

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Young California Black Rails.—The California Black Rail (*Creciscus jamaicensis coturniculus*) is sufficiently rare that even small contributions to its life history may be worthy of record. On May 10, 1941, I accepted the offer of an oological enthusiast to show me the nest of one of these birds in a slough near the south end of San Diego Bay, the eggs in which were about to hatch. Knowing of my interest in bird photography, it was his idea that I might be successful in securing a picture of the owner.

The eggs, pure white with tiny spots, and five in number, all seemed alive, as faint chirps could be heard from within. While the camera was being set up, the rail put in an appearance by a short flight from one clump of salicornia to another. On that first day I waited five hours for her to return to the nest and finally gave up as darkness approached. Before I left I laid a tiny twig across the eggs. I decided that if this was moved before the following morning all was well, but that if it was still in place the nest had probably been deserted.



Fig. 69. Eggs and recently hatched young of the California Black Rail.

By daylight the following morning I was again on the spot and so was the twig across the eggs. Strangely, however, the calls of the imprisoned young still issued from the shells, two of which were pipped. From the salicornia near by the rasping call of one of the adults could occasionally be heard. The photographic siege started once again and lasted well into the afternoon. During this time both of the pipped eggs hatched without parental aid. I took the accompanying photograph (fig. 69), which I believe may be the first ever published of young California Black Rails.

It is my firm belief that these eggs were left unprotected for a full 24-hour period, although the parents were watchfully waiting in the thick foliage near by. My experience therefore supported published accounts of the sensitiveness of this rail to intrusions upon its nest. When the young were able to crawl, they seemed intent on going in one direction—that from which the calls of the adults were often heard.—LEWIS W. WALKER, *San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, California, June 9, 1941.*

Occurrence of the Flammulated Screech Owl at Lake Tahoe, California.—On June 2, 1941, while motoring along the old Al-Tahoe Road, just east of Rowlands Marsh, Lake Tahoe, Eldorado County, California, I noticed a small owl impaled on a barbed-wire fence. The bird had evidently struggled desperately, though ineffectually, to free itself after becoming entangled, and