

BIRDS SEEN IN THE VALLEY OF THE SOUTH FORK OF THE FLAT- HEAD RIVER, MONTANA

By NORMAN de W. BETTS

WITH ONE PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

DURING the summer of 1915 I made a pack trip of seventy-five miles up the South Fork of the Flathead River. Inasmuch as I do not find very many published references to the birds of that particular region, the following brief notes on the bird-life encountered may prove of interest and worthy of record. My companion, Dr. J. H. Walton, and myself left

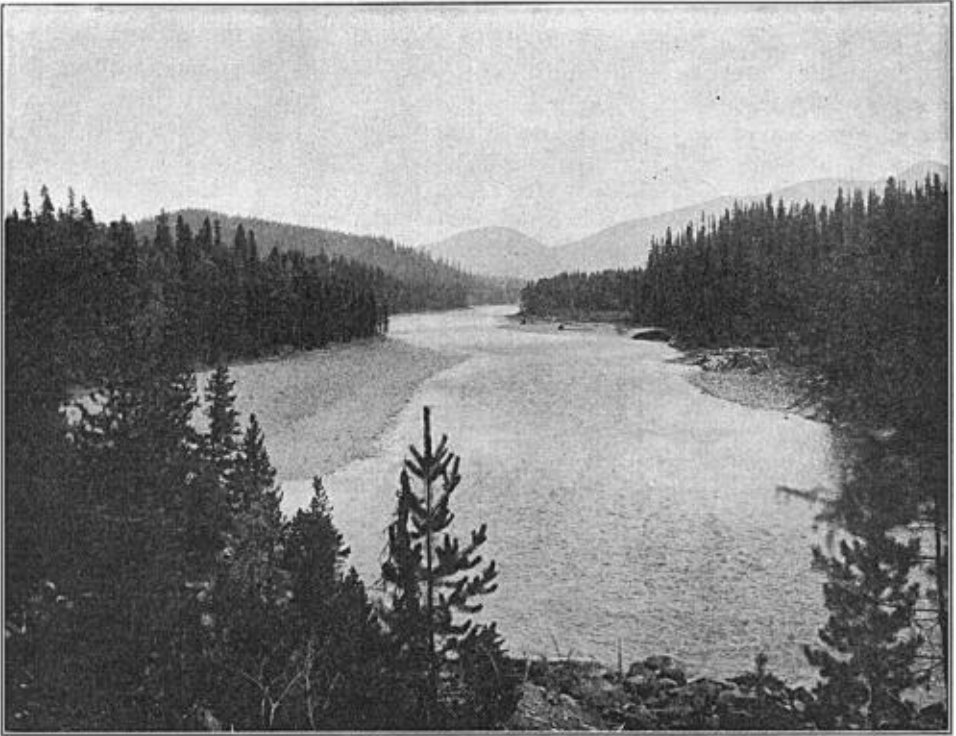


Fig. 43. THE SOUTH FORK OF THE FLATHEAD RIVER, MONTANA

Columbia Falls August 15 and returned September 9. The camp sites referred to in the notes are located as follows with regard to Columbia Falls: Riverside, 20 miles; Coalbank, 40 miles; Cabin Parks, 55 miles; Spotted Bear, 65 miles; and the Gorge, 75 miles. Conditions were not ideal for an intensive study of bird-life. Owing to the time of year birds were very quiet; while on the trail there was little opportunity to run down those not in clear view; and no collecting was done for the elucidation of subspecific identities. While quite familiar with the bird-life of the mountains of Colorado, this section was new to me, and I have not, therefore, given subspecific names where there appeared reason to doubt the form belonging in the region.

The valley of the South Fork is one of the large unoccupied forested

regions of the Rockies, and its avifauna has probably been little changed through human agencies. At Riverside the elevation of the river is about 3200, and at Cabin Parks about 3500 feet. The mountains enclosing the valley rise to about 8000 feet. Western larch and Douglas fir are the principal tree species, with a mixed stand of western white pine here and there, and with Engelmann spruce at the higher altitudes. Open burns and grassy mountain parks occur quite frequently, though the valley is essentially a forest covered region.

Mergus americanus. Merganser. Common in small flocks. Seen at Coalbank, Cabin Parks and Spotted Bear. One flock of seven appeared at camp, attracted by trout entrails thrown into the river. Their ability as swimmers was well demonstrated by the ease with which they made headway against the swift current of the river.

Melodromas solitarius cinnamomeus. Western Solitary Sandpiper. Two birds seen at Cabin Parks.

Actitis macularia. Spotted Sandpiper. Common along the river at all camps.

Canachites franklini. Franklin Grouse. The "Fool-hen" was quite common along the main trail and elsewhere.

Bonasa umbellus, subsp. Ruffed Grouse. The Ruffed Grouse was nearly as common as the Franklin, and found frequenting the same localities.

Buteo borealis calurus. Western Red-tail. One seen at Riverside.

Haliaeetus leucocephalus leucocephalus. Bald Eagle. One seen near Riverside.

Accipiter velox. Sharp-shinned Hawk. One found dead in the trail near Coalbank.

Falco sparverius, subsp. Sparrow Hawk. One seen at Hungry Horse Ranger Station near Riverside.

Pandion haliaetus carolinensis. Osprey. Well distributed along the river. Two old nests were noted.

Otus asio, subsp. Screech Owl. The familiar calls of screech owls were heard at Cabin Parks and Spotted Bear.

Bubo virginianus, subsp. Western Horned Owl. The hooting of Horned Owls was heard several times. Presumably *palescens*.

Ceryle alcyon alcyon. Belted Kingfisher. Common all along the river.

Dryobates villosus monticola. Rocky Mountain Hairy Woodpecker. Common along the river trail, and noted at 6500 feet in Silver Basin.

Picoides arcticus. Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker.

Picoides americanus dorsalis. Alpine Three-toed Woodpecker. Both species of the three-toed woodpeckers were quite common in the vicinity of Coalbank where there was considerable bug-infested western white pine. Two of the Arctic Three-toed Woodpeckers were also seen at Cabin Parks.

Sphyrapicus varius nuchalis. Red-naped Sapsucker. One bird seen in a clump of aspen at Spotted Bear.

Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola. Northern Pileated Woodpecker. Quite common and well distributed throughout the valley.

Colaptes cafer collaris. Red-shafted Flicker. Common along the main trail.

Chordeiles virginianus henryi. Western Nighthawk. Common at all camps.

Swift. Swifts were seen flying overhead at Cabin Parks but were not identified.

Tyrannus tyrannus. Kingbird. One seen at Riverside. Flycatchers of any type were notably lacking throughout the trip.

Cyanocitta stelleri annectens. Black-headed Jay. A few were seen at Coalbank and Riverside. Not numerous.

Perisoreus canadensis capitalis. Rocky Mountain Jay. Common.

Corvus corax sinuatus. Raven. Common and very noisy. Usually seen close to the river.

Nucifraga columbiana. Clarke Nutcracker. Common and noisy.

Molothrus ater ater. Cowbird. One which was seen at Coalbank persisted in alighting on the backs of the horses.

Pinicola enucleator montana. Rocky Mountain Pine Grosbeak. Two seen in Douglas fir on Spotted Bear Mountain.

Carpodacus cassinii. Cassin Purple Finch. One seen at Coalbank.

Loxia leucoptera. White-winged Crossbill. One male and two females were seen

at Riverside. They were very tame, and twice alighted on our hats. Montana is somewhat south of their usual breeding range, but the date on which these birds were noted, August 18, seems rather early for migration.

Spinus pinus. Pine Siskin. Noted in two places, Cabin Parks and on Mt. Baptiste at 6500-7000 feet.

Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus. Western Savannah Sparrow. A few seen in the grassy meadows at Cabin Parks, and at Spotted Bear.

Junco hyemalis, subsp. *Junco*. Small flocks of juncos were common as far as Cabin Parks. They closely resembled *mearnsi*, but may have been *montanus*, with which form I am not familiar.

Petrochelidon lunifrons lunifrons. Cliff Swallow. A flock was noted August 21 a few hundred feet below the top of Mt. Baptiste (8400 feet), at about timberline. Probably migrants.

Dendroica auduboni auduboni. Audubon Warbler. Small bands of this warbler were common, and formed the only indication of warbler migration.

Geothlypis trichas occidentalis. Western Yellow-throat. One seen at Cabin Parks.

Wilsonia pusilla pileolata. Pileolated Warbler. One seen near Spotted Bear.

Cinclus mexicanus unicolor. Dipper. Common all along the river, and heard singing several times.

Nannus hiemalis pacificus. Western Winter Wren. Common along the trail.

Certhia familiaris montana. Rocky Mountain Creeper. Noted here and there; not uncommon.

Sitta canadensis. Red-breasted Nuthatch. Common. Its note was one of the characteristic bird sounds of the valley.

Penthestes atricapillus septentrionalis. Long-tailed Chickadee. Common along the trail at least as far as Coalbank.

Penthestes gambeli gambeli. Mountain Chickadee. Noted at Silver Basin and Spotted Bear Mountain at about 6500 feet.

Penthestes hudsonicus hudsonicus. Hudsonian Chickadee. Two were seen on Spotted Bear Mountain in the Douglas fir forest at about 6500 feet.

Penthestes rufescens rufescens. Chestnut-backed Chickadee. A few noted at Coalbank in the same region frequented by the Long-tailed Chickadees.

Regulus satrapa, subsp. Golden-crowned Kinglet. Common and well distributed.

Planesticus migratorius propinquus. Western Robin. Seen only at Riverside and Spotted Bear.

Ixoreus naevius (meruloides?). Varied Thrush. One bird seen twice near Coalbank under excellent conditions for observation. It was carrying a grub on one occasion as though feeding young.

Madison, Wisconsin, April 16, 1916.

THE SAHUARO SCREECH OWL AS A RECOGNIZABLE RACE

By H. S. SWARTH

(Contribution from the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology)

THE SAHUARO Screech Owl (*Otus asio gilmani*) described by the present writer some years ago (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 7, 1910, p. 1), although admitted to the list of North American birds by the A. O. U. Committee, has been denied recognition by the latest monographer of the genus, Robert Ridgway, in his *Birds of North and Middle America* (part 6, 1914, p. 702, footnote). Here the conception of two subspecies of *Otus asio* existing in southern Arizona is objected to in no uncertain terms. The expression of such positive statements of fact and opinion, from so competent an authority, is certainly worthy of the most respectful consideration, and I must confess, upon first reading this criticism, to feeling decidedly unsettled in my convictions, and to wondering if perhaps my own conclusions had not been erroneous.