

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Birds Caught in Spiders' Webs.—Responding to the hurry call of one of my children about 7 a. m. on April 22, 1931, I found a live Coast Bush-tit (*Psaltriparus minimus minimus*) securely enmeshed in a spider's web close under the eaves of my two-story home in San Diego. Feebly struggling in the taut strands of the net, and silhouetted against the sky with one wing extended, the little bird's size, in this unusual situation, seemed magnified when viewed from a near-by window. Occasionally it responded to cries from the fellow members of its flock, which seemed to be remaining in the neighborhood. I took the bird in my hand and found it to be literally covered with the glutinous substance of the web. Not only were wing and tail feathers firmly stuck together, but the feathers of the breast and head were disarranged beyond remedy, and the toes of both feet were held tightly closed. The bird was evidently immature and was almost dead when liberated. After working for some time to remove the sticky webbing from its feathers, I determined that it would be impossible for it to live and therefore dispatched it.

Three other instances of birds being caught in spiders' webs have also come to my notice. In one case the bird, an Anna Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), was found dead and brought to the San Diego Natural History Museum by one of the gardeners in Balboa Park. In the second case, also involving an Anna Hummingbird and occurring several years ago, the victim was discovered by J. W. Sefton, Jr., President of the San Diego Society of Natural History, caught, about six feet above the ground, in his garden on Point Loma; after being cleaned off, the bird was able to fly away. The third case was that of an adult female California Linnet (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*) which Mr. Sefton found fluttering helplessly in one of the driveways of his garden on May 9, 1931. He picked it up and saw that the flight feathers of the left wing were securely attached by spider's webbing to the left foot. In his estimation the bird could never have disentangled itself, but with his aid it was able to proceed on its way.

In the Auk (XLVI, 1929, p. 123) George H. Mackay records the capture of an American Goldfinch in a spider's web in Massachusetts. The Linnet is even larger and stronger than the American Goldfinch and probably represents the maximum size of bird that could be so ensnared in this country.—CLINTON G. ABBOTT, *San Diego Society of Natural History, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, May 12, 1931.*

Some Additional Notes on James Hepburn.—When Mr. H. S. Swarth was working at the British Museum last year I showed him some information on James Hepburn and he suggested that I should send a note to the Condor to supplement the information he had published (Condor, XXVIII, 1926, p. 249).

James Hepburn or, to give his full name, James Edward Hepburn, appears to have dropped his second name after going to Cambridge. He was born in London in 1810 or 1811, and was the eldest son of James Hepburn of Tovil Place, Maidstone, England. He was educated privately in Sussex and, at the age of nineteen, was admitted a Pensioner of Trinity College, Cambridge, on December 20, 1830, taking his B.A. in 1835 and M.A. in 1838.

In 1835 he left Cambridge and went to London to study law and was admitted a student of the Inner Temple on January 15 of that year and, seven years later, on April 24, 1842, was called to the Bar. When he emigrated to California I have not been able to discover, but the earliest date mentioned in his American note books is 1852.

On April 16, 1869, Hepburn died suddenly at Victoria, Vancouver Island. In his will he is described as of "Tovil Place, Maidstone", but later of "California" and "Victoria, Vancouver". His collections were not mentioned in his will, but his relations, knowing that he had expressed a wish that they should go to Cambridge, presented them to the University in October, 1870.

Dr. J. W. Clarke, the Superintendent of the University Zoological Museum, in his report to the Museums and Lecture Rooms Syndicate dated February 8, 1871, described the collections as follows.

"In the course of last October term the Zoological Collections of the late James Hepburn Esq., were presented to the above Museum. This donation is of such importance that I feel it my duty to address to you a special Report on the Subject.

"Mr. Hepburn, originally a member of St. John's College¹, passed a great part of his life at San Francisco, where he made extensive collections, illustrative of the fauna of the Pacific seaboard from Alaska to Panama, and especially of Vancouver's Island, California and Sitka Sound. . . .

"Mr. Hepburn, having devoted most of his time to the study of Ornithology, it was to be expected that Birds would be best represented in his Collection. There are over 1500 skins, all in excellent condition, representing about 330 species, of most of which the series is extremely good, having, to all appearances, been selected to show the differences caused by sex, age, season or locality, particulars as to these points being carefully recorded in a MS. catalogue. They have been carefully examined, determined, and ticketed by M. Jules Verreaux, Aide-Naturaliste of the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes, Paris, and a Systematic Catalogue of the whole is in the course of preparation by Professor Newton. They are accompanied by a large collection of eggs and nests carefully identified and authenticated.

"Of mammals there is a small series, chiefly of skins, with two complete skeletons of the Northern Fur Seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*). These are of very great value, being so far as I know, the first skeletons of this seal that have been acquired by any European Museum.

"Of Reptiles, Amphibia, and Fish, there is a considerable number preserved in spirit.

"Of Invertebrata, there is a very large collection, consisting of Mollusca in spirit, shells, crustacea, and insects. The shells are all carefully marked with their names and localities, each species, of which there is often a long series, having generally a box devoted to itself. It has been impossible at present to estimate fully the extent of this portion of the Collection; but it certainly consists of many hundreds of species, selected, like the birds, under various conditions of age and locality.

"There is also a very interesting series of 28 skulls of Indians and a great quantity of arms, vessels, idols, and the like, illustrative of the habits of the Aborigines. . . .

"Besides the above Zoological Collections there is a small but important series of minerals, chiefly illustrating gold, and rocks in which it is deposited. There are also a few fossils.

"Mr. Hepburn's specimens have reached us in the most admirable condition and order, notwithstanding his sudden death, which, in the case of a less methodical naturalist, would have caused his collection to be left in a state of confusion."

I have given rather long extracts from Dr. Clarke's report, some of which does not pertain to ornithology, but with the object of showing the wide interests and carefulness of Hepburn in regard to natural history. In addition to the collections there are a number of note books at Cambridge in which Hepburn recorded the specimens he collected. Five of these books are devoted to birds, one to eggs and one to mammals. From the first of these note books it appears Hepburn shot his first bird in California at Martinez on May 6, 1852, and that he remained in San Francisco, visiting various localities, till the autumn of 1860, when he went to Vancouver Island, from where he made trips to the mainland, including Washington Territory and Sitka. He returned to San Francisco for short periods in 1861, '63, '64 and '65, but after 1860 his home seems to have been Vancouver Island.

Hepburn apparently was assisted by several people in making his collection and at the end of each year he gives a summary of the additions and how they were obtained. The results for the year 1853, for instance, are given as follows. "Shot 70, by W. Rhodham 13, by J. Scarle 3, by J. Attwood 2, by G. Meridth 2, by Aitken 1, found shot 1, new species 38".

From the note books I make out that the collection of bird skins was made up of 1016 from California, 353 from British Columbia, 136 from Washington Territory, 5 from Sitka; total, 1510. According to the egg note book Hepburn sent specimens to the Smithsonian Institution and H. E. Dresser. Hepburn also sent bird

¹ This was a mistake by Dr. Clarke for Trinity which as I have shown above was Hepburn's College.

skins to Sir William Jardine, and according to the latter's Catalogue he received at different times some forty-seven, most of which came from California.—N. B. KINNEAR, *British Museum Natural History, London, April 24, 1931.*

Brewer Blackbirds Roosting in Duck Blinds.—While hunting ducks in San Pablo Bay near San Francisco, California, January 12, 1931, on approaching a floating blind at daybreak I was surprised by the sudden flushing of a flock of thirty or forty Brewer Blackbirds (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) from the blind. Visiting several other blinds I found each of them holding its quota of roosting blackbirds. That evening while I was still in the blind the birds came and attempted to roost. The blinds are of the floating type anchored to the bottom and covered thickly with eucalyptus boughs. The owner told me that he usually placed the blinds in the water about October 1 and that the blackbirds began to roost in them within two or three days. He places about twenty blinds. The birds habitually roost in all the blinds, the outermost being nearly a mile off-shore at high tide. The low tide leaves the mud-flats bare for about half that distance.—FRANK N. BASSETT, *San Francisco, California, April 14, 1931.*

Saw-whet Owl and California Woodpecker on Santa Cruz Island.—On April 15, 1931, the writer saw a Saw-whet Owl (*Cryptoglaux acadica*) near Pelican Harbor on Santa Cruz Island, California. The bird was flushed from some undergrowth at the bottom of a cañon and flew to a low limb of a large shrub. The writer was able to crawl to within eight feet of the bird, which was in partial sunlight. The bird remained in full view for as long as the writer cared to observe it.

During several botanizing trips in 1930, the writer noted California Woodpeckers at three widely separated points on Santa Cruz Island, one a few miles from Scorpion Harbor on the east end, a pair in the main cañon a mile below the ranch house, and three in a cañon one mile east of Valdez Harbor on the north shore. The pair near the ranch house has been noted again in 1931. The California Woodpecker (*Balanosphyra formicivora bairdi*) apparently has invaded the island only lately. Many former observers have been through the main cañon to the ranch house. It seems improbable that they could have missed this conspicuous and noisy bird, if any individual had been present.—RALPH HOFFMANN, *Santa Barbara, California, April 25, 1931.*

Northern Say Phoebe Records for Southern and Lower California.—In checking over the specimens of *Sayornis saya* contained in the collections of the San Diego Society of Natural History and of Laurence M. Huey, five dark specimens were found that did not match other skins in the series. These were submitted to Mr. H. S. Swarth of the California Academy of Sciences, who pronounced them *Sayornis saya yukonensis*. The localities at which most of these specimens were taken definitely add *yukonensis* to the known avifauna of Lower California.

The data of the birds are as follows: Collection of the San Diego Society of Natural History: no. 13455, El Rosario, Lower California, Mexico, female, September 27, 1930; no. 13522, Santa Rosalía Bay, Lower California, Mexico, female, October 18, 1930; no. 13546, San Andrés, Lower California, Mexico, male, October 23, 1930. Collection of Laurence M. Huey: no. 119, San Diego, California, male, January 1, 1914; no. 3288, Laguna Hansen, Lower California, Mexico, male, October 17, 1926.—LAURENCE M. HUEY, *San Diego Society of Natural History, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, April 20, 1931.*