

be taken in its removal, because auklets have very sharp toes! When once out from its dark burrow and brought into the bright light, the bird had some trouble in getting its bearings; it would flutter about hopelessly a few moments and then, suddenly righting itself, dart quickly over the cliff toward the ocean. I watched several during a performance of this kind and found I could follow them with my eye until they struck the water, when the color of the bird and that of the floating kelp blended so nicely, that, at a distance, one could not be distinguished from the other.

In many of the nests there were young birds ranging in age from those newly hatched to ones nearly full grown, having only a little down clinging to the feathers about the neck. The little fellows were of more interest than the others; they looked for all the world like little black chickens, downy and soft, but too dainty to handle. When brought into the light they would sit blinking at you with the wise expression of the proverbial owl.

We examined in all a great number of nests and found very few empty ones; in those containing young birds, the parent bird was always absent, as there would be hardly room for the old bird and a young one half grown. Our observation extended only to this one colony. I have no doubt that the birds nested elsewhere on the island; but our time was limited to part of one afternoon and the next morning, so we could not do as much exploring as we wished. We finished off nicely, and having plenty of specimens, were anxious to set sail for Santa Monica, where we could get a square meal and a good wash. Our captain, while an expert oarsman, was a headstrong sailor, and no doubt questioned the old adage that "a miss is as good as a mile." His curiosity respecting the truth of this often carried us into some ticklish places, and we were heartily glad to scramble up on the wharf at Santa Monica and feel something solid beneath our feet again.

Notes from Santa Barbara, California

BY JOSEPH MAILLIARD

WHILE in Santa Barbara, recuperating from illness, from the middle of April until the latter part of July of last year, I utilized my time in doing what little my health would allow in the way of collecting birds and notes appertaining to them. My efforts being greatly restricted by circumstances the results were not by any means as great as could be desired, yet it was my intention to publish a list of the birds not noted in Jeffries' article, *Auk*, V. April, 1888. On second thought, however, the probability of being able to do more and better work in this vicinity at future dates leads me to postpone doing so until my notes are more voluminous. Later on, with the assistance of Mr. A. P. Reddington of Santa Barbara, I hope to be able to publish an annotated list that will be of greater interest and value.

Birds seemed to me to be very scarce that spring, and this idea was confirmed by residents interested in such matters. My observations were necessarily confined mostly to the outskirts of the town, and in this territory the apparently abnormal destruction of birds' nests was most noticeable. Though not making a specialty of nests a good many were noted. Not being allowed to climb trees, those above reach could not be observed, but of the many recorded for the purpose of noting

duration of incubation and stay of young in nest all were destroyed by one agency or another. Most of these nests were of California towhee, house finch, Arkansas goldfinch, hummingbirds, etc., but as sure as one was recorded in my note-book so sure was it to be destroyed. Most of the agencies of destruction could only be surmised, such as jays, cats, snakes, etc., but several nests were blown away by the strong north winds that sweep through here in the spring from time to time. Some nests were deserted soon after construction, but most of them were robbed, or destroyed, at periods varying from that of fresh laid eggs to young within three days of leaving. In the cases where young were destroyed it is more than probable the numerous and voracious colonies of ants in this neighborhood may have been a factor, as Mr. Reddington tells me that these insects give him a great deal of trouble among his pet bantams while the young are still small. This destruction or desertion of nests may have appeared larger in this than in other places on my records on account of the proximity to the town causing the presence of numerous cats to kill, and people to frighten away the birds, but the conditions are most certainly discouraging to the observer, and more so to the birds themselves. In the territory worked over the small boy did not appear to cut much figure, as he was seldom met with.

Another matter noted was the extremely early moulting of many of the birds of this locality. There may be observations on this subject extant, upon southern birds, which have escaped my attention or memory, but it seemed remarkable that so many birds should be in poor feather as early as April 15th, just the date at which the best plumage would naturally be expected. During my visit to Santa Cruz Island in April and May, 1898, these conditions did not exist in that locality, and the birds there were in fine breeding plumage, with the exception of the horned larks which are generally in poor feather very early, and this in spite of an abnormally dry season when all the grain died at the height of six inches. Yet here in Santa Barbara, as early as May 15 while still nesting such birds as jays, finches, wren-tits, wrens, bluebirds and other residents were in the state of moult, that one would expect to find in July or August. Even freshly arrived migrants, such as the different *Empidonax*, *Helminthophila*, etc., with some exceptions, were in a partial state of moult, the exception being the orioles, blackbirds, phainopeplas and a few others, which were in a normal seasonal plumage.

Some of the birds were not only moulting but also had their feathers actually worn away by the wind. In fact all of them, except those whose habits led them to remain for the most part hidden close under brush, showed more or less of this wear. In dry climates it is usual to find more or less abrasion among the old feathers. The climate of Santa Barbara itself is more or less humid from its proximity to the sea, and though not very much rain falls it is hardly dry enough to compare with the interior, hence this abrasion must be caused by some other agency, which can be nothing else than the heavy north gales that strike the valley from time to time in the spring and usually blow for two or three days at a stretch, and are, as a rule warm and dry. In the vicinity of the town there is but little wind except these gales, and the specimens from here show much less wear than do those from the vicinity of Point Conception. Mr. Reddington kindly collected some birds from this latter place and also from the Santa Inez River valley, some twenty-five miles north of the town. At Point Conception a strong wind is almost constantly blowing, and the specimens from there show this abrasion to a remarkable extent, in many cases the feathers of the head, breast and back being worn down to a sharp angle, with hardly sufficient of the outermost barbs and

barbules left to give a decided color to the bird. One juvenile Red-shafted flicker from there, a fully grown bird, taken on May 30, distinctly shows this abrasion, though it had not progressed sufficiently to greatly dull the fresh coloration of the feathers. On the other hand the Santa Inez River valley is greatly protected from strong winds, and the specimens from there showed no more abrasion than is normal in a dry climate.

The lutescent warblers (*Helminthophila celata lutescens*) taken near the town, on their first arrival even, had all their feathers so much worn at the ends as to destroy the tone of coloration, and evidently showed that their northward trip had been a continual bucking against head winds. All the specimens collected of this species were taken between April 25 and May 2, after which date none seemed to have remained, even in spots apparently well adapted to them for breeding grounds.

I had hoped to secure a fine series of Arizona hooded oriole (*Icterus cucullatus nelsoni*) but these birds confined themselves entirely to the gardens in the town, where their nests were frequently in evidence under the overhanging leaves of bananas and palms, with telltale shreds of fibre hanging down sometimes for a foot or so. Not a single specimen was met with outside the town limits.

The rufus-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*) was discovered breeding in the vicinity of the town, and in fact one specimen was secured within a couple of hundred yards of the old mission. The first one of this species was captured on May 27, its mate escaping from me. One or two more were seen at different dates and two juveniles taken near where the first one was secured, on June 13, as well as the one near the mission, prove that this species breeds here, though I believe there is no previous record from this county.

Anna hummingbirds were in evidence everywhere, and very numerous, but while many unidentified females of the smaller varieties of hummingbirds were met with, the sterner sex of the Allen, black-chinned, and Costa were seldom seen and but few specimens of these taken, though they were probably feasting among the gardens of the town while their domestic partners were attending to household duties.

Bullock orioles, ash-throated flycatchers and Arkansas kingbirds were very numerous upon their first arrival, about the middle of April, but these scattered around the country to their favorite breeding grounds and soon became scarce in the outskirts of the town.

Parkman wrens (*Troglodytes aedon parkmani*) were more numerous in this locality than in any other place that I have ever visited. In fact they seemed to be everywhere, while Vigors wrens, though frequently heard, were very difficult to secure. It appeared to be a foregone conclusion that when a Vigors was heard singing in a live-oak, and what seemed to be the songster was shot at, a Parkman wren was sure to fall, while the former dodged off to the next tree to continue his song. To an accustomed ear the respective songs are so different as to be unmistakable, and yet this result occurred again and again so that but few Vigors wrens were secured, the fact being that they were very wary while the other wren was not at all so, and that the Vigors would stop singing the moment it caught sight of a person while there was sure to be a Parkmans moving around within a few feet of the spot where the singing ceased.

The date of nesting of the white-throated swift (*Aeronautes melanoleucus*) in this vicinity was definitely ascertained by the taking of a female, on May 19, containing an egg almost ready to be laid, with appearances indicating that one or more had already been deposited in the nest. The rocky mountain range back of

the town must present many most desirable breeding localities for these birds, though but few were seen at any one time.

A few thrashers were obtained both from Santa Barbara and Point Conception, though hardly a sufficient number to be of definite value for comparison. A distinct difference in shade of coloration was noticeable however between the specimens from the two localities, so much so as to enable one to separate them at a glance. The Point Conception specimens are of a lighter shade on lower parts and whiter on throat, with line of demarkation on breast between lighter and darker feathers more pronounced than in those from Santa Barbara itself. This difference did not appear to be due to fading, moulting, or wind abrasion, and on further investigation with a good series may prove to be geographical variation. The seasonally late dates on which these specimens were secured were unfortunate as the wing and tail feathers are so badly worn at the end as to have no mensurative value.

California jays were not numerous in the territory visited, and were rather shy, so a much smaller series was taken than had been hoped for, especially as quite a curious fact is noticeable among specimens secured. This is that all those from Point Conception, and the only adult from the Santa Inez River have the lower mandible greatly worn off at the point, causing it to end as if filed squarely across, with a slight backward bevel, but with the file not held sufficiently tight to ensure a flat surface. In some cases the lower mandible is at least one-tenth of an inch shorter than what it apparently should be. The upper mandible in some of these specimens is worn and blunted to some extent, while in others, where not so worn is so much hooked over as to appear abnormal. The specimens from Santa Barbara township, however, have nothing unusual noticeable about the bill. In series from other localities individual idiosyncrasies of various kinds will be found, but in this instance, of the nine adults secured, the four from Point Conception and the single one from Santa Inez River show the same peculiarity, though the typographic, climatic, and floral conditions differ considerably, while the four from Santa Barbara show nothing but a reasonable amount of wear. Unless further observation prove the hypothesis incorrect it would seem as if this abnormal condition was the result of some difference either in the food itself or in the manner of securing it, as the birds may be in the habit of striking the lower mandible against hard ground or rock when capturing or gathering its food.

Bird Notes from Eastern California and Western Arizona

BY FRANK STEPHENS

(Concluded)

Megascops asio cineraceus. Mexican Screech Owl. A male bird shot in the dusk of the evening of August 15th, twenty five miles below Ehrenberg, on the California side of the Colorado, was identified by Mr. Ridgway as *M. a. cineraceus*. This is probably the form found along the Colorado. I heard screech owls in several places along the river. At about 5000 feet altitude, in the Providence Mountains, I flushed a *Megascops* from a thick pinyon tree growing in a narrow gulch but was unable to find it again; it was probably *bendirei*. In the Hualapai