

occurred in 1953 when a warm early spring caused early northward migrations of most waterfowl. Some of the cranes that normally nest in California may have wandered further north before the nesting season began. This may account for the decrease in population in 1953 even though water conditions were ideal in California.—A. E. NAYLOR, A. W. MILLER, and M. E. FOSTER, *California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California, March 2, 1954.*

**Sandhill Cranes at Meiss Lake, Northern California.**—The fact that around 1500 Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) during their spring and fall migratory flights make a stop of three or four weeks at Meiss Lake, Siskiyou County, California, seems to be unrecorded in ornithological literature. According to older farmers in that region the cranes have been stopping there for as far back as they can remember. Members of the Fish and Wildlife Service, with headquarters at Tule Lake, Siskiyou County, were not aware of the occurrence, nor does Walkinshaw mention the Meiss Lake locality in his book, "The Sandhill Cranes" (1949).

While a few Sandhill Cranes of the large form nest at Meiss Lake, the migratory birds stopping there are all the smaller form known as the "Little Brown Crane." Around the last of February or early in March the Little Brown Cranes arrive, first a vanguard of a few, then, a week or so later, in full number. Meiss Lake is just south of the Oregon-California state line. The birds feed and rest at the lake for all of March and sometimes well into April; around the fifteenth of October they are back again to feed and rest a few weeks before continuing south. Farmers report that they are becoming more and more wary each year with the increase in farming, travel and hunting in that area.

Except for the Malheur Bird Refuge in the extreme southeastern corner of Oregon, from where it is reported both Greater Sandhill Cranes and Little Brown Cranes stop during migratory flights, we have been unable to find any record of the Little Brown Cranes stopping anywhere in Oregon or Washington. The thought occurred to me that the Meiss Lake birds might be from the Malheur Bird Reserve—that possibly they might cross southwestward to Meiss Lake instead of flying directly to their winter feeding grounds in California and farther south in the fall and vice versa in the spring. In the fall of 1951, the cranes did not arrive until the first of November. It seemed a good time to inquire whether there had been any observation and banding of cranes at Malheur Reserve. This would be a basis for examining the movement postulated above. Mr. R. C. Erickson, Biologist, replied in part as follows: "Your remarks regarding the possibility of a movement of cranes from Malheur Refuge to the Meiss Lake locality are worthy of consideration for several reasons. In the first place the number (1500) coincides well with the number which occupy the grainfields of Malheur Refuge each fall, though this number also includes a proportion of Sandhill Cranes as well as Little Brown Cranes. Secondly, the build-up of numbers is rather gradual in summer in July, August, and September to a peak early in October, the main exodus occurring ordinarily during the second week of the month. This would coincide with your customary mid-October arrival date at Meiss Lake. Thirdly, the departure of the cranes from the refuge, too, was delayed about two weeks this fall, perhaps on account of the relatively warm autumn with few sustained periods of low temperature during October, and most of them left the refuge the last week of October. As mentioned in your letter, a reliable method of checking the correctness of the assumption that cranes may fly from Malheur Refuge to Meiss Lake would be the study of returns on banded birds. We have no records on that subject."

The older farmers of the region ruefully tolerate the small damage the birds do to their crops in the spring, but the newer farmers, considering the present high price of grain, are not so tolerant. Cranes damage young, sprouting grain, but do most damage on young alfalfa and clover by pulling up young plants in the fields where crops are just starting. In older, established fields where plants are firmly rooted, the damage appears to be slight. Suspicion that resident farmers do shoot at the cranes prompted the Fish and Wildlife Service to provide the farmers with flare guns in the spring to chase the birds from freshly planted fields. Crop damage by ducks, geese and cranes appears to be a mounting complaint among the ranchers, and it is becoming an increasing problem as more land is placed under cultivation.—EDITH RUTENIC McLEOD, *Klamath Falls, Oregon, January 10, 1954.*

**Turkey Vulture Wintering in Northern California.**—Although the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) is a common summer resident in the interior mountains of extreme northern

California, the writer has not found records for this species in winter. Therefore, it was a surprise to find a single vulture in the Hoopa Valley Reservation, in eastern Humboldt County, during the winter storm season. This bird was first observed feeding on a dead horse alongside a road on December 19, 1953, during a mild snow storm. From that date until a severe storm on January 4, 1954, this individual bird could be observed each day. The bird fed on the gravel bars and perched in dead cottonwood snags along the Trinity River. After the storm of January 4, 1954, the bird was no longer noted.

On February 12, 1954, a single vulture was observed perched on a fir snag on the Klamath River in eastern Humboldt County, about fifteen miles north and east of the Hoopa Valley station. A local resident informed the writer that the bird had first been noted sometime around the first week in January. The local man was quite interested in the vulture as he had never observed them along the Klamath in winter before. It is highly probable that this bird was the same vulture that had been noted at Hoopa, as the dates are almost identical for departure and arrival at the new station. The distance is slight for such a bird. No indication of sickness or injury was noted.—ROBERT R. TALMADGE, *Willow Creek, California, February 27, 1954.*

#### Western Gull, with Symmetrical Wing Patches, Resembling Aberrant Heermann Gulls.

—While and since making observations on the persistence of a rare color aberration in the Heermann Gull (*Larus heermanni*), I have seen, in the general vicinity of San Diego, California, a considerable number of Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis*) that showed a more or less definite white blotch at the angle along the front of each wing. Usually these symmetrically paired markings were small and irregular and I never could feel quite certain that the peculiarity was not due to displacement of wing coverts or to molting rather than to an aberration in pattern. On December 11, 1953, however, while on a cruise of the M. V. "Horizon," about four miles off the Whistling Buoy near the entrance to San

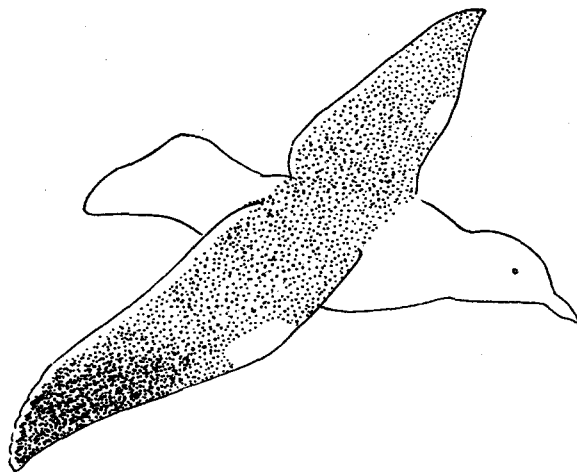


Fig. 1. An adult Western Gull sketched to show position of symmetrical white patches on angles of the wings.

Diego Harbor, I observed for some time at close range (to within 50 feet); with binoculars, from above as well as from the side, a fully adult Western Gull that was unquestionably aberrant in this respect. The approximate size and position of the very definite white areas was indicated on a field sketch, a copy of which is reproduced as figure 1. The aberration is noteworthy not only for its symmetry but also for its resemblance to the color variant noted in the Heermann Gull by several authors (Hubbs and Bartholomew, *Condor*, 53, 1951:221-227, with references; Pursill and Williams, *Condor*, 54, 1952:114-115).—CARL L. HUBBS, *Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, La Jolla, California, January 1, 1954.*