

gently poked with a tripod, gladly disgorged squids for our inspection. The red-footed booby also feeds on fish.

The common booby, *Sula sula*, for some reason best known to itself, does not live on Laysan, but we encountered it on Necker, a high, rocky islet, a few hundred miles to the eastward, where also the two foregoing species were met with. In its habits the common booby much resembles *Sula cyanops*, depositing two eggs on a shelf of rock, and rearing only one young. On account of lack of time and proper apparatus we were unable to secure satisfactory photographs.

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California Jays and Cats

BY JOSEPH MAILLIARD

WE always have several cats around our home at San Geronimo for the purpose of keeping the house free from rats and mice, which they do most effectively. These cats are daily fed in the back yard and some California jays have discovered that they can get good free lunches there also. Throughout most of the year several are in the habit of coming around at frequent intervals through the day to feed on what remnants may be left.

At nesting time they usually scatter among the brushy hillsides and are not often in evidence, but this season apparently one pair has remained at the house, and these two birds have become highly educated. Not being content with remnants alone they dodge around among the cats for better picking, and even resort to strategy to obtain particular bits of food that the animals are intent upon. However, the cats themselves have also grown wise in their own generation and it is seldom that a jay can make a cat leave its own particular tid-bit. Each has the measure of the other, and while a cat is watching, it is rarely that a jay approaches within reach of its business end, though it will do all it can to make the cat jump at it, or at least turn away. Grimalkin has learned to keep her tail well curled up when feeding, as a favorite trick of the jay is to give a vigorous peck at any extended tail and, when the cat turns to retaliate, to jump for the prize and make off with shrieks of exultation. These birds are not afraid of any of us within reasonable distance, though keeping a weather eye open for too close an approach. None of these actions are remarkable when one considers that it is the result of a course of education that has been going for some time that has produced them, but what does seem peculiar is that this particular pair of jays delight in wantonly teasing the cats in a most persistent manner. To find a cat napping, with its tail partially extended is absolute joy to one of these birds, which will approach cautiously from the rear, cock its head on one side and eye that tail until it can no longer resist the temptation, and, finally after hopping about a few times most carefully and noiselessly, Mr. (or Mrs.) Jay will give the poor tail a vicious peck and then fly, screeching with joy, to the nearest bush.

Watching one of these demonstrations one evening made me think of writing these notes. A large black cat was asleep on the edge of the roadway back of the house and as I was sitting on the porch about twenty yards away, one of the jays hopped down from a bush and approached the animal, whose tail was drawn in

most carefully close to its body. The bird hopped about from one side to the other, getting within eight or ten inches of the cat at times, but either seemed afraid to peck at quite such close range or else hoped to disturb the animal enough to cause it to switch its tail back a little. After trying these tactics for a while the jay flew back to the bush, but four times in perhaps ten minutes it hopped down again and went through the same performance. Finally it hopped to about six inches from the after end of the cat and screeched with all its might. One would naturally suspect that the cat would turn on the bird, but not a bit of it. He simply cocked up his ears a bit, gave a careless glance rearward, snugged up his tail closer yet and went to sleep again. A fifth time the jay renewed the attack, but just at this moment another cat came strolling by and the proposed victim arose and joined it, leaving me to speculate as to how long the bird would have amused himself in this somewhat unusual manner. There was no food nearby and nothing to attract the bird except a strong desire to have some sport at the cat's expense.

One of the queerest pranks of these jays, reported to me by a member of the household, was one I would have given something to have seen. It happens that our cats have the kitten habit to what seems an excessive degree, and, as their numbers must be limited, each batch of kittens is searched for assiduously as soon as their presence is suspected. Not long ago a certain tabby kept disappearing at short intervals for a couple of days and there was every reason to suspect that she had had a relapse of the above little failing. Diligent search failed to reveal the whereabouts of any "nestlings," but one day a faint mewing outside the window attracted the attention of some one in the kitchen when lo and behold there was a jay hauling a very young kitten out from under a young artichoke plant in the garden. The jay lugged the poor kitten along for a little way, seeming to enjoy its feeble wails, and then stopped and screeched in exultation over the find, only to repeat the process again and again. Needless to say the old cat was not present at the moment or things would have been made more lively. The bird certainly did not want to eat the kitten, and the affair seems to have been nothing else than a matter of pure mischief. Since this episode a jay chased a cat clear across the back yard—some fifty or sixty feet—by merely screeching at it and pretending to peck at its tail, the cat never stopping to show fight in any way. Lately nothing exciting seems to have transpired in this happy community and I think Mr. and Mrs. Jay are busy with household cares of their own at present, though I have not been able to locate their domicile.

San Geronimo, Marin Co., California.

The Leconte Thrasher

BY M. FRENCH GILMAN

MY introduction to this interesting bird, *Toxostoma lecontei*, was during the summer of 1882 when his whistling note nearly confirmed my boyish belief in ghosts. In a mesquite and creosote bush thicket at Whitewater ranch was buried a Mexican horse thief who had died with his boots on. Near this thicket I frequently wandered though it was said to be haunted. On several oc-