

It is said that this species nests upon the ground in the moss that grows in damp places, and to form the same with dry leaves, fibres of bark, pine needles, fine, dry grass and hay. The eggs, four or five, are white, speckled with lilac or reddish-brown.

This is one of those wanderers of the Mississippi Valley which appear to enter Ontario from the south-west. It is between four and five inches in length, and on the upper parts the plumage is of an olive-green, brighter on the rump; but ashy on the head. Below it is bright yellow, paler towards the lower parts, with olive shading on the sides. Crown with a chestnut patch, and pale ring round the eyes.

SEA BIRDS AND THEIR EGGS.

BY WALTER RAINE, TORONTO, CANADA.

One of the famous breeding places for Sea Birds in the British Isles is Flamborough Head in Yorkshire; and as many species found there also inhabit the Eastern Coast of North America, perhaps the following notes will be of interest to Ornithologists:

From Flamborough Head to Speeton, a distance of five miles, extend the famous chalk cliffs of Bempton, ranging from three hundred to over five hundred feet in height. It is on these cliffs that thousands of Sea Birds resort annually to lay their eggs and hatch their young.

Presuming that it is about the middle of June, we will take train from the fashionable seaport town of Bridlington, and after a ten mile ride we reach Bempton, that we may see the climbers at work. They are the farmers of the district who go about in gangs of three and four, one to do the climbing and the others to haul him up again. Each gang has its certain range of cliffs to climb, and the owners of the fields that border the cliffs receive a quantity of eggs as payment.

As we approach, we see a group of four men near the cliff top preparing their ropes. First they drive an iron bar into the ground a few feet from the edge of the cliff; to this they fasten the hand rope. With this rope the climber steers himself, signals and holds on to with his hands. He takes hold of this rope and walks to the edge of the cliff, where he drives another iron bar into the ground. This bar has

a pulley attached to the top, and over this pulley a rope runs which is fastened to a pair of strong leather knee breeches. The climber gets into the breeches; fastens them around his waist by means of straps; puts on an old plug hat padded with handkerchiefs to prevent falling stones from hurting his head; slings over his shoulder two bags (one of the bags has a small pocket for the more delicate and rare eggs) and is ready for the descent.

When all is ready the climber proceeds to and over the edge of the cliff, and steadily disappears from view. The climber always faces the cliff whether ascending or descending. The man nearest the pulley has a broad leather belt round his waist, and he lets the rope go once around his body, the men behind lowering away gently. This goes on for a few minutes till a signal from the hand rope denotes that they are to stop lowering, meaning that the climber has got to a ledge which contains eggs.

The ledges vary from four inches to one foot in width. When the climber reaches one of these ledges which contain eggs, he commences filling his bags with eggs.

The birds leave their nests and eggs on the climber's approach, screeching all the time and flying around. The Puffin is the only bird who stays in his hole, and the climber has to seize him and drag him out before he can secure the single egg, and he often gets his finger bitten, for the Puffin has a powerful beak and from this fact it is called Sea Parrot in this district.

The climber has been down over twenty minutes, when he signals to be drawn up and in a few minutes his head appears above the edge of the cliff and he is soon on *terra firma* again. He at once empties his bags, and has secured over fifty eggs, chiefly Razorbills, Guillemots and Puffins. Some of the eggs are very fine specimens and we select a few for which we have to pay from four to six cents each. The better marked eggs are sorted out and the ordinary ones are put in a separate basket and are afterwards sent to Bridlington where they are sold to be eaten. I have found them very good eating.

The climbers now move farther on and having fixed their ropes and bars, another man goes down, causing many Kittiwake Gulls to fly away screaming loudly. He soon reaches their nests, which are made of seaweed, built in a ledge of the cliff, and contain two or three eggs each, which vary considerably. After a while he is drawn up and as his head appears above the edge of the cliff, he calls

out to his companions, "some Falcons' eggs," and carefully unpacking his bags, there in the small pocket, he exposes to our view four splendid eggs of the Peregrine Falcon, which I afterwards purchased.

He describes the nest as resting in a ledge of the cliff, made of sticks and seaweed; lined with grass and sea birds' feathers. The clutch of four eggs were very handsome, of a light pinky brown ground color; mottled and blotched with various shades of dark brown. In the large pocket he has some fine clutches of Kittiwake, Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, with a few Guillemots, Razorbills and Puffins.

Moving on a little farther, the ropes and bars are again fixed and the man who made the first descent again is lowered, and after a short time appears as before with his bag well filled. This time he unpacks his bag it contains eggs of the Cormorant, Guillemot and others as before, and in the small pocket he has eggs of the Jackdaw and Kestrel Hawk. The latter makes a nest of sticks and grass on a ledge of the cliff, and lays four or five eggs of light red ground color; mottled and blotched with rich, dark brown.

The Jackdaw makes a similar nest; but its eggs are of a pale bluish-white, well spotted with ashy, light and dark brown. The Raven formerly nested on these cliffs; but is now seldom seen in this locality.

The climbers are still at work, and by lying on our stomachs and carefully crawling to the edge of the cliff, we can see a number of nests of the Kittiwake Gull, built on the ledges below. Most of them contain two eggs; but some have three, whilst one nest contained two young birds, a few days old.

The Guillemots' and Razorbills' eggs are laid on the ledges of bare rock (some of which are only a few inches wide), and it seems a marvel that the eggs are not blown off; but the reason is this, that the eggs are placed with the thick end to the cliff, and instead of rolling off they revolve around, the narrow end of the egg acting as a point.

The largest number of eggs taken in one haul is about one hundred, chiefly Guillemots and Razorbills. There have been a few serious accidents to the climbers during the past few years; two having arms and legs broken, and one has been killed outright.

When the climbers consider they have done a good morning's work, they sort out all the rarest and best eggs, which are sold to collectors

and dealers, and the common varieties of Guillemot and Razorbill are sent away in large quantities, from two to five hundred at a time. These are sold in the fish shops of large towns for eating, and are considered a delicacy.

The species found nesting in this district are the Skout or Common Guillemot, Ringed Guillemot, Razor-bill Auk, Puffin, Cormorant, Kittiwake and Herring Gulls, Peregrine Falcon, Kestrel Hawk, Jackdaw and a few smaller species.

The eggs of the Guillemot probably differ more than those of any other species in color. I have one hundred varieties in my collection, all different; some are quite white, while others have a yellowish-buff or green ground; blotched, spotted and streaked with brown and black.

The eggs of the Razorbill also differ very much in size, color and markings, and are easily distinguished from those of the Guillemot. They are smaller in size and are less elongate. The ground color is whitish, tinged with buff, and is never green like those of the Guillemot; but like the eggs of that bird are blotched and spotted with brown and black. The eggs of the Ringed or Bridled Guillemot are like those of the common species.

The Puffin lays its single egg at the far end of a hole, from one to four feet deep. The egg is pure white when first laid; but soon becomes soiled and turns to a yellowish white. Some Puffins' eggs are spotted and freckled with brown and gray, chiefly at the larger end.

The Kittiwake Gull is a beautiful bird and lays from two to three eggs; sometimes four are laid, but very seldom, two being the usual number. Some eggs have a stone-colored ground, others are an olive shade and still others a bluish gray ground. All are well spotted and blotched with ashy-gray, lilac and various shades of brown.

The Common Cormorant makes a nest of large sticks and seaweed, and lays from four to six eggs, covered with a white, chalky incrustation, which on being scraped off with a knife, leaves a shell of a pale bluish-green. The Cormorant is becoming scarce in this district.

The Herring Gull makes a large nest of seaweed and lays two or three large eggs, which vary greatly in coloring, from a warm stone color, through shades of brown, to pale and light olive-green and are spotted with brown, black and gray.

We now think it is time to leave the cliff tops, and packing our

eggs we walk along to Flamborough Head. On our way we startle several Wheatears from rabbit burrows, and find three nests made of feathers and rabbits' fur, built from one to two feet inside the burrow, and containing five or six eggs each, of a pale blue color, like those of the Bluebird. We also startle a Meadow Pipit or Titlark from its nest of four eggs (dusky-brown, freckled with dark brown), built on the ground.

After visiting the Light House at Flamborough Head, and the wonderful caverns, we return home much pleased with our visit to the home of the "Sea Birds."

THE COMMON OR SORA RAIL.

Porzana carolina.

BY C. C. MAXFIELD, WILLARD, N. Y.

This Rail is very little known on account of its skulking habits ; it being very difficult to get one to rise from the ground. Another reason, that may be cited, is that they choose as a home and nesting place, a low, swampy swale ; which, in nearly all cases, is partially or entirely covered with water, and thick undergrowth is so interlaced as to make it very difficult to move about in search of them.

The bird itself is small : length, about 8 1-8 inches ; wing, 4 2-32 inches ; tail, about 2 inches ; bill, from 1-2 to 2-3 inches and the tarsus slightly over 1 inch. The upper parts are greenish-brown, with numerous black and white streaks and specks ; belly, whitish ; throat, light slate color ; bill, light yellow, and legs and feet light green.

My first specimen was taken very late in the Autumn of 1883, while hunting ducks on Ox Creek, Oswego Co. Owing to the lateness of the season, I was much surprised to take this one ; but after securing the specimen, the absence of the left wing fully explained matters. The feathers of the left side lay smoothly, and at a short distance the loss of the wing could not be noticed. About a half-inch of the humerus still remained covered by skin, but no feathers. On dissection, the bone appeared cracked and broken at the end.