

rather expected to hear of its presence in the Imperial Valley, in common with a number of other birds which are extending their ranges over the irrigated delta of the Colorado River. Taken in this connection only, this note may prove of interest.—A. BRAZIER HOWELL, Pasadena, California, February 8, 1922.

Some Winter Birds of the Colorado Delta.—On January 22 and 23 of this year I was with a party hunting quail near Don Lorenzo in Lower California. We were from forty to fifty miles east of Calexico, and from twelve to sixteen miles south of the international line.

North of us we could see the sand hills that are still untamed if not unconquered, and beyond them the well-known mountain ranges of the desert. But we were not in a desert country at all—rather in a jungle. The true delta of the Colorado is overflow land, thickly covered with vegetation; ink-weed, rag-weed, and arrow-weed are the native names of the most common kinds. A few cotton-woods and many willows in the lower places, and the ever present mesquite patches, broke the monotony. The ground is not really level. Wind and water have combined to produce hills and depressions, and open places where sand was master were by no means rare. Still, in a general sense, we were on the edge of a flat scrubby country of several thousand square miles, covered solidly with a head-high growth that could be penetrated only with difficulty.

There was hardly a time when one or more of the Raptors were not in sight. When I woke the first morning a pair of Marsh Hawks were busily harrying the cotton-fields by the ranch house. Our old friend, the Western Red-tail, was conspicuously present, as were several other species of hawks and at least two species of owls besides the Burrowing Owl. Turkey Vultures were common. All of which speaks volumes for the abundance of the unseen rodent life in the brush.

The White-crowned Sparrow, in my judgment, was the most common bird, and Gambel Quail the next. Abert Towhees were seen everywhere, and the Mexican Ground Dove and the Northern Cactus Wren were very abundant, though both were outnumbered by the Western Mourning Dove. The Black Phoebe was as busy as anywhere around ponds and buildings. Ravens were plentiful, especially along the banks of the Bee River. I collected three Sparrow Hawks for the San Diego Museum.

Among other land birds observed were Shrike, Thrush, Bush-tit, Vermillion Fly-catcher, Dwarf Cowbird (quite common), Road-runner, Phainopepla, Tree Swallow, and Sonora Red-wing.

On January 24 we drove back to Hecheira and then turned south. We found a slough within eight or ten miles on which we shot ducks, mostly Spoonbills. My son and I each killed one of a pair of Fulvous Tree Ducks, and were much surprised to find them so far north at this season. There was a heavy tule growth around the slough, which was the home of innumerable marsh wrens, and the Sora was more common than I have ever seen it elsewhere.

We drove on to Volcano Lake and spent one morning there. Ruddies and Spoonbills were the most common ducks. Avocets, too, were present in large numbers. I was interested in obtaining from Mr. W. G. Hendricks an authentic statement of the presence there of the Roseate Spoonbill. In the summer of 1920 a flock of about twenty were on the lake, and in the summer of 1921 four were observed. A flight of Lesser Snow Geese apparently takes place over this lake every winter.—GRIFFING BANCROFT, San Diego, California, February 1, 1922.

Water Ouzel Eating a Fish.—On January 1, 1922, I caught sight of a small, plump bird struggling with something on a snow bank across the river, a foot or so from the water's edge. The bird was recognized at once as an Ouzel (*Cinclus mexicanus unicolor*). It appeared to have a small fish in its beak, which it was shaking violently and beating in the snow. I went to the tent and got the field glasses and was able to determine that it really was a fish that the Ouzel was struggling with. The fish was about two inches long and very much alive. After beating and mauling the fish for a few moments the Ouzel would attempt to swallow it. At this juncture the fish would free itself and flop onto the snow, whereupon the Ouzel would seize it and the maltreatment would commence again. After tussling with the refractory fish for about five minutes the Ouzel with apparently tremendous effort managed to stuff the victim down. After the

May, 1922

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

final effort the Ouzel appeared stunned and dazed and too full to move. His inactivity, however, was very brief and he soon plunged into the turbulent river. His strange maneuvers with the fish might remind one of the antics of the Kingfisher when attempting to reduce his catch to an edible state.—CHAS. W. MICHAEL, *Yosemite, California, January 31, 1922.*

Turkey Vulture Wintering at Chico, Butte County, California.—On December 28, 1921, while riding through the Phelan Ranch near Chico, California, I saw a Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura septentrionalis*) circling overhead. On expressing my surprise at seeing the bird so far north at that time of year my companion, who is an old resident there, informed me that they wintered there "quite commonly". Later in the day another was seen in the same locality. Two days later, December 30, I saw two of the birds along the highway between Chico and Gridley, which seems to substantiate my companion's remark.—FRANK N. BASSETT, *Alameda, California, February 18, 1922.*

Behavior of a Barn Owl in Captivity.—On February 13, 1922, some boys captured alive a Barn Owl (*Aluco pratincola*), in the top of the high school building in Benicia. After passing through several different hands it was finally presented to me on the evening of the same day, and I promptly made from a box a good-sized cage for it with the intention of learning a little about the bird's habits.

As usual with owls this bird's activity was much restricted during the day. Especially on sunny days, or at night when brought into a room where there was an electric light, the bird became very drowsy and to all appearances was fast asleep. It would either stand listlessly or lie forward on its breast, as when incubating, with eyes closed and in a position to avoid the most light. Should someone approach the cage during the day after the bird had been left alone for some time, it would always arouse itself sufficiently to attempt to avoid capture, but, not succeeding, would soon settle down and doze off again and become indifferent to any amount of commotion. In fact, it could be taken from its cage, laid on its back, feet upwards, and in this position would remain motionless, its eyes closed, wings folded and claws drawn tightly together.

Towards evening and at night, and sometimes on cloudy days, it became more lively and would attempt to escape from its cage, several times succeeding. Then he had the larger liberty of the laundry, where his cage was kept; an open window covered by a wire screen kept him from getting out of doors. In the laundry he perched on one of the shelves or on a clothes-line, or else flew back and forth between the perches or towards the window, where he clutched the wire screen with his claws, held on awhile, and then flew back to a perch. When recapturing him I found it advisable to keep my hands away from his claws, as I at first got several bad scratches. If he succeeded in getting a good hold of my hand it was difficult to extract it, as he did not seem satisfied to puncture the flesh by only one tight grasp, but would loosen and tighten his grip intermittently, thus making various wounds. He never bit me, though he held his mandibles open when I was recapturing him as though threatening to seize my fingers.

One evening I brought the cage into the kitchen and placed it on the floor to observe the bird's actions. He was quiet and indifferent until a house cat came in through the back door. This immediately occasioned a display of vigorous activity on the part of the owl. As soon as he spied the cat he began snapping his bill, and let forth a series of long, shrill screams of some five seconds duration, with an intermission between each of about the same length. This was kept up for about half an hour, or until the cat left the room. During all this time, backed into one corner of the box, he kept his wings raised high above his head, his whole body swaying slowly from side to side, and eyes open to their full extent, following the cat as it moved about the room.

Much to my disappointment I had difficulty in feeding him. I placed sparrows, raw beef, liver and mice in his cage but he would not voluntarily eat any of these. I succeeded in forcing two house mice into his throat, the bones and fur of which he later expelled in pellets. He accepted a little raw beef which was also forcibly fed to him; liver he would not retain but promptly expelled it. His attitude towards food was one of indifference; he made no effort to avoid being fed and no effort to feed himself. A sparrow which I skinned and fed to him he kept down, but several others freshly killed and placed in his box he did not touch. I thought he would soon begin to eat of his own