

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Association of Migrating Waders.—Mention of collecting a male and female of the Baird Sandpiper by L. E. Wyman in the July-August CONDOR (p. 172), calls to mind observations made by myself on migrating shore birds on the Atlantic coast during recent seasons. It was early noticed that the first birds to come south in the fall as well as the late ones travelling north in the spring, were very often seen two together. At times they appeared to be male and female, which is quite possible to determine in some species without taking specimens, the female being so much larger and longer billed. At other times they looked just alike. At first I took it for granted that these birds were mated pairs, but more recently I have come to have little confidence in that hypothesis. Too often have a couple of boon companions, separated from the crowd and evidently counting a good deal on one another's society, been of different species, a Least and a Semipalmated Sandpiper or even a Ringneck Plover and one of the smaller species. It also appears that three birds travel in company as often as two, perhaps more often in the late summer, and my belief is that these associations are, in general, purely platonic. We know that there are times when we prefer to travel with one or two chosen companions rather than with a crowd, and the more I see of them the more comparable to our own the social instincts of the shore birds appear. This point of view does not rest on sufficiently definite data to be called a scientific observation, but nevertheless I would like to present it for consideration.—JOHN T. NICHOLS, *New York City, August 15, 1919.*

White-throated Swift in Contra Costa County.—On the left hand side of Pine Canyon, Contra Costa County, about a mile above Ford's Ranch, which is at the entrance to the canyon, are some large rocks containing various ledges and cracks. While passing through the canyon on July 5, 1919, I noticed several White-throated Swifts (*Aeronautes melanoleucus*) sailing about these rocks. I therefore climbed up to see if their nesting site was accessible.

I managed, with stocking feet and small finger holds, to climb up the face of the rock to an almost inaccessible place, where two big rocks come together. In this crack was an unoccupied nest situated on a small wedged-in stone. Four feet above this nest was another which was occupied, as the old bird was flushed. While trying to decide which was the best way to reach this nest, the old bird came back at full speed and swooped up to it almost hitting me in the face. This proves that they do not always slow down in their speed when entering the nest.

After some delicate climbing and balancing, the nest was reached and found to be empty. But right above it, in a small crack, were two young birds almost ready to fly. After trying to poke them down with a small stick I had to give it up as the little birds squeezed farther in the crack. There were more nests elsewhere in the rocks, as about thirty birds were observed sailing back and forth over the canyon.—LUTHER LITTLE, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, California, August 26, 1919.*

Luck.—If the writer had not been possessed of a certain amount of this "article" these notes would not have been written. Briefly told the facts are these.

A certain pair of Nuttall Woodpeckers (*Dryobates nuttalli*) chose a partly decayed fence post for a building site. The same location had been selected by a family of bumble-bees. The woodpeckers started near the top of the post and drilled their excavation downward, while the bees started some two feet below and burrowed upward. The two openings met and the woodpecker remained in possession.

It so happened that Mrs. Woodpecker laid a runt egg which promptly slipped into the trap nest provided by the bumble-bee, and at the time the writer examined the post the small end of the woodpecker egg was protruding from the opening of the bumble-bee excavation, fully a foot below the bottom of the woodpecker's nest. In the woodpecker's dug-out were four normal eggs.

If the runt had been slightly smaller, if the bumble-bee hole had been slightly larger, or if the egg had lodged or broken in its winding journey through the tunnel of

the bee, this tale would not have been written, and the writer would have been short an interesting nest and set of eggs of the Nuttall Woodpecker.—N. K. CARPENTER, *Escondido, California, September 15, 1919.*

Second Occurrence of the Painted Bunting at Solomon, Saline County, Kansas.—A record of the nesting of the Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) near Solomon, Kansas, was given in THE CONDOR, for September, 1918. This year, 1919, I again saw one of the birds near the place where the nest and female were found last year. On June 30, 1919, a male was seen, and it was encountered a second time two days later. I am inclined to think the bird is of more than accidental occurrence in that part of the state and am strengthened in this belief by having seen three males near Chanute, Neosha County. One was seen July 23 and several times later until July 27, a second July 25, and a third July 27, each in a different locality, and several miles apart. I did not look for nests but think it likely that they could have been found, judging from the date of the 1918 nest (June 10) at Solomon. On August 8 still another male was seen just north of Altoona, Wilson County. From these records it would seem that the species occurs regularly farther north than was thought to be the case, or else, what is, perhaps, more likely, its range is being extended northward, possibly from an increase in numbers due to protection. Other Kansas observers may be able to add to our records of the bird.—A. J. KIRN, *Neodesha, Kansas, August 16, 1919.*

A Western Yellowthroat on the University of California Campus.—While working in the gallery of the M. V. Z., on the morning of May 21, 1919, my attention was attracted by a bird-song never before heard by me on or near the Campus. It was faint and directionless through the walls, but I caught enough of it to be keen for an investigation. With the help of Miss Margaret Wythe, I listened from windows on various sides of the building—without, however, hearing the song. The moment I returned to work, I heard it, as faint and directionless as before. Another investigation followed, and another return to work, and so on for half an hour, till I began to imagine that the ghost of a bird's voice was trying to get my ornithological goat, as one might say. But at last, as I listened from an office window, a single clear and near example of the song reached my ears. It was an utterance in four sections, the first three being four-syllabled and exactly alike: *pritisitta, pritisitta, pritisitta, prit*, with accent on the "prit". I had never heard a Yellowthroat song of this exact syllabification, but the chief and important distinguishing character of the song of the species is, after all, its exact repetition of some sort of a two- or three- or four-syllabled "word". Every individual Yellowthroat has quite a stock of different "words", and some are likely to be different from any "words" one would hear another individual sing. Timbre, to be sure, is also a character of the Yellowthroat song—though it varies among and in individuals as widely as does "word"-form. The timbre of this song was hardly typical: it was unusually loose and liquid. The utterance was comparatively slow. Outside the building I found Dr. H. C. Bryant under a bay tree trying to get a look at the singer. He looked as puzzled as I had felt in the gallery. The bird would not show itself except as some sort of a restless flitting warbler with yellow on it somewhere. It went from tree to tree within a limited area round the Museum, returning again and again to trees already visited. It foraged mostly in the bay and pepper trees, but once flew to the top of a large live oak opposite Dr. Grinnell's office window (a favorite place, by the way, for rare visitants to the Campus). We finally decided, in despair, to enlist the services of our doughty field-collector, H. G. White, who soon settled the question by "collecting" the bird. It proved to be a Western Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas occidentalis*)—another new record for the Campus, and one representing a race of Yellowthroat non-resident, and rare even as a transient, in the San Francisco Bay region. It is of interest to note that the bird was foraging exclusively in the high dry tree-tops—whereas one might rather have expected to find it fifty yards away in the tangle of vines and bushes along Strawberry Creek.—RICHARD HUNT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, August 1, 1919.*

Evidence as to the Food of the Wood Ibis.—The Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*), one of the rarer birds of our state, has long been noted as a bird of peculiar feeding habits. The account given by Audubon and cited by Coues in his "Birds of the Northwest"