

59. *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*. Rough-winged Swallow. Moderately common and seen almost daily; apparently nesting in the small canyons.
60. *Lanius l. excubitorides*. White-rumped Shrike. Rather common and seen almost every day in the sage brush.
61. *Vireosylva g. swainsoni*. Western Warbling Vireo. A single male, in song, was seen and secured in Pole Creek Canyon, July 19.
62. *Dendroica a. aestiva*. Yellow Warbler. Abundant in the willow timber. Occasionally seen, but not plentiful, in Pole Creek and Willow Creek Canyons.
63. *Geothlypis t. occidentalis*. Western Yellowthroat. On two occasions a Yellowthroat, presumably representing this subspecies, was heard singing in a thicket at the mouth of Willow Creek Canyon.
64. *Icteria v. longicauda*. Long-tailed Chat. Abundant in all the more extensive willow thickets.
65. *Setophaga ruticilla*. Redstart. On June 30 a pair of Redstarts were seen in the willow timber. On July 14 a female was noted feeding a young Cowbird.
66. *Oreoscoptes montanus*. Sage Thrasher. Common in the sage brush and seen nearly every day.
67. *Dumetella carolinensis*. Catbird. A considerable number of Catbirds, both young and mature, were seen in the willow timber, but none were observed elsewhere.
68. *Salpinctes o. obsoletus*. Rock Wren. Plentiful in canyons and other suitable places. Usually found in families, the young being full grown by July 1.
69. *Troglodytes a. parkmani*. Western House Wren. On June 28 a pair of these birds were seen feeding young in the nest; this was in a woodpecker's hole in a small tree in the willow timber. Two or three other specimens were noted in the same locality and one was secured.
70. *Telmatodytes p. plesius*. Western Marsh Wren. One specimen was taken in a willow thicket, July 23.
71. *Sitta canadensis*. Red-breasted Nuthatch. A bird of the year was taken in the willow timber, July 18.
72. *Penthestes a. septentrionalis*. Long-tailed Chickadee. Two or three families were met with in Pole Creek Canyon, July 1, and subsequently as many more in the willow timber, where one specimen was taken.
73. *Hylocichla u. swainsoni*. Olive-backed Thrush. Numerous specimens were seen and two or three taken in the willow timber. Many males were in full song up to the middle of July, and nesting was still apparently going on.
74. *Planesticus m. propinquus*. Western Robin. Robins were moderately common in the willow timber, but none were observed elsewhere.

## NESTING OF THE CALIFORNIA CUCKOO IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

By ANTONIN JAY

WITH THREE PHOTOS

HAVING read with much interest the account in the January CONDOR by Mr. Alfred C. Shelton, of the nesting of the California Cuckoo (*Coccyzus a. occidentalis*) in Sonoma County, and noting that some of its habits in that locality are slightly different from what they are here, I will endeavor to give a

summary of my experience on the breeding grounds of the Cuckoo in Los Angeles County.

The bird has always been one of particular interest to me, but for the first few years of my collecting I was never able to locate it or its nest. This I now attribute to the fact that it breeds late, after most of the other birds are through nesting, and that it seems to be, at least in this vicinity, extremely local in its distribution. It may be found breeding commonly in one grove of trees, while in another grove nearby, apparently offering the same advantages for nesting, it may be entirely absent. In the lower part of Los Angeles County, within a few miles of the ocean, are numerous swampy places and river bottoms, which are surrounded by willow timber. Although much of this has been cut away of late years, there still remain some groves here and there, either uncut or second growth, and in these groves we found the Cuckoo at home. The grove in which my brother and myself



Fig. 30. NEST AND EGGS OF CALIFORNIA CUCKOO, NEAR LOS ANGELES, JULY 10, 1910

have found the most nests and have had the best opportunity to observe the nesting habits is near the old town of Wilmington.

Here the willow timber is mostly second growth, and covers an area of perhaps forty acres. It is not as dense as in some groves, and the grass grows luxuriantly affording good pasture for stock. In this grove several pairs of Cuckoos nest every summer.

The birds generally begin nesting about the middle of June, but first sets of fresh eggs may be found as late as the middle of July. The earliest nesting date that I have is of a nest found May 10, 1901, which contained three newly hatched young of the Cuckoo and two badly incubated eggs of the Mourning Dove. The young Cuckoos were dead when found. The Dove was sitting at the time and the construction of the nest showed that it had been built by the Dove. The latest date was of a nest found August 7, 1910. This contained one fresh egg and was undoubtedly a second or third laying.

Eggs are generally deposited daily until the set is complete. This, however, is not always true, and sometimes, as in the case of the cuckoo's big cousin, the Road-runner, fresh, incubated eggs and young may be found in the same nest at the same time. It is a very common thing to find two types of eggs in the same nest, undoubtedly laid by the same bird, part of the set being sharp pointed and the others blunt ended. They also vary considerably in size. The average size of twenty eggs is  $.96 \times 1.29$ . The largest is  $1.02 \times 1.35$ , the smallest  $.85 \times 1.24$ , and a runt measures  $.66 \times .87$ .

In the majority of cases the Cuckoo builds its own nest, but in some instances it will appropriate an abandoned nest of the Mourning Dove, Black-headed Grosbeak, and possibly other birds. On June 22, 1902, I took two sets of Cuckoo's eggs from old Black-headed Grosbeak's nests. It will also on rare occasions deposit its eggs in a nest already containing those of other birds. The following instances of this occurrence have come to my attention. On July 12, 1903, my brother took a set of Cuckoo's from a Dove's nest which contained three eggs of

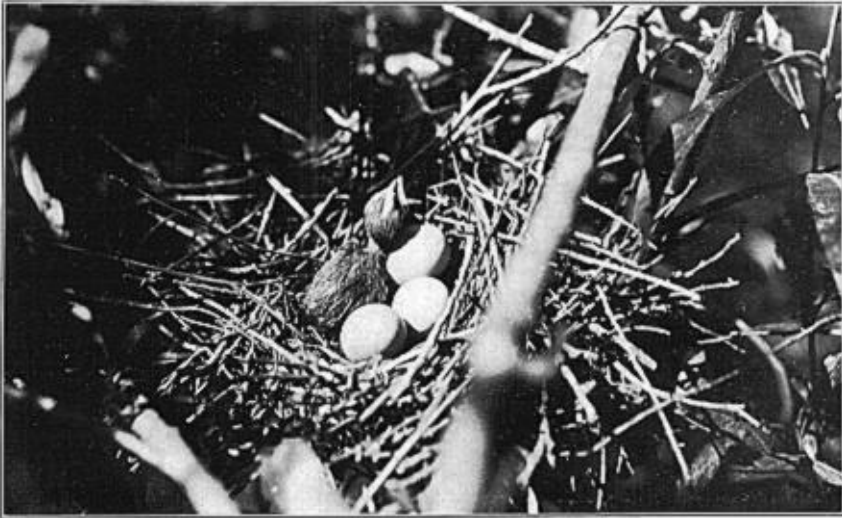


Fig. 31. NEST OF CALIFORNIA CUCKOO, JULY 24, 1910

the Cuckoo and one of the Dove; and on July 14, 1907, he found a nest of House Finch containing one egg of the Cuckoo and two of the finch. As no birds were seen near the nest we left it and returned a week later; on this date only the egg of the Cuckoo remained, both eggs of the finch being broken.

The nests as built by the Cuckoos themselves are considerably different from those of the Mourning Dove, both in material and location. They are composed almost wholly of dry willow twigs, lined either with green moss, green willow leaves, or fine straw, and are generally located near the extremity of a branch from three to twenty-five feet from the ground. I have examined over forty nests of the Cuckoo, but have failed to find a single instance where the nest was not built in a willow. I have never seen a nest built by a Cuckoo placed close to the trunk of a tree, in the manner so common to the Dove.

A typical nest measures: outside diameter nine inches, depth four inches; inside diameter three and one-half inches, depth one and one-half inches; it resembles a nest of the Pasadena Thrasher though not so bulky.

The female frequently begins depositing eggs before the nest is finished, and may be seen carrying twigs to it, after the full complement of eggs has been laid. I have not ascertained the exact period of incubation for the Cuckoo but it must be very short. I know of one case where the nest was built, three eggs laid, and incubation about one-fourth, all in a week; this must be admitted to be rapid work. The bird is a close sitter often allowing one to touch her before she will leave the nest. She will then leave as if she was crippled, and flutter along the ground for a short distance, very much like a dove.

The note in the breeding season is a quickly uttered "kuk-kuk-kuk", and is generally given at some little distance from the nest. The birds when in close proximity to the nest are usually silent. If the eggs are taken or destroyed, a second and even a third set will be laid within a very few days. The young when first hatched are naked and look as though they were made of India rubber. They grow very quickly, and I believe if undisturbed two broods are reared in a season.



Fig. 32. YOUNG OF CALIFORNIA CUCKOO, AUGUST 14, 1910

On July 10, 1910, Mr. J. Eugene Law, Mr. G. Willett, my brother and myself, in Mr. Law's auto started out to locate some new breeding grounds of the Cuckoo. We proceeded on the east side of the Los Angeles River until we had gone about sixteen miles south of the city, when we came to several small willow groves, which we started to search. It was not long before we heard the call of a Cuckoo, and Mr. Law soon discovered the nest, which was placed in the top of a slender willow about twelve feet from the ground, and contained three young. The rest of the groves were not very promising so we boarded the auto and made for the old grove, which we reached in a short time.

We had not been there long before I heard Cuckoos calling in several directions. We made for the nearest call, and after a thorough search I located a nest placed in the top of a small willow fourteen feet from the ground. This contained four slightly incubated eggs. I tried to take a photo but it was impossible, so I cut the tree and lowered it about half way down to a better position and took several pictures. I then searched in the direction where another bird was heard calling and in a short time found another nest. This was built in a willow bush about five feet from the ground and contained three badly incubated eggs. The bird was very tame and allowed me to touch her, but when I broke some small limbs which were in the way for the taking of a photo she flew away and did not return, so I was obliged to give up the picture.

I again visited the grove with Mr. Willett on July 24, and about forty feet from where I had found the first nest another was found resembling the first both in situation and construction. I took two photos of this, and we then made our way toward nest number two. Mr. Willett discovered this nest in a willow

about twelve feet from the ground. The contents were remarkable; one newly hatched young, one pipped egg, one fresh egg and one infertile egg. What seems strange to me is that in both of these cases the second set was larger than the first. We took two photos of this nest. I visited it again on August 7, but the young had left. Nearby I found another nest containing one fresh egg, which I believe was a third set from that pair of birds. I also found another nest near nest number one which contained three young and one pipped egg, and was undoubtedly also a third set. I returned again on August 14, but found the nest empty. It was just one week but the young had left. I hunted around the nest and found one of them, very likely the youngest. He was half the size of the old birds, his tail being very short. I took three photos of him.

The largest number of eggs I have found in a nest is five, and this only once. Three is about the average number though sets of two and four are not uncommon.

After the breeding season the Cuckoos spread out through the river bottoms and orchards. At this time the note is very subdued, and nothing like the loud call, as heard on the breeding grounds. The birds keep mostly in the tops of the trees and are very likely to be overlooked.

They leave for their winter home in September, the latest seen being one observed in an orange orchard in Vineland, September 22, 1904. The earliest spring record I have is one seen in the willows along the San Gabriel River at Pico, on May 5, 1907. Although shy birds they do not seem to object particularly to civilization and may be found nesting within a few hundred feet of a ranchhouse or barnyard.

## AN APRIL DAY LIST OF CALAVERAS VALLEY BIRDS

By HENRY W. CARRIGER and MILTON S. RAY

THE writers made the trip to Calaveras Valley, Santa Clara County, California, on April 3 of the present year, 1910, primarily for the purpose of visiting what we had been told were extensive breeding colonies of Yellow-billed Magpie. In this, however, we were disappointed. We left Milpitas at half-past three in the afternoon, and after a walk of about twelve miles we reached the northern end of the valley where we spent the night. The next day, after covering a wide area in and around the valley, we returned to Milpitas.

Calaveras Valley presents the usual California foothill country, with oak as the principal timber. Some of the canyons were quite heavily wooded. We found bird life abundant and, as the accompanying list will show, varied as well. Only five birds were found nesting, as the date was early, and these were as follows: Western Red-tailed Hawk, freshly built nests, and eggs well advanced in incubation; Yellow-billed Magpie, only a single occupied nest found, and we did not climb to it; Coast and California Jays, newly built nests of both noted; and Bush-tit, fresh eggs found.

1. *Aegialitis vociferus*. Killdeer.
2. *Lophortyx c. californicus*. California Quail.
3. *Zenaidura m. carolinensis*. Mourning Dove.
4. *Cathartes a. septentrionalis*. Turkey Vulture.
5. *Buteo b. calurus*. Western Red-tailed Hawk.
6. *Falco s. sparverius*. Sparrow Hawk.
7. *Otus a. bendirei*. California Screech Owl.