

THE CONDOR A MAGAZINE OF WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY.



Volume V

May-June, 1903

Number 3

Two Vireos Caught with a Camera.

BY WILLIAM L. FINLEY.

ILLUSTRATED BY HERMAN T. BOHLMAN.

I N the springtime the needle of our nature turns to the green fields and wooded hills. This is a season of joy and fascination more to the lover of birds, perhaps, than to any one else. Each day heralds the arrival of some old acquaintance, and each year one listens with deeper enthusiasm to the glad love songs of his feathered friends.

Oregon is an ideal place for the naturalist. The great tracts of wooded region extending along the numerous rivers and over the mountains furnish innumerable retreats for the birds. Feathered creatures may seem rather scarce to the casual observer and it may take a little longer to acquire their acquaintance, but once you have discovered their favorite haunts you are never disappointed.

June is the favored month of the birds and flowers in this northern climate. Fields are yellow and white with buttercups and daisies. The syringa is just beginning to blossom on the hillside, the wild currant is drooping with pink clusters of bloom, and black-berry vines are covered with white masses of flowers. Along the sides of every little stream, hurrying down through the canyons, are banks of moss and ferns. Bird voices resound from all directions during this season of song. At the first dawn of the morning's light we are awakened by the rollicking carols of the grosbeak, robin and tanager. The full rich tone of the meadowlark makes every field resound. The cheery twittering of the violet-green swallow is heard continually as he skims by with grace and ease, and, circling overhead pauses on some wire. The ringing notes of the bullock oriole are scattered downward from the top of some poplar or maple. The dreary call of the wood-pewee, the warbling of the vireo, and the sweet chant of the purple finch are heard among

the trees. Later after most of the other birds are quiet for the night, the vesper-hymn of the russet-backed thrush, from far up the hillside, thrills us to the soul and forms a fitting close for the day.

The vireos are cheerful, pleasing little songsters. Two varieties are quite common about Portland, the Cassin, and western warbling. However, one may find three or four nests of the former to every one of the latter. One peculiar difference we have noticed in the nesting of those two birds is that the home of warbling vireo is generally nearer the ground and, of course, is a trifle smaller than that of the Cassin. Three nests found last year were all between four and six feet up, while the Cassin vireo seldom builds less than twelve feet and often as high as twenty feet from the ground.

While out photographing during the second week of May last year we saw a

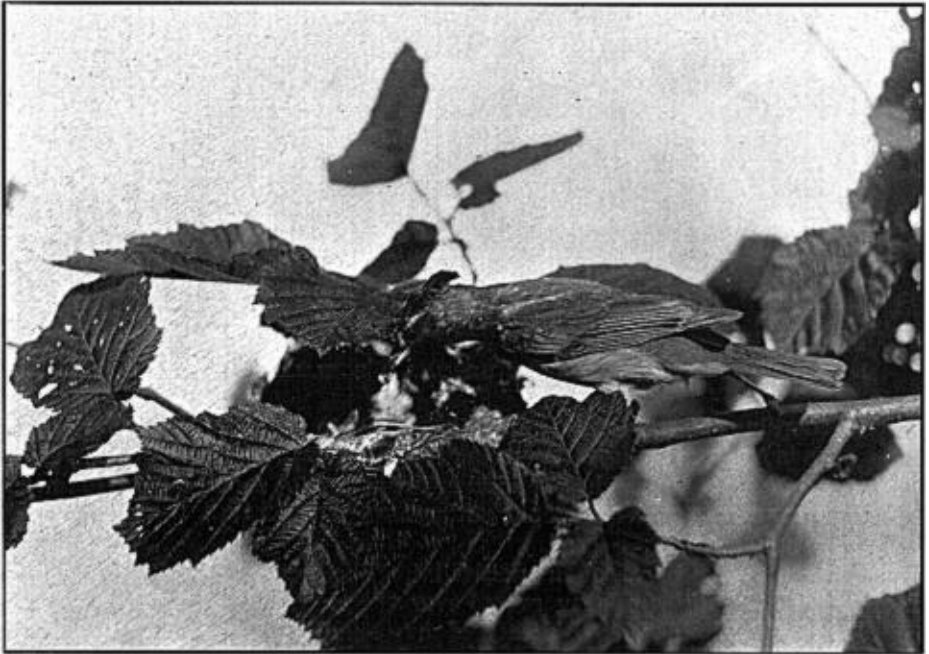


PHOTO BY H. T. BOHLMAN.

WESTERN WARBLING VIREO FEEDING YOUNG.

Cassin vireo tugging at the loose shreds of the bark of a maple tree. We had a pretty good idea for just what a vireo needed bark at that season of the year, and, by judicious watching, we were led down the canyon to where a little basket-like structure was swung gracefully near the top of an alder tree. Along the bank of some little stream in an alder, maple or dog-wood tree is the favorite haunt of this greenlet.

The nest in its natural position was too far from the ground to be photographed, so after waiting till the youngsters were about half grown we lowered the limb, to which the nest was attached, to within five feet of the ground, with apparently no inconvenience or trouble to the parents. A few minutes after the house-moving the parents were busily feeding the young in their new location.

Although rather shy at first the old birds became tamer after we had stayed around near the nest for a time. Their shyness we found was only an indication of their finer natures. They paid no particular attention to the camera, covered with leaves and branches, until they heard the sharp click of the shutter. This they regarded with suspicion and alarm and it was not till after the third day that the parents did not take immediate flight at the snap of the shutter.

The Cassin vireo is readily distinguished from the warbling vireo because it is slightly larger in size and has a clear white ring about the eye and a white loreal streak. The wing has the two white bars, distinguishable in both old and young birds, and light-edged feathers, while the under parts are white, tinged with yellow in contrast to the dull olive-green on the back.

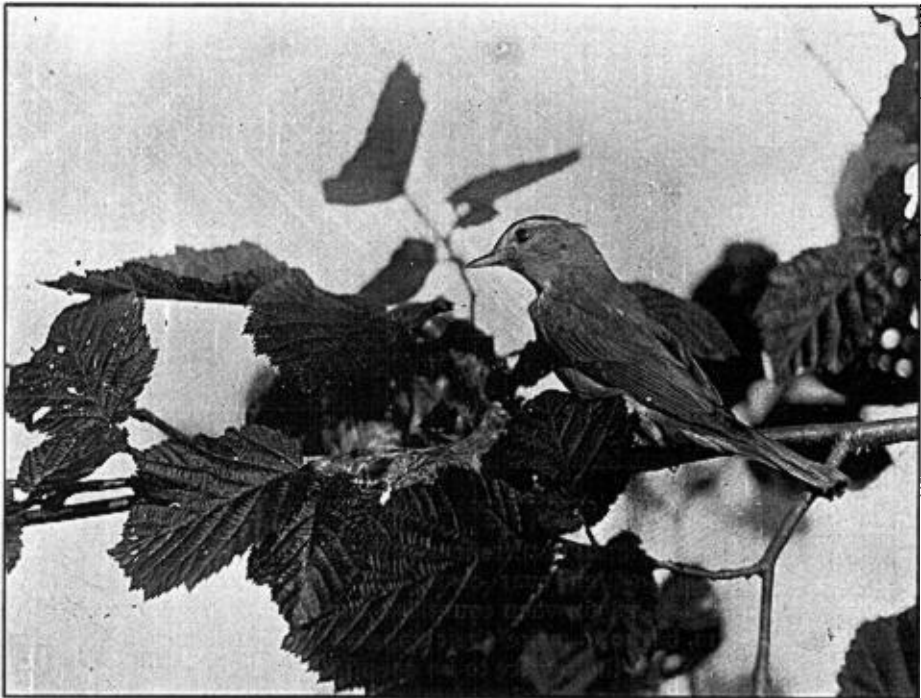


PHOTO BY H. T. BOHLMAN.

WESTERN WARBLING VIREO AT NEST AFTER FEEDING YOUNG.

The western warbling vireo seems to nest a little later than the Cassin. On June 25th of last year, while following up a little mountain stream, we were attracted by the call of one of these birds and soon discovered the cup-shaped nest tied to the limbs of a hazel bush only four feet from the ground, a good position for the photographer. The nest was completely concealed by leaves from one side and was built so as to be well sheltered by a leaf from above.

The first morning we discovered the nest it contained four eggs and one newly hatched bird. It seemed to be an exceedingly restless and anxious time for the mother; as we watched her from the tall ferns, she kept putting her head down under her body to view her first-hatched and to see how the other eggs were progressing.

The next day all the eggs had hatched and we found both parents busily engaged in carrying food to the young. As soon as the mother fed her offspring she brooded them till the father appeared with food, then he would in turn care for and protect the young from the cold. So during the entire day each performed



PHOTO BY H. T. BOHLMAN
CASSIN VIREO AT NEST.

an individual share in household duties. Often both parents were at the nest together, but at such times fortune did not favor us in getting a photograph. We were able to picture the mother, however, as she paused just for an instant beside the nest after feeding her young and again just as she reached under the protecting roof to feed the nestlings. In these pictures a distinct lacking of the wing bars will be noticed, which is a peculiar mark of the Cassin vireo. The other distinguishing mark, a white streak through the eye is readily told from the orbital ring about the eye of the other vireo.

A Remarkable Flight of Louisiana Tanagers.

BY W. OTTO EMERSON, HAYWARDS, CAL.

ONE of the most wonderful occurrences of the movements of birds in the season of migration which ever came under my notice, took place at Haywards during May, 1896, when countless numbers of *Piranga ludoviciana*, or Louisiana tanagers, began to make their appearance between May 12 and 14. From the 18th to the 22nd they were to be seen in endless numbers, moving off through the hills and canyons to their summer breeding range in the mountains. This continued till the 28th, and by June 1 only here and there a straggling member of the flock was to be seen.

They were first found feeding on early cherries, in an orchard situated along the steep bank of a creek, on the edge of rolling hills, well covered with a thick young growth of live oaks, which faced the orchard on the east. To this thick cover they would fly, after filling themselves with cherries, and rest till it was time to eat again. This they would keep up from daylight till dark, coming and going singly all day, without any noise whatever being heard.

Two men were kept busy shooting them as fast as they came into the trees which lay on the side next to the oak-covered hills. The tanagers at first seemed to take no notice of the gun reports, simply flying to other parts of the orchard. During the first week one of the gunners took his stand at the other side of the orchard, along the creek bank, under some tall willows, where the birds would come and alight, after being shot at so often. After the first week, I found on go-