

### Observations on the Nesting of *Parus rufescens* in Washington.

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[Read before the Northern Division of the Cooper Orn. Club, Sept. 2, 1899.]

THE geographical distribution of the Chestnut-backed Chickadee as given by Davie is "Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Southern Alaska." This is very true, but the center of abundance is in Washington State, where I observed this chickadee's habits, for the most part on Cape Disappointment. This cape is at the mouth of the Columbia River and extends about one mile into the ocean. It is very hilly and is covered for the most part by thick fir forests and the surface is also overgrown with a luxuriant growth of underbrush which is almost impenetrable. This seems to be the favorite country for this chickadee.

During my stay on the Cape I found the chickadees to be very common the year round, but especially so during the rainy winters, when large flocks of them could be seen scrambling about on the branches of the dripping firs in search of insects. They were often accompanied by flocks of the Oregon Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus occidentalis*) with whom they seemed to be on very good terms. I have also seen flocks of the Golden-crowned Kinglet in the same tree with the Chestnut-backed Chickadees, but cannot say that they mingle as freely as with the Oregon Chickadees.

*Parus rufescens* also seemed to prefer the more open woods along roads and trails to the dark recesses of the fir forests, and their peculiar lisping notes sound quite loud when heard in such places in the stillness of a drizzling day. Their notes are something like *the-the-the-te-te* pronounced with the tip of the tongue against the teeth. They generally keep this lisping up while feeding and I think very likely that it is a call note, because I have noticed that sometimes a single bird will fly into a tree and when it utters these notes the whole flock follows singly—one bird flying to the tree at a time. I have seen large flocks travel the whole length of about thirty fir trees in this manner.

During the summer of '98 I hunted diligently for their nests and was rewarded by finding one on May 20. On that day while hunting along the sides of a hilly canon I saw a small bird flying high over my head and, following it with my eye, saw it cross to the other side and enter, or, as I saw it, fly against a small black spot on a large dead stub. Upon further examination this spot proved to be a small hollow in the tree, which was five feet in diameter and twenty-five feet high. After watching awhile the bird came out and I was delighted to see that it was a Chestnut-backed Chickadee. She did not seem to mind my presence and after a few minutes re-entered the hole. This she did five or six times during the next half hour and I was at a loss to know whether she was building a nest or feeding her young, but as I could see nothing in her bill I determined to dig the nest out.

This was no easy matter because of the size of the stub, but with the help of my two brothers I was finally hoisted up to the opening which was twenty-one feet from the ground and one inch in diameter. When I reached the height of the cavity both parents showed a good deal of anxiety and were very nervous—hopping from branch to branch in near-by trees and keeping up their lisping *te-te-te*. The hollow extended directly downward and a partition of wood about three-quarters of an inch thick separated it from the outer air. This had to be broken through very carefully, since, if the cavity contained eggs, any chips falling in would break them. The nest was finally reached, however, six inches below the opening and contained seven perfectly fresh eggs which were white, minutely spotted with reddish specks, with the exception of one egg, which was pure white. They showed the following measurements: .62x.45, .61x.41–.62x.45–.60x.41–.59x.42–.61x.42 and .60x.42 inches.

The mass of hair, etc., in the hollow

had the form of a nest although I had to put it in a box to prevent it from falling to pieces. It is composed mostly of feathers and hair with a little gray moss and I also noticed a number of Steller's Jay's feathers in it. It measures four and a half inches across and about one inch deep and resembles nothing so much as a handful of floor-sweepings, especially the kind we sweep from the floors of our skinning rooms. Besides this nest I found two others. In one case I broke into the hollow but no eggs were to be seen, so the parents deserted on account of the exposure of their home. This hollow was about 20 feet from the ground. The third nest contained young and was 40 feet up.



### Black Oystercatcher on Anacapa Islands.

ON June 4, 1899, we dropped anchor near the southern end of Anacapa Island and prepared to go ashore and collect, although it was already late in the day. While we were getting ready, a shrill whistle was heard, followed by a loud clattering noise, and as we looked up, two large, dark-colored birds flew past and lit on a rock near by, still keeping up their noisy clamor. Their bright red bills and shrill notes easily established their identity as Black Oystercatchers, though we had hardly expected to see any on the islands. We got into the skiff and started to row around the island in search of a landing place, from which we could reach the top of the island, no easy job anywhere, and appearing from the boat almost impossible. We had not gone very far when two Oystercatchers were seen on some rocks. They allowed us to come within shooting range and I dropped one with each barrel, one falling dead on the rocks, while the other, only wounded, fluttered into the water.

Although there was a strong current and a heavy swell running, the wounded bird swam easily and swiftly to another clump of rocks fifty or sixty feet away, upon which it clambered and then fell exhausted. It was a matter of no little difficulty to retrieve either of the birds, and without a strong, exper-

enced boatman it would have been impossible to have brought the boat close enough to the rocks for a person to jump out and in, without having the boat dashed to pieces. Both birds were retrieved without accident, however, and we went on in our search for a landing. Before long we saw another Oystercatcher in a similar place to the others, which was also secured. This bird was so unsuspecting that we were within thirty feet of it before we saw it, and were obliged to row further away before it could be shot.

These were all that we saw for the day, but on June 6, when we rowed along the other two islands of the group, six or eight of the birds were seen; all, however, in places where it would have been unsafe to have taken the skiff. All the birds were in pairs, except one that I shot, but on dissecting the three that I secured (a male and two females) it was evident that they were not breeding. All the birds that were seen were very tame and unsuspecting and paid very little attention to us. The crops of the three birds secured were filled with small mussels and they were all extremely fat.

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### Additional Notes on the Birds of Santa Cruz Island, Cal.

WITH much interest I read Mr. Jos. Mailliard's article on the birds of Santa Cruz Island in the May-June number of the BULLETIN, and finding his experience differed from mine in some particulars, I submit a few notes taken principally on the west end of the island in May, 1897. On June 5, 1895, I visited Scorpion Harbor for a few hours and landed on the square-looking rock mentioned by Mr. Mailliard. In addition to the breeding gulls and cormorants (Farallone and Baird's), there were many burrows of Cassin's Auklet which contained heavily incubated eggs or young birds. On the west end of the island there is an open, rolling stretch of land running back from the cliffs along shore. On this mesa the Horned Larks were abundant. While they were all in pairs and nesting, the nests were found