

of Lake Tahoe about 5 p. m. on June 24, 1911. This was in a little cove occupied by fishermen at the source of the Truckee River between Tahoe Tavern and Tahoe City. At this particular spot the walk stood out over the water and on either side the willow marsh extended out to a like distance.

Suddenly we heard a coarse masculine "quack" almost under our feet and a beautiful adult American Merganser, with glossy auburn head and crest, glided out, followed by eighteen or twenty babies not over a week old. The water was as smooth as glass, and this pretty procession paid no attention to us as it passed the length of the short walk within five feet of where we stood. The little ones kept close in the wake of the mother, moving quickly here and there, never quiet a minute, and changing positions so rapidly that it was impossible to accurately count them. The mother's commanding "quack" seemed to keep the little ones in perfect obedience and they behaved like a company of little soldiers. They were a pretty golden brown, each with a conspicuous white spot on each wing. Evidently they were after their supper and all working hard. They passed quickly on, then tacked back a little farther out, then gradually worked across the cove and into the willows a few hundred yards along the shore.

Several times the mother raised almost out of the water and dashed quickly along for fifty feet or so, every chick rising and skipping after her, flapping their little wings and paddling the surface of the water with their little feet. After three of these spurts the youngsters seemed to tire, and one climbed on its mother's back; and soon several had done so, and rode securely there as long as they were in sight. Fortunately we had a good pair of Zeiss glasses and were able to watch every movement till they disappeared into the willows.

The fisherwives said this little family had been about the cove for two or three days and there were twenty chicks, but I could only be sure that there were eighteen. Did anyone ever see a more beautiful picture than this, with beautiful Lake Tahoe and its snow-topped mountains beyond as a background, and the stately pine forests all about down to the very water's edge?

The fisherwives said the hens stole the youngsters from each other, and sometimes had more than at others, but these were undoubtedly different families with varying numbers.

On the 28th we skirted the west shore, north some six miles, in search of other mergansers. Several adults were seen, twice in pairs, and on the lake side of "The Island" a female with six chicks, slightly larger than the "18" family, was observed and chased in a launch in an effort to get pictures. Time and again all rose on the surface and dashed along for a short spurt, fifty feet or so. The female would not leave them, nor did any show any tendency to dive.—J. E. LAW.

Concerning Nesting Sites of the California Jay.—In recent conversation with two experienced oologists, the nesting sites of *Aphelocoma c. californica* were discussed, and statements were made that observations upon their nest building habits were difficult in that birds of this common species were seldom seen carrying nesting material. An experience of the writer's, covering both subjects, was related, and the discussion that followed led to this paper as perhaps being worth while.

An abundant resident of Marin County, California, our nesting notes upon this species established the following sites for the eighty-three nests observed: oaks 69; bay 3; wild coffee 4; elder 2; madrona 1; gooseberry 1; toxon 1; poison oak 2. And yet in Belvedere, Marin County, where live-oaks are most plentiful, a nest has been built almost yearly, for seven or eight years, in a clematis which climbs up the side of our summer home. The nest has usually been placed within reach of, as well as observation from, the window of a constantly occupied bed room, a window opening out and frequently opened and closed daily.

A lucky observation on May 26, 1909, caught one of the nest builders with an oak twig held crosswise in its bill, and about to dart to the nest from the limb of a live-oak a few feet distant from, but slightly higher than, the nesting site in the clematis. The sudden appearance in the window of the observer caused the bird to resume its perching position, but more through curiosity than alarm, judging from the many "jay bobbings" then indulged in. After numerous interchanges of such morning salutations between the observed and the observer, the former deliberately put down its head and, bringing the twig in proper contact with the perch, placed one foot over the twig and thus securely held it in its perching grasp. The renewed bobbings were then accompanied by the bird's familiar and prolonged scolding note or squawk, in its rising crescendo.

This play was repeated a number of times, the observer retiring from the open window and reappearing at the critical moment of contemplated flight to the nest, already well along in construction.

To the foregoing notes upon nesting sites in Marin County, may be added the following which came under our observation in San Benito County, California: oaks 4; elder 1; willow 7; honeysuckle 2; sage 2; chaparral 1; greasewood (black willow) 1.—JOHN W. MAILLIARD.