

Winter Notes from the Copper River, Alaska.*—During the month of December, 1919, I made a trip from Chitina, Alaska, to within a short distance of the headwaters of the Copper River. Territorial Warden Young and I left the little village with horse and sled on December 7, following the Fairbanks trail northward. The trail from Chitina to Tonsina winds along the rugged hills of the Copper, furnishing a beautiful view across the broad expanse of spruce-filled valley.

The first day's journey carried us over a splendid road, although a tangle of vines and cranberry bushes impeded our progress through the woods. Spruce trees covered the mountain slopes and faint wisps of smoke curled from the summit of Mount Wrangell. Bird life proved to be very scarce from the start, Redpolls, White-winged Crossbills and Alaskan Jays being the only forms seen during the day, while the red squirrels were the only mammals noted.

At the mouth of the Tonsina River, sixteen miles from Chitina, there is an Indian village, an unkempt collection of scattered cabins and elevated caches. A short distance away is the Tonsina roadhouse where we spent the night.

The next day we had perfect weather for the short run to Kenny Lake roadhouse. Unfortunately, lack of wild life notes is the most outstanding feature of our experiences, for I have rarely seen such a dearth of animal life in a wooded country. A single Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker, crossbills, redpolls and jays were the only birds, while occasional rabbit, squirrel and weasel tracks were the only evidences of mammal life.

The following day, hazy and with the thermometer twelve below zero, we made twenty-four miles to Copper Center. The usual scarcity of birds prevailed and on December 10 we travelled the thirty miles to Gulkana without seeing a single bird or mammal. It was a clear day, with the temperature twenty-four below, and as we were heavily loaded and walked most of the way, we had ample time to make observations.

We left the Fairbanks trail to Gulkana and mushed to the Gokona River, following the Copper River along the general line of the old Eagle mail route. We were out the entire day, the spruce trees were covered with cones, but not a single bird was seen on the trip. We found the Indians a rather wretched lot, for they were having poor success in their hunting and trapping. They reported "halo (no) caribou", upon which they depended so much for food and clothing. Had it not been for an unusual run of salmon the summer before, they would have been starving.

December 12 we had an early start from Gokona, intending to mush the thirty-six miles to Chistochina, but when climbing the steep grade from the Gokona flats to the high land, I could not hold the sled to the trail and we went over, breaking the sled. We camped that night, repairing the runners with the aid of our ax and some wire, and made the roadhouse next day. The Tolsona flats furnish about as monotonous a day's travel as one could experience. We saw no birds, the trees were stunted and burned over, and the wide stretches of marsh-land were filled with frozen nigger-heads. We saw a few ptarmigan tracks, as well as the tracks of a moose and a lynx. Although the trail was monotonous there was some comfort in the beauty of the frost-covered spruces and, late in the evening, the sky became a crimson flame, lighting the mountains, Drum and Sanford, whose great glaciers showed green, even at that distance.

We rested over at John Paulson's trading post the 14th and made arrangements for him to accompany us up the river with his dog team, while an Indian was to care for our horse during our absence. The temperature was thirty-five below and the next day we remained housed, as the thermometer dropped to fifty-six below and Paulson did not care about driving dogs in such cold weather.

We started out at nine the following morning, bucking a head wind which swept down the river, and found that the cold weather had been favorable for us, in that it had frozen most of the overflows. The going was hard, as we had to face into the biting wind; and it was all our five dogs could do to keep a footing on the slippery, wind-swept ice. We boiled tea at noon, and made a cabin on the Salina River, thirty miles from the post, by dark. No birds or mammals were seen. From the cabin on the Salina we took a side trail to Batzunita Creek, ten miles farther, to the Indian village where we stopped with Batzunita Billy, one of the natives. Trapping was so poor the natives were not even attempting it and few caribou were rewarding the hunters.

* The above notes were made while doing field work for the Biological Survey and are published here with the permission of Dr. E. W. Nelson, the Chief of the Bureau.

Having secured the notes on fox ranching and other data which we desired, I decided to push back to Chitina as rapidly as possible. We left Chistochina December 20, and mushed the thirty-six miles to Gokona. The woods were beautiful with new-fallen snow, there was not a sound to be heard and not a bird was seen. In fact, in the last two days we had covered sixty-six miles on foot, without having seen a bird or mammal. Our return to Chitina was of no especial interest, as we followed the Fairbanks trail back from Gulkana.

The ornithological notes of our trip are chiefly important because of the lack of species and individuals noted. We covered about 160 miles of trail each way, mostly on foot, and kept a careful watch at all times for birds. Ptarmigan and grouse tracks were seen occasionally, but the birds were so scarce that the natives did not hunt them. When talking to men along the trail, the sight of a ptarmigan or grouse a month previously was thought of enough interest to tell.

The following notes were made between December 7 and 27, 1919, in the Copper River Valley.

Alaska Three-toed Woodpecker. *Picoides americanus fasciatus*. Woodpeckers were rare, especially when it is remembered that the entire trip was made through a wooded region. The fact that a great part of the flats was burned over might be one cause for their scarcity. Only three woodpeckers were seen and one of these collected. The specimen secured was an adult male taken December 24 at Kenny Lake. It was in a burned-over tract of cottonwood.

American Magpie. *Pica pica hudsonia*. Restricted to the vicinity of the villages; quite common at Chitina. One was seen at Tonsina, and two at the Batzunita Indian village, at the end of our outbound journey. I collected an adult female at Tonsina December 25 which had half of the upper mandible missing.

Alaska Jay. *Perisoreus canadensis fumifrons*. The commonest birds noted. They frequent the whole region visited and are usually to be found about the trading posts, where they secure an easy living.

Northern Raven. *Corvus corax principalis*. Only two seen on the trip, one the first day out as it sailed high over the mountains, circling buzzard-like among the clouds, the other at Gulkana. This one followed us for miles and when we thought we had lost it we would suddenly hear the raucous croak and he would then sail ahead and alight.

Alaska Pine Grosbeak. *Pinicola enucleator alascensis*. Very scarce, five specimens only being seen and all of them between Tonsina and Chitina. An adult female was collected December 26 near Chitina.

White-winged Crossbill. *Loxia leucoptera*. Abundant throughout the wooded portion of the first eighty miles. Not seen in the very favorable places around the Chistochina and the Salina rivers. The birds fed in large flocks; they were wild, and as they remained in the highest trees they were difficult to collect.

Hoary Redpoll. *Acanthis hornemanni exilipes*. Common Redpoll. *Acanthis linaria linaria*. Redpolls were abundant for the first fifteen miles from Chitina, being seen on both the out and the return trip. A flock of fifty or more was seen at Chistochina on December 14. Both species occurred in the same flock, although the Hoary Redpoll was in the minority. They were very wild, flying away at the slightest noise; but if I remained stationary, they would approach within a few feet so that I could determine the species. Specimens of both species were collected.—ALFRED M. BAILEY, *Colorado Museum of Natural History, Denver, Colorado, November 17, 1924.*

American Egrets near Benicia.—On November 16, 1925, while driving between Benicia and Cordelia, California, along the paved highway skirting the Suisun marshes, I observed twelve American Egrets (*Casmerodius egretta*) standing in shallow water some fifty yards from the highway. These large white birds, approaching the size of the Great Blue Heron, were a beautiful sight and identification was unquestionable. Since that date and until the present writing I have seen individual birds at different points in the marsh, but this is my first observation of as many as a dozen together.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, February 14, 1926.*

Least Flycatcher in Kansas in Summer.—On July 28, 1921, I collected a Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) in a ten-acre grove of trees on the Mendenhall ranch which is five and one-half miles southeast of Gove, Gove County, Kansas. The skin,