

IDENTIFICATION BY CAMERA

By WILLIAM LEON DAWSON

WITH TWO PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

A NATURAL rivalry—oh entirely good-natured, I trust—exists between the “gunmen” and the exponents of those more modern weapons of attack, the camera and the binoculars. Of course the arbitrament of the



Fig. 57. LESSER AND GREATER YELLOW-LEGS, PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE ESTERO NEAR SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 16, 1913.

gun *in your own hands* is conclusive, as indisputable as the virtue of the dead Indian; but there be those who find less pleasure in knock-down arguments than in the more subtle play of the wits. Science deals with facts and her cold storage chambers of induction are crowded with certainties, established truths, often uninteresting because undisputed and so, nearly forgotten. But the quest concerns itself with near-facts, probabilities, possibilities even, and herein resides the interest of life. As instruments of research in the realm of interest I submit that the binoculars and the camera are proving themselves superior to the gun.

Moreover, in the fact-product itself the work of the camera at least is by no means negligible. It, no more than the gun, depends in the last analysis, upon the credibility of human testimony, upon the honesty of the observer. *You say* this Tennessee Warbler's skin was secured in such and such a place. Very well; I agree that it is a Tennessee Warbler's skin. Whether it is therefore a bird of California rests with you. I will accept it as such on your say-so. I say that the accompanying photographs, believed to include portraits of the Lesser Yellow-legs (*Totanus flavipes*)* were taken in the Estero at Santa Barbara on the 16th day of August, 1913. The conclusion that these photographs really do represent the Lesser Yellow-legs in life is less obvious, less forced upon you than in the case of your warbler skin. That is a matter for you to decide. The data which we are able to submit for your consideration are much less complete than those you offer me. I can offer only evidence

which answers the tests of outline, distribution of light and shade and comparative size. That this has some value you *must* admit, but I shall not blame you if you do not find it conclusive. For, after all, the status of *T. flavipes* as a bird of California must rest upon testimony, upon the reliability of a witness, *ne c'est pas?*

*Disallowed as a bird of southern California by the latest authority (Willett, Pac. Coast Avif. no. 7, 1912, p. 111).

At the time these photographs were taken there were eleven of the Lesser Yellowlegs present on our Estero, and they were to be found in varying numbers for about two weeks thereafter. They proved to be rather timorous on all occasions but especially so when incited to flight by the Killdeers, which were always bossing them about. In moving to and fro across the Estero they usually paid little attention to their own kind and were as ready to join a bevy of Long-billed Dowitchers or Northern Phalaropes or the solitary Greater Yellowlegs



Fig. 58. LESSER YELLOW-LEGS IN COMPANY WITH NORTHERN PHALAROPE (AT LEFT) AND WESTERN SANDPIPER (THE SMALLEST BIRD OF THE THREE); PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN ON THE ESTERO NEAR SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 16, 1913.

shown herewith, as to hunt up their proper fellows. The duet recorded in this critical picture lasted but a moment, for upon the instant of discovery I swung upon them with the Graflex as one would level a gun and at the "report" of the shutter they were off like rockets. And as they flew they made outcry in two different keys of Totanine indignation, the notes of these two species being even more distinct as a measure of difference than the relative size of their bodies.

SOME CURIOUS NESTING PLACES OF THE ALLEN HUMMINGBIRD ON THE RANCHO SAN GERONIMO

By JOSEPH MAILLIARD

WITH ONE PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

THE THREE nests of Allen Hummingbird (*Selasphorus alleni*) shown in the accompanying photograph are of especial interest on account of the peculiar choice of location, all three being inside of buildings more or less in use. As it was impossible to photograph them *in situ*, on account of want of light and, in two cases, because of their inaccessibility as far as a camera was con-