

A NEST OF THE WESTERN HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus subarcticus*.)

BY EDWARD R. WARREN.

In the early part of May, 1901, while in Paonia, Delta county, Colorado, I heard of a nest of the Western Horned Owl. On the 8th we drove out there to investigate, and found the nest site in a cliff or bluff of adobe clay facing the west. The nest was 18 or 20 feet above the base of the bluff and as far or farther below its top. As we approached the place the old bird flew away.



NESTING SITE OF WESTERN HORNED OWL—NEST IN THE CLEFT ABOVE THE MAN'S HEAD.

While there appeared no way to reach the nest from below, it was possible to scramble to the top of the bluff above the nest. Arrived at the top, a rope, a loose fence post and a conveniently placed prairie-dog hole furnished the desired combination. The first descent proved fruitless as far as the nest was concerned, but embarrassingly fruitful in the amount of "dobe" carried to the bottom of the cliff. The dry wall of dirt crumbled at the touch into dust as fine as flour, or rattled down in chunks at a vigorous blow.

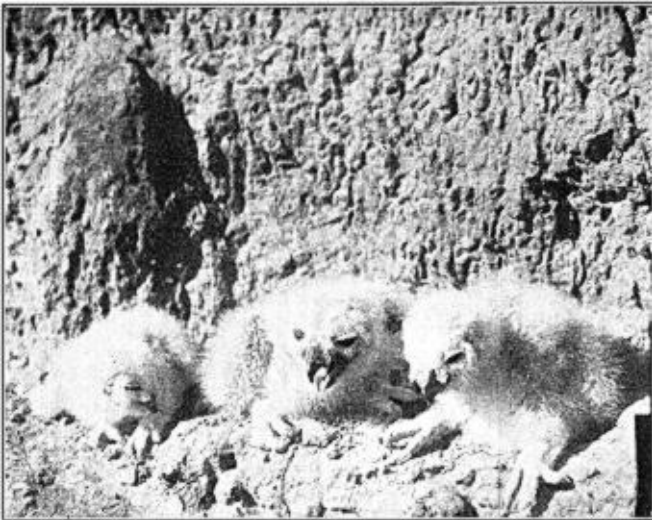
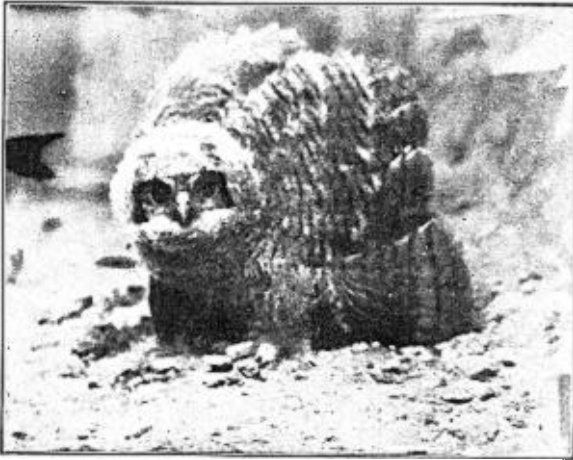
The second descent was successful in locating the nest on a shelf about six feet wide and four feet deep, sloping slightly down toward the edge—rather insecure footing on that crumbling soil, but making the use of the camera possible.

There were two young in the nest. After a snap at them in the defensive attitude which they immediately assumed, backing up against the adobe wall, I attempted to move them into a better light, but one of them chose to flutter down from the protecting ledge. I followed and had him at my mercy. His picture shows how he felt about it, and how his evident temper impressed the camera. We left the young bird at the foot of the bluff, feeling certain that the parents would find it.

The next day we returned and carried the other youngster home in a bag, and made a pet of him. He seemed to thrive on shreds of tough old rooster, which he refused to help himself to. At first I placed it in his mouth, but in the end found that the most expeditious way was to take hold of the bird's head, force open his bill, and poke the food down his throat. As he could swallow pieces of the rooster's neck an inch long, his digestion must have been good.

The bird stood about twelve inches high. The body plumage appeared to be mostly down—soft, fluffy and thick—but the wing and tail feathers were about half out of their sheaths. Ordinarily the ear tufts projected about half an inch, but sometimes fully three-quarters of an inch. The feet and legs were thickly covered with a yellowish or light buffy down.

The whole of the body down was barred, below as well as above, like the adult plumage. The body was light yellowish brown, gray tipped. The wing coverts were brownish yellow, with very dark bars fully a quarter of an inch wide. The primaries, secondaries and tail feathers were as dark as the bars

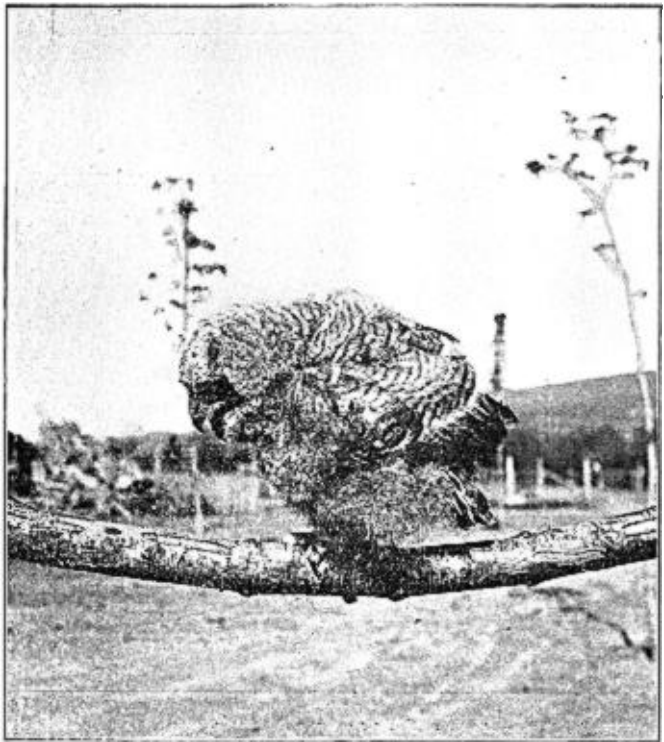


YOUNG WESTERN HORNED OWLS.

of the coverts, with still darker bars. The feathers of the face were just beginning to show.

During my absence the owl grew normally, and finally escaped, only to return for more chicken, and was killed while indulging a cultivated appetite for chicken.

I visited the nesting site in April of the following year. An empty egg shell proved that the nest was occupied again. Returning on the 13th we found the post ready set. The old bird was on the nest when I started down, but soon flew away. In the nest were three downy young, with pin feathers just beginning to show in the largest bird. There were also three young Pinon Jays, a Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys*), and the hind quarters of a cotton-tail rabbit, all food for the young.



YOUNG WESTERN HORNED OWL.

The few shredded cedar-bark fibers could hardly be called a nest.

The down of the young birds was white. The smallest one (at the left in the picture) I judged to be about ten days old, since it was ten days since I had found the shell at the base of the bluff. No opportunity offered for a further study of this interesting family.

WINTER BIRDS OF CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK CITY.

BY CHARLES H. ROGERS.

My own notes, which cover the past three seasons, have been supplemented by those of Mr. George E. Hix and Mr. R. E. Stackpole, to whom I owe grateful acknowledgements.

All numbers of individuals, unless otherwise stated, refer to that part of the park north, to 86th street on the west and the Museum of Art on the east and south to about 73rd street.

I. WINTER VISITORS, 15.

1. *Larus argentatus*. Herring Gull. 51.—All through the winter flocks sometimes numbering fifteen hundred birds, though usually less, visit the large Croton Reservoir, a few only occasionally visiting the small one. In other parts of the park they may be seen flying overhead singly and in small parties. Arrival: earliest, October 9; latest, November 6; average, October 27. Last seen: earliest, April 18; latest, May 5; average, April 27.

2. *Aythya americana*. Redhead. 146.—On January 1, 1903, I saw a male (with two females of the same species?) feeding together on the big reservoir, apart from the gulls.

3. *Dryobates pubescens medianus*. Downy Woodpecker. 349c.—One male and one female in 1900-1; the same in 1901-2; and in 1902-3, two males and two females. Arrival: earliest, August 23; latest, October 20; average, September 19. Last seen: earliest, April 13; latest, May 2; average, April 22.

4. *Carpodacus purpureus*. Purple Finch. 517.—I saw one male, February 3, 1903.

5. *Zonotrichia albicollis*. White-throated Sparrow. 558.—This, one of our commonest winter birds, was strangely less common last winter. In 1900-1 about seventy were present, and the next