

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

American Redstart in Los Angeles.—While in Griffith Park the afternoon of September 13, 1923, near the Western Avenue picnic grounds, my eye was caught by a flash of black wings with brilliant orange patches as a bird flew into the top of a nearby oak. I immediately followed this up, and, never having seen anything like it before, I hurriedly jotted down the following notes as I observed the bird. "Above, all black with bright orange patch on wings and rump or tail. Below, throat and breast black with orange patch at side of breast. Belly white. Size and actions of Warbler." On consulting Bailey and Chapman, I could find nothing that at all fitted this description except the male American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*), and as the distinctive coloration and markings are so striking, it would seem that there can be no doubt as to its identification.

The Redstart was also seen by Miss J. A. Potter, who was with me at the time. The following day Mrs. G. H. Schneider made a trip to the same location, hoping the bird might still be there, and was equally fortunate in seeing this rare visitor.—MRS. ELLA H. ELLIS, *Los Angeles, September 20, 1923.*

Breeding Condition of the Murres on the Farallones in June, 1923.—A surprising feature of my visit to the Farallon Islands on June 8 was the small number of California Murres (*Uria troille californica*) which were seen breeding. While it was not possible to get over all of the main island during the time at my disposal, it was clear that breeding murres were present in numbers to be measured in tens as against the presence of breeding cormorants in hundreds and gulls in thousands. Only three small groups of murres were actually seen to be breeding; in each case they had laid their eggs in crevices large enough to accommodate from seven to fifteen birds. Whether my visit was made before most of the murres had begun to lay, or whether their breeding numbers have been reduced to this extent, it is not possible to determine from this single observation. At any rate the breeding season appeared to be advanced for many of the other species, especially for the cormorants and gulls, whose nests in most cases were occupied by young birds. The occurrence of several hundred murres on the water and in the air between the Islands and San Francisco favored the supposition that they had not yet commenced to breed.

According to the lighthouse keeper, the small number of nesting murres become discouraged, after one or two attempts at nesting, because of the attacks of the gulls. I, myself, saw no actual case of interference on the part of the gulls with the nesting of other birds. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that I kept on the edges of the large breeding colonies, with the result that few of the brooding birds left their nests. The selection by the murres of crevices in the rocks as breeding places suggests that they have felt the need for protection. It seems probable, therefore, that the small number of breeding murres is indeed to be largely charged to interference by the gulls, whose numbers are said to be greatly on the increase.—RALPH W. CHANEY, *Berkeley, California, September 27, 1923.*

Woodpeckers, Pecan Nuts, and Squirrels.—In connection with some recent discussions upon the storing of acorns by the California Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus bairdi*), the following account given to me by Mr. J. A. Graves, President of the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank of Los Angeles, may be of interest.

Mr. Graves has an orange orchard near Alhambra, not far from Los Angeles. On the property there are, also, a few pecan trees and a redwood tree, the latter being 37 years old, with a diameter near the base of about four feet and a height of from 75 to 100 feet. Three years ago California Woodpeckers stored in this redwood tree hundreds of pecan nuts, duly fitted into the bark, as is the custom of this species of woodpecker.

It happens that there are a good many gray squirrels in the vicinity, and the sharp-eyed little animals soon discovered the store of nuts in this newly filled warehouse and promptly removed each and every nut for their own special use.

Since then not a single nut has been stored in the redwood tree by the woodpeckers, which have transferred their choice of storage room to the upper ten feet of the trolley poles on the car line near by. These poles are of solid, hard wood, but the birds have dug out the holes and fitted in the nuts just as though the poles were of one of the softer varieties of wood to which they were accustomed. The squirrels have not yet found these caches.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, August 1, 1923.*

Nesting of Pigmy Nuthatches at Lake Tahoe.—On August 15, 1923, I found the nest of a pair of Pigmy Nuthatches (*Sitta pygmaea*) in a hole about ten feet from the ground in an upright post at Brockway, Placer County, California, about 75 yards from the shore of Lake Tahoe. My attention had been attracted to the site by the calls of the adults and nestlings and by the frequent trips to the nest made by the adult birds with food for the young. The nest, entered by a small, irregular orifice, was in a decayed portion of the pole, where excavation was easy. The visits of the adult birds were so noticeably frequent that an hour was given, on the afternoon of the 16th, to observing and recording the time of each visit.

For a few minutes after I first began to observe them, from about a dozen feet from the foot of the pole, the birds were unwilling to visit the nest; so the time during which they were evidently restrained by my presence is excluded. Both parent birds were engaged in the task of carrying what appeared to be flies, worms, and white grubs, and both birds were often in sight at the same time. The first visit was recorded at 2:26 in the afternoon and by 3:27 the birds had made 24 calls, carrying food each time. At this rate the adult birds were making over 300 trips a day. The longest interval between visits was eight minutes, the shortest interval was half a minute. The parents did their foraging in nearby pine trees and well up from the ground, from about 50 to 80 feet or more high. The insects were thrust into the bills of the young the instant the parents arrived, without the slightest delay, and the old birds were off for more, now and then stopping a second or so to remove material from the nest. The approach was usually made by first alighting on a small pine tree almost at the nest, and the departure by the same route, but some of the trips were by a direct course from and to the group of large pines without any intermediate stop at all.

Not once during this hour did either adult enter the nest, although at other times they occasionally did so. The entrance to the nest, and the wood for about three inches around the entrance, was worn and almost polished. The birds alighted near the entrance in any position, with the head pointed toward the nest; but they were always vertical when delivering their captures to the young. The young birds were evidently nearly ready to leave the nest because one always had its head out of the hole when food arrived. They appeared to be fully feathered, and their calls were as loud as and similar to those of the adults. The young could detect the approach of their parents before I could and I learned of the coming of the old birds through the calling of the young.

The pole in which the nest was placed stood at the junction of two board walks, not over twenty feet from an occupied cottage. People were passing every few minutes, workmen were repairing a drain and board walk within one hundred feet, and automobiles were being repaired, moved about, and their engines raced by mechanics, within fifty or seventy-five yards. The adult birds were so intent upon their duties that none of these activities disturbed them. These same general conditions obtained throughout the days August 15 to 17, inclusive. The cottage in which we were staying was only a few rods from the nest, and several times each day I observed the continuous feeding going on. Early on the 18th the nest was deserted, and all the birds had disappeared. Two probable reasons at once suggest themselves for the change of environment: (1) the vicinity of the nest was noisy and unsafe; (2) the territory may have been depleted of available food supply.

During the days on which I watched the birds, foraging was done in a group of about twenty large pine trees. The flights were always direct from near the nest to and from these pines. I measured what seemed the distance of these trees from the nest and estimated that 150 yards was the average round trip and that the total distance traveled each day was approximately thirty miles.

The voice of the Pigmy Nuthatch is unlike that of the Slender-billed and Red-breasted nuthatches. There is none of the familiar *yank, yank, yank*, which is usually