

NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF OKANOGAN CO., WASHINGTON.

Family Tyrannidae, TYRANT FLYCATCHERS.

This aristocratic family is represented in Okanogan county by nine species, of which four are *Empidonaces*. The consideration of the latter is reserved until, in some later Bulletin, they may be compared with some available eastern specimens. Of the remainder, *Tyrannus tyrannus*, the common Kingbird and *Tyrannus verticalis*, the "Arkansas" Kingbird, have too wide a range to require special notice here. However, may it be in order to note the manifest absurdity of calling *T. verticalis*, which is abundant in Washington, the "Arkansas" Kingbird. It cannot make even the feeble plea offered by the "Louisiana" Tanager, viz., that the name once included the region of the bird's greatest abundance. *Western* Kingbird would evidently be a more suitable, if not very original, name.

SAY'S PHEBE. *Sayornis saya*.—In the spring of '96 these birds appeared on the 17th of March and immediately took up their wonted stations as patrols on the granite cliffs. You may expect to find a pair of these pewits around almost any considerable rock-wall of the lower ranges. The bird will make its presence known by a sudden shrill, "Look at 'ere, look at e-ere," as it flushes and seeks a higher point of rocks. If pursued it will rise from rock to rock, alternately grumbling and coaxing, but keeping shrewdly out of reach of "dust" shot until you are successfully decoyed to the summit of the steep. Arrived there the bird disappears from view by a bold plunge over the brow of the cliff, and soon you hear, wafted up to you the faint, plaintive notes from some boulder hundreds of feet below, where the bird sits waiting to "begin again." On March 19th a Say's Phebe was seen on the townsite of Chelan, fluttering about with his mournful burden from fence to gable and back again. His common note is a minor "Kute-ew, kute-e-ew," with various inflections, sometimes falling, sometimes sharply interrogatory. A rapid succession of these liquid notes delivered while the bird is on the wing passes for quite a respectable song.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER. *Contopus borealis*.—Not a common resident even in the higher ranges where it is found, but conspicuous on ac-

count of its clear penetrating note, "*Sweecheew*," delivered with great energy from a high branch in some fir tree. The bird chooses its summer quarters in the depths of the mountains up to the very feet of the glaciers. Here the miners and prospectors love its heartening cry, which they hear as "*Three cheers!*"

WESTERN WOOD PEWEE. *Contopus richardsonii*. — This bird is perhaps the most characteristic species of the fir-clad, precipitous shores of Lake Chelan. Structurally it closely resembles the common Wood Pewee, (*C. virens*) of the East so that the distinctions between birds in the hand are very nice. The olivaceous of *virens* is almost subdued in *richardsonii* and this is especially noticeable on the breast, where the olive is entirely replaced by fuscous. In the specimens at hand (two of *C. richardsonii* and three of *C. virens*) the under mandible of the western bird is largely dusky, as against the yellow with merely dusky tip of *virens*.

But habits, and particularly notes, at once set the western representatives still further apart. The note of *richardsonii*, is not only "not exactly like that of *virens*" (Coues), but radically different. It is a unique blending of poignant melancholy and fitful exultation, which defies analysis. "A weird *swee*," as given thus in quotation marks by Coues* perhaps expresses it as nearly as one can hope to. "Weird" it certainly is, and calculated to prepare you for the mysteries of the great dark mountains, as you draw up along shore and are saluted by one of these little mourners. The vivacious manners of the bird however, compromise the impression produced by its doleful tones. And so when one of them has returned from a successful brush with a hated rival or, as one may imagine, has shared some Contopine jest, his little being fairly overflows with such a tumult of braggadocio or shrill laughter that one fears for his sanity.

The breeding range so far as observed is confined to the lake shore, where the birds choose some exposed situation and set a dainty hempen cup at the fork, or foot, of a bare limb, without invoking the aid of any covering leaves. A nest found on August 1st, 1895, which contained two large young, was saddled upon the crotch of a maple sapling which leaned out from the cliff at an acute angle and at a height of fifteen feet above the water. There was no attempt at concealment as the sapling was destitute of leaves for several feet on each side of the nest. Other situations chosen were clumps of osiers or dead elderberry bushes.

The bird is perfectly guileless in its domestic affairs and indeed seems

*Key N. Am. Birds ed. 1887—but there wrongly attributed to Wright's Flycatcher.

rather proud to show off its nest to interested and flattering strangers. A typical nest thus pointed out by an over-obliging bird was saddled neatly on a horizontal limb of a balm tree at the height of about 30 feet from the ground and the ever-present lake. Since it was found on June 12th, (1896) this nest contained three fresh eggs. It made an easily marked prominence on the two-inch limb which supported it, and measured, inside, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep by 2 inches wide; outside 2 inches deep by 3 inches wide. It was composed of dried grasses, vegetable fibres and the familiar gray hemp. A few feathers and bits of cotton from the old catkins of the balm tree were worked in; but there was no apparent difference in the texture between the inside and the outside and no attempt at external ornamentation or concealment. Hence quite different, it will readily be seen, from the shallow, lichen-colored nest of the common Wood Pewee. The eggs are not distinguishable from those of *C. virens*.

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GENERAL NOTES.

NOTES FROM BERWYN, PENN.—INCREASING SPECIES.—With the evidence at hand of the decrease in numbers and the not infrequent disappearance entirely of many of our birds in various localities, it has been a good deal of pleasure to me to note a more or less marked increase in numbers of a few of our local species during the past season. The Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, the first to attract the attention and admiration of him who was destined to be known as the Father of American Ornithology, is far from common. It has been observed oftener during the present year than for a period of the six years preceding. Several were found wintering with us, and several broods of young were raised, to my knowledge. It became quite a common occurrence to note several of the beautiful Scarlet Tanagers, *Piranga erythromelas*, in a few minutes' walk during the May migrations, while the average number of individuals in former years was very few. The increase became perceptible last year to a less degree, when it was first found nesting. This season, its unobtrusive "chick-chur" became a familiar sound, issuing from almost every suitable thicket of saplings and wild grape vines. Up to June 2, of the present year, I was practically unacquainted with the Purple Martin, *Progne subis*. Whether it be through the breaking up of a colony or the surplus of an over-crowded neighborhood, we are the gainers of perhaps more than a half-dozen