

1 and 2 were both fairly substantial platforms of oak twigs lined with weed stems; but nest no. 3 was very flimsily constructed of willow twigs and lined with rootlets.

At no time were the old birds aggressive. They usually left the vicinity of the nest as soon as we came within fifty or sixty yards. The only note we ever heard them utter was a sort of plaintive whistle. One morning, while working near the nest, my brother saw one of the Kites returning from the direction of the river with something in its claws. While still some distance from the nest it began calling and was quickly joined by the other bird. The first bird remained hovering in the air like a Sparrow Hawk, while the other darted up underneath it, took the food from its claws and returned to the nest while the other sailed away.

*Sespe, California, August 10, 1915.*

## ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE BIRDS OF THE LOWER COLORADO VALLEY IN CALIFORNIA

By A. BRAZIER HOWELL and A. VAN ROSSEM

THE FOLLOWING paper is meant to supplement J. Grinnell's "An Account of the Mammals and Birds of the Lower Colorado Valley" (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., XII, 1914), and contains only such notes on the birds of the region as would seem to be of especial interest in connection with that publication. The present writers spent from January 13 to 31, 1913, camped on the river bottom of the Colorado, with headquarters some four miles below Potholes, on the California side. It will be recollected that this was immediately after the big freeze of two years ago, and for that reason it is possible that the conditions as we found them did not present altogether a normal aspect. Our work was mostly confined to the arrow-weed association with the intervening patches of cultivated ground, and to the bordering mesquite thickets. Some little collecting, however, was done back in the dry arroyo beds, and in the patches of sahuaros a few miles above Potholes. This general locality presents unusually interesting features and merits much further work on the part of ornithologists, especially in the summer and early fall.

*Marila valisineria.* Canvas-back. We found this duck to be rather common. Two that were shot on January 21 and 28, respectively, were feeding in an abandoned canal that was thickly surrounded with brush, and in which the water was not over four feet deep. This was obviously a poor place for them, and it was not until we spent a day, the 28th, among the sloughs above Laguna Dam that we met with them in any numbers. Here a number of flocks were noted and an adult male secured by a Mr. Reckart. The latter person, who was thoroughly familiar with the ducks of the region, assured us that during some winters, the "Cans" were present by the thousands, while but very few were seen in other years.

*Dendrocygna bicolor.* Fulvous Tree-duck. One of these birds flew close over van Rossem on the 17th, allowing him to be positive of its identity.

*Herodias egretta.* Egret. A few may possibly breed near Yuma, but it is pretty certain that the majority of the birds to be seen here during the winter, have come to us from farther south. We were told on good authority that a flock of thirty or forty had been roosting for weeks on one of the islands above the dam. A number were seen by us on the 28th, and a male was secured on which the plumes of one side of the back

were almost completely developed, while those of the other side had but recently burst the envelopes.

*Porzana carolina*. Sora. Quite abundant in suitable spots. In the heavy growth bordering a slough near our camp, numbers were seen, and one taken on the 14th.

*Chaemepelia passerina pallescens*. Mexican Ground Dove. A sharp watch was kept for these birds during our stay, but it was not until we were on our way home, about two miles east of Fort Yuma, on the Imperial Valley road, that we encountered them. Twelve or fifteen were observed within a mile and a half, and two pairs secured. They were all feeding in the road, in little parties of two or three, and those shot contained many tiny black seeds, which had evidently fallen from a certain tall weed which thickly bordered the roadway.

*Speotyto cunicularia hypogaea*. Burrowing Owl. A pair was noted on the 13th, well back from the river bottom.

No *Micropallas whitneyi* (Elf Owl) was seen, although we examined fifty odd, likely-looking holes, all that were to be reached with the aid of a good ladder, on the 30th. Indubitable evidence of their recent presence was secured in the sahuaros, however, in the way of feathers, pellets and excrement. A number of the holes had been chopped out very recently, and whether the lack of owls was due to the industry of some collector that had preceded us, or to the possibility of the extremely cold weather having caused them to undertake a temporary visit to the southward, we are unable to say.

*Centurus uropygialis*. Gila Woodpecker. This species proved to be quite abundant among the cottonwoods and willows of the bottoms. They were feeding almost exclusively on the berries of the mistletoe. These, however, never seemed to be completely digested, and when a bird was shot, it would void a quantity of sticky, green pulp and seeds, which was very hard to remove from the feathers. Almost without exception, we found the birds to be infested with numbers of a long slender tape-worm, in some instances, in almost sufficient quantities to clog the intestines.

*Colaptes chrysoides mearnsi*. Mearns Gilded Flicker. These were present in small numbers, but *C. cafer collaris* exceeded them in numbers, in the ratio of about fifteen to one. The latter form must be merely a winter visitant to the region, while the former is resident; but two birds were secured which showed all the characters of hybrids between the two. On the 27th we came upon two *Colaptes* that were going through elaborate courting antics on a horizontal branch. Upon shooting these birds, we were much surprised to discover that the male was a Red-shafted and the female a Mearns Gilded.

So-called hybrids between *Sphyrapicus varius nuchalis* and *S. ruber ruber* have been taken in many parts of the west. An adult male which showed a blending of the characters of the two forms in about equal proportions, was secured on the 17th.

*Myiarchus cinerascens cinerascens*. Ash-throated Flycatcher. We found, as Grinnell surmises, that this species is a winter visitant to the region, and apparently a regular one, for if such is not the case, this cold snap would assuredly have caused them to move farther south. They were not by any means abundant, but one was sure to be seen every two or three days, and several were collected. The cold nights, with temperatures well below freezing, must have greatly reduced their food supply.

*Empidonax griseus*. Gray Flycatcher. A female and two males of this form were taken, and two other birds seen, which would indicate that the species winters here.

On the cultivated fields of the lowlands we encountered mixed flocks of female *Otocoris alpestris pallida* and *O. a. leucolaema*. Among the scores seen, we searched carefully for males, but not one was noted. On the mesa lands well back from the river, however, we found only *pallida*, and although a score or so were seen and several taken, no females were observed.

*Agelaius phoeniceus sonoriensis*. Sonora Red-wing. Small flocks were frequently seen during our stay, and a number of specimens taken, all of which were crammed to the bill with kaffir corn seeds. Well over a hundred birds were observed close enough to distinguish between the sexes, and of these, but two were males. Near the Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona, Mr. van Rossem found a similar state of affairs last winter, as regards red-wings. Flocks of hundreds were seen almost daily for a while, but as far as he was aware, there was not a male in the vicinity.

*Spizella breweri*. Brewer Sparrow. This species winters abundantly in certain parts of the Imperial Valley, but they are evidently not so partial to the valley of the

Colorado as a winter home. We could always be sure of finding a few of them in certain favored spots, but they were very wary.

*Junco hyemalis thurberi*. Thurber Junco. Grinnell reported but one of these birds, which was obtained farther up the river, while we saw at least eight, and secured three. Their presence may have been partly due to the low temperature.

*Melospiza lincolni lincolni*. Lincoln Sparrow. Grinnell is of the opinion that a large proportion of those birds which his party saw (after February 26), had not spent the entire winter in the region. We, however, found the birds to be common in suitable places throughout our stay, and, since they are never much in evidence, they were probably even more common than was apparent. A specimen taken on the 14th was intermediate in characters between this form and *striata*.

*Pipilo maculatus curtatus*. Nevada Towhee. A single male of this form was secured on the 23rd, making this the southernmost station from which it has been reported.

*Vermivora celata lutescens*. Lutescent Warbler. An individual was shot on the 24th. This would seem to indicate that the subspecies occasionally spends the winter.

*Oreoscoptes montanus*. Sage Thrasher. A single bird was seen and taken on the 30th.

*Toxostoma lecontei lecontei*. Leconte Thrasher. The only bird of this species noted on the trip was one seen from the automobile as we were driving in the vicinity of the sahuaro grove above Potholes, January 30. Although reasonably close, the guns were not handy, and it escaped.

*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*. Western Bluebird. Bluebirds were encountered in small numbers. Of the two males secured, one is practically indistinguishable from specimens of *bairdi* from Arizona, while the other exhibits characters intermediate between that and typical *occidentalis*. As lots of birds from the Sierra Nevada of California also have the main characters as given for *bairdi*, we are at a loss just how to place our Fort Yuma specimens. Much work remains to be done with this group.

*Covina, California, September 25, 1915.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Arizona Hooded Oriole in the Fresno District.**—On May 26, 1915, a male Arizona Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus nelsoni*) was found among the raisin boxes in a shed on the Borell place, four miles west of Fresno. It was collected by Adrey Borell and the skin, in a somewhat mutilated condition, is now in my collection. During the following week three more males were seen at close range. All were in full plumage and alone.—WINIFRED N. WEAR, *Fresno, California.*

**Nesting of Wild Ducks near San Francisco.**—During the spring and early summer I visited Merced Lake a number of times for the purpose of taking a bird census of the region as requested by the Biological Survey. The following species of wild ducks were found to be nesting in the vicinity:

**Mallard.** On April 22, I flushed a Mallard from her nest. At that time the nest contained seven eggs, but on April 28 it contained ten. After sitting on the eggs about ten days the duck abandoned it though she stayed in the vicinity for a number of days.

**Lesser Scaup Duck.** A male of this species was seen on nearly every visit to the lake. In July this male, in company with a female and three young not yet old enough to fly, was seen out in the lake. The distance was too far for positive identification of the female, but it seems probable that a pair of this species nested in the vicinity.

**Ruddy Duck.** These were the most numerous ducks about the lake. They probably nested in considerable numbers, though no nests were found. Young of this species were seen in some numbers during July and August and must have been hatched in the vicinity of the lake, as they were not yet able to fly.

On June 5 of this year I visited Stow Lake and the other lakes of Golden Gate Park for the purpose of making an estimate of the number of wild ducks summering there. In all, 169 ducks were counted. They were of the following species: Mature Mallards, 66; young Mallards, 70; total Mallards, 136; Ruddy Ducks, 6; Baldpates, 2; Lesser