

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

An Ancient Murrelet in Northeastern Nevada.—On the morning of November 14, 1955, following the first major winter storm of the season, Frank Lespade found an Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) in the yard of a local lumber dealer in Elko, Nevada. The live bird was turned over to George E. Gruell who in turn passed the bird on to me.

In view of the unlikelihood of this individual finding its way back to a marine environment from so far inland, it was made into a study skin (now no. 133834 Mus. Vert. Zool., Berkeley). The bird, a female, was lean and showed signs of diarrhea. This specimen not only constitutes the first record for this species in Nevada, but apparently it also represents the first Nevada record for any member of the family Alcidae. Later, it was learned that Mike Cobo, an associate of Lespade, saw another bird of apparently the same species on the Humboldt River in Elko on this same day.

One can only speculate how a normally short-flighted, strictly oceanic species could wander so far inland. Bent (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 107, 1919:138-140) notes that the flight of this species is "swift and direct, usually close to the surface of the water, and not usually much prolonged." He continues: "I have never seen this species make a long flight." The murrelets that appeared in Elko would have had to make a sustained flight of at least 175 miles from the nearest large body of fresh water (Pyramid Lake, in western Nevada), or one of nearly 475 miles from the nearest seacoast of northern California, crossing mountain ranges exceeding 5000 feet elevation en route.

The possibility that the storm of November 13 might have carried these birds so far inland makes it worthwhile to record some details of this storm. On November 11, there was a strong low pressure area centered in northwestern Colorado, and a strong high pressure area centered about 600 miles off the Washington coast. The gradient between the two pressure centers was steep enough that an air mass moved almost directly to the east, accompanied by winds with velocities of 20 to 39 knots at lower levels. This rapid movement of air brought moderately heavy precipitation in the form of snow to much of northern Nevada, and perhaps it also carried a flock of lost Ancient Murrelets along with it.

Perhaps significant is the recent record by Jewett (Condor, 53, 1951:301) of a female of this species east of the Cascades in central Oregon, also in mid-November (1950) and following a heavy cyclonic storm with high winds. If the Nevada birds were diverted while on southerly migration from their Alaskan nesting grounds, one would expect them to be gradually pushed inland as they moved south, coming over the same area from which Jewett reported his bird, rather than being blown directly east from the northern California coast.—GORDON W. GULLION, *Elko, Nevada, November 21, 1955.*

Prolonged Incubation by an Anna Hummingbird.—On June 27, 1955, a female Anna Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) started building a nest in the pendulous branches of a birch tree (*Betula alba*) at Alameda, California. The first egg was laid on July 3. On the following day the second egg was laid and she began incubating. The eggs did not hatch but she continued sitting through October 6, a total of 95 days. All during this time nothing seemed to disturb her. She sat as tightly as she had done in the beginning. I could approach within two feet of the nest before she would leave. Several times birds would perch within a foot of the nest and she would not move.

She continued to turn the eggs. At times she was seen bringing cobwebs and pappus of the achenes of *Gazania splendens* which she would poke into the nest. When she finally deserted the nest, I sent the eggs to Alden H. Miller who stated that they showed no signs of embryonic development. All that was left was dried yolk material as from a fresh egg. Presumably the eggs were infertile.—JUNEA W. KELLY, *Alameda, California, December 5, 1955.*

Another Record of the Tropical Kingbird for California.—On October 22, 1955, approximately three and a half miles northwest of Arcata, Humboldt County, California, a kingbird was observed flying and feeding from a barbed wire fence next to a pasture. Upon close examination, the notched tail was observed and the bird was collected. Comparison with specimens at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology proved that the species was the Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*. The length of the wing (104 mm.) and tail (88 mm.) agree well with those of the race *T. m. occidentalis*. The sex of the bird was not determined but the frontal and parts of the parietal bones were still

single roofed, indicating that the specimen was an immature. The skull and wing are now in the collection at Humboldt State College.

This record is additional support for the assumption made by Cogswell (Condor, 54, 1952:117) that the northward movements of wandering vagrants of this species in the fall may be fairly commonplace, at least along the Pacific coast.—ROLF E. MALL, *Humboldt State College, Arcata, California, November 29, 1955.*

A Fossil Magpie from the Pleistocene of Texas.—A nearly complete left tarsometatarsus of a magpie is included among fossil vertebrate material from the panhandle of Texas under study by Dr. Donald E. Savage. We are indebted to Dr. Savage for opportunity to report on this specimen. The bone (Univ. Calif. Mus. Paleo. no. 43386) comes from Palo Duro Falls (locality no. V-5318, Univ. Calif. Mus. Paleo.), Randall County, Texas; more precisely this is 9 miles east and $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Canyon along the graded road leading from the old "Harding Ranch" house out over the south wall of Palo Duro Canyon. The bone was associated with mollusks, turtle and fish fragments, and a few small mammal bones in a stream channel sand that is part of a larger alluvial channel in the Caliche (limey) caprock of the Texas panhandle plains. On the basis of combined, although meager, paleontologic and geologic evidence, Dr. Savage states that the age of the vertebrate remains here is probably post-Blancan or, in other words, early Pleistocene. It is definitely not older than Blancan and it is possibly, although less likely, as late as mid-Pleistocene.

The fossil tarsometatarsus shows its identity with the genus *Pica* among the Corvidae most clearly by the configuration of the shaft (see fig.) which is almost parallel-sided throughout its length, involving a distinct narrowing just distal to the scar of the M. tibialis anticus, and by the less rounded outline of the medial cotyla in contrast with other corvids of similar dimension. New World corvids which bear near resemblance in size of the tarsometatarsus to *Pica* are *Calocitta*, *Psilorhinus*, and *Cyanocorax*. *Calocitta* and *Psilorhinus* are shorter and relatively stouter, with the proximal end of the shaft stouter than the distal end. *Cyanocorax* is the same length as *P. pica* but shows more taper in the shaft and a distinctly more rounded medial cotyla.

The two Recent forms of North American magpies, *P. pica hudsonica* and *P. nuttallii*, show overlap in all measurements of the tarsometatarsi (see table). Even though *P. p. hudsonica* and *P. nuttallii* exhibit a similar size range in total length of the tarsometatarsus, *P. nuttallii* is still a relatively smaller bird and this difference is reflected in a reduction of the massiveness of the cotylar and trochlear ends. Statistical significance can be demonstrated (see table of *t*, Simpson and Roe, Quantitative Zoology, 1939:206) in the differences between the means of the measurements of *P. nuttallii* for trochlear width ($P < .01$), cotylar width ($P < .05$), and anteroposterior length of medial cotyla ($P < .01$) and those of the fossil. The fossil falls within or barely exceeds the upper size limits of *P. p. hudsonica* and *P. p. japonica*, whereas it greatly exceeds the extremes of *P. nuttallii* in the three measurements. It is therefore identified as *Pica pica*.

In North America, fossil magpies (*P. nuttallii*) heretofore were known only from the late Pleistocene of California (A. H. Miller, Univ. Calif. Publ. Bull. Dept. Geol. Sci., 1929, 19:7; Wetmore, Smithsonian Misc. Coll., 131, 1956:92). The genus *Pica* has generally been considered to be of Old World origin and to have reached the North American continent "relatively recently," presumably via a Bering land bridge (Amadon, Amer. Mus. Novit. No. 1251, 1944:12). The magpie from Palo Duro Falls therefore places the time of arrival of the genus *Pica* in North America earlier than had previously been supposed.

Of significance is the fact that this early Pleistocene magpie represents the holarctic species *P. pica* rather than *P. nuttallii* whose range is at present restricted to California west of the Sierra Nevada. It is even possible that *P. nuttallii* could have been derived from *P. pica* at some time earlier

