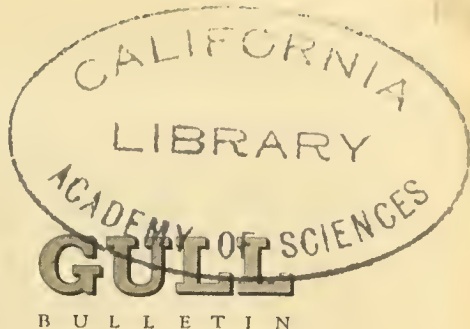


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VOLUME I

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, SEPTEMBER, 1919

NUMBER 9

**SEPTEMBER MEETING:** The regular monthly meeting of the Audubon Association of the Pacific will be held on Thursday evening, the 11th of September, at 8 o'clock sharp, in the Lecture Room of the California Development Board, Ferry Building.

Mr. Tracy I. Storer, Field Naturalist of the University of California, who has recently returned from a field trip in the Yosemite District, will give an illustrated lecture on "Woodpeckers of California." Members are urged to attend this meeting, that they may become better acquainted with this interesting group of birds.



**SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP** will be taken on Sunday, 14th inst. to Big Lagoon, via Muir Woods; returning via Coyote Creek and the old rifle range to Manzanita; distance, 12 miles. Purchase round trip tickets to Mill Valley, 40c. Take Sausalito Ferry 8:15 a. m. Bring lunch and canteens.

This route traverses every variety of habitat in this locality and as many as fifty-five different species of birds have been encountered on previous one-day trips, although this is not to be anticipated at this season of the year.



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE AUGUST MEETING:** The thirty-first regular meeting of the Association was held on the 14th of August in the Ferry Building, President Lastreto in the chair.

It was decided to make a report to the Superintendent of Parks on the results of the work done at the Bird Preserve in Golden Gate Park and to insure its continuance and extension, and a committee consisting of Dr. D'Evelyn and Mr. Hansen was appointed to convey the message.

Mr. Hansen reported on the very effective work in Bird instruction accomplished at the Boy Scouts' Training Camp.

Mr. C. R. Smith recounted some of his usually interesting observations, especially of the water ouzel's song.

Mr. Ed. Ellis discoursed on the breeding of poultry, especially the changing of coloration through feeding and resulting surprising effects.

A prolonged discussion followed on the general topic of artificially produced coloration on other domesticated and caged birds, revealing a wide and interesting topic.

At a previous meeting of the Board of Directors, Judge Rolla B. Watt and Mrs. Paula L. Watt were elected to membership.



**ACTIVITIES OF THE JUNIOR ANNEX:** The vacation season now having ended, the junior clubs are rapidly reorganizing, and will soon be progressing in a satisfactory manner. Mrs. Roe has taken charge of the Hummer Junior Audubon Club, and started things a humming last Saturday afternoon with a field trip in Golden Gate Park.

Ralph Vincent, President of the Gull Junior Audubon Club, reported the appearance of an Anthony green heron in Golden Gate Park, near Stow Lake, Saturday, August 16, 1919.

Special mention and expression of appreciation are due the California Academy of Sciences, who, through Dr. Evermann, Curator of the Museum, has given free of all expense a meeting place with unusual conveniences for boy bird students, and on every request lends all the specimens desired from the Academy's collection.

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## A COLONY OF TRICOLOR BLACKBIRDS

Not far from San Francisco is a considerable breeding ground of the Tricolor Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*). It is so near that the Audubon Society could visit it conveniently. I have been making one or more visits to it each spring for three years. My first visit was with Dr. John Van Denburgh, May 20, 1917. We found the birds nesting in a large, dense patch of the common nettle (*Urtica californica*). There were apparently two or three hundred of the birds, and the nesting season was about over. I found many nests from which the young had flown, many others with young still in them, and a few still with eggs. In another part of the nettle patch Dr. Van Denburgh found some forty to fifty nests usually with four eggs each, some with only one, two, or three. Apparently the one large colony was made up of two or more sub-colonies, all of which do not nest exactly at the same time. Or, perhaps, the belated nesters were birds which had met with some mishap in their first attempt to nest and were now making a second effort. In one corner of the nettle patch where the nettles were somewhat less tall than elsewhere I noted that the nests were rather nearer to the ground than usual, and, on closer examination, nearly every nest was seen to be tilted over to one side. I suspected that some varmint had been inspecting these nests and the suspicion became a conviction when a most stifling odor surrounded me and I became aware I had stepped on a skunk!

The ground covered by the nettles is doubtless covered by water early in the spring but much of it becomes almost or quite dry before the birds are done nesting.

I visited this place again on May 4, 1918. The patch of nettles in which I found them in 1917 was practically deserted; part of it had been burned over and it was all much drier. But in another patch not far away I found the Tricolor in large numbers. The nesting season was at its height. Many nests were examined and nearly all contained four eggs each; a few contained three, two, or one. Rarely one was found with young birds just hatched, and still more rarely a nest not yet completed was seen.

Just a year later (May 4, 1919), I again visited this place. There were two to three hundred birds about, the females all very busy nest-building, the males sitting about on the nettle tops, in the bushes, or on the fence near by, now and then spreading their wings showing the beautiful three-colored shoulder patch most attractively, and keeping up the constant guttural croaking which I suppose they think is a song. The patch which was so nearly abandoned in 1918 had recuperated and two to three birds were there actively building. It was noted that the birds at the first patch, which was near a barley field, were using dry barley stems and blades as nesting material, while those at the other place, more remote from the barley field, were not using any of that material whatever. The scene was certainly an interesting one and I spent most of the day watching the beautiful birds coming and going and listening to the raucous notes of the males.

Apparently the season was just a week later than in 1918. Just a week later (May 11), I went again to the place. Instead of seeing the birds in large numbers as I had expected, there was scarcely a bird in sight. When I arrived at the nearest patch, instead of seeing many birds leave their nests and finding numerous nests with full complement of eggs, I saw only

## THE GULL

a few birds. Entering the patch of nettles I found plenty of nests but nearly every one of them was tilted over to one side and either empty or with a few bits of broken egg shells. A visit to the other patch disclosed the same conditions. Very few birds were about and they were silent. The only nests in which any eggs were found were such as had been placed high up in the weeds; every nest less than two feet above the ground had been pulled over from below and the eggs taken or broken. The odor of the skunk was everywhere, albeit by no means as overpowering as when I stepped on one of the varmints two years before!

Although I did not catch a skunk in the act, I believe that animal is the guilty party. It might have been the opossum (lately introduced) but I hardly think so. At any rate it is evident that one or two varmints possessing this habit can, in a season or two, practically exterminate a colony of such birds as these. The only safety for the birds is to change their breeding grounds or nest higher up in the nettles. The harm the skunks and opossums do to ground nesting birds must be great indeed. This is a matter which the Audubon Society might properly investigate.

BARTON WARREN EVERMANN.  
California Academy of Sciences.



## FEW MIGRANTS AT THE FARALLONES

Mr. Kunder, keeper Farallon light-house, who has been enjoying his first "shore leave" in nearly two years, reports an unusually light migration of land birds during the last season: "not one-tenth of the average number."

If there is any connection between this and the small number of birds observed in the vicinity in the last months, it would be interesting to know the cause.



## RECORDS

By Mr. C. R. Smith

June 10, 1919: No. 77, Blacktern. A number of birds, twelve or fifteen, were seen near the highway between Galt and Woodbridge. On the following day a single specimen was seen at Woodbridge.

July 18, 1919: No. 125, White pelican. Three specimens were seen on a fresh water pond near Woodbridge on the Sacramento and Stockton road.

No. 703a, Western mocking bird. Following northern records on June 9, 1919, a single bird four miles out of Sacramento. On the same date one was heard singing at Florin three or four miles off the main highway. On August 3, 1919, two specimens were seen on the Stockton road about five miles from Sacramento. The nearest citrus groves would be from fifteen to twenty miles in the Orangevale district and I had occasion to pass through this district a few days previous and did not see the bird nor was I successful in finding any records of the mocking bird in this citrus section. Nor have I ever seen the mocking bird in the Oroville, Orland or Corning citrus district.



## BIRD DESTRUCTION ON OILED ROADS

A considerable loss to bird life is caused by the asphaltum base highways of San Joaquin County. In the heat of the summer, which is all the way from 100 degrees up, patches of liquid asphaltum form which prove to be a death trap to birds, especially to the meadow lark, brewer black birds, occasionally a linnnet and horned larks. Not only are they held by this in the roadway and run over by automobiles, but those who succeed in escaping this death often starve, as it is impossible for our feathered friend to clear itself. One consolation is that this class of highway is not successful and concrete base will be used in the future.

C. R. SMITH.

## ALTERED LIFE HABITS THROUGH CHANGED CONDITIONS

It has come to the writer's observation that birds living in different localities change their habits to a considerable extent in regard to the food supply.

In the early part of April of this year I was in Nevada, and at this season the trees, which are largely cottonwoods and willows, had not leaved out and the English sparrow was nesting. I counted 122 nests in one block and as the desert towns afford no food for the English sparrow except within their limits, which are small, the H. C. L. with the English sparrow is on a par with the American citizen and makes him hustle. He turns to the fly catching habit, although clumsily. I saw him go up straight in the air to a height of 14 feet and bring down a fine fat grasshopper. It is true that he showed none of the dash of our regular fly catcher, but it is evident that he succeeds in adding to his meagre living by these methods.

C. R. SMITH.

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## ALARM OF THE HAWK'S SHADOW

Birds, at least wild birds, know their enemies. I have never observed a bird that would show fear from the shadow of a vulture, but let a hawk, even the red tailed, whose reputation is almost beyond question as a killer, follow in the wake of the vulture, and the average bird will sound its alarm note and sometimes seek cover. One bird that seems fearless regardless of what member of the hawk family is present, is the California woodpecker, who not for one instant slackens his clown-like antics nor does he notice you.

C. R. SMITH.

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THE AUGUST FIELD TRIP was made on Sunday, August 17th, to Wildcat Canyon, among the hills back of Berkeley. Wildcat was at its best, neither too warm nor too cool, and the day passed very pleasantly, in spite of the fact that comparatively few birds were in evidence.

Some of the party entered near the upper end; others came past the reservoir on the ridge and skirted the west side of the canyon to the pumping station. The bottom was then traversed for a mile or more to a delightful luncheon spot on the rocks in the creek bed. About four o'clock the party climbed the ridge to the reservoir and returned to town via the electric line along Arlington Avenue.

From San Francisco came Mr. Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, with Miss Brown as a guest. Miss Griffin and Miss Potter made the trip in their machine from Oakland. Miss Flynn, Mr. Thomas and Mr. and Mrs. Kibbe represented Berkeley, making eight members and two guests.

Birds encountered were: California quail, sharp-shinned and red-tailed hawks; flicker, Anna and Allen hummers; coast and California jays; meadow larks, purple finch and linnets; green-backed goldfinches, Nuttall sparrow, California and San Francisco towhees; Hutton vireo, pileolated warbler and titmouse; bush-tits, wren-tit and russet backed thrush. Twenty-one species in all.

## AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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The Gull invites free and open discussion. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views nor the stand taken by this Association.

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