

The lake was about one hundred by one hundred and twenty-five feet, lying in a hollow, all surrounded by the hills and its shores thickly covered with alders and small aspens, one tall charred spruce stump standing on the shore near the nest.

I made up my mind when I saw the nest what my next Sunday's work would be, and when Sunday, the 7th came, I went to the spot with the camera and took several photographs from different points of view. As I was going through the brush around the shore of the lake the bird flew off, and all the time I was there kept flying about overhead, often accompanied by her mate. After I finished there I visited a number of other lakes and saw two more cranes but found no nest.

A few ducks also nest about some of these ponds though not so many as in past years. Large game was formerly very abundant here but has mostly been killed off or driven away and the birds are also much scarcer.

*Colorado Springs, Colo.*

### Midwinter Birds at Palm Springs, California

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL

THE small village called Palm Springs lies in Riverside county, California, about seven miles south of the Southern Pacific station of the same name. It is situated on the floor of the extreme western arm of the Colorado desert. This arm terminates on San Geronimo Pass which separates the lofty San Bernardino range on the north from the precipitous San Jacinto mountains on the south. Palm Springs itself is close to the abrupt base of San Jacinto peak, and is at about four hundred feet elevation. But the desert sinks away gradually to the southeastward until in places it is two hundred and fifty feet below sea-level.

The plant-life of this belt is startling to a novice in its strangely adapted desert forms. In the vicinity of Palm Springs the desert floor is more or less closely dotted with several peculiar species of cacti, the creosote bush, screw-bean, mesquite and various Daleas, one of which is called locally the smoke-bush, from the filmy bluish aspect presented by a thicket of it at a distance. At the mouths of canyons and in the desert in the vicinity of springs, grow clumps of giant palms, which give a tropical air to the landscape. Cottonwoods flourish wherever there is sufficient underground water supply. The remains of numerous small annuals attest to occasional rains which, though rare, result in a luxuriant but brief-lived additional vegetation. These leave a crop of seeds to be garnered in the rest of the year by the remarkably numerous kangaroo rats, as well as by various birds, and granivorous insects such as ants.

From all accounts the summer temperature of this region must be well nigh unbearable. We were told that the town of Palm Springs is deserted during the summer months by everyone but Indians. But the winter climate is truly delightful—the days and nights perfectly clear, a little warm for comfortable tramping in the middle of the day, but cool and pleasant the rest of the time. The excessive dryness of the atmosphere is a bit disagreeable, resulting in chapped hands, and thus increasing the danger of arsenic-poisoning if one happens to be preparing specimens continuously.

Mr. Joseph Maillard and myself were recently fortunate enough to participate

in a collecting trip into this interesting locality. Nine days were industriously occupied, from December 25 to January 2, inclusive, and a gratifying array of specimens and information proved the success of the undertaking. We made our headquarters at the winter resort or "hotel," which consists of numerous cottages hidden away within a fine old orange orchard. During our stay we were joined for a few days by two other Cooper Club members. Mr. French Gilman of Banning, who knows this region thoroughly, assisted us greatly in learning the whereabouts of things. And Prof. Kellogg of Stanford found Mallophaga of interest on certain of our mammals as well as birds. Mr. George Maxwell, a very companionable gentleman from Portland, Oregon, also proffered his aid whenever opportunity offered.

Except in certain small areas birds were exceedingly scarce. In some parts of the desert quite a number of individuals of the forms that appear to live without water were to be found; while in other and apparently similar portions all species were conspicuous only by their absence. Around the little village many varieties were present in numbers; and yet at some of the abandoned farms and orchards within a mile or so of it, and where there were well-filled irrigating ditches, trees and shrubbery—apparently ideal spots for bird life—there were almost no feathered inhabitants, except perhaps a few Audubon warblers or kinglets. The favorite locality for most species was within a semicircle made by the "big ditch," flowing at this season, where mesquites and other bushes attained almost the dignity of trees. This spot was the feeding ground of a combined flock of desert and valley quail, containing sixty or eighty individuals. These birds were extremely wild, made so by the constant persecution of the Indians and whites living at Palm Springs nearby, and would scatter in every direction when disturbed, running with remarkable speed, occasionally flying and in any case seeking shelter on the steep, rocky mountain side adjacent, where it was useless to try to follow them.

The following list is intended to give any person who may contemplate a visit to Palm Springs an idea of what to expect in the bird line in the winter season. Mr. Gilman told us that later, during the spring months great numbers of migrants were in evidence. It is suggested that this place, or any other up toward San Geronio Pass, would make an ideal station for making observations on migrating land birds, on account of the peculiar topography probably one of the best in California.

In preparing the present paper I hereby acknowledge the cordial assistance of Mr. Joseph Mailliard, whose observations are incorporated along with my own.

**Lophortyx gambeli.** Desert Quail. **Lophortyx c. vallicolus.** Valley Quail. Numerous in the vicinity of water, as along irrigating ditches and in canyons. The desert or Gambel quail was apparently the commonest species; though the two were often found together so that it was difficult to judge of their comparative abundance. Their notes and flight differed to some extent, and Mr. Mailliard contributes the following remarks in this regard. "The notes of the desert quail differ from those of the valley quail in variety, and to a certain extent in character, though they have some notes in common. The 'crow' of the latter consists of three notes, varying in length and accent according to the call given, in one case the last note being a falling one. The 'crow' of the desert quail, while rather similar to the other, has two additional notes at the end, rendered in a softer tone. Besides the alarm calls the valley quail has a few twittering or conversational notes, while the other species has a lot of these, quite varied and often given in a

way that seems remarkably loud to one accustomed only to the notes of the former. Another peculiarity of the desert quail is the queer sound that it makes as it rises from the ground on being surprised into flight—the sort of screeching cackle, on a small scale, that a hen makes when frightened from her nest.”

*Accipiter v. rufilatus*. Western Sharp-shin. Mr. Mailliard saw one quietly flitting along some pepper trees near the Springs, doubtless on the lookout for robins.

*Accipiter cooperi*. Cooper Hawk. Single individuals were several times seen flying along the base of the mountain. Their approach was usually announced by the excited chirping of a scattering flock of linnets, which, however, kept at a respectful distance in the rear.

*Buteo b. calurus*. Western Red-tail. Two or more roosted regularly in some tall cottonwoods near the Springs, being generally seen as they were arriving at night. Mr. Gilman showed us a nest, from which he had secured eggs many years ago, built in a cranny on the face of a cliff at the mouth of Andreas canyon.

*Bubo v. pacificus*. Pacific Horned Owl. Heard nightly about the Springs, especially just at daybreak. Prof. Kellogg flushed one from among some boulders on the mountain side back of town.

*Geococcyx californianus*. Roadrunner. Fairly common.

*Dryobates p. turati*. Willow Woodpecker. Mr. Mailliard found a bird of this species in Andreas Canyon, and was also sure of the identity of one seen near the Springs. The willow woodpecker is doubtless only a winter visitant from the westward.

*Dryobates s. bairdi*. Texas Woodpecker. Several were seen and one secured out on the deserts southeast of the Springs. They were shy and led a hot chase, flying long stretches to alight but a minute or so on some cactus. An individual of this species was found in Palm Canyon working on a palm trunk; another was almost daily seen in the cottonwoods close to the hotel.

*Sphyrapicus r. daggetti*. Sierra Sapsucker. Mr. Mailliard secured a typical example of this bird. The characteristic borings of sapsuckers were to be seen abundantly on pepper trees about town.

*Colaptes c. collaris*. Red-shafted Flicker. Common about the Springs and in Palm Canyon. Mr. Mailliard secured an interesting “hybrid,” with the under surface of wings and tail yellow and malar patches red.

*Calypte anna*. Anna Hummingbird. A number were noted at the canyon mouths and about the Springs.

*Calypte costæ*. Costa Hummingbird. Two males in full plumage were taken and others seen. They were feeding about a red-flowered desert shrub.

*Trochilus alexandri*. Black-chinned Hummingbird. One was taken and several others seen. I was not previously aware that either the black-chin or Costa hummer remained throughout the winter in any part of California.

*Sayornis saya*. Say Phoebe. Fairly common. But as usual in winter seen only solitarily, mostly on the plains.

*Sayornis nigricans*. Black Phoebe. Several noted in Palm Canyon, and one at the Springs.

*Carpodacus m. frontalis*. House Finch. Abundant everywhere, especially in the vicinity of water; many old nests in palms.

*Astragalinus psaltria*. Arkansas Goldfinch. Often seen about the Springs, and in brush along the ditches out on the desert.

*Chondestes g. strigatus*. Western Lark Sparrow. One small flock and three individuals were encountered close about the Springs.

*Zonotrichia l. gambeli*. Intermediate Sparrow. A few were met with in

brush out on the desert. Every night quite a number came into the orange trees about the hotel to roost.

**Spizella s. arizonæ.** Western Chipping Sparrow. The only individual detected was taken by Mr. Mailliard near the Springs.

**Amphispiza b. deserticola.** Desert Black-throated Sparrow. Common on the desert and up the lower slopes of the mountain, occurring in scattering flocks of from six to twenty or more. These companies were usually in motion and hard to follow, as the birds had a way of flying off one at a time in rapid succession, retreating over a hill or behind thickets; so that the whole flock seemed to vanish. It was only by singling out one particular bird and firing the instant an opportunity offered that we were able to secure many specimens.

**Amphispiza nevadensis.** Sage Sparrow. Fairly common in the desert; met with either singly, or but a few together feeding on the ground beneath bushes, and when pursued flying from one bush-top to another.

**Melospiza c. cooperi.** San Diego Song Sparrow. Two specimens, doubtfully referred to this subspecies, were obtained along the willowy stream in Palm Canyon.

**Pipilo c. senicula.** Anthony Towhee. Two were secured along the main ditch near the Springs.

**Pipilo aberti.** Abert Towhee. Seen only in the immediate vicinity of the Springs, where the birds in pairs hopped familiarly among shrubbery. Mr. Mailliard found several on the hillside just back of town. As already recorded (CONDOR V, p. 12), Mr. Gilman has found the species breeding here and on the Colorado Desert to the eastward. Palm Springs is doubtless its westernmost station.

**Phainopepla nitens.** Phainopepla. Quite common in mesquite patches feeding on mistletoe berries.

**Lanius l. excubitorides.** White-rumped Shrike. Evenly distributed wherever we went, but not numerous. One was discovered in the orange orchard near the hotel industriously battering a linnæ. The squalls of its victim quickly attracted a sympathetic crowd of onlookers which commented vociferously. After what seemed considerable time the linnæ broke loose and escaped into a bush, panting but apparently little the worse for wear. A sample of the butcher-bird's work was found in the shape of a kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys merriami simiolus*) which was skilfully wedged between forking twigs of a smoke-bush. The subspecies to which our Palm Springs shrikes should be referred is doubtful. They present characters distinct from those of both typical *gambeli*, and *excubitorides* as occurring in Arizona. It is high time that some one thoroughly equipped worked up the western forms of *Lanius* of which there are several well-marked races as yet undescribed.

**Dendroica auduboni.** Audubon Warbler. This species, so widely distributed in winter, was present in usual numbers in the cottonwoods about the Springs.

**Anthus pensilvanicus.** American Pipit. One was seen in company with bluebirds on an irrigated field close to the Springs.

**Oroscoptes montanus.** Sage Thrasher. One specimen was secured and a few others seen in creosote brush southeast of the Springs. At a moderate distance this bird bears a remarkable resemblance to the cactus wren in behavior and general appearance. At least I am sure I confused the two repeatedly unless very close to hand.

**Mimus p. leucopterus.** Western Mockingbird. One individual was often seen about the hotel, and one or two others were found in Palm Canyon.

**Toxostoma lecontei.** Leconte Thrasher. This wary bird we found to fully warrant the many stories we had heard of its extreme shyness. Mr. Gilman, who has probably had as much experience with Leconte thrashers as any one, showed us where to find them, and how to secure specimens by running them down. The latter procedure I found rather discouraging myself, for I failed to get a single bird. But it was like watching a mimic battle to see Mr. Gilman charging across the country, dodging cactus clumps or jumping clear of them, as he could, every now and then hauling abruptly to aim and fire. His success proved the correctness of his methods.

**Toxostoma crissale.** Crissal Thrasher. Mr. Mailliard secured one specimen and saw another among the mesquites along the big ditch south of Palm Springs. In this same locality Mr. Gilman has found the species nesting. (CONDOR IV, p. 15.) This marks the westernmost limit of the bird's range.

**Heleodytes b. couesi.** Cactus Wren. Fairly common out on the desert; and also, as surprised me when I first found them, in Palm Canyon. In the latter locality they made themselves at home among the drooping dead leaves beneath the green heads of the lofty palms. The birds could be plainly heard rattling about inside, but were difficult to drive out. Doubtless such palm-leaf bowers afforded insect food in plenty, as well as a well-protected retreat. The San Diego and canyon wrens had taken similar advantage of the palms. The specimens of the cactus wren secured, when compared with numerous other skins from Arizona and the San Diegan district present no tangible differences. A fairly careful study of my material points towards the correctness of Mr. Swarth's conclusions (CONDOR VI, p. 17) in regard to the absolute uniformity of the race as occurring in the southwestern states.

**Salpinctes obsoletus.** Rock Wren. Uniformly common on the boulder-strewn mountain sides as well as among mammal burrows out on the level desert.

**Catherpes m. punctulatus.** Dotted Canyon Wren. This unique songster was numerous about and within the buildings at Palm Springs. In the morning before it was really bright daylight we were often aroused by these birds scratching about on the roof, sometimes coming into our rooms through spaces under the eaves. In fact Mr. Mailliard chased one under the bed. But the birds refused to be cornered, for they were evidently familiar with every exit. Their hoarse notes resounded lonesomely through the house; and now and then burst forth the beautifully-modulated, descending series of notes which never fails to thrill one with delight. Aside from the immediate neighborhood of the Springs, we found the canyon wren only in Palm Canyon, where many were detected as they dodged in and out of crevices between huge granite slabs, or scurried about within the reversed tussocks of palm leaves.

**Thryomanes b. charienturus.** San Diego Wren. Very numerous in Palm Canyon; also fairly common in the mesquite brush along the big ditch. This form is here probably only a winter visitant from the San Jacinto region a short distance to the westward.

**Thryomanes b. eremophilus.** Desert Bewick Wren. I secured a single bird, clearly referable to this form, on the desert four miles southeast of Palm Springs, December 30. It was a female in unworn plumage, and differed markedly from the San Diego wren. In fact when I first saw the bird I mistook it for a rock wren; for it was skipping from weed to weed and alighting on the ground much after the fashion of the last named bird. Its pale coloration and large size readily distinguish it from the San Diego wren. This was probably a winter visitant

from the eastward, for the skin seems identical in every respect with others from the Huachuca mountains, Arizona.

***Psaltriparus minimus***. California Bush-tit. Small scattering flocks were frequently seen in the pepper trees and cottonwoods close around the Springs.

***Auriparus flaviceps***. Verdin. A common bird, from a desert standpoint. Mr. Gilman has described its nesting in this vicinity elsewhere (CONDOR IV, 88).

***Regulus c. cineraceus***. Ashy Kinglet. Fairly common in the trees about the Springs, and also in brush along the ditches to the eastward.

***Polioptila c. obscura***. Western Gnatcatcher. Several were seen, and one shot for identification, close about the Springs. They were generally in the company of bush-tits.

***Polioptila plumbea***. Plumbeous Gnatcatcher. A common species, being found in pairs, or sometimes half-a-dozen within a few yards' radius, in mesquites, or any other sort of desert brush for that matter. The call-notes of this species are quite different from those of either of the others, but defy intelligible description. Mr. Gilman told me this species occurs to the westward about fifteen miles, beyond which he has not seen it. The black-tailed gnatcatcher is common at Banning and a few miles to the eastward. But he has never found the two species intermingling. There is apparently a hiatus of several miles left between their ranges where neither have been seen except for the single straggler recorded beyond.

***Polioptila californica***. Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. I secured a lone specimen, a female, on January first, two miles east of Palm Springs. I heard and recognized its call, and singled it out from among a scattered band of the plumbeous. The black-tail was being set upon and vindictively harried by a pair of plumbeous, which very plainly indeed resented its intrusion upon their domain. This bird was doubtless a straggler from the direction of Banning.

***Hylocichla g. nana***. Dwarf Hermit Thrush. Several observed in canyons along streams which make down from San Jacinto Peak.

***Merula m. propinqua***. Western Robin. A few, perhaps a dozen in all, were constantly present in the pepper trees about the Springs.

***Sialia m. occidentalis***. Western Bluebird. Found in flocks frequenting mesquite tracts where they were feeding on mistletoe berries. In Palm Canyon great numbers were in evidence among the giant palms. A dozen or more would be seen clinging to each pendant cluster of dates obviously attracted by the fruity outside pulp. While thus feeding upon the fruit of the palms, the noise made by the seeds dropping into the dry brush at the bases of the lofty trees was so great as to give the impression, before the true cause was discovered, that some large animal was trampling through the undergrowth.

***Sialia arctica***. Mountain Bluebird. Mr. Mailliard saw four near Palm Springs and secured two.

### The Elf Owl in California

BY HERBERT BROWN

WITH the possible exception of rare stragglers I am of the belief that the Colorado river marks the western boundary line of the habitat of the elf owl (*Micropallas whitneyi*). I have reasons to think that this statement will hold good. In Arizona, during the nesting season, the natural home of the