

impossible because I supposed it would be rather the size of the Greater than the Lesser Yellow-legs, with a thick-based, dagger-shaped, probably yellow bill and (on May 14) ruffs. So I wrote pages 240-241 in 'Birds of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts' on the supposition that I must have seen an erythristic Stilt Sand-piper! I am now perfectly certain that it was a Ruff. We live and learn.—SAMUEL A. ELIOT, JR., *Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.*

**Glaucous Gull in Florida.**—On April 2, 1941, while examining a large group of gulls at North Miami Beach, Florida, the writers noticed among the others, a large white gull, which proved to be a Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) in second-year plumage. The bird was a particularly white individual, being nearly snow white all over. The legs were pink, and the bill was basally light, the terminal one-third dark. The eye was completely dark. The darkness of the eye and of the tip of the bill would seem to eliminate the possibility of confusion with an albino of another species. An unexcelled size comparison was afforded by six immature and one adult Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) which were standing with the Glaucous Gull in the mixed flock of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*). The Glaucous Gull was markedly larger than the Herring Gulls, and had a decidedly larger bill than a Herring Gull which conveniently walked over and stood immediately next to the Glaucous Gull.

The flock was sufficiently tame to permit us to approach to within about one hundred feet to determine these points. Both writers are familiar with the Glaucous Gull as a regular winter visitor to the Northeast.

We are aware of two previous records of the occurrence of this species in Florida: Howell's 'Florida Bird Life' records a second-year bird seen by Eaton and Savage at Coronado Beach, February 23, 1930; Weston (*Auk*, 53: 445, 1936) records a second-year bird at Pensacola Bay, March 14 to May 10, 1936.—HUSTACE H. POOR, *112 Park Ave., Yonkers, New York*, AND OLIVER K. SCOTT, *767 Central St., Framingham, Massachusetts.*

**Gulls eat fruit of the cabbage palmetto.**—In the early forenoon of February 5, 1941, while 'birding' along the Indian River, Vero Beach, Florida, I saw several Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) hovering above the crown of a cabbage palmetto. One by one, with supreme grace, the birds fluttered down to the pendant fruit stalk, snatched a berry, then sailed off. This was repeated several times, while in a nearby palm an immature Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) was clumsily perched on a fruit stalk and eating the berries. Two days later I observed forty or fifty gulls of both species devouring the fruit.

Two boatmen (natives) to whom I remarked about this behavior, said that the gulls had been observed feeding on the palmetto drupes for four or five days previously, and that never before had the gulls been seen to do this.

Raw northerly winds and chill temperatures prevailed in Florida during early February, and the gulls evidently had a difficult time securing their normal food. The drupes of this tree are exceedingly hard, and as palatable, from the human standpoint, as cherry-stones.—MAURICE BROWN, *Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Route 1, Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania.*

**Common Terns nesting on muskrat houses.**—The following notes concern an unusual marsh colony of Common Terns, *Sterna hirundo*, of which all the nests were located on the tops of muskrat houses.

The marsh where the observations were made had been formed in 1929 when

low farming land, bordered on one side by the Thames River and by Lake St. Clair on the other, was flooded. The area is now covered by a dense growth of aquatic vegetation, and it supports a large population of muskrats.

On finding the nests on the muskrat houses, the writer took them to be those of the Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*, which had been reported from that region by various authors. Examination of the fledglings and closer scrutiny of the adults disclosed that the colony was composed probably entirely of Common Terns. One downy young and one female were collected from a nest. No individuals of the related species were found.

Approximately three-thousand muskrat houses were on the marsh and it was estimated that of these, 100 to 150 were used as nesting sites by the terns. The nests were not confined to one spot, but were distributed well over the area of the marsh. Seventy-five nests were examined, and several were kept under continuous observation. The terns did not choose between used and abandoned houses, but no nests were constructed on houses which were so worn down with age as to extend less than a foot above the surface of the water. One nest was located on top of a 'push-up' which had been built by muskrats on top of an old barrel, so that the nest was about four feet above the water. While the nests were sometimes found on adjacent houses, there was no house that supported more than one nest. Roberts (1932) reports that Forster's Tern will sometimes build four or five nests on the same house.

It is interesting to note that the nests of the terns were restricted to the comparatively new marsh, which indicates that the age of the colony was probably less than seven or eight years. The lake front, adjacent to the area described and separated from it by a narrow strip of land, was also marshy and supported a good number of muskrat houses. The houses of this marsh lacked nests, however, even though they were located nearer the lake, which was used by the terns as a feeding ground. Since the terns did not use the old marsh, it is possible that they had not used muskrat houses for their nests in that region until the flood in 1929.—OLIVER H. HEWITT, *Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.*

**An egg of the Marbled Murrelet.**—On May 23, 1934, near Mittelnach (an islet in the Strait of Georgia, just east of Campbell River, Vancouver Island), the senior author shot a female Marbled Murrelet, *Brachyramphus marmoratus*, from the oviduct of which was subsequently taken an unbroken, perfectly formed, well-marked egg. Though ledges, turf, and shrubbery on Mittelnach were thoroughly searched that day, no murrelet was flushed anywhere on the island itself.

The egg measures  $58.5 \times 39.5$  mm. It is *pale glass green* spotted with *lavender gray* (light), *deep madder blue*, *sepia*, *bone brown*, and *black* (italicized words from Ridgway's 'Color Standards and Nomenclature,' 1912). From the photograph, herewith reproduced (Plate 19), it will be seen that the spots, rather than being evenly distributed, tend to encircle the larger end.

The senior author has published ('Birds in the Wilderness,' 1936: 167) an informal account of the taking of this specimen; but since descriptions of the Marbled Murrelet's egg continue to be based primarily upon the famous, though imperfect, George G. Cantwell specimen taken in the Prince of Wales Archipelago almost half a century ago (and figured on Plate 48 in Bent's 'Life Histories of North American Diving Birds,' 1919) it seems advisable to publish the present description with a natural-size photographic illustration.

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