

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Townsend Solitaire Singing in the Autumn.—On the morning of October 14, 1925, I happened to be walking up the old road in the bottom of Granger Canyon, on the east side of the Warner Mountains, near Cedarville, Modoc County, California, when my attention was attracted by the clear notes of a bird song, a song that was familiar, and yet one that seemed to be too loud for that of the species suspected of giving it voice.

The morning was clear and beautiful. Not a breath of air was stirring, and what few sounds there were in this near-desert canyon carried remarkably far. Yet the singer seemed near, and some time was spent in trying to locate it. The road there led up the bottom of the canyon, which runs nearly east and west, and the singer was on the warmer hillside of the southern exposure. Not being able to catch a glimpse of the bird from my position, I sent my assistant up the hillside toward the source of the sound, and, after he had gone some distance, the bird flushed from a small juniper among the rocks and much farther away than seemed possible from the volume of sound that had reached us. My provisional identification was correct, for the bird proved to be a Townsend Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*).

The altitude of that spot was possibly 5,500 feet above sea level. As we continued up the steep road grade, some ten to twelve more of these birds were seen in the hour that it took us in a leisurely fashion to attain another thousand feet of elevation, and in that time four or five other Solitaires were heard and located in full song. A few of them must have been nearly half a mile away and all were above us, some at an altitude where patches of snow still remained from a fall of several days before.

While I have come across this species many times and in many places in the fall of the year, it had never before been my good fortune to hear it in song except in the spring and early summer, and considerable search on my part has failed to reveal many records of fall or winter song. Most of such records as I have so far come across distinctly state, or else give the impression, that the song during autumn and winter is soft and subdued.

Charles F. Batchelder (Auk, vol. 2, 1885, p. 128) states that he noted this species in New Mexico in December, 1882, and says that its song is "not loud and striking, but is clear, sweetly modulated, and full of expression, and is long sustained. . . . It sounds as if it came from a distance even when the singer is quite near." Again, to quote from "A List of Birds from the Vicinity of Golden, Colorado", by R. B. Rockwell and Alexander Wetmore (Auk, vol. 31, 1914, p. 332), on November 7, Solitaires "were found in sunny hollows on the side slopes and were singing a low, warbling song." At Collegeville, Minnesota, December 20, 1909, "its melodious warble broke the monotony of a winter day" (Severin Gertken, Auk, vol. 33, 1916, p. 327). There is nothing here to indicate an impression of vigor or volume.

On the other hand, Grinnell and Storer ("Animal Life in the Yosemite", 1924, p. 596) say: "The song season is not, as with many birds, restricted to the spring and early summer; but the autumn and early winter witnesses occasional outbursts of song, fully as melodious as those of summer and more impressive in the prevailing chill and silence." And again, on page 599, writing of early October: "Just as the sun came up over the rocky ridges to the east and touched the tips of the junipers, the solitaires would break forth into song nearly or quite as ecstatic as that of early summer, excelling in both quality and volume all other voices in the Glen. . . . No other bird of the Yosemite, except perhaps the American Dipper, seems to have quite such a revival of song in the fall as does the solitaire."

My own experience herein described merely corroborates that of Messrs. Grinnell and Storer in this matter of the vigor with which the Solitaire voices its feelings on fine, crisp days in autumn. It seems strange, however, that there has been so little reference made, in the published experiences of other observers, to this pleasant trait. Possibly the Solitaire feels the more cheerful the farther west it lives.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, California, February 1, 1926.*

English Aviaries.—Having read Dr. Casey Wood's article on English aviaries (Condor, vol. 38, 1926, pp. 3-30) with great interest, I feel impelled to add a few remarks. While on a visit to England during the winter of 1920-21 I had the privilege of meeting the late Mrs. Dalton-Burgess, who was kind enough to show me her aviaries