

SOME BIRD NOTES FROM VENTURA COUNTY

By J. R. PEMBERTON

DURING June and July of this year the writer was engaged in geological work in Ventura County, California. The haunts of rocks and birds are identical and no amount of conscientiousness of a man toward his job will keep him from dropping a fossil now and then, and spotting some old or new feathered acquaintance. Such, indeed, was my experience, and even if I did miss a few geological landmarks I hope it may in a way be justified by the following bird notes. Birds in this region were numerous, and in great variety. An extended account would for the most part be a repetition of known facts, so I give only the interesting, at least to me, notes which I took.

Observations were made upon several species of birds which one would hardly expect to find summering in Ventura County. These few species are regularly transient in this region, but pass on in the spring for the Sierra Nevada where their summer home is made. The migration is, no doubt, because of the instinctive desire for the peculiar conditions in which breeding must take place. It is interesting to speculate upon the conditions necessary to cause birds of this kind to remain.

The interesting stragglers are natives of the Transition zone. The higher parts of the Santa Ynez Mountains are in this zone and it is in these mountains and along the edges that the following birds were noted.

Dendroica nigrescens. Black-throated Gray Warbler. Frequently seen along the Rincon Creek, from Stanley Park, with an elevation of 400 feet to the summit of the Santa Ynez Mountains, elevation 4900 feet. At the summit, amid a thick growth of *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa*, surroundings were found which were apparently identical with those at the home of this bird in the low Sierras. On June 23, 1909, a male bird was watcht for some time as it carried food to a brood of young. The nest was built among the leaves of a fir, at the end of a limb about 30 feet above the ground. The female was not seen. The characteristic song of this species when heard, would immediately impress one by the apparently perfect happiness of this bird, so far away from its usual summer home.

Dendroica auduboni. Audubon Warbler. A single male was watcht several minutes and carefully identified on July 3, 1909, on the headwaters of the Santa Ynez river, at an elevation of 2500 feet.

Lanivireo solitarius cassini. Cassin Vireo. This loud-calling Vireo was seen and heard in many places in Matilija Canyon, on Rincon Creek, Coyote Creek and Santa Ana River in numbers nearly equaling *Vireosylva gilva swainsoni*. While usually given as a summer resident of the Sierras, this Vireo has been found nesting at several localities in the Coast Ranges. Cohen records it from Lexington, Santa Clara County; Beck records it from near San Jose; Mailliard from Paicines, San Benito County, and the writer has later to record it from the Santa Lucia Mountains in Monterey County. Ventura County, however, is the most remote place in the Coast Ranges where this bird has been found in numbers in summer.

Piranga ludoviciana. Western Tanager. The commonest of the unusual birds met with in Ventura County. All along the fir-covered tops of the Santa Ynez Mountains this bird was encountered. At our camp in Stanley Park, on Rincon Creek, at an elevation of 450 feet, a fine male bird used to pick bread crumbs from the ground around the table, and even from the table itself. The Japanese cook finally caught this bird and kept it some days, when it finally died. The female was never seen. This was on June 23, 1909.

Aeronautes melanoleucus. White-throated Swift. Plentiful along the summit of the Santa Ynez range and down among the rocky cliffs of the Matilija Canyon. Numerous cliffs were seen with cavities in and out of which Swifts flew; but the adventurous spirit was not strong enough in me to attempt a nest robbery under the conditions.

Nuttallornis borealis. Olive-sided Flycatcher. Common around the Santa Ynez Mountains; one nest was seen in a fir. The birds were seen well down the slopes toward the sea.

Ardea herodias herodias. Great Blue Heron. A lone Blue Heron was seen a quarter of a mile from shore, out in the ocean, standing placidly on a mass of kelp!

Gymnogyps californianus. California Condor. To any ornithologist, the first sight of this wonderful bird, and the first entry of that name in one's note book, is certainly a moment of great satisfaction. I was wearily ascending the last hundred feet of Divide Peak, in the Santa Ynez Mountains, and thinking of all the reviving agents known to man, when I suddenly came on three of these great birds, sitting stolidly upon a great boulder upon the very top of the mountain. It seemed, then, that without any other motion than a lazy stretching of their wings, and the posing anew of the whole body, that they could change from a bird to a speck, and then vanish. No bird can equal that exhibition of aviation. (That is a late word, but applies here very well.)

The same Condors, no doubt, were the ones which different members of our party saw almost daily around the same spot. Eight were seen in all, the other five occurring as follows: One on Red Mountain; three near Sulfur Mountain, and one near Matilija. The three birds of Divide Peak seemed always to stay together. From all the accounts of the natives of the mountains, the Condor is a rather common bird, and its presence is to be expected in all the spurs of the main mountains of Ventura County. It is reported as numerous in the vicinity of Devil's Gorge on the Sespe.

One day I witness a competitive flight between a Condor and a Turkey Buzzard. What a world of difference between the respective grace and speed of the two birds! And the Turkey Buzzard is a first class performer on the wing, at that.

A DEFENSE OF OOLOGY

By MILTON S. RAY

WITH ONE PHOTO BY OLUF J. HEINEMANN

BEFORE giving my views to the readers of *THE CONDOR* I wish to state I consider oology an inseparable part of ornithology, but, as it has been separated by some and completely divorced by others, I am forced to use the term.

The first point I wish to take up is: Is oology scientific or popular ornithology?

In the opinion of some, perhaps many, the structure and classification of birds is considered the more scientific; in fact a division has been made, terming this "scientific ornithology" and relegating the study of eggs, young, nests and all else to another division termed "popular ornithology." It would seem to me that inasmuch as the eggs are produced by the bird's anatomy and hold new life, they are