

Arizona Race of Acorn Woodpecker Vagrant in California.—Acorn Woodpeckers (*Belanosphyra formicivora*) occur normally in California west of the crest of the Sierra Nevada and the desert divides where essential acorn-supplying oaks are present. There is but one published record of the occurrence of this species to the eastward in California, namely, at Carroll Creek at 5500 feet, near Lone Pine, Inyo County, September 8, 1911 (Grinnell and Miller, Pac. Coast Avif. No. 27, 1944:232). This station is near the Sierran forests where the woodpeckers are resident.

On October 19, 1945, near the summit of Eagle Mountain, at 4900 feet, in central Riverside County, California, far out in the desert, I came upon an Acorn Woodpecker in an open piñon. Among the rocks of this desert mountain top is a sparse, dwarf woodland of piñons and scrub oak (see Miller, Condor, 48, 1946:75-79). Oaks were scattered about the area where the woodpecker was encountered, and upon dissection of the bird acorn mast was found in the stomach.

The bird (♂ no. 94189 Mus. Vert. Zool.) proves to be an example of the race of Arizona and Mexico, *Belanosphyra formicivora formicivora* (see Twentieth Suppl., A. O. U. Check-list, Auk, 62, 1945:443), rather than *B. j. bairdi* of western California. The identification seems decisive by reason of the slight amount of yellow on the throat, the relatively narrow black chest band and the short wing (132.1 mm.) which the bird possesses. The area on Eagle Mountain is ecologically inadequate to support a resident group of Acorn Woodpeckers and no acorn stores were found. It may be assumed that this bird was a vagrant from one of the areas of residence in Arizona, the closest of which is in the Hualpai Range ninety miles distant across the Colorado River valley. In view of the sedentary habits of this species, this vagrancy is somewhat surprising. It is worthy of note that in crossing the desert this bird had found this small isolated area of scrub oak and had utilized its food resources. In this connection we may again draw attention to the remarkable deviation in instincts of the Central American race of this species (see van Rossem, Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Zool. Ser., 23, 1938:316-317) which has lost, or never acquired, the striking acorn feeding and storing behavior which so dominates the lives of most races of this group and which determines their habitat selection and distribution.—ALDEN H. MILLER, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, April 5, 1947.*

Stone-turning Habits of Some Desert Birds.—Recently, in the Indio-Mecca section of the Salton Sink in the Colorado Desert of California, I came upon a large flat of dried mud, the result of an overflow of highly sedimented irrigation waters from a cultivated field. While drying, the fine sediments had formed an upper crust which had cracked into large irregular-shaped lamina, slightly upturned about the edges. Shrinkage had caused fissures between the concave plates fully three-quarters of an inch wide and deep. This peculiar dried mud surface was situated in an open space in the midst of a thicket of honey mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) and quailbrush (*Atriplex lentiformis*). The surrounding brush afforded excellent shelter for a number of species of birds, among them a Road-runner (*Geococcyx californianus*) which came out of the brush into the open space. Although I was plainly in view at the edge of the brush tangle, the bird paid no attention to me. After having run half way across the sixty-foot space, it stopped suddenly and to my amazement began lifting and overturning with the aid of its strong beak the large plates of caked dry mud. Each time a plate was upturned the Road-runner quickly looked over the ground beneath it for any insects hidden there. After a moment's pause it would run forward and upturn another mud plate. It seemed quite successful in its quest for food, often obtaining as many as three insects under a single mud-cake. This procedure was repeated over and over until some thirty of the cakes had been lifted on edge and thrown over. Some of these plates were seven or eight inches across and almost two-thirds of an inch thick. Evidently the yield of insects was soon quite sufficient to satisfy its hunger, for before ten minutes had passed, it ceased its unique labors and ran off into the brush cover from which it had come.

Eager to see what insects the Road-runner had been getting, I walked forward and upturned several of the undisturbed mud plates and found a rather small gray black cricket (*Gryllus*) just under the margin of almost each plate. From the fact that many of the cakes of mud on this flat as also those on an adjoining one had been recently turned, I concluded that this bird had for several days been engaged in this method of procuring crickets and perhaps other insects, too.

On January 21, 1946, in the Chuckawalla Mountains, I saw a pair of Cactus Wrens (*Heleodytes brunneicapillus*) in an iron-wood tree. One of the pair descended to the floor of the sandy wash and there, not more than sixty feet from me, engaged in a performance of overturning small stones with its beak, evidently for the purpose of securing the various insects that sometimes lurk in such places. One after another the small rocks were turned, some of them actually weighing more than the bird itself. One stone weighed fully six ounces, another, slightly smaller, was greater in girth than my thumb and three and a half inches long. In its quest for insects the wren sometimes merely pushed some of the rocks forward and thus exposed the living food morsels. It was part of a behavior pattern I had not expected, especially in the Cactus Wren. The bird was under close observation for fully five minutes.—EDMUND C. JAEGER, *Riverside College, Riverside, California, January 22, 1947.*