synonym of *Aphelocoma californica californica*. A recent examination of specimens, however, shows that it is a recognizable race, differing from *Aphelocoma californica californica* in its larger size, particularly of wing and tail, and in its somewhat paler, and in fresh plumage, slightly more grayish, blue of upper parts. It occupies the western part of Oregon and the northern part of California; and we have examined specimens from the following localities:

Oregon: Klamath Falls.

California: Goose Lake; Dana; Ice Caves, six miles southwest of Tule Lake; Picard; Lake City; and Lassen Peak.

The Florida jay, *Aphelocoma cyanea* (Vieillot) (=*Aphelocoma floridana* [Bonaparte]) seems, however, to be a species distinct from any of the above, since it differs constantly in its pale forehead and pale sides of the pileum; also *Aphelocoma insularis*, by reason of its very large size and much darker coloration, appears to be trenchantly different from any of its allies, and thus specifically distinct.

With the changes indicated above, the forms of what might conveniently be called the *Aphelocoma californica* group will stand as follows:

Aphelocoma cyanea (Vieillot)
Aphelocoma californica californica (Vigors)
Aphelocoma californica immanis Grinnell
Aphelocoma californica obscura Anthony
Aphelocoma californica hypoleuca Ridgway
Aphelocoma californica grisea Nelson
Aphelocoma californica cyanotis Ridgway
Aphelocoma californica sumichrasti Ridgway
Aphelocoma californica texana Ridgway
Aphelocoma californica woodhouseii (Baird)
Aphelocoma insularis Henshaw.

Washington, D. C., March 9, 1917.

BIRDS OF THE HUMID COAST

By FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

WITH ONE ILLUSTRATION

(*Concluded from page 54*)

VI. IN THE BRACKEN

ONE of the choicest parts of this half cleared strip of land surrounded by forest was an acre of high bracken, the west coast form of the brake, adjoining the carpenter's garden and strawberry bed, solid fern threaded only by narrow trails leading down on one side to the New Englander's in the clearing and on the other to the fishing village by the Bay. Looking off over the fern field to the south there was a rich satisfying mountain view, the wide timbered V of Miami Notch, through which was seen, in the morning light, a sunlit forest; in the afternoon shadow, a rich purple mountain mass. On warm days the view through the notch was softly veiled, while the trees outlining the notch stood in idyllic haze. To the west, between framing conifers could be had glimpses of the Bay which at high tide was banded purple and pale green with brown

stripes marking the sand bars, while across the Bay the strong blue outline of Mt. Hebo and the Coast Range to the south, often seen with white clouds above them, made easily surmounted barriers over which the mist crept in from the ocean.

As we were close to the ocean and the rainy season was not yet over, the mist seemed to be always creeping up from the sea to spread over the mountains, and from the fern field there were ever changing effects of fog between the adjacent inland ridges, wisps of fog rising lazily like smoke among the trees or floating off and getting caught in the tree tops. Even the weather prophet took note of it—"If the fog goes up, it'll rain; if it goes down, it'll clear," the saying was quoted. The strong invigorating ocean breeze that came to the fern field every afternoon bringing the voices of Gulls from the shore, on clear days was tempered by the warm sunshine that, resting on the bracken brought out their delicious fragrance.

On the borders of the fern field were small groves of young conifers, where Thrushes and other birds that found food in the open could retire to safe nesting places. From these groves, in one of which the family of Screech Owls roosted in the day time, reaching out over the bracken were rugged, prickly, long-fingered Sitka spruces, and hemlocks with their gracefully drooping branches hung with tiny cones, that bowed like ostrich plumes in the wind. In strong sunshine the exquisite light green tips of the new foliage made the dark shadowed trees look fairly green jewelled, as beautiful as flowers. At the foot of the fern field passing birds could gather a plentiful harvest of salmon berries.

Over the clearing Vaux Swifts were occasionally seen hurrying by, and after the familiar *peent* of a Nighthawk had been heard by the shore, two of the birds were seen flying around up in the fog at sunset. The sweet-voiced Willow Goldfinches were often seen loitering around the fern field. The female was in darker dress than the eastern Goldfinch but the male as strikingly yellow and black as any of his tribe, the yellow so bright that it was surprising to have it fade to white against the green of a hemlock. The joyous flight song was heard over the fern field about the middle of June and one of a pair seen with nesting material in her bill stopped to pick at the partly ripe head of a bull thistle. When the birds get a billful of unmanageable down, as from a clothesline, it was reported with assurance, they fly up to a hemlock branch and stick it together by rubbing it against the soft hemlock gum! On the last day of June a Goldfinch was heard singing at length and with happy emotion. Perhaps a nestfull of eggs had hatched! Other late builders, Waxwings, with raised crest and clear yellow tail band, were seen on a red huckleberry bush where they were apparently feeding.

One day as I sat among the bracken a Rufous Hummer with a squeak and a whirr came whirtling low over—me?—or was it over my neighborhood where some invisible feathered lady was in hiding? When a male was peaceably sitting on top of a small hemlock, another, possibly a rival, dived down at him, hurtling him off at a wide angle. Several were chasing after each other one day with nothing to indicate the merits of the case, and twice, greatly to my surprise I discovered a Hummingbird in hot pursuit of an inoffensive Swallow—such heights of arrogance may even a pinch of feathers attain!

But though many an attractive bird was seen flying about over the green bracken, the one whose song and presence harmonized best with the fragrant fern field was the Russet-backed Thrush. Two were singing their sweet mu-

sical *hoit, whoite, tra-la-la-la-ree,* on opposite sides of the green acre at one time, one of them perched on the tip of a stake beside me quite unafraid, when a Robin spied a prowling cat and made such an outcry that, much to my disappointment the concert stopped abruptly. Before family cares became too engrossing, the lovely Thrush songs might be heard at almost any time of day, sung perhaps within hearing of happy brown mothers brooding their nests in the bordering groves. While the sweet song seemed best suited to the open clearings and fragrant fern fields, at its deepest moments—in the quiet evening hours and at the nest—it went well with the richly shadowed hemlocks, with the sound of the wind through the spruces, and the cool strong air from over the sea.

One of the trails through the fern fields led to a fence where Goldilocks went mornings for a pail of milk that hung from a rail, went protected by her two dogs, for across the fence down a dark trail through the forest a black bear had gone not long before—had gone ambling by the Pileated's stub on through the dark woods to a small wood garden where pink Canterbury bells nearly twice a bear's height bordered the trail, and then up across a monster fallen log that blocked the way and was easier to surmount with four feet than two—fearsome trail—no wonder the little milk maid's heart beat hard and she kept her protectors close at hand!

Just beyond the fence where the milk pail hung above the bracken, stood one of the white mottled alders with its multiplicity of slender branches and cocoon-like cushions of greenish brown moss then being shipped out in bales to California florists. The light green leafy alder top was one of the favorite hunting grounds of a Western Flycatcher, but only occasional glimpses could be caught of twitching shoulders or other fragmentary parts of avian anatomy as he flitted about in the thick sunny tree top. Once I did get a really good view of his olivaceous back as he sat on a branch singing a weak disjointed song that after all was rather pleasing and was apparently eminently satisfactory to himself. *See-wick-ee-wick-ee, see-wick-ee-wick,* it ran, varied by *e-pa-seb, pa-sub,* a jerk of the tail following the terminal *seb* or *sub.* After singing his song over and over till partly perhaps from its association with the sunny tree top, it began to sound very sweet in my ears, he fell back on his familiar call of *see-wick,* willingly answering my poor imitations of his notes for a time, and then flying on into the alders and conifers by the brook, where he was lost sight of in the dense thicket.

Another small Flycatcher, presumably *trailli,* was seen several times on a small dead tree in the middle of a neighboring clearing with the sun shining full on his white breast, contentedly calling *pre-ep'-pah-deer, pre-ep'-ah-deer,* his notes punctuated by jerks of the tail.

In the top of a young hemlock near our fence line, a Seattle Wren often sang a bright clear musical song, or rather a variety of songs, for his flexible voice made variety easy. The general form and rhythm sometimes suggested the *pill-a-will* of the black Towhee, but the wrennish burr and quality were characteristic. Sometimes it was *bur'r'r will-ahwill,* or *bur'r'r willahwillahwill;* again *pur'r'r-will, will, will, will, will, will, pur'r'r-will, will, will, will, will, will;* or *tu-wee' wata, wata, wata.* Once the Wren gave a single short note and then four notes strikingly loud and clear; and again four repetitions of the same note with the fifth note dropped, *he-he-he-he ha-ha-ha-hup.*

From the fence at the foot of our fern field a trail led through the bracken

higher than my head down to the brook and so to a pasture beyond; and along the line of this fragrant fern trail sitting on my camp stool with the bracken closing me in, the tips of the triangular fronds uncurling over my head, I spent many pleasant hours watching the feathered passers-by. Once there came the soft musical, almost tender *wick-up, wick-up, wick-up* of a Red-shafted Flicker close beside me, and when the two went by, the *if-if-if-if-if* was heard. After one of the big birds had flown overhead, a conspicuous object with its red underwings and white rump patch, it lit on the shadowed side of a hemlock trunk and vanished so completely that I could barely make out the form of its head and neck.

The small yellow forms of Lutescent Warblers were often seen during June disappearing in the bushes about the garden and fern field, though the quiet little birds were not so much in evidence as the Golden Pileolated Warblers with their keener colors and louder voices. But on the first of July a Lutescent was found feeding young near the fern trail. Twice it almost flew into me, it was so preoccupied. As it went in and out of a small spruce and flew back and forth over the bracken I had ample opportunity to notice how well its soft green plumage toned in with the yellow green of the sunlit ferns and spruces.

The next day, as one of the white dogs was with me, I created quite a disturbance down the fern trail. For how could anxious parents be expected to distinguish between a white dog and a white cat? Though the voices of young birds were heard, they were prudently kept out of sight. A female Black-headed Grosbeak—with her yellowish brown breast and the white median crown stripe that gives the odd effect of hair parted in the middle—flew onto the tip of a young hemlock and said *ick* at us, but she did not seem greatly disturbed and when her mate came he took us even less seriously, after intelligent inspection beginning to sing. But the white dog marked us for suspicious characters and a Seattle Wren came peering down at us, three black-capped Pileolated Warblers looked enquiringly as they flipped through the bushes, a Russet-backed Thrush and a Song Sparrow examined us, and a Rufous Hummer glanced down as he whizzed by.

Though there was no telling how many Pileolated Warblers and Russet-backed Thrushes there were in the compressed fifty-rod nesting area, the Grosbeaks were apparently the third pair in the immediate neighborhood. Farther down the fern trail my attention was attracted by a Swallow note and looking up, perched jauntily on top of an old gray stub was a rufous-backed Sparrow Hawk, around whom, for reasons best known to themselves, two White-bellied Swallows, perhaps my friends from the nest in the stub, were clamorously flying.

VII. THE BAND-TAILS

Near the foot of the fern trail one day I stopped to enjoy the view of Miami Notch with its purple background, and to look up at a row of noble old hemlocks and Sitka spruces fronting the strip of timber between the clearing and the Bay, in which as it proved a flock of perhaps fifty of the large Band-tailed Pigeons made their headquarters. Studying the line of tall trees, their large trunks sun-patched, their branches waving in the afternoon sea breeze, two stood out conspicuously, one a great clean boled spruce with big cushions of moss on its branches, the other a bare-tipped lofty mast, good for passing

Eagles to light on. Flanking the row of tall bare-trunked trees was a younger stand of conifers, handsomely branched to the ground.

As I gazed up at the trees, suddenly a flock of about fifteen of the large virile Pigeons flew out of their dark depths. A few moments later a loud noise of wings in the direction of the pasture below was followed by the appearance or reappearance of a close flock of fifteen or twenty which quickly vanished in the cool dark timber. As I watched the tree tops in which they had disappeared, through the dense evergreen branches I now and then caught suggestive glimpses of a head and neck or, as one rose, the band of a square spread tail, and heard the sound of whacking wings and movements among the branches, together with the characteristic hooting—*hoo'-ha-hoo, hoo'-ha-hoo;* or *hoo'-oo-hoo, hoo'-hoo-ugh,* and *oop'-oo-ugh,* given with mouthed pouter dove quality. While the Pigeons hooted high in the tree tops, from the undergrowth around me came the songs of Western Robins, California Purple Finches, Rusty Song Sparrows, and Russet-backed Thrushes.

Wherever a Pigeon was seen or heard he became the center of interest, whether flying from a high tree-top across the sky with powerful arrowlike flight, hooting in low subdued tones from his hiding place in a dense evergreen top, or hooting loudly from the top of a lofty stub—one was seen on top of the two hundred foot stub that marked our clearing—hooting in Owl-like cadences—

Whoo-ah, hoo-hoo'; whoo-ah, hoo-hoo'; whoo-ah, hoo-hoo; or *who-ah-hoo, who-ah-hoo.*

Two that I saw about the middle of June around an old dead spruce suggested courtship maneuvers. One, as if on exhibition, sailed on outspread wings completely around the top of the tree, after which it perched on a high branch beside its audience. This soaring before one witness was seen twice within a few days. Once hearing a whirr through the air I looked up to find two Band-tails crossing overhead with their swift powerful flight. Another time I startled a flock along a wood road where there was an abundance of salmonberries, and they kept flying up, whacking wings, till it seemed as if there must have been fifty in the flock.

In the afternoons, generally between three and four o'clock, the Band-tails left their tree-top headquarters and flew, in flocks of varying size, across to the mountains. One day at 3:20 a flock of about twenty-five straggled over; another day at 3:45 when I had about given them up the sound of wings attracted my attention and ten birds started from the big spruces. Still later, at 4 o'clock one afternoon I saw a flock round a spruce top, swing out clear of the trees, and come up through the sky towards the mountains. As both open water and berries of various kinds were to be found on the slopes, the birds probably went both to drink and to feed. Elderberries, huckleberries, and salmonberries were all on the bushes at the same time. So many elderberries are eaten by the Pigeons, I was told, that at times their meat is bitter from them, while the bear berries or cascara that also grow in the Coast Mountains are such a favorite food that the Pigeons will go to a tree of them when in the midst of other berries.

Thinking that perhaps the Pigeons drank from the school reservoir up in the woods, in which direction they generally flew, I went up one afternoon to see if I could find any of them there. Though none were found at the time, berry bushes were in bearing just below, and the birds might well come to drink in the

beautiful spot, the most beautiful of any seen in the region. From a mountain spring the water came tumbling down a narrow wooded gulch between moss-covered banks and among mossy logs and clusters of tall spreading fern fronds into the clear pool of the reservoir, shadowed by a brotherhood of noble hemlocks, their branches hung with swaying pale green moss. Here in the solemn conclave of Druids, where the wind sings with hushed voice, from the moss

VARIED THRUSH

From Bailey's' "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States." By courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company.

and ferns of the rich earth carpet came the call of the little brown woodlander, the Winter Wren, a lover of just such forest depths. And it was easy to imagine a band of the great Pigeons hooting solemnly from the tree tops overlooking the clear water of the beautiful pool.

VIII. A VOICE FROM THE HEIGHTS

Above the chorus of the Humid Coast belt three soloists stood apart, not from any brilliancy of execution or charm of vocal accomplishment, but from their deep human appeal, their rare moving quality. The clarion *pu-pu-peo*, or the keener *pu-pee-peo,* of the Olive-sided Flycatcher from the hills aroused rich mountain memories, as did also the fresh uplifted song of the Nuttall Sparrow, whether heard from a fern field, a tree top overlooking the fishing village and the quiet inland waters of the blue Bay, or from a cliff overlooking the wide sandy beach and the long white lines of surf coming in from the ocean.

But there was one voice that was new to me, whose appeal was reinforced by no rare memories, though given glamour by Alaskan song and story—the voice of the Varied Thrush. Its single note with its mysterious vibrant trill had been heard from the mountain tops in the chorus of morning and evening; and on one red letter day, from the wood road one of the rare birds had actually been seen near enough to distinguish its golden brown, dark-collared breast.

But not until one Sunday morning when I was sitting quietly in the fern field, did I really hear the wonderful song. Then through the clear air, each single, long-swelling note came down from the ridge above like the peal of a golden bell. It was indeed a Voice from the Heights! The best songs from the lower levels and even those of the Olive-sided and the Nuttall Sparrow but lead up to it, for the song of the Sparrow is full of plaintive yearning, and the call of the Flycatcher, pure and clarion toned though it be, has a note of striving in its exaltation; but the voice of the Varied Thrush seems the voice of one who has attained. And as it comes from the Heights with their far view over the ocean, it seems to voice the serene philosophic spirit by which life, death, and the veiled hereafter seem but links in the chain of the ordered Universe, upon which, with bared head, one may gaze, content to bear his part.

Washington, D. C.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Peculiar Nesting Habits of the Avocet.—While collecting on the south shore of Big Quill Lake, Saskatchewan, on June 22, 1915, on a low, sandy island I found three nests of the Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*). Nest number one contained four eggs on the point of hatching. Number two, six eggs, three of which were fresh and three on point of hatching! Number three, eight eggs, all fresh. During the time I was on this island, nearly two hours, I counted ten birds. On June 8, at Buffalo Lake, on a small low island, I found only one nest containing seven fresh eggs, though I counted there eight birds.

Mr. W. E. Lake, of Edam, Saskatchewan, a reliable observer, told me he had noted Avocets breeding in his district for some years, and of having found nests containing from three to eight eggs.—H. H. MITCHELL, *Regina, Saskatchewan.*

The Surf Bird at San Francisco.—On November 5, 1916, a very exceptional opportunity was afforded the writer for observing a flock of Surf-birds (*Aphriza virgata*), on the boulder-strewn beach below San Francisco's famous Cliff House. I had been looking seaward through the powerful binoculars that may be rented on the piazza, when my attention was attracted by nine of these birds on the ledges almost directly beneath. Upon adjusting the glass to proper focus, the birds were revealed in startling proximity, appearing scarcely an arm's length distant and permitting of the most minute inspection.

They were busily engaged in exploring the mossy buttresses, and apparently were not at all alarmed by the numerous visitors on the terrace above, though acknowledging their presence by pausing from time to time to look upward. They worked industriously