

winter, twenty-eight specimens of the Snowy Owl, and enclosed a most artistic picture of fourteen of these striking birds. He states that they first appeared late in November, 1901, and that they had almost completely destroyed the quail and partridges in that section; the quail having been quite abundant before the inroad of the owls. One specimen, seen flying close to the ground, suddenly stooped and captured a rabbit. Mr. Kress informs me that at least fifty specimens were killed in the vicinity of Elk Rapids.

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### GENERAL NOTES.

**The American and European Herring Gulls.**—In 1862, the late Dr. Coues separated the American Herring Gull as specifically distinct from the European Herring Gull, under the name *Larus smithsonianus*, on the basis of slight differences in general size, and in the size and form of the bill, but mainly on the small amount of white at the tips of the primaries. Later an attempt was made to show that these alleged differences were due to age (cf. Allen, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., II, pp. 194-196, April, 1871). As, however, Herring Gulls unquestionably referable to the Old World form have proved to be of more or less frequent occurrence in this country, together with many intermediates, both forms of the Herring Gull have been given a place in the A. O. U. Check-List, standing, respectively, as *Larus argentatus* and *Larus argentatus smithsonianus*. I have, however, never been convinced that my exposition of the case in 1871 was not thoroughly sound.

Although *Larus smithsonianus*, either as a species or subspecies, appears to have never received any recognition abroad, it was not again challenged by American writers till 1898 and later, when Mr. O. W. Knight, after examination of a great number of adult American Herring Gulls shot at Portland, Maine, emphatically claimed the "non-existence of the so-called subspecies *L. a. smithsonianus*" (cf. Auk, XVII, Jan. 1900, pp. 63, 64). A year later Dr. Dwight, on wholly different material, reached practically the same conclusion in his paper on 'The Sequence of Moults and Plumages of the Laridæ' (Auk, XVIII, Jan. 1901, pp. 49-62). In referring to the white areas at the tip of the first primary in the American Herring Gull, and to the wide range of variation in these markings, which vary from two small distinct white areas to a single large apical white spot, he asks "Is the European bird always marked by one white area?" Owing to the absence of large series of European specimens in

American museums, the question was not easy to answer. Hence, when an opportunity presented itself, in July, 1901, to examine the series of these birds in the British Museum, through the courtesy of the officers of that grand institution, I eagerly availed myself of it. The result of my examination of this material may be briefly summarized as follows: 40 adult birds were examined; 9 out of 15 specimens killed in the British Islands were of the *smithsonianus* type, and 6 of the *argentatus* type; of 16 specimens from various localities in North America, 4 were of the typical *argentatus* type and 12 of the *smithsonianus* type. Thus much more than half of the specimens killed in the British Islands were like the so-called *smithsonianus* type, and one fourth of the American specimens were of the so-called *argentatus* type. Most of the British examples, it should be added, were birds of apparently the second or third year, and the same is true of the American examples examined.

From the foregoing it is evident that there can be but one conclusion in respect to the Herring Gulls of the two sides of the Atlantic; namely, that the extent and form of the white apical spots on the first primary vary with the age of the bird, being small and separated in birds that have just acquired adult plumage, and increase in size with age till, in a small percentage, consisting of probably very old birds, the two white spots at the tip of the first primary become merged into one, forming a single greatly lengthened white area; that this is true of both European and American birds; and that the alleged characters of *Larus smithsonianus* are invalid, the supposed differences in the form and size of the bill being also variations due to age. — J. A. ALLEN, *Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., New York City.*

**Leach's Petrel at Westford, Mass.** — Mr. E. Abbot informs me that a specimen of *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* was shot on Forge Pond, September 25, 1902, and that the bird is now in the Westford Public Library. — REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR., *Longwood, Mass.*

**European Widgeon in Michigan.** — On March 27, 1902, Mr. William B. Boulton, of New York, was on one of the Bay points at Munroe Marsh, Michigan (on Lake Erie) with a friend, when a flock of five Widgeon came towards the decoys, but soaring well outside. Only one bird was hit and came down with a broken wing. The hunter went out in his boat and shot it, and not until the bird was in hand was there any suspicion that it was a splendid male specimen of *Anas penelope*.

Another male, in almost as good plumage, was taken in April, 1900, and a third in April, 1892. All were preserved. We have no records of females, nevertheless I believe we occasionally take them and their identity is not suspected, as there is not so wide a difference between the plumage of the females of the two species as there is between the males. — HAROLD HERRICK, *New York City.*