FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Occurrence of the White-tailed Kite in Northern California.—In view of the fact that records of the White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus majusculus*) in northern California seem to be uncommon, I thought it best to publish my own observations on this species. Townsend (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 10, 1887, p. 201) states that two kites were seen by him near Red Bluff early in May, 1884. So far as I can ascertain, this is the only published record of kites in northern California unless certain records from Napa Valley are to be included and more recently those from Yolo County.

During October, 1933, I saw a White-tailed Kite flying over the Sacramento River bottom-land near Orland. The bird flew low over a field and except for hovering a couple of times, its flight resembled that of a Marsh Hawk. The next kite I saw was over chaparral near Cherokee. This time the bird was flying rapidly and soon disappeared from sight. Both this and the first observation were made in Butte County.

On April 29, 1937, I saw two White-tailed Kites chasing each other over a forest near Burney Falls in eastern Shasta County. This pair was observed with glasses for several minutes before they disappeared. They would fly at each other and after making a few aerial maneuvers would sail about with their legs hanging down. No cries or calls were heard.—Lloyd G. Ingles, *Chico State College, Chico, California, May 18, 1937.*

Virginia Rail Nesting at Benicia, California.—A set of eight fresh eggs of the Pacific Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola zetarius*) was found on the Southampton Bay marsh, one mile west of Benicia, Solano County, California, on May 3, 1936. Though this species is reported as a fairly common resident in the San Francisco Bay marshes, records of eggs taken in this same region are few.

The nest reported above was located by a Benicia High School student, Manuel Costa, who led his science teacher, J. D. Graham, and myself to the patch of sedge, near the middle of which the nest of dry marsh-grass, was found. The sedge patch in which this nest was placed was about twelve feet in circumference, surrounded by a large stretch of salicornia, and about a hundred feet from a cattail bordered slough. As seems to be customary when nests of rails are approached, no bird was seen at or near the nest. Verification of my identification of the eggs as those of the Virginia Rail was made by Professor J. Grinnell at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley.

On October 3, 1936, while looking over this marsh and hoping to observe a rail, I found another nest of this species, the egg shells in and about which indicated that the eggs had hatched in the previous nesting season. This nest, too, was in a small patch of sedge surrounded by a rather extensive growth of salicornia.—Emerson A. Stoner, *Benicia, California, October 3, 1936.*

A Vaux Swift and its Young.—On July 30, 1930, Messrs. J. M. Edson, E. J. Booth, and I visited the nest site of a Vaux Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*) at a packing plant in Bellingham, Washington. Edson (Murrelet, 1931, vol. 12, p. 25) reported upon certain observations on this bird, the young, and nest. The nest, constructed largely of sticks and cemented to the inside corner of a brick chimney about 12 inches below the roof of the building (fig. 61), contained four nearly full-fledged young. When I revisited the site on August 2, the young still were in the nest and the parent bird (presumed to be the female) was present, making frequent trips afield.

During the time I was at the nest, 9:37 a.m. to 11:15 a.m., the old bird made 8 trips as tabulated below.

Trip	Out	In	Minutes away from nest	Minutes at nest
1.	9:37	9:43	6	2
2.	9:45	9:46	1	2
3.	9:48	10:03	15	1
4.	10:04	10:07	3	2
5.	10:09	10:30	21	2
6.	10:32	10:37	5	12
7.	10:49	11:10	21	5
8.	11:15			

Although the variability of the time away from the nest (1 to 21 minutes) might indicate that two birds were engaged in feeding the young, I never saw more than a single adult bird at any one time. Because of this, I infer that only one parent was occupied in feeding them.

On this particular day, a strong wind was blowing from the east and the manner in which the parent bird entered the chimney was governed by the direction of its approach. When it returned flying into the wind, it glided, not more than 10 feet above the flat roof, to the chimney and "floated" into the aperture. When the approach was with the wind, however, the speed of the bird was greater, and usually it circled once about 30 feet above the roof and then dived into the opening. In leaving, it invariably flew over that part of the chimney farthest from the nest, thus taking advantage of a greater angle in its exit (see fig. 61).

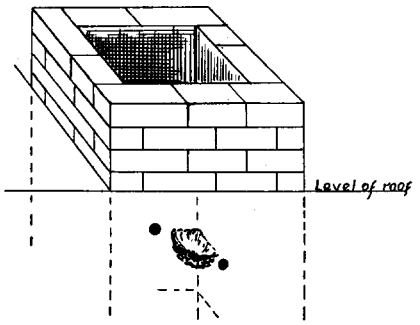

Fig. 61. Drawing indicating position of nest of Vaux Swift in chimney. Spots indicate places where parent perched when feeding young.

When I first looked into the chimney, I was greeted by the clamor of the young. Their calls consisted of series of rasping notes uttered in rapid succession. The young were perched on the edge of the nest, each with its posterior end projecting over the edge and with its head directed toward the corner of the chimney. Below the nest the chimney was streaked with excrement, a circumstance which indicated the young were not defecating in the nest. This probably explains the clean condition in which Edson (*ibid.*) found the empty nest when it was collected two days later. No evidence was obtained that the parent bird removed the fecal sacs of the young, although one can infer that it probably did when the young were smaller and unable to perch on the edge of the nest. Each time the parent returned from a trip afield, the young became vociferous, their calls lasting until the old bird left. By listening for the calls of the young, one could mark the coming and going of the adult.

After the parent had returned from its sixth trip, I moved close to the chimney and witnessed the feeding of the young. When first observed, the old bird was clinging to the chimney beside the nest, supported partly by the stiff tail feathers. The young were facing her (?), each with its mouth wide open clamoring for food and vying with its nest mates. I was led to wonder what relation existed between lustiness of voice and the chance of being fed at that particular visit. Later, after additional observations, I learned that proximity to the parent determined to a large extent which of the young was fed. At succeeding visits, the old bird alighted first at one side of the nest and then at the other, feeding the one, or ones, closest. The food, consisting of insects, largely leaf hoppers (as determined by gullet examination of the young), was placed far back in the open mouth of each young one.

To return to the first observation: After the parent bird had fed one of the young, it caught sight of me and dropped to a lower level in the chimney where it alighted out of sight. I moved closer and placed my head directly over the opening to get a better view. As I did so, I heard the rapid beating of wings and, thinking the bird was coming out, I instinctively jerked my head to one side to avoid being hit. It did not appear, so I looked in a second time and again I heard wing beats. This time I kept my position, and after my eyes had become adjusted to the darkness, I observed its stunt several times. The bird would let go its hold on the wall, and, by rapidly beating its wings, suspend itself in the middle of the chimney and at the same time produce the br-r-r-r-ing sound. Apparently the sound was produced by the beating of the wings themselves, for I could not observe them touching the sides of the chimney. During these performances the young were quiet. I interpreted this behavior as a means employed to intimidate the intruder, much as does the hissing of the chickadee or the swooping dive of the Red-tailed Hawk.—WILLIAM B. DAVIS, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, June 22, 1937.*

Hybridism between Myrtle and Audubon Warblers.—Looking around for something of interest to do, the fact came to mind that in the ornithological collection of the California Academy of Sciences there is a specimen of *Dendroica*, taken by W. Otto Emerson at Hayward, California, on April 4, 1901, that is labelled Audubon Warbler but has the word "hybrid" written slantingly across the label.

It happens that in the Auk (vol. 51, 1934, p. 243) is a description by Brodkorb of a hybrid between *Dendroica striata* and *Dendroica castanea*, which are closely related species, and accompanying the description is the remark that hybrids in this genus seemed to be of rare occurrence. As the Emerson specimen is undoubtedly a hybrid, this matter seemed to be worth looking into. As a beginning the indexes of the Auk, the Condor, and Bibliography of California Ornithology were