

# The Condor

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## Among the Sea Birds of the Oregon Coast.

BY WILLIAM L. FINLEY.

**A**BOUT forty miles south of the mouth of the Columbia River and two miles out from the entrance of Netarts Bay are three large rocks. These are the homes of countless numbers of sea-birds and as the bird life there had never been disturbed to any

Netarts was one of interest to a bird crank because in the coast mountains we found breeding, such birds as the varied thrush, pileolated warbler, Oregon jay, Vaux swift, pileated woodpecker, western evening grosbeak and in the dwarfed shrubbery down by the



PHOTO BY H. T. BOHLMAN.

THE BIRD ROCKS AT A DISTANCE

extent we determined, if possible, to make a trip to the rocks and ascertain what species were breeding. There were four in the party including Mr. Herman T. Bohlman, who did the photographic work, and myself. The trip overland last year from Portland to

seashore we found the wren-tit. We also saw a flock of cross-bills but no sign of their nesting.

We reached the coast the last of May and spent the first two weeks of June at the sea-shore. The weather was very unsettled at that time and it was rather



COLONY OF CALIFORNIA MURRETS.

PHOTO BY BOHLMAN.

a difficult problem to reach the rocks at all. Our only method was by launching a boat in the surf and rowing out, then the equal difficulty of landing and getting to the top of the rocks. After waiting for about a week we were enabled to make two trips to the rocks. Most of our observations were made on the rock furthest out at sea known as Shag Rock, as it was the most accessible and larger than the others. We ascended one of the other rocks but found the same species breeding there.

A couple of days at such a bird metropolis is a novel experience for a

sented itself; looking down the rocky slope up which we had come we counted hundreds of nests of Brandt cormorant scattered over the entire length every few feet apart. To the north was a large slope of about 150 yards covered with a rich growth of yellow-flowered weeds, among which many gulls had placed their nests. The whole distance was perforated with the burrows of petrels and puffins. The south side was a sheer precipice and hundreds of feet below the waves dashed against the granite foundation. But their sound was lost in the ceaseless



PHOTO BY BOHLMAN.

BRANDT CORMORANTS NESTS FROM TOP OF ROCKS.

person; one who has not been among the sea-birds cannot imagine the sight that presents itself. Our time was too short to make many observations of value or to secure a good series of photographs. At every turn scenes of bird life that would have made interesting pictures presented themselves, but the difficulties in the way of success were almost as numerous.

When we reached the top-most point of Shag Rock an interesting sight pre-

cries of great numbers of sea-fowl that we had aroused by our presence. They crowded about in the air, circling over and darting past our heads, watching every move we made. It gave us a wierd feeling and we felt like getting out of the disputed territory.

Of the three species of cormorants we found on the rocks Brandt (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) was by far the commonest. The nests of the great colony on Shag Rock showed that they had

been there for a long time. They were built of grass on a foundation of guano, and often over a foot high. The remains of fish were scattered about in all directions. Baird cormorant (*Phalacrocorax p. resplendens*) was also found breeding along the more inaccessible places in the face of the cliff. Its smaller size and the white flank patches easily served as a distinguishing mark. The third variety was the

tail petrel (*Oceanodroma furcata*) comparatively common. We sometimes found the two species breeding in the same burrows; the latter were more inclined to live in small colonies and where one or two nests were found others were generally found near by. This petrel is larger than the Leach petrel and easily distinguished by its light slatish-gray plumage. Some of these birds were found with fresh eggs,



PHOTO BY BOHLMAN.

TUFTED PUFFIN AND NEST.

double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax dilophus*); they were found on both the rocks we visited and were even more numerous than Baird cormorant.

In the burrows we found a great many tufted puffins (*Lunda cirrhata*) and Leach petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). We managed to secure a good picture of an adult female of the former species on her nest, by carefully uncovering her burrow. Besides the Leach petrel we found the forked-

others with young. Sometimes the males were incubating and sometimes the females.

The California murre (*Uria troile californica*) and the western gull (*Larus occidentalis*) were both very common about the rocks. The murre occupied every available place. The two peaks of the second rock we climbed were occupied entirely by two great murre rookeries. A good picture was secured of a colony of murre looking down from the top of Shag Rock. The gulls were floating

about overhead continually, ever ready to pounce down on some unprotected cormorant's nest. We observed one Baird cormorant that was scared from its nest. No sooner had she gone than two gulls pounced down upon the vacated eggs, and while one of the robbers pierced two and devoured the contents, the other gull picked up the remaining egg in its bill and flew off to the adjacent rock.

There were a few pigeon guillemots (*Cephus columba*) about the rocks, but not very many were found breeding there. We noticed a number of pairs of black oyster-catchers about the rocks, but were only able to locate one nest.

The birds were flying back and forth continually uttering their whistling call.

The nest of this species that was found was on the south side of the rock, on a little slope where the fine pieces of rock had fallen down from above. The three eggs were placed without the least sign of a nest, two of them were near together while the other was about eight or ten inches below. All of the eggs were pipped and just about ready to hatch in the warm sun. The parent birds were flying about the rock but did not come near the eggs.

*Berkeley, Cal.*

#### Nesting of the Prairie Falcon.

BY O. W. HOWARD, LOS ANGELES, CAL.

EARLY during the spring of last year while doing some development work on one of my mining claims in the Huachuca Mountains in Cochise Co., Arizona, my attention was often attracted by the screaming of a pair of prairie falcons (*Falco mexicanus*). The sounds seemed to come from a tall cliff near the crest of a high ridge on the opposite side of the canyon in which we were working, and although the distance was too great to watch the birds I felt certain they were nesting on the cliff. When the birds had been in the vicinity for several weeks I felt sure it was time for a full set of eggs, so my partner and I made a trip up to the cliff to look for the nest. When we were within a few hundred feet of the cliff we were greeted by a sudden screaming, and on looking up saw three prairie falcons in an aerial combat.

Their flight was very swift and graceful; undoubtedly two of the birds were the pair nesting in the cliff and the other an intruder. One bird of the pair was following in close pursuit of the enemy while its mate would ascend high into the air and with folded wings drop like a falling stone and at the same time

utter a shrill scream. Just at the second one would naturally expect to see the enemy dashed to pieces, a slight turn of the tail would carry him to one side and the would-be assassin would dart harmlessly by like a flash.

We watched the performance until the birds had passed out of sight. The rest of the way to the cliff was a hard climb through the thick oak brush and over large, jagged rocks. When we reached the cliff two of the falcons had returned and were flying about in their usual manner with quick fluttering wings, occasionally uttering their peculiar scream. When we had watched the birds a few minutes one of them, presumably the female, flew to a cavity about half way up the face of the cliff and disappeared. This I felt sure was the nest, as the male bird lit on a sharp projection of the cliff not far off. I had forty or fifty feet of small rope with me but not enough to do any good so I decided to let the matter rest until I could obtain a longer and thicker rope.

Before leaving the cliff, however, we looked around to see what else we could find; there were several turkey vultures sailing back and forth, also a golden eagle was seen and a pair of