

A FORGOTTEN REFERENCE TO THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA

BY WALTER K. FISHER

THROUGH the kindness of Dr. James Perrin Smith of Stanford University I have recently examined an almost forgotten work which contains some interesting notes on the natural history of California. The book is entitled: "Life, Adventures, and Travels in California."† Dr. Smith's copy is a second edition, the "Conquest of California," etc., evidently having been absent from the first edition. The contents are chiefly concerned with an account of the history and geography of California, the customs of the natives, and the incidents or adventures of the author's journey. He sailed in December, 1840, from the mouth of the Columbia River for Hawaii in order to reach Monterey, California.

The natural history portion comprises a comparatively small part of the book and is considered under the following heads: Animals, Birds, Fish, Plants, Minerals. I have listed all the birds mentioned, and the numbers in parentheses refer to the pages on which the latin names occur. Spelling follows that of the original.

"Worthy of mention among the first of the feathered family in California, is the Great Vulture, peculiar, probably, to this country. Let his name be given in full—a lofty and sonorous one, and well fitting its owner—*Sarcoramphas Californianus*. (388) * * * The great vulture is met with along the whole Pacific coast from Lower California to the most northern boundaries of Oregon, and the Russian possessions." *Cathartes aura*, Turkey Buzzard (389). *Cathartes atratus*, Black Vulture, "is quite common in almost every part of the country west of the Rocky Mountains." *Aquila Chrysaetos*, Golden Eagle. "Its plumes are used by the natives as ornaments, and are attached to their pipes or calumets, from which circumstance it is called Calumet eagle. This species is found on the coast and in most sections of the woody and mountainous parts of California. It feeds on hares, grouse and other game, and seldom if ever catches fish." *Aquila leucocephala*, Bald Eagle (390). *Aquila Haliaeeta*, Osprey (391). *Falco peregrinus*, Black Hawk or Peregrine Falcon. *Falco Islandicus*, Jer-Falcon. "He inhabits the northern coast, and is properly confined to the frozen regions, though individuals are by no means rare in upper California." *Falco sparverius*, Sparrow Hawk. *Falco columbarius*, Pigeon Hawk. *Accipiter plumbarius*, Gos-Hawk. "Of the owls there are several species. *Strix Virginiana*, Great Horned Owl. *Strix nyctaea* Great Snow Owl. *Strix cucularia*."

"*Lanius borealis* (392), several species of *Tyrannus* and *Tyrannula*, Flycatchers; *Merula migratoria*, The Robin; *Orpheus felivox*, The Catbird; *Orpheus rufus*, The Brown Thrush; several Sylviatæ; *Alauda*, The Lark, one or two species; *Emberiza nivalis*, The Snow Bunting; *Icterus phænicus*, The Redwing." *Loxia leucoptera*, The Crossbill. *Corvus corax*, The Raven. *Corvus corone*, The Crow. *Corvus pica*, The Magpie. "*Garrulus cristatus*, the Common Blue Jay, and another smaller species, probably *G. Stelleri*, are quite common. *Colaptes Mexicanus* * * * is found in upper California, and all along the Pacific coast, and is, with the exception of an occasional individual of the golden-winged

† The exact title is: Pictorial edition !!! | Life, | Adventures, and Travels | in | California. | By T. J. Farnum. | To which are added the | Conquest of California, | Travels in Oregon, | and | History of the Gold Regions. | New York. | Published by Cornish, Lampert & Co. | 1852.

species, *Picus auratus*, the only woodpecker which the author observed, except a species at Monterey, which is probably not yet described." (393.) *Trochilus colubris*. *T. rufus* "which seems to inhabit almost the whole country from Nootka Sound to the Rio del Norte in Mexico." *Hirundo Americana*, Common Barn Swallow. *H. lunifrons*, Cliff Swallow. *H. riparia*, Bank Swallow. *Caprimulgus Virginianus*, Night Hawk. *Alcedo Alcyon*, Kingfisher. *Tetrao urophasianus*, Great Cock. *T. obscurus* (394). *T. rupestris*, Rock Grouse, "inhabits the mountainous regions of the North. *T. umbellus*, The Ruffed Grouse and *T. leucurus*, White-tailed Grouse are common in different places." The following are also mentioned; *Tringa*, Sand Piper; *Charadrius*, Plover; *Numenius*, Curlew; *Totanus*, Tatler; *Limosa*, Godwit; *Scolopax*, Snipe; *Larus*, Gull. *Cygnus buccinator*, The Swan. *C. Bewickii*? *Anser albifrons*, Laughing Goose. *A. Canadensis*, Common Wild Goose. *A. hyperboreus*, Snow Goose. *A. bernaccla*, Brant. *Pelicanus onocrotalus*, White Pelican. *Diomedea exulans*. *Diomedea fuliginosa*.

As there are no new forms described and no facts of a very startling nature revealed, the account must therefore be chiefly of historical interest. Under most of the species more or less annotation is given, although I have quoted only here and there. In this connection it is well to remember that at that early date the extent of California was somewhat elastic, and in the mind of the author probably included the entire country west of the Rockies, north of Mexico, and south of Oregon. His travels were mostly in our California, however.

According to the author: "There are probably many yet undescribed birds and quadrupeds in this country." He adds: "The author's sketches in this department are necessarily rather those of a traveller than a naturalist, and he has been obliged to content himself with mentioning those species which casually came within his own notice. It is very probable that many inaccuracies may be detected both in his nomenclature and descriptions, but these may be excused by the circumstances under which his notes were taken, his lack of books of reference, and his imperfect acquaintance with the science of Zoology."

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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Monterey Bay Notes.—While collecting, at various times during the last four years, for the California Academy of Sciences, at Monterey Bay, several interesting species of birds were observed, and Mr. L. M. Loomis, Director of the Museum, has requested me to record the occurrence of some of the rarer ones, which is done herewith.

Brachyramphus hypoleucus, Xantus Murrelet. From November 24, 1904, to February 4, 1905, these murrelets were seen nearly every time a trip was made to the seaward of Point Pinos. The last one was seen on February 25. The most seen on any one day was twenty seen January 2, 1905. They were evidently moving southward, tho' leisurely, for the majority were seen on the water, frequently in pairs. A series of thirty was taken.

Simorhynchus psittaculus, Paroquet Auklet. January 14, 1905, one was taken; and January 17, 1905, two more were secured. These three were all that were seen. They were out several miles from shore.

Podiceps holbaelli, Holbæll Grebe. From November 11, 1904, to February 4, 1905, these birds were seen every time the day's trip was made toward Monterey. On January 10, ten were seen. Usually not more than four or five were observed. They were most often seen within a radius of a half mile of the Monterey wharf. About fifteen specimens were obtained.

Sterna antillarum, Least Tern. At Moss Landing near the mouth of the Salinas River a small colony of these terns were feeding young, some of which were barely able to fly August 25, 1903. Several were taken.

Xema sabini, Sabine Gull. During the latter part of September, 1903, Sabine gulls were common off Point Pinos going south. Some eighty specimens were taken.

Harelda glacialis, Old-squaw. December 23, 1904, one specimen taken, the only one seen.—
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