that they were Aleutian Terns. I have even known of several of them having been collected for this species and their identity not discovered until some time later.

In view of the above facts it seems as if the probable breeding of the Aleutian Tern in southeastern Alaska is open to doubt unless specimens of the birds were actually taken.—F. SEYMOUR HERSEY, *Taunton, Massachusetts, August 14, 1920.*

Comments upon the Safety of Sea Birds and upon the "Probable" Occurrence of the Northern Bald Eagle in California.—In THE CONDOR for May-June, 1920, appear two articles upon which the undersigned seeks the privilege of commenting.

The article by J. Grinnell on page 101, entitled "The Existence of Sea Birds a Relatively Safe One," appears to the writer, after a number of years careful study of this very question, to be most timely and accurate and not open to any criticism whatever. The only reason for taking up the matter here is a desire to enlarge somewhat on the theme of the original article.

We are all familiar with the frequent allusions to the "sea birds killed by storms" that have appeared in print in times past. A number of years ago the writer began to visit the California beaches after severe storms, expecting to find dead and crippled sea birds plentiful. This was not found to be the case, however, and, after several years observation along the beaches and the examination of hundreds of dead birds, the conclusion was arrived at that the storms have nothing whatever to do with the birds found dead along shore. In fact the greatest numbers of dead birds were noted at times when there had been no storms for weeks. Another point to be considered is that birds killed or crippled by storms blowing on-shore would still be fat when they reached the beach. On the contrary, a great percentage of the shearwaters, fulmars and other birds found dead along our beaches are in a more or less emaciated condition, evidence that they died of disease. Furthermore, in many cases their internal organs were swarming with parasites. It is the writer's belief that sea birds, particualrly those that migrate in companies, are at times subject to epidemics to which large numbers succumb and that this fact is responsible for the numbers of dead birds on the beaches at certain times, storms having nothing whatever to do with it.

The most striking example known to the writer of the ability of sea birds to withstand severe weather conditions is that of the young of the Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*). At midnight, with the aid of the light of a lantern, the writer has watched these downy chicks, not more than three or four days old, dive through the surf in response to the cry of the parent bird and head out to sea into the teeth of a southeasterly gale, and this at a time when boulders weighing a hundred pounds or more were being rolled up and down the beach like so many pebbles. Furthermore, all evidence points to the fact that these young birds remain on the open sea many miles from land until fully grown, in spite of the fact that in this latitude severe gales are frequent through the summer months. In eight seasons spent in this region the writer has never seen a young murrelet anywhere near the shore after it had once taken to the water. In fact, the half-grown young had never been noted at all until this season (1920), when, on July 21, A. M. Bailey and the writer secured a pair of adult birds and a pair of young about two-thirds grown in the middle of the channel between Forrester and Dall islands, ten or twelve miles off-shore.

The second article upon which the writer desires to comment is the one by Mr. J. H. Fleming, entitled "The Northern Bald Eagle as a Probable Californian Bird" (page 110). Now, with all due regard to the high ornithological standing of the author of this note, it seems to the writer that the evidence submitted is far too inconclusive to serve as a basis for recording the Northern Bald Eagle as a "probable" Californian bird.

Let us consider briefly the evidence as presented. In the beginning of the article Mr. Fleming states that the Northern Bald Eagle "should occur at least as a migrant". This statement is made arbitrarily without presentation of any facts tending to show that the Northern Bald Eagle in the southwestern portion of its range is to any extent migratory. The writer, whose experience with this bird in southeastern Alaska covers a period of eight years, finds that it is, in the extreme southeastern part of Alaska at least, resident throughout the year, being fully as abundant in winter as in summer. Near Craig, Prince of Wales Island, during the winter of 1919-20, several pairs of birds

were noted that remained in the vicinity of their nests throughout the entire winter, eggs being laid in April.

As to the difference of a few millimeters in wing length: How much value should be attached to this feature in considering an individual of a race known to show such a vast amount of variation in size, individually? The writer has measured several extra small adult birds killed in southeastern Alaska that, if considered from point of size alone, would necessarily have to be referred to the southern form. It is improbable that any CONDOR reader would consider even momentarily the recording of the southern bird from Alaska on this evidence; so, would not the old saying "It's a poor rule that won't work both ways" pertain to this case?

The fact is that there is no hard and fast line of demarcation between the two forms of the Bald Eagle. The size difference is only an *average* difference. The northern form *averages* larger than the southern form, and individual variants may be found within the known range of either form that, if considered from a standpoint of size alone, could be referred to the other subspecies.

In view of these facts it seems to the writer that the preponderance of evidence points to the fact that Mr. Fleming's Lakeport bird is an unusually large individual of the Southern Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus leucocephalus*) and may not be properly considered as demonstrating even the "probable" occurrence of the northern form in California.—G. WILLETT, *Forrester Island, Alaska, August 5, 1920.*

Eastern Fox Sparrow at Seattle.—On February 15, 1920, at Renton, a small town a few miles southeast of Seattle, Washington, a typical Eastern Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca iliaca*) was secured as it fed in a thicket bordering an open field with a miscellaneous gathering of Rusty Song Sparrows and Oregon Towhees. Even before it was shot its dissimilarity to the several subspecies of Fox Sparrows that occur here was easily noticeable, and once in the hand there was no question as to its identity. This is as far as I know, the first record for this species for the state of Washington. The specimen itself is now in the collection of Mr. D. E. Brown, of Seattle.—THOS. D. BURLEIGH, *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 6, 1920.*

The Yellow-headed Blackbird Flocking with Brewer Blackbirds.—While passing through Lake Valley on August 12, 1920, about two miles north of Meyers, El Dorado County, a flock of about seventy-five Brewer Blackbirds (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) flushed from the road and flew to a lodgepole pine tree in the adjoining field about a hundred yards distant. In their midst was a single Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) showing in striking contrast. I took the bird, which proved to be a young male.

The Yellow-headed Blackbird is frequently associated with Red-winged Blackbirds, and Coues (Birds of the Northwest, 1874, p. 190) mentions them flocking with Cowbirds, but its presence with Brewer Blackbirds seems rather unusual, and all the more strange as there were no Redwings seen in the vicinity.—FRANK N. BASSETT, *Alameda, California, August 27, 1920.*

Note on the Nesting Habits of the Osprey in Yellowstone Park.—On the spires of rock which stand up perpendicularly from the steep sides of the Canyon of the Yellowstone River in the Yellowstone National Park are a large number of nests of the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*). All nests observed from the side of the canyon were without any shelter or protection of any kind. They were great collections of sticks resting on the rock, and apparently a new nest was built on top of the nest of the preceding year or years. At the time of our visit to the Yellowstone, in July, 1920, a young bird was observed flopping about in one nest, and an adult bird was standing on the side of the nest with the back to the sun so as to project its shadow directly into the nest. We watched this nest for fully an hour and during all that time the adult bird's shadow was thrown into the center of the nest. The parent bird was clearly keeping the young in the shade. During all the time of the observation the sun was shining brightly and the weather was warm.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *Berkeley, California, September 8, 1920.*