

## GENERAL NOTES.

**Holboell's Grebe (*Colymbus holboelli*) in Georgia.**—On February 22, 1930, Norman Giles, Jr., reported to me that he had seen what he firmly believed to be a Holboell's Grebe in the lake at the East Lake Country Club in Atlanta. So early the next morning he and I visited the spot and positively identified the bird. It was in winter plumage but seemed to be almost crested and we had a wonderful view of it, preening itself, opening and shutting its bill as if yawning, and although rather nervous it did not appear to be very wild, staying part of the time with some Scaup Ducks. This species is on Wayne's Hypothetical List in 'Birds of South Carolina' and I understand that Dr. Murphey of Augusta procured two specimens on February 13, 1904 and that Mr. Isaac Arnou shot a specimen at St. Marys, Ga. on February 18, 1904. This bird identified here on February 22, and 23 is the only record I can find for this part of the State.—EARLE R. GREENE, 642 Orme Circle, Atlanta, Ga.

**Simultaneous Loss of Primaries in Prenuptial Molt of Loon.**—On April 1, 1930, while investigating the killing of water-fowl by oil from steamers, my attention was drawn to a Loon (*Gavia immer*), which had washed up on the beach at Lambert's Cove, Marthas Vineyard, Massachusetts. The bird had been dead for some time and in addition to being badly oiled was waterlogged and bedraggled. It was evidently passing through the prenuptial molt and many of the feathers of the back and especially the upper wing-coverts were black with white spots. The primary feathers were very short and my first impression was that the bird had probably crawled out upon the beach in order to preen its plumage and remove the oil which had matted down its feathers, and that after the poisons in the crude oil had begun to affect the bird, it had thrashed about on the pebbles and sand and had worn off the ends of its primaries during its death struggles.

Two days later, in company with Mr. Alden H. Hadley of the National Association of Audubon Societies and Mr. Winthrop Packard of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, I inspected several more Loons at Gay Head and Squibnocket on Marthas Vineyard and on April 4, at the Millpond, a small land-locked salt pond at Chatham on Cape Cod, we inspected ten dead Loons in a distance of less than a mile. One of these birds (they had all been dead from a week to a month or more) was in typical winter plumage and showed no signs of a prenuptial molt. This bird was very heavily oiled so that it showed no white feathers below but the feathers of the back were not so badly affected. The old flight feathers were all present. A Red-throated Loon, (*Gavia lumme*) also examined at the Millpond, showed a similar lack of molt and was the only bird of this species examined.

All the other Loons at the Millpond had molted in greater or less degree as was indicated by the presence of black feathers with white spots on the

back and upper wing-coverts, and in every instance the entire set of primaries had apparently been molted simultaneously. In some specimens the new primaries were barely showing beyond their feather sheaths and were nearly concealed by the coverts, in others they showed for an inch or more, but in any one bird the primaries were all of approximately the same length and development.

At one point on the shore of the Millpond two Loons had crawled up on the narrow strip of salt marsh and we were able to capture one of these birds in our hands, through the activity of Mr. Everett Eldredge, Jr., who accompanied us while at Chatham. This bird had an entire set of new and nearly full grown primaries but the quills were not completely hardened and when we tossed the bird into the air it fell heavily into the pond and splashed away for a short distance, using both wings and feet for propulsion. Then it stopped, called briefly and derisively, flapped both wings in the air once or twice, dove, and swam out to join several other Loons which were swimming about in the Millpond. The undeveloped condition of the primaries was plainly evident when it flapped its wings.

It is well known that Loons and Grebes, as well as Ducks and Geese, molt all their primaries at one time in their *postnuptial* molt but the authorities which I have been able to consult, with one exception, make no mention of any such condition in the *prenuptial* molt. The late Edward Howe Forbush, in the first volume of his 'Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States,' describes the molts of the Loon at some length, basing his description largely upon that of Mr. A. C. Bent in his 'Life Histories of Diving Birds.' Mr. Forbush states "the first winter plumage is worn for a year without much modification." The second nuptial plumage begins to appear in November or December "by growth of a few jet-black feathers with white spots on back, wings, rump and flanks; usually this molt is not much in evidence until February; from then on prenuptial molt advances to head and neck and by April or May second nuptial plumage is complete." During the third winter "the prenuptial molt (also complete) may begin in November or later and may not be completed until spring." The parenthesis "(also complete)" was added by Mr. Forbush and his description of the molts is followed by this paragraph,

"Note.—As an example of complete spring molt of the Loon, the following is of interest: On March 12, 1921, I picked up at Nantucket a very large and heavy dead Loon apparently in its second winter plumage. There were no signs of breeding plumage except some dark feathers in the upper wing-coverts which were spotted with white. The flight feathers had been molted recently. The primaries were so short that the white under wing-coverts projected beyond their tips; secondaries also were very short. Evidently this bird if alive would have been unable to fly."

Upon my writing Mr. Bent regarding this simultaneous molt of the primaries in spring, he replied "This is certainly a surprising discovery for, so far as I know, none of the water birds have any such complete molt in the spring." At a meeting of the Nuttall Ornithological Club on April 7,

no one knew of this unusual type of spring molt in the Loon. As this note by Mr. Forbush and the condition itself seem to have been pretty generally overlooked, I feel justified in publishing this observation of my own.

Since writing the above I have talked with Mr. George H. Mackay of Boston and Nantucket, whose shooting records for many years have recently been printed by Dr. John C. Phillips. Mr. Mackay immediately recalled a winter Loon with molted primaries which he had collected, in company with the late Sidney Chase, many years ago. Upon referring to his published diaries we found that on February 21, 1892, Mr. Mackay recorded that when shooting on the Western Jetty, at Nantucket, Mr. Chase "shot a Great Northern Diver in the gray plumage today, the wings of which had scarcely any feathers. The bird could not possibly have flown and I took it to be a case of moulting. I have never seen anything similar to it."

While we have been unable to trace the subsequent history of the specimen, the unusual condition of the bird made such an impression on Mr. Mackay that he had no difficulty in recalling the circumstances after an interval of nearly forty years.—JOHN B. MAY, *State House, Boston, Mass.*

**Townsend's Oregon Tubinares.**—Four South Pacific Tubinares, the Yellow-nosed Albatross, Sooty Albatross, Giant Fulmar, and Slender-billed Fulmar have held their places in the North American 'Check-List' for nearly one hundred years wholly upon their alleged capture off the mouth of the Columbia River by John K. Townsend. The specimens were submitted to Audubon for description and he named two of them as new, along with two others, the Black-footed Albatross and Pacific Fulmar, also secured by Townsend and which occur regularly in the North Pacific. A later alleged sight record of the Giant Fulmar in Monterey Bay Calif., is hardly worthy of serious consideration.

Audubon had one specimen each of the four species under consideration. Of the Yellow-nosed Albatross he says "procured in the Pacific Ocean not far from the mouth of the Columbia River"; of the Sooty Albatross, "procured near the mouth of the Columbia River. Of its habits or distribution I am entirely ignorant"; of the Giant Fulmar, "shot at some distance from the mouth of the Columbia River," and of the Slender-billed Fulmar a note appended by Dr. Townsend states: "Within a day's sail from the mouth of the Columbia River. Its habits are very similar to those of *Procellaria capensis*" etc. and adds "They are easily taken with a hook baited with pork." It should be noted however, that in describing the Pacific Fulmar, a common bird off the Columbia, Audubon says: "Three skins submitted to me by Mr. Townsend appear to belong to two species of the Fulmar genus. The first of these may be named as above [*Procellaria pacifica*]. Two were of this species and the third he named *tenuirostris* stating that both, along with the Atlantic species were very similar and only differed in the shape and size of their bills. It seems evident that Townsend did not distinguish the two species of the Pacific as different and his note