

a number of eggs and sets of eggs of *M. g. osceola*, or Florida Turkey. In no. 25787, the eggs are short and broad, the ground color being pale whitish, slightly tinged with brown. Some of the spots on these eggs are unusually large in a few places, three or four running together, or are more or less confluent; others are isolated and of medium size; many are minute, all being of an earth-brown, varying in shades. In the case of no. 25787 of this set, the dark brown spots are more or less of a size and fewer in number; while one of them (no. 25787) is exactly like the eggs of number 3; finally, there is a pale one (no. 25787) with *fine* spots, few in number in middle third, very numerous at the ends. There are *scattered large spots* of a dark brown, the surface of each of which latter are raised with a kind of incrustation. Another egg (no. 27869) in the same tray (*M. g. osceola*), is *small*, pointed; pale ground color with very few spots of light brown (Coll. W. L. Ralph). Still another in this set (27868) is markedly *roundish*, with minute brown speckling, uniformly distributed. There are nine eggs in this clutch (no. 27868), and, apart from the differences in form, they all closely resemble each other, and this is by no means always the case, as the same hen may lay any of the various styles enumerated above, either as belonging to the same clutch, or at different seasons.

NESTING OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NUTHATCH

By F. C. WILLARD

WITH TWO PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

TWO members of the interesting nuthatch family are regular breeders in the Huachuca Mountains. They are the Pigmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*), and the Rocky Mountain Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*). The latter appears much rarer than the former, but, owing to its more general range in the mountains, I am inclined to believe that it is really the most numerous. The Pigmy Nuthatch is confined to the higher ridges where pine stubs abound. The Rocky Mountain Nuthatch is found all over the mountains, from the oaks at the mouths of the canyons to the highest peaks, and it nests wherever found.

Like their eastern cousin, the White-breasted, these birds talk to each other as they hunt for food along the trunk or branches of some tree. If the female is sitting, the male still keeps up his "talking" as he hunts for food to take to her. It is by watching him at this time that I am able to locate the nest. He usually takes the food for his mate into the nest, but it is a very common thing for her to come to the entrance to receive it, or even to leave the nest cavity entirely.

A natural cavity with a long narrow opening is generally selected. The one shown in the illustration is typical. Nine out of ten nests are in oaks, the balance usually in pines though a sycamore or madrone is occasionally selected.

The nest is a mass of assorted fur and hair of various animals, skunk and squirrel fur, cow and deer hair predominating. I have also found rabbit fur and bear's hair in their nests. Enough is used to completely fill the bottom of the cavity and come up a little on the sides.

Five eggs comprise the usual set, though I once found three about to hatch,

and have taken one set of six fresh eggs. The last week in April is pretty sure to show complete sets with incubation begun, in the lower altitudes, and ten days later for the summits of the mountains. These dates vary considerably with different seasons. May 24, 1909, I collected a set of five half incubated eggs from a pine stub on the summit of the main ridge, altitude 8,450 feet; May 4, 1907, a fresh set from an oak near the summit; June 11, 1908, I photographed an adult feeding young which left the nest two days later, altitude 5,800 feet; May 25, 1909, I found a nest full of young large enough to fly. The nest was in a dead stub of a sycamore in the bed of a canyon, altitude 5,200 feet.

Sometimes the bird sits very close and at others she flushes readily. The



Fig. 83. ROCKY MOUNTAIN NUTHATCH AT ENTRANCE TO NEST, CARRYING FOOD FOR YOUNG

former is usually the case, and she will stay in the nest cavity while it is being chopped open, climbing up into the cavity above the opening. I have never found a nest in a cavity that did not extend above the entrance.

One brood, only, is raised in a season. The same nesting site is sometimes used year after year, though vermin in the nest frequently cause them to select a new location the next season.

This Nuthatch is quite cute about drawing one's attention away from the nesting locality. May 18, 1910, I heard a pair "talking" to each other, and began to trail them. One soon secured some bit of food and started up the steep mountain side with me in hot pursuit. I soon lost sight of it, but discovered the mate close by with some grass or bark or something of that character in its beak. It dove into a cavity of a small oak, and shortly reappeared without

its nesting material. After a few moments calling it was joined by the other one of the pair, and both were soon busy carrying nesting material into the oak. I quietly withdrew, to return ten days later. There were no birds about so I examined the cavity and was chagrined to find only the few bits of grass and fur I had seen them carry in. Some time later I discovered the real nest with its family of large young in an oak some distance farther up the mountain side. It then dawned upon me that they had played this trick, and I had to smile to myself as I realized how nicely I had been hoodwinked.

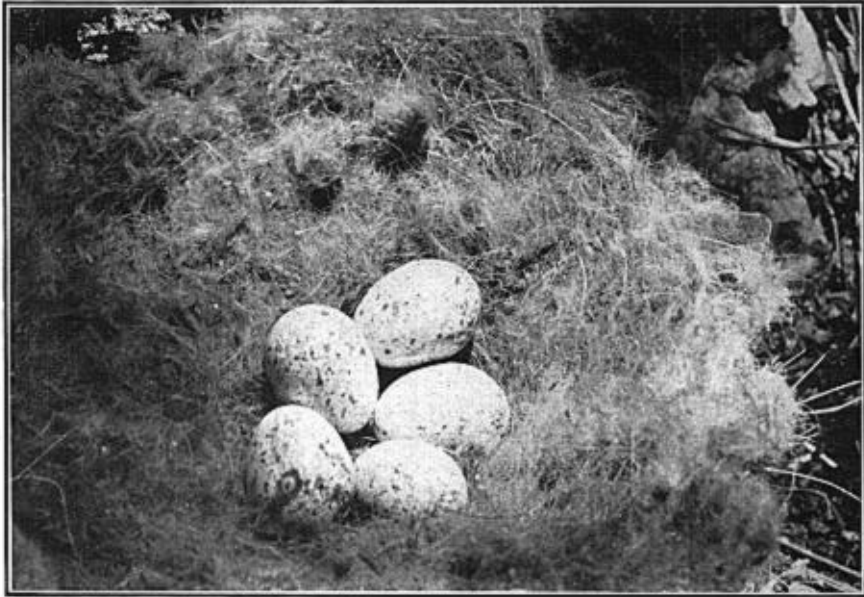


Fig. 84. NEST MATERIAL AND EGGS OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN NUTHATCH;
A LITTLE LESS THAN NATURAL SIZE

A HORSEBACK TRIP ACROSS MONTANA

By ARETAS A. SAUNDERS

IN the summer of 1911 it came to my fortune to take a horseback trip nearly across the State of Montana, starting from Bozeman in Gallatin County, and ending at Chouteau in Teton County. The trip led me through varied valley and mountain country lying on the eastern side of the continental divide. Just a week was occupied in making the trip, from July 10 to 16. At this season of the year the weather in Montana is at its best, and except for one or two days when the heat became a little too great for comfort, this was true of the weather I experienced. The June rains were over, but the dry weather of late summer had not yet come to rob the grass of its fresh green. Many varieties of flowers were in their fullest and freshest bloom, and most birds were finishing their nesting and were still in full song.