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EGGS OF THE SPOON-BILL SANDPIPER (*EURYNORHYNCHUS PYGMEUS*).

BY JOHN E. THAYER.

Plates II and III.

LAST spring I sent an expedition to Wrangel Island in charge of Mr. Johan Koren, with instructions to collect during the summer on the way up and to winter on the island, so that collecting could be begun as soon as possible in the spring of 1911. A vessel was purchased and a crew selected. They sailed from Seattle May 1. All went well until they encountered a terrible storm on May 13, which nearly destroyed the vessel. She was in such bad shape that it was decided to return and hire another boat. This was found impossible and Koren with two of his crew shipped on a trading vessel that was going to touch along the eastern coast of Siberia.

Mr. Koren thought he could land near Cape Serdze and find the nest of the Spoon-bill Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*), because he had collected a few specimens of this species in this locality the previous year; but the pack ice was so bad that the captain of the vessel was afraid to risk his ship and they had to turn back.

Captain F. Kleinschmidt, starting on a trading and collecting trip a week earlier than Koren, managed to get to Cape Serdze and had the good fortune to find the first nest and four eggs of



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SPOON-BILL SANDPIPER

Figs. 1, 2, 4.—Bill of Newly Hatched Young.

Figs. 3 and 5. Bill of Adult.



EGGS OF SPOON-BILL SANDPIPER

the Spoon-bill Sandpiper. The parent bird, with the nest and eggs, was taken; also photographs. The nest was in the tundra, well concealed, especially so when the bird was incubating. Unfortunately this was the only set taken, as the season was advanced, it being then July 15. Captain Kleinschmidt took eight downies a few days old, which I have in my collection. The set of eggs was nearly incubated. The measurements are as follows: $1.20 \times .92$; $1.22 \times .90$; $1.20 \times .88$; $1.30 \times .90$ inches. I hope next year to collect many sets of this interesting bird as I shall send Mr. Koren to Cape Serdze in the spring.

The following is taken from a letter I received from Captain Kleinschmidt: "I was in hopes that I could get five or six clutches of the Spoon-bills, so I took all kinds of chances with my boat in the ice on the Siberian coast. I found, however, but one set of eggs and they were just ready to hatch.

"The male is the parent bird of the eggs, but the female belongs to neither eggs or downies, simply because the habits of this Sandpiper are similar to those of the Phalarope. The male has to stay at home, keep house and attend to the young, while the female thinks she has done all that is necessary by merely fulfilling the duties nature demands of her, namely the laying of the eggs. I shot the female in close proximity of the nest, but we never found a female with the downies. It was always the male. Although our observations were limited to but a few, still I believe the male solely attends to the hatching and the rearing of the young. The female also is larger than the male.

"The nest as well as the downies were found on the gentle slope of the tundra, bordering small fresh-water ponds. The nest was a rounded hollow in the moss, thickly lined with dry willow leaves. The downies blend so perfectly with the color of the moss that the closest scrutiny will scarcely reveal their hiding place. My pictures were not a success. I did n't have the adequate camera. I am sending you, however, two copies of each. On one I have traced the bird so you may find him in the other."

If this is true, that the male incubates instead of the female, it is extremely interesting. In looking over my series of fourteen skins, all adults, I find the females are larger and their mandibles noticeably so.

A most interesting fact is that the nestlings just hatched out of their shells, have perfectly formed spoon bills as seen in plate II. This must indicate that this species is a very old one.

The two plates are from drawings by Mr. E. N. Fischer. The figures are all natural size.

NEST LIFE OF THE SCREECH OWL.¹

BY ALTHEA R. SHERMAN.

IN LARGE boxes put up for the accommodation of Woodpeckers lived the Screech Owls from whose nest lives these studies were made. It was in one of these soap-boxes, nailed against the trunk of a willow tree that the first of these Owls was seen on March 24, 1909; evidently it had been there in January of that year, as the feathers of a luckless Bohemian Waxwing remained to prove. A Screech Owl was seen to spend the day there again on March 30 and on April 2 and 18. On the morning of April 5 a rufous feather fluttering from the entrance hole of the west flicker-box in the barn betrayed the nesting place. The bottom of the box was covered with excelsior in which the female had scratched a hollow in the corner farthest from the entrance, where she was sitting on four fresh eggs. For six days the nest was closely watched and the following facts were ascertained. The meat-offerings brought by her mate and dropped through the hole for his divinity within consisted of a white-footed mouse on two of the mornings, and a Junco on two of them, while on the remaining two mornings nothing was there. On two evenings the female went out early before the nest watch began; on other two she went out after dark alone, and on two evenings her mate came after dark to the hole and called her with a very low cry, which once was answered by a low sharp note from the female, who on both even-

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