

In the San Joaquin Valley, American Egrets appear to have become reestablished in numbers earlier. Between 30 and 40 individuals were noted near Los Baños, June 21, 1925. The existence of a thriving colony of about 50 pairs south of Gustine is known to many bird students.

Egretta thula brewsteri. Snowy Egret. Autumn observations in the Sacramento Valley over the past 10 years indicate this species to be present in the above area in a ratio of about 1 to 20 as compared with the larger form. An unusual number of small egrets, in pairs totalling 10 birds, was noted 5 miles east of Delevan, Colusa County, February 16, 1929.

Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli. Black-crowned Night Heron. This is another species that has been driven by man from a rookery in the eucalyptuses of Cut-off Slough, Suisun Marsh. Small mummified young, presumably of the preceding year, were found in old nests there on March 28, 1936. A few adults were noted near-by at the time, but no fresh nests were in evidence.

A breeding colony has persisted for many years on the northern part of Belvedere Island, Marin County. Sets of eggs with advanced incubation were taken there April 22, 1918, and April 2, 1920, at which dates about 25 pairs were nesting. Last visited July 18, 1938, no herons were seen, but 31 nests in live oaks and bays bore evidences of having been used this season. Since the earlier visits, houses have been built near the colony and more recently the brush has been cleared from the land beneath the nesting trees so that the birds have much less privacy than formerly. It appears that this colony will not persist much longer.

Ixobrychus exilis hesperis. Western Least Bittern. Supposed to be summer visitant only to northern California. C. C. McGettigan has a mounted male specimen taken on the Greenhead Club, 6 miles west of Pennington, Sutter County, December 28, 1924. I saw the bird in the flesh. Exactly six years later (December 28, 1930) my wife and I were gunning on the same grounds from a bulrush "island" 15 feet in diameter, when a Least Bittern flew from the shore to alight at arm's length in the rushes. Here we watched it for many minutes, unwilling to take it at such close range with heavy duck guns. Efforts to drive it to flight failed and it remained while several shots were fired at ducks. I intended to keep watch that it did not fly away and to collect it from a distance after the hunt, but it evidently left the thicket when we were not watching, as search later on failed to divulge its presence. Another Least Bittern was seen in this locality, June 13, 1925. These records indicate that this elusive species is probably resident in the Sacramento Valley.

A set of five Least Bittern's eggs, incubation advanced, was taken from a bulrush thicket three miles south of Los Baños, June 10, 1928. Neither parent was seen.—JAMES MOFFITT, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, August 20, 1938.*

The White-tailed Ptarmigan of Vancouver Island.—In commenting on six juvenile specimens of White-tailed Ptarmigan collected by him on the mountains bordering Great Central Lake, Vancouver Island, H. S. Swarth (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 10, 1912, p. 25) first pointed out the distinctive black and white head and neck color of the Vancouver Island birds as compared with other White-tailed Ptarmigan. Except for two juveniles collected on Crown Mountain by W. B. Anderson in 1912, and a winter adult taken near Cowichan Lake by Dr. Stoker in 1905, Swarth's specimens, in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, were at that time the sole representatives of the Vancouver Island ptarmigan. During the past summer the author and P. W. Martin of Victoria, B. C., in the interests of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, collected a series of ten specimens on Mount Arrowsmith.

Comparison of these specimens with a large series of *Lagopus leucurus leucurus* from various points on the mainland of British Columbia, and with specimens of *Lagopus leucurus rainierensis* from Mount Rainier, Washington, kindly loaned to us from the Biological Survey collection of the United States National Museum by Dr. H. C. Oberholser, makes it clear that the insular conditions of Vancouver Island have fostered the development of a race of ptarmigan differing markedly from all adjacent races. For this race I propose the name

Lagopus leucurus saxatilis, new subspecies

Type.—Male adult, no. 8324, coll. B. C. Provincial Museum; Mount Arrowsmith, Vancouver Island, B. C., 6000 feet altitude; September 11, 1938; collected by I. McT. Cowan and P. W. Martin; original number 1580.

Diagnosis.—Like *Lagopus leucurus leucurus* but larger, with longer tail; with larger, more hooked bill; head and neck black and white without, or almost without, buffy wash; shafts of primaries black.

Range.—So far as known, confined to the higher peaks of Vancouver Island.

Specimens examined.—All from Vancouver Island, B. C.: Mount Arrowsmith, 10; Crown Mountain, near Upper Campbell Lake, 1; mountains at head of Cowichan Lake, 1.

Measurements.—Average, maximum and minimum measurements of five adult males: Total length (in the flesh) 366 mm. (375–358); tail 104 (106–100); wing 181 (187–178); exposed culmen 17.4 (18–16); nostril to tip 10.9 (11–10.5); depth of bill 8.7 (9–8). One adult female measures: Total length 350 mm.; wing 172; exposed culmen 18; nostril to tip 11.2; depth of bill 7.6.



Fig. 27. Comparison of bill shape in adult males of three races of White-tailed Ptarmigan: (a) *Lagopus leucurus leucurus*, no. 350, coll. K. Racey, Alta Lake, B. C.; (b) *L. l. saxatilis*, no. 8324, Provincial Museum, Mount Arrowsmith, Vancouver Island, B. C.; (c) *L. l. rainierensis*, no. 269376, Biol. Survey coll., Mount Rainier, Washington.

Comparisons.—Twelve specimens of the Vancouver Island ptarmigan are available for study. Of these, five are adult males in preliminary winter plumage (for terminology, see Dwight, Auk, vol. 17, 1900, p. 149), one adult female in preliminary winter plumage, one adult male in winter plumage, and five are young birds in the transition from juvenal to first winter plumage. In comparison with 26 specimens from Atlin, Revelstoke, Robson and Alta Lake, on the mainland of British Columbia, these differ in having the first primary quill black or shaded with black in 100% rather than 15% of the specimens examined. The same difference, though to a less degree, persists in the rest of the primary series.

Adult males of *saxatilis* differ from comparable birds from the mainland of British Columbia, and from *rainierensis*, in larger size, longer tail, larger, more hooked bill; in having head and neck clear black and white, with little or no admixture of brownish in the plumage, and ochres of the back and flanks averaging richer, browner and less gray.

The single adult female of *saxatilis* differs from all comparable mainland birds in having the ground color of the dorsal region and sides of the breast rich brown rather than grayish or brownish gray.

The juveniles differ as markedly as do the adults. Vancouver Island birds have the black and white barring of the head and neck slightly more subdued than the adults and with a tendency to more brownish in the ground color; nevertheless in comparison with the even brownish gray, finely speckled with black and white characteristic of the mainland birds the difference is striking. The juvenile specimens of *saxatilis* differ further in having the backs browner and more heavily mottled with black.

Females and juveniles of *Lagopus leucurus rainierensis* differ from comparable specimens of *saxatilis* in having the bill smaller and nearly straight rather than strongly hooked; they differ further in that the head and neck lack the strong black and white barring.—IAN McTAGGART COWAN, Provincial Museum, Victoria, B. C., November 7, 1938.

Red-tailed Hawk as Possible Enemy of Skunk.—On February 13, 1938, I found dead at the roadside between Castroville and Monterey, California, a Western Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo borealis calurus*). The cause of death was not ascertained, but the feathers of the bird's breast and belly were soaked with the pungent musk (fluid) of skunk. Certainly the two animals had been close together, if not in contact; otherwise the feathers could hardly have been as thoroughly saturated as they were with musk.—ALBERT C. HAWBECKER, 34a Jefferson Street, Watsonville, California, November 23, 1938.

Old-squaw Taken at San Diego, California.—As there appears to be no record of the capture of an Old-squaw (*Clangula hyemalis*) in southern California waters since 1921 (Anthony, Auk, vol. 39, 1922, p. 104), it may be worthy of note that I secured a specimen of this duck on San Diego Bay, November 11, 1938. The bird was a female in typical winter plumage, and it is now specimen no. 17944 in the collection of the San Diego Society of Natural History. There was also at this time an unusual number of White-winged Scoters (*Melanitta deglandi*) on the bay, perhaps 500 individuals in all—more than I had ever previously observed.—J. W. SEFTON, JR., San Diego Society of Natural History, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, December 5, 1938.