A REPORT ON THE BIRDS OF NORTHWESTERN ALASKA AND REGIONS ADJACENT TO BERING STRAIT. PART III

WITH TWO PHOTOS

By ALFRED M. BAILEY

POMARINE JAEGER. *Stercorarius pomarinus.*

Our records for this species were not numerous for the summer and fall of 1921, six birds only being taken; two of these were birds of the year. Several were seen at Whalen, Siberia, July 12, and one was collected. Two were noted around the *Bear* off Cape Halkett, to the eastward of Point Barrow, on August 10. They were scarce in the vicinity of Wainwright; two adults were collected September 3, and two young on the 19th and 23d, respectively, the last bird being found dead upon the beach. These were following the coast line southward, in a direct course as though they were migrating.

In the spring, this species appeared abundantly at Wainwright and proved to be a common summer resident. The first arrival was noted on May 26, and on the 28th several flocks of twenty or more were observed. Hendee states that they were very common early in June, over the lead, usually flying in pairs, moving north in numbers with a south wind, and south in lesser numbers with a north wind, but always, apparently, merely passing. On June 21 a few were seen which appeared to be located for breeding, and on June 29 a nest with three eggs was found. On July 1, two nests, with one egg each, were taken. The nests were placed on hummocks of moss on the tundra and were lined with a few feathers, there being no effort at concealment. An immature was taken on August 11.

The first of this species at Wales was recorded on May 29, and on June 3 a great many were seen offshore, migrating over the pack. There was a large migration on June 16, and pairs of birds were noted commonly throughout the rest of the month and during July. The natives told me that the "big tundra hawks" occasionally nested, but I found no eggs. Both color phases were taken, and at Wainwright the darker phase seemed to be about one in twenty.

In 1924 Mr. Brower sent us a good series of eggs from Point Barrow and remarked upon the abundance of Pomarine Jaegers there during the season. He stated that lemmings were very numerous and that jaegers were plentiful for that reason.

PARASITIC JAEGER. *Stercorarius parasiticus.*

This species proved to be the most abundant of the jaegers at Wainwright in the fall of 1921, and it was noted quite commonly during the whole summer at the different points which we worked. Hendee saw a few birds on St. Lawrence Island the first week in July, and a few were seen in the vicinity of St. Michael about the 20th of that month. Curiously, of the many jaegers seen at Nome, none was of this species. I did not note them to the eastward on our trip to Demarcation Point. Our first record for the Arctic was made August 21, when a dark-plumaged bird was taken by Hendee at Wainwright. Birds of dark and light phase were both observed practically daily throughout August and up to the 19th of September, when I collected the last one which we recorded, a bird of the light phase. No birds of the year were observed.

The Parasitic Jaegers were next in abundance to the Pomarines at Wainwright the following season. It was the last of the three species to arrive, the first Hendee noted being on June 26, when three specimens were taken. No nests were found, although they were unquestionably summer residents. About one in three of these birds observed were in the dark phase, while with the Pomarine, the average was about

one in twenty. This species was rare at Wales, the first being taken on July 1, and a few being seen during the following week. The natives did not differentiate between this and the next species, so I could get no information on their nesting.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER. *Stercorarius longicaudus.*

This species is the most abundant of the Jaegers along the northern Alaskan coast and was met with at practically all points visited; yet, strangely enough, we did not observe a single individual during the two months of the open season at Wainwright. We found the species common at Nome, where a fine series was collected about the middle of June. These "tundra hawks" were the most conspicuous of the birds to be seen about Nome, flocks of half a dozen often working over the level tundra; but we failed to locate nests. Hendee noted several at St. Lawrence Island the first week in July and I saw one at Emma Harbor, Siberia, on July 3. A few were seen at St. Michael July 19 to 23, and they were common at Teller on the 29th. Several were observed at Cape Blossom August 1, a few at Point Barrow on August 7, and one at Demarcation Point on August 15.

In the spring, Hendee found these jaegers rare, the first specimen being caught in a trap on June 9. They were seldom seen, although there were a few days when considerable numbers drifted southward. One egg was secured at Wainwright. This species, like many others, is probably rare in a given locality, while a few miles farther on it may be found in considerable abundance.

At Cape Prince of Wales the first arrivals were noted on May 28, after which date they were common. They nested on the tundra along Lopp Lagoon, and a few eggs were secured, the nest being a mere depression in the moss on a tundra mound. These are among the most predaceous of the northern birds, and pairs of them are often seen cruising back and forth over the flats, searching for eggs, young birds, and rodents.

IVORY GULL. *Pagophila eburnea.*

On October 24, while on the way to Barrow by dog team, we skirted the coast for miles. Between Wainwright and Atanik we saw several of these beautifully plumaged birds, shining like wet ivory against the dirty shore ice. They followed up the beach, working along the edge of the slush ice, circling back now and then, but finally disappearing far ahead. On October 30, at Barrow, I had an interesting day with the Ivory Gulls. The sea was clear except for masses of old ice which lined the beach and drifts of pan ice offshore, while the sun shone from a cloudless sky, making an ideal day for observation. Ivory Gulls could be seen working along the large leads of open water, flying north, while, in the meantime, other bands were working to the south. In general flight they were impossible to distinguish from Ross Gulls, having the same habit of circling and suddenly dropping near the surface of the water. Even their general build is similar, although, of course, the Ivory Gulls are much the larger. When within gun range, they are easily identified.

It was very cold and I noticed my feet would not stay warm, even when I was walking up and down; clouds of steam arose from the water, and cracks formed in the snow. I tried decoying the birds from the distance by waving a handkerchief, and succeeded in shooting seven, of which my dog would bring in only four. The government thermometer registered eighteen degrees below zero. I hesitate to make estimates of the birds noted in flight, especially as they seemed to be going up the coast and then returning; but it seemed to me there were at least one hundred examples in the near vicinity. The sea froze over for a long distance out during the night, and only three birds were observed the next day, the last records for the year. Mr. Brower told me that Ivory Gulls do not appear commonly at any time, but that they are seen more often in the spring than in the fall. The nature of the climate in the

Arctic is such that it is practically impossible for a field man to work on many of the winter days. The ice forms on a boat so quickly that it is impossible to use one; young ice usually extends from the shore too far out to make it possible to shoot successfully from the beach; and, finally, it is really cruel to allow a dog, no matter how ambitious he may be, or how rare the specimen, to go out after them. The birds I collected were taken within one hundred yards of the station, and between retrieves it was necessary to thaw out the dog by the big heater and rub him dry, as the ice formed solidly in his wiry coat. No better example of the necessity of a dog may be given than that out of five Ivory Gulls and seventeen Ross Gulls which I collected during the fall, only two of the Ross Gulls could have been secured without the services of the dog. I venture to say that he retrieved over fifty percent of our water birds for us.

The first Ivory Gulls of the spring were seen at Wainwright on May 18 over the whaling camp, seven miles out on the ice. This rare species was often abundant when the Eskimos were "cutting in" whales recently killed. The most of these birds were seen between May 22 and 27; so, had bad weather prevailed, this form might have been overlooked. Of the seventeen specimens taken, but one was in the immature plumage. Hendee states: "These gulls were less wary than the Glaucous Gulls. They seldom came within shotgun range, however, unless attracted by food, seemingly having little curiosity. Their note was similar to that of the Arctic Tern."

The Point Barrow Expedition of 1882-83 reported the Ivory Gull "at best a rare visitor". I believe, however, that this species can be looked for regularly, far offshore, especially when whales are killed.

My spring work at Cape Prince of Wales and upon the ice-floes of Bering Strait proved of interest, especially as I found the Ivory Gulls to be fairly common, thus extending their regular range to Bering Sea. As the ice breaks up in the spring and starts moving through the Strait these beautiful gulls appear, working far out over the shifting ice fields. It seems they must winter in numbers at the edge of the pack, possibly feeding along the open leads to the northward of St. Lawrence Island, for, as the ice opened at Wales, these birds appeared from the south, drifting northward with southerly winds. I saw the first one on May 8, and the Eskimos reported many of them on May 16 and 18. When hunting seals on May 22, I saw between twenty and thirty, of which I collected nine as they hovered over the bloody carcasses. On May 28 several were seen. According to my notes: "The Ivory Gulls were feeding on the refuse where the Eskimos skinned a walrus the other day, and in spite of their beautiful plumage there was something unattractive about them. Their feet were loaded with slime and they walked heavily about, looking disgustingly like white buzzards. I watched them quite a while before collecting them, as they were very tame." A few birds were seen almost daily during May and the first two weeks in June, when weather conditions were favorable for hunting; but they were not numerous in June, merely an occasional straggler being seen. The last specimen was secured on June 26.

No better example than the collecting of Ivory Gulls can be given to show the necessity of the northern collector hunting with the natives. Gulls and other rare stragglers are only taken offshore along the open leads. Hendee accompanied the whale hunters seven miles out on the sea ice, and so made his interesting notes. Many collectors have failed altogether to make observations of certain species, or considered them rare, because there were few natives about to assist them.

PACIFIC KITTIWAKE. ***Rissa tridactyla pollicaris.***

Abundant throughout the islands of Bering Sea, nesting along the precipitous ledges in great numbers in company with murres, cormorants, puffins, and auklets.

Many kittiwakes were noted at sea when we were abreast of the Pribilof Islands on June 16; and we found them to be abundant at King Island and at St. Lawrence Island where they were already nesting. I saw many on their eggs along the cliffs below Sivunga on July 8, and flocks were seen daily at Emma Harbor between July 1 and 7, although I do not know where they were nesting. They were extremely abundant at Whalen, near East Cape, July 12, feeding on a small shrimp along the ice-floes which lined the beach; great flocks of them would rise at one's approach, only to sail on ahead and alight again. Many were seen at St. Michael from July 18 to 23 and at Cape Blossom on August 1, while a few were noted at Point Barrow August 8,

Fig. 31. WALES ESKIMO WITH IVORY GULLS, FAR OFF-SHORE IN BERING STRAIT; MAY, 1922.

and at Cape Halkett on the 10th. Several hundred were seen flying north at Wainwright on September 2; at Icy Cape between the 5th and 7th many were observed, the main migration to the south evidently being September 7 when hundreds were flying offshore, usually skimming close to the surface of the water. Many more were seen the next day; but three days later, when we made a fifty-mile trip in a whale boat, not a bird of this species was observed, so it seems that most of them move south at the same time.

In the spring of 1922 Hendee did not observe any kittiwakes on their northward migration; the first specimen seen was taken on July 10. After that date a few birds were seen straggling north. This is one of the interesting problems of bird migration, for thousands move southward along the northwestern Arctic coast in early September.

Murdoch fails to include the species in his report of his two years' work at Barrow, so it is possible the birds noted at Wainwright in the fall of 1921 were wanderers from the south after the breeding season. This, however, does not seem to be the correct solution, for the great bands drifting southward had all the appearance of migrating. They were not loitering along the way and we had not observed straggling bands coming from the south. On October 17, when ice was forming on the sea, I took a young kittiwake from a flock of Ross Gulls.

At Wales the first was noted on May 17; and they were abundant at the Diomedes by June 3. A great migration occurred along the shore lead on June 16, and by June 25 the paired birds were occupying their nests along the precipitous walls of the Diomedes and Fairway Rock, although all the nests we examined were still empty. During June the kittiwakes did not seem to wander far from their nesting rocks, but late in July they were abundant along the mainland shore and even over the shallows of Lopp Lagoon.

RED-LEGGED KITTIWAKE. ***Rissa brevirostris.***

But one bird of this species was observed closely enough for positive identification, that being on the 11th of July, at Whalen, eastern Siberia, where Hendee saw a finely plumaged specimen within a few feet of the ship.

GLAUCOUS GULL. ***Larus hyperboreus.***

This large gull is a common bird of the Arctic. It was observed at practically all points visited, being seen frequently among the northern islands of Bering Sea and at Emma Harbor, Siberia, where nesting birds were noted along the cliffs of Providence Bay, and at Whalen near East Cape. To the eastward of Barrow a few were seen daily. Birds in worn, adult plumage worked the beaches near Wainwright the latter part of August. We found them exceedingly wild, doubtless because the Eskimos hunt them for food.

Between September 4 and 13 we saw may Glaucous Gulls near Icy Cape, and on September 16 the biggest migration we noticed passed Wainwright. The birds passed in bands for several hours in the morning, in flocks of a dozen at times, some in worn adult plumage, many without tails, some already taking on the winter adult plumage, and many of the large gray young of the year. They seemed to follow the high tundra banks and one could secure them easily by hiding behind some of the broken-down turf at the shoreline. This seemingly endless chain of gulls started about daybreak and continued until three in the afternoon, for the most part going straight on their southward journey, although occasionally a large flock would circle high in the air, like so many man-o'-war-birds, some flocks crossing below the village to the inlet and following upstream beyond sight. From that date to the 15th of October a few birds were noted daily and upon that date there was quite a flight down the coast in the morning, a few returning up the coast in the afternoon. A number were observed on October 19, after which time I have no record of their occurrence.

The following spring the first Glaucous Gulls were seen on April 12; and two others were observed a week later in a lead of open water. When the ice broke up on May 6 a few birds straggled along the coast, and from that time on they were the most common of the gulls. They nest sparingly along the tundra ponds, a nest with two eggs being found on June 30, and on August 20 a young bird unable to fly. Hendee states: "These birds were exceedingly numerous during the whaling season and flocked about whenever a whale was being 'cut in', to pick up the scraps of blubber left about. The native boys were greatly amused by the actions of these birds and were continually throwing pieces of meat into the air to attract them."

At Wales I saw the first of this species on April 20. It will be noted that Hendee recorded one specimen a week earlier than the above date although he was located 650

miles farther north. These birds undoubtedly work along the entire coast in small numbers, following the leads caused by the constant shifting of the ice-pack during the late winter days. I have no doubt that they occur around Wales during the latter part of March. By the first of May many wandered up the coast, and shortly after that date they were fairly common. They did not have a pronounced spring migration, however, like the fall movement southward which we observed at Wainwright on September 16. On the contrary, they seemed to move leisurely northward toward their breeding grounds. This species has a wide breeding range, at least from Bering

Fig. 32. NEST AND EGGS OF GLAUCOUS GULL, LOPP LAGOON, CAPE PRINCE OF WALES, ALASKA; JULY, 1922.

Strait Islands to far beyond Point Barrow. I found a few nests at Wales, situated usually upon little sand islands in Lopp Lagoon or in a tundra pond, where their nesting mounds were conspicuous for a long distance. The adults revealed their nest sites by fluttering overhead when one came near, voicing their protests in strident manner. Two or three eggs were usually found to a set. On one occasion I found a nest containing an egg of the Arctic Tern, one of the Old-squaw Duck, and one of the gull, upon all of which the bird was evidently brooding. What a surprised old bird she must have been when her strange assortment of chicks appeared!

I have listed all the Glaucous Gulls observed as *hyperboreus* although Dr. Oberholser holds that our North American species is *barrovianus*. The birds collected and observed in Siberia appeared larger to me in the field, but there is such a variation in size of individuals, according to sex, as well as in colors, that I have classed the two forms, if such there be, under *hyperboreus,* until the question is definitely settled by the A. O. U. Committee.

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL. ***Larus glaucescens.***

I saw a few of these birds around the *Victoria* in Unimak Pass but did not observe the species northward until during the fall migration of 1921 when a few dark-winged

immatures were seen at Wainwright on September 16. A few young of the species were taken from among the great number of Glaucous Gulls which made their way southward, but it was impossible to identify them quickly enough to collect many as they passed overhead. Whether these young birds were reared to the eastward of Point Barrow, or whether they were stragglers from the south, is a question that will have to await further field work. The two specimens which we collected appear to be northern records for the species.

The following spring a few were seen at Cape Prince of Wales on May 18. At this date a "southwester" was blowing and a great many birds were drifting before the wind. During the latter part of August they were exceedingly abundant along the Alaskan peninsula, offshore from the Shumagin Islands, and at every fishing station and cannery along the coast.

SLATY-BACKED GULL. ***Larus schistisagus.***

One of these birds was observed at Nome, on July 28, where it was seen in company with a large band of kittiwakes alongside the *Bear* just as we were leaving for the Arctic. It was noticeably more shy than the other birds, staying aft usually, although it would join the flock when any offal was thrown overboard. Its "saddle" appeared especially conspicuous in flight, as it hovered low over the water. This was the only one seen during our entire stay in the north. It was feeding on refuse thrown overboard, and while the other gulls with which it fed would swim close to the ship, the Slaty-backed Gull swam far out to the rear, only joining the others when food was to be had.

HERRING GULL. ***Larus argentatus argentatus.***

We did not collect any Herring Gulls on our northward trip, nor during the fall of 1921 except on September 16 during the big southward flight of gulls at Wainwright. At this time the birds were working down the coast and for several hours there was a continuous flight. We collected several Herring Gulls, including adults already in their winter plumage, and also birds of the year. Migration and breeding notes of these gulls from northern Alaska are scarce and these specimens appear to be northern records for Alaska. It is quite probable that birds nesting to the eastward work over to the northwest coast and on down through Bering Strait to the Pacific.

VEGA GULL. ***Larus argentatus vegae.***

This bird was met on the Siberian side at Emma Harbor during our visit to the Siberian Coast early in July and a few specimens were taken. The following spring I saw a good many birds, with dark primaries, at Cape Prince of Wales; a specimen collected May 30 proved to be a high plumaged male of this species. They were not common. A few were seen about the Diomedes on June 3 and 25, and I have no doubt they were nesting.

THAYER GULL. ***Larus argentatus thayeri.***

Little is known about the migration of this species. We took one specimen from the large number of gulls passing at Icy Cape on September 16. It was taken by Upiksom, my native assistant, and the specimen was an immature male.

SHORT-BILLED GULL. ***Larus canus brachyrhynchus.***

This is apparently an abundant species in northern Alaska, yet with decided preferences as to feeding and breeding places, for it was observed abundantly in some places and lacking in others, though no great distance intervened. At St. Michael, for instance, they were plentiful, while not a bird was seen in the vicinity of Nome. A few were seen at Cape Blossom August 1, and one bird was taken at Wainwright September 2, a northern record, I believe. Hendee did not record the species at Wainwright in the spring. I saw but few at Wales, although they were fairly common on May 28 and 29 and a number were in migration at the Diomedes on June 3.

BONAPARTE GULL. *Larus philadelphia.*

I observed but one of this species, that being over the ice-pack at Wales on May 29.

ROSS GULL. *Rhodostethia rosea.*

A close watch was kept for this rare species, and our first flock of about thirty birds was seen October 12, flying down the coast and well offshore. The sky was lead color and the sea drab, closely matched in tone, which made the birds very hard to distinguish against the dull background, the black penciling of the primaries being the most conspicuous feature. I waved a handkerchief and the whole flock circled in, but as there was an offshore wind it was practically useless to shoot. I tried to collect a couple near the beach but they dropped well out, where I had to wade waist-deep to get them. I had left the dog behind as I thought the water too cold for him—slush ice then forming along the shore, and when salt water freezes, it is cold! But who wouldn't wade for his first Ross Gull?

After thawing for an hour, I went up the beach, this time taking Jerry with me, and was successful in getting three more birds from a flock of twelve. This flock consisted of scattered individuals that seemed to be feeding; but all the birds, as with the first band, were working south. Three flocks of about a dozen birds each were seen October 15 flying up the coast, but so far out I could not attract them. They were working along in straggling groups, a few alighting or separating from the main band as in a flock of terns, in flight reminding me of Bonaparte Gulls, all the birds dipping together with that same uniform, graceful, undulating swing so delightful to watch. On October 16, six flocks were seen near the mouth of Wainwright Inlet, averaging from a dozen to twenty birds each, but I could decoy only one flock in, from which, however, I secured a good series. These birds were working up the coast and the next day I saw a band of fifteen flying south, from which I secured my only adult Ross Gull, out of seventeen specimens. It was so cold that the salt spray froze to the dog, and one gull was carried out to sea, the dog not being willing to make more than two trips. While following the beach on our way to Barrow, October 24, I saw about fifteen birds working along the surf line where it welled under the ice. Four others were seen at Barrow October 27. Murdoch described the migration of this species at Barrow, but Mr. Brower, who has lived there many years, told me that some years they see very few or none at all. During the fall of 1921 there were a number about a whale carcass on October 13, and two specimens were taken for me. Mr. Brower has seen Ross Gulls in the spring and describes them as being then extremely beautiful and conspicuous, their rosy breasts forming a striking contrast to the monotonous white of the sea ice. Once he saw them very numerous in the spring, thirty miles offshore about a dead whale, where they fed upon the carcass. He also told me that he had seen them at Point Hope in the spring.

Hendee secured but one specimen of Ross Gull during the next season, an adult male on July 24. The natives from whom he secured the bird report it to have been one of five which were seen at the mouth of a small stream. None was seen about the lead in the spring, despite the close watch which was kept. Jim Allen informs me that this species was fairly common in August, soon after Hendee left Wainwright. I had expected to find it at Wales, but the natives did not know it from my description; so, unless the birds follow closely along the Siberian coast on a southward journey, I am satisfied that comparatively few go through the Strait, most of them keeping to the open leads of the Arctic. The natives are good observers and all at Wainwright knew the gulls from my description.

Murdoch found these birds numerous at Barrow in 1881-2, but the flocks always seemed to be flying in a northwesterly direction. He states, however, that "perhaps

the most plausible supposition is that soon after leaving Point Barrow, perhaps when they encounter the main ice pack, they turn and retrace their steps so far out at sea as to be unnoticed from land and pass the winter at the edge of the ice field, proceeding north to their breeding ground as the pack travels north in the spring." The specimens which we secured were feeding entirely upon a small "ice-shrimp" which abounds in the vicinity of large bergs. According to the notes on this species in Bent's "North American Gulls and Terns" their food seems to be wholly insectivorous when on their breeding grounds. From what the whalers told me, these birds doubtless are not different from other gulls, however, in that they will greedily take any offal lying about.

SABINE GULL. *Xema sabini.*

This gull was met with generally along the coast, but in the greatest numbers at St. Michael July 18 to 23. There we secured a good series of adults about the wharves. A few examples were noted at Wainwright August 5, at Point Barrow the 6th, and at Cape Halkett the 10th. The first young was observed at Wainwright by Hendee on August 6, in company with an adult. A few scattering birds were seen during the fall months at Wainwright; two on August 21, one on August 31, four September 1, and two September 4. Wainwright is situated in a bight, so that birds in direct migration would pass well offshore where they would not be observed. Several large flocks passed Icy Cape, going south, September 7, and our last observation was made September 16, when we collected a young bird at Wainwright.

In the spring, Hendee saw the first Sabine Gull on May 28 in company with Glaucous Gulls and Pomarine Jaegers over an open lead, and several others were seen the next day. They were not abundant during the summer but were observed practically every day. These little gulls breed sparingly about Wainwright, choosing the small islets and hummocks of the tundra lagoons as their nesting sites. On several occasions, broken eggs of this species were found. One set of three eggs was secured on the tundra some miles north of Wainwright on the bank of a lagoon.

At Cape Prince of Wales a few birds were observed on June 3 and others on June 16. On Lopp Lagoon, about twenty miles from Wales, they were fairly abundant, and I found several nests in construction the first week of July. The nests were of grass, upon a muddy peninsula of a tundra lagoon. These birds were a month later in nesting than Nelson records them at St. Michael, which seems to be the average for the other species as well, a fact which speaks ill for the climate in the vicinity of the cape.

Denver, Colorado, January 12, 1925.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE BIRDS OF YOSEMITE VALLEY

By CHARLES W. MICHAEL

THE AUTHOR of this article has been a resident of Yosemite Valley since May 1, 1920. The information contained in the following report was gleaned from daily records kept during all these years; and a complete copy of these detailed records has been filed for permanent keeping and reference in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley. All the birds mentioned in the following report were seen on, or from, the floor of the Valley, and within four miles of Yosemite village. No specimens were taken to back up these records, but the observer was cautious and it