

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Northern Phalaropes and Xantus Murrelet Associated with Fishes.**—In August and September of 1951 the fisheries research vessel "Yellowfin" was operating in the area between Cedros and Asunción islands, Baja California, México. While trolling offshore Asunción Island (27° 4.6' N, 114° 17.2' W), two common dolphins (*Coryphaena hippurus*) were taken at 4:15 p.m. on August 29. One of these, a male, had its stomach stuffed with a conglomerate which was found to be the distinguishable remains of four Northern Phalaropes (*Lobipes lobatus*). Digestion had proceeded to the stage where dorsal surfaces of the skulls were gone. Bills, feet, and feathers were in such good condition as to allow comparison with museum specimens and to verify the field identification. Apparently these birds had been taken from a group at about the same time.

On September 5 at 2 a.m. the ship was occupying a station off Cedros Island. A Xantus Murrelet (*Endomychura hypoleuca*) was observed swimming under water amidst a mixed school of four-inch anchovies (*Engraulis* sp.) and Pacific sardines (*Sardinops caerulea*). These fish were slowly milling under a 1500-watt bulb suspended over the side to attract them. One characteristic posture was that in which the bird dipped its head under the water, stretched its neck, and seemed to peer intently into the brilliantly lighted area. After this was repeated several times it would dive and move about half a foot beneath the surface in irregular circles six feet in diameter. It never took a fish, but occasionally it pursued one. The bird swam with its wings rigidly half open and feet trailing. The feet were never seen to move. Since the bird was observed from directly overhead, any movement of the feet in the vertical plane could not have been easily seen.

Sometimes when the murrelet was sitting on the water, one of the small fishes would "flip" behind it. This would alarm the bird, and it would fly off a dozen feet in the typical jerky, uncertain flight we have observed seabirds display under bright lights at night.—ROBERT L. EBERHARDT, *Bureau of Marine Fisheries, Department of Fish and Game, San Pedro, California, February 15, 1952.*

**Geographic Variation in the Horned Grebe.**—The Horned Grebe (*Colymbus auritus*) has been consistently treated in the literature as a uniform holarctic species. This is at variance with its congeners, *C. caspicus* and *C. griseigena*, both of which have differentiated into New and Old World subspecies. It seemed logical to compare samples of the New and Old World populations of *C. auritus* to determine whether a similar differentiation had taken place. Examination of the extensive series of this species in the American Museum of Natural History and the United States National Museum revealed definite characters by means of which these two populations of Horned Grebe may be separated.

European specimens average darker and blacker on the back than American specimens, which are grayer. The contrasting light gray feather edgings of the back, well marked in American birds, are darker and less conspicuous, sometimes virtually absent in European specimens in comparable plumage. In breeding plumage, the brownish stripe through the eye averages much darker in European birds. All Old World specimens seen have the preorbital part of the stripe dark chestnut and the postorbital part of dark buff with a chestnut tinge. Most New World birds have this stripe much paler, even the preorbital part being buff. A few extreme New World birds approach the coloration of Old World birds in this respect.

In nonbreeding plumage the darkness of the back of the Old World birds, as just described, is retained. The most obvious difference, and the first one which became apparent to me at the beginning of this study, is in the color of the crown. In Old World winter specimens the crown is a glossy black, whereas the crown of New World birds in this plumage is a dull gray. There is no discernible difference in size.

Exact delineation of the ranges of the two forms has not been possible with the material thus far available to me. The type locality of this species is Sweden, and Scandinavian specimens examined agree with other European specimens in showing the color characteristics. Winter specimens from China, Korea and Japan are somewhat variable, and it may well be that the easternmost Asiatic breeding populations are intermediate. Two birds from Bering Island are referable to the New World form. It is possible that some Horned Grebes from the northwesternmost portion of the American breeding range may follow the Asiatic coast of the Pacific on migration.