

propose merely a modification, to suit different emergencies, in the composition of Mr. Seebohm's complex third term. I fail to see any objection to this proposed modification, while, on the other hand, it seems to offer special advantages.

Finally, a word on the composition of these polyonymal names. Obviously the specific name of a group of subspecies should be the earliest name applied to any member of the group; this of course should invariably form the second term in the designations of the several subspecies. Then follows the name of the different subspecies as the third term, when relating to their ordinary phases. When the third term becomes complex, through an effort to designate intermediate forms between two formally recognized subspecies, the first element of the complex term should be that of the subspecies to which the intermediates are most nearly allied; and so on, as already explained.

Doubtless for all ordinary occasions the simple trionymal form will be sufficient, but when greater exactitude may be required or seem desirable, as not infrequently happens, I certainly can see no shorter or more explicit way of designating the facts in the case than resort to the complex third term, with the above designated changes of position, etc., of its component elements.

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### COLLECTING IN THE COLORADO DESERT— *LECONTE'S THRASHER.*

BY F. STEPHENS.

DURING the last week of March, 1884, I spent four days in the extreme western end of the Colorado Desert, during which time I picked up several items of interest to ornithologists. As some reader of 'The Auk' may desire to try collecting on this desert, I will give a few hints, especially as they may help others to a better understanding of the 'lay of the country.'

The Southern Pacific Railroad enters the desert from the west through the San Gorgonio Pass, between the San Bernardino Mountains on the north, and the San Jacinto Mountains on the south. These ranges, or spurs from them, diverge toward

the east, and enclose the desert between them. Much of this desert lies *below* sea-level, having been cut off from the Gulf of California by alluvial deposits at the mouth of the Colorado River. The railroad passes along the northern edge of the desert, which is uninhabited except by the men necessary to keep the railroad in operation, and by a few Indians. At Indio the railroad company keep up a hotel and eating-house. In the immediate vicinity are small mesquit trees and other brush, and a couple of miles to the north are hills in which are several groves of palms, making it a very fair desert collecting ground.

To get to the part of the desert where I went, it would be necessary to hire a conveyance large enough to carry tent, blankets, horse feed, and provisions enough to last the entire trip, as nothing but water can be procured on the desert, and the water in but few places. Don't forget a canteen, and after the beginning of April don't start for a half-mile walk without having it with you filled with water, as it is an excessively dry climate, and dangerous without water. The thermometer gets to 100° in the shade in April, and even to 130° in July and August.

We entered the desert March 26, 1884, over a sandy, boulder-strewn road, over which it was impossible to drive faster than a walk; and stopped at Agua Caliente, a warm spring a few miles south of the railroad. Half a dozen families of Indians cultivate a few acres of land in the vicinity of the spring, making a green place very grateful to the eye after passing over the cactus-covered desert.

An hour's walk among the little Indian fields revealed several species of common birds, some of which species had not as yet this season made an appearance on the opposite side of the mountains. The most interesting species found near this spring was *Calypte costae*, and in the three following days they proved quite common all over the plain and in the foothills of the adjacent mountains. I believe the species is resident in the foothills, and it undoubtedly breeds in the cañons. In the afternoon I found an old nest of *Auriparus flaviceps*, the next day taking a bird of this species. I think this is their extreme western limit.

On the morning of the 27th our party started for a visit to a large palm grove, in a cañon six miles south of Agua Caliente. I went on ahead, and among some large larrea bushes, a mile or

so from the spring, I heard a bird singing in a low desultory way, that reminded me much of the song of *Harporhynchus lecontei* as I had heard it once in Arizona. On going towards it I saw the singer perched on a dry stem. On my attempting to approach it, it slid off to the ground and struck out on a run, carrying its tail elevated at an angle of about  $45^{\circ}$ , a more common characteristic of *lecontei* than of any other species of *Harporhynchus* that I am acquainted with. I followed it some distance, but it escaped without my getting a shot, and I failed to find it again, although I searched for half an hour.

Before reaching the palm cañon I shot a male *Lophortyx gambeli*, and saw others. The neighboring foothills furnish *L. californicus*, and *Oreortyx picta plumifera* occurs a few miles further up the mountains.

The grove of palms was tenanted mainly by *Carpodacus frontalis*. Among the masses of dead palm leaves, clustered below the living ones, were many Oriole nests. I climbed several trunks to inspect the nests, finding that they were composed exclusively of the strong hemp-like palm fibres, making a beautiful warm nest. All seen, except one, were attached to the under sides of the masses of dead leaves, among the wind-frayed filaments composing the ends of the old leaves. The exception was one apparently sewed on the under side of a large green leaf. I much wanted to get it, as it was a very pretty nest, but it was impossible to climb past the mass of old leaves which surrounded the trunk some thirty feet from the ground, and was eight or ten feet in diameter and pressed almost solid by the storms of years. I fired several shots at the leaf stem, trying to cut it off, but the tough fibres were too much for my small shot. Nearly all were the shallow, cup-like nests of *Icturus cucullatus*, but one was larger and wider than this species is likely to make, and probably belonged to *I. parisorum*. None were the more purse-like nests of *I. bullocki*. Some nests taken were filled with sound seeds of the palm, evidently placed there by a small species of mouse, of which I saw one. No Orioles were seen in the cañon, but the following day I saw several *I. bullocki* in the cottonwoods around Agua Caliente.

In going back to camp I followed down the stream flowing from the palm cañon. A mile or two below where it sank into the sand I saw another Leconte's Thrasher in a grease-wood

bush. I stopped to change cartridges and take off my hat and game bag preparatory to creeping up on it. While doing so another, probably its mate, came in sight in the bush, fluttering around with the one first seen. They were only about a hundred yards distant, but when I got within range they were not in sight, and I could find nothing more of them. They had vanished.

Pursuing my way toward camp I saw a Cactus Wren fly from her nest, which was found to contain four fresh eggs. As usual it was in a cholla cactus, and in the centre of the cactus was an old nest which I was too ill-humored to examine as closely as I should, but I noticed its resemblance to the nest of *Harporhynchus redivivus*, and believe it to have been a nest of *H. lecontei*.

A little further on I heard a low song, and standing still and looking about me I saw *H. lecontei* number four sitting on a low bush not far away. He observed me about the same time, and went off to another low bush. As he flew along I dropped among the weeds, meaning to do my best to get him. I crept along among weeds that were not large enough to hide me, but could get no better cover. I soon saw that he was watching me, and concluded that my game was up, but worked along, flattened as close to the ground as I could get, for several yards, when I came to a wash a few feet wide and a foot or so deep. I meant to try to reach and cross it, and fire from the opposite side, though it was long range. He watched me closely until I got down in the wash, where I swung my gun around and slowly raised it to fire, when I saw that he had absconded. I didn't swear, oh, no! You wouldn't either under such circumstances, would you? The 'confounded fool' had watched me as long as he could see me, and when I hid in the wash he evidently thought it was time for him to go. Perhaps he was not such a fool after all.

The morning of the 28th I left the camp, determined to get a *lecontei* if there was any virtue in perseverance added to my growing experience with this wary species. I found them foemen worthy of my steel, or lead rather. On reaching the place where I saw the first one, I saw him slipping through the brush, he having seen me first. He was again too much for me, as I was able to keep him in sight for but a few yards. A mile or so farther on I heard a call-note new to me, and carefully working toward the sound I saw two more, one of which saw me about the same

time and went. The call-note still sounded from a little distance to one side, and I concluded that it came from a third bird of this species. The other bird in sight did not appear alarmed, and perhaps had not seen me. I worked a little closer, when it passed leisurely through to the opposite side of the bush. I began to get a little puzzled by its unsuspecting actions, but commenced imitating the call-note, when I was much pleased to hear it reply. I succeeded in calling it out in sight, where I shot it. On picking it up its actions were explained. It was a bird of the year, and when I skinned it a few hours later I saw that it could not have been out of the nest many days.

The call-note is something like *hué-e*, whistled through the teeth. It is low and musical. *H. bendirei* has a somewhat similar call-note, though much louder and sharper. My shot probably alarmed the one I heard, as I could find nothing of it, nor of the other one I saw.

Half an hour later I saw another *H. lecontei* running over the sand, it having seen me first. A sharp run and some dodging among the bush brought me near it, with its suspicions lulled. Profiting by my former experience I began calling it. Presently it answered, and after a little careful calling I got it to sing in a low tone, occasionally stopping to utter its call-note. After a little it gained more confidence and came out in full view, but some movement of mine alarmed it, and it dove into the bush like a flash and was off without my getting a shot. I followed it some time, and got a long range shot but missed it.

I turned toward camp, and as I passed along it occurred to me that as the one I first saw had been in the same place again I might be able to find it there once more. As I had now learned the locality pretty well, I worked up very carefully and succeeded in finding him in the old place without his seeing me. I took no chances, but immediately fired and killed him, finding him to be a fine adult.

I came out again in the afternoon, seeing three, perhaps some of those seen before, but got none.

The next morning we started for home. Some two or three miles from Agua Caliente I saw a bulky nest in a cholla cactus by the side of the road. It struck me as appearing like a Thrasher's nest, and I got out to examine it. It contained three eggs, which I at once saw were new to me. They were evidently those of some *Harporhynchus*, but certainly not *redivivus*.

As the nest had evidently been deserted some time I knew of no way of *positively* identifying them, but I believe them to be *lecontei*, especially as they tally well with Mr. Holterhoff's description of the nest and eggs of *H. lecontei*, taken by him at Flowing Well, farther east on this same desert. The nest was built among the branches of the cholla, nearly in the centre of its mass. From its situation it took an oblong shape. It measured  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches inside in diameter by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in depth. Outside it was about  $8 \times 12$  inches. The eggs were bedded in fine sand that had been blown in by the fierce desert winds, and over them lay several twigs similar to those of the outer part of the nest, and were probably once a part of it. The nest may have been abandoned some weeks, as the contents of the eggs were somewhat decomposed but not dried. One contained an embryo of considerable size.

I have given my experience with the Leconte's Thrashers with much detail; perhaps too much; but I desired to give as good an idea as I could of the little known habits of this rare bird. It is probable that in this locality the species is at least as abundant as in any other the species frequents.

The species must have a very long breeding season, as the finding of a young bird already out of the nest in March, added to the date of Mr. Holterhoff's set, which was in July, if my memory serves me right, makes at least five months' range of nesting. Coupling the long breeding season with the rarity and wariness of the birds, makes the chances for finding eggs of this species exceedingly small; so few collectors are likely to ever include eggs of *Harporhynchus lecontei* in their collections.

My note book contains a list of about fifty species noted on this desert during the four days mentioned. The migration was at least a week farther advanced than on the coast side of mountains.

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## ANALECTA ORNITHOLOGICA.

### *Third Series.*

BY LEONHARD STEJNEGER.

#### XI. NOTES ON ARCTIC *Lari*.

MR. E. W. NELSON, in his 'Birds of Bering Sea,' p. 106, advances the opinion that *Rissa brevirostris* "undoubtedly occurs about the shores of Okhotsk Sea." I have been unable to find