

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A Note on the Color of the Eye of the Bush-tit.—During the past several years attention has been called to the two types of eye coloration in *Psaltriparus minimus*. It has been supposed by one writer that dark eyes and light eyes occur independently of age, sex, or season, by another that the eyes of adults are light and those of young dark. Still a third believes the opposite to be true, namely, that juveniles are light eyed and the adults dark. My own experience has been so uniformly different from all of these that the following note is submitted.

All male Bush-tits collected and prepared by myself since 1914 (I believe without exception) have had dark eyes regardless of age or season. Similarly, all females, regardless of age or season, have had light eyes. I do not for a moment contradict the direct statements of the very competent observers who have already published notes on this subject, but in the hundred-odd specimens which have been prepared since I first noticed the sex differences (in the subspecies *plumbeus*) in 1914, there have been no exceptions that I can recall. This experience includes the subspecies *californicus*, *plumbeus*, and *cecaumenorum*. Differing opinions are offered by Grinnell and Storer (Animal Life in the Yosemite, 1924, p. 580), the Micheners (Condor, 30, 1928, p. 133), and Swarth (Proc. Calif. Acad. Sci., ser. 4, 18, 1929, p. 344).—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *San Diego Society of Natural History, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, June 25, 1935.*

Some Observations on the Feeding Habits and Eye-shine of the Poor-will.—If one climbs to the summit of Ben Lomond in the Santa Cruz Mountains, California, and looks off toward Monterey Bay he can trace the outlines of an ancient inlet by the line of sand dunes which lie between the mountain top and the bay. These dunes are partly clothed by oaks and knob-cone pines, yellow pines, manzanita, spiraea and bush-poppy. They form a marked contrast with the valleys filled with redwoods, Douglas fir and madrones and also with the mountains which rise above the dunes and are densely wooded with these same trees of the humid coast belt.

Through these sandy hills a road was cut a few winters ago to serve as a detour during the construction of a bridge over the San Lorenzo River on the line of the main highway which runs from Santa Cruz to the Big Basin. With the completion of the bridge, the sandhill road became a fairly unfrequented road of the kind so useful to the bird watcher.

On the evening of August 12, 1934, my husband and I were enjoying an evening drive over this pleasant by-road when a bird fluttered up just in front of the car. A few rods farther on a bird perched on the ground at the side of the road and remained there quietly while we passed. When we reached the bottom of the hill we turned back to try to get another look at what I thought must be a Poor-will (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii californicus*). Almost immediately our attention was attracted to a brilliant spot of light a hundred yards ahead. We stopped and I advanced with a flashlight to ascertain the source of the light which was the color of a red-hot coal. When I was about fifteen feet away a bird flew up from the spot, circled over the adjacent meadow and alighted on an electric pole just above my head. After a few seconds it flew again and disappeared in the distance.

Using this eye-shine as a clue and adjusting our lights for distance, we drove slowly up the hill and soon spotted the red-hot coal again. This time we proceeded slowly and stopped twenty feet from the bird. To our surprise the Poor-will began to catch moths in the area lighted by the car. Even after the bird became invisible as it left the roadway we could still see the eye-shine.

A quarter of a mile farther on, the telltale light appeared again, and when we stopped, the bird came so close that the hood of the car prevented us from seeing it. Once it remained at the side of the road while we passed and once it allowed me to approach on foot to within six feet.

The next evening we went out "poor-willing" again. No birds were seen during early twilight, but when it was almost dark the light appeared at the side of the road as before. If we turned out the headlights and I approached with a flashlight the Poor-will refused to allow me to come nearer than ten feet. But if we remained in the car with the headlights turned on, it continued to feed as long as we cared to remain. We could not determine whether it was always the same bird which re-

appeared at different points along the roadway or whether it was perhaps a family group. Our experience the first evening made us suspect that there were more than one bird.

Our next opportunity to visit the region came on September 1 and 2, when no Poor-will was seen. This spring we have taken two evening drives on the sandhill road. The first one, on May 3, was without result but the second on May 22 was more successful. After having driven over the hill and back three times we were returning home with a negative verdict when a Poor-will fluttered across the road just in front of our windshield. Returning to the spot we got the eye-shine for a split second as the bird came into view around a curve. But it was headlight shy and flew the instant the light struck. However, these two observations led me to conclude that the birds probably nest on this sandy hill.

In August numberless moths were flitting in front of our headlights, but in May moths were few and far between. Whether it was this scarcity which led to the difference in behavior or whether it was the secretive instinct of the breeding season I cannot say. It is even possible that in August we were seeing young birds not yet wise enough to recognize the danger attendant upon too great familiarity with the automobile.

As I said before, the eye-shine was the color of a live coal. Also the eye looked very large in proportion to the size of the bird. Not once did we get the reflection from both eyes at the same time; nor did we hear any sound either vocal or mechanical in connection with its flight. So long as the bird perched on the ground the spot of light was motionless and showed no turning of the head from side to side.

After having known Poor-wills for many years only from the call, it was a distinct pleasure to see the bird in action and to learn something at first hand concerning its habits.—AMELIA SANBORN ALLEN, *Berkeley, California, May 23, 1935.*

Glaucous Gull on the British Columbia Coast.—At Departure Bay, near Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, during the month of March, 1928, and during the period February 25 to March 25, 1929, one or more Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*) was encountered almost daily; 5 were seen on March 28, 1928, and 3 were in sight at one time on March 20, 1929. The total number observed was 12 in 1928 and 10 in 1929. All were young birds in various stages of immaturity. So far as I am aware no adult Glaucous Gulls have been reported from British Columbia. In the totals given, which are estimated, allowance has been made for individuals which might have been seen more than once; but, as a matter of fact, many of these birds possessed some character of plumage which served to identify them individually. In no instance was a bird so distinguished seen more than once, a fact which points to their being transients. Invariably they were among the large flocks of Glaucous-winged Gulls that had been attracted by local spawnings of herring.

At first, mistakes in identification were made, examples of immature *glaucescens* with bleached primaries and light-colored backs (also bleached) being mistaken for immature *hyperboreus*. But on examining specimens of the latter a character was noted which afterward served as an identification mark in the field. I refer to the coloration of the bill, which in immature birds is ivory, lightly shaded with pale yellow or vinaceous, except for the terminal one-third which is abruptly dusky. This holds good with all but one of the immature specimens of the species I have examined. In the case of *Larus glaucescens*, birds of the year have a uniformly dark bill, while in older birds the otherwise light-colored bill is clouded with areas of dusky purple that contract as age progresses. Never, so far as I am aware, does there occur in this species the definitely bi-colored bill characteristic of immature *hyperboreus*.

The exception noted is a male taken on March 28, 1928. This specimen apparently is in the third winter plumage, the yellow-shafted primaries are white, secondaries and tertials largely drab gray, the unmarked rectrices pale ecru drab with white edges, and the mantle chiefly pale neutral gray. This is the oldest of five specimens collected. The coloration of the bill while fresh was ivory and pale vinaceous blotched with benzo brown and with a subterminal, irregular blotch of dusky extended along to a point below the nostril. This particular color-combination is common in *Larus glaucescens* of similar age. The possibility of this specimen being a hybrid between *Larus hyperboreus* and *Larus glaucescens* has been considered.

On March 14, 1929, I was concealed near the edge of a cliff watching a flock