

- Progne subis hesperia.** Western Martin. Common. Mostly around settlements.
Pipilo fuscus crissalis. California Towhee. Common.
Zamelodia melanocephala. Black-headed Grosbeak. Common.
Cyanospiza amœna. Lazuli Bunting. Rather common in river bottom.
Petrochelidon lunifrons. Cliff Swallow. Common.
Tachycineta bicolor. Tree Swallow. Common in river bottom.
Tachycineta thalassina lepida. Violet-green Swallow. Very common.
Riparia riparia. Bank Swallow. Common.
Phainopepla nitens. Phainopepla. Not rare.
Lanius ludovicianus gambeli. California Shrike. Common.
Toxostoma redivivum. California Thrasher. Common.
Troglodytes aedon parkmanii. Parkman Wren. Common.
Sitta carolinensis aculeata. Slender-billed Nuthatch. Common among oaks.
Parus inornatus. Plain Titmouse. Common.
Chamæa fasciata. Pallid Wren-tit. Not rare.
Psaltriparus minimus californicus. California Bush-tit. Common.
Polioptila cærulea obscura. Western Gnatcatcher. Abundant.
Sialia mexicana occidentalis. Western Bluebird. Very common.
Los Angeles, California.

FIELD NOTES FROM ALASKA

By JOSEPH DIXON

(EDITORIAL NOTE.—Mr. Dixon is a member of the 1908 Alexander Alaska Expedition, which is now making zoological collections in the Prince Williams Sound region of southern Alaska.)

Hinchinbrook Island, Prince Williams Sound, Alaska, June 26, 1908.—We are camped at the head of a little unnamed bay on the northeast side of Hinchinbrook Island. There is the usual salmon creek emptying into the head of the bay. On either side of the creek there is a swamp of devil club and tall salmon berry bushes, while large spruce trees are sprinkled evenly over this swamp. These trees prove an aggravation to the collector every day as the Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Crossbills flit around in the top branches of them and laugh at us. They are out of range of anything smaller than number four shot and if I did get one, the chances are nine out of ten that it would lodge on one of the thick, spreading, moss-covered branches.

The other folks say that there are stacks of fox sparrows there but no one has brought in more than two of them at any one time. Varied and Hermit Thrushes are about as common as usual but the Varied Thrushes are rather wary and most of them are feeding young ones now.

It has not rained for some three weeks which is a terribly long dry spell for this country. The days have been warm and often sunshiny affording a fine opportunity for us to dry our skins especially the larger ones. This warm weather has also brought on swarms of mosquitoes and clouds of little sand flies. The mosquitoes have five grayish white bands around their abdomens which gives them a zebra-like appearance; but they are the most blood thirsty lot that I have ever met, for they no sooner noiselessly light on one than they begin to probe and they never stop until they reach bottom. I have had them bite thru a heavy flannel shirt and heavy wool underwear, but "duxbak" clothing is too much for their sharp bills.

By wearing a head net inside of a bed net and then closing the tent up tight we manage to sleep without being caressed by the "skeeters." It is almost impossible to work outside of mosquito nets even inside of the tightest tent. Burning buhack usually drives them out; but almost all of our endeavors to evade them have been futile. The sandflies are so small that the net will not stop them and their bite feels like some one running a hot needle in one's arm. Any account of these small insects may seem trivial but they certainly have made us feel their importance. It is humiliating to be driven out of the woods by such small creatures when hunting for bear; but it would not be much worse to be eaten all at once than to be devoured daily by these gauzy-winged "hellets". Then too their bites are always itching and I will scratch them in my sleep. These make ideal material for arsenic sores. Enough for our pains, so let us look to some of our pleasures.

While we were working at Canoe Passage on Hawkins Island, Miss Alexander found a Northern Bald Eagle's nest and thought from the actions of the parents that the nest must contain young. The nest was an immense affair; eight by ten feet in diameter, measured with a steel tape that had no rubber in it! It was placed in a large hump-backed hemlock tree that stood near the point of a low sand spit. There were but very few limbs on the rough moss-covered tree trunk which was too big to "hug" up, so we went down a couple of days later with cameras, ropes and an ax. As we approached the nest one of the old white heads came sailing over from his watch tower on an old dead hemlock. When he came to a spot above the nest he hovered up against the wind for a minute while he uttered a few anxious chuckle-like notes. Both birds seemed quite threatening but it was only a bluff as they cleared out entirely when I began climbing the tree. We managed to get a rope over the first limb and after I had tied it around me, Mr. Hasselborg began to hoist away so that together with his pulling and my scratching I managed to reach the first limb. Then after I had thrown the rope over the next limb the pulling and scratching began again and continued until I had reached the nest where I was surprised to find *three* instead of two young fuzzy eaglets as I had expected. They could not have been more than two weeks old as the largest of the three did not weigh more than a pound. The smallest one was not much more than half the size of the largest one. They seemed to not be at all afraid of me and surveyed me with curiosity only. Then they snuggled up in the moss that lined the nest and went to sleep. The nest was evidently an old one as a large currant bush twined its green branches over one side of the nest. It must support at least a ton of snow during the winter so I got out and walked around in it after taking some photos of the eaglets. I hope to be able to raise them and get a life history series of photographs.

Grouse seemed to be quite common about the high wooded knolls near the beach. They are very different from the grouse that we got last year. They are much smaller and darker. Mr. Heller thought that it was the Franklin Grouse but I do not think that it is. None of them have more than sixteen tail feathers; so I suppose that they belong to the genus *Canachites* and are probably the Alaska Spruce Grouse but as we have no description of this form, I cannot be sure. The comb is not orange colored, but almost a cardinal hue. The upper tail coverts are not strikingly barred but have the same appearance as the rest of the upper parts. They stay in the dark woods and scarcely ever flush unless we almost tramp upon them.

The country about Canoe Passage on Hawkins Island was low and rolling with large open parks bordered by wooded creeks. There were a number of lagoons almost shut off from the Bay by long grassy gravel bars. One mountain in the in-

terior of the Island was 1900 feet above the sea according to the aneroid. Hutchins Geese were nesting about these lagoons and about the twentieth of June goslings were everywhere. It was strange how they all hatched out so near the same time. I was wandering home one evening about 10 o'clock. It was just after sundown but the deeper woods were beginning to darken slowly. It was high tide so that I had to make a cut clear around the head of a slough. Just as I came out of the thick huckleberry underbrush in the strip of timber, I stumbled over a log and almost fell on top of an old goose that was sitting on a nestful of eggs. She made a terrible racket as she went flopping and squawking off the nest and I do not know which of us was the worst scared for a minute. The nest was placed in the open close to the trunk of a large tree just at the edge of the wood. It was lined with moss and down and held six eggs which I afterwards regretted were almost ready to hatch.

We took a trip up on the mountain after Ptarmigan and were fortunate in securing two males.

The mountain appeared to be higher than it really was because timberline was only about 1000 or 1200 feet. The summit of the mountain down for three or four hundred feet was wrapped in mist which a chill wind kept sweeping up from the south. This made it very hard to locate the birds as they sat around on the brownish-grey lichen-covered stones and would not flush unless one almost walked upon them. Most of the feathers on the upper parts of the birds were brownish but the summer plumage was not much more than half complete at this date.

Old worn bear trails were commonly met leading to the salmon creeks but the bears have been gone for several years at least, as we only saw one fresh track. The country was so open that hunting was too easy for them to last. Mr. Heller found a flock of White-winged Crossbills and secured several.

There is a very large dark song sparrow here which is darker than any that I remember. I have never seen any specimens of that Kenai form so I do not know whether it is that or not. The Fox Sparrows have been so split up that it would be hard to tell what this form is without material for comparison but anyway we will have a large series of both from the various islands so that it can be decided when we get back. Mr. Hasselborg secured that long-looked-for *Leucosticte* the other day with his "bear" gun and dust shot. The grey of the crown comes down covering the sides of the head so I take it to be the Hepburn *Leucosticte*. These birds seem to always stay around the very summits in the crags and rock slides. This one was secured about 1000 feet above timber line. Miss Alexander saw another *Leucosticte* within easy range but it was sitting on the brink of an impassable drop-off so she refrained from shooting at it. Miss Kellog secured a fine male Ptarmigan which is in the best feather of those yet taken.

La Touche, July 16, 1908.—We just blew in here from Green Island late last evening. We decided to leave Hinchinbrook Island on the fourth of July as there were indications of fair weather and a favorable wind. We broke camp at four o'clock in the morning but got stuck on a bar as we were passing out over the tide flat, so we had to spend the whole morning waiting for the tide to turn again with a glorious breeze going to waste. We got off again about one o'clock and safely crossed Hinchinbrook Entrance to Montague Island in the afternoon. As the wind died out we were forced to anchor at the entrance of Zaikof Bay for the night. We had a taste of a "wooly" in the morning which sent us flying down the Bay. We just got all our stuff off the boat when a good healthy rain storm set in and the tents, which had been taken down while wet, leaked like cheese cloth. Mr. Heller said that Montague Island should have been named *Microtus*

Island and it certainly would have been very appropriate, as meadow mice simply overrun the entire island from the beach clear up to the very summit of the highest peak that we were on (2500 ft.). They are large fellows almost as big as a gopher and are evidently the "grey squirrels" that we hear about that are overrunning Montague. On the whole I was rather disappointed in Montague. Altho the island lies well exposed to the ocean it is comparatively cold, and barren in number of species. This is probably due to the snow which even now lies in thick slides along the whole range of mountains that forms the backbone of the island.

I secured one Ptarmigan and saw another, but both of them were exceedingly wild. Ground hogs (Hoary Marmots, or Whistlers) were very shy on the mountains so we did not succeed in getting any. Hasselborg secured another *Leucosticte* and two Redpolls. The *Leucosticte* was one of a pair that we watched for some time as they flitted about the cliffs and rock slides. I am quite sure that they had a nest in a cliff as they kept returning repeatedly to the same spot. I examined the stomach of the bird that was shot and found that the majority of the contents was of a vegetable and not an insect nature. Sprouting buds of some small plant was the chief item. The Ptarmigan were lying close under some scrub spruce trees just at the upper edge of timber line. They are almost in full summer plumage by this time. I cannot understand why we never find any female Ptarmigan. I know that they are there but I have never yet seen one as all that I have yet secured have been males.

The three little eaglets that I worked so hard to get are all dead now. The two biggest ones pecked the little one to death. Then the largest one slew his brother and in turn was accidentally drowned the other day. I secured two half-grown eagles from a nest on Hinchinbrook Island and have the largest one still. I may be able to get some more if he should die but he is a good sailor and unless the canoe capsizes or we get some place where there is no meat, I think that the "Villian" will survive. The young eagles are clothed in a white down at birth. In about three weeks this white down begins to disappear and is replaced by a coarser sooty grey down which remains until the feathers come in and the bird weighs ten pounds or so. The Duckhawks that I raised last year did not go thru this sooty-gray-down stage but changed their coats of white down for one of feathers direct. I never saw such hard things to dry as young eagle skins. They won't even dry in the sun. They just rot. We have had trouble in drying our small birds as we only stop a week or so at a time and the collecting chests are full of small mammals. We either have to dry the bird skins in a hurry or else pack them around green. If they dry too rapidly the unequal heat from the stove causes them to warp as the side that is toward the heat dries first and shrinks pulling the tail around. If they are packed in a box, even very carefully, while green they are bound to get out of shape. I may be too cranky about the skins coming out well but I hate to put a good skin away and find it all dried out of shape later. A perfect or nearly perfect skin is a joy forever, especially from a place like this where it is almost impossible to secure good skins.

Green Island is low and the vegetation comes on early. Many of the land birds such as the Hermit and Varied Thrushes have families of youngsters flying about as have also the Song and Townsend Sparrows. As we came down the channel along Green Island we ran into a feeding ground of Puffins. There were literally swarms of them. The Horned Puffins were perhaps the more numerous but there were hundreds of their dark-bodied cousins with long flaxen curls. One of the two species makes a very odd sound while feeding. It is a series of droll Aw! Aw! Aws! , deep and long drawn out. It sounds as tho they were making fun

of some one as much as to say "Aw! Aw! I don't believe it." Mr. Heller suggested that it sounded like the subdued notes of a California burro!

We had a couple of bright days on Green Island and the mosquito and "no see" flies increased about a thousand fold. The mosquitoes were worse at night; but by getting inside of two or three nets arranged inside of each other, one could get a little sleep. All self-respecting flies are supposed to cease from their blood letting by night time but this particular breed was so industrious that they simply swarmed into the tent and no mosquito net is fine enough to stop them. It was useless to try to kill them and their bite feels like fire and swells up like baking powder biscuits. At last I wrapped my head up in the blankets and then about smothered but I was away from the pesky flies.

We must make another try at Montague as we have no bear from there yet. Then we will work the islands east of here until we strike the Kenai Peninsula where we ought to get some good big game hunting.

La Touche, Alaska.

THE NESTING OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCREECH OWL IN WYOMING

By CHAS. W. METZ

WITH FOUR PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

SO far as I know, no collector has reported the nesting of the Rocky Mountain Screech Owl (*Otus asio maxwelliae*) in Wyoming. A few notes taken by me in the northern part of the State, may, therefore, not come amiss. The first nest was found May 30, 1906, the old bird being flushed from a bush



NESTING SITE OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCREECH OWL (in tree trunk to right of picture)