

In some respects the Oregon song sparrow is a remarkable form. It is darker than the races north and south of its range, and duplicates in coloring the sooty song sparrow of the Sitkan District. The races along the coast seem thus to alternate light and dark. But while *phæa* is nearly identical with *rufina* in color, it is conspicuously smaller, and the ranges of the two are separated by several hundred miles.

The present form occupies a strip along the coast from the northern limit of the redwoods (?) or at least from Rogue River north to Yaquina. The specimens from Crescent City are probably migrants as the breeding birds seem nearer *cleonensis* (tho not precisely typical). The area of intergradation between *cleonensis* and *phæa* is probably small, extending perhaps from Crescent City to Chetco R. (northern limit of *Sequoia sempervirens*). Lack of specimens prevents the exact determination of the limits of *phæa* at the north.

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Winter Observations on the Colorado Desert.

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FROM Oct. 27 to Nov. 16, 1901, I spent at the American Girl Gold Mining Co.'s camp, located in the Cargo Murchacho Mts on the Colorado Desert, five and one-half miles northeast of Ogilby, Cal., and some sixteen miles west of Yuma, on the Colorado River. The westward trend of the river below Yuma, however, brings the stream within eleven miles of camp to the southeast.

From a bird standpoint, or any other, for that matter, it is a most uninviting spot. The camp is located in a dry gulch formed by ridges of barren rock north and south of it. At one time the wash at the bottom of the gulch supported a few stunted palo verde, iron wood and mesquite trees, but they have long since been cut for fuel. The only water obtained is from a pipe line reaching the Colorado River eleven miles away. The pipes are carefully watched for leakages so the birds have scant supply from that source, but a floating board in the reservoir at the end of the pipe line furnishes a possible watering place. I often saw them at the tub in the horse corral and about the seepage at the end of the kitchen drain. Another place, and a most deadly trap it proved judging from the

dead birds floating on its surface, was the cyanide tanks, two in number, containing a strong solution of cyanide of potassium. Birds that essayed to quench their thirst at this fount toppled over dead in an instant.

When I arrived in camp I found several American pipits, three intermediate sparrows (*Z. l. gambeli*) and another variety of sparrow too soaked by solution for identification, besides many that rested on the bottom of the tank. The most common and the only resident bird, the rock wren, seemed to avoid this danger entirely, it being attractive only to thirsty migrants. That there is a migration across the desert is evident from the fact that such birds, as mentioned above, are found so far from their natural environment. A small horse and a larger mule corral, with its scattered hay, offers some attraction for birds in the way of seeds and grain, but only once did I see them take advantage of it, when three juncos were seen on the ground near the baled hay at daylight one morning.

There were about a dozen rock wrens (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) about camp. They were very tame in the vicinity of building, wood and lumber piles, but very wary and secretive among the

rocks beyond the limits of the camp. On a previous trip in July, when the thermometer registered 120 degrees in the shade and the rocks were so heated that one could not hold the bare hand upon them, these birds worked over them as unconcernedly as in winter. On October 28 I saw a western black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans semiatra*) in a side canyon close to camp.

On the 29th several juncos (*Junco hyemalis thurberi*) flew from the rear of the store when I approached, where they had been inspecting some sweepings and went up the same side canyon. This same side canyon, by the way, was the only place where I succeeded in getting specimens of this bird. They would keep along the bottom of this wash beyond reach, but by concealing myself and firing one barrel of the gun the echoes would so confuse the birds that one was sure to fly within range of the other barrel. The juncos were in camp every day of my stay but I never saw more than six at one time.

October 30 I saw two intermediate sparrows, (*Z. l. gambeli*) at the outlet of kitchen drain. They would dodge under a flat-growing weed a few feet away and peer out. If I made no motion, one of them a young bird of the year with brown stripes on the crown, would come out and hop about the moist spot, but the old bird with white stripes was always shy, in fact I only saw it for one day, although the other remained ten days. The storekeeper called my attention to a wren that had come in the open door and caged itself among the rafters. It had no white superciliary stripe, so I took it to be the Parkman wren.

Nov. 1, three ravens (*Corvus corax sinuatus*) flew along just under the top of the ridge south of camp. Once after that I saw two others flying along the same route, and again on Nov. 11 when they changed their course and flew down the side canyon, over the mule corral and the Mexican quarter and back again, resuming their westward

flight along the ridge. Nov. 2, a Say phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) remained about camp all day and again on the 13th I saw it on the slope of the southern ridge. A small hawk, about twice the size of our desert sparrow hawk circled over camp twice and then departed towards the river through the reservoir gap. On the 13th, a mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) came swiftly up the gulch, alighted at the drain a few moments, and departed as quickly in the direction of the river.

In July I have seen several turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*) sail over camp, coming from the river and going towards the Golden Cross mine, where a horse or mule is sometimes hauled out for them to feast upon, a rather difficult task in this dry region where a carcass is more apt to dry up than to decay. The above includes all the birds seen in the desolate region mentioned, during over three weeks observation.

On Nov. 4 I drove down to the pumping plant situated at the other end of the pipe line, on the California side of the Colorado River, one and one-half miles above the Mexican boundary and some ten miles below Yuma. No birds were seen until among the brush-studded sand dunes which lie between the real desert and the rank growth of the moist river bottom. Here a lot of phainopeplas (*Phainopela nitens*) had congregated on the palo verde and mesquite which grew in the washes.

We arrived at the plant at dusk, and in order not to disturb the domestic arrangements of the engineer, spread our blankets on the sand among the mesquite near the river bank. The next morning, (Nov. 5,) at first streak of dawn I was awakened by a tremendous clucking and chatter, coming from the other side of the clump of mesquite, not ten feet away. It proved to be a flock of forty to fifty gambel partridges (*Lophortyx gambeli*) on their morning foray along the river bank. There was no sleep after that, so I spent a couple

of hours loitering among the mesquite clumps within half a mile of the plant. The old Hanlon ranch with its huge date palms loaded with ripening fruit, is located here. There are also some other fruits in their season. The Mexican in charge complained that the birds damaged his fruit and he constantly made pot shots among them.

I saw half a dozen western gnat-catchers (*Poliophtila cærulea obscura*) gleaning insects which had adhered to the sticky surface of the dates.

It was here that I saw my first Gila woodpecker (*Melanerpes uropygialis*). He flew from these same palms to a stub sticking out of a mistletoe-covered mesquite. The mistletoe was white with berries and he may have been after these, but catching a glimpse of me, scarcely fifty feet away, he gave several decided jerks of his head and then flew back to the palms. About fifteen minutes later he came to the

same spot and I had another good view of him. Other birds noted, and of which I secured specimens, were the verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) cactus wren, (*Heleodytes brunneicapillus*) cowbird, (*Molothrus ater*) house finch, (*Carduelis mexicana frontalis*) sharp-shinned hawk, (*Accipiter velox*) and red shafted flicker; (*Colaptes cafer collaris*). Also noted a flock of seven western bluebirds, (*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*), white rumped shrikes, (*Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*) and rock wrens, the latter about the gravel-covered slopes leading up from the river bottom to the main desert. I was prevented by serious illness from making a more extensive examination of this field, but I am convinced that that part of California which lies next to the Mexican boundary has much in store for ornithologists who may investigate it in the future.

A Few Notes on the Nesting of *Trochilus alexandri*.

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IT would be hard to find an individual displaying no interest at the sight of a member of the family under discussion tonight. Ornithologists and laity alike seem always imbued with enough of the æsthetic to grant these little gems a warm spot in their hearts. Personally, I will say at least, that I have found their acquaintance most fascinating.

I have chosen the black-chinned hummingbird (*T. alexandri*) because of a greater experience with the species and also because I consider it the characteristic form of this locality; certainly it is the most abundant nesting species I have observed here. Although I have met with this hummingbird forty miles inland, nearly all of the nests and eggs in my possession have been collected within two miles of the sea and practically at sea level. The small patches of willows which here and there dot dry, sandy water-courses are

shown perhaps a necessary partiality. However where cotton-woods and sycamores are found, they are not despised. Two cases in which a weed stalk and a wild grapevine were used have even come under my notice. By the side of such willow patches, strips of wild tobacco often run, and it is then that we have found an ideal nesting ground.

Nest building commences during the latter half of April and during May nesting is in full swing. During this month their purpose to perpetuate their kind is deeply seated; in one case the domicile and contents of a pair were taken three consecutive times from the identical position; the fourth nest and eggs were allowed to remain in the possession of the ambitious though unwise little mother. The nest is a dainty cup-shaped affair placed at heights varying from two to twenty feet. It is composed only of plant down and spider webs, with never a lichen or feather to