

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Avocets Nesting on San Pablo Bay Marsh.—On May 12, 1934, I took a "nature study hike" with Rev. E. W. Houlding of Benicia, California, driving to the western end of Island No. 1, which lies northwest of Mare Island, where a friend, Chester Curtis, is keeper of a gun club. The club grounds, partly in Solano County and partly in Napa County, lie between the Sears-Point highway, which traverses this island for its eight miles of length, and the Napa Slough.

Mr. Curtis had spoken to me on several occasions, when he visited and shopped in Benicia, regarding a flock of some ten or twelve "white pelicans" which he was of the opinion were nesting just outside of his grounds. He advised that he had seen "young pelicans flying over," and that the flock always returned to, and settled down on, a certain portion of the marsh adjoining his club on the east.

Though we found no evidence that the pelicans were nesting, or had nested, we observed while we waded in the marsh a couple of pairs of American Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*). As we approached one of the small, grassy islands in the marsh, these avocets vociferously resented our trespassing. I had had experience in the Los Baños marshes with nesting avocets, and a little search disclosed two nests on this island of not over two square rods in extent. Parts of egg shells showed that the eggs had already hatched. Some six feet from one of the nests I located one avocet chick which I estimated was not over two or three days old. It made little or no attempt to get away from us, and I had no trouble in taking the accompanying photo (fig. 50). We noted that the legs seemed rather large for the size of the bird, but when I placed it in the water, the little fellow put these large legs to good use and swam rapidly to the edge of another small island (fig. 51).



Fig. 50. Avocet chick on San Pablo Bay marsh, May 12, 1934.

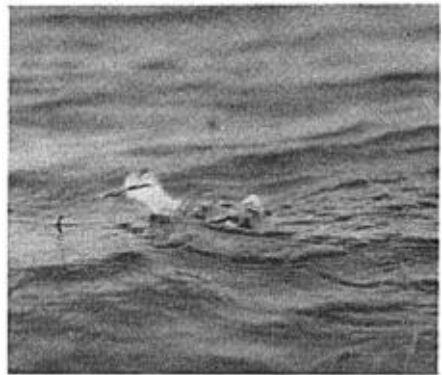


Fig. 51. Avocet chick swimming. San Pablo Bay marsh, May 12, 1934.

I looked for nesting avocets again in this section in April of 1935 and 1936 without success, there being no birds about except migrants in flocks. Mr. Curtis lets water into his grounds at certain periods and is of the opinion that the land was not flooded early enough to attract them to breed there during these years. They are common during migrations in this area. The "Directory to the Bird-life of the San Francisco Bay Region" by Grinnell and Wythe does not record that the avocet has been found nesting in the San Francisco Bay region.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, September 2, 1936.*

The Black Vulture in Colorado—a Correction.—The collecting of a Black Vulture, *Corymbus atratus atratus*, near Boulder, Colorado, was reported in the Condor in 1922 (vol. 24, p. 26). A recent study of Boulder County specimens in the University of Colorado Museum by Mrs. Charles Moore, then a student in the University, suggested to her that the specimen, which is no. 1426 in the bird series, is a juvenal Turkey Vulture rather than a Black Vulture. Further examination by the undersigned bears out this view. With the endorsement of Professor Junius Henderson, who published the original report, I am, therefore, making this correction. The record should be disregarded, and the species removed from the list of Colorado birds, as its presence on the list was

based upon this specimen. The error was not incorporated in the A.O.U. Check-list (1931), but it is included in the late Dr. W. H. Bergtold's "Guide to Colorado Birds."—GORDON ALEXANDER, *University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, March 31, 1937.*

Brown Pelicans Invade Arizona.—The California Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) has been known as an occasional straggler to Arizona on the basis of two published records. Law (Condor, vol. 26, 1924, p. 153) records one shot at Dos Cabezas, Cochise County, in the fall of 1914 or 1915. Bruner (Condor, vol. 28, 1926, p. 232) saw a flock of nine over Otero Canyon, Baboquivari Mountains, on March 23, 1925.

In June, 1935, Philip Welles, a student of the University of Arizona, flushed a Brown Pelican from a lagoon on the Arizona side of the Colorado River at Laguna Dam. It flew off down the river. In the summer of 1936, Brown Pelicans invaded Arizona in small numbers. In southern Arizona, on June 28, an immature Brown Pelican was found on the grounds of the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind, at the western edge of Tucson. It was in starving condition and barely able to stand. Some fresh fish was at once procured, and the bird was fed all it would eat. Next morning it was transferred to the University of Arizona aviary and there was exhibited to the interested public for a time. During this period the bird was fed fresh fish twice daily and gained strength rapidly.

On July 14, fresh fish presenting too much of a problem in a desert city, this pelican was freed on Picacho Lake, an irrigation reservoir in the valley 60 miles northwest of Tucson, where White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) have been present for several years in numbers varying from six to one hundred (Condor, vol. 37, 1935, p. 243). Nothing further is known of this individual. At the very point on the shore of the lake chosen for its release, the remains of another immature Brown Pelican were found. This bird had been dead, apparently, for several days.

In northern Arizona, a flock of three Brown and four or five White Pelicans was seen by Mrs. Fred Metz at Mormon Lake, 30 miles south of Flagstaff, on June 7. She was informed that pelicans (doubtless the same flock, as there are no previous summer records of any pelican in the region) had been seen there June 6, also. About June 10, an immature Brown Pelican appeared on the Flagstaff city reservoir, 3 miles northwest of Flagstaff; possibly unable to rise, it remained there until caught by hand, June 15. It was turned over to the Museum of Northern Arizona, but was too weak to save and died the same afternoon. This specimen is now in the collection of the Museum of Northern Arizona.—CHAS. T. VORHIES, *University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona*, and ALLAN R. PHILLIPS, *Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff, Arizona, April 20, 1937.*

Red-tailed Hawk Choked by Squirrel Skull.—While collecting in the foothills near the old deserted town of Nortonville, Contra Costa County, California, I found a dead immature Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo borealis calurus*) that apparently had been killed by a mammal skull which had lodged in its throat. The skull was so tightly wedged in the throat that it could not be removed until the skin was cut away. Upon examination the skull proved to be that of the ground squirrel, *Citellus beecheyi*.



Fig. 52. Head of a Red-tailed Hawk killed by the skull of a Ground Squirrel.

When the loose matted hair was scraped from the skull it was found that the squirrel's skull had been in the hawk's stomach for some time and the flesh had been digested from it. The bones of the zygomatic arch had been broken at the middle of the arch and the sharply protruding jugal bones had caught in the sides of the throat.

Those who saw the dead hawk formulated several theories to account for its death. One possibility is that the bird had been shot and had attempted to expel the skull as it died. However, from the way the sharp broken jugal bones were stuck in the throat, it seems improbable that this was the case. Also, the hawk was found in the bottom of a small canyon some distance from any road, trail or habitation.