

No. 19. Collected by Paul Thorasimsson, on the 15th of June, 1905, at Lake My Vatn, North Iceland (set c 1-2), measures, according to my measurements, 2.60x1.80.

Nos. 18 and 19 are both very dark eggs, while no. 17 is lighter. In the case of no. 19 most of the spots are very fine, even minute, with only a few larger ones. In no. 18 they are larger and blacker, those at the greater end being, in fact, great blotches and mostly confluent.

In the egg belonging to the same clutch with no. 18, there is a blotch near the butt which measures 20 millimeters by 10 millimeters, or nearly the size of one's thumb-nail. One still nearer the butt is nearly as large; but such markings in the eggs of loons are exceptional, and in any case appear to be formed by several smaller blotches, overlaid by somewhat thinner and very slightly lighter ones.

Loons' eggs are very different from any of those of the *Alcidae* or auks; indeed, in the case of some of the latter, the eggs are pure white, and present no markings of any kind whatever. Moreover, some of the puffins and other species lay but a single egg, although other auks lay two, and, as we know, so do the humming-birds.

These facts are alluded to simply to illustrate the point that the *number* of eggs laid by a bird of one well-defined group, selected as a single characteristic, is by no means a safe one to go by in taxonomy, in the matter of arraying that bird, or family of birds, with another group, simply for the reason that some of the latter assemblage may chance to do the same thing.

Still, in avian classification, the characters presented on the part of eggs always mean something, and such data is often of use in this connection; but it should never be employed as a single factor more than to be additional evidence, with respect to affinities, when associated with what is presented on the part of structure, habits and distribution.

As yet we have not the knowledge which will admit of correctly stating why it is that all loons lay two dark-colored, spotted eggs; but there is a reason for their so doing. And were we able to trace the matter back far enough into the past, that reason could be brought to light. For instance, could we but know what kind of an egg *Hesperornis* and its descendants laid, it would greatly help out.

*Washington, D. C., October 13, 1913.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**A Plea for More Lasting Field Notes.**—What happens finally to all the ornithological field notes that are made? A few of them are left to state and local institutions and societies, some to close personal friends of the deceased, and by far the greater majority I imagine, are put away with odds and ends in an old trunk until a house-cleaning by some member of the next generation puts them in the ash barrel. Again, how many of these notes are put and kept in concise, connected and decipherable form so that they may some day be of use to others?

From what I have myself seen I feel safe in venturing the statement that a good percentage of the average men who are interested in birds, other than those connected with some museum or other institution, will find that their old notes are scattered through notebooks of different sizes, and some of them, at least, stored with other old papers where they may be forgotten and at best hard to get at.

Notes that are worth taking at all are worth keeping in orderly condition and

passing along so that they may be of use to others. There are numberless ways of keeping field records systematically, and most of us have our own little pet notions about the one best way for this. What seems to be most desirable is to keep each species separate in card index form, making the different entries under their proper heads as soon as one returns from a trip. This in a way is a little cumbersome and has other drawbacks. Probably most of us in referring to our notes wish to refresh our memories in regard to the birds of some one section rather than general notes relating to a particular species. On the other hand, those who make nearly all their observations in one section would, I think, find the card index system of species most desirable.

I do not pose as an authority on the best method of note-keeping; I only know what system best suits my individual needs. While in the field and the majority of our birds are wrapped up, it is often hard to tell just what subspecies we take from day to day,—for instance, whether we have a Pileolated or a Golden Pileolated Warbler on a certain day, and there are often other things in our notes that need correcting. As soon as I return from a trip I sort out and identify the doubtful subspecies, make a note of the latter, and copy my notes. Those whose chirography is more legible than mine can trust to their pen, but I typewrite mine on a good quality of paper with the best and most lasting ink-ribbon obtainable, fasten the sheets together with paper clips, put the notes of each trip in a labelled manila folder and file the folders away in a fiber case. Some may object to this method, but the main and only thing is to have your notes in a lasting and legible form, and to follow some simple standardized system.

After the advisability of keeping notes for your own reference, is to see that after you are gone, they shall be put where they will be of the greatest help to others. Don't leave them knocking around to be thrown out with your old worthless papers, and don't leave them to your best friend. I would give a good deal if a certain ornithologist whose memory we all revere had put his notes where they could now be located,—notes that are a good deal more valuable than most of us have ever made; so, for the cause of science and the help of those younger ones who will be left when you are gone, instruct the members of your family to send your notes to some safe and sound institution where they will be in safe keeping and accessible to those who wish to use them. In order that these would not be too scattered, why not, all you western ornithologists, leave your notes to the Cooper Club? Mr. Grinnell, at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, or Mr. Chambers, at Eagle Rock, where most of the Club property is housed, are well situated to take care of these field notes, and could loan parts of them to members in good standing who might be engaged in special work. In time, this would grow to be quite a feature of the Club, and a very valuable one at that.—A. BRAZIER HOWELL, *Covina, California.*

**Notes from Vicinity of Claremont, California.**—In looking over the "From Field and Study" department in last CONDOR, I noticed Mr. Pierce's note on *Phainopepla nitens*. Although it is a well known fact that *Phainopeplas* winter here in small numbers, I thought it might be of interest to record that they were especially common the past winter. There was not a day passed that I did not see at least one of these birds and no day when it would not have been possible to find on search a half dozen or more. I have in mind particularly a female that resided all winter in the trees (pepper and sycamore) around the grammar school. It was while hunting on the mesa that I encountered them most often, in bushy country.

In connection with this I should like to mention the scarcity and peculiar actions of the Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). As I was particularly anxious to obtain specimens of these birds I watched for them most carefully all winter. Although a common winter visitant, there were none here during December or January, and it was not until the first part of February I received word of a flock west of town. I searched diligently all the pepper trees in the vicinity for three separate days, but was unrewarded. Nothing was seen of them again until the middle of March when a flock of about five stopped in town for a day or two and then passed on. During April they became common but were nearly all gone by May first. Both Mr. Pierce and I spent our spare time searching in pepper trees just outside of town with no result. Although we naturally associate Waxwings with pepper trees, yet I did not see a single Waxwing in