

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

possession of one of the towers of the building, nearly one hundred feet from the ground, was killed and the honey taken by ants that formed a line from the ground to the top of the tower and, by their overwhelming number, overcame the bees. If bees were killed by ants, why not young birds? Several nests of the Anna Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) were located and kept under observation and in every case the young were killed and eaten within two or three days of the time they hatched.

A colony of Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon lunifrons*) that had nested in one of the towers was visited and some twenty-five dead nestings found on the roof under the nests. Several nests that seemed to have been used and abandoned were torn down, and in most of them were found dead young covered with ants, while a steady column of the insects marched from the top of the tower to the ground.

Several nests of Green-backed Goldfinch (*Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus*) had been abandoned before the eggs hatched, the ants that were swarming over the tree and nest, doubtless being the cause.

Nests of Pipilo located in the shrubbery about the grounds suffered, as well as nests of all the other local species, and the only young birds that I saw about the grounds during two seasons were one or two broods of Green-backed Goldfinches and several of the Valley Quail (*Lophortyx californica vallicola*). Either these two nest in the more open ground where the ants are less abundant, or they are more resistant, for broods of nestlings were not uncommon and of normal size. Domestic fowls, however, suffer a heavy loss.

I was told by a member of the Park Board, living in Balboa Park, that he was unable to raise chickens, as the ants destroyed the chicks before they could emerge from the egg, entering the shell as soon as it was pipped and killing the occupant by sheer force of numbers, a statement easily to be believed by any that have seen the pest in action.

While the Argentine ant does not seem to extend its range rapidly, it is well established in many parts of southern California, and in such sections is certainly a menace to be seriously considered.—A. W. ANTHONY, *San Diego, California, March 26, 1923.*

Early Nesting of Nuttall Sparrow in Golden Gate Park.—In *The Condor*, vol. 18, no. 2, p. 44, Milton S. Ray mentions having found nests of the Nuttall Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*), with fresh eggs, in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, as early as April 1. The most unusual drought of the past six weeks may have induced the birds to commence their spring housekeeping at an earlier date this year than is their ordinary custom. On March 28 (1923) some boys, who come regularly to the Academy for assistance in certain matters in which they are interested, reported the finding of a nest of this species which already contained two eggs. The bush in which this nest is built is in plain view from my desk and one of the birds was sitting upon the eggs when the nest was shown to me.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, March 30, 1923.*

A Guilty Road-runner: Circumstantial Evidence.—February 1, 1923, was one of the bleakest, coldest mornings of the winter, following a stormy night which had brought the snow nearly to the base of the mountains. Our home stands at the upper edge of the mesa slope near where the mountains sink into it. An overcast sky kept things chilled. On such a morning insect and reptilian life is conspicuously absent.

A sparrow trap (Biological Survey type) set in the native brush had been helping me with banding. When I abruptly came into view of the trap, at 11:30 A. M., I saw a Road-runner (*Geococcyx californianus*) crouched against the outside, its attitude that of an individual surprised at some devilry. It looked at me in wide-eyed terror for a moment and then ran into the brush and out of sight.

Curiosity took me toward the trap at once. Better had I retired instantly to a long-distance view and awaited developments. When I saw a sparrow on its back in the trap, however, I 'ducked' into the garage near by and ever so slightly pulled open the drawn shade so that my eye had a good view of the trap. Almost at once the Road-