

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

California Condors Observed from Airplane.—On October 15, 1949, at 1:30 p.m., the writer caught sight of two very large soaring birds while piloting a two-place Cessna airplane above Liebre Gulch, about 8 miles southeast of Sandberg, Los Angeles County, California, and 26 miles southeast of Mount Pinos. A lookout for Condors had been kept during regular weekly trips over this region since the preceding November, during which time many Turkey Vultures and a few Golden Eagles had been seen but no birds as large as those now sighted. They were soaring at an altitude about 500 feet higher than the plane, the latter registering 5500 feet above sea level. The altitude of the wild and rugged hills at this point reaches 3500 feet as shown on the U. S. Tejon Quadrangle, which placed the birds at 2500 feet above the ground level at that point.

A few seconds after altering course and climbing so as to approach the birds directly, I was able to identify them unmistakably as California Condors. Like Turkey Vultures and eagles these birds, no doubt unaccustomed to being challenged in the air, made much less effort to get out of the way of the plane than do ducks and geese, for example. Such waterfowl alter course quickly, accelerate their wing strokes and, upon close approach, dodge erratically. Turkey Vultures, eagles and Red-tailed Hawks often describe evasive circles on set wings and sometimes flap heavily upon very close approach, but show much less disposition to change course and often make none whatever.

As the plane overtook the Condors from their left, they behaved like other large birds of prey. They sailed to the right in a tight circle on motionless wings so that I was obliged to bank steeply and make a sharp 180 degree turn to avoid running past them on a tangent with the risk of losing sight of them entirely. By keeping in a very steep bank, with the Condors turning on motionless wings within their own smaller circle, the writer reduced the distance to about 100 feet from the closer bird. At this close approach, it stared over its shoulder, flapped heavily and turned still more sharply in its circling so that the plane shot on by, whereupon the bird resumed its leisurely soaring. A second close approach was made similar to the first, with the same sequence of behavior, including the neck craning and laborious flapping when the plane approached within 100 feet.

This incident took place directly in Amber Airway No. 1, which is a straight line between Bakersfield and Los Angeles and is traveled every day by dozens, perhaps scores, of aircraft. Undoubtedly the birds are thoroughly familiar with planes. Their behavior indicated no alarm more acute than that shown by a roadside bird when it flies a few yards out of the way of an approaching automobile.

The cruising speed of this plane is approximately 100 miles an hour, but in climbing and turning maneuvers involved in observing the birds, it was traveling not more than 80 miles an hour. Nevertheless, as is the case with all soaring birds observed thus far, the man-made flying machine overtook them with the speed of an express train. Overhauling birds in flight takes place so rapidly that the chief concern is to stay far enough to one side to avoid collision in case the birds make an unexpected turn. Collision with a Condor could conceivably cause extensive damage to a small plane.—LOWELL SUMNER, *National Park Service, San Francisco, October 26, 1949.*

New Breeding Records for Colorado.—Nestings of the Ring-necked Duck, Western Grebe, White-faced Glossy Ibis, and Snowy Egret in Colorado have never, or only rarely, been reported. While engaged in studies of waterfowl in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado, April 1 to September 12, 1949, the writer observed numerous instances of nesting in these four species. Brief comments on the literature and on recent observations and collections are made here to help clarify breeding status of these species in Colorado.

Niedrach and Rockwell (*The Birds of Denver and Mountain Parks, Denver, 1939:41*) considered the Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) to be an uncommon migrant in the Denver area. Bergtold (*A Guide to Colorado Birds, Denver, 1928:67*) and Sclater (*A History of the Birds of Colorado, London, 1912:55*) reported a similar status for the state as a whole. Apparently no record of its breeding in Colorado has ever been obtained. On June 10, 1949, the writer observed 19 pairs of this duck in the vicinity of Wright's Ranch, approximately 10 miles west of Creede in Mineral County at an elevation of 9000 feet. On the same date a female and a male with enlarged gonads were col-