

**The Tragical Addition of a New Bird to the Campus List.**—A dead bird or any part of one found in the woods or fields always suggests a story. It is true that the story, even when the bird can be identified, usually tells nothing more than this: That the species represented has occurred in or near the locality where its remains were found. This is not much, but it is something, especially when the bird is rare or hitherto unknown in that locality.

It is always interesting when the finding of a dead bird is attended by circumstances which suggest, in addition to the fact of the bird's occurrence where found, a real story, with action and human appeal and perhaps even a plot. Such a story is suggested by some remains of a Short-eared Owl, found in the Berkeley Hills and brought to the Museum, on two different dates, by two different people, and in two different manners and forms.

On the night of January 29, 1918, a Short-eared Owl was perched on a rock which crops from the steep gravelly north wall near the head of one of the two small tributary canyons lying between the mouths of Strawberry and Claremont canyons. This slope can be seen easily by anyone who walks up Haste Street and looks straight ahead of him. The axis of the canyon, if extended west, would almost coincide with Haste Street. The half-gravelly, half-rocky slope, or ledge, shows up plainly, for it is the only dirt-colored area in a canyon otherwise more or less intensely green with vegetation.

What time of night it was, or how long the owl had scanned the moonlit canyon from the high rock, we cannot say, but the bird's vigil was suddenly interrupted by a dark form swiftly bearing down on silent wings. We can imagine that the Short-eared Owl quickly crouched, as startled birds do before springing into the air. But it had barely spread its wings before the dark form had pounced upon it and crunched it into a gravelly crevice of the ledge. It fought upward with its talons, cat-like; but, if it was a cat, its antagonist was a tiger, with talons that were longer and stronger. For a few moments there was a lively tussle and a great beating of soft wings on rocks; feathers were torn from the smaller bird and strewn over the ground; then the talons of the Horned Owl closed on the breast of the Short-eared, at once piercing the vitals and squeezing out the breath,—and the struggle was over.

The Horned Owl, bearing the body of its victim in its claws, flew across the canyon, probably in a southerly direction, toward the grove of eucalyptus trees back of the State School for the Deaf and Blind. Here it engaged in a cannibalistic orgy, devouring the breast and other portions of its slain relative, and not caring how many of the bones and feathers it swallowed with the flesh.

The next morning (January 30), the Horned Owl, still gorged, and made stupid by sunlight, was sleeping in the foliage of a live oak or eucalyptus, near the scene of its feast, when a man (or a boy) with a shot-gun passed. The owl flushed, and the man (or boy) took a wing shot at it. Though wounded, its momentum carried it some distance from the gunner, who hunted for the body awhile and then gave up his search.

That is the story as reconstructed from the evidence brought to hand at the Museum. The reader, after hearing the evidence, is at liberty to judge whether the story seems, at least in its main essentials, reasonable.

On the afternoon of January 30, a member of the Museum staff, while strolling around the small canyon already described, spied some feathers near the rock already described, and, clambering up, collected all of the larger and some of the smaller ones. Among these were five primaries (three from the left, two from the right, wing), and one secondary (from the left wing). What would amount to a good handful of small downy breast feathers he left scattered, as found, over the ledge. Some of these were blood-spattered, or torn out with bits of skin adhering to their roots. The quills of two larger feathers were crushed and split. At the Museum he compared the feathers with feathers on study specimens and thus proved they had come from a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*).

These feathers constituted the first installment of Short-eared Owl remains to arrive at the Museum. The second installment arrived five days later, in the stomach of a Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus pacificus*). On February 4, Miss Elizabeth Van E. Ferguson, while walking in "the Berkeley Hills near the Blind Asylum", found a dead Horned Owl, which she retrieved and brought to the Museum. Dr. Bryant, who examined the stomach, found that certain dark wet masses therefrom, when dried and fluffed out,

resolved themselves into the feathers of a Short-eared Owl. The close correspondence between the localities where the wing-feathers, and the dead Horned Owl, respectively, were found, immediately linked up in a suggestive manner two events hitherto not guessed to be related. Thereupon, Mr. Swarth, who skinned the Horned Owl, testified that it had already been dead from two to four days when found, and thereby proved a correspondence between the two circumstances in *date* as well. From these facts and clues, from other evidence (such as the finding by Mr. Swarth of shot in the body of the owl), and from a study of the canyon and an elimination of certain events that probably did not happen, has been constructed the story of what well might have and probably *did* happen.

This much at least is positive: A Short-eared Owl has occurred on or near the Campus—which is interesting because this owl has not previously been recorded as a Campus bird.—RICHARD HUNT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, March 5, 1918.*

**Nesting Notes from the San Bernardino Valley.**—A nest with five eggs of the Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) was taken in Colton, California, on March 15, 1917. The weather was unusually cold in January, February and March, 1917; yet this is the earliest instance that I have noticed.

On July 4, 1917, I found a Pasadena Thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum pasadenense*) incubating three eggs. Apparently incubation was advanced. Several days later when I visited the nest I was sorry to find that the eggs had been destroyed. These birds nest early and this is, by far, the latest record that I have.—W. C. HANNA, *Colton, California, February 15, 1918.*

**The Salton Sink Song Sparrow at Oro Grande, California.**—I spent two days, February 17 and 18, 1918, collecting at Oro Grande, near Victorville on the Mohave Desert, San Bernardino County, California. Nine Song Sparrows were taken, six of which were the San Diego (*Melospiza melodia cooperi*), two were the Modoc (*Melospiza melodia fisherella*), and one was the Salton Sink (*Melospiza melodia saltonis*). To quote Mr. J. Grinnell, who has examined the specimens, "the *saltonis* is of particular interest as it seems to be our first known occurrence of this species north of the Colorado desert, probably a winter straggler. Only *cooperi* has been known to breed along the Mohave River." —WRIGHT M. PIERCE, *Claremont, California, March 4, 1918.*

**A Surprising Trait in the Black-necked Stilt.**—One who has observed the Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) in the field or who has considered its extreme specialization as a wader would scarcely suspect it of much ability as a diver, yet it has such ability to no little degree. While collecting at Nigger Slough, in the vicinity of Los Angeles, this spring, I brought down a male Stilt from a flock overhead. The bird, with the tip of one wing injured, came down into open water some eighteen inches in depth. It repeatedly tried to escape by diving. These efforts were watched with much interest on my part, and a fairly good view of the performance was obtained. The wings were used in making progress but the position of the feet was not learned. The injured wing tip was an apparent handicap and the bird did not remain below very well. A distance of some four or five feet was the longest dive made. The adult bird must have practically no use for such an accomplishment in a state of nature. Is it a diver when in its infancy? Is this a juvenal character persisting in the adult but coming to the surface only under unusual stress?—LOYE MILLER, *State Normal School, Los Angeles, California, May 9, 1918.*

**Wood Ibis at San Diego.**—A pair of Wood Ibises (*Mycteria americana*), male and female presumably, which I first observed on March 17, 1918, were here for over one month, and, if they have not been shot, may still be in the vicinity. I never before saw an Ibis here so early. These birds apparently were mated, as they always remained close together when feeding or flying. I have not seen them myself since April 17, but have heard of one being seen lately. My previous earliest record for the species was June 29, 1915, when six appeared and were promptly shot by local gunners, to be left where they fell. It is a pity that the game laws are not recognized to any extent in San Diego city and county by such a large percentage of gunners.—HENRY GREY, *San Diego, California, May 1, 1918.*

**Evidence on the Food of Hawks and Owls in California.**—Most questions as to the food of hawks and owls can be answered by reference to A. K. Fisher's "The Hawks and Owls of the United States in their Relation to Agriculture" (U. S. Dept. Agric., Div. Ornithology and Mammology, Bull. 3, 1893). In this volume are to be found 210 pages of