

NOTES ON THE BIRDS OBSERVED IN THE ALTA LAKE
REGION, B. C.

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DURING the past five years the Alta Lake region has been visited from time to time and numerous notes made and birds collected in different places and at varying altitudes.

This interesting and little known district can be more particularly described as lying between Maguire and Pemberton Meadows. There is a chain of lakes which lie in the valley, Alpha to the west, then Nita, Alta, Green and Lost Lake, all of which are glacial with the exception of Alta Lake, and are fed by numerous mountain streams having their sources in the glaciers and snow fields of the surrounding mountains. Alta Lake is not glacial, but is largely fed by springs and remains clear all the year round. Its old name of Summit Lake aptly describes it, as it is on the height of land in the Cascade Mountain Range. It discharges at both ends, the southern end into Nita Lake and the northern into Twenty-one Mile Creek and thence into Green Lake. Cheakamus Lake lies in the valley between Garibaldi, Whistler and Red Mountains. From this lake Cheakamus River flows westerly to Maguire and then southward through the wild and beautiful Cheakamus Canyon to Squamish where it empties into Howe Sound. The altitude of Maguire, which is seven miles south of Alta Lake, is 1700 ft., Alta Lake is 2200 ft. and from that point there is a gradual decline to 700 ft. at Pemberton, which is only about twenty-two miles north of Alta Lake. The whole country is extremely rough and rugged, with range upon range of snow capped mountains rising in every direction to heights of from 7000 to 8000 ft. above sea level. By referring to a map it will be noted that this region lies midway between the wet and dry belts. In the summer of 1924 particular attention was paid to the nesting birds and much information was gathered in the higher altitudes where many birds were found nesting and rearing young at and above timber line in the great open meadow stretches which but shortly before our visit in June were covered with snow and ice.

The following list of birds collected and observed is still very incomplete, but it embraces eighty different species and subspecies.

Aechmophorus occidentalis. WESTERN GREBE.—A flock of these birds numbering several hundred arrived at Alta Lake August 28, 1923, spent the day on the lake resting and feeding and late in the evening departed in a southerly direction. One solitary bird was seen on the same lake July 2, 1921.

Colymbus holboellii. HOLBOELL'S GREBE.—Two seen on Alta Lake, September 2, 1922.

Colymbus auritus. HORNED GREBE.—One seen on Nita and two seen on Alta Lake September 1, 1921. A pair of these birds seen each summer on Alta Lake.

Gavia immer. LOON.—A pair seen every summer on Alta Lake. A nest with two young in the down was found at Lost Lake by Mr. Phillips of Rainbow Lodge. On June 23, 1924, when out fishing in the evening on Alta Lake two of these birds followed our boat and showed considerable distress and anxiety, especially when we were near the large water-lily beds on the east side of the lake. Several times they approached within twelve or fifteen feet of our boat.

Sternula hirundo. COMMON TERN.—Flocks seen on several occasions during the latter part of the month of August, 1923 and 1924, but only remained about the lake for a few days.

Larus sp. GULL.—A few seen every summer flying over the lakes. August 27, 1922, three adults and three young birds seen. Believe these to be *L. glaucescens*.

Anas platyrhynchos. MALLARD.—Only seen on Green Lake where several pairs breed in the flats through which Twenty-one Mile Creek flows. In 1923, three broods were hatched and these numbered eleven, eight and six respectively.

Spatula clypeata. SPOONBILL.—One young bird seen on Alta Lake September 1, 1923.

Clangula clangula americana. AMERICAN GOLDEN-EYE.—July 1, 1920, two breeding females seen on Alta Lake, only one nest was found and it was in the fork of a tall dead cotton-wood tree, about fifty feet above the ground. June, 1924, three females were observed on Alpha Lake, two on Alta, one on Green and one on a small un-named lake near Green River falls. In 1922 several nested on Green Lake.

Branta canadensis. CANADA GOOSE.—Understand from residents about Alta Lake that honkers are quite numerous in the fall before freeze up. A flock seen above Alta Lake flying southward September 2, 1922.

Ardea herodias fannini. NORTHWEST COAST HERON.—One or two birds seen about the Lake shore each summer. In 1923 an injured bird was found by a visitor who took it to Rainbow Lodge where it was cared for but eventually died.

Actitis macularia. SPOTTED SANDPIPER.—Seen each year on Nita and Alta Lakes. In June, 1924, three pairs bred on Alta Lake, also a pair on both Nita and Alpha Lakes.

Dendragapus obscurus fuliginosus. SOOTY OR BLUE GROUSE.—Usually common up to timberline, but I noted a decided scarcity of these birds in June, 1924. Not more than three or four cocks heard hooting and no females or young seen until August, when a few flocks were found numbering from five to seven birds. In 1923, these Grouse were numerous and the decrease in numbers may be partly accounted for by the very large increase in the numbers of Horned Owls in the district.

Canachites franklinii. FRANKLIN'S GROUSE.—July 2, 1921, a hen bird with four chicks seen at 2500 ft. elevation near Nita Lake. A chick was found dead near this brood, it having been killed by some bird of prey. On July 30, 1923, a male, female and two young half fledged birds were seen on the mountain side above Alpha Lake. None were seen in 1924, although I heard that three or four were shot during the open season for Blue Grouse.

Bonasa umbellus sabini. OREGON RUFFED GROUSE.?—A few Ruffed Grouse seen in the swamp between Alta and Green Lakes.

Lagopus leucurus. WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN.—Five of these Ptarmigan seen above timberline between Red Mountain and Mt. Whistler (6000 to 7000 ft.). Two males were secured. These birds sometimes come down to Alta Lake in winter time when snow is very deep and the weather severe. At no other place did I hear of these Ptarmigan having been seen except about two miles south of Maguire where about a dozen birds were seen during the winter of 1923-24.

Lagopus lagopus lagopus. WILLOW PTARMIGAN.?—A prospector, Mr. John Bailiff, told me he had more than once seen a large Ptarmigan with black tail feathers, near Red Mountain.

Columba fasciata. BAND-TAILED PIGEON.—One seen between Alpha and Nita Lakes August 27, 1921. A rancher living at Nita Lake told me that two pairs had nested in the tall fir trees just behind his shack. June 22, 1924, a lone bird seen at Pemberton.

Accipiter velox. SHARP-SHINNED HAWK.—Two seen on the old Pemberton Trail above Alta Lake, July 28, 1923.

Accipiter cooperi. COOPER'S HAWK.—Frequently observed at Nita Lake, August, 1922. On September 2, 1923, near Rainbow Lodge a Cooper's Hawk seen striking at a Pileated Woodpecker which, however, escaped. June 23, 1924, a female taken at Pemberton, was molting from juvenal to adult plumage. August, 1922, seen nearly every day hunting along the mountain side bordering Alta Lake.

Astur atricapillas striatulus. WESTERN GOSHAWK.—August, 1923, several seen hunting towards evening on west side of Alta Lake. Only one seen in 1924, and that on June 16, when an adult flew within fifteen yards of our camp.

Buteo borealis calurus. WESTERN RED-TAILED HAWK.—Often seen soaring high in the air. August, 1922, a Red-tail and a Cooper's Hawk were seen fighting in the air above Sproat Mountain. They kept up the quarrel for an hour or more before finally separating. In 1920, a pair nested in a tall fir tree at the southern end of Alpha Lake.

Aquila chrysaetos. GOLDEN EAGLE.—Five observed above Cheakamus Lake, June 25, 1924. Understand from an old prospector that a pair of Golden Eagles nest on an inaccessible ledge on Red Mountain.

Falco columbarius suckleyi. BLACK MERLIN.—August 23, 1921, two birds believed to be the Black Merlin were seen between Alta and Nita Lakes.

Falco sparverius deserticola. WESTERN SPARROW HAWK.—Common everywhere up to 2500 ft. Breeds.

Pandion haliaetus carolinensis. FISH HAWK.—Two pairs bred between Alta and Green Lakes. The tree which held the nest near Alta Lake was cut down by a rancher, upon which the birds built again near Lost Lake.

Bubo virginianus saturatus. DUSKY HORNED OWL.—Very numerous and their numbers seemed to have increased with the very notable increase of mice in the district during the past four years. One evening when my family were returning to camp at dusk, one of these Owls flew down and tried to seize our small Pekinese dog and when driven off flew only a short distance away and perched on the limb of a dead tree.

Ceryle alcyon. BELTED KINGFISHER.—Found on all the lakes.

Dryobates villosus harrisi. HARRIS'S WOODPECKER.—Breeds. Scarce.

Sphyrapicus ruber notkensis. NORTHERN RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER.—Quite numerous and nests frequently found up to 2500 ft.

Ceophloeus pileatus abieticola. PILEATED WOODPECKER.—Several seen each year, breeds on eastern slope of Sproat Mountain.

Chordeiles virginianus henryi. WESTERN NIGHTHAWK.—Common throughout the district.

Chaetura vauxi. VAUX'S SWIFT.—A few of these birds seen each year at Alta and Green Lakes.

Selasphorus rufus. RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD.—Very numerous, especially near the lakes. Breeds.

Contopus borealis. OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER.—Common from Maguire to Green Lake. None observed near Pemberton. Breeds.

Contopus richardsonii. WESTERN WOOD PEWEE.—Common. Breeds.

Empidonax hammondi. HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER.—The most common of the small Flycatchers. Breeds.

Otocoris alpestris arcticola. ALASKA HORNED LARK.—Abundant on easterly spurs of Mt. Whistler from 6500 to 7500 ft. On June 28, a half fledged bird found among grass and rocks at edge of snow field. Its

gray and white colouring harmonizing perfectly with the stones and moss amongst which these birds nest. This young bird could only fly a few feet and would permit us to approach within a few inches before taking flight. The parent birds flew bravely at us trying to drive us away.

Cyanocitta s. stelleri. STELLER'S JAY.—Numerous and found breeding up to 2500 ft. altitude.

Perisoreus obscurus griseus. GRAY JAY.—Flocks consisting of old and young frequently met with up to 4000 ft. elevation. Were daily visitors at our camp at Mons during end of June 1923-24.

Corvus caurinus. NORTHWEST CROW.—Only very occasionally seen flying over lakes but numerous and breeds at Pemberton.

Nucifraga columbiana. NUTCRACKER.—Numerous from 5500 to 7500 ft. Two nests with young found in stunted firs at 6000 ft., June, 1924.

Agelaius phoeniceus caurinus. NORTHWESTERN RED-WING.—Breeds at north end of Alta Lake.

Scolecophagus cyanocephalus. BREWER'S BLACKBIRD.—Each summer for several years a flock of about forty birds remained about camp at Alta Lake and were regularly fed with camp scraps.

Loxia curvirostra minor. RED CROSSBILL.—September 1, 1921, a flock of about twenty-five seen at Alta Lake, two taken.

Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis. HEPBURN'S LEUCOSTICTE.—Several flocks seen June 25, 1924, at an altitude of 6200 ft. Were feeding on insects which were numerous on the snow at that high elevation.

Spinus pinus. PINE SISKIN.—Very common and found everywhere up to 6000 ft.

Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus. WESTERN SAYANNAH SPARROW.—One observed just behind Rainbow Lodge. July, 1923. Found breeding at 5800 ft. between Red Mountain and Mt. Whistler. June 25, 1924.

Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli. NUTTALL'S SPARROW.—Only once seen and that on September 17, 1923, when a flock of about a dozen birds were seen on the mountain side behind Mons. All were young birds and one was secured.

Zonotrichia coronata. GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW.—Several pairs found breeding on the eastern shoulder of Mt. Whistler. June 26, 1924. One male bird taken.

Spizella socialis arizonæ. WESTERN CHIPPING SPARROW.—Found only at Pemberton Meadows, where three were seen June 22, 1924, and one taken.

Junco hyemalis connectens. INTERMEDIATE JUNCO?—Uncertain as to this species. Only one female taken. Quite numerous and flocks of twenty to thirty birds frequently seen on old Pemberton trail near Mons.

Nest with full complement of 4 eggs found on westerly shoulder of Red Mountain. June 25, 1924, 6000 ft. altitude.

Melospiza melodia morphna. RUSTY SONG SPARROW.—Very common in all swampy locations near Lake shore.

Passerella iliaca altivagans. ALBERTA FOX SPARROW.—Numbers found breeding June 24 to 27, 1924, between Mt. Whistler and Red Mountain, west of Fitzsimmons Creek at an altitude of from 5500 to 7000 ft. The wonderful song of these birds is extremely sweet and in the mornings we could hear it regularly from the clumps of stunted fir trees in every direction.

Zamelodia melanocephala. BLACK-HEADED GROSBK.—Only met with at Pemberton where an adult male was taken.

Piranga ludoviciana. WESTERN TANAGER.—Frequently seen up to 3000 ft. at Pemberton.

A nest with young was found in a fir tree about thirty feet from the ground June 22, 1924.

Petrochelidon l. lunifrons. CLIFF SWALLOW.—Found breeding in the barns on Mr. Barnfield's ranch at north end of Alta Lake.

Hirundo erythrogastra. BARN SWALLOW.—A few seen each summer. Rather uncommon.

Ampelis cedrorum. CEDAR WAXWING.—Breeds. Frequently met with in flocks during latter part of August.

Vireosylva gilva swainsoni. WESTERN WARBLING VIREO.—Fairly common at Mobs and Pemberton, where specimens were collected.

Vermivora ruficapilla gutturalis. CALAVERAS WARBLER.—Only met with at Pemberton where they were numerous and breeding in willow swamp behind the village.

Dendroica aestiva rubiginosa. ALASKA YELLOW WARBLER.—Met with everywhere but not above 3000 ft.

Dendroica nigrescens. BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER.—One specimen seen at Pemberton June 22, 1924.

Dendroica townsendi. TOWNSEND'S WARBLER.—An adult female taken in a fir tree on the mountain side above Nita Lake July 1, 1922, altitude 2500 ft. This is the only record I have of the Townsend's Warbler in the district.

Oporornis tolmiei. MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER.—Quite numerous and found nesting in the low bushes on the mountain sides. Not found above an elevation of 2500 to 3000 ft.

Wilsonia pusilla pileolata. PILEOLATED WARBLER.—Frequently met with at both Alta Lake and Pemberton and usually in the alder and willow bottoms.

Setophaga ruticilla. AMERICAN REDSTART.—Found breeding at Pemberton June 3, 1924.

Cinclus mexicanus unicolor. WATER OUZEL.—Found in nearly all the mountain streams in the district and seen in Fitzsimmons Creek at an altitude of 3300 ft. June 24, 1924.

Nannus hiemalis pacificus. WESTERN WINTER WREN.—Found everywhere in the district.

Certhia familiaris occidentalis. CALIFORNIA CREEPER.—Two or three seen in the dense fir growth on the eastern slope above Nita Lake.

Sitta canadensis. RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH.—Frequently seen and heard all summer and especially between Nita and Alta Lakes.

Parus atricapillus occidentalis. OREGON CHICKADEE.—Common in company with Kinglets.

Parus refescens. CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE.—Several flocks seen on Sproat Mountain August 29, 1922. One specimen taken.

Regulus satrapa olivaceus. WESTERN GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET.—Common. A breeding male taken June 20, 1924.

Hylocichla ustulata ustulata. RUSSET-BACKED THRUSH.—Quite common about Alta and Nita Lakes, especially in the alder bottoms. Nests. A Thrush was found breeding at an altitude of 5500 to 6500 ft. between Red Mt. and Mt. Whistler. Its song was quite different from that of *ustulata*, but it remains unidentified as no specimen was secured.

Planesticus migratorius migratorius. WESTERN ROBIN.—Breeding in abundance about the Lakes but not seen between 3000 and 5000 ft. Several seen at an elevation of 6000 ft. on June 25, 1924.

Ixoreus naevius. VARIED THRUSH.—Common from the lakes up to 6000 ft.

On June 20, 1924, a full fledged female was taken on the eastern slope of Sproat Mt. at an altitude of 2350 ft. and on June 24 and 25 numbers of these birds were found nesting on one of the eastern shoulders of Mt. Whistler at an altitude of 5000 to 6000 ft. The loud clear whistle of these birds much resembles the whistle of the Hoary Marmot.

Sialia mexicana occidentalis. WESTERN BLUEBIRD.—Seen about all the lakes and found breeding on the eastern side of Alta Lake, June 18, 1924. Nest was in a broken branch of a tall cottonwood tree about 40 ft. from the ground.

Sialia arctica. MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD.—One specimen only seen and that was sitting on telegraph wire on eastern side of Green Lake June 22, 1924.

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