

this Vulture as nearly spherical, JET-BLACK, and about the size of those of a goose.<sup>1</sup> Following this authority, all writers who have referred to the eggs of the California Vulture have described them in a similar manner. That they should be spherical would be an exceptional case to the whole genus, and is therefore hardly probable, though by no means impossible. Markings of a jet-black color, even to the extent of blotches, spots, or lines, are of very rare occurrence, if not positively unknown. Nor am I aware that any of this family of Vultures ever construct nests. For these reasons, and until the statements of Mr. Douglas can be confirmed by other testimony, I am inclined to discredit his accounts of its nest, eggs, and habits in every respect. In this belief I am in part confirmed by the testimony of Mr. Townsend. He was informed, as he tells us, by the Indians of the Columbia River, that the Californian Vulture, like all others of its genus, breeds on the ground, fixing the place for a nest in swamps, under the pine forests, chiefly in the alpine country,—in this conforming with the habits of the family.

The egg in the Garden of Plants corresponds, in its generic characteristics, with the eggs of the *Cathartes aura*, the *C. atratus*, and also with those of the *jota* and *brasiliensis* of South America. It is also remarkably similar, except in size, to occasional marked varieties of the egg of the Condor (*Sarcoramphus gryphus*) which, however, is usually white and unspotted. I feel justified, therefore, in accepting the drawing as an authentic representative of those of this species.

This egg measured  $3\frac{1}{8}$  inches in length by  $2\frac{1}{8}$  in its greatest breadth. Its ground color is that of all the known eggs of this genus, a rich cream-color, or a yellowish-white. A ring of reddish-brown confluent blotches surround the larger end, leaving the residue nearly free from markings. A few blotches of a smaller size and lighter color are distributed over the whole surface. The faint purplish-drab markings noticeable in the eggs of the preceding species (*C. atratus*) are not observable in this specimen.

The Californian Vulture is confined to the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. It is there found from the extreme southern portions of the Pacific coast of North America to Washington Territory and the British possessions, where it abounds in the summer season. It was met with by Mr. Townsend on the banks of the Columbia, upwards of five hundred miles above the mouth of that river, throughout the months of June, July, and August.

#### ADDENDA

*Cathartes Californianus*.—In Newman's "Zoologist" (Vol. XIII, p. 4633, 1855) occurs the following in reference to the nesting and eggs of the California Vulture. It is contributed by Mr. A. S. Taylor, of Monterey. I have given it with the view of putting on record all the statements and descriptions made public in this connection, though I do not think the account here given will be confirmed in all respects by more full and certain testimony. Mr. Taylor's information is, as may be seen, derived from the reports of others, and is therefore not so reliable as it would be if given from his own observations.

"The egg of the bird is three inches broad and five long, about one-third longer than a goose's egg. Its color is a dirty pale blue, spotted brown, and it is nearly as thick as an ostrich's egg. The same person informs me, that the female lays only one egg during the season, and makes her nest on the ground in the ravines of the mountains, and generally near the roots of the redwood and pine trees. It is three months before the young birds can fly."

*Escondido, California.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Pointers for the Field Naturalist.**—*Bamboo*.—To those who, like myself, make up skins with "sticks in 'em" I can recommend bamboo as the best possible wood for bird necks. It is also useful for extending broken legs in large birds. One end of a small piece is easily whittled down to fit tightly into the stump of the broken member; for mammal tails—*ne plus*

<sup>1</sup> "They build in the most secret and impenetrable parts of the pine forests, invariably selecting the loftiest trees that overhang the precipices on the deepest and least accessible parts of the mountain valleys. The nest is large, composed of strong thorny twigs and grass, in every way similar to the nests of the eagle tribe, but more slovenly constructed. The same pair resort for several years to the same nest, bestowing little trouble or attention in repairing it.

They lay two nearly jet-black eggs, about the size of those of a goose. They hatch generally about the 1st of June, and the period of incubation is twenty-nine or thirty days."—(David Douglas, *Zoological Journal*.)

*ultra*. Bamboo is so light, strong, and straight-grained that it is difficult to imagine anything better for the above purposes.

*Naphthalin*.—If you are going to the tropics to collect anything except rocks, take a big supply of flake naphthalin. In the Philippines, as in other tropical countries, there are many species of ants. A good part of these make it their business to eat every kind of animal substance they can find, and they do not neglect birds, from freshly killed specimens to dry skins. In a closed box naphthalin is sudden death to all species of ants and it prevents ants and other insects from entering. It also helps to prevent the growth of mould. Naphthalin is a necessary adjunct to the botanist. A pinch scattered over each specimen when the first change of dryers is made kills the many "grubs" or insect larvæ which if undisturbed often ruin the flowers before the specimens are dry. There are also certain ants, mostly small black species so far as I have observed, which spend their time on shrubs and trees and decline to leave even when specimens are put in press. These also are driven off by naphthalin.

*Gun Varnish*.—During sea or shore shooting, or for rainy weather, a mixture of equal parts linseed oil and turpentine, applied daily to arms, will harden and form a coat which is impervious to moisture and is as superior to vaseline or "gun oil" as your own hair is to a wig. It seems needless to add that this mixture should not be put into the works of a gun. If the arm is to be put away for a month or more a coat of the mixture on the inside of the barrels is an excellent protection.

*Fish-basket*.—I suppose every bird collector has used a fish creel in the field and has wished that they were made without the hole in the cover. To get rid of the hole and to protect specimens from heat and rain get a piece of light colored oil-cloth a little larger than top of creel and sew it on letting it hang over the edge.

*Abdominal Opening*.—In dealing with doves, ducks, grebes and any birds with short or scale-like feathers a much better looking skin can be made if a transverse cut is made instead of the ordinary breast-to-vent opening. The cut should extend backward from the base of each leg and connect thru the vent. The skinning proceeds much as usual. In the make-up there will be no unsightly break in the central abdominal feathers and the cut, being closed by a few stitches, will present very little evidence of its whereabouts. This method may be known to American collectors but I first saw it used by my Filipino assistant, Andres Celestino.

*Wad-marker*.—Anyone having many shells to load will find a wad-marker made as follows an efficient and useful article. Take a square rubber eraser and cut the ends off smooth and square; on each end mark with a lead-pencil a number corresponding with the sized shot you most frequently use. Now cut away the rubber from around the pencil mark and the result is a rubber stamp.

*Formalin*.—If the feet of large birds be opened in the sole and a liberal amount of full strength formalin injected, the drying will be greatly hastened and all danger of sloughing scales will be avoided. There is considerable danger of the latter trouble in a damp and hot climate. In the case of long-legged birds such as herons, it is well to dose the leg at the tarso-metatarsal joint also. The liquid may be introduced by means of a large hypodermic syringe; but if that instrument is wanting bits of cotton soaked in the preservative and pushed inside the foot give good results.—RICHARD C. MCGREGOR, *Manila, P. I.*

**Destruction of Herons by a Hail-storm.**—The following brief item is from the Lyons, Colorado, *Recorder* of July 18, 1907:

"The cranes' resort, three miles east of Lyons, was broken up by the recent hail-storm. The ground under the trees is covered with dead birds."

The item refers to the Great Blue Heron, the mistake in nomenclature having been since corrected by the paper at my suggestion. The St. Vrain colony, near Lyons, where the disaster occurred, is a well-known and interesting heronry. These birds, in the northern Colorado colonies, on account of their habit of nesting in the tops of the trees above protecting branches, and the severity of occasional hail-storms, are very liable to destruction. In perusing the note-books of Denis Gale I noticed that, in 1890, he found many nests in this same colony destroyed by heavy winds, and that he found buzzards nesting in the same trees with the herons.—JUNIUS HENDERSON, *Boulder, Colorado*.

**Siphia erithacus Sharpe; a Correction.**—I regret that thru oversight I have burdened this little flycatcher with another name and therefore wish to make this correction. *Cyornis erithaca* of Sharpe's Hand-list should stand as *Cyornis platenæ* (Blasius), *Ornis*, 1888, p. 308, with *Siphia erithacus* Sharpe and *Cyornis paraguayæ* McGregor, *Condor*, VIII, p. 29, as synonyms.—RICHARD C. MCGREGOR, *Manila, P. I.*