

BIRD RECORDS FROM CRAIG, ALASKA

By G. WILLETT

Aechmophorus occidentalis. Western Grebe. Specimen taken at Craig, October 7, 1921.

Larus californicus. California Gull. A bird of this species was found dead on the beach September 21, 1921. It had been partially eaten by a hawk or an eagle. The head and one wing were preserved.

Lophodytes cucullatus. Hooded Merganser. Three females or immature males observed at close range, November 24, 1922. While I was hidden on the beach shortly after daylight on the above date awaiting an expected flight of geese, these three birds swam around in shallow water near shore catching small fish. At times they approached within fifteen feet of my hiding place.

Anser albifrons albifrons. White-fronted Goose. A late fall record for this locality is of a pair of adult birds shot November 8, 1922. The male was preserved.

Fulica americana. Coot. Two specimens taken near Craig docks late in the fall of 1921: a female, November 26, and a male, December 25.

Tringa canutus. Knot. Female taken May 13, 1922. Though this bird probably passes Craig in considerable numbers, it would seem that it rarely stops, as the taking of this bird constitutes the only record secured during several years spent in the locality. The bird was on a small rocky islet in company with Surf Birds (*Aphriza virgata*).

Sturnella neglecta. Western Meadowlark. On October 21, 1921, while walking along the shore on Fish Egg Island, near Craig, the writer flushed a meadowlark from the beach grass. The bird was very wild and, though shot at at long range several times, was not then secured. Upon returning to the same locality the following morning (October 22), the bird was again flushed and was finally shot from a spruce tree to which it had flown. It is typical of the western species.

Passerculus sandwichensis savanna. Savannah Sparrow. This species apparently occurs later in the fall than any other migrant land bird. It is usually rather common throughout September and October and is occasional in early November. The latest record is of a bird seen November 11, 1921. The latest seen the past fall (1922) was on November 5. The earliest fall record is of several seen on Dall Island, August 28, 1921.

Passerella iliaca townsendi. Townsend Fox Sparrow. In a previous note (Condor, xxiii, 1921, pp. 36-37), the writer recorded this bird as occurring commonly at Craig during the winter of 1919-20, thus modifying considerably Swarth's definition of its winter range (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., xxi, 1920, pp. 75-224). Later events have shown that it must not be assumed that the species winters regularly in the region; in fact, it may prove that its common occurrence during the winter of 1919-20 must be considered unusual.

The winter of 1920-21 was spent by the writer at Wrangell, in which locality no fox sparrows were noted between October 17, 1920, and April 13, 1921. In May, 1921, the writer returned to Craig and has resided there since that time. During the following summer several pairs of Townsend Fox Sparrows nested in brush thickets around the town. They were common until about August 15 and rare thereafter until September 17, on which date they were common for one day only. They were not seen later in the fall and were apparently entirely absent during the following winter. In the spring of 1922 the first noted was a single bird on April 22; two or three were seen the following day, they became quite common on April 25, and remained so throughout the past summer. They were frequently noted in Craig until September 22, several were found near the summit of a nearby mountain, September 30, and two or three were seen in Craig, October 27. They have not been further noted this fall and at the present writing (November 29) are apparently absent from the region. These records would indicate that the occurrence of the Townsend Fox Sparrow in southeastern Alaska in winter is at least irregular.

It is interesting to note that practically the same facts apply to the occurrence here of another bird, the Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*). This species, which breeds

in various parts of this section, wintered here abundantly during the winter of 1919-20, but has not been seen since during the winter months.

The writer has been unable to connect the occurrence of these two birds during the winter of 1919-20 with prevailing weather conditions. During that winter the cold was as severe as during any of those that have followed it. The present fall is the mildest known in the vicinity for many years, very little frost having appeared, and streams and lakes being entirely free from ice at time of this writing. Still these two birds have apparently been gone from the region for a month or more.

Lanius borealis. Northern Shrike. A male taken on Fish Egg Island November 30, 1921, is the only example of the species seen in this locality to date.

Craig, Alaska, November 29, 1922.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A Winter Record of the Spotted Sandpiper for the Olympia Peninsula.—On January 31, 1923, while walking along a rocky beach of the Straits of Juan de Fuca, about nine miles west of Port Angeles, Washington, I was surprised to flush a Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*). The bird flew out over the water and down the beach a short distance where it alighted. I followed it back and forth over the rocky beach for some time, getting within a few feet of it on several occasions. On rounding a point another bird was found. On the return trip an hour or so later both birds were again noted and watched for some time. While I know this species has occasionally been taken on the Oregon and Washington coast in winter, this is my first record.—IRA N. GABRIELSON, *Portland, Oregon, March 15, 1923.*

Predatory Brewer Blackbirds.—Several years ago, in eastern Oregon, I encountered my first murderous blackbird. My attention was attracted to a pair of Brewer Sparrows that were frantically fluttering about a Brewer Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) that seemed to be trying to hide from the view of the world some object that was being held between the feet and hidden by the drooping wings. At intervals, when the sparrows permitted, vigorous blows were delivered at the victim, which seemed to be still struggling.

I forced the blackbird to relinquish its prey, which I found to be a fledgling sparrow, seemingly just from the nest, that had been all but brained by its assailant.

The second case of murderous assault was witnessed the past summer in Balboa Park, San Diego. A Brewer Blackbird was seen pounding a suspicious object, as described in the first instance, which when identified was found to be a young Green-backed Goldfinch only a week, or perhaps less, from the egg. The bird must have been taken from the nest, as it was far too small to have reached the rim and fallen over.

The murderer in the first instance abandoned its prey on my approach, but the second refused to give up what it seemed to consider its lawful dinner and several times flew with it to a distance of fifty feet, where it renewed its efforts to reduce the nestling to a size that would permit of its being swallowed.—A. W. ANTHONY, *San Diego, California, March 19, 1923.*

The Clark Nutcracker at Pacific Grove, California.—A Clark Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) appeared in our dooryard on February 2, 1923, and another of the same bird was observed a few blocks distant on the 8th. We hope this may be the vanguard of a wave such as visited the Monterey region in 1919-1920.—A. B. and W. K. FISHER, *Pacific Grove, California, February 8, 1923.*

Random Notes from the Southern Border of California.—Mountain Plover. *Podiceps montanus*. None observed in the Chino region, but four seen in an alfalfa field near Brawley, Imperial County, January 2, 1923.

Ruddy Turnstone. *Arenaria interpres morinella*. One feeding with Black-bellied Plover on a mud flat in False Bay, San Diego, December 29, 1922.