parents kept up a constant chirping and approached quite near while we were around. They must have commenced nesting about the middle of March.

The highest I ever found a nest built, was about thirty-five feet up in a cypress. This nest was easily seen from the ground, and contained two perfectly fresh eggs. The parent birds were not around. Golden Gate Park of this city is another breeding place of these birds. Here they are not disturbed, and they build commonly in the bushes and trees. One nest I saw was built in a brush-pile. A song sparrow had its nest in the other end of the same pile.

The eggs of this species are really very pretty. The ground color is of a greenish blue. This is splashed and dotted with liver brown, and purple washings are often noticeable. I have one egg which looks as tho someone had taken a brush and painted a pale purple band around the center of it. Some eggs are covered over the entire larger end with the brown markings, until it appears like one solid color. The eggs are from two to four in each full set.

The Nuttall sparrows seem to find their food mostly along the ground. They feed in the roadways, a good deal like the English sparrow. In fact the two species are quite similar in several respects.

*San Francisco, Cal.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**The Empidonax From Santa Catalina Island.**—In the March number of THE CONDOR for 1905 (page 51) I presented evidence adverse to the contention that the Empidonax breeding on the Santa Barbara Islands is a distinct form. Additional material obtained since then has confirmed the conclusion that "*Empidonax insulicola*" has no basis for recognition.

Mr. Charles Richardson, Jr., secured 8 skins in the vicinity of Avalon, Catalina Island, from April 15 to 20, 1905. The birds were then nest-building, so there is no doubt whatever but that they were quartered in the locality for the summer. Mr. Richardson and I together carefully compared these 8 specimens with my large series of mainland *difficilis*. Not a single character was detected by which the Catalina birds could be distinguished, when adults in breeding plumage only were considered.

It was found that the dorsal brownness of some specimens is obviously due to an advanced stage of wear which results in the loss of the bright yellowish olive which overlies the brown. A selected feather from the interscapular tract (in an early spring migrant before wear has had much effect) shows the contour portion to be centrally olive brown and toward the ends of the barbs bright yellowish olive. Examination of a corresponding feather from a June bird shows very plainly that the browner tone of the upper surface is due to the loss of the yellowish distal portion of the barbs. In an unworn bird the brighter terminal portion of each feather overlaps and more or less conceals the brown central portion of the next feather posteriorly. As abrasion gradually removes the terminal portions of the barb, the back of the bird appears more and more brownish.

Changes occur in the other feather tracts which affect the tones of coloration in a similar way.

Of course there is variation in the rate of wear in the same species of bird in different localities; and also individual variation in the intensities of colors to begin with. Taking all of these things into consideration I fail to find any character by which to discriminate the Catalina birds from any other local aggregation of *Empidonax difficilis* which I have seen. The name "*insulicola*" is thus getting so objectionable as to invite immediate interment in our synonymic graveyard. It is very easy to describe a "sp. nov." upon inadequate grounds, but vastly more tedious, and a thankless job all around, to disprove it. I know both, from experience!—J. GRINNELL, *Pasadena, Cal.*