

species of bird breeding on the island, wrecking hundreds of nests.

MILTON S. RAY,
San Francisco, California.

April 29, 1909

[The above letter was sent to the State Game Commission, and the following is the substance of the reply.—ED.]

You will observe that in the new fish and game laws, there is a prohibition on the killing of Mountain quail and grouse up to Sept. 1st, 1911. The Mountain Quail have not recovered from the awful demands made upon them by the market hunters, when the quail were allowed to be sold in the market. Two years of close season should show a great improvement, but it is my opinion that the sheep have had much to do with destroying the nests of both the quail and grouse. My observation regarding Mountain Quail is that in the northern part of the state, especially in Siskiyou and Shasta Counties, they are well able to take care of themselves by September 1st; in fact, the people of that region tried to have the law open on August 15th. The Mountain Quail has a wider range than is generally supposed; I have seen them in Sonoma County, also in Mendocino at an elevation not to exceed 1500 feet. One reason why there is a difference in the seasons has been the influence brought about by the people living in the Sierras who claimed that unless they were allowed to shoot quail by the 1st of September, they got none at all, as their migrations commence shortly after; but these problems will work themselves out. Our people are becoming more accustomed to the restrictions and there is a better sentiment all over the state. In fact, the improvement has been most marked in the last four years and thru the Legislature we can accomplish more now than we could five years ago.

With regard to the Farallone Islands, that is territory over which we have no jurisdiction. It is a Federal Reservation, just the same as the Presidio. The Treasury Department at Washington exercises control over the Islands. Having been a witness to the damage done by dogs, a letter from you to the Treasury Department at Washington calling attention to the matter, or to the National Audubon Society at New York, might result in some order being issued that would tend to check this abuse.

Yours respectfully,

CHAS. A. VOGELSONG
Chief Deputy Fish and Game Commission,

Thayer Museum,
Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Editor THE CONDOR:—

My collector, Wilmot W. Brown, Jr., is still in the Cape region of Lower California. His letters are so interesting, I thought the readers of the CONDOR might enjoy them, therefore I

decided to publish them. The collecting of so many sets of such a rare bird as Craveri Murrellet and the description of their nesting habits is indeed interesting.

JOHN E. THAYER.

(Letter no. 1): *La Paz, Lower California, Mexico, January 20, 1909*: From La Paz I went by sea to Buena Vista and from there by mules to Eureka which is on the coast and lies seven miles south from Buena Vista. At Eureka I made a small collection while waiting for the mules from Miraflores to arrive. The most interesting species were a series of the Belding Maryland Yellowthroat, an Elf Owl and a Burrowing Owl. On the way to Miraflores I made a short stay at Santiago and collected a fine series of the Belding Maryland Yellowthroat in the laguna there. Also took several Marsh Wrens and a Carolina Rail. At Miraflores I spent over two weeks collecting while waiting for mules. I finally secured mules for the expedition to El Sauz a Sierra, about two and one-half days' trip with pack mules from Miraflores. El Sauz being the objective point of the expedition and an excellent region for the rare Laguna Sparrow, *Aimophila ruficeps sororia*, we pitched camp near a small mountain stream. We found it very cold up there, our tent many nights being stiff and heavy with ice. To get water for cooking purposes we had to break the ice. The elevation above the sea is about 4,000 feet. We camped there for about 16 days and secured a large series of Laguna Sparrows. It was sometimes difficult work in collecting them as they were found in very steep places. The species is not common there, as six specimens a day was the best I could do. Also collected three specimens of the very rare Xantus Screech Owl, and other interesting species of the Sierras. All are in excellent plumage. From El Sauz we returned to Miraflores where a short stay was made and two more of the Xantus Screech Owls were collected and several specimens of the Elf Owl also.

From Miraflores we took the pack mules to Santiago and camped at the Laguna within fifteen feet of the tules, and shot Belding Maryland Yellowthroats out of the back door of the tent. Also secured two more rails and some Marsh Wrens. But the most interesting were two fine full-plumaged *Megascops xantusi*. My cook getting the malaria or fever we struck camp and returned to Eureka with pack mules and from there to Buena Vista; and two days later by sea to La Paz in the schooner "Laurita." The collection is packed in 5 cases and numbers over three hundred and seventy-five specimens. It contains every species of owl recorded from Lower California—that is from the Cape Region as covered by Mr. Brewster's book. Of the Screech Owl there

are nine fine specimens. It may not be out of place to mention the fact that Messrs. Belding, Bryant, Frazar and Nelson did not meet with it on their expeditions in Lower California. There is also a very fine specimen of the Pigmy Owl from a new locality—Miraflores. As you know this is a very rare bird in collections. But what pleased me most of all on this expedition is a series of eight specimens of the tiny Micropallas or Elf Owl from several localities. It seems the only skins in existence from Lower California are two specimens in the U. S. National Museum at Washington! Messrs. Xantus, Bryant, Frazar and Nelson failed to meet with it, so it must be pretty good. Of the Dwarf Horned Owl there are two fine specimens. Also three Barn Owls, two Short-eared Owls and three Burrowing Owls. From Miraflores and El Sauz there is a general collection of birds.

On December 26, at El Sauz, I found a nest of *Columba fasciata vioscae*, with an egg. The nest was a platform of twigs, etc. In the mountain stream nearby the ice was nearly an inch thick! Several other nests were found but contained young ones.

(Letter no. 2): *La Paz, Lower California, Mexico; March 10, 1909*: I arrived here a few days ago from the islands of San Jose, San Francisco and El Callo. On San Francisco I took a series of *Neotoma* which may be new. The object of the expedition to the Islands was to make a search for the eggs of *Brachyrampus craveri*, the Craveri Murrelet. I am pleased to write you that I took over 40 eggs of this species on a rock that lies about two miles from San Jose Island. I also took a series of 35 skins. We found the Murrelets nesting in the crevices among the rocks of the bluff. The nest in all instances was a slight depression in the earth at the end of the crevice and generally contained two eggs, but some nests only contained one. The young take to the sea two days after being hatched! Twenty-two days is the period of incubation. The males help in the act of incubation, many males being taken on the eggs in the day time. In the early morning hours, particularly about an hour before dawn, there was much activity among the Murrelets, they at this time being seen in pairs chasing each other, and making much noise among the rocks. Our tent was at the foot of the bluff and it was impossible to sleep, the Murrelets made so much noise; for when they fly there is a loud whirring sound. Towards the end of our stay they learned that the walls of our tent were soft and seemed to take delight in butting into it in their amorous frolics. One pair in the excitement must have hit it head on, for they dropped to the ground with a thud and fluttered together under the side of the tent into my bed, where

I was trying to sleep. I caught them by throwing my blanket over them. This is the first collecting I have ever done in bed! They proved to be male and female. In the day time I did not observe any in the waters around the island. They seem to feed far out to sea, for with the exception of the setting birds in the crevices, I did not see any in the vicinity of the Islands in the daytime. But in the early hours of the morning the rocks of the bluff seemed alive with them; they all disappeared on the approach of dawn. This species has three distinct notes, the one of displeasure being very harsh. According to Mr. Brewster's book, it seems only one set of eggs of this species has been taken and that was on the Island of Raza in 1875, and was taken by Dr. Streets. The Island of Raza is over 300 miles north of San Jose Island.

On the Island of San Francisco, on a high headland overlooking the sea I found a Bald-headed Eagle's nest. The nest was a bulky structure and contained two eggs. This set seems to be the first recorded from Lower California. Also took a set of eggs of the Fish Hawk. On a Mangrove Island in a lagoon on the Island of San Jose I found a colony of Great Blue Herons breeding. I took about 25 eggs, and three sets of four eggs and three sets of three eggs. If I am not mistaken this is the first colony of Great Blue Herons discovered in Lower California.

Also took some more Snowy Herons, Oystercatchers, Mangrove Warblers, and Brewster Boobies. The above collection was made under difficulties. We camped on El Callo Rock at the foot of a bluff. With the exception of a few days the wind blew a gale during our stay there and threatened our tent with destruction. I had two sailors with me. On the second day on the Island one of them deserted me and returned to La Paz, for it was cold and very windy. I saved the tent by throwing up a wind break of rocks. During the gales we were literally prisoners on the rock, for we could not venture out in our boat, the sea being too rough.

Very truly yours,
W. W. BROWN, JR.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

BIRDS OF THE BOSTON PUBLIC GARDEN, By HORACE W. WRIGHT, with an Introduction by Bradford Torrey and illustrations. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909; pp. i-xx, 1-238; cloth, \$1.00 net.

This book contains the record of nine seasons' observations made in a city park and is a very interesting example of what may be done by one pursuing the study by way of pastime in