

islands, it was evident that some of the wiser birds had learned, by experience, that they were safer when separated from the mainland, even if by only a few hundred feet of shallow water.

A few days later, I visited Crane Lake, a little farther east, in Assiniboia, and while investigating a large colony of Western Grebe there, I was amazed by the large number of dead Grebes on nests or floating on the water near nests. The males were swimming about and diving near the nests but the females were nearly all dead. The water at this point was about 30 feet deep and the nests were the usual floating platforms placed among rather thin growths of tules. The area covered by the tules comprised probably five acres or more. The nests all contained from three to five eggs. In making a trip through this area and back, I counted not less than 200 dead birds, and the destruction seemed to extend throughout the colony. The birds had recently been killed, and upon investigation I found each bird had two or more small blood patches on the under part of the neck; otherwise the plumage and flesh were undisturbed. My conclusion was that each bird had been killed while on the nest by a mink or some such animal. This place was, at that time, far from any habitation.

Another incident within my observation, was in Lassen County, California, in May, 1919. I was walking over a piece of land recently drained, where high water had flooded an area of sagebrush. In this sagebrush there had been a colony of Red-winged Blackbirds. I found the eggs in each case broken and the nests partly pulled away from their fastenings. After finding one or two nests in this condition, I observed the tracks of a coyote in the soft mud and by following the coyote tracks, I was led to at least a dozen other nests similarly destroyed.

These depredations, no doubt, go on continually and have been going on for generations; but they point to at least one important cause of bird destruction.

I have been informed by friends who have visited the lakes above referred to, in recent years, that settlers and agriculture have encroached upon these bird breeding grounds to such an extent that the places have been almost deserted by the birds. This would indicate either a great depletion in their number or a very much more congested breeding ground elsewhere.

In further reference to this subject and the apparent lack of data regarding the actual game bird census, I would suggest that some effort be made to secure from each person obtaining a hunting license, a statement as to the number and kind of birds taken the previous year. The duck shooting grounds in California are nearly all covered by private game preserves, and I do not believe it would be difficult for the owners of these preserves to keep a record and return to the proper authorities a statement at the end of each year giving the number of birds killed each day and the numbers for each species. Tabulation of these figures for a few years should be a valuable guide as to the proper bag limit, and would also furnish information regarding migration.—JULES LABARTHE, *San Francisco, January 26, 1924.*

Mid-winter Occurrence of Black-crowned Night Heron Near Gridley, California.

—On January 13, 1924, I spent most of the day with Mr. Gerald J. Chalmers, whose ranch is riparian to the west side of the Feather River about due east of Manzanita, in Butte County, California, trying to find a flock of Wood Ducks, which he had seen near his ranch several days before. A half-mile or so north of the Chalmers ranch and about 3½ miles southeast of Gridley, there is an irregularly shaped pond, covering two or three acres, with a subterranean connection with the Feather River. The water level of this pond corresponds with that in the river. Part of its shore is leveed and all of it covered with a thick growth of trees and brush.

We approached this pond from the north in the late forenoon, making as little noise as possible, in the hope of getting a look at Wood Ducks. We went along the west side of the pond and around to the south side, whence we saw a pair of birds at the opposite (north) side, which turned out to be Coots and not Wood Ducks. We then stepped out onto the bank and flushed a Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax n. naevius*), which rose from the water on the north side of the pond and perched in a tree about 25 feet from the water and perhaps 125 to 150 feet from us. I watched this bird carefully for several minutes, with and without field glasses. It then flew to another tree about the same distance away. While perching it faced us and was quite stationary, with the bill turned down and to one side. The size of the bird, its

generally gray coloration and dark back and crown (dark gray or blackish but not black), its pointed, dark bill, yellow legs, white forehead, throat and under parts, and its rather short neck, satisfied me beyond any doubt as to its identity. The flight was slow and labored, as one would expect in a heron.

From such literature as I have been able to consult this appears to be an extension northwardly of the reported mid-winter occurrence of this species in California.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *Berkeley, California, January 28, 1924.*

Notes on Certain Horned Larks in California.—*Otocoris alpestris insularis*: The Island Horned Lark may not be such a casual visitor to the mainland of California as the present single record from the coast of Los Angeles County would indicate (Pac. Coast Avif., no. 11, 1915, p. 96). There are two specimens of this form in the Dickey collection, a male (no. CX 45), taken at Goleta, Santa Barbara County, November 26, 1915, and another male (no. K 534), taken on the sand dunes near Oxnard, Ventura County, August 22, 1922. The possibility of these birds being extreme examples of *Otocoris alpestris actia* has been considered, but they match island specimens of *Otocoris alpestris insularis* so perfectly as to convince the writers that they may safely be referred to that form. In both instances the birds were taken on the sand dunes, just back of the beach. It would be interesting to determine whether the form ever wanders inland, or whether it is confined to the littoral association. On the Santa Barbara Islands, the race is found almost exclusively on upland pasture lands. One would expect the birds to seek a similar habitat on the mainland during their fall and winter wanderings, but present evidence seems to negate this expectation.

Otocoris alpestris merrilli: A male horned lark (no. J 1831), taken at Buena Vista Lake, Kern County, December 31, 1921, is apparently of this race. It is perfectly matched by two birds from western Idaho, and is therefore quite distinct from *Otocoris alpestris sierrae*, examples of which were at one time referred to *Otocoris alpestris merrilli*. There is no topographic barrier to prevent *merrilli* from coming south to Buena Vista Lake through the great interior valley of California. Dr. Grinnell has recently found the race in abundance in the Sacramento Valley (CONDOR, XXV, 1923, p. 172). It will therefore probably be found to winter regularly south to the southern extremity of the San Joaquin Valley.

Otocoris alpestris enthyimia: Several horned larks in the recently acquired Howell collection were so at variance with our extensive series of the forms of *alpestris* known to occur in California, that we finally submitted the birds to Dr. Oberholser for identification. He pronounced them *Otocoris alpestris enthyimia*. Two more birds have been collected during the past year. These fall so naturally with the specimens examined by him that they are here incorporated under the same name. The data relating to the individual specimens, which are now in the Dickey collection, are as follows, it being noted that all captures were made in the desert area, east of the coastal drainage:

No. 8628, ♀, Fort Yuma, Imperial Co., Jan. 29, 1913.

No. 10037, ♂, shore of Salton Sea, Imperial Co., Feb. 1, 1913.

No. 11931, ♂, Newberry Springs, San Bernardino Co., Dec. 8, 1917.

No. 12509, ♂, Kane Spring, Imperial Co., Jan. 13, 1923.

No. 12510, ♂, Kane Spring, Imperial Co., Jan. 13, 1923.

It has been suggested that these birds might be intergrades between certain races inhabiting areas more nearly adjacent to the stations of capture, thus merely paralleling *enthyimia*, instead of representing that race. However, the characters exhibited by these birds are such as to apparently preclude the possibility of accepting this hypothesis, and to force, instead, the recording of *Otocoris alpestris enthyimia* as a winter visitant to California.—DONALD R. DICKEY and A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Pasadena, California, February 4, 1924.*

Unusual Bird Nesting Records for Southwest Saskatchewan.—In a paper that appeared in the May-June, 1923, issue of the CONDOR I was pleased to be able to record the first appearance in this corner of Saskatchewan of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) in July, 1922. At the same time, I ventured to predict that before long we might see this species here again. Mr. Spencer Pearse, a neighboring rancher, tells me that last May (1923) a pair of Bluebirds appeared at his ranch. His natural hope that they would remain to nest in the spot was not fulfilled, as the birds departed after a couple of days' stay.