

Odd Nesting Sites of Samuel's Song Sparrow. On the 29th of April, 1898, I found a nest of this species built in the side of a large bunch of driftwood and leaves, lodged in the forks of a willow tree, twelve feet above the ground, on the banks of a stream. The eggs, three in number, were laid in a depression, which was slightly lined with straw and hair, in the side of the mass of driftwood, and were far advanced in incubation. This nest was discovered by seeing the bird leave. Just a year later, upon the 29th of April, 1899, I secured a set of four fresh eggs from a nest which was built in an old nest of the Black-headed Grosbeak from which a set of eggs was taken in 1898. The nest was in a fork near the top of a small willow tree, ten feet from the ground, in a thick growth of small willows near a stream. It was placed in a Grosbeak's nest, and was compactly built of straw, leaves and grasses, lined with fine grass and horsehair. When we consider that this sparrow usually nests in blackberry thickets and thick underbrush three or four feet above the ground, it will be readily seen that the above recorded nests were in rather unusual places.

Queer Antics of a Western Redtail. While cultivating in my orchard one warm morning last spring, I was watching a Western Red-tailed Hawk that was passing over. It was flying high, in a north-easterly direction, and flying fast, as if returning to its nest, when suddenly it tumbled over and over in the manner of a tumbler pigeon, directly downward for a distance of about forty feet, then spread its wings and resumed flight. I thought for an instant that some one had shot it, but hearing no report and seeing the hawk continue its journey, I concluded that the bird had, in all probability, been attacked by some small bird or insect and had adapted this manner of eluding it. WM. L. ATKINSON, Santa Clara, Cal.

Discoloration of Plumage in Certain Birds. It may be worth while to notice the fact that many birds taken near cities have the plumage greatly discolored. Whether this is due to smoke, ashes, coal dust, or charcoal of burnt stubs I am unable to say. From their appearance it might be any of these agencies. About Denver it may be due to the smelter smoke. As to a certain *Otocoris*, sent to Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., he said: "and 1077 [*arenicola*] is of course soiled with coal dust or some such thing, perhaps from feeding on ash heaps." Near Denver the birds which show the greatest amount of dirt on their plumage are the house finches. Every feather is greatly darkened by the extraneous substance and the red areas are so toned down as to be inconspicuous. In regard to this species I believe Mr. Ridgway has suggested that the birds feed in burnt timber. In the vicinity of Denver, at least, it is rather doubtful if this be the case.

In the same locality *Anthus*, *Lanius*, *Junco* and *Ammodramus* have also been taken with soiled plumages. Coming now to California, we find a smoky plumage in *Ammodramus*, *Thryomanes*, *Anthus* and *Zonotrichia*, all taken in the vicinity of San Francisco. Mr. Slevin, to whom I spoke of the matter, said that *Colaptes* hung around the roofs of buildings in Alameda and probably got dirty from sliding on the shingles, a theory which seems quite probable. In his collection he showed me specimens of *Colaptes*, *Accipiter* and *Regulus*, from Alameda, and a *Dryobates* from Aiken, S. C., all very much soiled.

RICHARD C. MCGREGOR, Palo Alto, Cal.

Brewer's Blackbird Nesting in Cavities. On April 21, 1895, while at Sargents, Cal., a peculiar nesting site of Brewer's Blackbird was noted. A colony of these birds were inhabiting a small live oak grove on a hill. I was surprised to find one nest built in a small cavity on the under side of a rotten oak limb, about ten feet from the ground. The nest was composed largely of Spanish moss and lined with horse hair. It contained two fresh eggs. The cavity was one such as is generally selected by a Sparrow Hawk in which to build. C. BARLOW, Santa Clara, Cal.

Sierran Crossbill in El Dorado Co., Cal. At Fyffe, El Dorado Co., on June 8, 1899, Mr. Carriger and I noted a bird on the low limbs of a pine near the house, which at first glance we took to be a male Cassin's Finch. Upon shooting it, the specimen resolved itself into a Sierran Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra bendirei*, ♂) in rich

plumage. The testes were undeveloped and the bird showed no signs of breeding. This was at an altitude of 3,700 feet, in the forests of yellow pine. For two days after this I saw at different times, flocks of crossbills in the tops of the pines and firs, moving along rapidly and doubtless feeding upon the buds of these trees, but secured no other specimens. They were probably moving up into the high Sierras, although up to this time their migration must have been strictly a northern one, as none were seen or reported west of Fyffe, showing it was then entirely too late for them to be migrating up from the valleys.

C. BARLOW, Santa Clara, Cal.

Occurrence of the American Scaup Duck in Los Angeles Co., Cal. In a bunch of ducks sent me by ex-Governor Markham and shot by him at Bixby, Cal., Dec. 20, 1899, I find a male American Scaup Duck (*Aythya marila nearctica*). This is a new record for Los Angeles Co., and an addition to Mr. Grinnell's list.

F. S. DAGGETT, Pasadena, Cal.

Early Nesting of the Pasadena Thrasher. On the 15th of last month, (December '99,) Dr. Fenyes and myself, while hunting over a brush-covered wash near Azusa, were surprised to find a nest of this species (*Harporhynchus redivivus pasadenensis*). It was in no ways peculiar, except as to the date, being built two and one-half feet above the ground in a black-sage bush. One of the birds was sitting closely and the other singing from its perch at the top of a bush not far off. The nest contained three eggs in which incubation was well begun. The thrashers are always in full song soon after their single annual moult which occurs in August, but they do not ordinarily breed before March and April, though we have one county record for January 27.*

JOSEPH GRINNELL, Pasadena, Cal.

An Unusually High Nest of Audubon's Hermit Thrush. Mr. Belding's note in the March-April BULLETIN for 1899, on the nesting of the Audubon's Hermit Thrush (*Turdus aonalaschka auduboni*) in the Sierra Nevadas, brings to mind the only set of eggs of this bird I have seen. We were near the summit of the Sierras on the 6th of June, 1896, and while looking around in a grove of trees, I noticed a nest well out on a pine limb, thirty feet from the ground. On climbing the tree, the bird was seen upon the nest and flew off when closely approached. The nest is strongly built of twigs and bright yellow moss (*Evernia vulpina*), with a layer of fine dry leaves, within which is a heavy lining of fine grass stems. The nest contained four fresh eggs. The height from the ground seems unusual as compared with other records, but it was perhaps to get the benefit of the morning sun, as patches of snow lay all around and the nights were quite chilly. Several birds were heard or seen between 7,000 and 8,000 feet in El Dorado Co., and several heard singing in the Merced grove of Big Trees a couple of weeks later.

R. H. BECK, Berryessa, Cal., Dec. 20, 1899.

Notes from Haywards, Cal. In some notes published in the *Nidologist*, Mr. D. A. Cohen of Alameda mentions that the Hermit Warbler (*D. occidentalis*) was reported seen in 1885 at Berkeley. My records extend back to March 4, 1880, when two males were shot in live oaks on the north hillside at Haywards. I find among my records the taking of a Black-throated Gray Warbler (*D. nigrescens*) on Oct. 14, 1882, and another seen on May 11, 1883. I also have a male Myrtle Warbler (*D. coronata*) taken April 13, 1881, the only specimen ever noted here.

I shot a male and noted two other Red-breasted Nuthatches on Oct. 14, 1882, the only time I observed them. A California Creeper (*C. familiaris occidentalis*) was observed in the live oaks on Feb. 2, 1890, being rather out of its range as it is restricted to the redwood and pine regions. On Dec. 8, 1885, a cold, wet, windy day, I noticed several Californian Chickadees (*Parus rufescens neglectus*) feeding among the cypress trees, which is the only time they were seen. They were no doubt common years ago, before the disappearance of the redwoods from the hillsides and canons. A female was taken at Dry Creek Aug. 1, 1896, and the species may breed on this side of the bay shore.

W. OTTO EMERSON, Haywards, Cal.

*Birds of the Pacific Slope of Los Angeles county.