forward, caught the insect on the wing and flew off to the nearby pine trees with it.—JACK C. VON BLOEKER, *San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, California, July 20, 1927.*

Winter Roosts of Western Robins.—During the winter of 1926-27, the University Farm at Davis, California, proved to be quite a roosting place for Western Robins *(Planesticus migratorius propinquus).* They were first noted in numbers on December 21, when I saw a flock of some fifty or more roosting in a group of acacia trees. This number remained about the same for a short time, and then increased to several flocks, each of about the same number, which roosted in various places on the Farm. During the early part of February the number had been further materially increased until it reached a maximum about February 11. At 5:30 p.m. on that day I estimated that there were about 700 robins roosting in two places, under observation. In one tree that had shed its leaves, I counted 105 individuals. There were several trees in the immediate vicinity that held almost the same number.

The numbers of the birds seemed to remain nearly the same for about three weeks and then became less, until by March 22 there was only about one-tenth of the maximum number. These gradually became less until there were only a few scattered birds.

Although robins are found at Davis each winter, it is unusual to find them present in such large numbers. In the day time they would scatter into the fields to feed, and at night return to their roosting places. There seemed to be no unusual food supply to have attracted them there.—ERNEST D. CLABAUGH, *Berkeley, California, October 10, 1927.*

September Nesting of the Band-tailed Pigeon.—On September 29, 1927, Mrs. Grinnell and I were climbing the long-route zig-zag trail up over Vernal Falls, above Yosemite Valley, when we saw a lone Band-tailed Pigeon *(Columba fasciata)* fly swiftly by us up through the trees clothing the steep talus slope. The bird disappeared close to the base of the towering cliff above us. The zig-zag proved to follow the same general course, and when we had gotten up to about the right place we began scrutinizing the branches of the trees over our heads. Presently, Mrs. Grinnell espied a pigeon's nest, with the head of a bird showing in sharp outline above it. Glasses proved the identity and helped in observing details.

Soon an old bird alighted, coming up the same steep course as the first one, at mid-height of the trees through the forest, and alighted on a branch of the nest tree, on a level with the nest but on nearly the opposite side of the trunk. After remaining perched quietly for awhile, the old bird then walked along the branch lengthwise to the trunk, hopped across, fluttering some, to the base of the nest branch, and walked out on it to the nest.

Immediately a commotion began—the young one fluttering its wings spasmodically, the old one, not plainly seen because of intervening foliage, evidently feeding it. The process lasted fully three minutes, when the old bird flew directly off from the nest, out into space from the cliff base, and circling, was seen to alight at far distance on a middle branch of a dead tree. We would have timed the feeding process if we had had any notion of its lasting so long. After feeding, the youngster crouched down motionless and could be seen plainly no more. When being fed, its up-raised, fluttering wings showed the quills to be only an inch or so long; it could have been no more than ten days old.

The nest was in a fairly large Douglas spruce, growing on the upper edge of the talus-fan close to the base of the cliff. It was a sparse platform of irregular, coarse sticks and twigs resting on a spray of dead twigs given forth from the branch where it was about two inches in diameter (as judged from our place on the ground up the slope opposite) and seven feet out from the trunk; it was about 30 feet above the steep slope directly beneath.

At other times during this same day, September 29, we saw single Band-tailed Pigeons. One was seen at the edge of the water of the "Silver Apron", above the brink of Vernal Falls. We saw no *flocks* of Band-tailed Pigeons. Furthermore, we were told by Mr. Gabriel Souvelewsky that he had not seen any flocks lately around their customary feeding places on the floor of the Valley. All this led us to think it likely that most, if not all, of the Band-tailed Pigeon population was this year, and in

this territory, carrying on nesting through the autumn period, which includes the month of September. Moreover, this conclusion is in harmony with findings elsewhere in California (see Abbott, *Condor*, XXIX, 1927, pp. 121-123). This situation, come to think of it, is explicable on good natural history grounds. With birds in general the season of breeding is adjusted so as to bring the time of rearing of the young to coincide with the period when food supply is easiest obtainable. With the Band-tailed Pigeon, acorns provide the staff of life; and the acorn crop comes to maturity, ready for harvesting, during the early autumn months.

[I sent a copy of the above note to Mr. Charles W. Michael, for many years resident in Yosemite Valley, and who with his wife carries on regular and carefully recorded observations upon the bird-life there. The Michaels take exception to the implications I have stated, and on excellent grounds. I am glad, as Editor, to be able to present Mr. Michael's rejoinder as the next following "field and study" item.]—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, October 18, 1927.*

Nesting Time of Band-tailed Pigeons in Yosemite Valley.—Without much further evidence than is now in my possession I would not be inclined to accept the idea that Band-tailed Pigeons *(Columba fasciata)* time their nesting season so late as to bring forth their young about the time that they feed most extensively on acorns; for this would mean that the height of the nesting season would come not earlier than September 1. My observations of Band-tailed Pigeons in the Yosemite Valley would seem to indicate that most of the young are fledged before the end of August.

The theory that, with birds in general, the season of breeding is adjusted so as to bring the time of rearing of the young to coincide with the time when food is easiest obtainable might be tenable; but if the acorn crop is considered the easiest obtainable food supply for the pigeon, then I do not believe that the rule here applies. It would seem to me if this theory applied, then there should be many more late nesting species of birds. For instance, the nesting period of the California Woodpecker should correspond with that of the pigeon. Also the Belted Kingfisher should nest late, when the water is low and fish may be speared at will. And why should not the Sparrow Hawk nest late when the grasshoppers are most abundant?

If it is the general habit for Band-tailed Pigeons to arrange their nesting activities to concur with the ripening of the acorns, it is strange that such late nestings have not come to our notice during our eight years of residence in the Valley. And furthermore, if it is their aim to bring their young along with the ripening of the acorns, why nest late this year when their favorite oaks (chrysolepis) absolutely failed to produce a crop?

Acorns for the pigeons may provide the staff of life, but if so, the Rhamnus berry provides the spice of life. Strange tastes these pigeons have! In event these two fruits fail the pigeon, why not postpone the nesting season until the time of ripe madrone berries? You know the pigeons dearly love this fruit.

Band-tailed Pigeons have a big advantage over most birds inasmuch as there are two parent birds to take care of a single young. This being the case it would seem to me that they might successfully rear their young most any time of year regardless of any specially abundant food supply. However, I do believe that in the Yosemite Valley their nesting activities are confined principally to the months of June and July. During these months nests have been commonly noted; and I believe we had one record for August, although I fail to find such record among my notes.—CHARLES W. MICHAEL, *Yosemite, California, October 24, 1927.*

Assistant Parentage Among Birds.—On Sunday, July 31, 1927, I was at Grants Park on the Clackamas River a few miles southeast of Portland, Oregon. As the family sat down to a picnic dinner in a grove of alder, maple and fir woods, my attention was attracted to the familiar calling of young robins, *Planesticus migratorius propinquus*. The nest, located about thirty feet from our table, was fourteen feet up in an alder, saddled on three of the lowest limbs next to the tree's main trunk. It was in plain sight and contained three young about half grown. Every few moments the parent female would fly to the nest and feed her young on wild fruits that from our seats looked like *Amelanchier* berries. The male robin was also present and much in sight, but was not seen to feed the young. Before our meal was finished, greatly to our