

Winter Records of Virginia Rail and Mountain Plover in Coachella Valley, California.

—Two Virginia Rails (*Rallus limicola*) were seen by the writers in marshy ground near Mecca, California, on January 26, 1936, and one specimen was taken. When discovered, these birds were making their way between piles of screw-bean branches on ground that had been cleared and flooded during the past hunting season.

On January 17, 1936, the writers saw a Mountain Plover (*Eupoda montana*) on freshly graded ground on a ranch ten miles northwest of Indio, California. Two others were seen in the same locality on January 22, when a specimen was collected, and again on February 10. Another Colorado Desert occurrence of the species is that recorded by Hoffmann (*Condor*, 25, 1923, p. 106), who saw four in an alfalfa field near Brawley, Imperial County, on January 2, 1923.—BEN CLARY and MARJORIE CLARY, *Coral Reef Ranch, Coachella, California, February 13, 1936.*

A Late Nesting Record of the California Woodpecker.—On the morning of September 19, 1935, I was amazed at the sight of California Woodpeckers (*Balanosphyra formicivora*) still feeding young in the nest. Amazed at first, in a moment it struck me that there was a good reason for this late nesting record. The nest-hole was about thirty-five feet above the ground and was cut into living wood where mistletoe had caused a burl to form. It is significant that the nest-hole was drilled into living wood.

For years a colony of California Woodpeckers have lived, loved and reared families in the Kellogg oak grove opposite the Yosemite Post Office in the New Village. This year, having a band of CCC boys to keep busy, someone conceived the idea of improving on nature and one of the improvements was the cutting of all dead wood from the oaks of the village grove. Nests and nesting sites naturally came down with the dead wood. There still remained, however, a row of wooden light poles along the village street. Some of the woodpeckers took advantage of the presence of the poles and drilled out new nest holes. But woe to the hard working woodpeckers, for it was decided that the light poles were unsightly against a background of neatly trimmed oaks and so the poles came down. The woodpeckers moved back into the grove and drilled the nest-hole into living wood—all of which accounts for the late nesting record.

Instead of feeding young at this late season of the year the woodpeckers should be gathering and storing acorns. And this brings up another problem for the woodpeckers. Where are they going to store acorns? With all the dead wood cut from the oaks, the woodpeckers are forced to look elsewhere for places to drill holes for the storage of winter acorns. Many of the California Woodpeckers that live about the village have already learned to store acorns between the shingles and in the woodwork of the buildings.

It so happens that dwellings and other buildings of Yosemite Village are scattered through the ancestral groves of the California Woodpeckers. With their natural nesting and storing sites removed from these groves, what are the woodpeckers to do but to retaliate by drilling into the buildings as the only available substitute at hand? This retaliation will bring about a problem from the human point of view, for surely there will be certain individuals of nervous temperament who will be annoyed by the drilling and drumming of the woodpeckers. And there will also be the other individual who will object to having holes drilled into his house. Fortunately there is an answer to the problem that will bring joy to the woodpeckers and peace to the homes of the annoyed villagers.

Obviously the answer to the problem is to put back dead wood in the ancestral groves of the woodpeckers. A further improvement on nature and one that would redound to the benefit of both woodpecker and villager would be to place handsome totem-poles in the lawns of the dwellings that happened to be located in the oak groves! It would be hard to know just what sort of totem-pole the woodpeckers would best like. Perhaps the Park Naturalist and the Park Landscape Engineer could collaborate on the totem-pole idea, the naturalist taking the woodpecker's point of view and the engineer representing the "esthetic" point of view. These totem-poles could be used by the woodpeckers either as nesting sites or as storing cribs for their acorns.

However, even if a Park Naturalist and a Landscape Engineer could agree, it would take time to place the totem-poles; probably therefore, it would be a good idea, now that all the old storage limbs are gone, to hang baskets of acorns in the trees of the grove to tide the woodpeckers over the first winter. With acorns furnished the first winter, the woodpeckers would have plenty of time to drill holes in the totem-poles to receive the acorns of the next year's crop. With nesting and storing sites restored, one of the most interesting features of the Yosemite landscape would be preserved, the woodpeckers would be happy, and the villagers could sleep in peace.

Since writing the above article I have learned that Park officials have hit upon a simpler plan of solving the problem. The slaughter has begun. California Woodpeckers are being shot from the sanctuary of a National Park. But, "it is an ill wind that blows no good." With the extermination of the California Woodpeckers the ground squirrels will come in for a bigger share of the acorn crop, and will thereby further prosper.—CHAS. W. MICHAEL, *Yosemite, California, September 24, 1935.*