

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Notes on Winter Bird Roosts.**—During January and February, 1928, small flocks of from eight to twenty Lawrence Goldfinches (*Spinus lawrencei*) were common about my home on the outskirts of East San Diego, California. These birds were to be seen daily feeding on the seeds of the greasewood (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*). Some fifty or more roosted nightly in a large clump of lemonadeberry bush (*Rhus integrifolia*) in the center of a grassy patch in a nearby canyon. They were flushed from this bush at dusk and also at dawn on several occasions.

During the first two months of 1929 not even one Lawrence Goldfinch was seen in our neighborhood, but we had other bird visitors. Whenever I visited the canyon at dusk I saw flock after flock of Western Robins (*Turdus migratorius propinquus*) and Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) coming from the direction of San Diego and alighting in the bushes. After some flying back and forth they settled down for the night, chiefly in the large clumps of lemonadeberry bush, laurel-leaved sumac (*Rhus laurina*), toyon (*Photinia arbutifolia*) and holly-leaved cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), and in the thickets of scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*). At dawn, hundreds of these birds were to be seen in the canyon until about sunrise when flock after flock would head back toward the city. These two species were common in the city during the day wherever berry-bearing shrubs or trees afforded them food. I was at a loss to understand why these birds should leave the partial safety of the city with the excellent and secluded roosting places available in Balboa Park for the low brush of this canyon where they were far more open to attack by bird and mammal predators. I found the remains of several that had been killed, and I also found two robins that must have been shot by rabbit hunters.

During this same period and about a mile from the canyon where the robins and waxwings roosted I often saw Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax naevius*) at sunset winging their way over the business section of East San Diego. After watching them on several evenings I finally saw them leaving a cluster of eucalyptus trees in a yard just a block and a half from one of the most traveled streets in the city and on the very edge of the business section. Without doubt these birds spent their days in these trees from which they were seen to emerge on several subsequent evenings and then wing their way toward the open country. Aside from small ornamental pools in yards, the nearest water containing fish was at least a mile and a half distant. Three immatures seen on February 14 were the most seen at one time, but a few evenings later a beautiful adult was seen to leave its roost in a Monterey cypress not more than fifteen feet above a sidewalk in the residential section. On another occasion, an immature Night Heron was seen to alight in a yard near a little pool where Pacific tree frogs (*Hyla regilla*) were singing, but it was immediately frightened away by the movements of a woman working among the flowers in the same yard. In spite of the large size and conspicuous appearance of these birds and the loud "qwonks" which they frequently uttered in flight, no one except myself, so far as I could observe, noted their presence in the city.—FRANK F. GANDER, *O'Rourke Zoological Institute, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, August 15, 1929.*

**Least Bittern in California in Winter.**—A female Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) was taken by R. B. Moran at Sunset Beach, Orange County, California, December 10, 1927. The bird was brought to me in the flesh by Mr. Moran, who donated it to the museum. It was mounted and is now no. 14400, collection Los Angeles Museum.—G. WILLET, *Los Angeles Museum, October 31, 1929.*

**A Gull with Feathered Feet.**—The presence or absence of feathers on the feet of birds is usually regarded as of generic value. Single or straggling feathers are occasionally present on the feet of species that are normally quite bare; and such feathers have been noted by the writer on the feet of such diverse species as a Gyrfalcon and a Pileated Woodpecker. A very notable instance is the feathered tarsi of a Western Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo borealis calurus*) in the National Museum of Canada at Ottawa.

The persistent little bunch of feathers above the hind toe in the Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) is a case where a peculiarity has become permanent. This feature is not present in any other species of this genus. But a regular series of feathers on the tarsus and middle toe of each foot in a water bird is a notable freak. Such a condition exists in a juvenile gull, *Larus glaucescens*, taken by Mr. Arthur Peake at Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, on September 19, 1929.

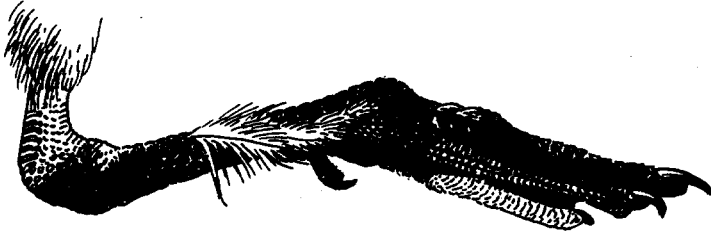


Fig. 26. FOOT OF YOUNG *Larus glaucescens*, SHOWING FEATHERS ON TARSUS AND TOES; FEMALE, DEPARTURE BAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SEPTEMBER 19, 1929.

On the outside of each tarsus are nine or ten well developed feathers, and on the first joint of the middle toe there is a similar number of poorly developed feathers; those on the tarsus are smoke gray, on the toes somewhat paler. The longest feather is 27 millimeters long. Mr. Peake has kindly donated the specimen to the writer's collection. It is otherwise notable in being a good example of the very dark phase of the juvenile of this gull, as dark as the darkest individuals of the Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus smithsonianus*; but the primaries and rectrices are dark sooty gray instead of black. The underparts, however, are darker than in any of the large gulls.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, B. C.*, November 9, 1929.

**Miscellaneous Notes on some British Columbia Birds.**—*Larus hyperboreus*. Glaucous Gull. On January 14, 1928, while on the wharf at Okanagan Landing, the writer watched a Glaucous Gull for half an hour at distances varying from thirty to fifty feet and was thoroughly satisfied as to its identity. This was an immature bird in the creamy white plumage of the second year. It was in attendance on a flock of coots that were engaged in diving for apple parings which had been thrown overboard from the steamer. When a coot rose to the surface with an apple paring hanging from its bill the gull immediately would leave the water and, with bill open and spread feet held downward, pursue the coot who meanwhile would be swimming in a straight line out of the flock. The apple paring held in the bill would be shaken several times and eventually swallowed before the clumsily pursuing gull could steal it. This happened again and again and only once was the gull successful. On this occasion it splashed into the water and seized the coot by the feathers of the back, whereupon the apple paring promptly changed hands, or rather, bills.

*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. White Pelican. On May 15, 1928, five White Pelicans were seen flying north over Okanagan Landing. This species is a scarce migrant in the Okanagan Valley but is said to occur regularly during migrations in the Nicola Valley, some fifty miles west. This would be the most likely route to the Cariboo country where the species has been reported breeding (in 1899 at Sucker Lake, twenty-five miles northwest of Quesnel, according to Brooks and Swarth). There is said to be a breeding colony at Anahim Lake, which is approximately one hundred miles southwest of Quesnel. This colony was reported in 1922 by a former game warden who patrolled the district.

*Mareca penelope*. European Widgeon. A male European Widgeon in immature plumage was taken in Haro Strait, near Bare Island, British Columbia, on January 3, 1929, by Mr. Walter Burton of Victoria, British Columbia. This specimen is in the writer's collection.