

Antrostomus vociferus vociferus. Whip-poor-will. In looking up records of the Whip-poor-will in western Canada, I could find none for Saskatchewan. I was therefore glad to have the opportunity to investigate some reports I had heard of its occurrence along the Saskatchewan River east of Prince Albert. On July 15 of this year I reached the district near where the South joins the North Saskatchewan River, about thirty miles east of Prince Albert. My guide and I arrived at our camp-site late in the evening; while putting up the tent, I was delighted to hear the bird I was after, "singing" in the poplar woods quite near us. The following nights I heard it much farther away, if it was the same bird, though my guide told me that some years one could hear three or four birds "singing" in the neighborhood. Evidently it had moved to another "bush" about a mile from camp. I located it there on the 20th, after tramping the ground to and fro till late in the afternoon. It flushed a couple of yards from my feet. This proved to be a male; careful search in the neighborhood failed to discover the female, and as I did not hear another songster the succeeding nights I was there, apparently there was but the one pair in the district.

Regina, Saskatchewan, August 18, 1919.

A RETURN TO THE DAKOTA LAKE REGION

By FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

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ON the south shore of the lake where the Holbøll family was generally found, families of Pied-bill and Horned Grebes were also seen, the east and south shores being the favorite feeding grounds of the Grebes of the lake. One family of peeping young Pied-bills was seen near shore where an oily green scum had formed on the water, so thick that a yellow and black snake squirmed its way along on top of it, its coils actually gathering and piling up the greasy looking substance. In walking softly along the wooded bank above, I heard the Pied-bills talking and found them about a thin screen of tule. The mother gave a queer note of warning, whereupon the six young—easily recognized by their black and white striped necks—swam out a little and watched me. Farther along some larger young, caring for themselves, swam along shore examining me, two of them, wet from diving, in profile showing wisps of sharp-pointed tails. One stretched its neck high to see me better, and as it turned its head from side to side was reflected in the still water near shore.

Near the spot where the old Holbøll drove off the light-cheeked Horned Grebe that used to swim by itself, on August 16, on looking through the trees I discovered a Horned Grebe swimming and diving with two almost grown white-throated young. Was this the mate of the light-cheeked one, come from her nest with her brood at last? They noticed my least motion and kept out a little though evidently wanting to come in shore. The next day, in the same

place I found a pretty group—three striped-necked young Pied-bills sitting on the water close together. In a few moments they were joined by three other young Grebes, presumably those seen on the previous day as birds are very local in their habits; and the six sat there watching my shore while I was watching them. Were the mothers of both broods giving lessons in self-reliance? As we all sat quietly taking note of each other, the willowy cry of a Flicker came from the woods behind me, the song of a Sora rang out brightly from a marsh in the distance, and the keen *Pet-er-weet, weet, weet* of one of a family of Spotted Sandpipers that patrolled the shore called attention to a teetering figure below. Then a young Franklin Gull swam by, mirrored in the water, picking lightly from the surface as it went.

Up the shore beyond the Grebes and Sandpipers an old fence line extended out into the water like that in the farmhouse corner of the lake, also affording convenient roosting places for Night Herons. So much at home did they feel here that one of them held his post even when a line of cattle waded splashing out along the shore behind him. Three of the tall, yellow-legged birds were standing on the fence posts one afternoon when I arrived, while in the cove beyond, a fourth stood with his back to a tule wall. One of the row of three, probably catching sight of a minnow, suddenly dropped to the surface of the water, after which he returned to his fishing post. The hungriest looking of the three stood with body bent to the horizontal, staring down anxiously upon the water, and as its pangs increased, leaned still farther, ready to pitch forward. The one on the post behind, however, stood calmly back, with head up in judicial pose—probably he had had more breakfast! The Hungry One, finding poor fishing at his post, left, whereupon the Well Fed One yawned, and rising deliberately with yellow legs hanging, flapped slowly across to the deserted post. What did he care if the fishing were poor there?

Across the cove another fisherman with form only vaguely suggested inside a bank of tules moved mysteriously down the line. Herons certainly pin their faith to blinds! He was far enough back inside his to make it effective, but in cases where the screen is too thin, the large size of the birds makes them conspicuous. Still, we must not forget the principle enunciated by Abbott Thayer, for light underparts seen from below when near the water doubtless tone out against the light sky to offset the conspicuous size.

A third short section of fence running out into the water on the south shore was occasionally used by perching Night Herons, but it was also used by the family of Spotted Sandpipers. Once they swung in and lit on the barbed wire and when rested started to walk the tight rope, wings up to steady themselves. Some green lake weed, hanging from the wire, cushioned a section for them, but when they reached the bare sharp barbs, I noticed that they lifted their feet quickly and nervously.

Besides Herons, Grebes, and Sandpipers, families of Ducks were occasionally seen along the south shore. One of the families of Pintails seen about the lake—a brood of eleven whose small-billed mother had brought them across from the western side to be sheltered from a strong east wind by the eastern wall and its tule border—on several consecutive days were found along the wooded south shore where the brood was feeding busily, picking dainty morsels from the surface of the water. Sometimes they swam behind the mother, all eleven woolly ducklings in single file, and once they divided and partly en-

circled her, making a lovely intimate family picture. At some bit of carelessness on my part on the bank above, however, the mother gave a warning note and the brood swam farther out from shore.

On the morning of August 10, when a cold northwest wind had driven all but a few Coots and Ruddies from the south side of the lake, and the water was rough, and foam lay piled along the shore, to my surprise I discovered the pretty Pintail and her downy brood. Not far out, to be sure, but riding the small rollers with such evident satisfaction one imagined them quite capable of ocean voyages! As they rocked over the waves they preened themselves nonchalantly, if the spray broke over them, shaking their little heads casually. Their mother, a good sailor too, preened as she rode, her head back over her shoulders, letting the waves roll her as they would. The downy ducklings dived prettily and on coming up gave a little jump and a shake of the head. But—what had become of the eleventh? There were only ten, now. Had the family slept too near to shore? There was a strong mephitic odor along the bank.

In this same place, when revisiting the lake with our little school boy on September 2, the child, pointing to a group on the water asked eagerly, "What are those?" adding, "They're babies of some kind," and so they were, four tiny dark ducklings, feeding on surface water weeds. A Pied-billed Grebe, two female Blue-winged Teal, and a female Ruddy were swimming near them, but no one claimed the little tots and I was at a loss to know whether they belonged to the Teal or the Ruddy. Finally, however, after letting the Teal and the Pied-bill swim around close to the little ones for some time, the Ruddy came swimming over all bristled up and chased off a Pied-bill with such an air of exclusive ownership that Solomon himself would have felt quite satisfied. The little school boy watched the proceeding with great interest. When he saw the wondrous blue bill of the Ruddy drake that he had been anxiously looking for, he exclaimed, "Oh, isn't that pretty—that *blue* bill—Say, but that is pretty!" and when we started home he ejaculated fervently, "I'm glad I *came*"—a remark deeply appreciated, as agriculture in the fascinating form of a threshing outfit to watch had threatened to outrival ornithology.

As we walked back through the woods, a northern visitor, a Red-bellied Nuthatch, crossed our path with its autumnal message. That was not the first pleasant surprise I had had in these woods. Two weeks before—on August 17—a family of three-quarter grown Long-eared Owls had burst out of a tree before my very eyes, one of them lighting not far away, sitting up parallel to the tree trunk which it closely resembled. Its ears were still short and as it lowered its head, its eyes inside its facial disk had a strained anxious look. Retreating to another perch, it turned its head around over its back to look at me. Although the middle of the day, its ears were alertly sensitive, for at the sound of Crows or a flock of Ducks passing over, it looked up.

From its perch in the sun it again flew to a branch in the shade, and leaned over twisting its head around trying to see me better. But soon its eyes stared wide as if it had to try hard to keep awake, and presently its lids drooped. When I walked up closer, however, it drew itself up very tall and thin, with ears erect like the pictures of protective attitudes, one wing curiously drawn half way across its breast helping to narrow its body and make it look more like the tree trunk. When nothing happened, it relaxed, let itself down shorter, and let go the branch with one furry foot, standing on the other foot ready for a nap.

What was that noise below? It turned its head to look over its shoulder, and with face forward, pressed on hard with its eyes. Seeing nothing there it looked back over the other shoulder in the same intense, strained manner. Still discovering nothing it gave a little yawn. But when some Waxwings whistled softly near by and a Mallard quacked in passing, it quickly looked up. Then perhaps missing its family, it gave the weak cry of a young bird, which like that of the Ferruginous Rough-legs, was absurdly out of keeping with its size but went well with the shortness of its ears. When I answered in my best Owlese, it cocked its head drolly on one side. That would bear looking into. Again worming its big head down and around, its facial disk setting its face quite apart from its neck, it studied me intently, and not liking what it saw, with a queer little *qua, qua, qua* flew off. Several times more it lit and flew, and I followed. When it crossed a Kingbird's beat, that self-appointed guardian of the peace flew down at it—*once*. Why he stopped at that, I was at a loss to imagine, unless so young to his trade that the sight of the big-eyed, big head raised upon him at close quarters was a deterrent. His kingly courage returned when the Owl moved, however, and he flew down and snapped his bill over it. When the young Long-ear lit next, it looked so comfortable on its shady branch that I did not want to disturb it, so, after listening to the call of a Catbird, the song of a Yellow Warbler, and—out of season though it was—the full love song of an Oriole—I went back down the lake toward home.

The next day I had a still greater surprise. Contrary to my usual custom of keeping carefully secreted in the woods above the water, I had gone down on the short strip of beach where the Spotted Sandpipers usually ran up and down, and happening to glance up in the sky saw a compact flock of large white forms advancing. Gulls? No! On they came, with the slow, heavy, stately flight of White Pelicans. As this was before I had seen them at North Sweetwater and I had looked for them in vain since the first small squad seen on Devil's Lake in June, I greeted them with eager anticipations. Fourteen there were, of the great white airships. They were heading southeast against the wind as if coming straight for the one narrow strip of beach that side of the lake afforded. And there I stood on it! Alas! Around they turned, flying back high across the opposite side of the lake. As I gazed up at them their formation characteristically changed from a wedge to a straight line, and then to a confused mass without figure. Overcome with disappointment, in the vain hope that they might come again, I retreated to the woods. Had I kept out of sight before, probably the whole fleet would have lighted on the beach under my very eyes. Realizing at last that there was no hope of their return I went back to the beach to see if they were still in sight. Looking across the west end of the lake, where a threshing machine was building up a straw stack in a harvest field, high in the sky I caught sight of a wavering silver thread, and through the glass the silvery thread turned into a line of white birds, the line forming and reforming till they disappeared in the sky.

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From the south-east corner of the woods in which stood the hunting lodge, late one August afternoon, after a thunderstorm, there was a charming picture of the peaceful quiet life of the waterfowl undisturbed by man. As I crept in down an old willow-bordered path to the lake and carefully placed my campstool between screening willow branches, the birds went about their affairs

only a few yards from me, all unaware of my presence. A young Catbird flew into the bushes at the lake end of my path, while a Flicker and a Goldfinch came in almost over my head, as undisturbed as the Meadowlark singing outside.

A flock of about forty Ruddies had gathered in the quiet corner out of the wind. In the strong western light that slanted full across the safe harbor, their white cheek patches were dazzlingly snow white, their bodies a warm rufous. A pretty sight they made, riding mirrored on the smooth water, a blue bill and white cheek patch in duplicate making indeed a striking picture. A big mother Canvasback swam in through an open space between the Ruddies—a steamship plowing its way among motor boats—leaving a long, strongly marked wake behind her and diving at its point. In feeding, one of her family stood on his head, tail in air; another, after bathing, rose so straight he almost tipped over backwards.

Three young Coots climbed up eagerly into a yard of tule that rose out of the water in the center of the protected harbor, its slender stems charmingly reflected below. Coots' Rest I had come to call it, from seeing a matronly old Coot standing there preening herself, looking round and comfortable as if she were on her own home island. Now, however, two of the young ones got to scrapping and rose bill to bill, one finally driving the other into the water. His undisputed possession of the little island did not last long, however, for the queenly old Canvasback who had come in among the Ruddies swam up to the pleasant resting place quite as if all the lake were hers by right, and the aggressive young Coot hurriedly slipped off into the water.

At one time the yard of tules constituting Coot's Rest was taken possession of by a mother Shoveller who in moving around showed her orange under mandible and feet, and was apparently taking solid comfort on the little island—for even Ducks seem to like to tread on terra firma occasionally, perhaps to get their sea legs off! When she went out to feed, she let the mud strain out of her bill in good spoonbill fashion. Another time four Ducks were enjoying the wisp of tule, one barely visible inside the thickest part of the screen, while swimming around close by, Blue-winged Teal tipped up their wings so the wide blue patch and its bordering white and green showed, and others of their conferees flew in calling softly. When a Ruddy autocratically rushed along by Coots' Rest, routing out one of the Ducks which was taking its ease, a big flock of Ducks passed close over the water, and Ruddy, canting his head over to look up, apparently forgot the small tule island and swam on.

The evening that the waterfowl gathered in the protected harbor to get out of the wind, across the lake, above the harvest fields dotted with sheaves of wheat, a creamy cumulus cloud arose, to be reflected in the lake. Scattered over the harbor, Coots were getting their evening meal in various ways—picking lightly from the surface, plunging their heads under water, or diving with a splash that sent the water sparkling into the air.

On the outer edge of the circle of Ruddies, Coots, and Canvasbacks, I was glad to discover my family of Holbøll Grebes, characteristically keeping a little apart. The sun touched up the red throat and white face patch of the old mother who was followed close by her little one swimming with bill open, talking as usual in a soft young voice close by her ear. When she dived and came up with food, two of the young swam toward her for their share, but she had taught them to fend for themselves, and even the little Talker was now diving

quite freely. Before sunset the Holboell call drew my eye to a reunited family, the mother with all three young. Between dives there once seemed to be a second adult, as if the father had joined the family again. The suggestion was so pleasant that I found myself making excuses for his absence. Perhaps to make the group less conspicuous he kept away in the day time, but before night, came to help guard the little ones during the hours of darkness.

A sudden splash! Probably the Black-crowned Night Heron on the post just beyond had caught a minnow. As I glanced around the curving tule border of the harbor, warm in the glowing light, another Heron's form was dimly outlined—a hunter in his blind. In the smooth mirror of the lake, the cumulus cloud above the harvest field was growing salmon. The sound of a binder came on the wind. Swallows twittered, flying swiftly overhead, and small squads of Ducks swung in. Two Pintails lit outside the circle of waterfowl and sitting high, with long necks raised, looked nervously on, not having learned the security of the quiet refuge; but from within the circle, the homelike quack of Mallards came from a band swimming around self-absorbed and unafraid. Flocks of Ducks, Gulls, and Crows, crossing overhead to their nightly roosts made no ripple in the life of the little harbor, in which was heard the soft *tu-weep* of the Spotted Sandpiper, well suited to the stillness of the peaceful, sunny bay.

As I carefully withdrew leaving the birds undisturbed in their safe haven for the night, I passed up the road by the lake now bordered with golden wild flowers. Looking west I could see not only the connecting Coulee, but the white line of the large Sweetwater beyond the Bridge. From the east a flock of Black Terns came speeding in. From the sunset a golden portico was reflected in the lake, its illumination spreading to a wide golden band reaching across the water. Into the east came a soft pink afterglow, and well up in the sky rode the harvest moon, while the weary harvesters, their day over at last, were wending their way slowly home.

(To be continued)

NOTES ON THE ELEGANT TERN AS A BIRD OF CALIFORNIA

By JOSEPH GRINNELL

(Contribution from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California)

THE Elegant Tern (*Sterna elegans*) is one of the several species of sea birds which nest altogether to the south of the United States and yet which appear at certain times of the year well north of our southern borders. It is listed as a bird of California upon rather meager basis, and some of the general statements made during recent years in regard to the manner of its occurrence, by the present writer among several, are likely to have left the hearer or reader with incorrect impressions. The purpose of the present article is to assemble all that has been published to date with regard to the Elegant Tern as occurring in California, to scrutinize this information closely, and to put on record an increment which has resulted from field work of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.