

**Sialia sialis sialis.** Bluebird. Common resident, but the numbers were greatly increased by winter visitants. Its principal food during the cold weather was sumac berries. Nidification began about March 25. Young and adults were both molting heavily as late as September 18.

*San Antonio, Texas, October 22, 1914.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Barn Owls as the Farmer's Friends.**—On May 13, 1914, while staying for a short time at the Herminghaus Ranch near Mendota, Fresno County, California, I was informed that there were two nests of Monkey-faced Owls in the tank house, which is a large three-story affair built on a slight knoll a short distance from the house. Although the tank is still in place the building has been in disuse for several years.

Upon investigation I found that two pairs of Barn Owls (*Aluco pratincola*) had shared the structure with a colony of Cliff Swallows and a great number of bats. One nest was placed in the tank on the bones, fur, pellets, and refuse that had accumulated to a depth of several inches. One bird was perched on a beam overhead asleep, while his mate occupied the nest which contained four very small birds and six eggs. Scattered about on the floor were five Pocket Gophers (*Thomomys*), five Kangaroo Rats (*Perodipus*), one Pocket Mouse (*Perognathus*), and two white-footed mice (*Peromyscus*), all of which were in good condition and undoubtedly of the previous night's capture. Besides these, there were partly eaten remains and fresh skeletons of several more. All evidence pointed to the fact that this place had been used for a great many years by owls, as I picked up nearly four hundred entire pellets and could have secured many more.

The other nest was on the floor of the platform between the siding and tank in a rather exposed situation, and the nine eggs had been deserted for some time.

A second visit was made to the Herminghaus Ranch on July 19, and upon inquiry about the owls, I was informed that all of the ten eggs in the first mentioned nest had hatched and only one of the owlets failed to come to maturity. My informant also stated that early in June a second set, consisting of seven eggs, had been deposited and produced seven sturdy birds, the youngest of which was still present, being unwilling to attempt a long flight.

Aside from the late nesting dates, there was another fact that may have had some significance. Mr. Albert Foster, the superintendent of the ranch, realizes the great benefit that he derives from the presence of such efficient mammal destroyers about the place, and affords them protection at all times; but he informs me that a former tenant persistently shot all hawks and owls and destroyed their nests at every opportunity, and that on the Herminghaus Ranch, the Barn Owls were reduced almost to the point of extermination. Is it not possible that these nocturnal hunters, now safe from persecution, are depositing large sets of eggs in an effort to regain their normal abundance in that region?

If the thoughtless farmers who so relentlessly destroy this owl on account of its supposed fondness for chickens and pigeons would take the trouble to keep watch of a nest-site through one season, the most ignorant among them could hardly fail to realize that they are working against their own best interests whenever they kill a Barn Owl. Then, if we could convince sportsmen that all hawks and owls are not the ravenous destroyers of game birds that hunters generally suppose them to be, we would not be saddened by the all too frequent sight of the remains of numerous innocent Sparrow Hawks and Red-tails that are to be found on the ground beneath the telephone and power wires along so many of our country roads during the shooting season, and the plague-infested squirrels, of which we have heard so much in recent years, would cease to be a supposed menace to our health, or destroyers of the farmers' crops.—JOHN G. TYLER, *Fresno, California.*

**Two Birds New to California.**—*Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis*. While collecting January 17, 1914, at La Punta, located on the south end of San Diego Bay, I shot a Louisiana Heron. It proved to be an adult female.