

would have taken but little abrasion of the tips of these feathers to have rendered this bird indistinguishable from specimens taken during April and May. On Dec. 19 I secured another, almost a counterpart of the one described above, except that the black on the crown was not quite so extensive as in that bird.

Whether these birds acquire the spring plumage through a moult of the entire crown, or whether they merely renew the few feathers which are entirely gray, is a question. As I have taken one or two summer birds showing very faint traces of gray in the black crown, I rather incline to the latter supposition. Possibly those birds which retain more or less of a black cap through the winter, are the old males; the younger ones retaining the plumage of the female until the spring. Possibly, also, for several years they re-assume this plumage each fall, and after each fall moult a few more gray-tipped black feathers remain on the crown. As to the black streak over the eye, I

think that it is acquired at an early age; I have taken quite young birds which show it distinctly.

The time for the spring moult seems to be extremely variable; I have specimens taken at the end of February, with no trace of the black crown, and not yet commencing to moult; while on January 20, 1902 I took one with many pin feathers on the head and the black cap nearly complete. Usually, I think that the change of plumage is not finished before the first week in April. No part of the bird but the crown seems to be affected by the moult, but winter birds have the back tinged with brown, which color disappears by spring. Often the plumage presents rather a worn and abraded appearance by the time the black cap is donned; I have taken specimens which had just barely acquired their black cap, and yet their retrices were so worn that the white markings of the lateral ones were completely obliterated.

An Unusual Set of Eggs of Clarke Nutcracker.

BY H. C. JOHNSON, AMERICAN FORK, UTAH.

I HAVE the great good fortune and honor to record the taking on April 8, this year, of Clarke nutcracker, (*Nucifraga columbiana*) male parent nest and five eggs; also the female parent, nest and three eggs on April 17, by W. Dunsdon on the southwest slope of Box Elder Mountain, Wasatch Range, Utah Co., Utah.

The same collector secured the three nests mentioned in THE CONDOR, May-June 1900, and on the same mountain, Mr. Dunsdon to whom all honor is due is an old and seasoned miner and prospector and above all a courageous mountaineer. For four consecutive years he has made some of the gamiest mountain climbs in March and April, seeking the nests of that elusive *rara avis*, Clarke crow. He will permit no dallying with names, laughs at your

latin and will not stand Clarke nutcracker or Clarke crow; "It is just simply 'camp robber,' lad, for I have known it as such before you were born and that settles it."

In March he tried a "little trip" but could not get up the mountain, but early in April he made another attempt, gaining the altitude where he found his previous nests in 1900. According to former experience gained he watched the birds rather than the trees but could not get around very much on account of the deep snow. Finally he was rewarded by seeing one fly directly to a large balsam tree near by; then he could see the nest. The setting bird immediately left the nest and the newcomer took charge of the incubation. For some two hours he waited, then the mate returned allowing the other to go. In

this way he states they change during each day, just about every two hours. There is no waiting around the nest,—the parents arriving and leaving quickly and directly.

This set he collected April 8, taking the male by hand from the nest and five beautiful eggs rewarded him, incubation about one-fourth. The nest was on east side of tree, opposite the cold northern blasts, about twelve feet from ground and saddled on *two* stout limbs several feet from the bottom of the tree. Five feet of snow was under the tree. The nest was in no ways different from previous ones observed being very warm and adapted to the severe climate of that altitude. The eggs measure 1.33x.92, 1.26x.89, 1.36x.91, 1.34x.91 and

1.33x.94. This large set must be considered extremely unusual, the largest set previously found containing four and the usual nest complement being three.

The second set alluded to was taken April 17 at about 7000 feet altitude in a black balsam tree fifty feet high. The nest was about sixteen from the ground the tree being a very wide-spreading one four feet through at the trunk. The nest was fully ten feet from the body of the tree saddled on a great limb ten inches in diameter. The female was collected by hand from the three eggs, and with the nest carefully wound in string was safely brought down,—but alas for our hopes, incubation was nearly complete.

Notes on the Verdin.

M. FRENCH GILMAN, BANNING, CAL.

THE California range of this bird, *Auriparus flaviceps*, being somewhat restricted, a few observations made on the Colorado desert may prove interesting. In October 1889 I first made acquaintance with the bird. While hunting at Whitewater ranch, at the east end of San Gorgonio Pass, I found a queer nest in a mesquite and as it was a new nest in the fall of the year I thought it might be the roosting place of some new bird. Returning after dark I captured the owner. The following spring I found a nest of young birds and one infertile egg and a year later secured a set of five eggs, all in the same neighborhood. This ranch, lying at the west end of an arm of the desert and at the same time merging into a fertile mountain pass, seems to be the western limit of the range of the verdin.

The bird is shy and retiring in disposition and at first glance might be mistaken for the California bush-tit. But a closer scrutiny will reveal the yellow or greenish-golden tint of the head and the deep chestnut color of the lesser wing coverts. It frequents all mesquite

and screw-bean thickets on this desert. Its range is easily determined by the great number of nests seen. A peculiar feature is the building, by both sexes, of winter nests in which to roost at night. These nests are built in the fall and early winter and a male and female nest are usually found near together, probably mated birds. They seem to have no idea of the conservation of heat or of energy by having a "nest built for two," but go about making two roosting places.

The nests of male and female differ a little, the former being less elaborate, smaller, with not so much lining in it. The female *winter* nest differs but little from the *breeding* nest and I am inclined to believe in some cases is used as such, possibly by experienced or lazy birds. The only material difference between female winter and the breeding nests lies in the shape of the interior and possibly some difference in thickness of lining. The nest is retort-shaped with entrance through a short neck extending from one side downward at angle of 45°. In the breeding nest there is a deep cup or depression