

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Nest of Pygmy Nuthatches Attended by Four Parents.—On May 24, while checking over a number of dead pine stubs in the Angelus Crest Forest near Buckhorn, Los Angeles County, California, at 6500 feet elevation, I found the nest hole of a Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*) about six feet from the ground in the dead stub of a yellow pine. I returned with a saw and cut a portion of the trunk so that I could remove it to photograph the nest which contained nine eggs (fig. 1). On May 28 a parent, presumably a female, was incubating. Two other nuthatches were feeding her on the nest. However, this clutch does not exceed the usual number, which is six to nine.

On May 30, I returned with Mr. and Mrs. Neil Willis to allow them to make some photographs of the parents and found that the young had hatched and appeared to be about one day old; more than two birds (three or four) were feeding the young. On June 8, I again visited the spot and found that the nine young were nearly grown, with pin feathers ready to shed their sheaths. The nest was

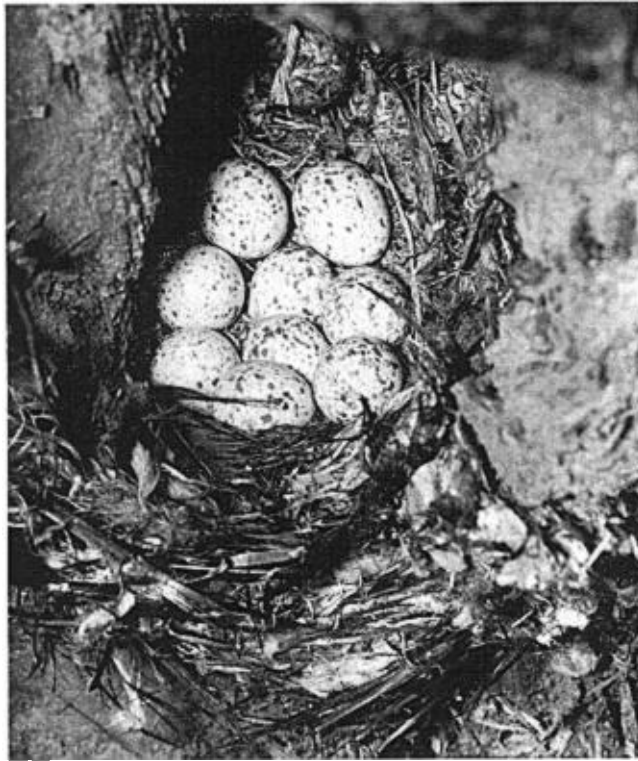


Fig. 1. Nest of Pygmy Nuthatch attended by four adults.

so crowded I had to give up trying to make shots of the young being fed, since they would kick each other out of the nest without the protection of the removable piece of trunk. The birds fed constantly and I became more sure that at least four parent birds were feeding the young.

Later that day a number of chipmunks (*Eutamias*) were running about under the nest tree and suddenly I noticed that one of the birds returned but did not go into the nest hole. Instead it stopped outside and stood motionless on the trunk apparently watching the chipmunks. In a couple of minutes another nuthatch joined the first, soon another and then a fourth appeared. All stood perfectly still for ten minutes. I got out of the car which was parked about twenty-five feet away and opened the trunk to get my camera. I walked to within ten feet of the tree, one flew away, and I took a picture



Fig. 2. Three Pygmy Nuthatches remaining motionless near nest in presence of chipmunks at base of tree.

of the three (fig. 2). I continued to move closer until all flew away. I sat in the car. In five minutes all four were again in position on the trunk about five inches apart where they stayed for another twenty minutes. When one flew away, the remaining three all fluttered their wings as do females awaiting being fed by the male.—DON BLEITZ, *Los Angeles, California, January 9, 1951.*

Red-tailed Hawk Captures Cottontail Rabbit.—Several years of random observations of wildlife on the Santa Rita Experimental Range near Tucson in south-central Arizona have rarely given opportunity to watch the visual predation of Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), although these birds are fairly abundant. Considerable circumstantial evidence of predation is available in the form of skulls, bones, and other remains about nests or roosting places. Some of these records, however, may be the result of eating carrion rather than prey. Accordingly, an observation of actual details of capture of prey by the Red-tailed Hawk seems worth recording.

The pursuit and capture of a cottontail (*Sylvilagus auduboni*) was observed on December 19, 1950, about 3:30 p.m. While driving slowly along an abandoned road, I saw a Red-tailed Hawk perched about 12 feet off the ground in a mesquite tree some 40 feet away. The bird was evidently so concerned with watching an animal that the presence of the automobile caused no alarm. Before the car could be stopped the hawk swooped down on a cottontail rabbit which apparently was resting beneath another mesquite about 15 feet away. The rabbit dashed toward another mesquite about 10 feet distant, reversed directions around this tree, and then crossed a small clearing, running for the shelter of a hackberry bush. The hawk at all times was in close pursuit and was never more than two feet off the ground. Wing tips touched the ground and shrubbery several times. The maneuvers of this particular broad-winged hawk were similar to those characteristic of the Cooper and Sharp-shinned hawks.

The cottontail was captured by the hawk after a chase of about 50 feet. One foot clutched the shoulder region of the back; the other held the hindquarters, and balance was maintained with the wings. The hawk had no difficulty holding the rabbit, although it was mature and weighed about