

California Condors Breed in Captivity.—In May, 1924, while on a visit to the National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C., I was interested to learn of repeated attempts on the part of the California Condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) to breed there. This was news to me and may be to others. The Condors constituted to me the chief attraction in the park. Three fine adult examples there live in a spacious "flying" enclosure.

In 1898, I saw seven California Condors about a carcass in the mountains of northern San Diego County, California; yet careful search has failed to reveal even one Condor in that locality within the past five years. Although I have seen all together quite a number of Condors in the wild, I have never seen Condors that seemed healthier or in better color or feather than those three captive individuals in Washington.

Mr. Ned Hollister, Superintendent of the Park, has kindly furnished me with the following data. All three Condors were received as birds-of-the-year from Mr. W. B. Whitaker of Piru City, California. The first individual was received at the zoo on July 19, 1901; the second arrived September 7, 1903, and the third came on September 21, 1903. Two of the birds are supposed to represent a mated pair, while the sex of the third individual is unknown. The three birds are of equal size. Mr. Hollister says he has not been able to tell the sexes apart. Outside of the mating season it is difficult or impossible to pick out the mated pair. There is no strife; all three birds live together in real harmony. Mr. Hollister has refused to part with the third bird, for fear it might have a bad effect on the remaining pair.

The captive Condors bred for the first time when they were twelve years old. Mr. Hollister believes that this marks the age when Condors normally reach maturity. The birds have "nested" three times, but one or more seasons have elapsed between nesting periods. In each case, the single egg was laid upon the bare wooden floor of a large shelter or roost which was placed well above the ground. In every instance the egg proved to be infertile. In the first two instances the Condors incubated the egg for several weeks. In the third case the freshly laid egg was taken out and artificially incubated, but again the embryo failed to develop. Although now twenty-one and twenty-three years old, these Condors appear to be in the prime of life, and the excellent housing and attention which they receive lead us to hope that they will continue to live for many years to come.—JOSEPH DIXON, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, July 15, 1924.*

White Wing-markings in the Heermann Gull: A Record from the Past.—I have recently received from Mr. Ruthven Deane a postal card written by Dr. J. G. Cooper, the subject matter of which seems of sufficient interest to place on record, even at this late date. It was written at a time when Mr. Deane was gathering data on albino birds, and is evidently a reply to queries along that line. It was addressed to "Ruthven Deane, Esq., Cambridge, Mass.," and is worded as follows: "Hayward, Cal. Nov. 12 '78. Dear Sir, I never got but one albinoscent spec. in Cal. a *Larus Heerm'ni* with a white patch $\frac{1}{2}$ size of this card on middle of each wing, that is across 2ndy quills. It looked very pretty in the air, like a new sp. but when I shot it I found no other difference. I have seen pale brown & mottled *Dendrocygna fulva* & blotched *Bernicla Gambeli*, imperfect albinos of *T. migratorius* & *Scolecoph.* but they are rare here yet. Yours etc. J. G. Cooper."

Inscribed across this writing is a postscript, "Dr. Brewer may have this *Larus* in hand now."

It will be recalled that Willett (CONDOR, vol. 20, May, 1918, p. 122) has recorded the capture of Heermann Gulls (*Larus heermanni*), both by himself and by L. E. Wyman, that were marked as Dr. Cooper described so many years before. Willett's record stimulated P. A. Taverner (CONDOR, vol. 20, September, 1918, p. 187) to describe a similar specimen from British Columbia; and yet others have been recorded (C. L. Hubbs, CONDOR, vol. 21, May, 1919, p. 121). Evidently this peculiarity of the Heermann Gull, noted as a novelty by present-day collectors, is one of long standing.—H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, May 1, 1924.*

An Unique Blackbird.—An extraordinary bird specimen was collected near Santa Clara, Utah, in March, 1923. Examination showed that it was a Sonora Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus sonoriensis*) with an abnormal bill. The usual length

of the bill in this subspecies is given as .89–1.00 inches. In this specimen the upper mandible is 2.1 inches long, while the lower mandible remains of normal length. It was an adult male and very fat, showing that the bird was surviving in spite of this

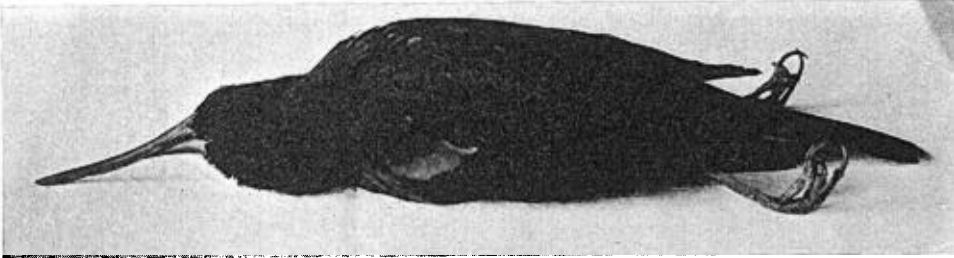


Fig. 49. A BLACKBIRD WITH A STILT'S BILL.

handicap. An examination of the digestive tract revealed that the recent diet was entirely of weed seeds. After the above picture was taken of it, this non-conformist was skinned and stuffed.—VASCO M. TANNER, *Biological Department, Dixie College, St. George, Utah, July 26, 1924.*

Do Bird Families Have Any Permanency?—THE CONDOR having become the medium for a discussion of this point, the writer submits a contribution. The drift of Miss Sherman's article in the May-June issue (vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 85-88) is that flocks of a number of species of birds are not formed by the aggregation of families. In this matter, as in most natural history subjects, we shall find probably that there is nothing like a universal rule. Whistling Swan and Canada Geese families I am sure from personal observation retain their identity at least to midwinter. On Currituck Sound, N. C., when large flocks of these birds are undisturbed for a period they gradually separate out in groups. In the case of the swans the fact that these are families is evident at a glance, the grayish necks of the cygnets making them easily distinguished from the adults. When one sees the birds grouped in this way, two white-necked, accompanied by 2 to 3, and rarely by as many as 5, gray-necked ones, and sees not one, but scores, and even hundreds of such groups, he becomes convinced that he has under observation swan families. When at ease the geese group in the same way, the families in this species generally numbering from 5 to 9. This grouping is well known to all the baymen, of course, and is accepted without question as indicating family ties among the birds; comment on the success of the last breeding season is based on the size of these subdivisions of the flock. There are notable variations in this respect in different seasons, the pairs of swans some years having from 1 to 3 cygnets each, and in others from 3 to 5.

While the writer knows these things from his own observation, he thought it well to write for confirmation to his old friend, Mr. Jasper B. White, of Waterlily, N. C., who has lived with the waterfowl of Currituck Sound for an ordinary lifetime. Mr. White not only gives the desired confirmation but adds further interesting data showing that family ties do mean something among these birds. His father had a pair of Canada Geese which were mated for 42 years; when the male was then accidentally killed the female died in a few months. Mr. White, the son, had an identical experience with the female of a pair that had been mated over 20 years. Game breeders report that Canada Geese have decided preferences about mating. Two specimens or any multiple of that number will not pair, merely because the sexes are equally divided. By no means; it seems they must fall in love, much as human beings do, but once mated, they set an example for constancy that may be equalled, but is never surpassed, among mankind.

The evidence pertaining to ducks is conflicting. We observe that drakes are promiscuous, and we know that in some species at least they desert the females when incubation gets under way, form bachelor gatherings, and even migrate, after the