

bird life around one of the many small prairie lakes in Albany County, Wyoming. Our attention was attracted by a pair of Western Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos hesperis*). Their actions were those of breeding birds but there was not a tree or bush within sight, and within a radius of ten miles there seemed to be no possible nesting sites available except bushes which were not over five or six feet high. The crows' interest in the immediate vicinity persisted until finally I was convinced that they were nesting nearby. A careful search through the low sage and greasewood produced nothing, but the nest was found at last, located on the ground. (See fig. 30.) It was in the short grass, on flat, open prairie.

The nest was placed in a depression which at one time might have been the entrance of a badger hole. This depression was such that the rim of the nest was just level with the surface of the ground, and it was well filled with grass, weeds and small pieces of sage and willow. The nest had an outside rim of weeds, sage and willow twigs and a few small sticks and was lined with strips from weeds and with cow's hair. The general construction and bulk of the nest was about the same as any tree nest of the species. A few larger sticks and twigs were scattered around on the ground surrounding the nest. This nest contained seven eggs which appeared to be well incubated.—CAPTAIN L. R. WOLFE, *Fort Warren, Wyoming, February 1, 1931.*

The Reddish Egret, a Bird New to the Avifauna of California.—On February 12, 1931, while making a census of Black Sea Brant in this region for the California Fish and Game Commission, the writer and his companion, Frank F. Gander, observed a lone Lower California Reddish Egret (*Dichromanassa rufescens diceyi*) on the tidal flats at the south end of San Diego Bay near Coronado Heights. The bird was just beyond the positive killing range of a shot-gun and it flew before the distance could be shortened. It was closely scrutinized through 6-power Zeiss binoculars by both observers and positively identified, the writer having had previous experience with Reddish Egrets in their haunts farther south, where he collected a number of specimens. A renewed effort was made the following day to locate and collect the bird but this was not successful.—LAURENCE M. HUEY, *San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, California, February 14, 1931.*

A Seasonal Feast of the Willow Goldfinch.—The principal roadway of the University Farm at Davis, California, is bordered on either side by a row of elm trees (*Ulmus pumila* var. *arborea*) planted about twenty-two years ago, which have grown to goodly size and now provide grateful shade for man during the warm days of summer. The slender bare branches in winter and the foliage of summer are occasionally visited by birds in those seasons, but the principal ornithological interest is for a brief period each spring when the trees are the rendezvous of a large flock of Willow Goldfinches (*Spinus tristis salicamans*). The elms here put forth their diminutive blossoms in late February or early March, quickly followed by a dense clothing of "samaras", which grow, ripen, and fall as the leaves appear.

Goldfinches appear scatteringly in these trees at various times during the year, but the annual gathering comes just as the seed crop is "in the milk". In four years for which I have definite record the birds began or were at work on March 16 (1931), March 19 (1926), March 20 (1930), and March 25 (1929). Fully a hundred goldfinches were present in 1931.

The samara of this elm is a soft thin oval plate of tissue about $\frac{5}{8}$ by $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in surface dimensions, with a single seed at the center. These samaras are borne in dense clusters, often fairly clothing the branchlets. The goldfinches work in small companies, with seldom more than a dozen birds in any one tree, and the whole group is usually in a few adjacent trees. The birds seem to have decided preferences, as they pass by for a time some trees which are a little behind others in blossom time, and in any one tree they pick and choose among the seeds, taking one here, and another there. I could not see much if any difference in adjacent seeds on twigs taken at random. Early and late the birds are at their feeding, with little if any let-up during the midday hours, and there is a continuous chorus of small chipperings, with an occasional song, or flight notes as an individual leaves

or arrives. One year many of the goldfinches evidently roosted at night in a group of eucalyptus trees adjacent to the row of elms. The sidewalks and ground beneath the trees are littered with debris from the feast, fine bits from the samaras, occasional seeds or bits of seeds, and a few intact samaras loosened in feeding operations, while the whitish droppings spot the ground after a day or two of feeding in any particular tree.

At this season the goldfinches are beginning the spring molt, but only a few yellow feathers are in evidence when they are working in the elms. At times California Linnets join the goldfinches, and in 1929 there were two Pine Siskins present for several days.

During the remainder of the year the Willow Goldfinches are scattered about the valley country, in gardens or along the stream courses. Groups of moderate size are sometimes seen in other favorable feeding places, as on a Babylonian willow early in bud, or on the dried blossom heads of cosmos left by a bird-loving gardener in late autumn.

The regularity with which the goldfinches visit this ephemeral crop of the elms suggests that in some way the "news" is spread among the population and the birds quickly gather. Before the seeds are ready only scattering individuals are to be observed; but once the seeds reach the "milk" stage the birds assemble, and they continue in numbers until the food has passed beyond the range of palatability for them. The untouched seeds mature and turn brownish, the samaras whiten and shower down, and the goldfinches seek other feeding places until another year rolls around.—TRACY I. STORER, *University of California, Davis, March 30, 1931.*

Behavior of Parent Killdeers.—The following account of behavior of Killdeers (*Oxyechus vociferus*) was related to me by friends and seems worthy of record. They were driving east on the Alpine Hi-way above Pine Grove, in Amador County, when they noticed two little fledglings in the road. One of the ladies thought it a shame to leave such young birds alone and apparently without care, to the mercy of passing motorists, and consequently doomed to certain death. She accordingly stepped from the car, picked up the little orphans and, placing them in a pocket of her coat, carried them back, and the party proceeded on its way.

A gentleman of the party protested that it was murder thus to carry these little fellows away, that they could not live in captivity, and that even though they might survive, being the young of the killdeer, they would not sing.

The discussion continued for some miles up the road when it was decided to return the youngsters to the place whence they had been taken.

As the original spot was neared, both parents made for the car. When it stopped they both pecked savagely at the tires, and when the young were placed on the ground one bird, apparently the female, assisted the youngsters in making a most miraculous disappearance, while her mate continued a vicious attack on the front tires.—HENRY WARRINGTON, *Jackson, California, March 28, 1931.*

Whistling Swans on Salton Sea.—Early in December of 1930 my neighbor, Mr. Seth Hartley, told me of seeing three swans on Salton Sea. A few days later he saw presumably the same three birds fly over a blind, where they received a volley that caused one to fall in a field, where it was captured. It proved to be an adult female Whistling Swan (*Olor columbianus*) and seemed to be in a dying condition. But after a few days it seemed to be well on the way to complete recovery and would dive for food and swim around a reservoir with infinite grace. After a couple of weeks it began to fail, and on December 31, 1930, it died.

Robert Leatherman, the young man who was taking care of the bird for me, stated that the swan sang on the afternoon and evening of its death. The song was loud enough so that he could hear it while he was in his home about sixty feet distant. The song had absolutely no resemblance to any of the calls that the bird often gave and he could not describe it except to state that it was a real song and pleasing to the ear.

It is my opinion that the swans are accidentally shot by hunters who think they are "large geese". It behooves members of the Cooper Club to help educate hunters or these magnificent birds soon may be exterminated.—WILSON C. HANNA, *Colton, California, February 12, 1931.*