

Nesting of the Sierra Creeper.—During the summers of 1905 and 1906 spent in the San Bernardino Mountains of southern California, I became acquainted with the nesting of the Sierra creeper (*Certhia americana zelotes*). The species proved to be more numerous than I have ever seen it elsewhere, in the upper part of the Santa Ana Canyon and on its tributaries and adjacent slopes. While observed from an altitude of 5600 feet in the Santa Ana Canyon to as high as 9500 feet, above Dry Lake, on the north base of San Gorgonio Peak, yet the creepers were most abundantly represented in the canyons from 6000 feet to 7500 feet. This belt of abundance was also the belt in the Transition Zone where the incense cedar (*Libocedrus decurrens*) is conspicuously represented. And it was in these cedars that the majority of the creepers' nests were found.

While the birds themselves were most often seen and heard high above, scaling the massive trunks of the huge firs, pines, and cedars, yet their nests ranged not higher than twenty feet above the ground. Myself and companions examined fully thirty nests, easily discovered after we once learned how to find them, and of these I should judge the average height to have been six feet. In other words the majority could be at least touched by the hand as we stood on the ground. One nest was only three feet above ground.

Altho the majority of the nests found were on cedar trunks, one was on a Jeffrey pine, and at least five were on silver firs. In the latter cases the trees were dead and rotting, for it was only on dead trees that the bark had become loosened and separated enough from the trunk to afford the narrow sheltered spaces sought by the creepers for nesting sites. But the huge living cedar trunks furnished the ideal situations. For the bark on these is longitudinally ridged and fibrous, and it frequently becomes split into inner and outer layers, the latter hanging in broad loose strips. The narrow spaces behind these necessitate a very compressed style of nest. A typical nest closely studied by me may be described as follows:

The material employed externally was cedar bark strips one-eighth to one-half inch in width. This material had been deposited behind the loosened bark until it packed tightly enough to afford support for the nest proper. The bark strips extended down fully a foot in the cavity, and some of them protruded thru the vertical slit which served the birds as an entrance. The main mass of the nest consisted of shredded weathered, inner bark strips of the willow, felted finest internally, where admixed with a few small down-feathers. This nest proper was six inches wide in the direction permitted by the space, and only one and three-fourths inches across the narrow way. The nest-cavity was one and one-third by two and one-fourth inches, so that the sitting parent probably always occupied one position diametrically.

No nests were found with eggs later than June 11, but young were found, yet unable to fly, until July 20. Two sets of eggs found on June 11 consisted of four and five eggs, respectively. Broods of young were of three to six individuals, one of the latter number being noted on June 26.

The ground-color of the eggs is pure white. The markings are elongated in shape lengthwise of the egg. The brightest markings are burnt sienna the tint varying from this towards vinaceous as the depth of the markings in the shell-substance increases. The darkest markings average one millimeter in diameter, while the vinaceous ones vary down to mere points. The markings are most crowded around the large ends of the egg-shells, and radiate from this pole in lesser numbers towards the opposite pole. The nine eggs are quite uniform in appearance, tho certain ones are to be distinguished as more sparsely, more boldly, or more minutely marked. The markings on one set are not so dark as on the other, approaching pale hazel at darkest and ranging to vinaceous-cinnamon.

In shape the eggs of the Sierra creeper vary from ovate to elliptical-ovate. The two sets measure, in hundredths of an inch: .61x.45, .63x.42, .61x.44, .60x.44 and .56x.43, .57x.44, .59x.44, .55x.43, .58x.43.—JOSEPH GRINNELL, *Pasadena, California*.

Do Birds Desert Young?—Mr. W. Otto Emerson tells of a newly mated pair of orioles (*Icterus bullocki*) that he saw one day about a grove of eucalyptus trees. The male was in fine plumage, and he shot it for his collection. The next day the female appeared with a new husband who was as bright and fine looking as the bird that was killed the day before. At first chance this male was also shot, partly it was said, because of his fine plumage, and partly to see if the female could find another mate as readily. Two days later she appeared with a third husband, who went the way of the two former ones. The female then disappeared for a few days, but returned again with a fourth suitor. These two began building and soon had a home in the eucalyptus grove. This may be a remarkable case of wooing and winning, but very likely the widow oriole was breaking up other families.

Whenever I have found nests that were deserted when they contained eggs or young, I have attributed it to accidental death of one or both of the parents. But this is not always so.

During the summer of 1905, I was making a study of a family of Bullock orioles that nested in a willow tree. On June 13, there were three half-grown young in the nest. Both male and female were feeding. Suddenly, I noticed a brighter colored male fly over and light in a nearby tree while the father of the nestlings darted at him and drove him off. The next morning I noticed the same male appear and there was another fight. In the afternoon I heard the intruder, singing at the upper end of the orchard. The mother had been feeding her young, but as the hours passed her visits were fewer and I noticed only the male was bringing food. The next day the female had deserted her young entirely, for only the male was about, and he had assumed entire charge of the household.

It happened that a rain storm came up that night, and as the young birds were not hovered

we found them dead the next morning. The male was about with food, but there were no young to be fed. He stayed about most of the day, but I did not see the mother again. From all appearances, she was a deliberate deserter. Can it be that some birds are as unbirdlike as some people are inhuman?—WILLIAM L. FINLEY, *Portland, Oregon*.

Puffinus creatopus in Alameda County, California.—On July 7, 1906, I was driving along the main road, home from a trip to the Santa Clara Valley, when, about three miles from Irvington and sixteen miles from Haywards, at the side of the road I saw what at first glance appeared to be a gull. It was lying directly under the telegraph wires, a strange place, I thought, for a gull to be seen at this time of the summer and still more, so far from the bay shore, at least six miles off. I was about to pass on, when the idea struck me that I had better identify the species. On picking up the bird, my surprise was complete, as I recognized it to be an ocean straggler, a shearwater instead of a gull.

On arriving home and skinning the bird, I found it very poor, an adult male in moulting condition. The only way I could account for this shearwater (*Puffinus creatopus*) straying so far from its natural surroundings, is that we had been having, for a week preceding, unusually thick fogs that had extended from the ocean inland for sixty miles or more. No fogs for many years had been so heavy and lasting all thru the day. This shearwater must have lost its bearings in the fogs along the ocean coast, which about opposite would be in the neighborhood of Pigeon Point or Pescadero Beach, some fifty miles or more in a bee-line from where the bird lay. It must have passed over the Coast Range into the Bay region, wandered about until it came down lower to sight the land, and struck against the mass of telegraph wires and was killed by the contact. On skinning the bird, I found a line or dent across the front of the skull.

That oceanic birds often get lost in the fogs, if they have not the coast line to go by, is thought to be a fact from recent investigation by Mr. L. M. Loomis on Monterey Bay. (See Calif. Water Birds No. IV, page 308.)—W. OTTO EMERSON, *Haywards, California*.

Another Record of the Alaska Water-thrush in California.—On the 29th of September 1906, I secured a female specimen of *Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis* near National City, San Diego County, California. A pair of this species were feeding, with several song sparrows, along the slimy mud exposed by low water in a fresh-water pond about one mile from San Diego Bay. They were not at all shy and allowed me to approach within easy "auxilliary" range. This was at 7 A. M., and the stomach of the bird secured was filled with what looked like tiny seeds.—C. B. LINTON, *Long Beach, California*.

Two New Winter Records from Tacoma, Washington.—Our little back yard here in the city boasts of three small trees, namely, a cedar, a horse-chestnut and a mountain ash. Nevertheless, during the winter months my system of a daily food supply of crumbs, seeds, etc., is always productive of a large mixed flock of English sparrows, rusty song sparrows, and Shufeldt and Oregon juncos. These in turn often attract rarer visitors, such as western evening grosbeaks and Sitka kinglets.

During the past December I was much pleased to have my regular flock decoy in a new winter record in the shape of a number of Townsend warblers (*Dendroica townsendi*). This is the first time that I have positively identified these birds in winter, altho during past years I have several times felt personally sure of their presence between the months of December and March. The December records for 1906 occurred on the 4th, 13th, 15th, 21st and 29th, three being seen on the 15th.

The second new record is that of the Anthony vireo (*Vireo huttoni obscurus*). These birds have several times been reported to me in winter. Mr. W. Leon Dawson, of Seattle, tells me he heard it once in winter near his city. They are also reported as being heard in winter on Vancouver Island. From Oregon, Mr. A. W. Anthony, of Portland, writes me that they winter near there along the Columbia River. I, myself, have several times felt positive of having both seen and heard the species around Tacoma in winter, but a vireo amid snow and ice was contrary to my Massachusetts upbringing, so I have never made any official records of it. Indeed, in their small size, color, and actions they so closely resemble the Sitka kinglet (*Regulus calendula grinnelli*) that a field-glass identification made in our dense fire woods might not be accepted as conclusive unless a more positive record had been made. It afforded me considerable satisfaction, therefore, to personally collect two specimens, a male on November 17, 1906, and a female on January 26, of the present year; this, too, in spite of ten consecutive days when the thermometer registered from 10° to 28° above zero. In both cases the vireos were travelling with a large flock of perhaps a hundred western golden-crowned kinglets and chestnut-backed chickadees. The cold weather apparently had not bothered them in the least, as both were very fat and in excellent condition.—J. H. BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington*.