

NESTING OF THE OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

By JOSEPH DIXON

WITH THREE PHOTOS

THE OCCURRENCE of the Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Nuttallornis borealis*) in the San Francisco Bay region in summer has been noted by a number of observers (for example, Fisher, Condor, VI, p. 108; Grinnell, Condor, XVI, p. 32; and Hansen and Squires, Condor, XIX, p. 60). While this boreal

species has thus already been regarded as a breeding bird of the Bay region, yet exact breeding evidence in the form of nests, eggs or young appears to be lacking. Through the interest and initiative of Donald D. McLean, a Cooper Club member, definite breeding data is now available, he having discovered the nest and eggs now to be described.

On June 12, 1920, a set of four slightly incubated eggs of the Olive-sided Flycatcher, together with the nest attached to the limb supporting it, and accompanying photographs, were secured by Mr. McLean and the writer from a slender Monterey cypress that stands on the south-facing hillside just north of the Claremont Hotel, in Berkeley. The birds had started a nest in an adjoining cypress, but for some unknown reason they had abandoned it and moved to the new location. The nest was placed fifty-seven feet above the ground, by actual measurement, and thirty inches from the tip of a long slender upper branch of a broken-topped cypress. The situation was exposed, but



Fig. 38. NEST SITE OF OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER IN MONTEREY CYPRESS. THE TAIL OF THE FEMALE, ON THE NEST, SHOWS AS A BLACK DOT AT THE POINT WHERE THE MARGINAL ARROWS WOULD INTERSECT.

the brooding bird was partially screened from above by an overhanging branch. The nest was firmly ensconced on top of a cluster of twelve cypress cones, the main limb itself at this point being insufficient, as it was only one-half inch in diameter. The foundation of the nest consists of dead bare cypress twigs and a few dry grass stems. It is lined with fine dry pine needles, stiff fibrous rootlets, and horsehair. The outside dimensions of the nest are $6 \times 6\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$

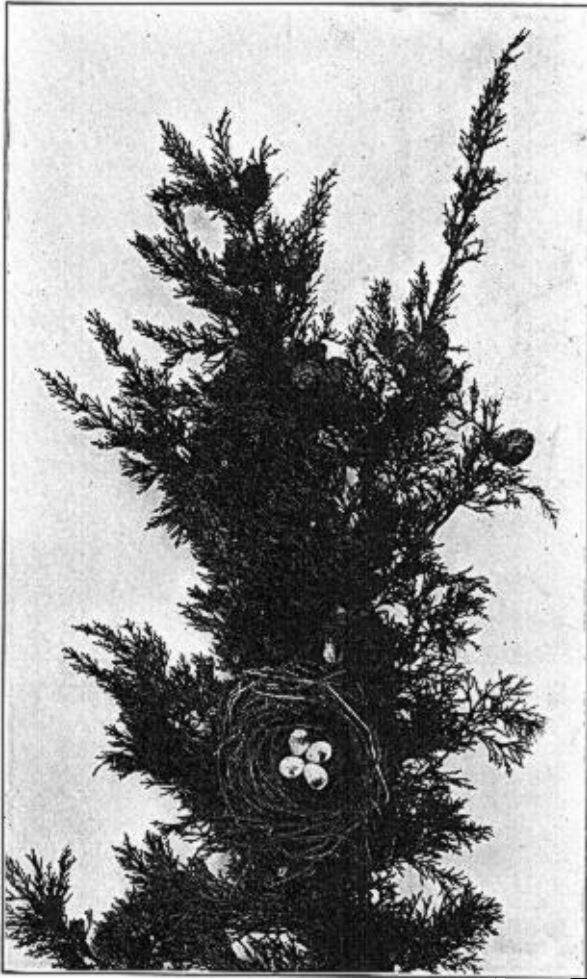


Fig. 39. THE NEST WAS FIRMLY ENSCONCED ON TOP OF A CLUSTER OF TWELVE CYPRESS CONES. IT WAS PLACED THIRTY INCHES FROM THE TIP OF A SLENDER UPPER BRANCH OF THE BROKEN-TOPPED CYPRESS.

inches (15.3x16.5x6.5 centimeters) and the inside dimensions, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (9.0x9.5x3.8 centimeters). The four eggs measure 23.0x16.5, 22.5x16.9, 22.2x17.0 and 22.6x17.0 millimeters, respectively. The ground color of the eggs is normal for the species, being light ochraceous-salmon, but the markings of the eggs are odd. Instead of being wreathed about the larger end with clusters of fairly well defined spots, all four eggs have a single heavy splotch or smudge, six by ten millimeters in extent in one case, on one side or surface of the egg, while the opposite surface is practically unmarked. These splotches are light vinaceous-drab, fading about the edges to cinnamon-rufous (these color names from Ridgway, 1912). The set appears either very handsome or plain according to the position of the eggs when viewed. When first observed in the nest the plain aspects of the eggs were most in view.

A bare dead branch of a nearby eucalyptus was the favorite perch of the pugnacious male, and his duty seemed to be quickly to put to rout any luckless bird that happened to come within twenty-five feet of the nest. Excreta picked up below this favorite perch were found to consist almost entirely of chitinous remains, mandibles and elytra, of insects, chiefly beetles. The dried remains of several blow-flies were found on the edge of the nest, crumbs fallen, as it

were, from the female flycatcher's feeding tray—if she was in truth fed there by the male.

We had hoped that the birds would nest in such a place that a series of photographs illustrating the life history of this species could be secured; but the slender nest branch swaying about in the wind, the distance of the nest



Fig. 40. THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEST CONSISTED OF BARE DEAD CYPRESS TWIGS AND A FEW DRY GRASS STEMS. IT WAS LINED WITH FINE DRY PINE NEEDLES, STIFF FIBROUS ROOTLETS AND HORSEHAIR. ALL FOUR EGGS WERE WELL MARKED ON ONE SIDE OR SURFACE, BUT WERE PLAIN ON THE OTHER.

from the tree trunk, and the clouds of smoke and soot from the nearby hotel, proved too serious handicaps, and the life series idea had to be abandoned. Through the generosity of Mr. McLean the four eggs together with the nest now constitute accession no. 1783, recorded as a gift from him, in the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

Berkeley, California, June 15, 1920.