

Odd Nesting Site of Western Flycatcher.—While visiting Mr. James Ortega at Yountville, Napa County, Calif. on June 19, 1927, he invited my attention to a nest of the Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis difficilis*) built between the antlers of a pair of deer horns which hung on the wall close to the ceiling of the room in which he kept his specimens. He told me that the flycatchers had built the nest there, coming in through the window which was open at the top for a foot or so. The birds had deserted the nest about three days previous and Ortega allowed me to take the four slightly incubated eggs together with the nest.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California*.

A Lower California Record of the Northern Violet-Green Swallow.—During the course of a recent visit to the Gulf of California with Mr. J. R. Pemberton, several mainland points were visited in addition to the many islands, the investigation of whose natural history constituted the main object of the cruise. On January 20, 1932, the 'Petrel' was at anchor at the extreme south end of Concepcion Bay on the Gulf coast of Lower California, a locality where several mangrove-bordered lagoons penetrated for short distances into a forest of giant cactus. Over the lagoons and adjacent desert were milling flocks of Violet-green Swallows in which were birds obviously of two distinct sizes. I collected one specimen of each more as a matter of routine than with any thought that the presence of the larger race was noteworthy, but on consulting Grinnell's recent Lower California 'Summation' I find that the presence of *Tachycineta thalassina lepida* in Lower California, in winter, rests on the rather meager basis of a specimen taken at La Paz in February and a sight record made in February in the Delta of the Colorado River. Therefore it may be advisable to place on record the present instance. As to the relative abundance of the larger *lepida* and the smaller, resident race *brachyptera* which were present at Concepcion Bay on the above date, it was my belief at the time that they were in approximately equal numbers. Certainly both were to be called abundant.

It is almost certain that the scarcity of more northerly winter records of the Northern Violet-green Swallow simply reflects lack of observation at that season. This race is probably fairly common and of regular occurrence in winter north as far as the Delta where Rhoads noted it in February, 1905, and Wright (Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist., 6, no. 19, 1931, 267) in February, 1929, and even into the Imperial Valley of California where I personally met with numbers in the winter of 1910-11.—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California*.

The Song of the Red-breasted Nuthatch.—As the true song of the Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) seems not to be generally known and never to have been fully described in the books, it seems worth while to put on record in 'The Auk' as adequate a description as I can give of the song as I have heard it this spring of 1932. I heard the song many

times between March 27 and May 14 of this year from a bird near my house in West Roxbury, as well as on two occasions from two other birds in other places in eastern Massachusetts. The song when I first heard it (March 27) was so strongly suggestive of that of the White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis carolinensis*), yet so different in tone, that though I could not at the time follow up the bird to identify it, I had little doubt that it was a Red-breasted Nuthatch. On April 6 I heard the song again and was then able to connect it definitely with *Sitta canadensis*, for I saw the bird in the act of singing. After that and up to the time when the bird left us, presumably for his breeding-haunts farther north, I heard the song frequently, and I never had any difficulty in distinguishing it from that of its white-breasted cousin, which I also heard nearby not infrequently. The song resembles the familiar *wa-wa-wa-wa*, etc., or *what-what-what-what*, etc., of the other species, but is more rapid and higher-pitched and possesses a reedy quality unlike the smooth, liquid tone of the other. The strange thing about it is that it should be so rare, or at least so little known. I have been pretty familiar with the species for many years, not only on migration and in the winter in eastern Massachusetts, but also on its breeding-grounds in northern New England and elsewhere in the breeding-season, but I had never before heard the song, nor have any of the ornithological friends whom I have consulted, including the members present at two meetings of the Nuttall Ornithological Club. I have as yet found in the literature but three descriptions of vocal utterances of the Red-breasted Nuthatch that approximate the one I have described, and not one of the three seems to correspond with it exactly. Dr. Walter Faxon in 'On the Summer Birds of Berkshire County, Massachusetts' (Auk, 1889, p. 105) says: "Like its White-bellied cousin this bird at times repeats its nasal *hank* for a protracted period and with rapidity, suggesting to my ears the call of a pygmy Flicker. This seems to be its song proper." This may be the song I have heard, but to my ears the note repeated is not at all the familiar 'nasal *hank*' of the call-note but a much softer note that is not particularly nasal. Dr. Charles W. Townsend in 'Supplement to the Birds of Essex County' (Memoirs of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, No. V, p. 173, 174) says: "The courtship song may often be heard in the early spring. It consists of a rapid repetition of its short tin-trumpet calls. Sometimes the song is given from a perch and the wings are slightly open. In a March snow-storm at Ipswich I heard this given at the rate of one hundred notes a minute. The bird was apparently circling above me out of sight in the falling snow. At last I saw him descend and alight in a maple tree where he continued to sing for about half a minute longer." This performance, as described by Dr. Townsend, certainly looks like a "courtship song," but it is not the song I have been hearing this year. That is shorter and much more rapid, and the individual notes are not 'tin-trumpet calls.' Mr. Edward Howe Forbush, in 'Birds of Massachusetts,' Vol. III, page 361, gives under the head of 'Voice' for this species, "Song, a fine, sweet trill of seven or eight syllables

uttered while on the wing," citing Miss J. O. Crowell (a correspondent) as authority. This may be a variant of the song I have described, but it is much shorter, and I never heard the song delivered on the wing. So much for the three approximations I have referred to. Most authors appear to take it for granted that the bird is songless. I myself had previously supposed that a succession of call-notes constituted the only song of the species. That keen observer and careful recorder of bird-song, Mr. Aretas A. Saunders, had the same impression when he wrote in 'The Summer Birds of the Northern Adirondack Mountains' (Roosevelt Wild Life Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 3, page 374), "Occasionally it produces three or four prolonged notes in succession, 'ya-a-a-a-a, ya-a-a-a-a, ya-a-a-a,' which I believe represents the song of the species, for at such times the bird perches with head up in a song pose." It seems to me that if we call the *hah-hah-hah-hah-hah* (Chapman's rendering) of the White-breasted Nuthatch the regular song of that species—and it is certainly used as a song—we must consider the corresponding effort of the Red-breasted Nuthatch *its* regular song, in spite of its apparent rarity, though that does not preclude the possibility of a succession of ordinary call-notes being used for song purposes on occasion. The whole matter, however, seems to be somewhat mysterious. If, as appears, the Red-breasted Nuthatch has a perfectly good song, completely differentiated from the call-notes, why does he, as a rule, make so little use of it?—FRANCIS H. ALLEN, *West Roxbury, Mass.*

Nesting of Brown-headed Nuthatch at Amelia, Va.—The nesting of a pair of Brown-headed Nuthatches (*Sitta pusilla pusilla*) near Amelia, Virginia, forty miles west of Richmond on latitude 37° 20', and at an altitude of 280 feet, would seem to be of sufficient interest to warrant publication, as it appears to be considerably out of the usual nesting range of that Lower Austral species.

The nest was in a hole in an old cedar fence post that stands on the bank of a small stream, with pine woods on the south and an open pasture on the north. In late March the birds, the first ones observed in this country, were seen going to this hole, and thereafter I watched them as closely as limited time would permit.

On April 14, the faint chirping of the young birds was heard for the first time.

The parents were seen to feed the young on April 18, 24, 25, and 26 and on the last occasion the latter seemed to be fully grown and put their heads out of the hole to be fed. They had left the nest by April 30, after which I saw nothing of parents or young.—JOHN B. LEWIS, *Amelia, Va.*

Palmer's Thrasher, an Addition to the Florida List.—I record herewith the taking of an adult male Palmer's Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre palmeri*) near Pensacola, Fla., on June 11, 1932. As far as is at present ascertainable, this form has never before been recorded east of Arizona, though a closely related race, the Brownsville Thrasher (*T. c. oberholseri*), ranges regularly to southeastern Texas.