

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

surprise, a Russet-backed Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata ustulata*) alighted on the side of the nest and fed two of the young robins.

This was about 2 P. M. I shortly left the vicinity of the nest, but my sister remained and watched for them until 5 P. M. During that period of about three hours, the thrush fed the young robins nine times. After my return, the thrush fed at least twice more before 7 P. M.; making at least twelve visits to the robins in four hours. Once, while the thrush was feeding the youngsters, the mother robin appeared on a nearby limb, and that thrush fairly jumped backwards in its haste to leave the nest! It certainly showed every evidence of fear of the old robin. There were two robins and two thrushes near the nest during the entire afternoon. Although a systematic hunt was made for the thrushes' nest, it was not found.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, August 2, 1927.*

**Food of Young Horned Owls Includes Adult Marsh Hawk.**—During the nesting seasons of 1926 and 1927 at Fort Riley, Kansas, a family of young Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus virginianus*) was studied, and observations were conducted on the feeding habits. The first season a large Red-tailed Hawk's (*Buteo borealis borealis*) nest was used by the owls. This was completely destroyed by two soldiers and the young carried away when about half grown. The catastrophe was discovered within a short time. A new nest was constructed, by the writer, out of second Red-tail's nest and placed in the tree. Thereafter housekeeping went on as usual. In 1927 the nest of a Cooper Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), built last season in a small oak tree, was occupied by the owls. These quarters became very crowded as the two youngsters grew but proved adequate for the needs.

The bill of fare was varied, with cotton-tail rabbits forming the main component. Side dishes consisted of gophers, field mice, and an occasional Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) or Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*). At infrequent intervals a Coot (*Fulica americana*), Teal (*Querquedula discors*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) or domestic fowl constituted the menu, while once the family fell completely from grace by indulging in a Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus americanus americanus*). However, the great preponderance of rabbits in the diet together with a goodly number of gophers partially if not completely counterbalanced these delinquencies.

On April 3, 1927, when the young were only about two weeks old I was astonished to find the feathers of a large hawk filling the nest and scattered around on the ground. There were many Swainson's (*Buteo swainsoni*) and Marsh Hawks (*Circus hudsonius*) migrating at this time, and evidently the rapacious mother owl had overwhelmed one of these in her quest for food. Everything, including the feet and head, had been eaten, the tough flight feathers alone being left. At the end of such a banquet the young could well join with Pepys in remarking "my dinner was noble and enough". The feathers were identified through the courtesy of Messrs E. R. Kalmbach and Remington Kellogg of the United States Biological Survey as being from a female Marsh Hawk of unusually large size.—LEON L. GARDNER, *Manila, P. I., August 18, 1927.*

**Whistling of the Wilson Snipe.**—In the January number of the *Condor*, Mr. Aldo Leopold gives some interesting observations on what he calls the "whistling" of the Wilson Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*), and I thought that in this connection an experience of mine this spring might be worth recording.

On April 28 a small party of us were out on an all-day hike through one of the picturesque valleys of southwestern Wisconsin. The day opened fair, but by afternoon the sky was veiled with clouds. It was around 3 o'clock when we heard an unfamiliar sound overhead and looking up made out the form of a jacksnipe flying at a height of four or five hundred feet. In fact the height was such that it was not easy to see the bird with the naked eye; but with our binoculars we could see it distinctly and could follow it throughout its course.

It was flying in a wide circle with a diameter of some 300 yards, extending roughly from the road where we stood to the slopes of a wooded hill. Midway between, and a little below us, lay a piece of marshy ground which marked the approximate center of the circle. The flight consisted of a succession of upward and downward courses, averaging perhaps a hundred yards in extent and being at an angle of rather less than 45 degrees. On each downward swing we could plainly hear that vibrating