

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

The Western Gnatcatcher as a Nest Mover.—In 1938 Mr. J. D. Graham, of Benicia, and I found ten nests of Western Gnatcatchers (*Poliophtila caerulea amoenissima*) near Cordelia, Solano County, California.

We are convinced that reports such as made by Chamberlin (Condor, vol. 3, 1901, pp. 33-36) of this species removing nests from one location to another are true and that this is a characteristic and commonly practiced custom. A nest found with one egg on May 21 was completely gone on May 29 and there was no trace of it either on the limb or under the tree. A careful survey led us to believe it was removed, piecemeal of course, to another site, although it is a matter of conjecture what happened to the egg. With little doubt another pair which was putting the finishing touches on their nest on May 29 moved their nest, as there was no trace of it a week later. I watched a pair of these birds on June 5 busily tearing apart a gnatcatcher's nest and flying away with parts of it. My efforts to locate what was possibly a new site were unsuccessful as they traveled to a distant point. It occurred to me that jays might have destroyed some of our missing nests; Dawson (Birds of California, 1923, p. 815) suspects that "fully half" of the gnatcatcher nests are robbed or torn up by jays. With little doubt jays bother gnatcatchers as well as other birds during the nesting season. However, I do not believe jays would take every vestige of nesting material from a nesting site. Cobwebs and downy materials adhere to the limb even when a nest is carefully removed by hand, and in the case of our missing nests the limbs on which they had rested bore not a single web or trace of down. It would seem that a jay would have no interest in so completely destroying a nest, whereas the busy little original owners might easily be suspected of transferring every treasured bit of home-building material to another location.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, August 23, 1939.*

White-winged Dove in Santa Cruz County, California.—On July 18, 1939, a White-winged Dove (*Melopelia asiatica*) was seen in Larkin Valley, about five miles west of Watsonville, Santa Cruz County, California. The bird was perched on a wire beside the road, where it remained until we got out of the car. It was closely and carefully observed, both at rest and in flight, by myself, Dr. Laurence M. Dickerson and Mr. A. C. Hawbecker. There was no question as to the identity of the bird, but it may, of course, have been an escape. The nearest records of occurrence of this species seem to be at Twenty-nine Palms, San Bernardino County (Heller, Condor, vol. 3, 1901, p. 100; Carter, Condor, vol. 39, 1937, p. 85; at Escondido, San Diego County (Dixon, Condor, vol. 14, 1912, p. 196); and in Santa Barbara (Parmenter, Condor, vol. 25, 1923, p. 107). Mr. Hawbecker has seen the bird several times during the subsequent month. The identification of the bird is so certain that he has not tried to collect it.—R. M. BOND, *Soil Conservation Service, Berkeley, California, September 5, 1939.*

July Records from San Pedro, California.—On July 23, 1939, while the writer and his wife were cruising on the ocean a few miles off San Pedro, California, a number of terns were seen and tentatively identified as the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). As the earliest fall date previously recorded for this species in southern California is August 13 (Willett, Pac. Coast Avif., No. 21, 1933, p. 76), it seemed worth while to substantiate the July occurrence by a specimen. Consequently the locality was revisited July 25, with the result that several of the terns were again encountered and an adult female collected. As expected, it proved to be *S. hirundo*. A few minutes before the tern was secured, two Rhinoceros Auklets (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) were seen and one (a male) was shot, this also being a first record for July. The above two specimens are in the Los Angeles Museum.

Shortly after we had started for port, and while still about five miles out, an adult Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) crossed our bows in pursuit of a tern. Although this bird was not collected, it was seen so clearly that the twisted tail feathers were plainly visible. This is an early date for the species in southern California.—G. WILLETT, *Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, California, August 29, 1939.*

Foraging Dexterity of a Lazuli Bunting.—Instances of foraging behavior that are especially adapted to meet particular physical situations are numerous indeed among birds. Less frequent are occasions when an element of learning, in contrast to instinct, is clearly manifest in feeding technique carried on in the wild. We may be confident of the adaptability of birds in general in seeking their food, but when actions are nicely gauged to take advantage of some unnatural object in the environment, we are the more assured of the individual's powers of comprehension and adjustment.