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A Dusky Grouse and Her Brood in New Mexico

BY FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

ONE of our pleasantest field experiences last summer was with an old Dendragapus in the Rocky mountains, which, after a short acquaintance flattered us by coming to accept us as neighbors. We had a hint of the pleasure in store for us as we were packing up the mountains, for when my horse, leading the way for the pack horses, flushed an old cock grouse which had been dusting himself at the foot of a tree close to the trail, he lit again on a branch so near that we could see his small pointed head and craned neck as he watched us. "If they're all as tame as that!"—I thought with a thrill of expectancy. When we had climbed to 11,000 feet we made camp in the blue spruces and established ourselves for our Canadian zone work.

Our neighbors were discovered one morning soon afterwards by Mr. Bailey who, bound for his mammal traps, started up the grassy slope on the edge of camp, a sunny slope dotted with mariposa lilies and bountifully supplied with patches of wild strawberry, which is a favorite mountain delicacy with the grouse. Half way up the hill two little grouse about a third grown, sprang from the long grass at his feet, one whizzing off in one direction and one in another. Quick as a flash the mother grouse appeared from behind a rock close by and 'sputtered and fussed', standing for some time within five feet of the enemy, effectually distracting his attention from her brood. Hoping that she would wait, he called me to bring the camera, but on my approach she started up the hill leading us to the woods, pointing the way with flags flying—head, crest, and tail up, an alert, conspicuous figure.

On reaching the woods I followed Mr. Bailey inside for a short distance to give the old bird time to compose herself, and on my return found her sitting quietly by a log on the edge of the woods. I wanted to get her into the light to photo-

graph her and she let me drive her a few steps at a time until one of her brood hidden by the log flew up into a tree. Instantly the little hen which had been demurely permitting me to shoo her around, was transformed into the alert, anxious mother, and hurried back into the woods evidently expecting me to follow. Instead, I sat down on the grass and kept quiet.

After some time I was rewarded by the faintest possible call from behind me, and looking keenly in its direction discovered her creeping cautiously out of the dark woods, crest and head down, tail hanging. Not seeing me she came out to the edge of the meadow, mounted a log, and giving a low *cluck*, such as a motherly hen gives when quieting her brood, she emitted two loud characteristic, wild, whistling notes, on the instant leaning forward, craning her neck to listen. From the grass down the slope came a faint quavering answer from her little one—the one that had not been heard from since Mr. Bailey flushed it. At the answer the mother raised her head as if satisfied, and having placed it by her loud cry, called quietly at short intervals as if to draw it toward her.

While she was hunting up her second fledgling, the first one, the one that I

had frightened into a tree, flew obliquely down into the grass several rods from the woods. At this the old bird cautiously made her way out to it, creeping through the high grass between the sods as she had come from the woods, crest down, tail hanging, pecking at the grass at each side as she went. The small grouse, on the contrary, stood up as high as its weeks would permit, its dim-



YOUNG BLUE GROUSE, PECOS MTS., N. M.

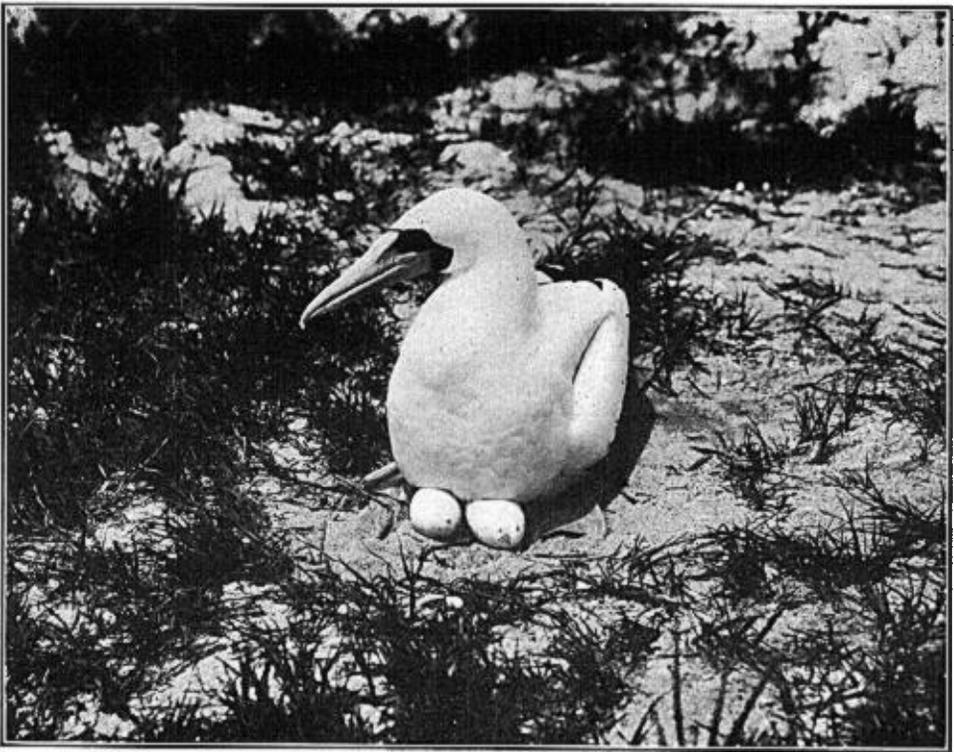
inutive crest raised, eagerly watching its mother's approach. As I appeared on the scene at that point, the old bird drew back a little, but the youngster, quietly making a detour behind my back joined her, and later when I succeeded in photographing the hen, at about seven feet, the chicken was almost in focus also.

Another day we came on the mother and one of her brood out on the open hillside, whereupon the old one promptly flew up into the nearest tree. The little grouse, badly frightened, crouched round-backed and flat-headed in the grass, its heart beats throbbing in its throat. After photographing it we got up within two or three feet of it, when it burst away on its stiff little wings, coming to ground again under its mother's tree. She clucked to it from her branch overhead and it squatted low, almost hidden in the protecting grass. We talked to it soothingly for some time and then drove it gently out into a better light, when quite reassured, before we had time to get a picture, it walked away, its little crest and tail raised in a very cocky manner.

A cold stormy night a week later the old grouse brought her brood into the firs behind our camp, and in the night, when a deer whistled she was so startled

she almost flew into our tent. The next morning her strawberry patch was white with hailstones and we found her sitting humped over a stone, while her two bedraggled young were trying to keep warm under cover of the firs. By this time our little neighbors were so tame that they did not startle when Mr. Bailey shot a hummingbird, and as he said, the only danger was that if we had stayed much longer they would get so tame that some one would shoot them when we left. As we broke camp to go on up the mountains soon afterwards, however, I trust that no harm came through us to the little family that had given us so much pleasure while camped in their woods.

Washington, D. C.



1. BLUE-FACED BOOBY AND NEST

J. O. S.

Three Boobies Interviewed

BY WALTER K. FISHER

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR AND JOHN O. SNYDER

WE found boobies, at rest, scarcely more difficult to photograph than stuffed birds, provided we exercised elementary caution in approaching them. They made ideal subjects, consequently, for a piping hot day on a tropical islet, since we early discovered that under such conditions one is likely to be