

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE AVIFAUNA OF FORRESTER ISLAND,
ALASKA

By GEORGE WILLETT

THE WRITER, who had previously spent the summers of 1914-15-16-17 on Forrester Island, off the coast of southeastern Alaska, returned to that locality during 1919, and, though engaged in fishing the greater part of the summer, found time to make a few notes that may add somewhat to our knowledge of the avifauna of this island. (For previous publications on this locality see Heath, Condor, xvii, 1915, pp. 20-41; Willett, Auk, xxxii, 1915, pp. 295-305; Condor, xix, 1917, pp. 15-17; Condor, xx, 1918, p. 85.) Three species are here added to the number known to occur on or in the immediate vicinity of the island, *Puffinus tenuirostris*, *Mergus americanus* and *Hylocichla guttata nanus*.

The occurrence of the Slender-billed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) was ascertained in 1917, but through an oversight was omitted from the published notes of that year. During the first two or three summers spent on the island the writer had several times seen a dark-colored shearwater that appeared to be smaller than *P. griseus*, which latter bird is irregularly common (often abundant), generally during the latter part of the summer. However, realizing the ease with which errors may be made by relying on size alone in a sight record of this kind, no mention of the matter was made in previous articles. On June 21, 1917, while two or three hundred yards off the northern end of the island, a specimen of *Puffinus tenuirostris* was found dead, floating on the water. It was in fair condition, was preserved, and is now in the writer's collection. I am still in doubt as to what proportion of the shearwaters of the locality are referable to this species. During 1919, for some reason not apparent to the writer, shearwaters were much less plentiful than usual, only being seen occasionally and then in small numbers.

Mergus americanus. American Merganser. Two adult male birds of this species were seen at close range off Lowrie Island, at the north end of Forrester Island, on the afternoon of June 12, 1919. They were undoubtedly present only as stragglers.

Hylocichla guttata nanus. Dwarf Hermit Thrush. The writer is forced to admit that his lack of careful observation is probably responsible for the fact that this species has not been previously recorded as summering on the island. A number of thrushes' nests found in previous years were all unquestionably those of *Hylocichla ustulata ustulata*; and, probably more from this fact than any other, the conclusion was arrived at that *ustulata* was the only thrush, exclusive of *Ixoreus*, that was nesting on the island. The first circumstance that tended to prove this conclusion an erroneous one was the finding of a specimen of *H. g. nanus* lying dead near my cabin, May 4, 1919. On dissection this bird proved to be a male and near breeding. After this, particular attention was paid to the thrushes with the result that *nanus* was found to be present in some numbers—probably as plentiful as *ustulata*—during the entire summer. The nest must be a difficult one to locate, as it was not found, though diligently sought for on several occasions. Full-grown young appeared in the vicinity of camp early in July and by the 18th of that month they were quite common. It does not seem plausible that these facts apply solely to the summer of 1919, and it is

the writer's belief that this species is a regular breeding bird in the locality, not having been previously recorded as such, by reason of the fact that it has been confused with its relative, *H. u. ustulata*.

During 1919 most of the breeding birds of the locality were present in the usual numbers and nesting as has been previously described. A considerable proportion (probably at least half) of the Pelagic Cormorants present at the island apparently failed to nest this summer, and three eggs was the complement of most of those that did nest. This irregularity of the species in nesting has been frequently observed by the writer during past seasons, but whether it is caused by fluctuation of food supply or other reasons is still unknown to him. There was apparently as much food for the cormorants this year as during 1917, when all the birds appeared to breed, with four eggs the smallest number observed in a nest and five eggs not unusual.

One nest of the Pigeon Guillemot containing two eggs was found June 12, the first time the writer has noted this number on the island. While this is the usual nest complement along the California coast, none of the nests previously noted by the writer on Forrester Island (probably a dozen or more), contained more than one egg or young.

Seven nests of the Townsend Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca townsendi*) were observed on various dates between May 26 and July 5. As usual, the situations of these nests varied greatly, two being well up in trees, two on the ground, and the others among moss and grass on sides of decayed stumps and fallen logs. Four out of these seven nests contained four eggs each, a number found very rarely during previous years, three being the usual complement.

Out of four Lutescent Warblers' nests noted, three contained five eggs each and the other four, a rather large average for sets of this bird.

Unusually rough weather during most of the early part of the month of May made travelling on the water very difficult or impossible, consequently few notes on the migratory water birds were obtained. Pacific Loons, though not so abundant as during some former springs, were frequently seen flying northward from May 2 to May 20, and one was noted as late as June 7. Several Sabine Gulls were observed outside the island June 8, the only time the species was seen during the summer. An immature Bonaparte Gull appeared in the bay July 26, the second record for the locality. Large flocks of Northern Phalaropes arrived June 12, and the species was rather common for several days thereafter.

Aleutian Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis sandwichensis*) were common during the spring migration from May 6 to 20 and were seen in diminished numbers until May 26. Golden-crowned Sparrows were unusually plentiful from May 8 to 19, and White-winged Crossbills were noted on two occasions, on May 15, when several large flocks were seen at the south end of the island, and May 24, when a flock of half a dozen birds appeared at camp. Sitka Crossbills were more or less plentiful during the entire summer, but no indication of their breeding was noted.

Marbled Murrelets with full-grown young appeared July 31 and were common at the time of our departure from the island, August 8.

Craig, Alaska, November 15, 1919.