

## GENERAL NOTES

**Birds seen on a trip to Labrador.**—For three weeks in the autumn of 1950, I was a passenger on the Canadian National Railways ship, *S. S. Kyle*, as it made its last trip of the season to ports in Labrador. The *Kyle* left St. John's, Newfoundland, on October 14, and stopped at Newfoundland ports of Carbonear, Catalina, Wesleyville, Twillingate, and St. Anthony. We then sailed north, passing west of Belle Isle, to reach the Labrador coast at Battle Harbour. Numerous small ports as far north as Hopedale were visited. On the return trip, we sailed up Lake Melville to call at Northwest River and Goose Bay before returning to the Atlantic Ocean and going south. As a rule, the *Kyle* moved close to shore, usually within several hundred yards of land, and went especially close to land when entering the many small harbors in Labrador or when threading its way among the numerous rocky islands and shoals which lie off the coast of Labrador. However, we were several miles from land when crossing Conception Bay, Trinity Bay, Bonavista Bay, Notre Dame Bay, the open sea east of the Grey Islands, the strait of Belle Isle, and Hamilton Inlet. The wind was generally moderate to strong; it blew from the west or northwest except for a severe easterly gale on two days (Oct. 21 and 22). Daytime air temperatures were 30-40° F. in Newfoundland waters and 20-30° on the Labrador coast. There was snow on the ground after the first day in Labrador.

I devoted about five hours a day to observing the birds of the region. Except for the stop at Cartwright, Labrador, I made my observations from the ship since it was usually difficult or impossible to go ashore. Seven-power (7×50) binoculars were used in scanning the water and shore. I have summarized the results in Table 1. Exact determination of species was not always possible for a variety of reasons, including poor light, distance, snow flurries, and rough water. The larger and rounded-off numbers in Table 1 are, of course, mostly estimated values.

Nearly all of the Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) seen were within a few miles of Hawke Harbour, Labrador, the site of a whaling factory. They were especially numerous in Hawke Harbour itself. I saw over a hundred there on each of two occasions, some on the water but most in flight about the harbor.

The unidentified ducks were nearly all female eiders; exceptions were the ducks seen on Lake Melville, 12 on Oct. 26 (probably White-winged Scoters [*Melanitta fusca*], according to a missionary at Northwest River) and 80 on Oct. 30 (apparently Goldeneyes [*Glaucionetta clangula* or *G. islandica*] but very far distant). I saw no Black Ducks (*Anas rubripes*), Old-squaws (*Clangula hyemalis*), Harlequin Ducks (*Histrionicus histrionicus*), Surf Scoters (*Melanitta perspicillata*), or Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*). They might reasonably have been expected since they all appear to breed in Labrador and the recorded late dates of their departure are close to the time that I was in the region (Austin, 1932. *Mem. Nuttall Ornith. Club*, No. 7: 40-61; Bent, 1923. *U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull.* 126:1-68; 1925. *Ibid.* 130:1-151).

I saw no Gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*) although I was informed by a resident of southern Labrador that Gyrfalcons become fairly common there in December and that many are killed in pole traps in winter. I saw only one Duck Hawk (*Falco peregrinus*). It flew shorewards across our bows when we were several miles off the Grey Islands. This bird was probably a migrant from Labrador where it is a common summer resident (Austin, *op. cit.*: 69). Peters and Burleigh (1951. "The birds of Newfoundland," Hough-





ton Mifflin Co., Boston, p. 146) describe the Duck Hawk as a rare summer resident and transient in Newfoundland. They give only four records of this species.

The late occurrence of shore-birds in Labrador was interesting. These birds were apparently not merely stragglers since I saw 115 White-rumped Sandpipers (*Erolia fuscicollis*) in a walk along a two-mile stretch of the rocky beach at Cartwright on Oct. 20; the water was then thinly frozen over in the shallow places. It is apparent from Table 1 that the migration of White-rumped Sandpipers from Labrador was still taking place in November. Bent (1927. *U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull.* 142:192) gives the late date of this species at Battle Harbour as Oct. 29. Austin (*op. cit.*: 98) states that scattered individuals linger on in Labrador through October although most birds have passed through by the end of September. Hantzsch (quoted by Austin, *loc. cit.*) observed a White-rumped Sandpiper at Hopedale on Nov. 2, 1906. I found both White-rumped Sandpipers and Sanderlings (*Crocethia alba*) to be rather common on Nov. 10, 1950 at Searston in southwestern Newfoundland. Peters and Burleigh (*op. cit.*:199) give Nov. 22 as the late date for White-rumped Sandpipers at St. Anthony. They also give (*op. cit.*: 209) Oct. 1 as the late date for Sanderlings in Newfoundland. I saw no Purple Sandpipers (*Erolia maritima*) on the trip although we passed much apparently ideal habitat. Since the winter range of Purple Sandpipers extends as far north as Greenland (Austin, *op. cit.*: 95; Bent, 1927:151), it might be presumed that relatively few migrants of this species had reached Labrador and Newfoundland by Nov. 3. Peters and Burleigh (*op. cit.*: 197) described the Purple Sandpiper as an uncommon winter resident and transient in Newfoundland. The unidentified small shore-birds I saw were neither Purple Sandpipers nor White-rumped Sandpipers; they appeared to be other species of the genus *Erolia*.

The scarcity of Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*) was somewhat surprising. Coues (quoted by Austin, *op. cit.*: 111), who spent July and August, 1860, on the coast of southern Labrador, thought Glaucous Gulls were rather rare in this region. Others (cited by Austin, *loc. cit.*) reported them common throughout the interior and north of Cape Harrison. Austin says that Glaucous Gulls are most common between Hamilton Inlet and Nachvak but are never so common as Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and Great Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus*). It should be kept in mind that these reports were made by persons present in Labrador only during the summer months. Peters and Burleigh (*op. cit.*: 221) state that Glaucous Gulls are fairly common winter residents in Newfoundland, becoming most common in fall, winter, and spring when drift ice is just offshore. Austin gives only one record of an Iceland Gull (*Larus leucopterus*) for Labrador. As he remarked, this is doubtless due to the absence of observers during the autumn, winter, and spring months, when this species would be expected. Peters and Burleigh (*op. cit.*: 223) describe the Iceland Gull as an uncommon winter visitant in Newfoundland. I found that the white-winged gulls in Labrador always occurred with Herring Gulls and, in salt water, with Great Black-backed Gulls also. Because of this, I was able to estimate comparative wing-spread and relative heaviness of bills, critical field marks for the separation of Glaucous Gulls from Iceland Gulls. On the basis of these observations, the species identifications of Table 1 were assigned. It will be noted that the only white-winged gulls seen on Lake Melville and Goose Bay were apparently Iceland Gulls and that only two Glaucous Gulls were seen on the coast of Labrador.

A man living near Hawke Harbour told me that Glaucous Gulls (apparently known locally as "slob gulls") do not become common there until December, when ice is forming in large amounts in the ocean. Since he seemed to have observed wild life closely and

with interest, I felt that his statements were accurate. I also gathered from his remarks that Ivory Gulls ("ice partridges"; *Pagophila eburnea*) are seen at Hawke Harbour with the appearance of sea-ice in December.

The difference in habitat of the various alcids was rather sharply marked. Black Guillemots (*Cepphus grylle*) were seen in the sheltered harbors and close to shore, Dovekies (*Plautus alle*) in deeper and less sheltered waters and the Murres (*Uria aalge* and *U. lomvia*) and Razor-billed Auks (*Alca torda*) in still deeper water and further from shore. Puffins (*Fratercula arctica*) were either uncommon in Labrador at the time or else prefer regions further from shore than the Kyle ordinarily sailed, for I saw very few of these birds. Austin (*op. cit.*: 140) remarks that Puffins stay among the outer islands and almost never come into the bays, at least during summer, the time of his observations.

The migration of Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) from Labrador was apparently complete after the fourth week in October, since I saw none of these birds after Oct. 20. According to Austin (*op. cit.*: 200), they are rarely found in Labrador during the winter. —JOHN G. ERICKSON, 611 North Lilac Drive, Minneapolis 22, Minnesota, September 18, 1951.

**Closely associated nests of Bronzed Grackle and English Sparrow.**—The Bronzed Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) has been considered to be an enemy of nesting birds, destroying both the eggs and the young. Specifically, it has been recorded as killing and partly eating English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) (Forbush, 1929, "Birds of Mass. etc., Part 2," pp. 458-459). The English Sparrow is said to rob and kill many native birds, and destroy their nests, eggs, and young. Allegedly, sparrows have driven all the smaller hole-nesting birds from cities and villages, and many that nested among the branches of trees. Supposedly sparrows kill birds as large as the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) or Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) by attacking in numbers or follow native birds about until the latter leave the neighborhood (Forbush, *op. cit.*, Part 3:42).

This reported mutual antipathy makes it advisable to record an example of extreme tolerance. In a trumpet vine on our garage in Chesterton, Indiana, in 1948, an English Sparrow had its bulky, untidy, domed nest but a short distance below the eaves. In April, a grackle used this nest for the foundation of its own nest. When the nests were examined on May 8, each contained young. On May 16, when still poorly fledged, the first young grackle climbed out of the nest, along interlacing twigs and branches, and away into the trees. The last one left the nest on May 19. The young sparrows left the nest on May 20 and climbed and fluttered into the neighboring trees.

While the adult grackles appeared oblivious to the sparrows, the sparrows sometimes appeared perturbed when a grackle visited its nest, and waited until the grackle had left before going to their nest. Sometimes when a grackle flew to its nest when the sparrow was at its nest directly below, the sparrow flew out. But this was not always true, and sometimes the sparrow, at its nest entrance, would simply look up at the grackle arriving just above it.

Often on their way to or from their nests, both adult sparrows and grackles perched close together in a nearby elm tree and completely ignored each other.

This is a case of two species, each ordinarily thought of as antagonistic to other nesting birds, raising their young in nests in close proximity. The grackles apparently built on top of the sparrows' nest because it offered a suitable, solid foundation. The total lack of interest of each species in the young of the other was striking and surprising.

The close nesting of two aggressive predatory species, however, or of a predator and a