

Zenaidura macroura marginella. Mourning Dove. Extremely abundant practically throughout the County. Between 5000 and 10,000 were estimated to have come to water at Coyote Spring, 2700 feet, the evening of May 23.

Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus. Piñon Jay. No occupied nest was found, but young were still being fed by the parents on May 20. Several times small flocks were seen in the Delmar Valley in the Joshua trees.

Turdus migratorius propinquus. Robin. Nesting commonly as low as the Lower Sonoran Zone, as in the Pahrangat Valley, but only in wet areas with willow, cottonwood, ash, or box elder.—R. M. BOND, *Soil Conservation Service, Berkeley, California, November 13, 1939.*

Killdeer Swimming.—On December 20, 1938, as I was driving along the Harkins road one-half mile west of Watsonville, California, I saw a Killdeer (*Oxyechus vociferus*) cross the road with one wing dragging. As it was the wrong time of year for the bird to be simulating injury, a stop was made and the bird pursued. It ran for a way along the bank of a drainage ditch, then seeing that it was about to be captured, ran down the bank and unhesitatingly entered the water. In spite of the broken wing, the bird floated as trimly as any bird that normally swims. The feet were seen working steadily and to my surprise the bird moved readily upstream against a moderate current. The whole performance surprised me, as I had watched the Killdeer for years, but had never seen it enter the water and swim before, but then I had never before seen it necessary for the bird to resort to that medium for escape.—ALBERT C. HAWBECKER, *Watsonville, California, March 19, 1940.*

Random Notes from the Humboldt Bay Area.—*Puffinus tenuirostris*. Slender-billed Shearwater. A female was taken on September 12, 1937, near the entrance of Humboldt Bay by Robert Talmadge.

Philacte canagica. Emperor Goose. A male was taken on April 26, 1925, on south Humboldt Bay. On December 6, 1927, a male and two females were taken on the marshes about two miles east of Eureka.

Falco columbarius suckleyi. Black Pigeon Hawk. Three birds were collected on the peninsula across the bay from Eureka in 1925: males on January 24 and 31, and a female on February 14.

Stercorarius parasiticus. Parasitic Jaeger. A female was taken on September 2, 1933, on the ocean side of Humboldt Bay.

Rissa tridactyla pollicaris. Pacific Kittiwake. A male was found on the ocean beach August 14, 1937, by Robert Talmadge.

Xema sabini. Sabine Gull. A male was collected February 7, 1932, on the ocean side of Humboldt Bay.

Cyclorhynchus psittacula. Paroquet Auklet. A female was taken on April 5, 1924, by George McDaniel on the ocean side of Humboldt Bay.

Strix occidentalis caurina. Northern Spotted Owl. Two young, not long out of the nest, were taken on July 29, 1913, in a grove of lowland fir, redwood, and Sitka spruce about three miles south of Eureka. On July 28, 1916, a young male was taken at the same place. Two young females were taken in Eureka, one on August 20, 1931, and the other on August 20, 1939. A live adult female was left in a sack at my back door by an unknown "owler" on January 18, 1939.

Penthestes atricapillus occidentalis. Oregon Chickadee. A male was taken October 23, 1924, also in Eureka.

Vermivora celata sordida. Dusky Warbler. A female was taken in Eureka on January 1, 1935.

Geothlypis trichas sinuosa. Salt Marsh Yellow-throat. An immature female was taken in Eureka on November 25, 1917.

Junco hyemalis hyemalis. Slate-colored Junco. A female was taken on March 17, 1935, by Miss Leno Moll in Eureka.

Zonotrichia albicollis. White-throated Sparrow. A male was taken May 8, 1934, a mile outside of Eureka, by Miss Leno Moll.

The above-mentioned specimens have been identified by the late Dr. Joseph Grinnell and by Dr. Robert T. Orr of the California Academy of Sciences.—JOHN M. DAVIS, *Eureka, California, April 20, 1940.*

Black Vultures Perch on Telephone Wires.—The foot of a vulture, fitted largely for walking and perching, would hardly seem adapted for grasping as slender a support as a telephone wire. The usual procedure of a vulture, when choosing a place to alight, is to pick some sturdy limb, pole-top, or rock, where the whole foot acts as a support, with the long toes functioning as aids to balance.

At other times, too, as when tearing meat from a carcass with the beak, the toes seem to function primarily as balancers rather than as supporters. It was therefore surprising to me to see several Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*) use their toes to support their weight when they chose to rest on a wire.

On February 2, 1940, I visited Guaymas, about halfway down the Gulf of California in Sonora, Mexico. A closely-packed group of perhaps seventy Black Vultures was feeding energetically on the great piles of sea bass heads dumped as refuse near the shore of the bay by one of Guaymas' leading

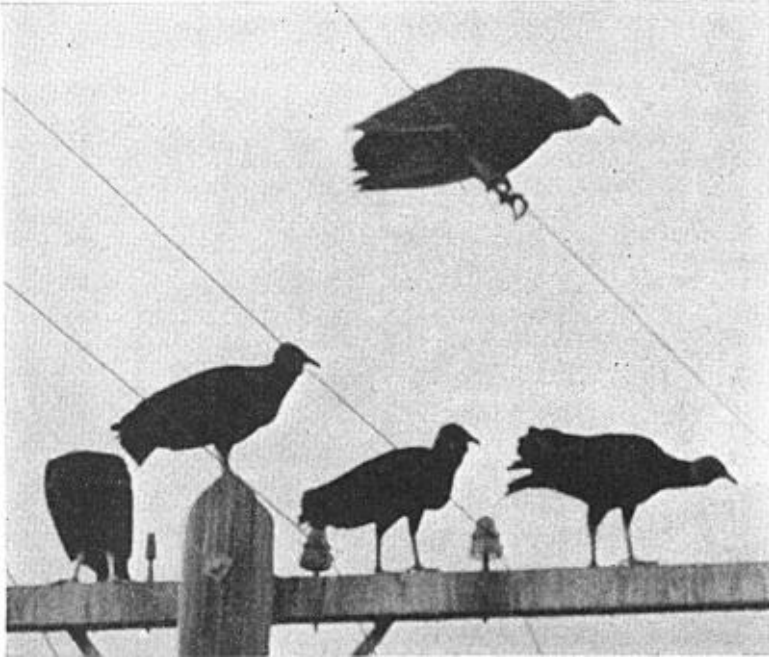


Fig. 63. Black Vulture balancing on telephone wire with wings partly opened and weight over toes.

fish canneries. I watched the birds from a distance of several hundred feet as they hopped about stiffly, grabbing for the best morsels. They were unusually wary for Mexican vultures, often so tame around the streets, and it was impossible for me to get the "close up" I wanted. When the birds took flight, many of them flew to the nearby telephone poles to alight. After the crossbars were filled, they continued to crowd in, while several of the late comers settled on the wires. Surprisingly enough they seemed to experience no great difficulty in balancing, and several remained on them for the best part of a minute, while I advanced for a picture. The photograph I was able to take (fig. 63) shows that the toes are simply curved like hooks over the wire, while the body is thrown slightly forward, making the center of gravity fall directly over the toes rather than over the end of the tarsometatarsus. The wings of the balancing bird are held slightly out as aids in maintaining equilibrium. The usual standing posture is plainly shown in the position of the other birds.

Such skill in balancing must be derived from repeated practice, as the vultures are not naturally suited for perching on such unsteady and precarious objects. Since the telephone wires shown here are near the spot where the fish heads are always dumped, the birds must frequently take to them when alarmed and thus have developed their unusual skill in balancing.—KARL W. KENYON, *Pomona College, Claremont, California, April 25, 1940.*

An Unusually Low Nest of the Nuttall Woodpecker.—For the past three years, E. A. Stoner and I have been making trips to a small lake near Cordelia, California, where several nests of the Nuttall Woodpecker (*Dryobates nuttallii*) have been found in the surrounding oak-covered hills. On April 23, 1939, we located a nest not over 30 inches above the ground in an oak stump. On