

CHANGES IN THE LIST OF BIRDS OF YELLOWSTONE  
NATIONAL PARK

BY EMERSON KEMSIES

The following notes are intended as a partial revision of the author's paper published in the WILSON BULLETIN on the birds of Yellowstone Park.\* Seven new species are here added and three subspecies are dropped. The total recorded for the Park thus is 216 species and subspecies.

Although Yellowstone is the oldest of the National Parks and it has become known the world over as a game preserve, comparatively little work has been done on the bird life and practically nothing on the winter bird life.

Two birds which are nearly extinct still breed in small numbers in the Park, the Trumpeter Swan and the Whooping Crane. It seems also that this region may prove to be one of those transition areas where a good many subspecies intergrade. For these reasons it is hoped that an extensive and thorough study of the bird life may be undertaken in the near future.

WOOD IBIS. *Mycteria americana*. This species was first reported for the Park in July, 1925, by Mr. A. C. Bent. It was again seen the summer of 1930 in the vicinity of Tower Falls by Mr. and Mrs. Arnold of the permanent ranger force. It seems clear that this species is an occasional visitor to the Park during its post breeding season wanderings, a habit which it shares with the egrets and some of the other herons.

TRUMPETER SWAN. *Cygnus buccinator*. During the past summer (1933) I had the good fortune to observe two pairs of these great birds in the Park. One pair had probably but a single young while the other pair had six. It is possible that a few other pairs breed in the Park and a few more in the vicinity; these together with the few known from British Columbia and Alberta are all that remain of this splendid species.

An interesting thing which I observed and of which I have no adequate explanation is that a color phase apparently exists in the young birds. In the brood that I saw with six young, three of the cygnets were pure white while the remaining three were a dark gray. All of the birds were of the same size and about half grown. The single cygnet of the other pair was also pure white.

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\*Birds of the Yellowstone National Park, with some recent additions. By Emerson Kemsies. WILSON BULLETIN, XLII, September, 1930, pp. 198-210.

The only reference to the white phase of the young of the Trumpeter Swan that I have been able to find occurs in Wright's "Fauna of Our National Park". Seemingly, Mr. Wright has taken it for granted that the occurrence of phases is well known, for he merely suggests that perhaps the gray young have a better chance of attaining maturity than the white ones.

The permanent rangers who have seen the Trumpeter Swan each summer for years have all noticed the occurrence of both white and gray young in almost every brood.

The only explanation I can offer at this time is one suggested by Mr. C. L. Sibley, of Wallingford, Conn., who suggests that the Trumpeter Swan may be inclined to throw genetic mutations in the same way that the European Mute Swan does. Species as they near extinction show great variation; is it possible that perhaps because of the interbreeding which must be occurring the white cygnets are produced? The entire subject should certainly be studied before the species is extinct.

COMMON CANADA GOOSE. *Branta canadensis canadensis*. It seems best in the absence of collected specimens to regard all the Canada Geese in the Park as belonging to this form. Therefore, it becomes necessary to drop the Hutchins's Goose of previous lists, now known as Lesser Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*). For a complete study of the races of this species, see Annual Report of National Museum of Canada, "Status of the Races of the Canada Goose", by Taverner.

RING-NECKED DUCK. *Nyroca collaris*. This species is likely at times to be confused with the scaups, and was not recorded for the Park until the summer of 1930, when attention was first called to it by Ranger Naturalist Cooke. It has since been seen each summer and I saw it this past summer. It is probably a fairly common migrant and may breed in small numbers in the lake region.

OLD-SQUAW. *Clangula hyemalis*. The Old-squaw has been recorded during the past two or three winters by Permanent Ranger Frank Anderson. It probably occurs only as a casual winter visitor.

SANDHILL CRANE. *Grus canadensis tabida*. Both this form and the Little Brown Crane (*Grus canadensis canadensis*) have been recorded in the Park. In the absence of specimens and since the two races nearly overlap in size, a sight record is hardly sufficient to admit this bird to the Park list. If it does occur it would probably occur only during migration, as it breeds much farther north.

FORSTER'S TERN. *Sterna forsteri*. There is a specimen of this species in the Lake Museum collected the summer of 1931, identified at the time as a Common Tern but should be referred to this species instead. Although this is the only record for the Park I imagine it occurs fairly frequently and may possibly breed in the marshes that border the Lake.

SNOWY OWL. *Nyctea nyctea*. Rather strangely this species was not recorded in the Park until November, 1931, when Permanent Ranger Ben Arnold saw one in Lost Creek Valley near Tower Falls.

GREAT GRAY OWL. *Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa*. The first record for this species is of a bird seen by Permanent Ranger Frank Anderson in the late fall of 1930. Since then several have been seen and one was collected and is mounted in the Lake Museum. It may breed occasionally in the Park.

HOWELL'S NIGHTHAWK. *Chordeiles minor howelli*. There is a specimen in the Lake Museum which seems clearly referable to this race. A specimen of the Pacific Nighthawk (*C. m. hesperis*) is also in the same collection. Just what the status of the two races in the Park is, I cannot say. It seems quite possible that the two forms intergrade in this area.

DESERT HORNED LARK. *Otocoris alpestris leucolaema*. No specimens of the larks have been collected in the Park, but specimens collected in Wyoming in nearby areas are of this race. Accordingly it seems best to regard those of the Park as of this race; the sight record of the Hoyt's Horned Lark should be omitted as it is practically impossible to distinguish the two in the field.

NORTHERN SAGE SPARROW. *Amphispiza nevadensis nevadensis*. I found this species fairly common in the sage brush areas near Tower Falls in July, 1933. Several people had reported hearing a strange song in this region but had not been able to find the bird. It is probable that it occurs in similar sage brush areas in other parts of the Park; it should be especially looked for in the area between Gardiner and Mammoth.

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