

RECENT OBSERVATIONS AT THE
BASE OF THE ALASKA PENINSULA

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During May–September 1966, February–September 1967, and May–September 1968, I was employed by the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of Interior, at Katmai National Monument (NM), Alaska. A number of significant occurrences of avian species were recorded during this time, details of which are given below. All observations are my own unless otherwise indicated; no specimens were collected.

Red-faced Cormorant. *Phalacrocorax urile*. On 28 June 1967 I found 10 pairs of Red-faced Cormorants breeding among 80 pairs of Pelagic Cormorants (*P. pelagicus*) on two rock islands in outer Kukak Bay (58°20'N, 154°27'W), Katmai NM. On 30 June the two accessible nests of this species contained three eggs.

There is no published record of the Red-faced Cormorant at the base of the Alaska Peninsula, although F. S. L. Williamson (pers. comm.) has found the species breeding at the tip of the Kenai Peninsula in Kachemak Bay, Cook Inlet, approximately 140 mi. NNE of Kukak Bay. Kukak Bay is 180 mi. NNE of the known eastern limit of the species' range (A.O.U. 1957).

Canvasback. *Aythya valisineria*. Murie (1959) mentions records of Canvasbacks from Unimak Island and Dutch Harbor, but the following sightings 1 mi. E of King Salmon in April 1967 were the first from the Alaska Peninsula. Eight Canvasbacks were scattered and feeding among numerous Greater Scaup (*A. marila*) on 27 April; 12 were counted on 28 and 29 April, and on 30 April, my last day in the area, 16 were seen.

Hooded Merganser. *Lophodytes cucullatus*. On 9 June 1968, following several days of strong east winds, an adult female or immature Hooded Merganser appeared at Brooks River, Katmai NM. It was observed at close range with two Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*) then and again on 11 June. The Hooded Merganser has not been recorded previously on the Alaska Peninsula.

Black-bellied Plover. *Squatarola squatarola*. Williamson and Peyton (1962) list only four records of Black-bellied Plovers from the Iliamna Lake area. Murie (1959) saw none, but lists several records for the late 1800's. Gabrielson and Lincoln (1959) list no Alaska Peninsula records. Thus, the following observations of migration, all in the Monument, are of interest: one on 26 May 1966 at Brooks River (the only freshwater occurrence); five on 3 May 1967, and six on 6 May 1967 at Kashvik Bay; and at Katmai Bay, 12 on 7 May 1967, four on 8 May, six on 9 May, 13 on 10 May, and five on 11 May. I left the area on 12 May.

Surfbird. *Aphriza virgata*. Gabrielson and Lincoln (1959) do not list any Alaska Peninsula records of the Surfbird; Murie (1959) quotes two records from Kodiak and Sanak Islands in the last century; and Williamson and Peyton (1962) list five records in 1958 and 1959 at Iliamna Lake and suggest that the species breeds in that area. In 1967 transients were observed as follows: three on 7 May, one on 8 May, and three on 10 and 11 May, all at Katmai Bay.

The only other record was of three in Iliuk Arm, Naknek Lake, Katmai NM, 11 August 1968. Two of the latter were in breeding plumage.

Whimbrel. *Numenius phaeopus*. Gabrielson and Lincoln (1959) cite four records of the Whimbrel for the Bristol Bay area, and Cahalane (1944) records the species once on Naknek River. The following observations of transients on the Monument coast are included: eight at Kashvik Bay on 6 May 1967, 11 at Katmai Bay on 9 May 1967, and 29 at Katmai Bay on 11 May 1967 (one flock of 27).

Lesser Yellowlegs. *Totanus flavipes*. The only previous record of the Lesser Yellowlegs for this region is that of Cahalane (1944) for Naknek River. I watched one on 1 July 1968 at Brooks River being chased repeatedly by resident Greater Yellowlegs (*T. melanoleucus*) that were defending several large young. The Lesser Yellowlegs called once, and the size difference was noted.

Pectoral Sandpiper. *Erolia melanotos*. Murie (1959) regarded the Pectoral Sandpiper as exceedingly rare. Gabrielson and Lincoln (1959) cite one record for Kvichak River. I saw three together at close range at the mouth of Brooks River on 11 August 1968.

Marbled Godwit. *Limosa fedoa*. On 8 May 1967 I found a group of six Marbled Godwits feeding with two Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*), identified by call, on tidal flats along the southwest shore of Katmai Bay (58°00'N, 155°02'W). Gabrielson and Lincoln (1959) list two definite occurrences of Marbled Godwits in Alaska (two specimens from Ugashik, approximately 95 air-line mi. SW of Katmai Bay). The A.O.U. (1957) cites two previous records (those at Ugashik, and Nelson Island) for this species in Alaska. The godwits observed in 1967 were approached to within 30 ft, and observed with a 20× scope in excellent light. It was apparent that the birds were neither Bar-tailed (*Limosa lapponica*) nor Hudsonian (*L. haemastica*) Godwits. They were buffy brown from neck to under-tail coverts, barred with black or dark brown, without a trace of rusty. In flight they were evenly brown on head, neck, back, upper-tail coverts, and tail, with no white rump. Bright cinnamon flashed from large areas of the wings, and the leading half of the distal portion of the wing was very dark, contrasting rather boldly with the rest of the wing; but there was no wing-stripe. A noisy, three-syllable call was repeated for perhaps 5 sec, while the birds were in flight. The godwits were observed for 50 min, between 14:00 and 14:50, and during this time they were photographed at 40 ft with a 300 mm lens by D. G. Burkhardt of the National Park Service. Efforts to locate these birds the next day failed. Weather on the coast for the week preceding this observation had been unseasonably warm, with daytime temperatures of 55–60°F and with no high winds or storms.

Herring Gull. *Larus argentatus*. Although this gull is mentioned by all sources concerning the area, it is very scarce. I noted Herring Gulls on only four occasions: a third-year individual at the mouth of Naknek River on 11 March 1967, an adult at King Salmon on 20 and 21 April 1967, and an adult at Brooks River mouth on 31 July 1968.

Downy Woodpecker. *Dendrocopos pubescens*. The only mention of this species' occurrence at the base of the Alaska Peninsula is that of Cahalane (1944), who recorded one Downy Woodpecker in Katmai NM in 1940. More recently a female and a male (R. Husky, NPS) were seen at Brooks River lodge on 1

August and 25 August 1967, respectively. On 4 July 1968 an active nest was discovered at Brooks River campground by Mr. and Mrs. J. Hand, visitors to the Monument. The following day I watched the female feeding young in the nest, 12 ft up in a 14-inch birch stub. One week later the nest was vacant, but at least one male was seen at irregular intervals in the Brooks River vicinity throughout July and August 1968: on 30 July, 3 August, 7 August, and 18 August.

Olive-sided Flycatcher. *Nuttallornis borealis*. The only previous record of the Olive-sided Flycatcher on the Alaska Peninsula is by Cahalane (1959), who saw two at Brooks Lake, Katmai NM, 9 September 1953. On 18 August 1968 I watched a single bird flycatching from spruce tops 5 mi. E of Brooks River.

Northwestern Crow. *Corvus caurinus*. Although crows are regarded as numerous in the Kodiak-Afognak area by both Murie (1959) and Gabrielson and Lincoln (1959), the only previous record of the species on the peninsula is that of Gabrielson and Lincoln (*op. cit.*), at Kukak Bay in 1926. On 2 May 1967 I saw a flock of seven at close range along the beach at Katmai Bay. At Kukak Bay I observed at least 12 in a scattered flock, and three feeding on the beach, on 2 and 3 July 1967, respectively. The species is probably regular, as at least a visitor, to the Pacific coast of the base of the peninsula.

Red-breasted Nuthatch. *Sitta canadensis*. One of two Red-breasted Nuthatches was observed and heard calling in mixed spruce-birch woodland on the peninsula that juts west into the Bay of Islands (58°38'N, 155°25'W), Naknek Lake, on 27 August 1968. This first peninsular record of the species is the westernmost for Alaska.

Brown Creeper. *Certhia familiaris*. The only published record of the Brown Creeper from the Alaska Peninsula is by Cahalane (1959), one at Brooks River on 18 August 1954. Four additional records, all from the immediate vicinity of Brooks River, are as follows: for 1966, one on 22 June; for 1967, one on 3 August, one on 8 August (D. Love, a visitor to the Monument); and one on 12 August 1968.

Swainson's Thrush. *Hylocichla ustulata*. Williamson and Peyton (1962) found Swainson's Thrush abundant in the Iliamna Lake area. There are two other records southwest of there, at Naknek and King Cove (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959). It is a common summer resident in the spruce forest of Katmai NM, however, although less so than the abundant Hermit

(*H. guttata*) and Gray-cheeked (*H. minima*) Thrushes. I recorded the species throughout three summers, and food-carrying adults were encountered on several occasions. The earliest arrival date was 22 May 1968 at Brooks River, and the species can be seen through at least the third week of August at the same locality.

Red Crossbill. *Loxia curvirostra*. Three specimens from Kodiak and one from as far west as Unalaska (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959) are the only previous records of Red Crossbills for southwestern Alaska. In Katmai NM at the peak of the white spruce (*Picea glauca*) cone crop in 1967 the first small group of 12 was recorded on 7 July, 5 mi. E of Brooks River. From then through at least 6 September 1967 this species, as well as White-winged Crossbills (*L. leucoptera*), was numerous, scattered throughout the spruce forest from Brooks River to an area 10 mi. E of there. On 5 August 1967 I hiked seven miles through the area in which both species were concentrated. I counted 122 *curvirostra* in flocks of 15-30 and 59 *leucoptera*, mostly singles or groups of less than a dozen. Neither species was seen during 1966 or in June 1967, and no Red Crossbills were seen during the 1968 season. A few pairs of White-winged Crossbills were present throughout the latter summer.

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SPECIMEN RECORDS FOR SOUTH DAKOTA BIRDS

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The following records, accumulated during the past two years, represent species which have been unrecorded or are considered rare in South Dakota. All specimens were deposited at the University of South Dakota Museum, Vermillion.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper. *Tryngites subruficollis*. Eight birds were found in a plowed field 6 mi. S of Howard, Miner County, 18 May 1967, and a male was collected. I have observed this species in South Dakota on only one other occasion, 16 May 1946, near Wilmot, Roberts County, in the northeast corner of the state. In the Great Plains states, Buff-breasted Sandpipers are reported regularly in numbers only at Norman, Oklahoma (Oring and Davis 1966); far

to the northwest they occur regularly in the vicinity of Edmonton, Alberta (Bent 1929:77). It would be very interesting to know what route is taken between these two points. Possibly the main flight is non-stop from Oklahoma to Alberta, which would account for the paucity of reports between these two points. The bird I took in Miner County was extremely fat, so heavy that I marveled at its making the long flight from its wintering ground in South America and still maintaining such a reserve of fat.

Varied Thrush. *Ixoreus naevius*. An immature male was taken from a flock of about 35 Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), at Twin Lakes, Sanborn County, 29 November 1966. This is the first specimen record for the state; prior to this there have been two sight records for the Black Hills in the vicinity of Rapid City (Pettingill and Whitney 1965:80). The Varied Thrush has been observed in several states east of South Dakota during recent years. There was evidently a minor invasion of this species into our region