

Stray Notes From Southern Arizona

BY F. H. FOWLER

(Second Paper^a)

LF OWL. The smallest, as well as one of the most interesting of all our owls, is about the commonest of the family in southern Arizona. Its favorite nesting-place is the sahuara cactus and so "familiarity breeds contempt" only in the few cases where it abandons its beloved cactus and nests in a sycamore, cotton-wood, mesquite, or other tree.

The only nest I found I came upon by accident. For some time I had kept watch of a pair of ant-eating woodpeckers that were excavating a nesting site in a sycamore stub, and at last when I judged there ought to be a full nest of eggs, I went out to secure it, armed with a ladder, saw, and sledge hammer. The hole was about thirty feet from the ground, and was easily reached by a man sent up the ladder, who, after sawing the stub half off, knocked away the top with the sledge. No sooner had he taken a peep into the shallow cup that remained, than he snatched off his hat and crammed it into the opening, shouting to my father at the same time, "Captain, here's one of them air little owls." And after another look, "She has three eggs, too!" The eggs and birds were soon safe in our hands, and the former are now among the most prized specimens of my collection. The parent was a very close sitter, and made no attempt to leave the eggs, even struggling to remain on them.

About this time another of the species which was found sitting in the lower branches of a live oak, in a canyon a few miles south of the post, was collected by Dr. A. K. Fisher. So small is this owl that my father, who first saw it, called to the Doctor, "Say, here is a little owl about an inch and a half long," and he was very much surprised at the greater size of the bird, when he got a chance to examine it.

At Fort Bowie, on October 5, 1893, the bartender in the sutler's store caught the only one I noted at that place.

Capt. Bendire found them breeding commonly in the sahuaras near Tucson, and says in his paper on this species, in the first volume of his work, that, although they probably breed wherever found, the only eggs obtained (up to that time) had been collected at, or near that place.

ARIZONA WOODPECKER. The Arizona woodpecker (*Dryobates arizonæ*) is, outside of the alpine three-toed and pileated, the most interesting member of the woodpecker family, that I have ever seen. So far as I have noted, the species is never common, never noisy, and never at rest. I have not found it except in live-oak woods, and at Fort Huachuca; on a good field day I used to see about six on an average. Not even the chickadees are as active as this little woodpecker. He will alight on the main trunk of the tree, or generally on one of the largest limbs, and the moment his claws are fastened in the bark he begins an untiring search for insects and grubs. He ascends rapidly in spirals picking and prying away small pieces of bark in search of food; when a promising limb is reached out he goes on it, often on the lower side. The search over in one tree, he wastes no time in looking around, but launches out, with barely a glance to determine the course, in his undulating flight to the next, there to repeat the performance. When closely approached, he works around the tree without paying any especial attention to the intruder, and when thoroughly frightened he will take flight with

^a For explanatory introduction to these notes see THE CONDOR, V, p. 68.—ED.

as little warning as he does when simply in search of food. While going up the tree he gives, from time to time, a characteristic call, much like that of the hairy woodpecker.

Although I never saw the nest of the bird, one was found by Dr. Fisher, in a maple, about twenty feet from the ground, which contained naked young on May 14. A nest containing young was found in the Chiricahua Mountains by Mr. W. W. Price, in 1893. As far as I know, these birds were found only in the live-oaks of the western and southern slopes of these mountains.

RIVOLI HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*). Early one bright, sunny morning in the first part of September, 1892, while waiting for breakfast, I chanced to take a stroll through our garden, which at that time was one of the most beautiful in the post of Fort Huachuca. The diminutive rufous hummers were out in great force, it seemed to me, more for the purpose of fighting than feeding. While watching the antics of these birds, my attention was attracted by a monster hummingbird that flitted over the house, without any apparent effort, and began to feed among some scarlet geraniums in a large flower-bed. All I knew when I made a rush for the house, was that right there in our garden, was something very rare in the bird line. When I got back with my gun the bird had left, but was soon found on the other side of the house, where, after a few unsuccessful attempts, I finally shot it, and I do not know that even the trogon, of which I have spoken, pleased me as much as did this fine hummer, with his black iridescent breast, showing green in some lights, the bright emerald gorget, and forehead of rich violet blue.

Its motions were unlike any other hummer I have ever seen as its wings did not hum in the manner that has given this family its name, but cut the air with strong, firm, wing beats. Its flight was erratic, like that of the hummingbird moth, and at times like that of a bat. It would even soar, or sail for a few feet. It was not very shy, but when it made up its mind to go it would flit away on an erratic course without the slightest warning.

I saw this hummer next at Rucker's Canyon, in the lower end of the Chiricahua Mts. in the last part of May '94, where, as we sat skinning some specimens, a fine male darted by, hovered a moment over some flowers, and then disappeared up the canyon.

When Dr. Fisher and myself reached Fly Park, in the Chiricahuas the first week of June, 1894, we found this, as well as the blue-throated hummer, common. They had evidently just come up from Mexico on their spring migration, and had not as yet spread through the deep canyons where they breed. Here we found them at their best, the males continually fighting, though not so fiercely as the smaller species, or displaying their brilliant colors to enemies, and admirers, from some sunny twig. As far as my observations went, I remember only males, and no females, but Dr. Fisher obtained one or more females.

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD. The history of the white-eared hummer (*Basilinna leucotis*) within our border is very short, and it is to be hoped that further notes on this species (which was recorded for the first time in the United States in 1894) can be obtained soon.

On the morning of June 9, 1894, Dr. Fisher and myself started from our camp at Fly Park for a hunt. We had not gone fifty yards from the tent, when the Doctor saw, perched on a twig, a hummer which had a decidedly white patch behind its eye. He called my attention to the peculiarity, and then shot the specimen. In the hand the white patch was very noticeable, and he thought it was an immature specimen of the Circe hummer, but it has since been identified as the white-eared hummingbird, a straggler from Mexico. Another specimen has since been secured in the Huachucas, I believe, by Mr. Lusk.