
From Field and Study

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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Colorado Notes.—Hon. James Cowie, while hunting ducks on a lake northeast of Boulder, on September 15, 1907, saw a flock of six birds which he failed to recognize and shot one for identification, turning it over to the University of Colorado. It proved to be an immature Sabine Gull (*Xema sabinii*). Altho Capt. Berthoud reported that the species was common in the early days of the settlement of the State, I only find six actual records prior to this one, all but one being from the plains near the eastern base of the mountains from Denver northward, the other being from Breckenridge, at an altitude of 10,000 feet. Whatever may have been the case as a matter of past history, the species is certainly rare enough hereabouts in recent years.

On September 14, 1907, while passing Church's Lake a few miles north of Denver, I noted several White-winged Scoters (*Oidemia deglandi*) within a few feet of the train, with some other ducks and coots. After allowing time to make sure of their identity, but before I had counted them, the birds all took flight, but there were not less than half a dozen of the Scoters. I find but nine previous records for the State, all October and November records.

The Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) is a rare duck in Colorado nowadays. I have heard of none recently except three killed near Boulder by Hon. James Cowie and Mr. Bert Werley about three years ago, no record having been made of the date. I have seen two of the specimens.

There seems to be but one record of *Syrnium varium* in the literature of Colorado ornithology; so I have hesitated about mentioning a note which I find in the note-books of Denis Gale. He mentions having seen a pair in the valley near Boulder in 1886, but gives no particulars and no exact date. The note was made three years afterwards, in 1889, when he says he looked again for the pair which he had seen there three years before but failed to find them. Upon careful consideration I have concluded that his identification was probably correct, as he was quite familiar with the owls of the region, and there is no other that he would be apt to mistake for this. The Spotted Owl (*Syrnium occidentale*) which might be easily mistaken in the field for the Barred Owl, is a species of the southwest, coming only into southern Colorado, so that the eastern species is much more likely to be found east of the Front Range and in the northern part of the State. However, with these rare records, one never feels safe unless the circumstances under which the birds are seen, the opportunity for careful inspection, the condition of the light, etc., are known.—JUNIUS HENDERSON, *Museum, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo.*

Notes From Colton, California.—On May 19, 1907, I found a Phainopepla's (*Phainopepla nitens*) nest containing one egg. Two days later there were no additional eggs. May 24 I noticed the female bird on the nest but did not climb the tree to see if there were any more eggs. May 30, or six days later, I noticed a Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) on the nest, and upon investigation found two dove eggs resting upon a slight platform placed on the Phainopepla's nest. I thought that this was rather rapid home changing.

A nest of the Valley Partridge (*Lophortyx californicus vallicola*) containing fifteen eggs was found June 1, in an unusual location. The bird selected a place under a small pile of eucalyptus twigs 25 feet from Pennsylvania Avenue and four feet from Olive Street, both being well-traveled village streets. A concrete flume was within sixteen inches of the nest and workmen walked along the flume many times daily while irrigating an orange orchard. A calf was tied to a tree at the edge of Olive Street, and it had also selected a resting place in the brush pile three feet from the bird. The calf could have put its hind feet in the nest if it had desired to do so. The calf was fed regularly by a man, woman or child. Across the street, ninety feet from the nest was a house. Several small children and a dog played around the yard and often came over to visit the calf. (They did not know about the nest, as the bird would not flush unless in danger of being stepped on.) June 10, I visited the nest and found that the bird had departed. Two piped eggs were in the nest and one little dead bird in the flume. Probably the others got away all right.

During August I had the pleasure of seeing an albino Brewer Blackbird (*Scolecophagus cyanocephalus*). I would say that about two-thirds of its feathers were white. About a week after I first saw the bird, I learned that it spent considerable time in company with other blackbirds on certain lawns here in Colton. The other blackbirds did not seem to treat it differently because of its white coat. A friend of mine informs me that he saw a white blackbird at San Jacinto Lake eighteen or twenty years ago. Talking about white blackbirds sounds like discussing white lamp-black!—W. C. HANNA, *Colton, California.*

Concerning a Few Abnormally Marked Eggs.—During the last few years the writer has collected several sets of eggs which are of special interest owing to the fact that they are thickly spotted with fine brown spots, where nature's usual prescription calls for unmarked eggs.

The first case is a set of Green-backed Goldfinch (*Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus*) taken near Escondido, San Diego County, California. There are three eggs in the set. Two are normal but the third is larger and thickly spotted about the broader end with many fine peppery spots. I found another set of three eggs of this species in 1905 in which every egg of the set was marked; but owing to the very advanced stage of incubation they were not collected.

In 1906 I found a nest of Lazuli Bunting (*Cyanospiza amœna*) in the midst of a patch of iron weed. It was only about a foot high from the ground and fastened to very slender stems. I flushed the bird but could not identify her as she darted thru the weeds. Upon looking into the nest I found four well-marked eggs. Altho I had collected for a number of years in this same locality I had never met with anything of this style before. I thought it must be something new, so quietly hid in some nearby willows to await the return of my bird. In about half an hour I saw her slipping thru the weeds and onto her nest, while her mate lit in a bush near by. To make sure of my own eyes I collected both birds, for I could hardly believe that they were Bunting eggs altho the birds were before me. The eggs were normal in every way except for the spots.

Last spring I discovered a Plain Titmouse's nest on the University campus. There were eight eggs in the cavity and all were more or less speckled with these same brown spots. They resemble very much the markings on a Black Phoebe egg.

Whether this subspecies of Titmouse, namely *Bæolophus inornatus inornatus* is in the habit of laying spotted eggs I cannot tell, for I have collected but one other set, and this was plain white. I doubt that the majority are anything but plain white. However, I shall watch with interest to see if this pair of birds return to last year's nesting site and lay spotted eggs.

It seems to me that here is a question for students of evolution: Are some of our birds which lay in the open going to lay spotted eggs in the distant future, or are these spots a remnant of the distant past. It would seem that spots on the eggs of birds which lay in cavities were of little benefit, hence the spotted Titmouse eggs may be remnants of the past; but who can tell?—NELSON K. CARPENTER, *Stanford University, California.*

Gray-headed Junco in the Cuyamaca Mountains, California.—On November 18, 1906, following a heavy snow-storm, at Julian, San Diego County, California, altitude 4100 feet, great numbers of Juncos appeared, altho one species, *Junco h. thurberi* was found in small numbers, since the early part of September. These flocks were made up of the species just named, and *Junco caniceps*, the last in the minority, but still in sufficient numbers to be noted in every flock. I left the mountains on December 3, and up to that time observed *Junco caniceps* almost daily.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Benson, Arizona.*

Passer domesticus.—In going thru a colony of Cliff Swallows two years ago, I found two sets of eggs of the English Sparrow. The sparrows had taken possession of the nests of the swallows when the outside walls were finished and furnished the interior to suit their own taste—a lining of a few straws, on which were laid, in one, a set of five eggs, in the other a set of six eggs.

A half block from my house in Santa Rosa, on Lincoln street, is a row of small maples at the edge of the sidewalk. On the third tree from the corner of Morgan street, there is a rotten stub two feet long with a woodpecker hole at the top end. In passing by on my way to work, last month, I several times flushed a bird from this stub, and was about ready to make a night attack on same, when one morning in passing by, I again flushed the bird. It stopped this time and perched in the tree close to the nest so that I got a good look at her. My desire to make the climb up the tree and cut off the stub for something rare was chilled. It was a female *Passer domesticus*.—H. F. DUPREY, *Santa Rosa, California.*

Correction.—In THE CONDOR for July, 1907, page 110, I recorded the "Mew Gull" as having been taken by me at Alamitos Bay, Los Angeles County, California, April 14, 1907. After careful comparison with examples in the collection of Mr. Grinnell, the specimen in question is now determined to be the Pacific Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla pollicaris*). In making the original erroneous record I was too hasty in forming an opinion.—C. B. LINTON, *Los Angeles, California.*