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Absence of Suitable Nesting Sites as Affecting Shrikes

About Benicia, Solano County, California, there are long stretches of fields, upon some of which grain is grown and others are uncultivated and used as pasture for sheep or cattle. The insect life in these fields attracts and supports a good population of California Shrikes, *Lanius ludovicianus gambeli*. However, in some places for considerable stretches there is a scarcity or entire absence of trees and bushes where these birds might nest.

While traveling over the Benicia-Cordelia highway on April 13, 1940, in a car with Mr. J. D. Graham, I casually remarked that at this season of the year some of the butcherbirds which were perched on the electric wires skirting the road must be nesting birds, and that in the absence of trees or brush they must be nesting in some of the weeds along the highway, mostly anise (*Foeniculum vulgare*). I scarcely believed my own supposition to be true, but Mr. Graham took me at my word, stopped the car and we searched a patch of anise. Very soon we located a shrike's nest two and a half feet up in one of these weeds. It contained four eggs and later there were seven. Each spring the Highway Commission sprays with weed killer the grass and weeds adjacent to the highway, and when dry burns it. It happened that this nest was within the area sprayed and we were sorry to find on April 19th that the nest and eggs had just been burned.

I had not previously suspected anise to be a suitable nesting site for a bird building as bulky a nest as this species; however, probably any bird will make the best of the situation in the absence of its usual requirements for a nesting site.

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. June 10, 1940.



California Wild Doves

Here in Redlands, at the east end of San Bernardino Valley, a small flock of about six White-winged Doves, *Melopelia asiatica mearnsi*, have been reported

since October, 1939. They are also known as "Sonora Pigeons" or "Arizona Doves" and are rare in this part of California.

In size, they are between the Band-tailed Pigeons, *Columba fasciata fasciata*, and the smaller Mourning Dove, *Zenaidura macroura*, and are great callers. Just after daylight they start "crowing" and keep it up quite steadily. A few days ago while taking an early morning walk I had a chance to listen to the calls of both the White-winged and the Mourning Doves at the same time. They were sitting on overhead wires about a block apart, and the calls were so entirely different as to be easily noted.

The White-winged are still seen in large flocks in Arizona and also are found all along the San Pedro Martir Mountains in Baja California.

M. Hall McAllister, Redlands, California. June 10, 1940.



Brown Thrashers vs. King Snake

During the afternoon of Sunday, May 26, 1940, the writer witnessed a very interesting encounter between a good-sized king snake and two California Thrashers, *Toxostoma Redivivum*, presumably mates.

While standing close to some shrubbery, growing in the front yard of a friend's home located near Napa, my attention was attracted by the very unusual actions of these birds. Hurriedly and excitedly they would go into the shrubbery and come out greatly disturbed. In a few moments the cause of the disturbance, the snake, appeared in an opening, and here it was attacked with daring and vigor, but also with care. First one bird and then the other would leap into the air, with wings outstretched, then dart downward and strike the enemy with its bill. The snake in an apparent effort to avoid the onslaught would constrict his body, rise and strike toward the oncoming bird, but the latter was alert to the danger and too quick in its movements for the snake.

The attack seemed to be co-ordinated, for when the snake attempted by a counter attack to ward off the blow of one bird, the other would strike from the opposite side. The battle ended victoriously for the thrashers as they forced the snake to leave and seek refuge in another part of the garden. There is no doubt in the mind of the writer that these thrashers were protecting their nest.

Joseph J. Webb, San Francisco, California. June 6, 1940.



June Field Trip

The June field trip started from Ross Station with sixteen members and guests. We stopped at the bridge and the little Memorial Park, then proceeded

leisurely along Lagunitas Road to Phoenix Lake. We lunched at the junction of the Eldridge, Fish and Schafer Grades near the upper end of the lake. We then went on to the top of the ridge via Schafer Grade and returned via Hidden Meadow. The day was pleasant, not too warm. On the way back, soon after we left the lake, we heard the full song of the Monterey Hermit Thrush, a truly beautiful solo.

Mrs. Thomas T. Kent invited us to her home in Shady Lane where she served a hot barbecue supper to those who stayed.

Ten members present were Mesdames Baer, Courtright; Misses Berg, Blake, Cohn, McConnell, Papini, Paroni, Roscoe and Sterne and six guests, Messrs. and Mesdames Herbert Handley, W. D. Landels, Mrs. Anabel and Miss Young.

Forty species seen were as follows:

Loon (species ?)	Nicasio Jay	Warbling Vireo
Pied-billed Grebe	Crow	Lutescent Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Nicasio Chickadee	Pileolated Warbler
Quail	Plain Titmouse	Meadowlark
Anna Hummingbird	Coast Bush-tit	Black-headed Grosbeak
Allen Hummingbird	Ruddy Wren-tit	Purple Finch
Red-shafted Flicker	House Wren	House Finch
California Woodpecker	Western Robin	Pine Siskin
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Monterey Hermit Thrush	Green-backed Goldfinch
Black Phoebe	Russet-backed Thrush	San Francisco Towhee
Western Flycatcher	Western Bluebird	S. F. Brown Towhee
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Hutton Vireo	Junco
Barn Swallow	Cassin Vireo	Song Sparrow
Cliff Swallow		

Mary L. Courtright, Leader and Historian.



A Robin Incident at Benicia

Western Robins, *Turdus migratorius propinquus*, are increasing in abundance every year as summer residents, nesting here commonly, whereas not many years ago nesting robins were an unusual record. Now there are probably a dozen pairs breeding in town and their singing is heard every day during spring and summer.

This season a nest was built in my yard about eighteen feet up on a limb of a large pepper tree. Everything went along lovely until the night of May 22nd, when at about eleven o'clock I heard a robin flying over the house uttering alarm notes. I went outdoors to investigate with a flashlight and threw the beam on the robin's nest, on which the bird had been setting for about a week. The flashlight illuminated a Screech Owl sitting on a limb facing the nest and only about two feet away from it. A few clods of dirt chased it away to another location in the same tree, and still another routed it to another pepper tree. It was a very cold

night and I was concerned about the eggs. I doubted whether the little owl would have harmed the eggs, but the fact remained that it had frightened the setting bird into a cold, dark night where it remained until daylight. I left our bright front porch light on for extended intervals, hoping it would give sufficient light to guide the robin back to the nest; however, the flashlight showed the bird did not come back,—either from fright or inability to find the nest in the dark. The next morning she was setting again, but not very faithfully, and a day later she had deserted the eggs,—possibly because her intuition told her that an absence of six hours or so on a very cold night had devitalized her eggs. Anyhow I blamed the Screech Owl for robbing me of the pleasure of having a brood of robins raised in my yard.

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. June 15, 1940.



Audubon Notes

July Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 11th, at 8 p.m., in the Ferry Building, San Francisco.

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. W. J. H. Hasselbrock, whose subject will be "Honey Bees in the Garden." The lecture will be illustrated with specimens.

Members may bring guests.



July Field Trip will be taken on the 14th in San Francisco. Meet at the end of the Municipal car "C" line at 10 o'clock. East Bay members will have to walk to Market Street from the Terminal for this car. The walk will be along the water's edge, taking in Land's End and the Cliff House where Pigeon Guillemots and Turnstones may be seen. If the members wish the walk

will be continued on to Chain of Lakes in Golden Gate Park.



June Meeting: The 274th regular meeting was held on the 13th in the Ferry Building, with thirty-four members and guests present. President B. K. Dunshee presided.

Don Heyneman was elected to membership.

Mr. David G. Nichols was the speaker of the evening, taking for his subject "Suggestions for the Study of Bird Behavior." This subject is one of the research problems suggested by Mr. James Moffitt.

Mr. Nichols cited some very interesting examples of the behavior and habits of certain species and illustrated his talk with drawings projected upon the screen. His audience showed much interest and asked numerous questions.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....Mr. B. K. Dunshee....Room 714, 245 Market St., San Francisco
 Corresponding Secretary.....Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....519 California St., San Francisco
 Treasurer.....Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.