

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Northern Phalaropes and Xantus Murrelet Associated with Fishes.—In August and September of 1951 the fisheries research vessel "Yellowfin" was operating in the area between Cedros and Asunción islands, Baja California, México. While trolling offshore Asunción Island (27° 4.6' N, 114° 17.2' W), two common dolphins (*Coryphaena hippurus*) were taken at 4:15 p.m. on August 29. One of these, a male, had its stomach stuffed with a conglomerate which was found to be the distinguishable remains of four Northern Phalaropes (*Lobipes lobatus*). Digestion had proceeded to the stage where dorsal surfaces of the skulls were gone. Bills, feet, and feathers were in such good condition as to allow comparison with museum specimens and to verify the field identification. Apparently these birds had been taken from a group at about the same time.

On September 5 at 2 a.m. the ship was occupying a station off Cedros Island. A Xantus Murrelet (*Endomychura hypoleuca*) was observed swimming under water amidst a mixed school of four-inch anchovies (*Engraulis* sp.) and Pacific sardines (*Sardinops caerulea*). These fish were slowly milling under a 1500-watt bulb suspended over the side to attract them. One characteristic posture was that in which the bird dipped its head under the water, stretched its neck, and seemed to peer intently into the brilliantly lighted area. After this was repeated several times it would dive and move about half a foot beneath the surface in irregular circles six feet in diameter. It never took a fish, but occasionally it pursued one. The bird swam with its wings rigidly half open and feet trailing. The feet were never seen to move. Since the bird was observed from directly overhead, any movement of the feet in the vertical plane could not have been easily seen.

Sometimes when the murrelet was sitting on the water, one of the small fishes would "flip" behind it. This would alarm the bird, and it would fly off a dozen feet in the typical jerky, uncertain flight we have observed seabirds display under bright lights at night.—ROBERT L. EBERHARDT, *Bureau of Marine Fisheries, Department of Fish and Game, San Pedro, California, February 15, 1952.*

Geographic Variation in the Horned Grebe.—The Horned Grebe (*Colymbus auritus*) has been consistently treated in the literature as a uniform holarctic species. This is at variance with its congeners, *C. caspicus* and *C. griseigena*, both of which have differentiated into New and Old World subspecies. It seemed logical to compare samples of the New and Old World populations of *C. auritus* to determine whether a similar differentiation had taken place. Examination of the extensive series of this species in the American Museum of Natural History and the United States National Museum revealed definite characters by means of which these two populations of Horned Grebe may be separated.

European specimens average darker and blacker on the back than American specimens, which are grayer. The contrasting light gray feather edgings of the back, well marked in American birds, are darker and less conspicuous, sometimes virtually absent in European specimens in comparable plumage. In breeding plumage, the brownish stripe through the eye averages much darker in European birds. All Old World specimens seen have the preorbital part of the stripe dark chestnut and the postorbital part of dark buff with a chestnut tinge. Most New World birds have this stripe much paler, even the preorbital part being buff. A few extreme New World birds approach the coloration of Old World birds in this respect.

In nonbreeding plumage the darkness of the back of the Old World birds, as just described, is retained. The most obvious difference, and the first one which became apparent to me at the beginning of this study, is in the color of the crown. In Old World winter specimens the crown is a glossy black, whereas the crown of New World birds in this plumage is a dull gray. There is no discernible difference in size.

Exact delineation of the ranges of the two forms has not been possible with the material thus far available to me. The type locality of this species is Sweden, and Scandinavian specimens examined agree with other European specimens in showing the color characteristics. Winter specimens from China, Korea and Japan are somewhat variable, and it may well be that the easternmost Asiatic breeding populations are intermediate. Two birds from Bering Island are referable to the New World form. It is possible that some Horned Grebes from the northwesternmost portion of the American breeding range may follow the Asiatic coast of the Pacific on migration.

Formal description of the American population as a new subspecies is not necessary, as there are several names in the synonymy of the Horned Grebe which apply wholly or in part to the New World birds. Of these, the earliest appears to be *Colymbus cornutus* Gmelin (Syst. Nat., 1 (2), 1789:591). This name was based on earlier descriptions by Edwards (Nat. Hist. Birds, 2:96, pl. 96), Pennant (Arct. Zool., 2:497) and Latham (Gen. Syn. Birds, 3 (1):287, pl. 91). According to Hellmayr and Conover (Cat. Birds. Amer., 1(2), 1948:30), Gmelin based his *cornutus* partly on the "Eared Dobchick" of Edwards, the left-hand figure in Edwards' plate 96. James L. Peters has informed me, however, that this figure, based on "several found in the market of London in the hard winter of 1739," definitely portrays an Eared Grebe. The right-hand figure, the "Black and White Dobchick" of Edwards, is evidently a Horned Grebe in winter plumage according to Peters. The figured bird was taken "about the large ponds of Hampstead near London." The descriptions by Pennant and Latham, based on birds from Hudson Bay, unmistakably apply to Horned Grebes. If Hellmayr and Conover were not in error in their designation of Edwards' left-hand figure as the partial basis of Gmelin's description, *Colymbus cornutus* would be a composite name referring to Eared Grebes from London and Horned Grebes from Hudson Bay. If the right-hand figure in Edwards' plate were the partial basis of *Colymbus cornutus*, the name would be a composite of two subspecies of Horned Grebe. However, Hellmayr and Conover (*loc. cit.*) have restricted the type locality of Gmelin's name to Hudson Bay, thus fixing the identity of *Colymbus cornutus* as the bird described by Pennant and Latham, the New World Horned Grebe.

The two subspecies of Horned Grebe may thus be known as follows:

Colymbus auritus auritus Linnaeus. Type locality, Sweden. Northern Europe and Asia, probably intergrading with *cornutus* in eastern Asia.

Colymbus auritus cornutus Gmelin. Type locality, Hudson Bay. Northern North America.

James L. Peters was good enough to examine old ornithological works not available to me, and gave much helpful advice. Thanks are also due to Drs. Herbert Friedmann and Dean Amadon for help and advice on various phases of this study.—KENNETH C. PARKES, *Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, April 19, 1952.*

Northward Extension of Range of the Acorn Woodpecker in Oregon.—The Acorn Woodpecker (*Balanosphyra formicivora*) is an abundant resident of the interior valleys of the Rogue and Umpqua rivers of southwestern Oregon, and ranges, though less abundantly, into the southern portions of the Willamette Valley. Gabrielson and Jewett (Birds of Oregon, 1940) record a bird from Lane County, and more specifically, Gullion (Condor, 53, 1951:140) gives Richardson Butte, which is some 12 miles northwest of Eugene, Lane County, as the northern limit of range.

Attention was directed to an isolated one-acre grove of Garry oaks (*Quercus garryana*) on the property of Oregon State College, one mile west of the campus in Corvallis, in July, 1950, when a fleeting glimpse of a woodpecker indicated the presence of this species. During May and June, 1951, two birds, a pair, were observed at close range on numerous occasions, usually perching on fence posts on the warm western edge of the grove in the afternoons. On May 18 the birds were actively engaged in catching insects, both by darting into the air in the manner of a flycatcher and by dropping to the surface of an adjacent roadbed. The insects were then deposited in a pocket in the top of a weathered cedar post. When a bill-full had been thus collected the woodpecker would disappear among the foliage of the oaks. Search from the ground, and on June 7 with the aid of climbing irons, disclosed numerous excavations varying from a few to several inches in depth, both old and recent, in dead oak limbs throughout the grove. The nest remained undiscovered. Stores of badly rotted and weathered acorns indicated the species had been present in years past. By June 30, when observations were discontinued, no young had been seen.

The presence of an isolated breeding pair of this social species 30 miles north of the population in Lane County reported by Gullion may be a step in the northward colonization along the Willamette Valley where abundant oak groves and woodlands would appear to meet the requirements for food and nesting sites. However, the pair here observed possibly represents only a fringe of the species population that may be limited by some factor other than the presence or absence of oaks.—KENNETH M. WALKER, *Department of Biology, College of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington, February 18, 1952.*