

NEW AND INTERESTING RECORDS OF PRIBILOF ISLAND BIRDS

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DURING the summer season of 1919 not many new records of birds were secured on the Pribilof Islands. This was not due to any supposed scarcity of material from which the records could have been made, but was the result of a lack of opportunity to make any systematic observations or collections. On several occasions shore birds were noted which could not be identified with any previously recorded species, but a combination of circumstances in every case prevented the securing of specimens. On three separate days warblers were seen, and wagtails were observed once. In each of these groups there are excellent opportunities to secure new records both for the Islands and for North America. And this would add very materially to the knowledge of migration of many species.

Field identifications are not ordinarily believed to be trustworthy for records in this locality, where there is so much mixing of the American and Asiatic avifaunas. A firearm should be carried constantly by a person who expects to get any considerable number of the valuable specimens which appear. Unfortunately this cannot always be done. Although I have been instrumental in the recording of some thirty-eight species from the Islands for the first time, including six new to North America, I firmly believe that fully twice that number would have been secured had I been able to go about my regular duty "prepared" for birds.

These little Pribilof Islands, mere atoms in a storm swept sea, form the land home for myriads of birds. But in addition to this they are the resting place for migrants and wanderers from the entire northern part of the earth. Some most unexpected visitors have been found, as a casual inspection of the complete list will show. They have come from Alaska, Kamchatka, Siberia, Japan, and the northern part of Europe. Whether there is any law which governs these extensive wanderings or not can only be determined by continued and careful collecting, which no one thus far has been able to undertake.

Complete lists of the breeding birds of each of the five islands of the group are offered herewith for the first time. From this it is hoped changes which occur from year to year may be noted. Undoubtedly additions will come in the future; the islands are very young.

Limnocryptes gallinula. European Jack-snipe. Some time during the spring of 1919, probably in April, a native on St. Paul Island secured one of these birds and very kindly kept the skin for me until my arrival. The identification was made by Mr. Joseph Mailliard of the California Academy of Sciences. This is a new record for the Pribilof Islands and for North America.

Macrorhamphus griseus scolopaceus. Long-billed Dowitcher. A female was taken on St. Paul Island, September 18, 1919. It, the only one seen, was secured near the Salt Lagoon.

Passerella iliaca unalaschcensis. Shumagin Fox Sparrow. On May 20, 1919, a female fox sparrow was found at North East Point, St. Paul Island, feeding among the piles of drift wood. Mr. Mailliard is responsible for the identification.

The above two species are here recorded for the first time from the Pribilof Islands.

The unsuccessful attempts to introduce the Northern Raven (*Corvus corax principalis*) on the Pribilof Islands prior to 1867 were recorded by Elliott many years ago (A Monograph of the Seal-Islands of Alaska: Special Bulletin 176, U. S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries, 1882, pp. 126, 128). His statement is as follows: "Failure to Introduce Ravens.—The Russians tried the experiment of bringing up from Sitka and Oonalashka a number of ravens as scavengers, a number of years ago, and when they were very uncleanly in the village, in contrast with the practice of the present hour; they reasoned that they would—these ill-omened birds—be invaluable as health officers; but the *Corvidae* invariably, sooner or later, and within a very short time, took the first wind-train back to the mainland or the Aleutian islands; yet the natives say that if the birds had been young ones instead of old fellows they would have remained" (page 126). On page 128 the species is given the number "6" in his list and it is further stated that the experiment was tried several times.

The species has not reappeared in any of the lists of the birds of the islands, since it had not at any time reached them of its own accord. During January, 1919, heavy ice surrounded St. Paul Island, but the natives were able to get out from shore in their boats in the open leads for the excellent duck shooting. On one of these occasions three ravens were seen near Sea Lion Rock. One was shot and wounded but could not be secured. It is not considered to be good policy to encumber literature with important records from the Islands except when they are supported by actual specimens, but in this case identification could hardly be mistaken. The occurrence was confirmed by several reliable men to whom the species was well known when they were in Unalaska. So in this case it seems to be worth while to make the record without the specimen. The reason why ravens do not become established on the Pribilof Islands is one of the unsolved mysteries of Bering Sea. They live on St. Matthew Island to the north, the Aleutians to the south, Alaska to the east and Kamchatka to the west. Yet the Pribilofs are passed with their wonderful food supply in the shape of carcasses of fur seals. Can it be that the Islands are geologically too young?

Two Little Brown Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) were collected on St. Paul Island in May, 1919. This species occurs in small numbers regularly during migrations but the birds are rarely shot. The previous record was based on a single feather picked up on the tundra. The two birds secured had gormandised on maggots, picked up on the seal killing fields at North East Point.

A female Gadwall (*Chaulelasmus streperus*) was secured on St. Paul Island on May 20, 1919, from a flock of three at Half Way Point. It is the second occurrence of the species on the Islands.

An American Green-winged Teal (*Nettion carolinense*), male, was taken from a pair found May 26, 1919, near Lukanin Rookery. Also a male European Green-winged Teal (*Nettion crecca*) was taken on September 20, 1919. These records confirm the previous ones as to the regular occurrence of both species at this locality. It would be surprising if hybrids were not occasionally produced.

A female Polynesian Tattler (*Heteractitis brevipes*) was secured on St. Paul Island on September 17, 1919, near Kitovi Rookery. It makes the third specimen taken in North America. I had an opportunity to observe this bird

for awhile with two Wandering Tattlers in view at the time. The actions of the two species were practically the same. They feed very close to the sea on rocky shores and when disturbed fly lazily, rarely more than a hundred yards. The Wandering Tattlers on this occasion appeared perceptibly larger than the Polynesian, and the notes of the two were different. The latter uttered an irregular screech not of the same intensity or pitch, whereas the former gave its usual call, a series of six to ten individual notes uttered in the same pitch and rapid succession but each of shortening duration.

Pipits were seen and one, a female, was taken, on May 25, 1919. They were feeding on animal life about the beds of kelp which had washed ashore in the Village Cove. Until this time the species had only been seen during fall migration, but rather often then. The specimen collected appears to be the common *Anthus rubescens*.

A female Western Robin (*Planesticus migratorius propinquus*) was taken in the barn yard on St. Paul Island, September 15, 1919. I know of the occurrence of the species but twice previously. The first was observed in 1872. The specimens upon which the above records are based are deposited in the Museum of the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco.

TABLE SHOWING THE BREEDING BIRDS OF THE SEVERAL ISLANDS OF THE PRIBILOF GROUP

	St. Paul Island	St. George Island	Otter Island ¹	Walrus Island	Sea Lion Rock
<i>Lunda cirrhata</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Fratercula corniculata</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Phalaris psittacula</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Æthia cristatella</i> .....	+	+	+	+	.....
<i>Æthia pusilla</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Uria troille californica</i> .....	+	+	+	+	.....
<i>Uria lomvia arra</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Rissa tridactyla pollicaris</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Rissa brevirostris</i> .....	+	+	+	+	.....
<i>Larus hyperboreus</i> .....	.....	.....	.....	+	.....
<i>Larus glaucescens</i> .....	.....	+	.....	+	+
<i>Fulmarus rogersi</i> .....	+	+	+	.....	.....
<i>Phalacrocorax urile</i> .....	+	+	+	+	.....
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	+ ²	.....	.....	.....	.....
<i>Nettion [carolinense?]</i>	+ ³	.....	.....	.....	.....
<i>Harelda hyemalis</i> .....	+	.....	.....	.....	.....
<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i> .....	+	+	.....	.....	.....
<i>Arquatella maritima ptilocnemis</i> .....	+	+	.....	.....	.....
<i>Leucosticte griseonucha</i> .....	+	+	+	.....	.....
<i>Plectrophenax nivalis townsendi</i> .....	+	+	.....	.....	.....
<i>Calcarius lapponicus alascensis</i> .....	+	+	+	.....	.....
<i>Nannus alascensis</i> .....	.....	+	+³	.....	.....

¹I prefer to leave the question of the breeding of the Slaty-backed Gull on Otter Island open for future decision.

²Very rarely.

³In 1916, 1917 and 1918.

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