

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

California Condors Observed from Airplane.—On October 15, 1949, at 1:30 p.m., the writer caught sight of two very large soaring birds while piloting a two-place Cessna airplane above Liebre Gulch, about 8 miles southeast of Sandberg, Los Angeles County, California, and 26 miles southeast of Mount Pinos. A lookout for Condors had been kept during regular weekly trips over this region since the preceding November, during which time many Turkey Vultures and a few Golden Eagles had been seen but no birds as large as those now sighted. They were soaring at an altitude about 500 feet higher than the plane, the latter registering 5500 feet above sea level. The altitude of the wild and rugged hills at this point reaches 3500 feet as shown on the U. S. Tejon Quadrangle, which placed the birds at 2500 feet above the ground level at that point.

A few seconds after altering course and climbing so as to approach the birds directly, I was able to identify them unmistakably as California Condors. Like Turkey Vultures and eagles these birds, no doubt unaccustomed to being challenged in the air, made much less effort to get out of the way of the plane than do ducks and geese, for example. Such waterfowl alter course quickly, accelerate their wing strokes and, upon close approach, dodge erratically. Turkey Vultures, eagles and Red-tailed Hawks often describe evasive circles on set wings and sometimes flap heavily upon very close approach, but show much less disposition to change course and often make none whatever.

As the plane overtook the Condors from their left, they behaved like other large birds of prey. They sailed to the right in a tight circle on motionless wings so that I was obliged to bank steeply and make a sharp 180 degree turn to avoid running past them on a tangent with the risk of losing sight of them entirely. By keeping in a very steep bank, with the Condors turning on motionless wings within their own smaller circle, the writer reduced the distance to about 100 feet from the closer bird. At this close approach, it stared over its shoulder, flapped heavily and turned still more sharply in its circling so that the plane shot on by, whereupon the bird resumed its leisurely soaring. A second close approach was made similar to the first, with the same sequence of behavior, including the neck craning and laborious flapping when the plane approached within 100 feet.

This incident took place directly in Amber Airway No. 1, which is a straight line between Bakersfield and Los Angeles and is traveled every day by dozens, perhaps scores, of aircraft. Undoubtedly the birds are thoroughly familiar with planes. Their behavior indicated no alarm more acute than that shown by a roadside bird when it flies a few yards out of the way of an approaching automobile.

The cruising speed of this plane is approximately 100 miles an hour, but in climbing and turning maneuvers involved in observing the birds, it was traveling not more than 80 miles an hour. Nevertheless, as is the case with all soaring birds observed thus far, the man-made flying machine overtook them with the speed of an express train. Overhauling birds in flight takes place so rapidly that the chief concern is to stay far enough to one side to avoid collision in case the birds make an unexpected turn. Collision with a Condor could conceivably cause extensive damage to a small plane.—LOWELL SUMNER, *National Park Service, San Francisco, October 26, 1949.*

New Breeding Records for Colorado.—Nestings of the Ring-necked Duck, Western Grebe, White-faced Glossy Ibis, and Snowy Egret in Colorado have never, or only rarely, been reported. While engaged in studies of waterfowl in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado, April 1 to September 12, 1949, the writer observed numerous instances of nesting in these four species. Brief comments on the literature and on recent observations and collections are made here to help clarify breeding status of these species in Colorado.

Niedrach and Rockwell (*The Birds of Denver and Mountain Parks, Denver, 1939:41*) considered the Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) to be an uncommon migrant in the Denver area. Bergtold (*A Guide to Colorado Birds, Denver, 1928:67*) and Sclater (*A History of the Birds of Colorado, London, 1912:55*) reported a similar status for the state as a whole. Apparently no record of its breeding in Colorado has ever been obtained. On June 10, 1949, the writer observed 19 pairs of this duck in the vicinity of Wright's Ranch, approximately 10 miles west of Creede in Mineral County at an elevation of 9000 feet. On the same date a female and a male with enlarged gonads were col-

lected. Both birds were in full breeding plumage. On July 18, 1949, several broods of downy young were noted in the same area. Three broods for which accurate counts were obtained averaged 9.0 young. Photographs were obtained of other broods. Search failed to disclose nests in any instance, so no clutch counts were obtained.

The Ring-necked Duck appears to be a more common migrant in Colorado than formerly supposed. In the San Luis Valley proper, individuals were noted on April 14, 15, and 16, 1949, in three separate flocks of Lesser Scaup Ducks (*Aythya affinis*). J. Frank Cassel reports seeing migrant birds in the spring and fall of 1949 in the vicinity of Fort Collins, Larimer County, in the northern part of the state.

In Colorado the Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) was regarded by Sclater (*op. cit.* :4) as a rare migrant. Bailey and Niedrach (Auk, 55, 1938:119) reported an observation of 52 birds as an unusual occurrence. Niedrach and Rockwell (*op. cit.* :25) list this species as an uncommon summer resident, but cite no nesting records. Approximately 50 adult birds were regularly observed by the writer during the nesting season of 1949 on the Russell Lakes, 9 miles south of Saguache, Colorado. These shallow lakes are 7580 feet in elevation and are surrounded by extensive hard-stem bulrush marshes. Nine nests were located in one 320-acre study area, only one-third of which might be considered grebe nesting habitat. The earliest laying noted was on May 6; the earliest young, May 22. One adult male and one downy chick were collected. Pied-billed Grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*) and Eared Grebes (*Colymbus caspicus*) also nested on this study area.

Bergtold (*op. cit.* :80) considered the White-faced Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis mexicana*) to be a rare breeder in Colorado. Sclater (*op. cit.* :77) tells of White-faced Glossy Ibis nests observed in the San Luis Valley by Aiken on July 1, 1875. In 1949, at least 12 pairs were observed nesting in the Russell Lakes study area. The first clutch was noticed on May 22; the first young, June 20. On June 22, Clyde P. Matteson and the writer banded two fledglings and made still and movie photographs of nests, young, and adults. One immature male was collected on July 22.

In recent years, the Snowy Egret (*Leucophoyx thula*) has apparently nested in increasing numbers in Colorado. Bailey and Niedrach (Condor, 40, 1938:44-45) are credited with the first record for the state, a nest found in the Denver area on July 8, 1937. In 1948, two pairs, and in 1949, six pairs, nested at Terry Lake, two miles north of Fort Collins. The writer found this species well distributed throughout the San Luis Valley, with several small colonies located on the bulrush margins of lakes and ponds. The earliest nests located on the Russell Lakes in 1949 were found early in May; the first young were seen on May 30. Twelve fledgling egrets were banded on June 22 and numerous individuals and nests were photographed in the course of the summer. One adult male was collected for a study skin.—RONALD A. RYDER, *Colorado Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College, Fort Collins, Colorado, November 17, 1949.*

Xantus Murrelet Captured in a Dip Net.—In February, 1949, I had the privilege of accompanying Mr. J. W. Sefton, Jr., and several other biologists on a short cruise aboard the "Orca" to San Clemente, Los Coronados, and Todos Santos islands off the coast of southern and Baja California. Late in the afternoon of February 23 we anchored close inshore on the lee side of the southern island of the Coronados group. As soon as darkness set in we began fishing for specimens with a dip net and a shallowly submerged electric light. At about 9:45, Dr. Rolf Bolin, who was handling the dip net from the landing stage at the time, caught a rapidly swimming creature that entered the lighted area about two feet below the surface. When he brought it into the laboratory cabin, it proved to be a mature Xantus Murrelet (*Endomychura hypoleuca*). An hour or so later a second bird was caught in the same manner by another member of the party. Both birds were kept captive until the next forenoon when they were released.

The shrill, plaintive whistle of the murrelets was heard frequently throughout the night, but only the two were attracted to the light. Several others were seen swimming on the surface a few yards from the ship, but at such a distance that the submerged light had no attraction for them.—IRA L. WIGGINS, *Natural History Museum, Stanford University, California, November 26, 1949.*

Slate-colored Junco in Reno, Nevada.—During a period of abnormally cold weather from January 19 to February 13, 1949, a Slate-colored Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) came at frequent intervals