Chapman and others have stated that grebes use the feet only in swimming. While the bird was in the water I ran along the edge of the ice and had an excellent opportunity to observe this use of the wings, as the bird was almost at my feet. I found also that they have the heron-like habit of striking directly at a person's eye when captured. Finding that he could not reach my face, he then tried to strike the buttons off my coat.

On reaching home, I identified this bird as Holboell's Grebe and you will find that its measurements indicate it to be fair average size. While the bird is in winter plumage, you will note the many reddish spots on its neck.

After exhibiting it to some people in the vicinity, I returned it to the spot where I found it, twenty-four hours after its capture. That night, however, the thermometer dropped to several degrees below zero, and on March 6 at 2.30 P. M., I went to the brook to see if the bird was still there and found it frozen into the ice and of course dead. I had to get a stick and smash the ice to get the bird out. I think you will agree with me that it is a nice specimen, not having been shot or otherwise injured.

I would be glad to see it added to the collection of birds in the museum of which I understand you are curator.

Mr. Walter's is the seventh specimen of Holboell's Grebe recorded for Berkshire County. All of them were captured either in the winter or early spring.

Carpenteria, Calif.

NOTES ON NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

XI.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER

The following notes on seven North American birds[1] have been made during the course of other investigations, and are here published as of possible interest to other ornithologists. They concern species of the families Charadriidae, Bubonidae, Laniidae, and Vireonidae.

[1] For previous papers in this series, *cf.* 'The Auk,' XXXIV, April, 1917, pp. 191–196; XXXIV, July, 1917, pp. 321–329; XXXIV, October, 1917, pp. 465–470; XXXV, January, 1918, pp. 62–65; XXXV, April, 1918, pp. 185–187; XXXV, October, 1918, pp. 463–467; XXXVI, January, 1919, pp. 81–85; XXXVI, July, 1919, pp. 406–408; XXXVI, October, 1919, pp. 556–559; XXXVIII, January, 1920, pp.

Charadrius nivosus (CASSIN).

The bird described by Cassin as *Aegialitis nivosa*[1] has by most recent authors been considered a distinct species. It is very similar in general appearance to *Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus* (Linnaeus), but differs chiefly in having the lores wholly white (instead of with a black line from the eye to the bill), and the rufous of the pileum less pronounced in fully adult plumage. Examination of a large series of birds of this species shows, however, that the characters distinguishing these two forms are not constant. That of the rufous of the head is too changeable to be of much value in the determination of specimens, so that the color of the lores is much the best character. But even this varies to such an extent that it is impossible to find any definite line of demarcation between the two forms. Specimens of the American *Charadrius nivosus* occur with partly black lores, and of the Old World *Charadrius alexandrinus* with nearly white lores. In view of these facts, it is of course, inadvisable to maintain the specific distinction of *Charadrius nivosus*. It, therefore, should be regarded as a subspecies of *Charadrius alexandrinus*. It is interesting to note that this is the view taken many years ago by Mr. Henry Seebohm,[2] as well as by some recent authors. Mr. Ridgway has recently separated[3] the American birds into two races; so that our Snowy Plovers should now stand as *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* (Cassin), and *Charadrius alexandrinus tenuirostris* (Lawrence).

Cryptoglaux funerea magna (BUTURLIN).

A few years ago a specimen of *Cryptoglaux funerea funerea* (Linnaeus) was reported from the Pribilof Islands, Alaska, as the first record of this bird for North America.[4] A recent examination of this specimen shows conclusively that it belongs, not to the typical form native of Europe, but to the more recently described race, *Cryptoglaux funerea magna* Buturlin.[5]

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[1] Rep. Explor. and Surv. R. R. Pac., IX, 1858, p. 696 (Presidio, near San Francisco, California).

[2] Geographical Distribution of the Charadriidae, 1887, p. 171.

[3] Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, part VIII, 1919, pp. 136–140.

[4] Evermann, The Auk, XXX, No. 1, January, 1913, p. 18.

[5] *Nycta lamagna* Buturlin, Psovaia i Ruzheinaja Okhota, 1907, No. 6, March, 1907; Ornith. Monatsber., XV, No. 5, May, 1907, p. 80 (Kolyma River at N. Lat. 68° 40′, northeastern Siberia).

This is a very pale race and the largest of all the subspecies of *Cryptoglaux funerea.* Geographically it is near Alaska, for it inhabits the extreme northeastern part of Siberia. The North American specimen above mentioned is perfectly typical and measures as follows: wing, 185.5; tail, 115; bill without cere, 15.5; tarsus, 30 mm. It is an adult female, No. 239184 of the United States National Museum collection, and was taken on St. Paul Island, Pribilof Islands, Alaska, January 26, 1911, by Mr. Walter L. Hahn. By reason of this change, *Cryptoglaux funerea funerea* (Linnaeus) must be replaced as a North American bird by *Cryptoglaux funerea magna* (Buturlin).

Asio otus wilsonianus (LESSON).

Some time since the present writer had occasion to investigate the subspecific status of *Asio otus wilsonianus* (Lesson).[1] This owl has for many years been commonly considered a distinct species, although known to be more or less closely related to *Asio otus* (Linnaeus)[2] of Europe. Even a cursory examination of a good series of both these birds shows that they are more intimately connected than has been supposed. The principal differences separating *Asio wilsonianus* from *Asio otus* consist in the darker upper parts, on which the blackish areas are more confusedly mottled with less inclination to a striped appearance; the less conspicuous ochraceous suffusion of both upper and lower surfaces; the rather more heavily streaked breast; and more heavily barred posterior lower parts. Although in size the two birds are alike, there is a great range of individual variation in the plumage of *Asio otus,* involving the existence of at least four color phases, these being a light and a dark ochraceous phase, and a light and a dark gray phase. The characteristics separating *Asio wilsonianus* are most striking when compared with the light ochraceous phase of *Asio otus,* but many specimens of the latter in the dark phase are not so different. In fact, not a few of the specimens in the series of *Asio otus* examined would be practically indistinguishable if placed, with their labels removed, among the American birds. While, of course, it is true that the average differences indicate

[1] *Otus wilsonianus* Lesson, Traité d'Ornith., 1830, p. 110 (New York).
[2] *Strix otus* Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., ed. 10, 1, 1758, p. 92 (Sweden).

that the two forms are readily separable, the two characters most relied upon—the darker and more confusedly mottled upper surface of the American bird, and its more heavily barred posterior lower parts—are not constant. In fact, in those respects we can find some examples of *Asio otus* from England and some from China that are but very slightly or not at all different from specimens of *Asio wilsonianus* taken in Utah, Nevada, and even the District of Columbia. The latter bird is still more like *Asio otus canariensis* Madarász. All of this of course, goes to prove that *Asio wilsonianus* is but a subspecies of *Asio otus*, as Dr. Ernst Hartert has recently claimed.[1] The American bird, therefore, should hereafter be called *Asio otus wilsonianus* (Lesson).

Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa (FORSTER).

In his recent account of the forms of the genus *Scotiaptex*, Mr. Robert Ridgway concludes[2] that the specimens of the Great Gray Owl from Alaska formerly identified as *Scotiaptex nebulosa lapponica* are but light-colored examples of *Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa* (Forster). A recent study of available material fully confirms Mr. Ridgway's opinion, which indicates that *Scotiaptex nebulosa lapponica* should be expunged from our North American list. The specimens from the delta of the Yukon River on which the North American record of this form was formerly based, are futhermore, no lighter than birds from Alberta in the collection of the Biological Survey in the United States National Museum, and are not to be distinguished subspecificially by either size or color from *Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa*. They are not even different enough to be considered intermediate between *Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa* and *Scotiaptex nebulosa barbata* (Pallas) from northeastern Siberia. In fact, the distinctness of *Scotiaptex nebulosa barbata* from *Scotiaptex nebulosa lapponica* of northern Europe is somewhat questionable, as the alleged differences appear to be based on individual or other unimportant conditions of plumage. We have not, however, examined a sufficient series from eastern Siberia definitely to settle this question even to our own satisfaction. A specimen from Verkhni Kloymsk in the Kolyma region of northeastern

[1] Vögel Paläarkt. Fauna, Heft VIII (Band II, Heft 2), Aug., 1913, p. 987.
[2] Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, VI, 1914, p. 635.

Siberia, recently recorded by Mr. J. H. Riley as *Scotiaptex nebulosa barbata*.[1] does not, so far as we can see, differ appreciably in any significant respect from *Scotiaptex nebulosa lapponica*.

Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi RIDGWAY.

The Shrike described as *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* by Mr. Ridgway[2] has not been recognized by recent authors. This has been due, apparently, to the supposition that the color of the upper tail-coverts was the principal, if not the only, character to separate *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* from *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi* of Santa Cruz Island, California, and that this character was inconstant. Size was mentioned by Mr. C. B. Linton[3] as another supposed distinction, but this was not claimed by the original describer, as may be seen by reference to his description[4], since the present form was there not compared with *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi*, but with *Lanius ludovicianus mexicanus*. Examination of a good series of both island forms from San Clemente and Santa Cruz islands shows that there are, however, excellent characters to distinguish *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi*. The trenchantly white upper tail-coverts of *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* are an excellent average difference, even if not reliable in every individual, for the rump and upper tail-coverts in *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi* are nearly always gray, sometimes pale, sometimes almost as dark as the lower back. Furthermore, *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* differs from *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi* in somewhat darker upper parts, much more whitish lower surface, much more strikingly and extensively whitish scapulars, and much larger white spot on the base of the primaries. Birds from Santa Catalina Island, California, are intermediate, but without much doubt properly referable to *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi*. All records of *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* from Lower California[5] belong probably to

[1] Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., LIV, 1918, p. 617.

[2] *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* Ridgway, Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., XVI, September 30, 1903, p. 108 (San Clemente Island, California).

[3] Condor, X, No. 4, August 28, 1908, p. 182.

[4] Ridgway, *loc. cit.*

[5] Ridgway, Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, III, 1904, p. 252.

other races, mostly to *Lanius ludovicianus nelsoni*.[1] The ranges of these two island forms are, therefore, as follows:

Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi: Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Anacapa, Santa Catalina, and probably Santa Rosa, islands, California.

Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi: San Clemente Island, California.

Vireo huttoni obscurus ANTHONY

Vireo huttoni obscurus was originally described by Mr. A. W. Anthony,[2] from a specimen obtained by him at Beaverton, Oregon. It is currently regarded as a dark form of *Vireo huttoni* from the Pacific Coast region of the northwestern United States and southwestern British Columbia. Its distinctness from *Vireo huttoni huttoni* was many years ago questioned by Mr. S. N. Rhoads,[3] and more recently by Anderson and Grinnell.[4] This vireo is not common in collections, and during the past ten years the writer has taken pains to examine carefully all specimens that have passed through his hands. Enough material has now accumulated from the States of Washington and Oregon to show that in neither breeding nor winter plumage is there the slightest difference in either size or color between the vireos of this species from these two States and those from southern California. The bird at present known as *Vireo huttoni obscurus* Anthony must therefore be synonymized with *Vireo huttoni huttoni* Cassin, and the range of the latter extended at least to northwestern Washington.

The large series of *Vireo huttoni* now available shows that this species is subject to great individual variation, which authors, including the writer, have not hitherto taken sufficiently into account. There are in this species two well-marked color phases which are not due to age, sex, or season. In one the upper parts are very decidedly greenish; in the other grayish, with little or no trace of olive green. Specimens of the latter character were

[1] *Lanius ludovicianus nelsoni* Oberholser, Condor, XX, No. 6, December 12, 1918, p. 209.

[2] Zoe, I, December, 1890 (January, 1891), p. 308.

[3] The Auk, X, No. 3, July, 1893, pp. 238–241.

[4] Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1903, p. 12.

the basis of *Vireo huttoni oberholseri* Bishop, for the separation of which the present writer was unfortunately at least in part responsible. Of each of these two color phases there are also two patterns of coloration; one in which the upper parts are uniform, and the other in which the pileum is distinctly darker and usually more grayish, forming a well-defined cap. There are thus at least four fairly distinct styles of coloration, all of which might perhaps well be called phases. All are connected by various kinds of intermediates. There is, in addition to these color phases, also a great range of difference in the general shade of coloration on the upper parts, and unusually dark specimens have been apparently responsible for the supposed distinctness of *Vireo huttoni obscurus*. Birds in worn plumage are usually darker, duller, and somewhat less greenish above.

Vireo huttoni insularis RHOADS.

The Vireo described by Mr. S. N. Rhoads as *Vireo huttoni insularis*[1] has commonly been considered a synonym of *Vireo huttoni obscurus* Anthony. Since, however, as above shown, the latter is not separable from *Vireo huttoni huttoni*, it would seem as a matter of course that *Vireo huttoni insularis* would become a synonym of *Vireo huttoni huttoni*. In order, however, to make sure of this matter, the types now in the Provincial Museum of Victoria, British Columbia, together with all the other available material from Vancouver Island, including some specimens not seen by Mr. Rhoads when he described *Vireo huttoni insularis*, have been examined. Unfortunately for the status of *Vireo huttoni insularis*, none of the Vancouver Island or other British Columbia specimens can be satisfactorily separated from California birds from the region about San Francisco Bay. The male type of *Vireo huttoni insularis*, from Victoria, British Columbia, and another specimen from the same locality, appear at first sight to be somewhat darker both above and below than California examples, but this apparent difference is readily traceable to some accidental soiling of the plumage. These facts, together with the lack of any differences shown by other specimens from Vancouver Island, take away all the present claim that *Vireo huttoni insularis* has for recognition as a subspecies. It, therefore, should be considered a synonym of *Vireo huttoni huttoni*, and the range of that form thereby extended to include Vancouver Island.

[1] The Auk, X, No. 3, July, 1893, p. 239.