

good field observation. It is concerned with the difference in behavior shown by animals when they are members of flocks and when they are alone or relatively isolated. This question has been much discussed with particular reference to problems of mob psychology, but there is still need of observation on the subject, particularly with respect to such highly specialized animals as birds.

In conclusion, I must explain that I am not an ornithologist. My interest in the animal kingdom is so extended that as yet I have been unable to specialize on any one group in making observations. Consequently I request correspondence on either of these points and I should be especially interested to see, summarized in print, the observations of students of bird life which have a bearing on these matters.

*Zoology Building, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, March 18, 1923.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**A Note on the Voice of the Ruddy Duck.**—The queried statement, "Voiceless?" in the excellent account of the Ruddy Duck (*Erismatura jamaicensis*) given in Grinnell, Bryant, and Storer's Game Birds of California, suggests that the following may be of interest.

The male in the breeding season has a peculiar and most unducklike note. It is a liquid and faintly explosive sound given at the completion of the characteristic bobbing of the head and neck. Possibly "dook," or "gook," comes as close as it is possible to write it. The sound made by a bubble of marsh gas as it reaches the surface is an almost exactly similar noise. This note is inaudible more than a few yards away.

While I was in a blind one day in the early fall, a female Ruddy and a fully grown juvenile swam past me at only a few feet distance. The young bird was giving at frequent intervals a low but emphatic "quack".—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Pasadena, California, March 26, 1923.*

**Black Phoebes and House Finches in Joint Use of a Nest.**—At the time of a visit, May 11-14, 1922, to Oakzanita Lodge resort in the Cuyamaca region of San Diego County, California, there came to the writer's attention a rather surprising state of affairs in avian home-life, with a pair of Black Phoebes (*Sayornis nigricans*) and a pair of House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*) as principals. The former, whose nest had been built under the projecting roof of an outlying cottage.—proclaimed, by the way, as the "Dove-Cote," where might have been expected only peace and contentment—were experiencing so determined an intrusion on the part of the latter that not only had the nest become a goal of contention, but as a result the phoebes were subjected to intermittent possession and forced to share its use with the finches. Just why the intruders should have disregarded seemingly well-established priority and persistently encroached upon the phoebes' domain has remained an unsolved problem.

Coincident with the finding of the nest, on May 12, the presence of a female finch and absence of the phoebes attracted particular notice, and investigation of its contents disclosed one egg of the finch and two of the phoebe. The logical supposition that the rightful owners had been completely driven away proved erroneous when later in the day the female phoebe was observed on the nest. At an early hour the next morning, however, the finches had already resumed proprietorship, and the phoebes, if in the immediate neighborhood, were not to be seen. During the afternoon the situation was similarly reversed, the male phoebe solicitously flying about while his mate occupied the nest. The morning of the 14th found the phoebes departed and

the finches again in control of the premises. Unfortunately, it was impossible to make uninterrupted observation, so that circumstances connected with the withdrawal of the phoebes and advent of the finches, or vice versa, could not be ascertained.

Upon leaving Oakzanita on the 14th, it was a matter of conjecture as to which would eventually retire or how long the joint use of the nest could continue. There was no further opportunity to take note of activities until almost a week later. On the 20th the nest contained the remarkable number of eleven eggs, six of the phoebe and five of the finch, but had been deserted by both pairs. The finches had in no way, apparently, attempted to add lining or to alter the nest. It might be of interest to record that the only trace of incubation evidenced in the entire group of eleven was in one of the two phoebe eggs that happened to be sparingly dotted with reddish brown, and were thus identified as having been laid at least later than the two first examined on the 12th, both of which were unmarked.

The use of Black Phoebe nests by House Finches, often supplemented with new material, is not at all of rare occurrence, this chiefly, if not wholly, being found where buildings, bridges, and like structures have offered locations. A goodly majority of the nests thus utilized have doubtless fully served their original purpose, but in some cases, considering the instance cited, such occupancy may have resulted from aggressive tactics that compelled abandonment.—HAROLD M. HOLLAND, *Galesburg, Illinois, April 9, 1923.*



Fig. 44.

**An Albino Western Robin in Seattle.**—On the afternoon of March 20, 1923, I observed an albino robin on the campus of the University of Washington. It was one of a flock of some thirty robins, all of which were of the western variety (*Planesticus migratorius propinquus*), and it is safe to say it belonged to the same race. Its wings and back were entirely white, while its head and tail were a light gray. In most lights the tail looked white also, but when seen from above it appeared to be only a degree lighter than the head. The breast was cinnamon-rufous, but was of a perceptibly lighter shade than those of the other robins in the flock. Its eyes were of normal color and there was no trace of dark markings on the throat. It was still on the campus on March 24.—HORACE GUNTHER, *University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, March 26, 1923.*

**The Knot in Southern California.**—The Knot (*Tringa canutus*), always a rarity on our coast, is almost unknown here in spring. The most recent record, and the second, I believe, in ten years or more, is the capture of two on April 24 in a tide-marsh near Sunset Beach, Orange County, by a collector from this Museum. The birds were in a flock of five or six, feeding on a mud bank at low tide.—L. E. WYMAN, *Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, California, May 3, 1923.*

**Ants Destructive to Bird Life.**—The ornithologist visiting San Diego is usually impressed with the surprising scarcity of nesting birds in Balboa Park, though the surroundings seem to be ideal. It was not until I had been at the San Diego Museum of Natural History a year, that the possible explanation was presented. A swarm of bees that had been installed as an exhibit in the museum was destroyed in a few days by an insignificant ant. This ant, I was told, had in all probability reached our shores with some of the trees or shrubs brought in from South America. It was known as the Argentine Ant.

Such was my introduction to a pest that will doubtless cause immense loss to the state unless some check is soon discovered. A second swarm of bees was destroyed in six days, though all possible defenses were used. A third swarm of bees, in