

the discriminating mind and eye than is Dwarf Hermit Thrush, Summer Tanager and a hundred others in our avifauna, but I imagine there are few who would advise such sweeping changes.

By all means, let all who wish, call *Oceanodroma homochroa*, Coues Petrel, or call *Catherpes m. punctulatus*, Ridgway Canyon Wren. That is entirely permissible, but why not be uniform and call the birds either after the describer, or as those gentlemen intended they should be named.

Another thing to which I should like to call attention, and which I deplore, is the practice often followed by some men I know (and mighty good friends I consider them too) of calling birds by nicknames. For instance, a short time ago I was privileged to see some truly remarkable photographs of birds, the "names" of which were written on the backs. That of a flock of Black-crowned Night Herons was labelled "Squawks"; one of Black-bellied Plovers was "Grey Plovers"; Western Sandpipers was "Sand Peeps", and several others similarly. These names may be very expressive, and, if a man has a fair ornithological education, they will be understood, but the majority of the copies of these photos will probably fall into the hands of people whose knowledge of birds is limited. It is most important that the little which the lay public knows about birds, shall be correct. While a very small youngster, and just starting to collect single, end-blown eggs with the help (?) of a couple of popular bird books, I can clearly remember what difficulty I had in trying to distinguish between the Kingbird, as given in one book, and the Bee Martin in the other. I have never since forgiven the author of the latter.—A. B. HOWELL, *Tucson, Arizona.*

A New Fly Trap.—The English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is by far the most abundant bird in the cities of Imperial Valley, outnumbering all other birds (in the city districts) about ten to one. I have noticed them on several occasions congregated around store fronts early in the mornings while the air was still very cold. Close observation showed that the birds were industriously making hearty breakfasts of the flies which had settled on the store fronts the warm evening before, and were now benumbed with the cold. The supply of flies seemed inexhaustible but these imported fly traps must have eaten enormous quantities. I have seen the flies so thick that they could be brushed up by the quart. If the supply of English Sparrows in Imperial Valley can be increased sufficiently the fly question in that section ought to be solved, for flies, like English Sparrows, seem to thrive around our smaller cities and towns.—W. LEE CHAMBERS, *Eagle Rock, California.*

Mexican Ground Dove at San Diego.—A male Mexican Ground Dove (*Chaemepelia passerina pallescens*) was shot inside the city limits of San Diego on November 10, 1915, by H. G. Keith of this city. The bird is now in the collection of the San Diego Natural History Society.—HENRY GREY, *San Diego, California.*

An Early Record of American Scoter for California.—In sorting over an old box of bones here, I found the head, wing bones and feet of a bird, bearing the following data: 44931, *Oidemia americana*, ♀, San Luis Obispo, Cal., Spring, 1866, W. F. Schwartz. On the back of the label, in Baird's handwriting, is the statement: "First spec. fr. Pacific Coast. Keep." I do not know whether this information has any particular significance, since it appears Baird had recorded the species from Fort Steilacoom in his report of 1858, but it occurred to me this might be the first record for California and therefore of possible general interest.—CHAS. W. RICHMOND, *Assistant Curator, Division of Birds, U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

Mexican Ground Dove, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, and California Cuckoo at Escondido, San Diego County, California.—During the spring and summer of 1915 several species of birds were observed at Escondido, California (elevation 750 feet), which have not been found there commonly before; their appearance seems worthy of recording. It might be stated here that the rainfall during the spring of 1915 was excessive, which resulted in an *extended* as well as good growth of vegetation so that such birds as the Cuckoo and Ground Dove might have been led to wander farther than usual from their regular range.

The first stranger was noted April 13, 1915, by Charles Schnack who found what he thought was the nest of a Savannah Sparrow; but not being sure of the species asked me to come with him prepared to collect the bird on the nest if need be. The species proved to be the Western Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum bimaculatus*). The nest was located in an extensive, alkaline, salt-grass meadow. It was placed beside a clump of salt grass which originally covered the nest, in part, at least, shielding the brooding female from the more nearly vertical rays of the sun. The nest cavity seemed to have been scratched out, and the nest was very thin on the bottom so that the back of the brooding female on the nest was almost flush with the surface of the ground.

When we approached the nest the female flattened out on the nest and watched us anxiously. She flushed when we were about six feet away and after we had stood still for several seconds conversing in whispers upon the color pattern of the back and the lack of a decided yellow streak over the eye. The bird slipped off the nest with no trace of commotion, and ran, or rather sneaked away, using every available tuft of grass as a screen to hide behind. When she reached a little ridge about twenty feet away she hopped up in plain sight, and took a flying hop to another ridge a few feet farther away. To a passer-by she would appear to have flushed from a point some twenty feet away from the nest. Mr. Schnack observed the bird when she left the nest several times, and he said that this was her characteristic way of leaving it. The male could be heard uttering a faint insect-like *chip* from some clod or small ridge nearby, but he was very shy and kept circling the nest at a distance.

The nest was built entirely of fine dead weed stalks loosely pressed together. I have been able to identify some of the stalks as of wild oat and salt grass, but the majority are not identifiable. It was well lined with fine dry grass and grass-seed heads frazzled out, there being no feathers, fur or other animal matter.

The outside dimensions of the nest were, horizontally, 125 mm. ($5\frac{1}{2}$ inches) by 113 mm. (5 inches), with a depth of 43 mm. ($2\frac{1}{4}$ inches). The inner cavity measured 69 mm. ($3\frac{1}{4}$ inches) by 63 mm. (3 inches), with a depth of 30 mm. ($1\frac{1}{4}$ inches).

Incubation was from one-third to one-half completed in the four eggs, on April 14. The egg-shells have a ground color almost white with only a suggestion of blue. The individual markings on the eggs average about a square millimeter in area and are arranged in a band from three to five millimeters wide around the more central part of the egg. The position of this band is much nearer to the center of the egg than it is to the large end. This seems to be a good distinguishing character for the eggs of the Grasshopper Sparrow. The under-shell markings are a pale violet-plumbeous, while the brighter surface spots are about hazel. One egg has been cracked in transit and the others measure in millimeters as follows: 18.3x15.7; 18.8x14.6; 17.5x14.7.

The female bird was secured as she left the nest and is now no. 25866 in the collection of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. The male and eggs with nest were secured also, the male being no. 25865, while the nest with eggs is numbered 1617.

A female Savannah Sparrow (in migration of course) was secured within a few feet of the nest of the Grasshopper Sparrow. Several other pairs of Grasshopper Sparrows were seen or heard in this one salt grass patch, but their presence was certainly outside the regular order of things as none had been observed about this place during the fifteen or twenty years previous to this date.

On June 29, 1915, a male Mexican Ground Dove (*Chaemepelia passerina pallescens*) in full breeding plumage and actions was observed by my brother, J. B. Dixon. This bird frequented a stretch of marshy, willow-grown river bottom about three miles north of town. His intense cooing attracted attention, and he is now no. 25862 in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

June 30, 1915, revealed the first California Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) that we had observed in San Diego County. This was a female which was mistaken for a small hawk as it dashed through a willow thicket where there were young chickens. The cuckoo call had been heard several days previously to this, and the specimen (now no. 25863, Mus. Vert. Zool.), had the bare flabby abdomen of a brooding bird. Another (male?) bird was heard a few days later and several weeks later immature Cuckoos were seen and heard calling in the willows.—JOSEPH DIXON, Berkeley, California.