

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

when found, had been there for some time. On examination, it proved to be a Flammulated Screech Owl (*Otus flammeolus*), the sex of which could not be determined.

According to the records of both Mr. James Moffitt and of the writer, this bird has not been recorded previously from the Tahoe area. The specimen, now in the collection of the California Academy of Sciences, has been preserved as a complete skeleton, and thus will provide definite proof of the occurrence of this rare species in the Tahoe region.—MILTON S. RAY, *San Francisco, July 25, 1941.*

Yellow-billed Magpies on Coastal Slope of Santa Barbara County, California.—Linsdale (Natural History of Magpies, Pac. Coast Avif. No. 25, 1937:20) gives only two records since 1887 of Yellow-billed Magpies (*Pica nuttallii*) in coastal Santa Barbara County, California. These were both from the vicinity of Gaviota. In the course of several years I have known of a number of nestlings which have been brought from north of the Santa Ynez Mountains to Santa Barbara or its vicinity and raised in a semi-free condition. Individuals that became wild and independent always disappeared within a year or two, and usually much sooner. On July 3, 1941, however, about one mile north of Goleta (about six miles from Santa Barbara and two miles from the sea) I saw a flock of eight birds flying about in the tops of a group of eucalyptus trees under which I was standing. The magpies were very noisy and were being attacked by a pair of Western Kingbirds (*Tyrannus verticalis*) that succeeded in driving them off after about five minutes. The flock appeared to contain both adults and young (with shorter tails) and it seems likely from this fact, and from the date, that they had bred in the neighborhood. It is not known whether the presence of these birds is the result of man's activities, or whether they found their own way from the Santa Ynez Valley, where they are common, but it is interesting to note their appearance at this point near the type locality from which the species has long been absent.—RICHARD M. BOND, *Oakland, California, July 23, 1941.*

A Race of the Poor-will from Sonora.—A few years ago in considering the characters shown by a small series of Poor-wills from Bates Well, Pima County, Arizona (Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist., 8, 1936:135), I expressed the opinion that they were intergrades between *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii nuttallii* of eastern Arizona and *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii hueyi* of the lower Colorado River Valley, although nearer to the former. Mr. L. M. Huey has recently collected an additional series in the same locality. In the course of a recent inspection of certain Sonora birds in the Field Museum of Natural History, I found two similar Poor-wills taken at the Providencia Mines in central Sonora, and a re-examination of five specimens from Oposura [=Moctezuma], also in central Sonora (Museum of Comparative Zoology), shows them to belong in the same category. It is thus apparent that the birds from Bates Well are not intergrades but belong to an undescribed race which I name as

Phalaenoptilus nuttallii adustus new subspecies
Sonora Poor-will

Type.—Adult male, no. 50513 Dickey Collection; Bates Well, Pima County, Arizona, altitude 1500 feet, June 22, 1932; collected by A. J. van Rossem.

Subspecific characters.—Similar to *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii nuttallii* of the western United States in general, but slightly paler and decidedly browner throughout, this color being apparent in the "frosting" of the head and pectoral region as well as in the plumage in general. Similar to *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii hueyi* of the lower Colorado River Valley and, like that race, with "frosting" light grayish brown rather than silvery, but coloration throughout decidedly darker.

Range.—Extreme southern Arizona south through the Lower Sonoran Zone at least to lat. 29° 45' N. in Sonora (El Alamo; Providencia Mines; Moctezuma).

Remarks.—No differences in measurements of note are to be found between the three races here compared.

Poor-wills from extreme south-central Arizona (Upper Sonoran Zone in the Santa Rita, Atasco, and Pajarito mountains) and extreme north-central Sonora (Rancho La Arizona near Saric) are variable in color, some approaching *adustus* very closely, but the great majority do not appear to be different from *nuttallii* from the general range of that race.

I wish to thank Dr. L. B. Bishop, the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the Los Angeles Museum, and the Field Museum of Natural History for the loan of necessary specimens. Comparative material used was as follows: *adustus*, 21 from localities given above; *dickeyi*, Lower California, 5; *nuttallii*, California, 22, Nevada, 2, Arizona, 11, Washington, 1, British Columbia, 1, Montana, 2, Texas, 2, Kansas, 2, Sonora, 9; *hueyi*, California, 15; *californicus*, California, 17.—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Dickey Collections, University of California at Los Angeles, June 10, 1941.*