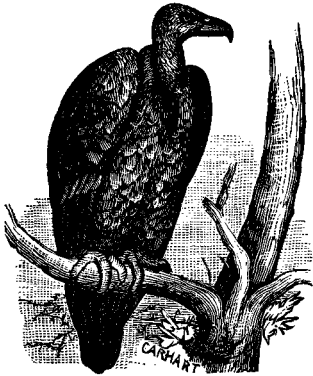


NESTING OF THE TURKEY BUZZARD.

Cathartes Aura.

BY JNO. A. DONALD, DECATUR, TEXAS.

This bird is quite a common resident in this locality. A few notes concerning the nesting of the species will, no doubt, prove of interest to the readers of the SEMI-ANNUAL. I have only been a student of the science for the past three seasons, during which time I have found and examined personally eleven nests of the Turkey Buzzard, and shall confine myself to observations of the same taken from my note-book.



THE TURKEY BUZZARD.

The first nest, found during the above period, was on April 5th, 1888, contained one egg and was on the ground, in a thicket, under a log.

I did not disturb it, but waited until the 10th in order to get a full set. On visiting it on that date it still contained one egg, which I took; incubation about 1-2. This egg measures 2.74x1.94. It is of a dull, creamy, buff color, very evenly spotted with dark brown—the spots around the larger end being thicker and heavier than those of the smaller.

The next nest found was on May 6th, 1888; contained three eggs and the broken shell of another. These eggs passed out of my hands soon after finding them, and for this reason I cannot give a description of them. On comparing them I decided that they were the product of two pairs of birds, as the markings of the broken shell and one egg were very different from those of the other two. The eggs were placed on a bed of leaves, in a thicket. Set 3-2 was collected June 5th, 1888, but the eggs were too badly incubated to save. Nest was on the ground in a thicket.

In 1889, the first nest was found on April 20th; contained two fresh eggs, and was on the ground, under a large rock, on a prairie branch. One of these eggs was very thickly spotted with small spots and blotches of varying shades of brown, while on the other the spots were very large and scattering.

On May 3d, 1889, I found a nest containing two young Buzzards, just hatched. This nest was in a thicket, on the ground. The young birds were covered with a dirty, white down, and although hardly able to sit up, were pecking at one another.

On March 22d, 1890, I found two nests, each containing one egg. I took both and replaced with turkey eggs. On returning four days later, I found one nest deserted and the turkey egg broken; while in the other I found another Buzzard egg had been laid, which egg I collected. This set (2-2) measures 2.64x1.92 and 2.66x1.91; are dull white in color, with large, irregular blotches of very pale brown, over which are a number of smaller spots of dark brown. Both of the above nests were placed under ledges of rock, on the ground, near a prairie branch.

On April 14th, 1890, two nests were found, each containing two eggs; set 3-2 being fresh and placed under a ledge of rock, and set 4-2 was slightly incubated. The coloration of set 3-2 is almost precisely like the set found on April 20th, 1889, and measures 2.79x1.87 and 2.75x1.87. One egg of set 4-2 was broken in collecting, and the other measures 2.64x1.99; the larger end is heavily spotted and blotched with drab, amber and dark brown, while the smaller end is almost unspotted.

Sets 5-2 and 6-2 were found April 22, 1890; both being placed under ledges of rock, along a prairie branch. Both sets were fresh. Set 5-2 is about a typical set, being creamy white and irregularly spotted with different shades of reddish brown; one egg being heavily marked while the other has only a few spots about the larger end and a very few small ones elsewhere. The eggs measure 2.90x1.83 and 2.79x1.81.

Set 6-2 is the most beautiful set of the species I have ever seen, being clear white, with numerous lavender and purplish shell markings, over which are large blotches of dark red and dark brown. Measurements, 2.83x1.94 and 2.74x1.93.

Of all the eggs that have come under my notice, the shorter has fewer and larger markings than the longer. This I have not noticed to be true of the Black Vulture.