

grasses hanging down from the side it very successfully simulated the overhanging grasses and rootlets of its surroundings.

When discovered, the parent was brooding, but left the nest silently and disappeared, nor was she seen again while I was in the neighborhood. The eggs at this date contained small embryos.

There was no evidence of a former brood having been reared in this nest, nor had I seen any young of the species in the month or more I had been in the canyon.

The following is a description of the nest and eggs kindly supplied by Mr. J. W. Preston of Baxter, Iowa. At the base of the nest is a quantity of disintegrated trash such as bits of bark, pieces of weed stalks and finely broken old grass stems and blades, with some dirt and dust which had evidently been scratched up from the bottom of the cavity. On this slight platform are dead sticks and twigs, from larch and pine, intermixed with much old faded grass, pine needles and leaves of fir, and with some bulbs and rootlets of different grass-like sedges. The materials have been drawn into the burrowed-out cavity in the bank, leaving two-thirds of the material outward from the true nest, which is of fine dry grass stems and blades finely shredded and formed into a neat, well-rounded rather shallow cup. I note a few sprays of the long, black moss so common among the fir trees of the mountains. The structure before me is oblong in outline, being ten inches long by five wide, and three and one-half inches deep. In the inner end is formed the neat, symmetrical nest, cunningly resting in so great an amount of superfluous matter. The inside measurements are one and one-half inches deep by two and nine-tenths across. The structure is of course, somewhat compressed in boxing.

The ground color of the eggs is faint greenish-blue, blotched and marked with pale chestnut and lavender. Some of the spots are large, and a number of irregular markings resembling written characters appear, well scattered over the surface, but heavier about the larger end. Two of the eggs are less heavily marked, the specks and spots being smaller. These eggs appear somewhat elongate. The following are the measurements: .90x.64, .94x.64, .95x.65, and .96x.66; average .93x.64 inches.

Nesting of the Abert Towhee.

BY M. FRENCH GILMAN.

IN PARTS of the Colorado Desert the Abert towhee (*Pipilo aberti*) is quite at home, and in the breeding season is fairly common. During a three or four years acquaintance with the species at Palm Springs, Indio, and Torros, I have made a few observations of nesting habits which may be of interest to Club members.

While more shy and retiring in disposition than the California towhee yet if undisturbed the Abert gains confidence and will make itself at home about the house. Its song or rather chirp, is more musical I think than that of its near relative, and is pitched in a higher key.

During the winter of 1899 I saw two pairs of the birds at Palm Springs and found one old nest. On May 9 of the same year I found a nest in a desert bush about two feet from the ground. The old bird slipped quietly off at my approach and revealed a set of three eggs slightly incubated. They were longer than those of the California towhee and not quite so large around. The nest was deeper cup-shaped and not quite so bulky.

The next season I saw several of the birds but found no nests. In March, 1901, in company with Nathan Hargrave of Banning, I made a trip to Toros and Martinez, thirty and thirty-five miles southeast of Palm Springs, and from fifty to one hundred feet below sea level. Here we saw several pairs and found two incomplete nests, and one containing two fresh eggs. All were in mesquite trees from three to eight feet from the ground. The birds were quite numerous and tame around the home of a Moravian missionary living at Martinez, and amused themselves by pulling up young alfalfa and millet that he was trying to raise. A few days later, March 24, at Palm Springs, I found in a desert shrub a nest with two fresh eggs.

In the winter of 1902 the birds were quite common at Palm Springs, six pairs being noted one day. In fact there were "all kinds of towhees" around that winter. One day, in the immediate neighborhood, half a mile from town, I saw the California towhee (*Pipilo crissalis senicula*), spurred towhee (*P. maculatus megalonyx*), Abert towhee (*P. aberti*), and the green-tailed towhee (*Oreospiza chlorura*).

On April 17, 1902, I found a nest in a desert bush containing two infertile eggs and a young bird. Two days later I took a set of three partly incubated eggs from a nest in a pepper tree. April 25 and 30 I found two nests in orange trees containing respectively three and four eggs each, and May 11 and 22, I found in orange trees two nests with three eggs each. The last two nests found were second sets, the birds moving a few yards from the first nests. Three seems the usual number of eggs in a set, four being found only in the one instance. Some of the birds were rather close sitters, while others slipped from the nest at my first appearance. The male birds exhibited some concern, hopping about in a nearby bush or tree and chirping uneasily.

The composition of the nests varied according to location. Those found in the desert bushes, three nests, were some distance from any house and were composed of coarse bark and a few grass stems and lined with fine bark. The other nests were in an orchard not far from a dwelling house and a barn and their composition differed from the other three. The nest found in the pepper tree was made of cottonwood bark, pieces of paper, grevillia leaves, and strips of gunny-sack and old overalls, and was lined with horse hair and fine bark. The nests in the orange trees were quite similar, varying only in detail. One was lined mostly with an old white-wash brush, pulled apart of course. One had much paper, in large pieces, jute, and cotton twine in the walls; while another displayed a fancy colored tomato can label. All were from five to ten feet from the ground.

Palm Springs seems the western limit of their range though they may occasionally stray as far as Whitewater, ten miles further west, where there are a few mesquite trees. But I have never seen one west of Palm Springs.

The Author of "Birds of North and Middle America."

DURING 1903, THE CONDOR will publish in each issue the portrait of an eastern ornithologist, that the Cooper Club may become better acquainted, as it were, with those *men*, whose *work* is already so well and deservedly known.

We therefore take pleasure in opening the series with the portrait of Mr. Robert Ridgway, whose work, the "Birds of North and Middle America," besides marking a distinct advance in the progress of systematic ornithology, at once places its author in the lead of contemporary systematic ornithologists. We believe we do