

mast, the birds were everywhere few in numbers and inconsequent in action.

No signs, whatever, were discovered of late summer nesting. Removal from the region of observation made it impossible for me to determine whether or not the crossbills were sexually active during July and August.

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## CHARACTERISTIC KAMCHATKAN BIRDS.

BY AUSTIN H. CLARK.

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FROM the 17th to the 20th of June this past summer, I was fortunate enough to be in that out-of-the-way and seldom visited town, Petropaulski, Kamchatka, where I had an opportunity to form a close acquaintance with a number of interesting birds which I had previously known only from museum specimens. I reached Petropaulski from Bering Island, after having spent nearly a month in the bleak and desolate Aleutian chain; and the sight of the pretty wooded hills about the town, the broad meadows, and the distant snow-covered mountains, combined with the songs of hundreds of birds all about produced a deep impression, and made me think at the time that there could not exist a more charming spot than this little town in farthest Siberia. The weather during my stay was perfect, warm and summerlike, the sun shining almost all the time, which I was in a condition to appreciate, as the sun is a rather rare sight in the Aleutians, and comfortable days, at this season, rarer still.

The first bird in Kamchatka to attract attention is the Siberian Ruby-throat (*Calliope calliope*), not from its coloration, for it is rather plain, nor for its ubiquitousness, for it is quite retiring, but for its most exquisite song. It is abundant about Petropaulski, and sings all day long, from sunrise to sunset, its song being the most characteristic bird note of the region. It inhabits particularly hillsides grown up to bushes, and bushy patches in the mead-

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ows, keeping usually on or near the ground, and is very adept at slinking away through the undergrowth when alarmed. The song is usually given from some little elevation, as the top of a bush, or the lower limbs of a small tree, but often from near the ground. Very justly has this bird been called the "Kamchatkan Nightingale."

Next in importance as a songster, and much more often seen, being in fact quite familiar about the town, is the Siberian Housefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus grebnitzkii*). In general habits and song this bird resembles our common Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*). This species frequents the hillsides, but keeps to the more open places, the higher branches of the small trees, and the tops of the bushes. It is vivacious and restless, never stopping long in one place.

The last of the really characteristic songsters occurring about the outskirts of the town is the handsome Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Hypocentor aureolus*) which is very common, but hardly equal vocally to the two preceding. It is much like the preceding in habits, but less active, and less familiar. An allied species (*H. rusticus*) with a white breast is not uncommon, but I did not succeed in identifying its song.

A near relative of the famous Skylark (*Alauda arvensis blakistoni*) is common in the meadows, its fine song characterizing the more level country behind Petropaulski.

Although not a song bird in any sense of the term, but a bird whose notes are characteristic of this region, as those of its representative are of the western palæarctic region, the common Eastern Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus telephonus*) deserves special mention. Its loud and clear *cuck'-oo*; *cuck'-oo* was heard at all times, and the birds themselves were frequently seen about the hillsides or clumps of bushes in the meadows.

One of the most curious birds of this region is the Slate-colored Bunting (*Tisa variabilis*). It inhabits the densest alder thickets along the banks of the small streams, keeping on or near the ground, its habits closely resembling those of our Juncos, and sparrows of the genus *Zonotrichia*, to which genus it has been referred by some authors; others have placed it in *Hypocentor*, *Emberiza*, *Fringillaria*; while one suggests that possibly it should be placed in *Spizella*, with our Chipping and Field Sparrows. Recently, however, a

genus has been erected for its reception. In full breeding plumage this bird is almost entirely clear slaty gray, and bears a most striking resemblance to two widely different species, *Phrygilus unicolor* of western South America, and *Junco vulcani* of Costa Rica.

Of the larger species the Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistasagus*) is the most abundant, occurring everywhere about the sea-coast, with the Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), a close second, although much more restricted in general distribution. The Osprey (*Pandion haliaëtus*) is very common about here, and the large Kamchatkan Sea Eagle (*Thalassaëtus pelagicus*) is frequently seen. The Raven (*Corvus corax kamtschaticus*) occurs here, and is not uncommon, although I saw but one or two. The eastern Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone orientalis*) is numerous, and was breeding at the time of my visit. I found a number of nests, none of them, however, accessible. One of the handsomest birds of the region, and certainly the most conspicuous, is the large Kamchatkan Magpie (*Pica pica kamtschatica*), which is common everywhere, although it is very wary, and manages to keep well out of gunshot.

Whenever I went near any groves of tall trees, I was sure to hear a continuous hooting, somewhat resembling that of the Barred Owl; but when I tried to get close enough to find out what was doing the hooting, it would invariably cease long before I was within range, to be immediately resumed from some distant grove. I suppose the bird was the Siberian Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula doliata*) which is the only owl known from the country.

About the taller trees also, the eastern Tree Pipit (*Pipastes maculatus*) was common, its song and actions instantly calling to mind our common Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*). I met with a number of other species of birds here, but all of much less interest than those mentioned. A word must be said in closing about the pretty Kamchatkan Wagtail, which is very common here, especially about the rocky beaches. It is rather shy and hard to approach, resembling in this, as in its general appearance at a distance, the common Snowflake (*Passerina nivalis*).

I was forced to leave Petropaulski early on the morning of the 20th, for Hakodate, which I did with great regret, as few places which I have visited have so appealed to me from an ornithological point of view as this pretty little Kamchatkan town.