

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Feeding Habits of the Black-bellied Plover in Winter.—When we arrived at La Jolla, California, at the end of October, 1933, there were three Black-bellied Plovers (*Squatarola squatarola*) on the strip of shore-line directly in front of what was to be our home for the winter. And as it turned out these plovers were also established for the winter. Each bird had his own particular strip of shore-line, and each had his own favored loafing ground. Each claimed and held for his very own a strip of perhaps a hundred yards. No other Black-bellied Plover was permitted to encroach, but shore birds of other species were allowed to forage freely. Up and down the beach for a distance of several miles, wherever there were patches of sandy beach between rocky headlands, there were likely to be found lone Black-bellied Plovers established for the winter. The far stretches of unbroken sandy beach were not favored by the plovers so far as we observed.

The Black-bellied Plover, once established on his winter quarters, is the least active of all the shore birds. He seems not to have the appetite of other shore birds, and hours each day he spends in silent contemplation. Occasionally when the sun shines warmly the Black-bellied lies flat on his belly and takes a sun bath. When actually sleeping he tucks his bill in the feathers of his back and stands on one leg. Often when but slightly disturbed he hops away rather than untuck his sleeping leg. It might be said that he has this habit in common with many other shore birds.

When foraging, the Black-bellied Plover runs a few mincing steps and then assumes a thoughtful attitude. He is a dainty feeder; he seldom probes for his food, but dabs lightly here and there, picking his food up from the surface of the beach. Much of his foraging he does at low tide when the kelp-covered rock flats lie exposed about his station. When feeding on the kelp-covered flats he is often associated with other shore birds. He never objects to the presence of Sanderling, Curlew, Godwit, Willet, Black Turnstone, or even the great American Egret, and he is quite friendly to the five little Least Sandpipers that come to feed on his preserves. But let one of his neighbor Black-bellied Plovers come onto his domain and he at once declares war. He ruffles his neck feathers, crouches into a belligerent attitude and trots toward his enemy as though to butt him from the premises. His bluff always seems to work, no blows ever are struck. But should he go onto his neighbor's territory the situation is reversed and he is soon persuaded to turn tail. When once established on his winter claim the Black-bellied Plover is able and eagerly willing to protect the claim against all comers of his own race.

These lone Black-bellied Plovers on their chosen territories stayed all winter, and as the weeks of March began to slip away the birds still remained. Now we began to hope that we might see them take on their black-bellied summer plumage. On March 20 we noted the first change; on one of the birds, black appeared to be spreading out across the breast from under the wings. The belly and breast of this bird were now mottled black and white.

On the shore of Mission Bay on the morning of April 2, in a flock of ten Black-bellied Plovers, there was one bird in full black-bellied plumage. On the morning of April 3 our three Black-bellied Plovers were missing from their stations. However, up until the day we left La Jolla (April 12) stray birds were occasionally noted.

When traveling the migration lanes the Black-bellied Plovers move in flocks. Early in November a flock containing four or five hundred birds was seen at Mission Bay. And again on January 23 a flock of fifty was seen. These birds probably moved farther south, as no large groups were seen during February, March, or April.—CHAS. W. MICHAEL, *Yosemite, California, June 4, 1934.*

Two Records for San Diego County, California.—*Mniotilta varia*. Black and White Warbler. This warbler apparently is sufficiently rare in San Diego County to warrant the recording of a specimen that was taken on September 14, 1933, at Bird Rock, a residential section between San Diego and La Jolla. It was given to me by a small boy who shot it with his BB gun while it was climbing, creeper fashion, up the trunk of a pepper tree in his garden. Although not received until about three days after its death, I was able to save it and add it to my collection. It was not sexed on account of mutilation by the shot, but by comparison with specimens at the museum

of the San Diego Society of Natural History it appears to be a female or immature bird.

Larus canus brachyrhynchus. Short-billed Gull. According to L. M. Huey of the San Diego Society of Natural History, the status of this gull in San Diego County is uncertain. On December 15, 1934, while collecting sea-birds off La Jolla, in company with T. W. Harvey, III, we noticed a gull slightly smaller than the abundant Western, California and Ring-billed gulls. When it flew within range we both fired and secured the bird which has been identified by Mr. Huey as the above species. It is a female and is now in my collection.—KARL W. KENYON, *La Jolla, California, March 2, 1935*.

Black-headed Jay Mimicking Loon.—At Okanagan Landing, on a morning in early May, the tremolo call of a Loon (*Gavia immer*) coming, so I thought, from far out on the lake and subdued by the distance, was accepted as genuine without question as to its source. Then my attention was attracted to a party of three Black-headed Jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri annectens*) which moved about in the brush along the lake shore, and, to my surprise, the low, quavering call, again repeated, was traced to one of these birds which was perched on a hawthorn branch thirty feet from where I stood. Upon its last performance the mimicked loon call was followed by a warbled cadence of four liquid notes.—J. A. MUNRO, *Okanagan Landing, B. C., Canada, August 11, 1934*.

Condors in Northern Los Angeles County, California.—On August 9, 1934, at a point near the Antelope Valley highway and some eight miles east-northeast of Sandberg, I saw seven Condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) feeding upon, or flying about, a dead sheep. They were accompanied by two Turkey Buzzards and thirty or more Ravens.

On December 14, 1934, I saw three Condors circling high over the Liebre Ranch headquarters. On December 15 three sailed within fifty feet over Sandberg (on the Ridge Route), going toward Cobblestone Mountain; on December 17, one sailed over at a height of fifty feet, headed northeast toward the desert. On January 12, 1935, three Condors sailed over the same place, 200 feet or so aloft, also headed northeast toward the desert.—HARVEY T. ANDERSON, *Sandberg, California*.

Unusual Food Habits of California Gulls.—During the past three years a few local complaints and newspaper reports have been received that gulls in Salt Lake Valley, Utah, have become destructive to the cherry crop. The first report in 1931 could not be confirmed and the State game commissioner wrote that he had been unable to verify the complaints although he had heard of a number.

In 1932 additional reports were received, and during the past season damage was reported in both Utah and Salt Lake valleys. Under date of September 13, 1934, Newell B. Cook, Commissioner of Fish and Game in Utah, wrote the following:

“As the cherries ripened in different localities in the State, the Sea-gulls would work heavily on this fruit. If you were to go to Rock Island this fall, you would find the entire north end of the island covered with cherry stones. This is also true of some of the islands of Great Salt Lake. These birds were very destructive the last year to Utah’s crop of cherries.

“During the hot weather of early July the Sea-gulls also worked heavily on grasshoppers and crickets. They would eat and disgorge several times a day. This also happened in 1929 at Roy, Utah.”

A number of competent and reliable observers have witnessed the gulls feeding on the cherries, and in localized areas the damage has been considerable. Mr. C. Lynn Hayward, of the zoology department of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, writes under date of January 23, 1935, that since the gulls appeared to be unable to alight in the foliage, they would hover over the trees and beat the fruit down with their wings. The birds would then fly to the ground and feast on the harvest. A county agricultural agent reported that in many cases the ground was heavily covered with ripened fruit and that the birds had practically stripped the trees.

Mr. Hayward further reported that “the gulls now nest on Rock Island, Utah Lake, in great numbers and the colony there has been on the increase for a number of years. A number of parties who visited the island last summer report . . . that the ground in the vicinity of the nests was thickly strewn with cherry stones. Just how long the