

A Curious Set of Gambel Quail Eggs.—During the season of 1913 I collected several interesting sets of common birds, among them one of fifteen eggs of the Gambel Quail, taken May 24, in the mesquite forest near Tucson. The photograph (fig. 38) shows this set, which was unusual in the great variation in the sizes of the eggs; for it contains not only the smallest, but also the largest egg of *Lophortyx gambeli* that I have ever taken.

The largest and smallest are shown side by side in the center of the photograph, and the others are arranged in the order in which I give the sizes (in inches), as follows: .94x.74; 1.06x.84; 1.04x.85; 1.10x.89; 1.07x.88; 1.17x.91; 1.18x.90; 1.22x.93; 1.19x.95; 1.27x.96; 1.31x.95; 1.30x.98; 1.31x1.03; 1.36x1.00; 1.45x1.03. The average of forty normal specimens is 1.23x.93.—F. C. WILLARD, *Tombstone, Arizona.*

The Breeding of the Snowy Egret in California.—It is well-nigh incredible that the early "fathers", Gambel, Heermann, Cooper, and the rest, who regarded the Snowy Herons (*Egretta candidissima*) as "abundant" in California should have recorded no specific instance of their nesting within our borders. Cooper's naive remark that "In summer it migrates to the summit of the Sierra Nevada" shows, perhaps, how wide of the mark they were in their search. Without a shadow of doubt this species, save for a thirty-year period of persecution by plume hunters, has nested in certain flooded low-lands of

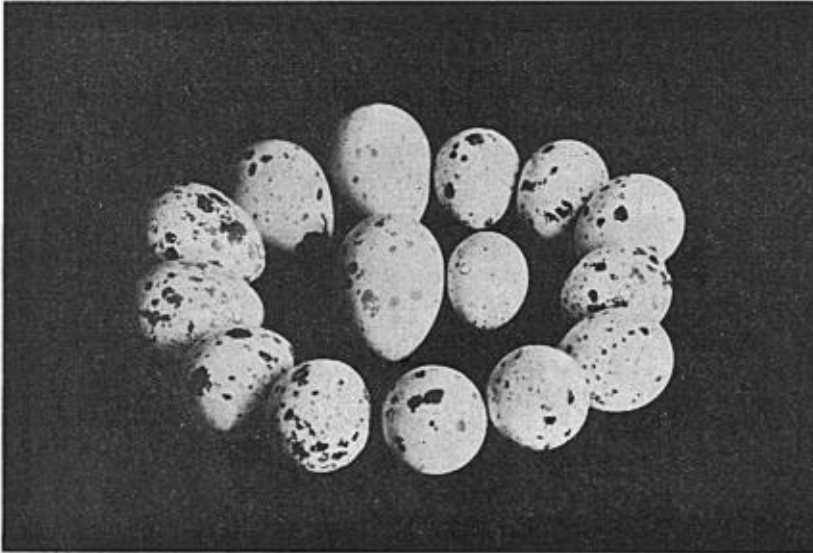


Fig. 38. A CURIOUS SET OF EGGS OF THE GAMBEL QUAIL

Photo by F. C. Willard.

our interior valleys from time immemorial; yet it remained, apparently, for a lucky accident of the past season to establish the first authentic breeding record for the State.

At a point in Merced County some miles from Dos Palos, my son and I, on the 26th of May, 1914, came upon five pairs of these birds nesting in close association with a colony of Black-crowned Night Herons, on a cat-tail island in the middle of a large overflow pond. The Squawks outnumbered the Snowies fifty to one, and it was impossible in the confusion attendant upon approach to tell just where the wary Herons got up. A thorough canvass of the reedy city, however, discovered five nests which contained a uniformly smaller type of eggs, four of five and one of four. One of these began to hatch on the day following, and the eggs yielded in turn chicks covered with a sparse long white down. The operation established also the fact that the Snowy Heron deposits its eggs every other day, and the complementary fact that incubation begins with the deposition of the first egg. Indeed it could not well be otherwise, for a single day's exposure to that blazing interior sun would addle an egg, however hardy.

The youngsters showed, as the days passed, an exaggerated disparity in size and strength, yet even when a week old appeared amazingly small and helpless. Neither did

they appear at all pugnacious, as do baby Squawks, but drew away timidly at the approach of the hand, and for the rest divided their time between panting lustily and scrambling about in search of shade.

The parent birds on all occasions were perfectly silent, and they maintained a discreet aloofness—sad commentary on the fiery furnace of affliction through which this gentle race has passed.—WILLIAM LEON DAWSON, *Santa Barbara, California*.

Additional Records of the California Clapper Rail and Red Phalarope in California.—On November 22, 1914, Mr. L. P. Bolander, Jr., secured at Tomales Bay, near Point Reyes Station, Marin County, California, the following two specimens which have been donated by him to the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

Rallus obsoletus, California Clapper Rail (no. 24915, Mus. Vert. Zool.), immature male. This is the first record of the species on the ocean side of the Marin peninsula.

Phalaropus fulicarius, Red Phalarope (no. 24916, Mus. Vert. Zool.), immature female, in full winter plumage. The present record is the latest for the season for the northwestern coast of California. Beck (Proc. Calif. Acad. Sci., 4th ser., 1910, vol. 3, p. 70) states that there are fifteen specimens of this species in the collection of the California Academy taken near Monterey during December and January.

Early in January, 1915, Mr. F. J. Smith submitted two specimens of Clapper Rail taken on Humboldt Bay, to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology for determination. The specimens are typical *Rallus obsoletus* (California Clapper Rail). One of these birds was taken by Mr. Fiebig and is at present in the library of the Eureka School. The other is the property of Dr. F. J. Ottmer. These specimens substantiate the Humboldt Bay record made by Cooper and Suckley (Natural History of Washington Territory, 1859, p. 246) and, together with the Tomales Bay specimen, extend the area of occurrence of the species beyond that given by Cooke (U. S. Dept. Agric., bull. 128, 1914, pp. 18, 19).—TRACY I. STORER, *California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California*.

Red Phalarope in the San Diegan District.—In view of the scarcity of records of the Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) from inland points in southern California, it seems worth while to publish a statement relative to specimens recently collected by myself at Nigger Slough, Los Angeles County, California. A female in full breeding plumage was secured May 25, 1914. On November 8, 1914, a male and a female in winter plumage were taken from a flock of about fifty of the same species. The next day, covering the same ground, just three of the birds were observed, and I have seen none since.

A large flock of Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*) was seen, and a pair secured, at the same place, November 15, 1914; and a pair of Marbled Godwits (*Limosa fedoa*) were also taken at this time.—I. D. NOKES, *Los Angeles, California*.

A Two Hours' Acquaintance With a Family of Water Ouzels.—On August 5, 1914, we were following down Rattlesnake Creek, near Cisco, Placer County, when our attention was drawn to the screaming of some nestling birds. Water Ouzels (*Cinclus mexicanus unicolor*) had been seen in the vicinity, and the locality seemed to be ideal as a nesting site for this species. A waterfall about fifteen feet in height tumbled over a rocky ledge at this point into a fine large pool of clear water which was surrounded, on all but one side, by perpendicular walls of rock. We were not surprised, therefore, to find, on investigation, a Water Ouzel's nest built in a cleft of the rock about two feet from the falling stream of water. The moss of which the nest was built had formerly been kept green by trickling water, but at this date had begun to turn brown. White excrement below the entrance to the nest led to its discovery.

On approaching the nest, one of the occupants, a well-fledged Water Ouzel, fluttered from the entrance and dropped down into the pool of water below. Here it immediately dove and swam for a distance of six feet or more and at a depth of about two feet below the surface of the water. Quick, short strokes of the wings enabled the bird to swim rapidly in this medium.

A moment later a second bird flew from the nest. This one, unlike the first, did not dive, but swam about on top of the water, using its wings in the same manner, however. Still another young bird remained in the nest, but repeated attempts to dislodge it failed.

An adult with food in its mouth soon appeared, jumping from rock to rock and "bobbing" continuously. Its call was answered by the birds in the water and the one in