

The persistent little bunch of feathers above the hind toe in the Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) is a case where a peculiarity has become permanent. This feature is not present in any other species of this genus. But a regular series of feathers on the tarsus and middle toe of each foot in a water bird is a notable freak. Such a condition exists in a juvenile gull, *Larus glaucescens*, taken by Mr. Arthur Peake at Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, on September 19, 1929.

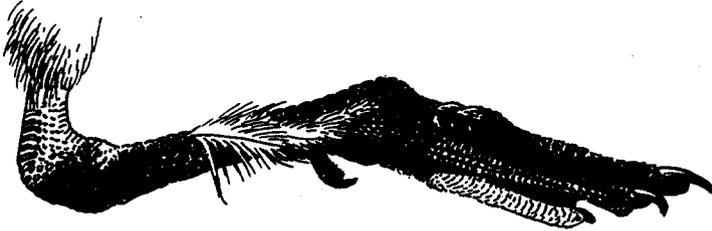


Fig. 26. FOOT OF YOUNG *Larus glaucescens*, SHOWING FEATHERS ON TARSUS AND TOES; FEMALE, DEPARTURE BAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SEPTEMBER 19, 1929.

On the outside of each tarsus are nine or ten well developed feathers, and on the first joint of the middle toe there is a similar number of poorly developed feathers; those on the tarsus are smoke gray, on the toes somewhat paler. The longest feather is 27 millimeters long. Mr. Peake has kindly donated the specimen to the writer's collection. It is otherwise notable in being a good example of the very dark phase of the juvenile of this gull, as dark as the darkest individuals of the Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus smithsonianus*; but the primaries and rectrices are dark sooty gray instead of black. The underparts, however, are darker than in any of the large gulls.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, B. C.*, November 9, 1929.

Miscellaneous Notes on some British Columbia Birds.—*Larus hyperboreus*. Glaucous Gull. On January 14, 1928, while on the wharf at Okanagan Landing, the writer watched a Glaucous Gull for half an hour at distances varying from thirty to fifty feet and was thoroughly satisfied as to its identity. This was an immature bird in the creamy white plumage of the second year. It was in attendance on a flock of coots that were engaged in diving for apple parings which had been thrown overboard from the steamer. When a coot rose to the surface with an apple paring hanging from its bill the gull immediately would leave the water and, with bill open and spread feet held downward, pursue the coot who meanwhile would be swimming in a straight line out of the flock. The apple paring held in the bill would be shaken several times and eventually swallowed before the clumsily pursuing gull could steal it. This happened again and again and only once was the gull successful. On this occasion it splashed into the water and seized the coot by the feathers of the back, whereupon the apple paring promptly changed hands, or rather, bills.

Pelecanus erythrorhynchos. White Pelican. On May 15, 1928, five White Pelicans were seen flying north over Okanagan Landing. This species is a scarce migrant in the Okanagan Valley but is said to occur regularly during migrations in the Nicola Valley, some fifty miles west. This would be the most likely route to the Cariboo country where the species has been reported breeding (in 1899 at Sucker Lake, twenty-five miles northwest of Quesnel, according to Brooks and Swarth). There is said to be a breeding colony at Anahim Lake, which is approximately one hundred miles southwest of Quesnel. This colony was reported in 1922 by a former game warden who patrolled the district.

Mareca penelope. European Widgeon. A male European Widgeon in immature plumage was taken in Haro Strait, near Bare Island, British Columbia, on January 3, 1929, by Mr. Walter Burton of Victoria, British Columbia. This specimen is in the writer's collection.

Querquedula cyanoptera. Cinnamon Teal. During the summers of 1927 and 1928 this species was much more common in the Okanagan Valley than has before been the case according to the writer's observations. Numbers of birds were seen on different dates at various points, from near the International boundary to the north end of Okanagan Lake; and many pairs nested in this region.

Chen hyperboreus hyperboreus. Lesser Snow Goose. Twelve Snow Geese were seen on Okanagan Lake near Okanagan Landing on April 26, 1928. Under close observation for some time these birds were relatively tame as they fed in the shallow water some forty yards from shore. To secure whatever was being sought on the lake bottom they reached down so far that only the tail and a small portion of the body was above the surface, this position being held by quick paddling with the feet. The Lesser Snow Goose is not a common migrant in the Okanagan Valley and flocks of this size are unusual.

Squatarola squatarola cynosuroides. American Black-bellied Plover. Mr. R. A. Cumming of Vancouver, British Columbia, informed me that a small band of Black-bellied Plover spent the winter of 1926-27 on Lulu Island at the mouth of the Fraser River. Several specimens collected by Mr. Cumming at that time, and now in the writer's collection, are adults in winter plumage.

Aquila chrysaetos. Golden Eagle. In the afternoon of March 4, 1926, near Okanagan Landing, a cock pheasant came down-hill toward the lake flying faster than ever pheasant flew before, or so it seemed, with a Golden Eagle in close pursuit. The pheasant dashed into the brush by the lake shore, and the eagle, unsuccessful, put on the brakes, turned at right angles and continued slowly along the lake, flying low and obviously hunting.

Falco rusticolus (subsp.). Gyrfalcon. A dark, immature female taken near Vernon, British Columbia, on November 24, 1928, is in the writer's collection. This is the fifth specimen taken in the vicinity during the past two years.

Dryobates villosus monticola. Rocky Mountain Hairy Woodpecker. During the winter of 1928-29 a male Hairy Woodpecker frequently was seen feeding on Virginia creeper berries in competition with several Red-shafted Flickers. On one occasion the same bird visited an apple tree, attracted by a few apples that still clung to the bare branches. Standing crossways on a branch, in the ordinary position of a perching bird, he rapidly stabbed his bill downward into the top of an apple. After doing this several times he flew to another portion of the tree and repeated the performance.

Phloeotomus pileatus picinus. Western Pileated Woodpecker. On December 2, 1926, a Pileated Woodpecker was seen scrambling among the thick entwined branches of Virginia creeper that partly covered the walls of a house situated on the shore of Okanagan Lake. Here it remained for twenty minutes, busily picking off the fruit. Subsequently, during the month of December, it often was observed eating these berries at the same place and likewise at a vine-covered house half a mile distant. Sometimes it appeared at both houses on the same day, but more often only one house was visited.

Asyndesmus lewisi. Lewis Woodpecker. An increase of this species in the Okanagan Valley was noted in 1927 and 1928 and new nesting territories were colonized in various sections. Many times these birds were seen feeding on grasshoppers and Rocky Mountain crickets, which swarmed in the valley in the summers of these years. During the winter of 1928-29 this woodpecker was observed at various times near Vernon (December 5 and 7, 1928, February 21, 1929) and at Summerland, 60 miles to the south (December 23, 1928, January 19, 1929). So far as the writer is aware, this species has been recorded in winter from the interior of the Province only once before.

Phalaenoptilus nuttallii nuttallii. Poor-will. On June 16, 1928, near Okanagan Landing, a Poor-will was flushed from under a sage-bush and investigation revealed two young huddled together on the bare ground. These birds, about two days old, were well covered with down; dorsally the color is wood-brown, the lower surface vinaceous buff. In one specimen the entire crown is tulleul buff, much lighter than, and contrasting with, the back.

Otocoris alpestris. Horned Lark. A certain small area of open range close to Okanagan Landing is yearly occupied as a nesting ground by a few pairs of Dusky

Horned Larks, *O. a. merrilli*, which arrive usually during the first week in March. Here also at this time come migrant *O. a. arcticola* and an occasional *O. a. hoyti*. Thus, on March 6, 1926, *merrilli* was fairly common in pairs. The males sang from any slight eminence, usually a stone but sometimes a clod of earth. The motionless singers were hard to locate, the fine buzzing song seeming to have a ventriloquial quality. Or the song would come faintly from high in the air and might be traced to its author, a small speck against the blue sky. Flocks of *arcticola*, among them a few *hoyti*, as subsequent collecting proved, drifted past to alight somewhere beyond and disappear against a neutral colored background of withered grass. Two weeks later, Horned Larks were scarce, and on these grasslands were left only the usual few pairs of *merrilli*.

Corvus brachyrhynchos hesperis. Western Crow. In recent years few crows have wintered in the vicinity of Vernon, Okanagan Valley; but during January and February, 1928, a flock of 100 remained in the outskirts of this city, spending part of each day in a ten-acre field of golden bantam corn which had been stooked and left thus all winter. What with the crows and a lesser number of ring-necked pheasants feeding daily in this field, the snow-covered ground had the trampled appearance of a poultry yard. During January, 1929, crows again frequented this cornfield after the first snow storm. Earlier in the winter the species had not been seen in the vicinity.

Molothrus ater artemisiae. Nevada Cowbird. For several years previous to 1927, Cowbirds were scarce throughout the Okanagan Valley. In the summer of 1927 they became fairly common and in 1928 unusually abundant.

Agelaius phoeniceus nevadensis. Nevada Red-winged Blackbird. In the summer of 1927 the Red-wing population in the Okanagan Landing-Vernon district was so much larger than usual that the normal marsh-nesting areas seemed insufficient for their requirements. Colonies were found nesting in tall rye grass and in brush patches on an open hillside bordering Okanagan Lake. During the two years previous there had been a plague of grasshoppers and Rocky Mountain crickets and with this food the Red-wings fed their young. Possibly this unusual abundance of insect food during the nesting season had been responsible for an increase over the normal, and the surplus thus created was forced to pre-empt whatever territory nearest to their requirements was available.

Icterus bullockii. Bullock Oriole. Across the lake from Okanagan Landing is a steep, bare mountain, down which wind a number of narrow draws well wooded with black haw, choke-cherry, service-berry and mock orange. For the past three or four years this range has been closely pastured by sheep with the result that the native bunch grass is being killed out and, where this has happened, is replaced by a dense growth of *Bromus tectorum*, an introduced grass of no value as forage.

In this region during the summer of 1928 Bullock Orioles were noticeably more abundant than usual, nesting in all the wooded draws. In the autumn, after the leaves had fallen, it was observed that the number of nests was greatly in excess of normal and that with few exceptions these were made entirely from the thin yellow stalks of the grass referred to above and sheep's wool. Some, unusually large and compactly woven, are beautiful examples of oriole architecture. The whole exterior is composed of this yellow grass, and in the bare trees the nests are as conspicuous as so many straw-colored baskets. The sheep's wool is not woven into the outer fabric of the nest but is used entirely as a lining, and in some cases the bottom of the nest is felted to a depth of three inches, thus forming a warm inner purse of the softest possible material. Other nests are made almost entirely of sheep's wool into which are laced strands of horsehair and stems of the yellow grass.

It seems of sufficient interest to record how readily the orioles took advantage of, and so lavishly used, these two recently introduced materials, suggesting that the local increase of this species was due to an abundance of desirable and easily obtained nesting material.

Zonotrichia leucophrys gambeli. Gambel Sparrow. A bird of the year was seen at Okanagan Landing on December 7, 1928, and again on January 3, 1929. Winter records of this sparrow in the Okanagan Valley are unusual enough to be considered worthy of mention.

Tachycineta thalassina lepida. Northern Violet-green Swallow. A single bird

seen at Okanagan Landing on November 7, 1927, just before the first cold weather and snow of the year, constitutes a notably late record.

Lanius borealis. Northern Shrike. At Okanagan Landing, on January 20, 1926, during a snowstorm, a compact flock of Redpolls was seen high in the air milling about in peculiar fashion. Suddenly the disturbing cause was seen to be a Northern Shrike which kept circling around the flock with occasional dashes into the midst of the frightened birds. In these dashes the Shrike seemed to single out a bird and try to separate it from the flock. This maneuver was repeated several times while the flock spiralled upward, higher and higher, finally to disappear in the grayness of leaden sky and falling snow. The last object seen was the Shrike apparently still unsuccessful in his hunting.

Turdus migratorius propinquus. Western Robin. During September and October choke-cherries furnish a favorite food of Robins in the Okanagan Valley. On October 1, 1927, a flock of twenty or more, after feeding greedily on cherries, flew into the tops of a near-by group of tall cottonwoods. Shortly afterwards came a pattering noise on the ground below, resembling the sound made by hailstones. Upon investigation this sound proved to be caused by the voided cherry pits falling from a considerable height and striking the dry leaves below. After a week or so a large number of pits were scattered on the ground under these trees and later in the season these were eaten by Evening Grosbeaks!—J. A. MUNRO, *Okanagan Landing, B. C., April 1, 1929.*

Notes on the Habits and Plumage of Young Kaeding Petrels.—The presence of *Oceanodroma leucorhoa kaedingi* Anthony about Guadalupe Island, Lower California, Mexico, is to be expected, as there are but few records of its capture far from this region. Yet it is of interest to record that two of four specimens of this bird taken from the immediate or near vicinity of Guadalupe by the writer on the nights of September 27 and 28, 1929, provided considerable data of scientific value. Both were young birds, with natal down still clinging to their feathers, and presumably had not flown for more than a few hours. The short time that had elapsed between their departure from their nests and their capture seems obvious from two angles—first, the fact that dampness or contact with water removes the clinging down, as it is very absorbent; and secondly, that, in view of this fact, the birds at the time of their capture had probably never rested on the surface of the sea.

The first of the specimens here considered was secured about 8:30 on the

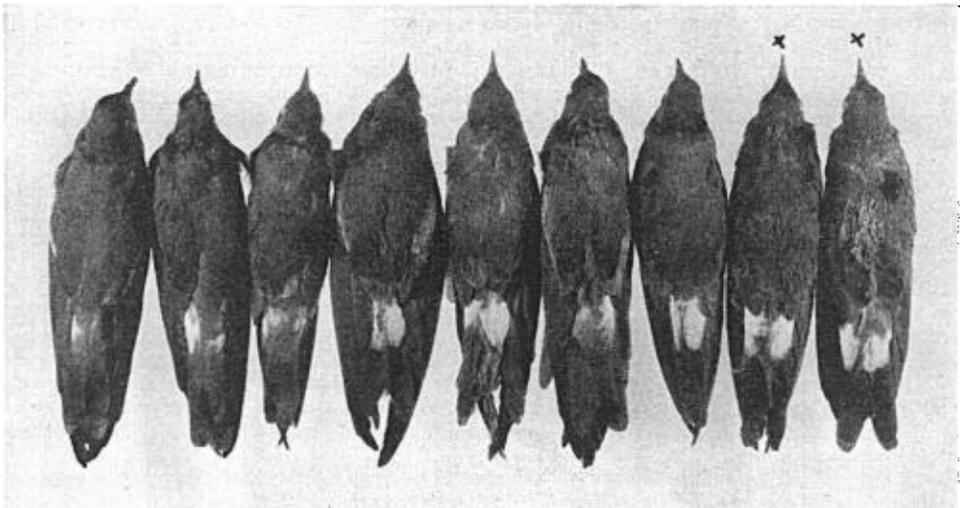


Fig. 27. SERIES OF KAEDING PETRELS SHOWING COMPARATIVE AREAS OF WHITE ON RUMP IN YOUNG (x) AND ADULTS.