

## GENERAL NOTES.

**The Summer Molt of the Razor-billed Auk (*Alca torda*).**—On August 14, 1928, near the Matamek River, just east of Moisie, on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while collecting for this museum, we took eight specimens of this species. Of these, two were still in complete nuptial plumage with full seal-brown head and neck and large bill crossed by a conspicuous white line. One was a half grown juvenile in semi-down and the remainder were adults molting from nuptial into winter plumage. These latter had already lost their deciduous bill-sheaths with their strong white lines and the bills were reduced to the normal winter condition. The brown of the throat was heavily sprinkled with incoming white feathers. All of these changing birds were absolutely flightless through simultaneous loss of their flight quills. It can hardly be supposed that all five of these birds were undergoing abnormal molt and it seems evident that the species undergoes a flightless season in the midsummer molt as do many of the Ducks. I have not seen this fact mentioned before and it appears to be new to ornithology.<sup>1</sup> A Common Murre, *Uria troille* taken near Betchewan, July 18, also an adult, in molt and flightless, suggests that the same may be true of that species.

Puffins, Murres and Auks on this coast all desert the breeding stations as soon as the young are launched upon the water. This happens very early in the development of the latter, long before they attain full size and while they are still in the half down. They usually leave the nest ledges at night and by morning have disappeared from the locality. It is very unusual to see swimming juveniles, or adults that have finished their reproductive duties, in the neighborhood where thousands have been raised or so engaged. The conclusion is that young and old immediately go to sea and scatter widely, the young to develop to adolescence, the adult to assume winter plumage. On the broad wastes of the open sea, rarely traversed except by hurrying ships, it is not astonishing that molting Auks have hitherto been overlooked by collectors and this flightless stage passed unnoticed. That the occasional bird accidentally met with at sea in midsummer cannot fly would not generally be noticed for they often seek to escape danger by diving instead of flying and the persistence of the act at sea would attract no particular attention.

The small juvenile bird taken is also in an interesting plumage resembling the nuptial one in color and pattern even to the white line from the base of the culmen towards the eye, but the texture of the feathers is soft and downy as quoted from Macgillivray by Bent in his first volume of

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<sup>1</sup> This manner of molting was described in *Uria lomvia* and *Cepphus mandt* by Stone in 1900 (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1900, pp. 6-7) and according to Stresemann (Aves. Handb. der Zool., 1927, p. 34) it is characteristic of the Grebes, Rails, Cranes, Auks, Flamingo and Anhinga.—Ed.

'Life-Histories.' There is therefore a distinct soft, semi-downy plumage resembling that of the summer adult between the nesting down and the plumage of the first winter. A similar sequence of plumages is found in the Dovekie (*Alle alle*) but not in the Common Murre which goes from down into a conventional white-throated plumage similar in color and pattern to that of the first winter.—P. A. TAVERNER, *National Museum of Canada, Ottawa.*

**The Wedge-tailed Shearwater off the Coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia.**—During August, 1919, I received a skin of a pale-colored Shearwater from Oliver Trafford, a taxidermist of St. Eugene, Ontario, the inscription "Vancouver, B. C." being the only data on the label.

A short time ago, while Dr. H. C. Oberholser was at my home, he identified the specimen as *Thyelodroma pacifica* and advised me that this species had as yet not been recorded for the coast of the United States or Canada.

It is much regretted that neither the collector's name nor the date of capture is known, but on account of the apparent rarity of this Shearwater on the north Pacific coast this specimen is now put on record.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon.*

**The Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) at Stone Harbor, N. J.**—On January 13, 1929 at Stone Harbor, Cape May County, N. J., the writer with Ernest Evans, Joseph Stokes, and Woodruff Emlen found a dead Sooty Tern on the salt marsh about a quarter of a mile back of the Coast Guard Station near the head of an inlet. Except for the wings, feet, bill and tail the bird was in a very decomposed condition and had evidently been lying there for a long time. The wing measured eleven and an eighth inches and answered the descriptions in several standard text-books as did the other parts that were collected. The bird had probably been blown north by a tropical storm during the autumn of 1928 as there have been several other records of the same species occurring along the Atlantic coast in September 1928.—WILLIAM C. DOAK, *Germantown, Philadelphia.*

**A Flight of Ross's Gulls<sup>1</sup>.**—I recently received from a correspondent of mine at Point Barrow, Alaska, a series of Ross's Rosy Gulls (*Rhodostethia rosea*). He writes to me that late in September, with a strong northwest wind, these rare Gulls came in over the beach in thousands. He never saw them so plentiful before or quite so early in the season. They arrived on September 26, but are generally not seen until late in October or in November. They always come, however, with a northwest wind seeming to arrive from off shore somewhere and working along northward. As soon as the wind changes they leave the coast for the islands off shore, remaining around as long as there is sufficient open water for the boats to get out whaling. For two days they were so numerous

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<sup>1</sup>Published by the Dwight Memorial Fund.