



FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Western Red-tailed Hawk Catches Cooper Hawk.—In December, 1943, I was driving along a road on the south side of the Santa Clara Valley about four miles east of Fillmore, Ventura County, California, when a female Western Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis calurus*) passed over me, traveling very fast. It flew into a rather open pine tree along the road, caught something and continued on down the road. She tried to alight in a rather scraggly eucalyptus tree a short distance ahead, missed her footing and fell to the ground. I arrived about that time and she flew away, leaving her prey on the ground under the tree. I stopped and got out to see what it was and was much surprised to find an adult male Cooper Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). It was still alive, but paralyzed from the wings back to the tail. I dropped it to the ground and was much surprised to see it take wing and fly for about fifty yards out into an orange orchard across the road. I went over and found it hanging by one claw to an orange branch, still alive and struggling. I carried it over to the road, killed it with a stick and placed it at the side of the road in plain view of the Red-tail which was perched on an electric pole near by. I passed there the next day and found no sign of the Cooper Hawk, so possibly the Red-tail had returned for her dinner.—SIDNEY B. PEYTON, *Fillmore, California*, May 22, 1945.

The Blue Goose in California.—While on a visit to Imperial County, California, on February 5 and 6, 1945, the writer was told of an "off-color" or "odd looking" goose seen with a large concentration of Lesser Snow Geese feeding on a recently planted barley field near the mouth of the Alamo River. This bird was reported by some observers as a Blue Goose and by others as possibly an Emperor Goose. The writer watched several thousand white geese feeding in the same area on the morning of February 6, without seeing any sign of the unidentified visitor.

On February 11, 1945, Gilbert H. Wardwell, while on regular work studying the movements and feeding habits of waterfowl, found and picked up a dead male Blue Goose in full adult plumage. The bird weighed 4 pounds, 12 ounces. It had not been dead very long before being found. Mr. Wardwell, who had previously seen the "off-color" goose, at once recognized his find as the bird previously noted, and, believing it to be a Blue Goose, preserved the skin as a "flat specimen" and sent it to me for verification. It proved to be a typical adult Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) in fine plumage.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon*, April 14, 1945.

Observation of the South American Condor.—It was my privilege to spend seven months in Ecuador in 1944, the major portion of the time in the field. While riding across the high, wind-swept páramos we often climbed to altitudes well above 13,000 feet and frequently saw South American Condors (*Vultur gryphus*) wheeling a thousand feet or more above us. On one field trip we crossed the extensive páramo between Atuntaqui and Piñan and camped the first night at 11,200 feet on the brink of the last canyon that afforded firewood before crossing the higher portion of the páramo. We had been on the lookout for condors during the latter part of the day, but none appeared until nearly sunset when two of the great birds swept rapidly across the valley.

The following day, June 21, we broke camp under an overcast sky, rode through a light rain for nearly three hours, and then, when we had given up hope of seeing condors, we sighted two of them on a sharp ridge about two hundred feet above the trail. They were sitting with their shoulders hunched up alongside their heads, looking almost as miserable as our Indian cargadores in the drizzle and swirling mists. We angled slowly upward toward them and they permitted us to approach within sixty or seventy feet before taking to the air.

They launched themselves by taking three or four clumsy hops along the knife-like ridge and by vigorously flapping their powerful wings. All awkwardness disappeared the instant they were fully air-borne! Their soaring appeared completely effortless. In a few seconds they were no longer visible to us, shut off by the scudding masses of mist that rolled over the adjacent ridges. Under the weather conditions at the time, the clouds swirling right to the top of the ridge, they soared within a few feet of the earth instead of climbing rapidly as soon as they got into the air.

Shortly after noon the weather began to break and in a few minutes the sky was swept nearly clean of mist. Soon we saw eight condors soaring slightly above the summit of a long, grass-grown ridge southeast of the trail. This was at an elevation of 12,800 feet. Then three more were seen, then another, and another, until we counted thirty-one in sight at one time. We were reasonably sure that we saw ten or fifteen more condors during the hour and a half that we watched them, but no more

than thirty-one were visible at any one time. The huge birds soared over the rim of the ridge and out of sight, singly or in small groups, but shortly either the same birds or others kept reappearing at other points from the opposite side of the same ridge. We estimated that there could easily have been fifty of them along that one valley and the ridge they crossed and recrossed in their wheeling flight. Their activity during mid-day may well have been influenced by the dense, continuous layer of clouds that had blanketed the whole páramo and its adjacent peaks during the earlier hours. On subsequent days when the early morning hours were clear the condors were active for only two or three hours immediately following sunrise and again for a short time just before sunset. Rarely were they seen during the middle of the day.

We were in the Piñan region for some days and saw condors every day, but never again so many at any one time. A half dozen within sight at once was a common occurrence, and not infrequently we counted ten to fifteen within sight of the unaided eye. A lone condor was a rarity, at least within the scope of our limited observations.

Just after sunrise one morning several of our cargadores were attracted by the actions of three condors which had been under observation for several minutes as they wheeled in great circles two or three thousand feet above us. They suddenly plunged downward toward a small draw about a half mile away and disappeared behind an intervening ridge. One of the Indians declared that the condors were attacking a calf or a deer. The mayordomo of our group of native helpers grabbed a shotgun and hustled across the páramo in an attempt to drive off the marauding condors, or to obtain the fresh meat for our own use in case the raptors killed the animal before he reached it. By the time he reached the rise overlooking the point where the condors had disappeared, the calf, for so it proved to be, was dead.

The mayordomo, Manuel Giler, brought the animal back to camp so I had an opportunity to examine the wounds inflicted by the condors and to judge of their manner of attacking the flesh of their kill. A gash on the left side of the chest cut clear through into the chest cavity, between the ribs, and the lung was deeply torn. The heart, however, had not been injured, but a considerable quantity of blood was in the chest cavity. Another gash exposed the flesh of the "saddle" just above the left kidney and perhaps a pound of the tenderloin had been stripped out. Other wounds were present on the nose and about the head of the calf, whether made by claws or by the beaks of the attacking birds I am unable to say. One eye had been pierced but not entirely plucked from its socket. The abdominal wall had been penetrated and about a third of the animal's viscera had been dragged out through a hole less than two inches in diameter. Aside from the areas mentioned, the skin was not torn and the condors appeared to have begun feeding by working through the comparatively small holes instead of by stripping away the covering skin.—IRA L. WIGGINS, *Natural History Museum, Stanford University, California, March 23, 1945.*

Feeding Habits of the Clark Nutcracker.—Like the Canada and Steller jays, the Clark Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) is often attracted to mountain camps and cabins by food scraps. Apparently the nutcracker, like other corvids, will feed on meat or carrion, but usually such feeding is done upon the carcasses of mammals or birds. On a trip to Yellowstone National Park in January-February, 1944, however, Dr. E. R. Quortrup of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge observed a Clark Nutcracker feeding upon the flesh surrounding the lacrimal ducts of an injured cow elk.

Feeding upon sores or freshly made brands of livestock or upon the sores of big game, is not a particularly uncommon practice of the Magpie (*Pica pica*). Adolph Murie, in his "Ecology of the Coyote in Yellowstone" (Fauna Series 14, Conservation Bulletin 4, National Park Service, 1940), mentioned finding magpies that apparently were picking at mites and ticks on live mountain sheep, elk, and bison; he also found ticks in the stomach of a dead magpie. M. P. Skinner, in 1920, reported Clark Nutcrackers in Yellowstone National Park congregating on grounds where elk had bedded; here the birds were finding and consuming large numbers of ticks. O. J. Murie writes (letter, March 1, 1944) that he found a Clark Nutcracker with engorged ticks in its throat. Perhaps this habit of seeking parasites on big game or livestock may lead these birds occasionally to probe deeper and obtain live flesh.

Ten stomachs, critically analyzed in the laboratory of the Fish and Wildlife Service, revealed that these Clark Nutcrackers had taken the following foods in approximately this order of abundance: pine seeds, cicadas, grasshoppers, oats and other grains, spiders, blister beetles, Hymenoptera (including ants, bees, and wasps), weevils, ticks, ground beetles, rove beetles, meadow mice, scarab beetles, and miscellaneous insects.—CLARENCE COTTAM, *United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago, Illinois, May 4, 1945.*

Miscellaneous Records of Birds Uncommon in Utah.—At various times in recent years the writers have, in their general collecting, obtained birds of relatively rare occurrence in Utah, at