

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Nesting of the Flammulated Screech Owl in California.**—After many years of search for the nests of Flammulated Screech Owls (*Otus flammeolus*) in the San Bernardino Mountains of California, I decided that if these owls were nesting it must be high up in the holes in huge dead stumps. It was also decided that the birds would not flush. These early conclusions proved to be false in at least one case.

My efforts were rewarded on June 1, 1941, by seeing a bird and finding the nesting site, which then held one fresh egg. This was at an elevation of about 7500 feet. Fred Frazer first noticed a hole only twelve feet up in a small dead fir stump with the bark still on it. He thought that he had seen something move at the entrance as we walked past and therefore called it to my attention. I investigated the stump at once, and upon touching its base, a Flammulated Screech Owl flushed from the hole and flew to a thicket of small pine trees about a hundred feet distant. We were able to approach the bird within about twenty feet and to observe it for fully half an hour before it flew to other trees, where we lost sight of it. We then secured a ladder and investigated the nest, which was down eleven inches from a natural opening, or a very old entrance made by birds, and saw a single white egg on the old rotted wood.



Fig. 82. Habitat of Flammulated Screech Owl in San Bernardino Mountains. Low branch of pine used as perch after flushing from nest.

A week later I again visited the site, with W. D. LaNiece, hoping to obtain some photographs of this exceedingly rare owl. On approaching the stump, we accidentally fell against it and caused the bird to flush. It flew only forty feet to a low branch of a pine tree where it perched for several minutes before it returned to the nest cavity. The bird again flushed as soon as the tree was touched and it went to the same branch as before for a few minutes before it returned to the eggs. We then put some rags on the end of a long stick and were able to stuff these into the entrance hole and capture the bird. During all of this work around the stump there was a Bailey Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli baileyae*) making frequent trips to feed her brood of young in a hole not three feet away in the same stump.

The owl was not antagonistic and made no effort to bite or use its sharp claws, nor did it seem to try to escape. The dark chocolate-colored eyes of this gentle little bird attracted our attention, as they were so different from the eyes of other owls.

The eggs were three in number and the weights in grams, 10.69, 10.24, and 9.11. This seems to be the second set of eggs taken in California, the first being a set of two eggs collected by M. French Gilman, June 3, 1894 (Condor, 4, 1906:85). The eggs are larger than those of the Whitney Elf Owl,



Fig. 83. Flammulated Screech Owl. Note dark eyes.

*Micropallas whitneyi whitneyi* (average weight of 50 eggs, 7.31 grams), and much smaller than those of our local Pasadena Screech Owl, *Otus asio quercinus* (average weight of 52 eggs, 17.59 grams).—WILSON C. HANNA, Colton, California, September 4, 1941.

**Black-billed Cuckoo in Idaho.**—On the morning of July 10, 1941, at my camp on Slide Gulch on the Middle Fork of the Boise River in Boise County, Idaho, I was awakened by the call of a cuckoo. The call originated from a thicket of bushes near by, and as this was the first cuckoo I had heard in the state, I determined to collect it. The bird could not be located in the thicket, but soon it flew into a tall cottonwood tree by camp and finally into a small bush near the river, where it resumed its calling. There I saw the bird as it perched motionless and was able to collect it.

Upon skinning the cuckoo, it was noted that the ova and oviduct were enlarged, the largest ovum being 11 mm. in diameter. Expecting a California Cuckoo, I was surprised to note certain points of difference. Final identification as the Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) was made at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. This skin is no. 1814 in my collection.

I have been unable to find previous records of the occurrence of this species in breeding condition west of the Rocky Mountains. Its range must therefore be extended to include the western portion of the state of Idaho.—M. DALE ARVEY, Boise Junior College, Boise, Idaho, September 12, 1941.

**Further Notes on Some Southwestern Yellowthroats.**—A number of years ago (Condor, 32, 1930:297-300) I gave a summarized review of the yellowthroats of southern California, southern Arizona, and Sonora. Since that time a large amount of additional material has been seen, but in spite of this I have no further comment to make concerning the races *Geothlypis trichas scirpicola* of southern California and *Geothlypis trichas chryseola* of southern Arizona and northern Sonora, save in minor detail. A re-examination of *scirpicola* fails to show any significant differences between the coastal and lower Colorado River valley colonies, a fact that is noteworthy, considering the differences usually shown by plastic species in these two areas. Specimens of yellowthroats from the Colorado River region are often deceptively pale, particularly those taken in spring and summer, but