

the female had flushed caught our eyes and there on the ground, nicely roofed by the overhanging ledge, was a nest containing four recently hatched birds. None had its eyes open as yet, even though the end of July is late for a brood of tanager to be hatching.

The nest was a shallow, flattish structure about 6 or 7 inches in diameter. The materials used were rootlets, bits of slender twigs, a few scraps of either willow or dogwood leaves, a few tufts of moss and a considerable number of pieces of lichens. The lining appeared to be mostly fine grass blades and bits of lichens, though the birdlets were not molested and we did not see the entire interior of the nest.

There could be no doubt that the nest belonged to the pair nearby, for we had seen the female rise from the same spot twice, though we missed the nest the first time because we thought she was searching there for food. And as we moved on up the trail she immediately returned to her brood, while the male again followed us fully a hundred yards, scolding us at intervals until he felt that we no longer menaced the nest.

This nest was located on the south side of the canyon, the overhanging ledge situated in deep shade in a stand of Douglas fir, about an eighth of a mile below the point at which the Clark Fork enters the Middle Fork of the Stanislaus River. (See the Dardanelles Quadrangle of the U.S.G.S. topographic maps.) It was at an altitude of between 5500 and 6000 feet, in the Arid Transition Zone. There was no scarcity of good arboreal nesting sites in the vicinity, so the choice seems a strange one.—IRA L. WIGGINS and BRUCE L. WIGGINS, *Palo Alto, California, December 5, 1938.*

**Notes on the Distribution of Herons in California.**—*Ardea herodias hyperonca*. California Great Blue Heron. A breeding colony located with that of the Farallon Cormorants along Sandborn Slough, Sutter County, has fared better than the latter, at least up to February 26, 1931, when last visited and about 20 pairs were commencing to lay. On February 16, 1929, upward of 50 occupied heron nests were counted here. The cause of their depletion is the same as for the cormorants (see Vioffitt, *Condor*, vol. 41, 1939, p. 33).

Over 30 pairs of Great Blue Herons were nesting with the cormorants along Cut-off Slough, Suisun Marsh, April 11, 1920, when a set of fresh eggs of the former was collected; by 1936, the herons had deserted the colony. These observations indicate that the two species may nest together harmoniously. Instances in each colony were found where heron nests occupied the upper parts of trees in which cormorant nests were situated lower down.

An immature Great Blue Heron (no. 1979, now in Paris Museum) was found electrocuted below high tension wires, 5 miles southeast of Willows, Glenn County, December 18, 1936, by J. Delacour and me. Its stomach held remains of six harvest mice (*Reithrodontomys*).

A Great Blue Heron was observed to alight on the surface of Clear Lake, Lake County, mid-day of July 15, 1938, at least a third of a mile from shore. When first seen it was flying, but it soon alighted near what appeared to be a dead young Western Grebe. It sat on the surface near this object for fully three minutes, where it provided an unusual appearance, its long neck held curved like an old Western Grebe's. Although it was dead calm, the heron then took flight with no effort, taking off directly with legs held trailing until it was well under way. No attempt was made to assist flight by paddling the feet on the surface (see Cottam, *Condor*, vol. 41, 1939, p. 37).

The unique ground-nesting colony of these herons near Redwood City, reported by Carriger and Pemberton (*Condor*, vol. 10, 1908, pp. 78-81) as composed of 49 nests on April 14, 1907, continues existence in approximately the same number. April 1, 1928, I collected several sets of fresh eggs from it and last visited it March 25, 1936, when between 30 and 40 nests were observed without special search.

*Casmerodius albus egretta*. American Egret. Had I kept note of observations of this bird in the San Francisco Bay region in the decade preceding 1925, a number of records could be provided to indicate its gradual increase over that period. Positive recollection, upon reading Stoner's report of 12 birds on the Suisun Marsh, November 16, 1925 (*Condor*, vol. 28, 1926, p. 175), avers that the species was observed there at least as early as 1921, and also in winter and early spring of the following four seasons (near Cygnus Station and four miles south of Suisun). I handled an egret of this kind shot by a gunner two miles southeast of Shellville, Sonoma County, in winter, between 1911 and 1913.

In the area of the Sacramento Valley bounded by Willows, Gridley, Colusa and Williams, my notes record this egret as being rarely seen on visits in the last three months of the years 1921 through 1924. On June 14, 1925, one was observed six miles west of Colusa; by 1928, the species was fairly common. On October 15, 1928, two were noted near Delevan; the next day nine were counted a mile east of Willows, each one perched atop a rice shock in a paddy field. Since that time, numerous observations indicate the egret population of the Sacramento Valley to have increased by leaps and bounds.

In the San Joaquin Valley, American Egrets appear to have become reestablished in numbers earlier. Between 30 and 40 individuals were noted near Los Baños, June 21, 1925. The existence of a thriving colony of about 50 pairs south of Gustine is known to many bird students.

*Egretta thula brewsteri*. Snowy Egret. Autumn observations in the Sacramento Valley over the past 10 years indicate this species to be present in the above area in a ratio of about 1 to 20 as compared with the larger form. An unusual number of small egrets, in pairs totalling 10 birds, was noted 5 miles east of Delevan, Colusa County, February 16, 1929.

*Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli*. Black-crowned Night Heron. This is another species that has been driven by man from a rookery in the eucalyptuses of Cut-off Slough, Suisun Marsh. Small mummified young, presumably of the preceding year, were found in old nests there on March 28, 1936. A few adults were noted near-by at the time, but no fresh nests were in evidence.

A breeding colony has persisted for many years on the northern part of Belvedere Island, Marin County. Sets of eggs with advanced incubation were taken there April 22, 1918, and April 2, 1920, at which dates about 25 pairs were nesting. Last visited July 18, 1938, no herons were seen, but 31 nests in live oaks and bays bore evidences of having been used this season. Since the earlier visits, houses have been built near the colony and more recently the brush has been cleared from the land beneath the nesting trees so that the birds have much less privacy than formerly. It appears that this colony will not persist much longer.

*Ixobrychus exilis hesperis*. Western Least Bittern. Supposed to be summer visitant only to northern California. C. C. McGettigan has a mounted male specimen taken on the Greenhead Club, 6 miles west of Pennington, Sutter County, December 28, 1924. I saw the bird in the flesh. Exactly six years later (December 28, 1930) my wife and I were gunning on the same grounds from a bulrush "island" 15 feet in diameter, when a Least Bittern flew from the shore to alight at arm's length in the rushes. Here we watched it for many minutes, unwilling to take it at such close range with heavy duck guns. Efforts to drive it to flight failed and it remained while several shots were fired at ducks. I intended to keep watch that it did not fly away and to collect it from a distance after the hunt, but it evidently left the thicket when we were not watching, as search later on failed to divulge its presence. Another Least Bittern was seen in this locality, June 13, 1925. These records indicate that this elusive species is probably resident in the Sacramento Valley.

A set of five Least Bittern's eggs, incubation advanced, was taken from a bulrush thicket three miles south of Los Baños, June 10, 1928. Neither parent was seen.—JAMES MOFFITT, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, August 20, 1938.*

**The White-tailed Ptarmigan of Vancouver Island.**—In commenting on six juvenile specimens of White-tailed Ptarmigan collected by him on the mountains bordering Great Central Lake, Vancouver Island, H. S. Swarth (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 10, 1912, p. 25) first pointed out the distinctive black and white head and neck color of the Vancouver Island birds as compared with other White-tailed Ptarmigan. Except for two juveniles collected on Crown Mountain by W. B. Anderson in 1912, and a winter adult taken near Cowichan Lake by Dr. Stoker in 1905, Swarth's specimens, in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, were at that time the sole representatives of the Vancouver Island ptarmigan. During the past summer the author and P. W. Martin of Victoria, B. C., in the interests of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, collected a series of ten specimens on Mount Arrowsmith.

Comparison of these specimens with a large series of *Lagopus leucurus leucurus* from various points on the mainland of British Columbia, and with specimens of *Lagopus leucurus rainierensis* from Mount Rainier, Washington, kindly loaned to us from the Biological Survey collection of the United States National Museum by Dr. H. C. Oberholser, makes it clear that the insular conditions of Vancouver Island have fostered the development of a race of ptarmigan differing markedly from all adjacent races. For this race I propose the name

*Lagopus leucurus saxatilis*, new subspecies

*Type*.—Male adult, no. 8324, coll. B. C. Provincial Museum; Mount Arrowsmith, Vancouver Island, B. C., 6000 feet altitude; September 11, 1938; collected by I. McT. Cowan and P. W. Martin; original number 1580.

*Diagnosis*.—Like *Lagopus leucurus leucurus* but larger, with longer tail; with larger, more hooked bill; head and neck black and white without, or almost without, buffy wash; shafts of primaries black.

*Range*.—So far as known, confined to the higher peaks of Vancouver Island.

*Specimens examined*.—All from Vancouver Island, B. C.: Mount Arrowsmith, 10; Crown Mountain, near Upper Campbell Lake, 1; mountains at head of Cowichan Lake, 1.