

of the Elk, were spoken of by the ranchers as a famous wintering ground of the "chickens". These birds find a broad valley with a southern exposure to their liking and there spend the winter as long as food conditions are favorable.

Owing to the inaccessibility of the region in discussion, and to the closed season in Colorado, I am told the Sage-hens have been holding their own. The farmers kill a few in the fall, but the birds are pretty well protected for the most part. A short open season for the Sage-hens in Colorado is now under discussion, but my experience is too limited with this species to venture an opinion on the advisability except that a continued closed season would surely do no harm. I should be sorry to see this last stronghold of the Sage-hen in Colorado invaded by gunners.—ALFRED M. BAILEY, *Colorado Museum of Natural History, Denver, Colorado, April 17, 1925.*

An Early Account of the Birds of Lake Merritt, Oakland.—I am prompted by Mr. A. S. Kibbe's interesting statistics on the occurrence of water birds at Lake Merritt in the March issue of *THE CONDOR* (p. 55) to give an account of an early paper bearing on the same subject, which has but just come to my attention. Reference was made in the November, 1924, issue of *THE CONDOR*, in the editorial department (p. 234), to the thrill that comes to a bibliographer in discovering a new title. This is quite comparable to the thrill that comes in discovering a new species—or, nowadays, a new subspecies! In the present connection I have only recently, for the first time, seen the article of the following title; and I have experienced that thrill.

1876. Nelson, E. W. Birds Observed in the Vicinity of Oakland, Cal., December 23, 1872. *The Scientific Monthly* [Toledo, Ohio], 1, February, 1876, pp. 232-234.

Even though Coues, in his bibliography of 1878, gave the above title, I had not included it in either of my installments of California bibliography—for the reason that I had never, myself, had access to this particular "Scientific Monthly", which series was evidently an ephemeral one. In other words, the above title is brand new to my personally gathered "collection" of California titles.

The general interest in this article of Dr. Nelson's, setting forth field observations of 53 years ago next December, is that it relates to a locality which is now almost in the heart of a big city. Incidentally, be it noted, Dr. Nelson was at that time a youth of but a few months passed 17 years of age. But he was an observant youth; and he put down in this article, when preparing it for publication four years later, much of just the sort of information we would like to have in comparison with avian conditions in the vicinity of Oakland today.

The article in question is a narrative account occupying most of three printed pages. Birds are designated usually by both their common and scientific names, the latter, some of them, rather curious in comparison with those in current use today; for example: "*L[arus]. delawarensis* var. *Californicus*", for the California Gull—as if the California Gull were a subspecies of the Ring-billed. The names used were of course not novel with Nelson, but were such as Henshaw, Ridgway, Coues and other active ornithologists of the day were employing.

A total of 28 species of birds are thus formally mentioned; and just one day of observation is covered, December 23, as indicated in the title. Young Nelson and a friend, "Mr. W. Wentworth", spent "the principal portion of the day . . . on an arm of San Francisco Bay and the adjacent marshes, which are extended along south of Oakland. . . . The only timber to be seen was the belt of oaks extending along near the bay, and in the midst of which, the town [Oakland] is situated."

"On the edge of the town we found a small lake made by building a dam across the outlet of an arm of the bay, which extended back a mile or more from the main body of water. This lake [Lake Merritt, of course] appeared to be the home of numerous water fowl, notwithstanding there were several residences on its banks and a much frequented [true today!] road extending along one side." . . . "On the shore near by a flock of Semi-palmated [=Western] Sandpipers . . . ran nimbly about, and on the opposite shore a White Heron . . . stalked sedately along."

White Pelicans and Eared and Pied-billed grebes were also seen, and their appearance and behavior are described. Furthermore, "in the centre of the lake a large flock of ducks were splashing about, seeming to well understand that they were under the protection of the law." Thus, reference is made to the fact that Lake Merritt was then already a protected resting ground for ducks, having been set apart, in 1869, as the first California State Game Refuge.

Young Nelson and his companion then pushed off from shore in their boat and as they did so "immense numbers of ducks arose from the water, in every direction, and after wheeling about a few times the most of them started off. When they circled by we recognized several species." These were, in modern parlance, Lesser Scaup Duck, Baldpate, Buffle-head, Gadwall and Mallard. In comparison with conditions today, the presence of the Gadwall and the absence of the Pintail are to be noted. In the latter respect it is not unfair, I hope, to suggest the possibility that young Nelson's immature experience prevented him from recognizing all of the species of ducks really present.

It is evident from the text that Nelson and his companion then proceeded in their boat down the outlet slough from Lake Merritt toward Oakland Harbor. They encountered some Willets, a pair of which were shot; and, "pushing the boat up into a narrow strip of grass bordering the marsh", they came upon "a large Rail" [California Clapper Rail, a race not then described] the behavior of which is recorded with admirable attention to detail. Among other birds encountered were "*Sterna Caspia*", "a fine specimen" of which was shot, and several Brown Pelicans, which "commenced fishing near the ruins of an old wharf, which was built out in the bay."

The article closes appropriately, with evident regard to the prevailing formalities of composition, as follows: "The sun sinking behind hills in the direction of the 'Golden Gate' warned us that it was time to turn our boat homeward, and we reluctantly bade farewell to one of the pleasantest days we had enjoyed for some time."—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, April 10, 1925.*

Remarkable Work of the Pileated Woodpecker.—On the talus slope 100 feet above the "Indian Cave", and growing among the great boulders, stands a group of four sickly-looking Douglas spruces. Three of these trees are about 125 feet high; one is a smaller tree, about 75 feet high. The larger trees average three feet in diameter, four feet above the ground; the smaller tree is fifteen inches in diameter. Now the interesting thing about these trees is the work that has been done upon them by a Western Pileated Woodpecker (*Phloeotomus pileatus picinus*). Each tree has been partly stripped of bark. Two have been worked upon from the top to within a few

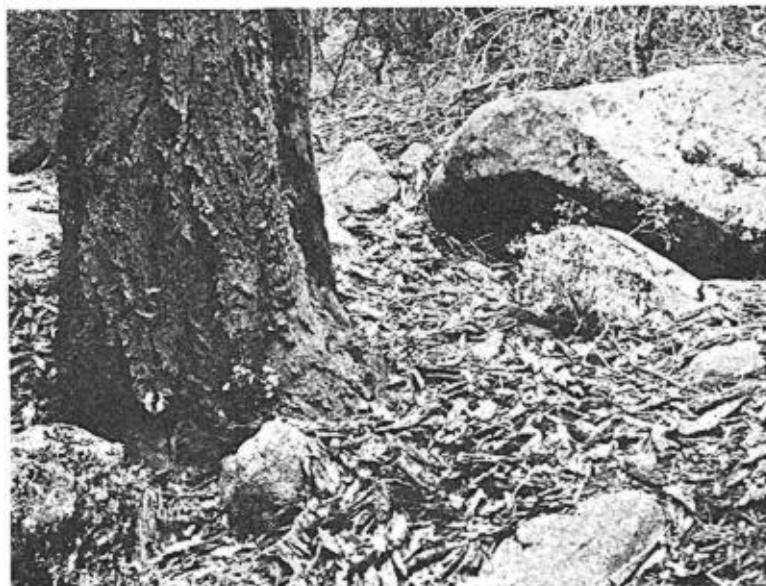


Fig. 45. CHIPS OF BARK AT THE BASE OF ONE OF THE TREES WHERE THE PILEATED WOODPECKER WORKED.