Bird Viewing Guide

This guide was created to enhance your experience while aboard one of our expeditions and to share with everyone the beauty and uniqueness of the place we have the privilege to call home. We do what we love and we love to share the bliss and exhilaration we experience on every expedition. We know that through witnessing as well as sharing this information about these animals serves to inspire people to protect, preserve and benefit this amazing ecosystem.

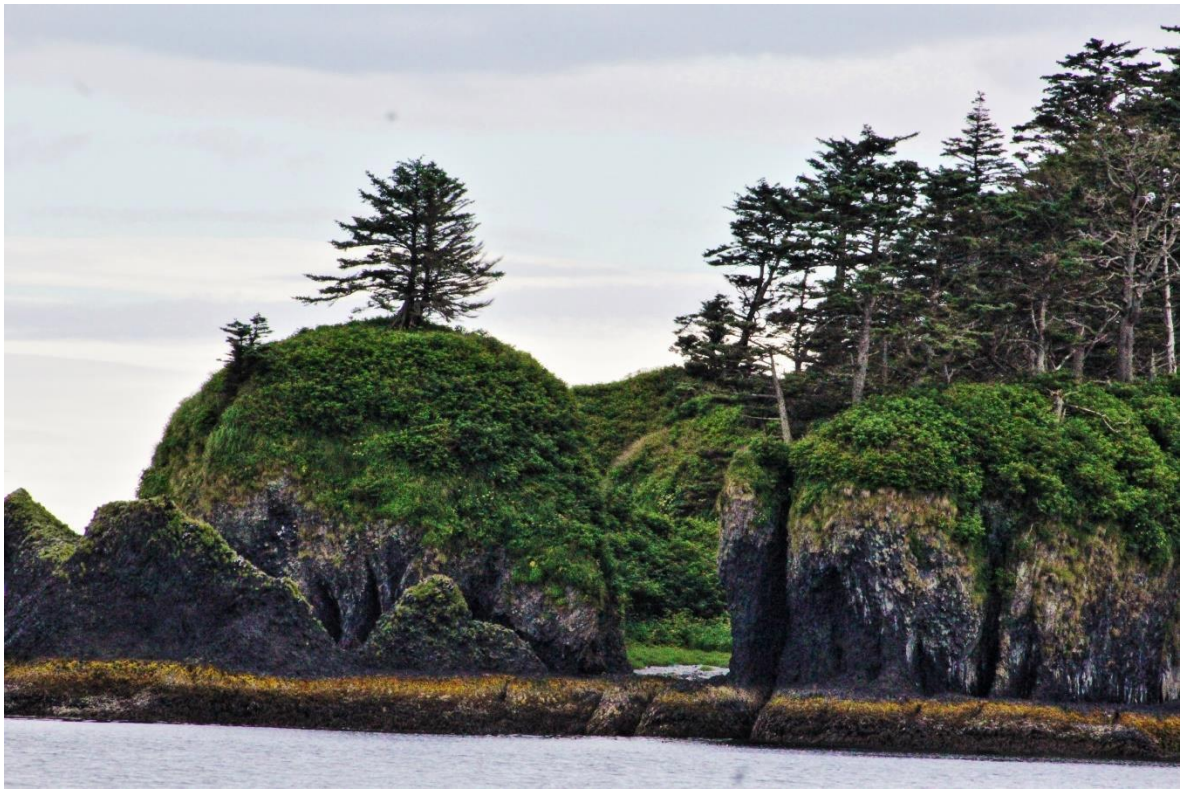
We encourage all, to find your passion and pursue it. Please share with us any questions, information, suggestions or comments to help us in our own pursuit.

"Great Things Happen When You Combine Beauty With Passion"

St. Lazaria

One of the largest seabird colonies in Southeast Alaska is found on a tiny old volcanic plug island called, St. Lazaria Island, about 20 miles from Sitka, is a nesting site for hundreds of thousands of seabirds. Fork-tailed and Leach's storm-petrels make up the largest population on St. Lazaria, with a quarter-million breeding pairs between them.

Just six-tenths of a mile long and 400 yards wide at its widest point, it supports large populations of seabirds in part because it has few predators and abundant food awaits in the surrounding waters. St. Lazaria is just one link in the 4.5 million-acre Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge made up of more than 2,400 islands, headlands, rocks, islets, spires and reefs along the Alaska coast. The refuge stretches from Cape Lisburne on the Chukchi Sea to the tip of the Aleutians and eastward to Forrester Island on the border of British Columbia.



Raptors

Eagles, Falcons. Osprey, Owls and Hawks

Bald Eagle

Haleiaeetus leucocephalus

Description

The adult bald eagle is a striking brownish blackbird with a white tail and head. Juveniles birds are mottled with white blotches. The do not obtain their distinct plumage of adults until they are about 4 or 5 years old. Bills, legs and feet are a deep yellow. Bald eagles are not bald. The name comes from an old English word, “balde” meaning white (White Headed). Size: Second only to the California Condor bald eagles dwarf most other North American raptors. Their wingspans range from 6 ½ feet to 7 ½ feet. Bald eagles weigh from six to eight pounds. Females are larger (9-11 LBS) and have a slightly larger wingspan. Wingspan: Male about 6 ½ Feet; Females about 7 feet. Weight: Male 9LB; Female up to 13 LBS. Bald eagles have lived up to 48 years in zoos, their average life span in the wild is likely 21-25 years. The bald eagle is a powerful flier, and soars on thermal convection currents. It reaches speeds of 35–43 mph when gliding and flapping. Its dive speed is between 75–99, though it seldom dives vertically. Selected as the national emblem of the United States in 1782 by Congress, in spite of Benjamin Franklin's arguments favoring the Wild Turkey. Perhaps the most widely studied bird.

Habitat

Typically breeds in mature and old-growth forest with some habitat edge, relatively close to water with suitable foraging opportunities adjacent to large bodies of water. Nests in trees, rarely on cliff faces and ground nests in treeless areas.

Distribution

Bald eagles are heavily concentrated in Southeast Alaska. They are always found near water. They pass over mountains and plains during migration.. Bald eagles breed throughout Alaska, Canada, The Pacific Northwest, along the East Coast, The Mississippi River, the Gulf coast, around the great lakes and anywhere there is sufficient water and wildlife. The winter along the coasts across the U.S. with some reaching Northwest Mexico. They are unique to North America with their closest relatives live throughout the world.

Nesting

The nest is the largest of any bird in North America; it is used repeatedly over many years and with new material added each year may eventually be as large as 13 ft deep, 8.2 ft across and weigh 1 metric ton. One nest in Florida was found to be 20 ft deep, 9.5 ft across, and to weigh 2.7 metric tons and recorded as the largest tree nest ever recorded for any animal. Clutch size generally 1-3 but have been noted up to 7 in captivity. Occasionally, as is recorded in many large raptorial birds, the oldest sibling sometimes attacks and kills its younger sibling(s), especially early in the nesting period when their sizes are most different.

Vocalization

Three distinctive calls **“Wail”** seldom given; **“peal”** often given in response to human approach, consists of high- pitched, prolonged, gull-like cry often repeated 3–5 times. **Chatter Call** most common response, Female will give single, soft, high-pitched note repeated several times, unlike any other calls in nature; apparently signals to male readiness for copulation.

Golden Eagle:

Buteo jamaicensis

Description

The Golden Eagle inhabits a wide range of latitudes throughout the Northern Hemisphere and uses a variety of habitats ranging from arctic to desert. Rare in the eastern half of North America, it is most common in the West near open spaces that provide hunting habitat and often near cliffs that supply nesting sites. Northern breeders migrate thousands of kilometers to wintering grounds; southern pairs tend to be resident year-round. As one of North America's largest predatory birds, this eagle has been prominent in human lore and culture, inspiring awe, reverence, and sometimes fear and hatred.

Habitat

Golden eagles are adaptable in habitat but often reside in areas with a few shared ecological characteristics. They are best suited to hunting in open or semi-open areas and search them out year-around. Native vegetation seems to be attractive to them and they typically avoid developed areas of any type from urban to agricultural as well as heavily forested regions. In desolate areas (e.g., the southern Yukon), they can occur regularly at road-kills and garbage dumps. The largest numbers of golden eagles are found in mountainous regions today, with many eagles doing most of their hunting and nesting on rock formations. However, they are not solely tied to high elevations and can breed in lowlands if the local habitats are suitable. Below are more detailed description of habitats occupied by golden eagles in both continents where they occur

Distribution

Once widespread across the Holarctic, it has disappeared from many areas which are now more heavily populated by humans. Despite being extirpated from or uncommon in some of its former range, the species is still widespread, being present in sizeable stretches of Eurasia, North America, and parts of North Africa. It is the largest and least populous of the five species of true accipitrid to occur as a breeding species in both the Palearctic and the Nearctic

Nesting

Cliff nests most common throughout most of North America. Sitka in 2018 had a mating pair and hatchling that expected to return. Wide variety of vegetation for nest-building; usually reflects flora of immediate vicinity. Often constructs alternate nests. Number of supernumerary nests/territory ranges from 1 to 14, usually 2 or 3. Golden eagles usually mate for life. Clutch size 1-3 sometimes 4. Incubation 41-45 days with shared duties, most for female. Aggressive interactions with parents increase with nestling age. Both parents bring prey to nest, but male rarely feeds young directly. Young leave nest as early as 45 d of age and as late as 81 d.

Vocalizations

While many accipitrids are not known for their strong voices, golden eagles have a tendency for silence, even while breeding. Some have been recorded, usually centering around the nesting period. The voice of the golden eagle is considered weak, high, and shrill, has been called "quite pathetic" and "puppy-like", and seems incongruous with the formidable size and nature of the species.[5] Most known seem to function as contact calls between eagles, sometimes adults to their offspring, occasionally territorial birds to intruders and rarely between a breeding pair. In Western Montana, nine distinct calls were noted: a chirp, a seeir, a pssa, a skonk, a cluck, a wonk, a honk and a hiss

Osprey:

Pandion haliaetus

Description

Widely admired Osprey is the continent's only raptor that plunge-dives to catch live fish as its main prey source. An Osprey might fly more than 200,000 kilometers during its 15- to 20-year lifetime. Ospreys dive feet first to capture their prey, accessing only about the top meter of water, so they are restricted to foraging for surface- schooling fish and to those in shallow water—the latter generally are most abundant and available. The Osprey always adjusts the fish in its claws so that the head is pointed forward. The osprey has a whitish body, very long wings in proportion to its body and osprey frequently fly with their wings in an "M" configuration. They are dark brown on the back with a white body. There are dark patches at the carpal joints on the underside of the wings. There is a distinctive dark eye strip.. Length: 2' - Wingspan: up to 6' - Weight: 2 - 5 lbs. While hunting can regularly hover over one spot, by beating its wings quickly.

Habitat

The osprey tolerates a wide variety of habitats, nesting in any location near a body of water providing an adequate food supply.. Seacoast, lakes rivers and streams.

Distribution

It is found on all continents except Antarctica, although in South America it occurs only as a non-breeding migrant. Despite its reliance on fish, Ospreys occupy a broad array of habitats, ranging from mangrove islets of the Florida Keys to Alaskan lakes, and from New England salt marshes to the saline lagoons of Baja California. Northern populations migrate south to overwinter on fish-rich rivers, lakes, and coastal areas of Central and South America, returning north each spring as waters warm and fish become accessible.

Nesting

Generally male brings bulk of material to the nest, female arranges it once there. May break dead sticks off nearby trees in flight or (more often) snatch from ground. Human can easily sit in nests. Extensive reuse year to year; nest an investment in time and energy, so reuse the following season allows earlier laying, and in turn more surviving young. Clutch size ranges from 1–4 eggs, with 3 eggs being the mode in most populations. Ground color creamy white to pinkish cinnamon; usually heavily wreathed and spotted with reddish browns, especially larger end. Surface smooth but not glossy.

Vocalizations

5 types of calls: Alarm; Solicitation (food-begging); Guard; Excited; Screaming. Female's calls generally stronger and lower-pitched than those of male, perhaps owing to larger body size

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

Description

Very widespread bird of prey. A large, crow-sized falcon, it has a blue-grey back, barred white underparts, and a black head. As is typical of bird-eating raptors, peregrine falcons are sexually dimorphic, with females being considerably larger than males. The sub species Falco peregrinus pealei is found in Southeast Alaska . It is non- migratory. It is the largest subspecies, and it looks like an oversized and darker tundrius or like a strongly barred The peregrine is renowned for its speed, reaching over 200 mph during its characteristic hunting stoop (high speed dive), making it the fastest member of the animal kingdom. According to a National Geographic TV program, the highest measured speed of a peregrine falcon is 242 mph. The peregrine falcon feeds almost exclusively on medium-sized birds such as pigeons, waterfowl, songbirds, and waders.

Habitat

Their breeding habitat in Alaska is often with open gulfs of air (rather than in confined areas and generally open landscapes for foraging

Distribution

One of the most widely distributed of warm-blooded terrestrial vertebrates, the Peregrine Falcon occurs from the tundra to the tropics, from wetlands to deserts, from maritime islands to continental forests, and from featureless plains to mountain crags-it is absent as a breeder only from the Amazon Basin, the Sahara Desert, most of the shrub lands of central and eastern Asia, and Antarctica. This makes it the world's most widespread raptor, and one of the most widely found bird species.

Nesting

The spectacular courtship flight includes a mix of aerial acrobatics, precise spirals, and steep dives. The male passes prey it has caught to the female in mid-air. To make this possible, the female actually flies upside-down to receive the food from the male's talons. Nests in a scrape, normally on cliff edges. The female chooses a nest site, where she scrapes a shallow hollow in the loose soil, sand, gravel, or dead vegetation in which to lay a clutch size of 2-4 eggs that are a creamy pink to reddish-brown in color. No nest materials are added. Cliff nests are generally located under an overhang, on ledges with vegetation. South-facing sites are favored. On the Southeast Alaska coast large tree hollows are also used for nesting. Mates share incubation duties with females accounting for overnight watch and about 75% of the overall 33 – 35 day incubation time.

Vocalization

4 basic categories based on structure: **Cack, Chitter, Eechip, Wail**. With exception of cack, each vocalization is used in multiple contexts. **Cack**: kak kak kak kak kak, often repeated incessantly. Given in alarm and in conjunction with nest defense. **Chitter**.: chi chi chi chi chi frequently given by male prior to or during copulation; occasionally given by either sex in alarm or by female when forcing food transfer. **Eechip**: ku ee chip, ku ee Used by both sexes in wild and captive birds in association with various forms of display and during food transfers. Given during aerial encounters with intruders around nest site; exact motivation unclear **Wail**: waiiiik . Has widest variety of forms/contexts Food Wail, Agonistic Wail, Copulatory Wail, and Advertisement Wail.

Sharp Shinned Hawk

Accipiter striatus

Description

A small hawk, with males being the smallest hawks in the United States and Canada. This small Accipiter hawk, with males 9.1 to 11.8 in long, with a wingspan of 17 to 23 in. As common in Accipiter hawks, females are distinctly larger in size, averaging some 30% longer, and with a weight advantage of more than 50% being common.] Adults have short broad wings and a medium-length tail banded in blackish and gray with the tip varying among individuals from slightly notched through square to slightly rounded (often narrowly tipped white). The remiges (typically only visible in flight) are whitish barred blackish. The legs are long and very slender (hence the common name) and yellow. Has especially long middle toes and large eyes, useful attributes for catching highly mobile prey. The hooked bill is black and the cere is yellowish. The remaining plumage varies depending on group. Considered the, "enemy of small bird" it's diet consist almost exclusively on small avian. Considered by many to be a vicious bird killer. While in migration, adults are sometimes preyed on by most of the bird-hunting, larger raptors, especially the peregrine falcon. The population of USA and Canada has rebounded since and might even exceed historical numbers today, probably due to the combination of the ban on DDT.

Habitat

Their breeding habitat in Alaska is sea level to near alpine. Nests in most forest types in range, particularly those with at least some conifers.

Distribution

Breeding Range throughout Alaska especially the Southeast and is widely dispersed and seldom-seen nesters that breed mainly in large stands of deciduous, coniferous, and mixed hardwood forests.

Sharp-shinned hawks construct a stick nest in a large conifer or dense group of deciduous trees. Clutches of 3 to 8 eggs have been recorded, but 4 to 5 eggs is the typical clutch size. The eggs are prized by egg-collectors, because they are heavily marked with surprisingly colorful and varied markings. The incubation period is thought to average at about 30 days. The nesting sites and breeding behavior of sharp-shinned hawks are generally secretive, in order to avoid the predation of larger raptors.

Vocalization

Not well studied. Believed to be silent most of the year, less so during the breeding season in dense forest where it is the primary means of communication between mates kek-kek-kek or kik-kik-kik or ricky-ticky-ticky-ticky- ticky alarm call . Known to emit a "plaintive" squealing call from perch sites, perhaps as a part of courtship Kip .. . kip given by male as it arrives at the nest; sometimes replied to by female with several keps or keeeep . Begging calls of nestlings and solicitation call of female a high-pitched ee . Sometimes utters "weak cackles" during copulation.

Red-tailed Hawk:

Buteo jamaicensis

Description

One of the most widespread and commonly observed birds of prey in North America, the Red-tailed Hawk (hereafter Red-tail) occupies a broad range of habitats from central Alaska south to Venezuela and east to the Virgin Islands. Breeding behavior, summer food habits, and habitat use have been well documented in many of these regions, but the taxonomic status of some populations remains unclear. The species varies greatly across its range, with up to 16 subspecies recognized by various authorities. Generally monogamous, this species initiates courtship and maintains the pair bond with spectacular aerial maneuvers performed by both members of the pair. Territories are vigorously defended at least during the breeding season and may be defended year-round by sedentary birds and where overwintering density is high. Territory size varies with habitat and food availability but typically ranges from about ¾ to more than 1 ¼ miles. At least in sedentary birds, mates stay paired throughout the year. The species is primarily a sit-and-wait predator and generally requires elevated perch sites for hunting. Where it inhabits closed-canopy forests, however, the Red-tail dives on prey from the air far above the canopy. It may also catch other highly concentrated, flying prey in the air. It is legally protected in Canada, Mexico and the United States by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Habitat

The red-tailed hawk occupies a wide range of habitats and altitudes, including deserts, grasslands, coniferous and deciduous forests, agricultural fields and urban areas. Typically breeds in open to semi-open habitats -- coniferous and deciduous woodlands, grasslands, shrub lands, deserts, agricultural and urban landscapes -- with elevated nest/perch sites such as tall trees, cacti, cliff faces, or human-made structures.

Distribution

It lives throughout the North American continent, except in areas of unbroken forest or the high arctic.

Nesting

In sedentary birds, mates remain together throughout the year . Whether this is typically the case in migratory birds is unknown. One brood/season but, will re=nest when eggs fail to hatch, or nest destroyed. Both members of wild pair reported to build or refurbish nest within a few days, but the female spends more of her time forming the bowl. Typically 28-30 inches in outside diameter, with the inner bowl measuring 12 to 14 ½ inches wide by 4-4 inches deep. Nests used and refurbished for several years may be somewhat larger one was reported to be 38 inches high. Clutch size is generally between 2 and 5 eggs. Typically, an egg is laid every other day, although a captive female laid the third egg 5 or 6 d after the second. Both parents incubate.

Vocalizations

Among adults, the most familiar vocalization hoarse scream, kee-eeee-arrr. Cry signals irritation or a defensive response when its territory is entered perceived threat. Described as having a “steam-whistle” quality. Given during territorial disputes and in response to human intrusion.

Merlin:

Falco columbarius

Description

The Merlin is a small, dashing falcon that breeds throughout the northern forests and prairies of North America, Europe, and Asia. Only slightly larger than the more common American Kestrel, it is heavier and in flight often appears considerably larger. The sexes differ in adult plumage, with females noticeably larger than males. This falcon was previously called the "Pigeon Hawk" because in flight it can be mistaken for a member of the pigeon family; its species name (columbarius) also refers to pigeons. "Merlin" derives from esmerillon, the Old French name for this species. There are three North American subspecies: the Black Merlin from the Pacific Northwest, the Taiga (or better-named Boreal Merlin of northern forests, and the Prairie Merlin, a pale colored form that breeds in northern prairies and aspen parkland of the U.S and southern Canada.

Habitat

In over wintering areas poorly documented, but appears similar to breeding habitat, e.g., open forest and grasslands. Regularly hunts prey (e.g., shorebirds) concentrated on tidal flats.

Distribution

In Alask breeding from edge of tundra south, except the Aleutians and islands of the Bering Sea; breeding season reports from Demarcation Point, Kotzebue Sound, Mountain Village, St. Michael, the Alaska peninsula, Unalaska, Kodiak, Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound, and especially along the entire length of the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers. Merlins visit Baranof and can occasionally be seen while hiking and long coast line

Nesting

Though the pairs are monogamous at least for a breeding season, extra-pair copulations have been recorded. Most nest sites have dense vegetative or rocky cover; the merlin does not build a proper nest of its own. Most will use abandoned corvid (particularly Corvus crow and Pica magpie) or hawk nests which are in conifer or mixed tree stands. Others nest in crevices on cliff-faces and on the ground, and some may even use buildings. Three to six (usually 4 or 5) eggs are laid. The rusty brown eggs incubation period is 28 to 32 days. Incubation is performed by the female to about 90%; the male instead hunts to feed the family. The young fledge after another 30 days or so, and are dependent on their parents for up to 4 more weeks

Vocalizations

4 types of calls. Ki-Ki-Kee (Kek-Kek-Kek). Most common call, given by both sexes. Varies in intensity, speed, rhythm, and number of syllables according to the situation. Male's call higher pitched and more rapid. Accompanies courtship displays, territorial or other aggressive encounters. Tic (Chip). Given by both sexes. Male's higher in pitch. Given in most courtship displays or when mates not in sight. Equivalent of eechip in the Peregrine Falcon. Copulation Chutter (Chrrr). Given by male indicating desire to copulate, occasionally by female. Nonresidents give this call when approaching resident female. Food Begging Whine . Monotonous, given by female soliciting food transfers from male. Sometimes given after copulation. The vocalizations of the Merlin are similar both in structure and context to those of larger falcons, but Merlin calls are of higher pitch

Western Screech Owl:

Megascops kennicottii

Description

The Golden Eagle inhabits a wide range of latitudes throughout the Northern Hemisphere and uses a variety of habitats ranging from arctic to desert. Rare in the eastern half of North America, it is most common in the West near open spaces that provide hunting habitat and often near cliffs that supply nesting sites. Northern breeders migrate thousands of kilometers to wintering grounds; southern pairs tend to be resident year-round. As one of North America's largest predatory birds, this eagle has been prominent in human lore and culture, inspiring awe, reverence, and sometimes fear and hatred.

Habitat

On the Pacific Coast in Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska, found in mixed forests of bigleaf maple, red alder, Douglas fir, western hemlock, and western redcedar and yellow cedar.

Distribution

One of the most common owls in low elevation woodlands and deserts from central Mexico and the western United States north along the Pacific Coast, the Western Screech-Owl exhibits considerable geographic variation both in size and coloration, and its subspecific taxonomy is complicated. This owl occurs in a wide variety of wooded habitats ranging from arid woodland in southern areas to confer-dominated forests in the Pacific Northwest. The species reaches highest densities in riparian deciduous woodlands at low elevations.

Nesting

Like many species of small owls, the Western Screech-Owl nests in tree cavities and is easily attracted to nest boxes. Nesting duties are strongly divided, with the male providing almost all the food for the female and young, while the female incubates the eggs and broods the young. The young leave the nest while still in a fluffy juvenile plumage and before they can fly well but, are independent by midsummer and disperse from their natal territories at that time. Hatching of their young, usually four to five, is synchronized with the spring migration of birds; after migrants pass through screech-owls take fledglings of local birds.

Vocalizations

The primary call is an accelerating series of short whistles at an increasing tempo or a short then long trill falling slightly at end. Other calls: barking and chuckling, similar to the eastern screech owl. They also make a high-pitched screech.

Northern Pygmy Owl:

Glaucidium gnoma

Description

Adults are nearly 6 inches in overall length and are gray, brownish-gray or rufous in color. This owl has a round white spotted head, weakly defined facial disc, and dark upper breast, wings and tail, the latter quite long compared to other owls. The eyes are yellow and the bill is yellowish-green. The bird has two black nape spots outlined in white on the back of its head, which look like eyes. The mid to lower breast is white with darker vertical streaking. Legs are feathered down to the four well-armed toes on each foot. Males will regularly perch at the top of the tallest available conifer trees to issue their territorial call, making them somewhat ventriloquistic in sloped landscapes, and causing distress and confusion among observers on the ground hoping to get a glimpse. They are incredibly hard to spot because of their size and color.

Habitat

hey are known to nest and forage in the center of dense, continuous forests, near streams. The northern pygmy owl is native to Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Their habitat includes temperate, subtropical and tropical moist forest, savanna, and wetlands.

Distribution

Alaska and Canada. In Alaska, known only from southeast. First confirmed nest in Alaska in 1988, on Mitkof I. but, also found on Wrangell I., AK. These islands are presently the known northern limit of distribution ; also recorded west to Yakutat, as well as in Sitka

Nesting

Feathers, leaves, and other matter associated with nest generally thought to be debris accumulating naturally in a cavity. They usually nest in a tree cavity and will often use old woodpecker holes. The female lays 2–7 eggs, typically 4–6. Nest tree species may include Douglas fir, western redcedar, western hemlock and red alder. Early in the breeding cycle males establish and defend a territory of about 1 sq. mi. During the breeding cycle the female incubates the eggs, broods the young and guards the nest. The male hunts, making food deliveries approximately every 2 hours. The male must feed his mate, the young (typically 5) and himself. The male hunts from dawn to dusk as the young near fledging, and during the first weeks after they leave the nest. The young leave the nest (fledge) by making an initial flight that may be a short hop to a nearby branch, or an explosive burst into an adjacent tree where they land by grasping whatever branch is first contacted, sometimes clinging upside-down. Owls at this stage are sometimes called "branchers" for their clinging, dangling and climbing behaviors. The second day after fledging, the young gradually climb and fly upward into the forest canopy, where they spend their first few weeks, at times perched "shoulder-to-shoulder" with their siblings, begging for food.

Vocalizations

Nestlings and fledglings give Begging Call that sounds insect-like, similar to katydid's “song”. rimary or Toot Song sounds like hollow toot similar to call of Gray Jay; spaced about 1–2 s apart. Often accompanied by rapid, higher-pitched, short-duration trill, similar to that of Eastern Screech Owl

Northern Saw Whet Owl:

Aegolius acadicus

Description

is a small owl native to North America. Saw-whet owls are one of the smallest owl species in North America. Adults are 6.7–8.7 " long with a 16.5–22.2 in wingspan. making them one of the smallest owls in North America. They are close to the size of an American robin. The northern saw-whet owl has a round, light, white face with brown and cream streaks; they also have a dark beak and yellow eyes. They resemble the short-eared owl, because they also lack ear tufts, but are much smaller. The underparts are pale with dark shaded areas; the upper parts are brown or reddish with white spots. They are quite common, but hard to spot. Saw-whets are often in danger of being preyed upon by larger owls and raptors. Saw-whet owls are also migratory birds without any strict pattern.

Habitat

Their habitat is coniferous forests, sometimes mixed or deciduous woods, across North America. Most birds nest in coniferous type forests of the North but winter in mixed or deciduous woods. They also love riparian areas because of the abundance of prey there. They live in tree cavities and old nests made by other small raptors. Some are permanent residents, while others may migrate south in winter or move down from higher elevations.

Distribution

Their range covers most of North America including southeastern Alaska, southern Canada, most of the United States and the central mountains in Mexico.

Nesting

Northern saw-whet owls lay about four or six white-colored eggs in natural tree cavities or woodpecker holes. The father does the hunting while the mother watches and sits on her eggs. Females can have more than one clutch of eggs each breeding season with different males. Once the offspring in the first nest have developed their feathers the mother will leave the father to care for them and find another male to reproduce with this type of mating is sequential polyandry. They compete with boreal owls, starlings and squirrels for nest cavities and their nests may be destroyed or eaten by those creatures as well as nest predators such as martens and corvids. Saw-whet owls of all ages may be predated by any larger species of owl, of which there are at least a dozen that overlap in range. They are also predated by Accipiter hawks, which share with the saw-whet a preference for wooded habitats with dense thickets or brush

Vocalizations

The northern saw-whet owl makes a repeated tooting whistle sound. Some say they sound like a saw being sharpened on a whetstone. They usually make these sounds to find a mate, so they can be heard more often April through June when they are looking for mates. Despite being more common in spring, they do vocalize year-round.

SEABIRDS

Fork-Tailed Storm Petrel:

Oceanodroma furcata

Description

A small seabird blueish gray in color. It is (8 to 9 in) in length, with a wingspan of 18 inches. It is the only storm- petrel gray in color. Like most petrels, its walking ability is limited to a short shuffle to the burrow. It is a colonial nester. The forked tail is more easily seen from above showing it's forked tail. They fly light, rapid and erratic; proceeds close to surface of water, often with extended feet as if walking. Similar to flight of other storm-petrels, but has larger wings and movement appears more rapid. Characteristically holds wings bent backward, with faster wing beats through narrower arc than Leach´s or storm-petrel. It feeds on mainly planktonic crustaceans, small fish and squid. It will also take offal. It feeds similarly to other storm-petrels, picking food of the surface of the water while in flight. This bird does follow ships.

Habitat

This bird breeds in rock crevices or small burrows in soft earth It spends the rest of the year at sea, usually spending its time over colder waters. It can be seen well offshore down the Pacific coast to central California on the North American side, and down to Japan on the Asian side.

Distribution

Second most abundant and widespread of storm-petrels breeding in n. Pacific. Core of distribution is offshore islands of Alaska, particularly e. Aleutian Is.. There are 250,00 breeding pair of Fork-Tailed and Leach's Petrals on St Lazaria and it's the fork tailed being the most abundant species.

Nesting

Even though an individual's breeding cycle takes about 4 mo, individuals may be found on a single colony over a 7-mo period. In Gulf of Alaska, adults begin visiting nesting sites in Mar or early Apr; in most years, the last young may not leave until mid-October. Mates are monogomous and may use side burrows of other seabirds for nesting sites. Both parents share incubation workload and the eggs can withstand long periods of inattentiveness. The eggs of the Fork-Tailed Storm Petral is one of the largest of relative to female body mass laid among avian groups, weighing as much as 21% of female.

Vocalizations

Raspy 3 to 5 note call made at night while in burrows but is quiet away from their burrows.

Leach's Storm-Petrel:

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

Description

Medium-sized storm-petrel; length 7-9”, wingspan 18-19”. Sexually monomorphic, with white rump patch, distinctly forked tail, and long angled wings. Dark blackish-brown, grayer on upperparts; crown, flight feathers, and tail slightly darker than remainder. Broad diagonal paler wing-bar formed by greater secondary coverts runs from leading edge near bend of wing toward trailing edge close to body. White rump usually, not always, divided by highly variable median "smudge." Black bill hooked, with tip pointing down at right angle to bill axis; nostrils in tube on top, as in all storm-petrels. Black legs and black webbed feet. Flight at sea is low over water, feet sometimes touching it when feeding; glides like miniature shearwater. Distinguished from Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel by much darker color, white rump patch, and more buoyant, erratic flight with deeper wingbeat

Habitat

Consists of islands far enough offshore to avoid predatory mammals. Leach's Storm-Petrel requires soil in which to dig burrow or may use crevices among rocks. Trees or rocks may protect entrances but are not essential.

Distribution

Breeding on many North Atlantic and North Pacific islands throughout range with enough soil for burrows or crevices among rocks, far enough offshore to be free of predatory mammals, and generally within 200 km of feeding grounds. Ranges widely at sea in North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans and tropics, even into southern temperate waters in e. Atlantic. There are 250,00 breeding pair of Leach’s Storm Petrels and Fork- Tailed Storm-Petrels.

Nesting

Data suggest that pair formation occurs at burrow site 1–2 seasons before actual breeding. Pairs may prospect empty burrows After first breeding year, fidelity to burrow site apparently reunites surviving members of a pair. Clutch size is mostly a single egg. Rare occurrence of 2 eggs in single burrow suggests possibility of egg dumping or nest sharing and probably indicates tolerance between females, possibly between males, but brood cooperation seem unlikely. Both eggs never known to hatch.

Vocalizations

Best heard at night during breeding season at colony. Chatter Calls are heard almost continuously during early to mid-breeding season, less often later. Purring is most common during pair-bond formation and mating but, can occasionally be heard throughout breeding season In general, little is known of vocalizations at sea where birds seem mostly.

Parasitic Jaeger:

Stercorarius parasiticus

Description

Parasitic Jaegers are well named for their habit of forcing other seabirds to disgorge their food, which the jaegers deftly swoop down to retrieve. Their acrobatics and aggressiveness in pursuing their targets have evoked both admiration and defilement by human observers. In the northeastern Atlantic, and possibly also in the Aleutian Islands, Parasitic Jaegers obtain most of their food by stealing from colonial seabirds. Nevertheless, in most of their circumpolar breeding range, “kleptoparasitism” is not the main way of life for Parasitic Jaegers. Small for a skua, the Parasitic Jaeger measures 16–19” in length, 42–49“ in wingspan. Light-morph adults have a brown back, mainly white underparts and dark primary wing feathers with a white "flash". The head and neck are yellowish-white with a black cap and there is a pointed central tail projection. Dark-morph adults are dark brown, and intermediate-phase birds are dark with somewhat paler underparts, head and neck.

Habitat

More often observed in migration near shore and in estuaries than other jaegers

Distribution

In Alaska, breeds along the entire arctic and west coasts, the Alaska Peninsula, and throughout the Aleutians. Breeding records are scarcer on the south coast but has nested on Kodiak I. and presence throughout the summer indicates possible breeding as far east as Glacier Bay.

Nesting

In wet areas of tundra, nests are usually on slight rises, such as the edges of low-center polygons or frost mounds. A slight depression in the ground or in moss and lichens formed by pressure with breast and feet, sometimes lined with a little dry grass or lichens. Usually 2 Eggs that are\dull greenish, grayish, or brownish olive, with spots, blotches, and lines of brown in various shades and tints, either evenly distributed or clustered near the large end.

Vocalizations

No quantitative study of variation in calls; many calls with different verbal descriptions might represent intergrading variants of a few basic vocalizations. Long Call consists of 1–12 (usually 3–4) bisyllabic notes at a rate of about. Short Call consists of staccato notes in irregular sequence; often precedes Long Calls; also occurs during aerial pursuits, during swoops at opponents, and in response to an attacker ,Yelp Call, variable piercing sound like a small dog, sometimes repeated, produced by birds under attack and in response to predators.

Common Murre:

Uria aalge

Description

Large black-and-white seabird (body length 15 – 17”, wingspan 25 – 28”; . In breeding (Alternate, summer) plumage, upperparts including head, neck, back, and upperwings brown to blackish brown; underparts mostly white; flanks and thighs striated brown and white. Secondaries tipped white, imparting a white trailing edge to wing. Dark color fades noticeably by late summer, especially primaries. Bill entirely black and stiletto shaped. Distinguished from very similar Thick-billed Murre by longer, thinner bill, tapering gradually to the tip, compared to notably decurved culmen in Thick-billed Murre (ratio bill length :depth 3.2 in Common vs. 2.4 in Thick-billed; longer, slimmer body and neck; bill always black (Thick-billed has white stripe along cutting edge of upper mandible, except for some individuals during winter); dorsal body plumage overall browner; streaking on flanks and underwing coverts darker; and white of breast meeting brown throat in a straight line or a shallow, inverted “U” (compared to a sharp “V” in Thick-billed Murre. They can fly up to speeds of 46 mph and dive up to 300 feet. The Common Murre also Migrates almost 3700 miles/yr.

Habitat

Breeds on cliff ledges, sloping island surfaces, or flat areas on rocky headlands and islands in full ocean view. When not at breeding sites during breeding season, frequents continental shelf and slope waters, including those normally >260’ deep, rarely to beach. In nonbreeding season, however, often found close to shore, at times far up inlets and sounds. Typical to view Rafts of 1K+ in spring and early summer at St. Lazaria

Distribution

Circumpolar: low Arctic, subarctic/temperate, 68–33°N in w. North America and 56–43°N in e. North America; occurs at sea mostly over continental shelf; not extensively migratory

Nesting

No nest; site selection process and by which sex not known. Males and females spend equal time at colony 2–3 wk before egg-laying, then females begin to visit less, males more. Both sexes incubate egg and brood chick equally. Actual division of labor overall appears equal. Prolonged care only by male suggests enhanced survival of young when accompanied by male rather than female. Defense of breeding site from competitors prior to fall exodus (essential to subsequent breeding success) left to female, who may be in poorer condition. Survival of poorer-condition female enhanced without at-sea chick-rearing duties, further helping to maintain beneficial long-term pair bonds. Egg have an astonishing variety, background mostly dark green to blue-green or turquoise

with black spots and streaking. but also lighter to tan, pinkish, and white; sometimes no spots or streaking. Adults use color and markings to identify their own eggs; usually successful when given a choice against a foreign egg. Strong tendency for a given female to always lay eggs of same color and markings. Clutch size in invariable 1.

Vocalizations

Communication critical in very dense breeding colonies; maintains order in this highly aggressive species. Mate and neighbor recognition especially important, with frequent reaffirmation of identity. Therefore, breeding colonies very noisy. Vocal signals also critical to maintain contact between male and chick in foggy and stormy seas, when a 2-min dive by a parent can take it many meters away. As described for Thick-billed Murre, "a variety of gutteral calls given, from faint urr to loud emphatic ' aargh '".

Thick-billed Murre:

Uria lomvia

Description

Large, stocky, black-and-white auk, with a deep, moderately long, pointed bill, short, rounded tail short and narrow wings noticeable in flight. On land, leans forward at an angle, with tail on ground, while resting or shuffling. Strongly arched black bill with blue-gray streak along cutting edge. A narrow furrow in feathers extends about 3–4 cm backward and downward from eye. Immature resembles Basic-plumaged adult, but has thinner, shorter bill and Pacific populations have slightly longer, thinner bills than Atlantic populations. Compared with similar Common Murre, Thick-billed is stockier with shorter, thicker neck, larger head, and deeper bill that usually is strongly Thick-billed best distinguished from Common Murre by (1) top and sides of head being entirely black (Common Murre has prominent white patch behind eye bordered below by blackish eye-line), (2) frequent presence of faint white line on bill (absent in Common Murre), and (3) distinctively thicker, stubbier bill than Common Murre. Immatures and molting adults of these species may be more difficult to distinguish.

Habitat

Coastal and continental-shelf waters, and along continental slope, usually farther offshore than Common Murres. Prefers proximity to deep, oceanic waters. Distribution may be affected by bottom topography and tidal phase, where strong tidal currents occur among islands and reefs also by the occurrence of oceanic fronts.

Distribution

Breeding on many North Atlantic and North Pacific islands throughout range with enough soil for burrows or crevices among rocks, far enough offshore to be free of predatory mammals, and generally within 200 km of feeding grounds. Ranges widely at sea in North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans and tropics, even into southern temperate waters in e. Atlantic. There are around 5,000 breeding pair of Thick Billed and Common Murres on St Lazaria.

Nesting

Where and when pairing occurs is poorly known. No nest constructed, but incubating birds often shift pebbles or other debris, sometimes dropping them close to site. Cemented by feces these fragments may help to keep eggs from rolling off ledge. The egg laying sites are on cliff ledges, sometimes in crevices or caves, but normally open.

Vocalizations

A variety of guttural calls given, from a faint urr to a loud, emphatic aargh, depending on context.

Laugh Call: A prolonged RAH-rah-rah-rah-rah, descending and diminishing, that causes whole body to shake when given loudly occurs periodically during incubation and chick-rearing, individual standing up and pointing head down toward egg or chick. May be repeated by neighbors and may pass along colony as wave of calling, especially noticeable when other activity is low, as in middle of night.

Tufted Puffin

Fratercula cirrhata

Description

14 ½-15 ½" long. Tufted Puffins exude stern confidence. With all-black body plumage, striking white robber's mask, chunky orange bill, and streaming golden head-plumes, this is one member of the auk family whose appearance—like that of a biker in leather regalia—says, "Don't mess with me!". Immatures dusky above, light gray below, with small bill. In flight, the large, webbed red feet are conspicuous. In most mixed seabird colonies a strict social order prevails within and between species. Each seems to have adapted to a specific niche, which includes occupying the terrain in a manner most suited to it. This reduces competition between species but sharpens it within each species. The Tufted Puffin has adapted a burrowing strategy for nesting. It typically digs a tunnel from 2 to 9 feet into a turf-covered slope, then lays its single egg at the end of the burrow. Many other alcids place their eggs on cliff ledges. Puffins are sometimes referred to as the "sea parrots." And can live for up to thirty years. The puffins live together in a very large group called a "raft". It takes five years for puffins to mature and breed. The adult puffins can be eaten by Orcas or hawks. Puffins can dive at least 80 feet deep. A puffin can fly about 40 miles an hour and will beat its wings about 300 to 400 times a minute.

Habitat

Most common nesting habitat is earthen burrows. Burrow densities appear highest along cliff edges, steep sea slopes covered with dense vegetation and deep layer of soil. Lower densities in rock-crevice habitats, among beach boulders, and in cracks and crevices of sea cliffs. Feeds at sea. Very prominent on St. Lazaria where up to 2,000 breeding pair reside.

Distribution

Their status as seabird tough-guys is not unwarranted. Few other seabirds breed over such a vast geographic range and extreme of climatic regimes, from cactus-covered rocks in southern California to frozen cliffs of the coastal Alaskan Arctic. And few other seabirds range so widely at sea, from icy waters of the Chukchi Sea to the warm, subtropical expanse of the Central North Pacific Ocean, and east to west from the California Current to the Kuroshio Current of Japan.

Nesting

Where soil conditions permit, puffins can tunnel eight feet or more underground when excavating a burrow. Puffins usually return to the same burrow and nest with the same mate year after year. The female lays only one egg a year, and both parents take turns incubating the egg and feeding the puffling. When the baby pufflings leave the puffinries, they will not tough land again for two years.

Vocalizations

Silent except for occasional growling notes uttered around the nest site.

Horned Puffin

Fratercula corniculate

Description

Horned Puffins are known for carrying beak-fuls of small fish to their young during the breeding season, and one might rightly conclude that they are well suited to living in coastal habitats that teem with abundant forage fish such as sand lance and capelin. However, this image belies their pelagic diet and ecology. While adults feed mostly fish to their chicks, they themselves consume a substantial proportion of squid and other invertebrates. Horned puffins are monomorphic (the male and female exhibit the same plumage coloration). Sexually mature birds have a small fleshy black "horn" extending upwards from the eye, from which the animal derives its common name — the horned puffin. A dark eye-stripe extends backwards from the eye towards the occiput. The cheeks are white, with a yellow fleshy spot at the base of the bill.

Habitat

Nests on vertical sea cliffs, in colonies or singly. In contrast to other puffins, most common nesting habitat for Horned Puffin is rock crevices in talus and among beach boulders. Feeds at sea. Prominent on Kruzof Island Cliffs where up to 1,000 breeding pair reside.

Distribution

Widespread in North Pacific Ocean, from mid-Transition Zone (about 35°N) to Beaufort Sea. Nests on coastline and offshore islands in British Columbia (rare), Gulf of Alaska, Aleutians, Sea of Okhotsk, Kurils, Bering and Chukchi Seas. Winters over a broad area of the central North Pacific, generally over deep oceanic waters.

Nesting

Brings nest materials to nest held cross-wise in bill. Amount of nest material varies from well-built nests with defined cup to few straws on floor of rock crevice. Unknown which sex builds nest. Little known. Both sexes incubate. The single egg can be left unattended several hours to a day, incubated up to a day or more by same individual without incubation exchange

Vocalizations

Chicks make continuous peep, peep, peep . . . sound, especially when hungry, or when adult returns with food. Adult-type vocalizations develop in first winter. Calls are similar to Atlantic Puffin's: a low growling “ arrr ” either single or uttered 3 times in slow succession, the first being the highest one and each of the following lower than preceding. When threatened or fighting, utters similar growl but more sharply.

Pigeon Guillemot:

Cepphus columba

Description

Medium-sized auk, plumage dark blackish-brown in summer (with an iridescent sheen in early summer); underparts white and upperparts grayish in winter. Total length 31 ½” – 33. Legs vermillion, relatively long for an alcid. Walks well on land. Bill long and pointed, inside of mouth bright red. Juveniles have gray-orange legs and brown barring to most body feathers. Immatures resemble adults but have less extensive, more mottled white upper-wing patch, worn flight feathers in first summer, and only acquire iridescent sheen to body feathers after first year. Wings rounded compared with other auks, used for propulsion and maneuvering underwater. Can be amusing to witness taking flight as they appear to run on the waters surface.

Habitat

Breeding occurs along rocky coastlines offering suitable nest sites-cavities or burrows-in close proximity to shallow water foraging areas (mostly < 150’ deep). Occasionally seen further offshore to continental shelf break

Distribution.

This seabird is found on North Pacific coastal waters, from Siberia through California to Alaska. The pigeon guillemot breeds and sometimes roosts on rocky shores, cliffs, and islands close to shallow water. In the winter, some birds move slightly south in the northern-most part of their range in response to advancing ice and migrate slightly north in the southern part of their range, generally preferring more sheltered areas.

Nesting

Pigeon guillemots are monogamous breeders, nesting in small colonies close to the shore. They defend small territories around a nesting cavity, in which they lay one or two eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs and feed the chicks. After leaving the nest the young bird is completely independent of its parents. Several birds and other animals prey on the eggs and chicks.

Vocalizations

Both sexes give the full range of these vocalizations, but males are vocal most often due to their more active role in mate and territory acquisition and defense. Three types apparent: **Hunch-whistle.** Given most frequently in pair formation and pre-egg period, and most often by a male when an intruder male approaches.

Neck-stretch. Given by territory intruders prior to flight. **Low-whistle.** Usually given by bird in resting posture. Characteristically given by unmated males early in season. *Trills*. Three types, each used in a different context. Trill. Given by a lone bird on territory, sitting quietly. Duet trill. Given by one member of a pair on territory. Thought to assist with forming and maintaining pair bond. Trill-waggle [the “twitter-waggle” . Face to face agonistic encounters, usually accompanied by rapid head movements. Common at offshore gathering areas **Scream**. whistle given as an Alarm call in response to perceived danger Rarely, female gives scream. Can be emitted during copulation . **Hissing call,** “rattle” when adults surprised in nest cavity by human.

Marbled Murrelet:

Brachyramphus marmoratus

Description

A small alcid (9 ½ " – 12 " long with a , wing span of 14" - 16" Wings longer, narrower, and more pointed than those of other alcids. Longest primary (outermost) equal to slightly more than half the length of wing. Rapid wing beats and flight speeds up to 100mph create a distinctive appearance in flight. Breeding adults have sooty brown to brownish black upperparts, rusty margins on the back feathers. Its habit of nesting in trees was suspected but not documented until a tree-climber found a chick in 1974, making it one of the last North American bird species to have its nest described. The marbled murrelet has declined in number since humans began logging its nest trees in the latter half of the 19th century. The decline of the marbled murrelet and its association with old-growth forests, at least in the southern part of its range, have made it a flagship species in the forest preservation movement. It is considered and endangered species. Murrelets belong to a family of birds that maintain a strong fidelity to historical nesting areas; it is not known whether murrelets will move to another area if their particular stand of trees is destroyed.

Habitat

In summer, forages primarily in bays, inlets, fjords (rarely in protected harbors), and open ocean within 30 mile of shore in Alaska. Usually in widely dispersed concentrations: singles or pairs of birds. Seems to prefer shallow water generally in areas with underwater sills, shelf edges, or strong tidal currents . Highest use in upwelling areas, mouths of bays, over underwater sills, tidal rips, narrow passages between islands, shallow banks, and kelp beds. Also known to feed on coastal freshwater lakes

Distribution

In the Americas the Marble Murrelet nests in forested or rocky areas on islands and on mainland along coast from Aleutian Archipelago in Alaska; east Santa Cruz California. It is a special treat to view these rare birds. Sitka is Ground Zero for studying this locally abundant species.

Nesting

More than 160 nests are now known; at least 140 tree and 15 ground nests in North America. In Alaska, open nests often at base of Sitka alder or dwarf Sitka spruce; crevice nests also occasionally protected by alder. Four nests on or near ground have also been in forested areas in s.-central and se. Alaska; these nests were on rocks, mats of moss, or tree roots on cliffs of rock outcroppings near ocean. Nests are generally not reused.

Clutch size is only 1 egg. Not known if individuals lay replacement eggs after failure or lay >1 clutch per year, although circumstantial evidence suggests re-nesting after failure at 1 nest in Alaska . Appearance is pale olive green to greenish yellow background color; nonglossy; covered with irregular brown, black, and purple spots.

Vocalizations

Most common vocalizations at nesting sites, while flying, and at sea. Sound phonetically like keer, kee—or, and kee-ee-er (keea, ke—ea, and kee-ee-ea, respectively

Kittlitz's Murrelet:

Brachyramphus brevirostris

Description

The Kittlitz's Murrelet is a mysterious bird of Beringia. In North America, it nests only in Alaska, particularly in glaciated areas from Glacier Bay to the Alaska Peninsula. Small populations also breed in western Alaska and the Russian Far East. This is the only alcid that nests on the ground at or near the tops of mountains, particularly near glaciers and in previously glaciated areas, where its cryptic plumage helps it avoid detection. In areas that are glaciated, it forages near tidewater glaciers and outflows of glacial streams. The species' general rarity and patchy distribution and questions about its population trends all have heightened concern about its future. It's linear measurements are poorly known; nothing known about geographical variation in measurements. In general, however, Kittlitz's Murrelets are smaller in bill measurements and larger in wing length and weight than are Marbled Murrelets and are smaller in bill measurements, wing length, and weight than are Long-billed Murrelets

Habitat

During breeding season, feeds and spends time at sea around icebergs when within range of tidewater glaciers although avoids areas of heavy ice cover In Gulf of Alaska, occurs almost entirely in bays and fjords; rarely seen on open continental shelf. In Bristol Bay, occurs on open continental shelf (0.5-65 nautical miles [nm]) from shore, although most birds occur (≤15 nm) from shore. They also have been sighted around Baranof island

Distribution

Distribution centered in Bering Sea; extends beyond it in symmetrical fashion to Gulf of Alaska.. Winter distribution poorly known but almost certainly also Beringian. This is a very rare site but not unheard of in the Sitka Sound.

Nesting

As far as is known, only 1 brood produced/yr. Pattern of nesting on glacial nunataks (suggests nesting is associated with present and past glaciation. Some nests occur in glacial cirques. Several records of nests in bare spots in snow fields or near glaciers, suggesting that these sites are selected because they melt off earlier than surrounding areas or because they are snow-free earlier in spring . Spacing of nests may be related to availability of suitable habitat.

Vocalizations

Primary call is the Groan Call, which has been recorded in Glacier Bay and sounds like aaahrr or urhhhhn. This call is short (0.3–0.6 s). Flying birds utter variations on this call that have slightly higher frequencies; in one case, the call had lower frequencies and a distinct, rapid quaver. A spectrographically similar Groan Call is rarely given by Marbled Murrelets.

Rhinoceros Auklet

Cerorhinca monocerata

Description

14 ½-15 ½ (37-39 cm). A pigeon-sized seabird. Dark above with lighter gray throat and breast, white underparts. Slender pale-yellow bill, white eye. In breeding plumage, short upright "horn" at base of bill, with white drooping "whiskers" at either side; white plume above eye. Immatures dark gray above, light below with duller, smaller bill and dark eye. Auklet is a misnomer, since this bird is not a close relative of the small, plankton-feeding alcids called auklets but is related to the more brightly colored, parrot-billed puffins. Rhinoceros Auklets feed on the open sea during the day but may be seen at sunset in summer among inlets and islands. They swim and bob with a beak full of fish, waiting for nightfall before venturing ashore to feed their young. The breeding colony on St. Lazaria has a significant population with approximately 1,000 breeding pairs. Now, occasionally we have the pleasure of coming across some Rhino's who clearly have too much food in their bellies. When they make that valiant attempt of trying to gain flight, often what you will see is them awkwardly skipping across the waters surface like a stone.

Habitat

Feeds on fish offshore; digs deep burrows in grassy or timbered headlands.

Distribution

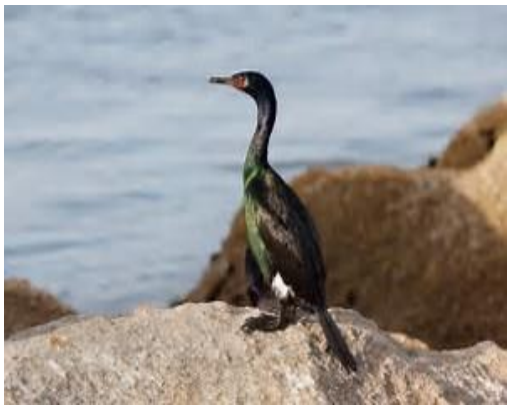
Breeds from Aleutians south to central California. Winters off breeding grounds and south to southern California. Also in Asia.

Nesting

Most of the North American population breeds on a small number of islands in British Columbia and adjacent parts of Washington and southeast Alaska. Rhinoceros Auklets begin to breed when they are 3-5 years old producing1 white egg, often spotted, in a burrow. Their nests are very long underground burrows (20 feet). Nests in colonies, sometimes in large numbers. The eggs are incubated for 39 to 45 days after which the egg hatches. When the chick is between 38-60 days old it will leave the nest (fledge).

Vocalizations

Calls are given regularly at sea during the day. Calling on land begins soon after first arrivals at colony (1–2 h after sunset at colonies and ceases 1–2 h before sunrise, with a peak after midnight, continuing until dawn. speculate that the chorus involves calling for mate recognition. 8 Different calls have been identified , Mooing, Growling, Groans, Braying, Pre-flight call, Rasp Sqeak, Huffs, Trumpeting and a Distress Call.



Pelegic Cormorant:

Phalacrocorax pelagicus

Description

The smallest and most widely distributed and poorly studied of the cormorant family. Also known as Baird's cormorant, Analogous to other smallish cormorants, it is also called the pelagic shag occasionally. Pelagic cormorants have relatively short wings due to their need for economical movement underwater, and consequently have the highest flight costs of any bird. hey are a glossy black, with a dark bill, long slender neck, which is held out straight in flight, head no wider than neck, and a red throat patch. Breeding birds have a bold white spot on each flank. At close range 2 crests fore and aft, are visible. The immature birds are dark brown, with same proportions as adults. On land, pelagic cormorants are rather clumsy and walk with the high-stepped waddling gait. After landing they often scratch the ground, as is typical for cormorants. Males searching for a mate or bonding with their partner give an elaborate courtship display. Like all cormorants, this includes stretching the gular sac with the hyoid bone and repeated "yawning"; as in many but not all cormorants, the pelagic cormorant's display furthermore includes arching the neck and hopping, lifting the folded wings and rapidly fluttering them to show the white thigh patches. During the yawning display, the head is thrown back and calls are given which differ between males and females; when the birds land, males and females give an identical call. Otherwise, the displays are given in silence. They prefer to hunt in the vicinity of kelp beds or among rocks.

Habitat

This seabird lives along the coasts of the northern Pacific; during winter it can also be found in the open ocean.

Distribution

The North American population totals about 130,000 birds, the majority of which occur in Alaska. Their breeding range extends throughout inner and outer coastal areas, from n. Alaska south through the Bering Sea to the Aleutian Is. and south along the Pacific coast to n. Baja California, Northernmost breeding colony is at Cape Lisburne, n. Chuckchi Sea; scattered colony sites throughout the Bering Strait including Diomede Is., AK and south including St. Lawrence I., St. Mathew I. in the Bering sea.

Nesting

The clutch size for this species is 3-7 chalky bluish eggs in a nest of seaweed, feathers, guano and other debris. They typically do not grow from one year to the next. The nests (avg. size 19” diameter) are often located on steep cliffs and rocky islands. They nest in the sea caves along Kruzof and St Lazaria Islands in the Sitka area. They can be found building a nest that has a shape, which is similar to a sconce shell shaped light affixed to the side of a wall. When these graceful creatures wish to take flight from their nest, because of very large muscles in their pelvic area (forward center of gravity), they must drop out of the nest backwards then turn mid-air and twist around in order to fly away from the rocky wall.

Vocalizations

Emits low groans, croaks, or hisses, depending on situation. Greeting Calls differ by sex and by individual. Females alternate between 2 call notes, "like the ticking of the pendulum of a grandfather clock" or a repeated igh-ugh call whereas males make a " purring " or arr-arr-arr call note.

Double Crested Cormorant:

Phalacrocorax auritus

Description

These are by far the largest and easiest to identify of the cormorants in the Southeast Alaska area. They are approximately 30-35" tall. It is an all-black bird which gains a small double crest of black and white feathers in breeding season. It has a bare patch of orange-yellow facial skin. Most waterfowl have a great deal of protection from the cold water thanks to plumage that contains oil which sheds the water across the surface of the feathers rather than soaking it up like a sponge. It is a combination of having dense bones, muscular skeletal structure and the absorption of water, which allows the cormorant to increase body weight and reduce buoyancy. This enables them to be efficient hunters under water. Some records indicate that these birds can dive to depths of 210 feet. After a dive the cormorant must "dry off". They can be observed standing on a rock or log with their wings stretched out from side to side drying themselves off like clothes on a clothesline in a summer breeze. In some areas in Asia cormorants have been raised and trained to fish for their owners because of their skilled hunting abilities. Once threatened by the use of DDT, the numbers of this bird have increased markedly in recent years.

Habitat

The double-crested cormorant is found near rivers and lakes and along the coastline resting or drying feathers on rocks on islands and islets.

Distribution

The Double-crested Cormorant is the most numerous and most widely distributed species of the 6 North American cormorants. In the U.S. and Canada, it is the only cormorant to occur in large numbers in the interior as well as on the coasts, and it is more frequently cited than the others as conflicting with human interests in fisheries.

Nesting

The clutch size for this species is 3-5 chalky, pale blue-green eggs in a well-made platform of sticks and seaweed. (condominium-like structure) placed in a tree or on a cliff or rocky island. Sometimes these nests become mammoth structures of nearly 3-5' high. Nest building and repair is a shared responsibility of the pair. On the west coast they primarily nest in very large colonies. Colony fidelity can be upwards of 87% but year to year nest fidelity is unknown.

Vocalizations

Cormorant from the Latin corvus marinus, or "sea crow." At nesting sites and roosts, produces several deep, guttural calls, like grunts; similar sounds also heard in large fishing flocks, but otherwise generally silent. before taking-off, t-t-t-t; just before landing, urg-urg-urg; following landing (or hopping), a "roar." Sexual advertising by male at nest site involves Wing-Waving Display, which is accompanied by synchronized ugh notes; these also described as ok-ok-ok-ok and noted as audible from outside the colony. During individual recognition display gives prolonged arr-r-r-r-r-t-t . Threat call is a repeated eh-hr .

Brandt's Cormorant:

Phalacrocorax penicillatus

Description

Medium-sized cormorant. Body length 35" relatively short tail; body plumage uniformly dark brownish black with green luster. On adults in Alternate (breeding) plumage, head and neck have purple luster, and loose, irregular tufts of stiff white plumes are situated on sides of head, neck, and scapulars. Sexes similar. Easily distinguished from other cormorants by blue patch on gullet, edged posteriorly with buffy to white feathers, forming a pale brownish band. Its specific name, penicillatus is Latin for a painter's brush (pencil of hairs), in reference to white plumes on its neck and back during the early breeding season. The common name honors the German naturalist Johann Friedrich von Brandt of the Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg, who described the species from specimens collected on expeditions to the Pacific during the early 19th century. It feeds on small fish from the surface to sea floor, obtaining them, like all cormorants, by pursuit diving using its feet for propulsion. Prey is often what is most common, rockfish and Pacific herring.

Habitat

Coastal or offshore rocks and waters near shore

Distribution

It breeds along the West Coast of North America, reaching Alaska in the north and Mexico in the south. In the main part of its range, from California to Washington, its life history and populations are tied to the rich upwelling associated with the California Current. In the nonbreeding season, when the effects of this current diminish, populations redistribute along the coast in concert with changing water and feeding conditions

Nesting

The clutch size for this species is 3-6 chalky bluish eggs. Nests in colonies on the ground on rocky islets, choosing flat or sloping areas or cliffs with ledges. Nests are large and untidy, made of terrestrial plants or seaweed collected from the land or sea, or stolen from other nests. Returning males commonly fight or threaten to evict new occupants from their previous nest site; females occasionally fight to regain their previous nest sites. Female and male alternate incubation duties. This species and the Pelagic Cormorant frequently nest on the same cliffs, with Brandt's forming colonies on level ground at the top of the cliff and the Pelagic choosing inaccessible ledges. Nest robbing by Western Gulls is such a serious problem that nests are rarely left unguarded.

Vocalizations

Least vocal of North American cormorants at nest, emitting barely audible . Low, hoarse and guttural croaks, growls, or gargles, and louder but similar repeated kauk notes. Also described as a repeated br-r-r, used in many situations, and a coughing sound made on land and in air; functions of these calls is unclear.

Gulls, Terns and Kittiwakes

Gull species are some of the hardest species to correctly ID!

Glaucous-winged Gull:

Larus glaucescens

Description

This gull is a large bird, being close in size to the herring gull, with which it has a superficial resemblance, and the western gull, to which it is likely most closely genetically related. It 20–27 " in length and 47–59 " in wingspan. It has a white head, neck, breast, and belly, a white tail, and pearly-gray wings and back. The ends of its wings are white-tipped. Its legs are pink and the beak is yellow with a red subterminal spot (the spot near the end of the bill that chicks peck in order to stimulate regurgitative feeding). A generalist feeder, the Glaucous Gull has a diverse diet that includes marine and freshwater fish and invertebrates, bird eggs and chicks, small mammals, berries, carrion, human refuse, and food items pirated from other foraging birds. One of these food categories may predominate in the diet of some individuals during the breeding season.

Habitat

Nest on relatively typically treeless and small offshore islands close to mainland where visibility is good; colony areas sometimes vegetated with grass, herbs, or shrubs, other times simply rock or shingle. This gull is an abundant nesting resident of St. Lazaria Island

Distribution

The Glaucous-winged Gull is an abundant resident along the northwestern coast of North America, where its bold nature and omnivorous food habits make it a familiar sight in coastal cities and towns. Although generally an inshore species, it does venture away from the coast where it is often seen around fishing vessels at sea.

Nesting

This gull generally nests at high densities in large or small colonies on offshore islands, although it has recently begun nesting on roofs of waterfront buildings. Individuals form apparently monogamous pairs, which usually stay together for several years; small nesting territories within the colony are defended vigorously and noisily against neighboring pairs. Each pair can produce up to three young in a season.

Vocalizations

Begging Call. Simple klee-ew call,bird assumes a hunched posture and flicks head up sharply while emitting call. By female in courtship context and by chicks soliciting feeding. **Shrill Waver**. When attacked by Peregrine Falcon or Gyrfalcon **Mew Call**. Soft, long-drawn single note linked with distinctive forward-bent posture, with neck stretched forward and arched. (1) courtship and pre-copulation, (2) parent-offspring interactions, (3) nest relief (4) aggressive encounters between territorial individuals. **Choking**. Usually performed in tandem by a mated pair. Birds squat, with breasts lowered to ground and tails elevated. Call uttered as head and neck pump up & down quickly & repeatedly, producing huoh-huoh-huoh sound. **Alarm Call.** Described as kek-kek-kek or kluk-kluk-kluk. Given in response to predator when first seen but does not yet pose immediate threat. Resting mates or other nearby Gulls quickly become attentive when call is heard. **Warning Call.** fe-kaw, fe-kaw, fe-kaw, given by adults defending the nest, often while in flight. Nearby Glaucous Gulls often attracted by Warning Call and fly to area of disturbance. Call heard frequently when human approaches nest, and often accompanied by aggressive aerial attacks. **Long Call.** Almost certainly functions in individual identification in many contexts. For example, given by both members of pair when one returns after absence, first by returning gull, often while still in flight, with mate typically responded before first has finished.

Glaucous Gull:

Larus hyperboreus

Description

Second largest gull in the world, “white-winged” gull (wing length 16 ½” – 19 ¼”, males average larger than females) with heavy body & long, thick, powerful bill that appears rather straight-sided in profile, lacking a prominent gonydeal angle. In flight, the wings appear broad with bluntly-pointed tips; at rest, folded wings show short primary projection and extend only a short distance beyond tail tip. Standing appears rather long-legged, deep-chested, thick-necked, and small-eyed, with a blunt rear end. Head rather large, angular, and flat-crowned (particularly males), imparting a fierce expression. A generalist feeder, the Glaucous Gull has a diverse diet that includes fish and invertebrates, bird eggs and chicks, small mammals, berries, carrion, human refuse, and food items pirated from other foraging birds

Habitat

Coasts, freshwater lakes, agricultural fields, urban areas, garbage dumps. Open water determines northern limit of winter range. At sea, observed inshore and also several hundred kilometers offshore. Individuals tagged in n. Alaska wintered along the coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula south to n. Japan, spending very little time farther offshore.

Distribution

In Alaska, breeds along north and west coasts also inland in foothills of Brooks Range and upper Colville River watershed. Winters from southern parts of breeding range southward, primarily in coastal waters; less commonly along large inland bodies of water. Winter distribution is dependent on access to open water and related food. Heavy ice at sea can force wintering populations south. Distribution at sea may vary in relation to age.

Nesting

Typically coastal, although some also nest inland in Alaska. Nests often inaccessible to mammalian predators. On tundra: typically shallow depressions composed of grass, sedges, moss, twigs, and occasionally feathers. Eggs often rest in slight depression with no lining material underneath them. Nests on cliff ledges: made of grasses, mosses, and seaweed. Clutch size usually 3 eggs, more rarely 1 or 2. Light gray-brown or olive. Speckled, spotted, with gray and dark brown spots. Smooth, nonglossy.

Vocalizations

Begging Call. Simple klee-ew call,bird assumes a hunched posture and flicks head up sharply while emitting call. By female in courtship context and by chicks soliciting feeding. **Shrill Waver**. When attacked by Peregrine Falcon or Gyrfalcon **Mew Call**. Soft, long-drawn single note linked with distinctive forward-bent posture, with neck stretched forward and arched. (1) courtship and pre-copulation, (2) parent-offspring interactions, (3) nest relief (4) aggressive encounters between territorial individuals. **Choking**. Usually performed in tandem by a mated pair. Birds squat, with breasts lowered to ground and tails elevated. Call uttered as head and neck pump up & down quickly & repeatedly, producing huoh-huoh-huoh sound. **Alarm Call.** Described as kek-kek-kek or kluk-kluk-kluk. Given in response to predator when first seen but does not yet pose immediate threat. Resting mates or other nearby Gulls quickly become attentive when call is heard. **Warning Call.** fe-kaw, fe-kaw, fe-kaw, given by adults defending the nest, often while in flight. Nearby Glaucous Gulls often attracted by Warning Call and fly to area of disturbance. Call heard frequently when human approaches nest, and often accompanied by aggressive aerial attacks. **Long Call.** Almost certainly functions in individual identification in many contexts. For example, given by both members of pair when one returns after absence, first by returning gull, often while still in flight, with mate typically responded before first has finished.

Sabine's Gull:

Larus occidentalis

Description

Sabine's Gull is an unusual and distinctive arctic gull that breeds at high latitudes but winters in coastal upwelling zones of the Tropics and Subtropics. Its dark gray hood, black bill with yellow tip, and tricolored upperwing consisting of alternating triangles of black, white, and gray make the adults of this species highly identifiable. The Sabine's Gull is considered an aberrant gull, both morphologically and behaviorally (Brown et al. 1967, Abraham 1986). It is one of only two gulls having a black bill with a yellow tip and a notched tail. It also displays many behavioral characteristics more similar to shorebirds than to gulls

Habitat

During Migration primarily beaches (especially in northern part of range and immediately after breeding), brackish waters (especially at river outflows), and marine waters (usually over continental shelf and shelf-break, occasionally near shore or farther offshore); occasionally in inland terrestrial areas near lakes, rivers, or sewage lagoons. Also may associate with fishing boats

Distribution

In Alaska, breeds along coastal w., se., n. Alaska and east across arctic Canada from nw. Mackenzie District and n. Keewatin District north to central arctic islands and east to n. Hudson Bay. Most migrate coastally or at sea near margins of continents, with much smaller numbers migrating north-south directly across North America and, to lesser extent, Eurasia; unknown percentage of world population crosses North Atlantic on passage between breeding grounds in Greenland/ne. Canada and wintering grounds off w. Africa

Nesting

Egg-laying believed to be timed to result in hatching just after first major emergence of aquatic dipterans, which form primary food. Roles and behavior of prospective parents in nest-site selection unknown. In sw. and w. Alaska, nests almost entirely on coast, either as isolated pairs or occasionally in groups of two pairs; in some cases, shares nesting ponds with Mew Gull. Generally, nest is depression in vegetation on tundra or marsh; rarely has lining (heather, grass stems, algae, or feathers), with most eggs laid on bare ground or, occasionally, on bare gravel. Both sexes attend eggs and share incubation for clutch size that averages 2.

Vocalizations

Primary vocalizations variously described as "chirping, groaning, and rattling" that resembles a tern more than that of a gull, a "harsh voice that is similar to that of terns", a chirring krrrrree and a "sound like a rusty clockwork mechanism being wound up." Social context of specific calls poorly known.

California Gull:

Larus californicus

Description

a medium-sized gull, smaller on average than the herring gull but larger on average than the ring-billed gull, though it may overlap in size greatly with both. Adults are similar in appearance to the herring gull, but, have a smaller yellow bill with a black ring, yellow legs, brown eyes and a more rounded head. The body is mainly white with grey back and upper wings. They have black primaries with white tips. Immature birds are also similar in appearance to immature herring gulls, with browner plumage than immature ring-billed gulls. Length can range from 18 to 22 in, the wingspan 48–54 in. This is the state bird of Utah, remembered for assisting Mormon settlers in dealing with a plague of Mormon crickets. A monument in Salt Lake City commemorates this event, known as the "Miracle of the Gulls"

Habitat

Migration Habitat; Regular seasonal migration to and from Pacific Coast. Vast majority leave breeding grounds in late summer, flying to Pacific Coast to spend nonbreeding months. In contrast to other large white-headed gulls, few individuals remain in breeding range during nonbreeding season. Conversely, few young birds return to breeding grounds; number of subadults returning to breeding grounds increases as their age increase

Distribution

Scattered breeding locations throughout arid West, nw. Great Plains, and s.-central taiga of North America Southern- and westernmost localities at Mono Lake and s. San Francisco Bay, CA; large population at southern end of range at Great Salt Lake and Utah Lake, UT. Easternmost breeding localities in s. Colorado, the Dakotas, and Manitoba at midlatitudes. Northernmost breeding currently at least as far north as Lac la Martre, 80 km northwest of Great Slave Lake, Northwest Territories

Nesting

Nests on islands, when available. Except in salt-evaporation facilities, where complicated systems of irregular levee roads provide some isolation from terrestrial predators, colonies on peninsulas appear to be in areas formerly or intermittently surrounded by water. In some study areas, prefers nesting next to shrub. Both parents build. In all populations, clutches of 2 or 3 eggs are most common. In some populations, there are occasional clutches of 4–6 eggs. Both sexes incubate. Between days 40 and 60, nest territories are abandoned and young move toward water; some birds able to fly short distances by end of sixth week. Young stand around on beach or swim in lake; parents continue to feed them at least in some populations. Most can fly by day 48.

Vocalizations

Begging Call. Simple klee-ew call,bird assumes a hunched posture and flicks head up sharply while emitting call. By female in courtship context and by chicks soliciting feeding. **Shrill Waver**. When attacked by Peregrine Falcon or Gyrfalcon **Mew Call**. Soft, long-drawn single note linked with distinctive forward-bent posture, with neck stretched forward and arched. (1) courtship and pre-copulation, (2) parent-offspring interactions, (3) nest relief (4) aggressive encounters between territorial individuals. **Choking**. Usually performed in tandem by a mated pair. Birds squat, with breasts lowered to ground and tails elevated. Call uttered as head and neck pump up & down quickly & repeatedly, producing huoh-huoh-huoh sound. **Alarm Call.** Described as kek-kek-kek or kluk-kluk-kluk. Given in response to predator when first seen but does not yet pose immediate threat. Resting mates or other nearby Gulls quickly become attentive when call is heard. **Warning Call.** fe-kaw, fe-kaw, fe-kaw, given by adults defending the nest, often while in flight. Nearby Glaucous Gulls often attracted by Warning Call and fly to area of disturbance. Call heard frequently when human approaches nest, and often accompanied by aggressive aerial attacks. **Long Call.** Almost certainly functions in individual identification in many contexts. For example, given by both members of pair when one returns after absence, first by returning gull, often while still in flight, with mate typically responded before first has finished.

Western Gull:

Larus occidentalis

Description

is a large white-headed gull that lives on the west coast of North America. It was previously considered conspecific with the yellow-footed gull (Larus livens) of the Gulf of California. A large gull that can measure 22 to 27" in total length, spans 51 to 57 " across the wings. has a white head and body, and gray wings. It has a yellow bill with a red subterminal spot (this is the small spot near the end of the bill that chicks peck in order to stimulate feeding). The western gull typically lives about 15 years but, can live up to 25 year. **Gull species are some of the hardest species to correctly ID!**

Habitat

Coasts, freshwater lakes, agricultural fields, urban areas, garbage dumps. Open water determines northern limit of winter range. At sea, observed inshore and several hundred kilometers offshore. Individuals tagged in n. Alaska wintered along the coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula south to n. Japan, spending very little time farther offshore.

Distribution

inhabits the Pacific Coast of North America, breeding from central Baja California north to Washington. In winter, this gull may be found throughout its breeding range, north to Vancouver I., south into Baja California, and in adjacent offshore waters of all these areas. Occasionally Id'ed in Sitka during the fall and spring

Nesting

Male and female dig various scrapes, fill them with vegetation; up to 3 per territory. Male feeds female regularly throughout, and female rarely leaves territory during laying. Clutch size generally 3. Incubation is shared by both sexes. Both parents brood young and brooding only occurs on wet and or cold days. est Parasitism occurs when chicks change nests and are adopted by adults other than genetic parents. Chicks leave nest within 24 h of hatching, remain on nesting territory and around nest 40+ d. Leave nesting territory initially with first flight at 45–50 d

Vocalizations

Begging Call. Simple klee-ew call,bird assumes a hunched posture and flicks head up sharply while emitting call. By female in courtship context and by chicks soliciting feeding. **Shrill Waver**. When attacked by Peregrine Falcon or Gyrfalcon **Mew Call**. Soft, long-drawn single note linked with distinctive forward-bent posture, with neck stretched forward and arched. (1) courtship and pre-copulation, (2) parent-offspring interactions, (3) nest relief (4) aggressive encounters between territorial individuals. **Choking**. Usually performed in tandem by a mated pair. Birds squat, with breasts lowered to ground and tails elevated. Call uttered as head and neck pump up & down quickly & repeatedly, producing huoh-huoh-huoh sound. **Alarm Call.** Described as kek-kek-kek or kluk-kluk-kluk. Given in response to predator when first seen but does not yet pose immediate threat. Resting mates or other nearby Gulls quickly become attentive when call is heard. **Warning Call.** fe-kaw, fe-kaw, fe-kaw, given by adults defending the nest, often while in flight. Nearby Glaucous Gulls often attracted by Warning Call and fly to area of disturbance. Call heard frequently when human approaches nest, and often accompanied by aggressive aerial attacks. **Long Call.** Almost certainly functions in individual identification in many contexts. For example, given by both members of pair when one returns after absence, first by returning gull, often while still in flight, with mate typically responded before first has finished.

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

Description

The Herring Gull is the most numerous, widespread, and adaptable of the large gulls that breed in North America. Young birds pass through about 4 plumage cycles (7 or 8 distinct plumage states) before reaching adulthood.. The Herring Gull is a large; males are distinctly larger than females, with noticeably larger bills. In breeding plumage, the head, neck, body and tail are white; the back and wings are light gray, the wing-tips are black with white spots ('mirrors'). The bill is yellow or light orange with a subterminal red spot; the iris is golden with a yellow or orange orbital ring; the legs are pink. In non-breeding plumage (September–March), the head and neck are variably (sometimes extensively) streaked grayish-brown and the bare parts are duller in coloration. **Making gull species some of the hardest species to correctly ID.**

Habitat

In migration, largely coastal on rocky shores, but also sand, pebble beaches, and mudflats with seaweed/kelp debris and beds of mussels or cockles, some shorelines and beaches of inland freshwater lakes where they occur only during migration. Habitats frequented food-rich, usually crustaceans or mollusks.

Distribution

In Alaska, Herring Gulls breed throughout the interior lowlands. Birds recorded breeding occasionally on St. Lawrence Island and other islands in the Bering Sea. Migrating and year-round Herring gulls occupy all of north America except interior Mexico and artic sea coastline.

Nesting

Herring Gull nests are built on the ground in treeless habitats, and locations that allow the sitting bird a clear view around it. The nest site is usually protected from prevailing wind(s) and is usually placed next to a large object (e.g., log, shrub, rock) which acts as a visual barrier between the nest and its closest neighbors. The modal clutch size is 3 eggs; some birds lay 2 eggs and a few birds in poor condition lay only 1 egg. Parents share incubation and sitting chores. Chicks require brooding for the first few days after hatching but, can then maintain their body temperature and leave the nest.

Vocalizations

Herring Gulls have a complex repertoire of at least 8 and possibly 12–15 calls. Two of these are used by pre-fledged chicks, 3 other calls are used exclusively by adults during the breeding season (Mew call, Choking call, Copulation call).

Mew Gull

Larus canus

Description

Also called common gulls , adult gulls are 16–18 in long, noticeably smaller than the herring gull and slightly smaller than the ring-billed gull. It is further distinguished from the ring-billed gull by its shorter, more tapered bill, which is a more greenish shade of yellow and is unmarked during the breeding season. The body is grey above and white below. The legs are greenish-yellow. In winter, the head is streaked grey and the bill often has a poorly defined blackish band near the tip, which is sometimes sufficiently obvious to cause confusion with ring-billed gull. They have black wingtips with large white "mirrors". Young birds have scaly black-brown upperparts and a neat wing pattern, and grey legs. They take two to three years to reach maturity. **Gull species are some of the hardest species to correctly ID!**

Habitat

The Mew Gull is a characteristic bird of beaches and river estuaries along the Pacific coast in winter and is the smallest of the “white-headed” gulls in North America, where it was formerly known as the Short-billed Gull.

Distribution

It occupies a wide variety of habitats, several of which are used in both summer and winter, including lakes, rivers, and rocky shores. In addition, during the breeding season, it uses tundra, marshes, streams, and islands. In winter, North American breeders chiefly forage over inshore and near-offshore marine waters, lagoons, and river estuaries; they are mainly coastal, being rare far offshore. Onshore, Mew Gulls may frequent flooded fields and short-grass pastures and are common, and perhaps best known, around sewage-treatment ponds and outfalls in coastal communities.

Nesting

It breeds in both marine and freshwater habitats and is both a ground and tree nester, being the only “white-headed” gull that regularly uses trees for nesting. Females are responsible for nest building with nest reuse being common. Clutch size from 1-5 eggs. Incubation is hared by the sexes and hatchlings leave nest within 3–5 d but remain near nest Start flying at about 4 wk, fly well at 5 weeks.

Vocalizations

Alarm Call of brachyrhynchus group described as sharp, querulous, repeated “ kwew, kwew ” to human intruder, high and squealing with a strident nasal quality or hoarse, wheezy “ hew,” “ whew,” or slightly reedier “ hsew ” immature birds described as giving high, slightly shrill “ siiir ”

Bonaparte's Gull

Chroicocephalus Philadelphia

Description

One of the smallest gulls in North America, Bonaparte's Gull is a familiar and often abundant migrant and winter visitor over much of the continent, but it is one of the least known of the gulls with respect to breeding. Breeding- (Definitive Alternate) plumaged adult has entirely black head (hood) with narrow white eye-crescents, gray mantle, and upper-wing with white outer primaries and primary coverts, white tail, white underparts, black bill (27–31 mm), and orange-red legs. At beginning of breeding season, breast may show subtle rosy-pink tinge. Nonbreeding (Basic plumaged) adult similar except head entirely white with characteristic dark ear spot behind eye (usually also has dark smudges on top of head and in front of eye), and gray hindneck. Immatures during their first winter. The species is named for Charles Lucien Bonaparte, a French ornithologist (and nephew to the former French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte) who spent eight years in America. **Gull species are some of the hardest species to correctly ID!**

Habitat

It avoids dense stands of conifers, instead choosing more open areas, such as the treed edges of bogs, fens, marshes, ponds, or islands. It typically nests within 60 m (200 ft) of open water. It also gathers in large numbers to feed on the eggs of spawning salmon, alighting on the water and, if necessary, diving to take drifting eggs.

Distribution

Breeds in w. (including Kobuk and Kuskokwim Deltas), sw. (to base of Alaska peninsula), central, s.-coastal (including Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound), and (rarely) se. Alaska. Migrates through Sitka in the late summer early fall

Nesting

Most nests are placed 9.8–19.7 ft above the ground, and within 200 ft of open water, though they have been found low as 5ft, as high 49 ft, and as far as 590 ft from open water. They are only rarely placed on the ground. Adults are aggressive in defending their nests, chasing away even large potential predators such as hawks, common ravens and humans. he female lays a clutch of 2–4 eggs, with most nests containing 3 eggs.

Vocalizations

Bonaparte's gull has a voice described as nasal and raspy, with calls variously transcribed as cherr or cheeer

Black-legged Kittiwake:

Rissa tridactyla

Description

Black-legged Kittiwakes are small, pelagic gulls with a circumpolar distribution in the northern hemisphere. They feed at the ocean surface on fish and macrozooplankton, mostly in daylight, but also at night when foraging over deep ocean waters, where key prey approach the surface in darkness. They breed in colonies numbering from a few to many tens of thousands of pairs. Small gull, length 15 = 16 ½", white with mantle and wings of pearl gray. Tips of outer primaries black, appearing "dipped in ink." Occurrence of white apical spots on otherwise black wing tips varies geographically. Inner flight feathers pearl gray and narrowly fringed in white. Wings more rounded than other gulls; wing beats faster and more rigid, almost tern-like. Adult bill uniformly greenish yellow (immature black to very pale yellow); feet and legs black, sometimes tinged with orange. Tail slightly forked.

Habitat

A cliff-nester on ledges of offshore islands, sea stacks, or inaccessible areas of coastal mainland. Also nests on steep earthen slopes or large boulders or in substitute-cliff man-made objects: shipwrecks, buildings Unsuccessful nesting on snow and glacial ice reported when access to previously used substrates was prevented.

Distribution

Breeding range is circumpolar; subarctic to arctic over coasts and islands wherever suitable nesting habitat and food are present. Northernmost colonies in Alaska at Cape Lisburne (Chukchi Sea). About 43% of the Alaskan population (total 356 colony sites) breeds in Gulf of Alaska (240 colony sites), 40% in the Bering and Chukchi seas (93 colony sites), 5% in Aleutian Is. Occasionally observed on St. Lazaria

Nesting

Birds that recruit to a colony are present at least 1 yr prior to breeding. Usual pattern is for male to obtain a nest site then attract a female to the defended ledge. In subsequent seasons, male typically arrives first and defends nest site of previous season. If divorce occurs, male more likely than female to stay at old nest site. Clutch Size is 1-3 with eggs ranging from brown, blue, gray, and olive to tan with dark brown-gray speckling. Color, generally similar within clutch, may be influenced by food eaten

Vocalizations

Voices of males and females similar. No songs. Calls provide cues for individual recognition. Greeting or Kittiwaking Ceremony. Both adults vocalize, standing in nest, facing each other or parallel with heads pointing in same direction. "Kittiwake" sound = " a-eh-al-eh " or " e-e-eh " or " hi-e-eh " or " gi-e-eh " .Vocalization similar to "Yodeling," "Trumpeting."

DUCKISH

White-winged Scoter
Melanitta fusca

Description

Large diving duck. Male: average total length is 22 inches; female: 20 ½ inches Adult male entirely blackish with small white patch around eye. Females and hatch-year birds of both sexes dark brownish with paler belly and (in immatures) whitish pre- and postorbital patches on side of head. Of the world's 3 species of scoters (White- winged, Surf, and Black scoter), all of which inhabit Holarctic waters, the White-winged Scoter is the largest and best known, in part because its nests are the most accessible. This scoter nests on freshwater lakes and wetlands in the northwestern interior of North America and winters along the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts. While in saltwater areas, it feeds on mollusks and crustaceans.

Habitat

The White Winged Scoter winters in Southeast Alaska and can be found in coastal estuaries, bays, and open coastline with shallow water over shellfish beds and hard, usually sand or gravel bottom. Prefers bays and inlets in intertidal zone along coast, just beyond zone where waves break and within about 1 m of shore.

Distribution

They are distributed in the northern regions of North America Throughout Alaska, British Columbia to the great lakes and mid Atlantic on the East Coast.

Nesting

Often nests long distances from water. Nearly all nests are located in dense, often thorny cover; usually well hidden and built on the ground and . Nests on mainland sites may be even farther from water; e.g., one nest was

½ mile away. Nests are commonly reused for ≥6 yr. Clutch Size Range from 6 to 12.

Vocalizations

Not very vocal. Wings reported to make whistling sounds in flight even louder than sound produced by a goldeneye's.

Surf Scoter:

Melanitta perspicillata

Description

17-21”. Male black with white patches on crown and nape. Bill colorful, swollen at base, bearing large black spot. Female brownish black, with 2 whitish patches on cheek. Both sexes lack white wing patch. The so-called “Skunk-head” is the only one of the three scoters confined to the New World and is the most common scoter on the Pacific Coast in winter, where it sometimes feeds quite close to rocky headlands and in shallow inlets.

These birds are similar in their habits to the other scoters but are more often seen diving for mollusks and crustaceans along the line of breaking surf. The bold white patches on the males head are used in displays; a bird may threaten a rival simply by turning its head and presenting its white nape. These scoters depart for breeding grounds in early spring, but a few, usually young males, may spend their second summer on wintering grounds.

Habitat

Swift-moving streams in summer; rocky, wave-lashed coasts and jetties in winter. Prefers to forage close to shore, often within 50 feet.

Distribution

In the fall the birds move to the coast, the preferred habitat where they thrive in rough water of a different kind, riding the surf in toward rocky cliffs, and wrenching mussels, chitons, barnacles, and other attached animals from the surface and diving for crabs and other crustaceans. In w. North America, winters all along coasts of British Columbia and s. Alaska, north and west to Aleutian Is. Southeast Alaska support wintering populations with a few south to n. California. Stragglers are seen as far south as Baja California.

Nesting

5-8 Creamy white eggs in a vegetative and down-lined depression hidden under bushes or in marsh vegetation.

Vocalizations

Generally silent. Voice poorly known and evidently little used, except in courtship. Male has liquid, gurgling call, especially while performing Breast-scooping Display: a liquid, explosive little puk-puk. Also a guttural croaking krrraakkrrraak, a rasping or crow-like call during Chin-lifting when threatening strange drakes. Call of female is crowlike: a harsh crahh with open beak when defending small young

Harlequin Duck:

Histrionicus histrionicus

Description

14-20”. A small dark duck. Male is blue-gray (appearing black at a distance), with chestnut flanks and distinctive white patches on head and body. Female is dusky brown with 2 or 3 whitish patches on sides of face. In flight, this species lacks large white patches on wings. Harlequin Ducks squeak when engaged in behavioral interactions, a distinctly un-ducklike sound and the source of one of their local names, sea mice. Their ability to swim and feed among the boulders of a raging river is unmatched. In winter they are usually found close to shore, feeding in raging surf or loafing on rocks. They are relatively tame and can be approached closely in many areas. Their name derives from a character of traditional Italian comedy and pantomime, the harlequin, who appeared in costumes of multicolored triangular patches and displayed histrionics (tricks).

Habitat

Swift-moving streams in summer; rocky, wave-lashed coasts and jetties in winter. Prefers to forage close to shore, often within 50 feet.

Distribution

In the fall the birds move to the coast, the preferred habitat where they thrive in rough water of a different kind, riding the surf in toward rocky cliffs, and wrenching mussels, chitons, barnacles, and other attached animals from the surface and diving for crabs and other crustaceans. In w. North America, winters all along coasts of British Columbia and s. Alaska, north and west to Aleutian Is. Puget Sound and Juan de Fuca Strait support wintering populations. Small numbers are seen on exposed coastlines of Washington and Oregon, with a few south to n.

California. Stragglers south to Baja California.

Nesting

6-8 pale buff or cream-colored eggs in a mass of down concealed in a crevice in rocks along a stream.

Vocalizations

Vocal for a sea duck. By far the most common call is distinctive mouse-like squeak: gia . Frequency and intensity rise with increasing activity in behavioral interactions. Female also utters coarse ek-ek-ek when searching for mate or brood.

Long-tailed Duck:

Clangula hyemalis

Description

Adults have white underparts, though the rest of the plumage goes through a complex molting process. The male has a long pointed tail (3.9 to 5.9 in) long and a dark grey bill crossed by a pink band. In winter, the male has a dark cheek patch on a mainly white head and neck, a dark breast and mostly white body. In summer, the male is dark on the head, neck and back with a white cheek patch. The female has a brown back and a relatively short pointed tail. In winter, the female's head and neck are white with a dark crown. In summer, the head is dark. Juveniles resemble adult females in autumn plumage, though with a lighter, less distinct cheek patch

Habitat

During daytime, usually migrates close to shore, but may also migrate offshore, following ice leads; inland when ice cover is extensive. Uses coastal lagoons and deep open lakes for molting grounds. Moves to leeward sides of barrier islands during strong winds when molting. Congregates at herring spawns on Pacific Coast.

Distribution

Breeding distribution is over extensive portions of subarctic and arctic areas of Alaska and n. Canada. Winters on both coasts of North America and on Great Lakes; sporadic on other large inland lakes. Often remains in northern areas as long as open water available.

Nesting

Tends to nest in small clusters on islands or peninsulas in lakes. Avoids nesting on ponds with nesting Herring Gulls, Pacific Loons, and Common Eiders. At first, nest is a shallow depression lined with 2.5 to 5.0 cm of dried dwarf willow and dwarf birch leaves. Nests constructed of grasses, sedges, and bell heather shoots. First egg is buried in this material, and down does not appear until, at least, second egg is laid. Down is added as egg-laying progresses. Up to 8 eggs / clutch.

Vocalizations

A vocal sea duck. Unmistakable male call, variously described as ahr-ahr-ahroulit, ahang-ahóo, ow owooolee, ow ow owoolik, or unk-on-alik

Greater Scaup:

Aythya marila

Description

This moderately large diving duck is the only circumpolar Aythya, and one of few circumpolar duck species. With prominent white wing-stripe extending onto primaries. Males appear white in midsection, black on both ends, and reflect green sheen on rounded head; noticeably drab in midsummer during body molt and especially bright in Feb. Females brown, except white face-patch around bill base, all seasons. Hatching year (HY) birds in fall resemble females. Under ideal sunlight conditions, head in Alternate male reflects green sheen, compared to a purplish sheen in Lesser.

Habitat

Species common in unfrozen bays and lagoons throughout Aleutian Is. and along Pacific coastline from Cold Bay through coastal Southcoastal Alaska. Greatest Alaska concentrations in protected bays of lower Cook Inlet. Fairly common to uncommon in winter in se. Alaska

Distribution

Alaska. Primary North American breeding grounds; greatest concentrations in tundra wetlands that border Bering Sea and Kotzebue Sound—from Izembek Lagoon at tip of Alaska Peninsula to Noatak River. Numbers decrease eastward across rest of Alaska.

Nesting

Most important feature of nest site is a substantial cover of previous year's growth of tall grasses or sedges on a substrate not usually subject to flooding in Jun–Jul. Simple bowl-shaped depression in ground, usually lined with grasses and eventually thick layer of down. Clutch Size- Eight or 9 eggs most frequent; range 5–13

Vocalizations

Closely like other Aythya in the “scaup” clade, includes Kinked-Neck and Head-Throw calls and Coughing in male and Inciting and Aggressive calls in female. Ducklings in broods or separated from others make plaintive peep s like young of other species.

Common Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Description

The Common Goldeneye is a cold-hardy, medium-sized diving duck that breeds worldwide in northern boreal forests. In flight its wings make a distinctive whistling sound, giving rise to its colloquial name, “whistler. Compact, “chunky” appearance with short neck and round body; short, gray-black bill. Adult sexes strongly dimorphic in size and plumage most of year. Breeding males have striking pattern of iridescent greenish-black head with bright, oval white patch at hind base of bill; brilliant white sides, breast, belly, and secondaries contrast with black back, wings, and tail. Females have chocolate brown head; slaty gray back, wings, and tail; and white flanks, belly, and breast. Both sexes have bright amber irides (hence the name “goldeneye”). Fish, crustaceans, and mollusks become a more important part of the diet in winter

Habitat

Primarily marine: shallow coastal bays, estuaries, and harbors of Atlantic and Pacific coasts, wherever adequate food is found. Because winter diet is largely mollusks and crustaceans, prefers foraging over sandy, gravel, rocky, or boulder substrates in relatively shallow waters where such prey are concentrated.

Distribution

A fairly common visitor to the harbors and estuaries throughout the Sitka Sound during the winter months

Nesting

In North America this species typically breeds across forested regions of Canada and winters along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. During the breeding season, it is primarily insectivorous and prefers lakes (often fishless) with abundant aquatic invertebrates. Females with breeding experience are generally faithful to previous nest sites. Cavity nester; uses live or dead trees (apparently uses most tree species), but infrequently will attempt to nest in other sites such as rock crevices. The female does all the incubating and is abandoned by the male about 1 to 2 weeks into incubation. The young remain in the nest for about 24–36 hours. Brood parasitism is quite common with other common goldeneyes,

Vocalizations

Usually silent. Males appear to vocalize only during courtship, producing variations of a single, short, faint call, peent; uttered during several of courtship displays, including Head-throw and Bowsprit

Barrow's Goldeneye

Bucephala islandica

Description

is a medium-sized sea duck. This bird was named after Sir John Barrow. The genus name is derived from Ancient Greek boukephalos, "bullheaded", from bous, "bull " and kephale, "head", a reference to the bulbous head shape of the bufflehead. The species name islandica means Iceland. Adult males have a dark head with a purplish gloss and a white crescent at the front of the face. Adult females have a mostly yellow bill. The male Barrow's goldeneye differs from the male common goldeneye in the fact that the common goldeneye has a round white patches on the face, less black on the back of the bird, a greenish gloss, and a larger bill. For the females, the common goldeneye has a less rounded head, and a bill in which only the tip is yellow.

Habitat

Females return to the same breeding sites year after year and tend to use the same nesting sites. The males stay with their mate through the winter and defend their territory during the breeding season, then leave for the molting site. Mating pairs often stay intact even though the male and female are apart for long periods of time over the summer during molting times. The pair then reunites at wintering areas. They are migratory and most winter in protected coastal waters or open inland waters. Barrow's goldeneye, along with many other species of sea ducks, rely on urbanized, coastal estuaries as important places on their migration patterns. These estuaries provide excellent wintering and stopping places during the ducks' migration.

Distribution

Their breeding habitat consists of wooded lakes and ponds primarily in northwestern North America, but also in scattered locations in eastern Canada and Iceland. Often found in the harbors and estuaries in the Sitka area during winter months.

Nesting

The Barrow's goldeneye is considered an arboreal bird species because much of its nesting is done in cavities found in mature trees. The birds will also nest in burrows or protected sites on the ground. Barrow's goldeneyes tend not to share habitat with the much more numerous common goldeneye. Average clutch size ranges from 6 to 12 eggs. Only female incubates.

Vocalizations

The Barrow's goldeneye is a relatively quiet bird that generally only makes vocalizations during the breeding season and courtship. These can include low volume squeaks, grunts and croaks. During flights, the fast movement of the bird's wings creates a low whistling sound.

Hooded Merganser:

Mergus cucullatus

Description

16-19”. A small duck with a slender pointed bill. Male has white, fan-shaped, black-bordered crest, blackish body with dull rusty flanks, and white breast with 2 black stripe down side. Female is dull gray-brown, with warmer brown head and crest. Both sexes show white wing patch in flight. The Hooded Merganser is the smallest of three North American mergansers and the only one restricted to this continent. Breeding throughout a wide area in the forested east and northwest -- where suitable nest cavities enhance adequate brood habitat -- it is most common in the Great Lakes region. Favorite winter habitats include forested freshwater wetlands, brackish estuaries, and tidal creeks. Unlike other mergansers which feed almost exclusively on fish, Hooded Mergansers have a more diverse diet, diving and capturing small fish, aquatic insects, and crustaceans, particularly crayfish, with the aid of eyes well-adapted to underwater vision.

Habitat

Breeds on wooded ponds, lakes, and rivers; winters in coastal marshes and inlets.

Distribution

Breeds from southern Alaska south to Oregon and Montana, and from Manitoba and Nova Scotia south to Arkansas and northern Alabama. Winters near coast from British Columbia south to California and from New England south to Florida and Texas.

Nesting

8-12 white eggs in a down-lined cup in a natural tree cavity or sometimes in a fallen hollow log. Nest boxes containing wood shavings and boxes used the previous year are preferred. Males abandon females shortly after incubation begins.

Vocalizations

Typically silent. Vocalizations most commonly heard during courtship and around nest sites. Male produces a rolling frog-like craaa-crrrooooo, in conjunction with Head-throw and Turn-the-back-of-the-head courtship display and a hollow pop after Head-shakes. Called "frog duck" in Georgia because call resembles that of the pickerel frog (Rana palustris). Females utter a hoarse gack associated with bobbing displays during courtship; this may be simultaneous with male vocalizations. The more usual female call is a rough croo-croo-crook like many sea ducks, occasionally given in flight around nest or by females when calling to newly hatched ducklings.

Common Merganser:

Mergus cucullatus

Description

Cold-hardy, fish-eating sea duck. As a top predator in aquatic food chains, this species has served as an indicator of environmental health. It was thought to threaten salmon and trout stocks, and in some regions it has been the target of eradication programs. it has a crest of longer head feathers, but these usually lie smoothly rounded behind the head, not normally forming an erect crest. Adult males in breeding plumage are easily distinguished, the body white with a variable salmon-pink tinge, the head black with an iridescent green gloss, the rump and tail grey, and the wings largely white on the inner half, black on the outer half. Females, and males in "eclipse" (non- breeding plumage, July to October) are largely grey, with a reddish-brown head, white chin, and white secondary feathers on the wing. Like the other mergansers, these fish-feeding ducks have serrated edges to their bills to help them grip their prey, so they are often known as “sawbills.” When floating leisurely, they position themselves in water similar to ducks, but they also swim deep in water like cormorants, especially when swimming upstream. They often sit on a rock in the middle of the water, similar to cormorants, often half- opening their wings to the sun. To rise from water, they flap along the surface for many yards. Once they are airborne, the flight is strong and rapid.

Habitat

Prefers nesting near water bodies or rivers surrounded by conifers or mixed forests

Distribution

The Common Merganser nests worldwide near large lakes and rivers in northern forested habitats. In North America, it winters on large lakes, rivers, and reservoirs of the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountains, central United States, Great Lakes region and along the coasts as far north as Alaska.

Nesting

Nesting is normally in a tree cavity, so it requires mature forest as its breeding habitat; they also readily use large nest boxes where provided, requiring an entrance hole (5.9 in) in diameter. The female lays 6–17 (most often 8–12) white to yellowish eggs. The ducklings are taken by their mother in her bill to rivers or lakes immediately after hatching, where they feed on freshwater invertebrates and small fish fry.

Vocalizations

Usually silent except during courtship or when alarmed. Males vocalize only during courtship, producing several calls; a twanging, uig-a, and a kragagagagaga during courtship. Alarm Call, given when disturbed, is a hoarse grrr or wak in male. In female, it is a harsh call karr or gruk, Female gives a higher pitched, rapid cro cro cro when calling the young from the nest. Female hisses if cornered with brood or in nest.

Bufflehead

Bucephala albeola

Description

Is a small sea duck of the genus Bucephala, the goldeneyes. This species was first described by Linnaeus in his Systema naturae in 1758 as Anas albeol. The Bufflehead, confined as a breeder to the boreal forest and aspen parkland of North America, is our smallest diving duck. Its small size has probably evolved with its habit of nesting in the holes of the Northern Flicker, an abundant resource too small to accommodate other, larger cavity-nesting ducks. Bufflehead also nest in boxes, facilitating management of this species and studies of its reproductive biology. Only diving duck with a lobed hind toe. Strong sexual dimorphism, both in size and color. Breeding males have striking pattern: head black, glossed green and purple, with large white patch from ear coverts across nape; back black; white underparts; wings black, with large white patch occupying most of secondary's and coverts. Females mostly dark brown on head, back, and wings; pale gray on underparts. They show a white ear patch and a smaller white wing patch than males. Males in eclipse plumage are essentially female-like but with larger white patches on the wings and face. Wing-beat is rapid.

Habitat

On saltwater (predominant winter habitat), occupies more sheltered areas than goldeneyes. Along the coast, uses shallow waters in secluded coves, harbors, estuaries, or along beaches; avoids open coastlines. Inland, occurs on ponds, lakes, impoundments or bays along slow-moving rivers..

Distribution

The Bufflehead winters through out Southeast Alaska coast. They are migratory and most of them winter in protected coastal waters, or open inland waters, on the east and west coasts of North America and the southern United States. The bufflehead is an extremely rare vagrant to western Europe. Their breeding habitat is wooded lakes and ponds in Alaska and Canada, almost entirely included in the boreal forest.

Nesting

An obligate cavity nester. Uses cavities excavated by Northern Flicker and, occasionally, Pileated Woodpecker; avoids cavities with broken tops. No nest material is added. Eggs are laid on the bare bottom or on top of nesting material left by previous occupants. Nest sites are often reused for many years, sometimes up to 6 consecutive yrs, either by the same bird or a different one. Laying rate is among the slowest in ducks, perhaps a consequence of the small body size and large egg size. Average clutch size is nine (range six to 11)

Vocalizations

Least vocal of Bucephala species. No detailed studies of vocalizations.

Horned Grebe:

Podiceps auritus

Description

Even though the Horned Grebe is still one of the most abundant breeding grebes in North America, its contracting breeding range is cause for concern. Small grebe (12 – 15 inches) with moderately long neck, short bill that is rather straight and pointed with pale tip, and rather flat forehead with short peak at rear of crown. In breeding plumage, has distinctive bright buff, erectable patch of feathers behind eye ("horns") and black, fan- shaped facial feathers; foreneck, lores, upper breast, and flanks are chestnut, while crown and back are blackish and belly dingy white. In Basic plumage, appears black and white with slaty gray crown bordering wholly white cheeks that extend almost around nape, where divided by narrow black line; border between crown and cheeks extends in rather straight line behind eye (whitish spot usually present over lores in front of eye); neck whitish, but may have dusky wash on lower portion. In flight, shows white secondaries and small patch (sometimes reduced or absent) at base of upper forewing.

Habitat

Wintering area in North America including SE Alaska, found on moderate- to mainly large-sized bodies of fresh and, more commonly, salt water, usually inshore; few descriptions or analyses, none detailed, of winter habitat in North America. concentrations found mainly in shallow archipelago areas, especially sheltered straits between low islands, often at considerable distance from coast

Distribution

Breeds in inland in central and s. Alaska, south of Brooks Range (but absent from Aleutian Is. and Southeast Alaska).

Nesting

Prefers small, open-water marshes and ponds for nest sites. Clutch size 4-7 bluish white eggs on floating vegetation anchored to bottom.

Vocalizations

Advertising Call - Loud, nasal aaanrrh or jaorrrh (quite variable) usually descending in pitch and ending in a rattle or harsh trill. Given b lone Horned Grebe in typical. **Alarm and Anxiety Calls**. - Closely similar to Advertising Call but usually shriller also described Ko-wee kowee Call that serves as alarm. **Duet-Trilling** - Loud, accelerating trill: dji-ji-ji-ji ... ji-ji-jrrh (highly variable). Given by members of pair mostly during Triumph Ceremony on meeting or after antagonistic encounter. **Copulation Trill**. - Intense trilling closely similar to previous vocalization. Uttered repeatedly by active bird before and during mounting, rising in pitch and intensity. **Threat Chittering**. - Similar to Duet-Trilling, but more staccato and stuttering, with less continuous cadence and shorter phrases of 2 or 3 notes: kru-vu kru-vu kru-vu or dji-ji dji-ji dji-ji ... . Includes a more intense, squeaky version: dji-ji—JOARRH dji-ji—JOARRH (dash indicates pause; capitals indicate accent). Typically given in Hunched Posture, often by both members of pair. **Contact Chittering** - Low kru-uuck or uck uck . Given by members of pair as they investigate nest sites. **Platform Call** - Soft, 2- or 3-syllable ga ga ga or gjack .... Most often given by male in vicinity of platform when building and soliciting.

Western Grebe:

Aechmophorus occidentalis

Description

The western grebe is the largest North American grebe. It is (22–30 in) long, and measures 31–40 in) across the wings. It is black-and-white, with a long, slender, swan-like neck and red eyes. It is easily confused with Clark's grebe, which shares similar features, body size, behavior and habitat, and hybrids are known. The Western Grebe is a conspicuous water bird of western North America, from southern Canada to the Mexican Plateau.

They are perhaps best known for their elaborate and energetic courtship rituals, now well-studied. These courtship ceremonies -- in which these birds perform a series of displays in ritualized, apparently mechanical, sequences -- are among the most complex known in birds.

Distribution Habitat

Wintering area in North America including SE Alaska, majority on salt or brackish bays, estuaries, or sheltered sea coasts, less frequently on fresh water lakes, occasionally on rivers.

Along West coast from SE Alaska to Mid Baja Peninsula. Inland north from Manitoba to east in central Wisconsin south to mid interior Mexico.

Nesting

During the breeding season, the birds advertise themselves through ceremonies. **Rushing Ceremony**, which can be also called as water dance, race or run, is a ceremony that is the most frequent display to form a pair-bond. The birds lift their wings stiffly to the side and run in an upright position with its head held forward and neck curved to attract attentions of females, and when one of two males attracts a female from his rushing behavior, a competition arises between males to get the female. The “winning” male mates with the female by performing Rushing together and continue to perform **Weed Ceremony**. Weed Ceremony usually precedes the acts of mating and nest building. It is done after the pair is formed, and the ceremony begins as the mates bob their heads in water. Then they dive in place and come back up to surface while holding weed on their beaks. This ceremony is continued until one of the pair flips away its weeds and drops to a normal position in water. They continue their mating with Greeting Ceremony. **Greeting Ceremony** is like the form of rushing ceremony and involves dip-shaking, bob-shaking, bob-preening and arch-clucking. These breeding dances are known to be the most elaborated dances in the water bird species. After the breeding, the male Western Grebes feed their mate, thus performing mate feeding behavior. Resembles the feeding of the young by parents, and through the feeding they obtain, females can have enough energy to form their eggs. Both sexes share Incubation duties with a clutch size of 3 or 4 bluish-white eggs, stained brown or buff, on a floating nest anchored to reeds or bottom.

Vocalizations

Ratchet call: a loud, harsh trill given alternately with another bird while face to face in Ratchet-pointing display. **Threat call:** a repeated tuk-tuk-tuk given during nest defense, particularly during colony establishment. Also given when defending feeding areas. **Begging:** a repeated, guttural tuk-a given by the female to elicit feeding by the male in mate-feeding bouts toward the onset of the egg-laying period. **Copulation Duet** : a loud trill given by the male (with regular interspersed shorter call notes by the female) during copulation.

Red-Necked Grebe:

Podiceps grisegena

Description

It is a large, highly pugnacious grebe that takes a variety of aquatic prey with its robust bill. The red-necked grebe is a nondescript dusky-grey bird in winter. During the breeding season, it acquires the distinctive red neck plumage, black cap and contrasting pale grey face from which its name was derived. Grebes can swim with only their heads above water, concealing them in low vegetation. All Grebes swallows large numbers of its own feathers, which lodge in their stomach and prevent fish bones from passing into the intestines. This species does not normally occur on land. Its movements are awkward; shuffles forward on breast by kicking feet. Also able to stand erect on toes and walk a few steps before dropping onto breast. Flaps wings when attempting to run. Outside of migration period, rarely flies. Requires long running taxi on water to become airborne.

Habitat

Species favors streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, and estuaries or calm marine waters in which prey are clearly visible. Stream riffles, a major source of prey, may be important cues for assessing prey abundance and thus habitat quality; small territories have proportionately more riffles than large territories. Prefers waters that are not obscured or overgrown by vegetation. Masses of floating or emergent aquatic plants may deter birds regardless of prey availability. Appears to prefer open running waters and noticeably absent from turbid waters.

Distribution

The Red-necked Grebe is a nearly circumpolar inhabitant of northern waters. In North America, it winters on northern Atlantic and Pacific coastlines. It moves inland to breed on small lakes and other suitable water bodies in the northern prairies, western parklands, and forests, north to near tree line. Winters primarily on marine waters along the Pacific Coast from Pribilof and Aleutian Is. and Southeast Alaska south to central California, most birds wintering from SE Alaska coast to northern Oregon.

Nesting

Male may initiate nest-site selection. Male and female jointly search for suitable nest sites, exploring shoreline and emergent vegetation. May evaluate site by diving and peering beneath water. Both sexes construct nest, often building several platforms used for copulation before selecting one platform. Male and female may favor different platforms before deciding on final nest platform. Sites are chosen for combination of shelter from wind and waves, availability of nest materials and anchorage, easy swimming access, proximity to open water, and distance from shore-bound predators. Nest is a compact mound with shallow depression for eggs. Size and shape are highly variable; bulk of nest structure is below water line. Nests are floating and anchored to emergent vegetation or are built up from lake bottom or submerged stumps, logs, or beaver caches. Clutch average 4-6 but are known to reach 9 light blue hued eggs.

Vocalizations

Highly vocal species on breeding grounds, giving loud penetrating calls to declare territories. By far the most common vocalization is Whinny-Braying; “Song and display-call”: harsh-sounding duet given spontaneously or in response to neighboring territorial pairs.

Red-Throated Loon:

Gavia stellata

Description

Smallest, least robust loon (length 25-27 inches) with slender neck and fine bill, which is usually held tilted above the horizontal. Head slighter and fore-head often appears more gently sloping than in other loons. In flight, feet trailing behind body also appear relatively small compared to those of other loons, and body appears hunchbacked, with somewhat drooping, slim neck. Male larger and heavier than females. Other loons need to run up to 100 m or more before taking flight from water; Red-throated Loons need less distance and can even launch from land.

Habitat

Breeds in coastal and near coastal areas throughout Alaska, including Alaska Peninsula and all Aleutian Is. And SE Alaska, least numerous in interior of Alaska. Prefers breeding in low wetlands, but also uses rugged, mountainous districts up to 1,070 m. Also nests in bog and forested terrain. This is the only loon that regularly forages away from its nesting pond, flying to larger lakes or the sea not only to feed but also to carry single fish back to its young.

Distribution

Circumpolar. On west coast of North America as far south as Vancouver B.C. interior Breeds in coastal plain of n. Canada from Yukon Territory east to n. Newfoundland and north throughout islands of Arctic Archipelago. Migrates interior as far south as the Great Lakes

Nesting

Usually in low-lying wetlands. Site characteristics are variable, but generally prefers shallow ponds. Nest placed amid shoreline vegetation or built up with plant material in shallow water; may be surrounded by emergent vegetation. Nests are usually on islands, less frequently on mainland; always close to water. Both sexes build. If nest is built in shallow water, decaying submerged vegetation and moss are used; grass and moss are used on land, although decayed vegetation may be added during incubation. Nests can also be constructed platforms built up with previous years' vegetative growth. Clutch size is generally 2 brown with darker brown spots eggs.

Vocalizations

All vocalization types are given by both sexes, except for Coo and Extended Coo (male) and Low Shrill and High Shrill (female). **Wail**.: Simple, high-amplitude call given with head low to water. **Mewing Call**: is noted only during interspecific defense. This is the only call given in response to Bald Eagles and jaegers predators on adults and/or young; also given during encounters with birds that are neither predators nor competitors. **Plesiosaur Call**: Hideous, far-carrying gayorworrk, given throughout summer Harmonically and structurally complex call, given by both breeding and small groups of nonbreeding birds. May serve in courtship and copulation, reaffirmation of pair bond following separation, and territorial disputes when threatened Similarity of its call structure, and role in territoriality and pair-bonding, suggest this call may be the “song” of Red-throated Loon, a counterpart to yodel of other loons. **Quack**: given by flying loons **Kark:**. Used as alarm call, **Coo**: Given only by males, near nest and to mate and young. Holds bill closed while calling and may hold fish in bill at the same time. **Low Shrill**: Given only by females, to mate and young near nest. **High Shrill**: Given by females to young when they are learning to fly but, heard on occasion given by non- breeders in flight.

Pacific Loon:

Gavia pacifica

Description

Probably the most abundant loon in North America, the Pacific Loon is strictly marine except during its brief three-month breeding season when it nests on freshwater ponds throughout much of the arctic and subarctic tundra and taiga regions of the continent. During short periods in the spring, and to a lesser extent in fall, it is a spectacularly abundant and conspicuous migrant along the Pacific Coast. Small to medium-sized loon. Total length 58–74 cm; wing span 110–128 cm; body mass 1.0–2.5 kg, probably varying across seasons (see Measurements, below). Sexes similar in plumage, males averaging slightly larger than females. In breeding (Definitive Alternate) plumage, note pale-gray to silvery-gray hindneck, black patch on foreneck bordered by a series of vertical black-and-white stripes, boldly white spotted back and scapulars, and white breast and belly; bill black, eyes reddish. In nonbreeding (Basic) and immature plumages, brownish gray (adults) or brown (immatures) above and white below; often shows narrow, dark “chinstrap” across lower neck and band across vent to sides of rump (“ventstrap”); gray on head ex-tends down to or slightly below eye (sometimes a thin white crescent below eye); rear half of neck dark gray and unpatterned, separated from white foreneck by rather crisp, dark border (darker line along border); rear crown and hindneck slightly paler gray than blackish base of neck, back, and forehead; bill gray with black along culmen.

Habitat

Coastal salt water; chiefly nearshore open ocean, but also larger bays and estuaries. Appears to prefer more offshore waters than other loon

Distribution

The Pacific loon breeds on tundra lakes, and winters in the open ocean or other large bodies of water. It breeds primarily in northern Canada and eastern Siberia, and winters along the Pacific coast of North America

Nesting

The Pacific loon constructs its nest on the ground near deep lakes. This nest is made out of piled-up vegetation.

This loon lays a clutch of one to two light buff or green eggs with brown spots of various sizes.

Vocalizations

A harsh kok-kok-kok-kok; wailing notes during breeding. The Pacific Loon Wail has been described in particularly colorful emotional terms by many arctic explorers, affected by its qualities. Described as eerie, melancholy, maniacal, unearthly, dismal, and jarring. Some describe the call as heart-breaking, and suggested that “if ever a species enjoyed spreading sorrow through the bird world, it is this loon.” Soper stated that “its lonely wail was almost constantly heard floating with dismal insistence on the varying winds of the tundra — Possesses the melancholiest voice of the Arctic lands.”

Common Loon:

Gavia immer

Description

One of five loon species worldwide. Expert divers, loons have eyes that can focus both in air and under water and nearly solid bones that make them heavier than many other birds; they are able to concentrate oxygen in their leg muscles to sustain them during the strenuous paddling that can take them as far as 200 feet below the surface. Their principal food is fish, but they also eat shellfish, frogs, and aquatic insects. Their principal food is fish, but they also eat shellfish, frogs, and aquatic insects. Many non-governmental organizations are dedicated to conserving this species, in part due to its great public appeal. Common Loons are widely-recognized symbols of northern wilderness and indicators of aquatic health. Landscape-level alterations, habitat disturbance, fishing practices and pollution threaten this species, but both individual loons and the overall population appear resilient and able to tolerate many of these threats, often within the same generation A large, heavy-bodied loon with a thick, pointed, usually black or dark gray bill held horizontally. It has a broad black head and bill, white underparts, and a checkered black-and-white mantle.

Habitat

Prefers lakes larger with clear water, an abundance of small fish, numerous small islands, and an irregular shoreline that creates coves. Water quality is important for successful breeding. Loons are visual predators, so clear water is crucial for efficient foraging.

Distribution

The Common Loon breeds on tundra lakes, and winters in the open ocean or other large bodies of water. It breeds primarily in northern Canada and eastern Siberia, and winters along the Pacific coast of North America. On the Pacific Coast, wintering loons range north into the Aleutian Islands of Alaska.

Nesting

Males control nest site selection in a bulky mass of vegetation near water's edge, usually on an island. Successful nests sites are often reused from year to year. Clutch size is generally 2 olive-brown or greenish, lightly spotted eggs. Both parents incubate.+

Vocalizations

Best-known call a loud, wailing laugh, also a mournful yodeled oo-AH-ho with middle note higher, and a loud ringing kee-a-ree, kee-a-ree with middle note lower. Often calls at night and sometimes on migration. Few people are unmoved by the haunting calls of the loon, one of the best-known and most loved symbols of the northern woods. The Common Loon is found in every corner of British Columbia, and is synonymous with the wilderness and outdoor adventure.

Shore Birds

Great Blue Heron:

Ardea herodias

Description

Largest heron in North America, standing about 5’ tall, and can be over 6’ in length. Sexes similar; females average smaller. Legs and neck long. Adults have long body and occipital plumes, shorter in immatures, absent in juveniles. Middle toe has a small comb (pectinate); wings are long and rounded; bill is long and tapered, tail is short. In flight, folds its neck in a S-shape and extends its legs along the body axis. It flies with deep, slow wingbeats.

Habitat

The great blue heron can adapt to almost any wetland habitat in its range. It may be found in numbers in fresh and saltwater marshes, mangrove swamps, flooded meadows, lake edges, or shorelines. It is quite adaptable and may be seen in heavily developed areas as long as they hold bodies of fish-bearing water

Distribution

The Great Blue Heron is one of the most widespread and adaptable wading birds in North America. The Great Blue Heron nests as single pairs and small colonies along coasts of southeast Alaska and n. British Columbia.

Nesting

They usually nest in trees or bushes near water's edge, often on islands (which minimizes the potential for predation) or partially isolated spots. Great Blue Herons nest as single pairs, but mostly in colonies. Great Blue Herons build nests primary from sticks but when nesting on the ground can also use other materials such as Salt Grass. Herons gather sticks and other nesting materials from the ground, nearby trees and shrubs, or from unguarded and abandoned nests (including nests of their predators such as Bald Eagles. Stick gathering is done primarily by males and placed on the nest primarily by females. Nest sizes vary greatly, from flimsy new platforms of sticks just 1 ½’ diameter, to bulky older structures 3- 4 ft. across. Nests used over several seasons can be about 3’ deep

Vocalizations

Great Blue Herons are mostly silent except at breeding colonies and when disturbed on foraging ground. 7 calls at breeding colonies. The **Frawnk** call is a rapid squawk. It is given day and night when alarmed or when being aggressive toward conspecifics. This call may account for the local name “Crank” given to this species along the New England coast. The **Go-go-go** call is a series of clucks given at the foraging site and breeding colony. When herons are disturbed by a slowly increasing stimulus, this is the first vocalization heard; if the disturbance continues, the Frawnk call follows as a herons' alarm increases. The **Awk** call is a scream that is given mostly in breeding colonies. This call is given when highly disturbed, such as during an attack by a predator. The **Gooo** call resembles the bleat of a calf and is uttered at the end of the Full Forward display. The **Ee** call is divided into two segments, uttered day and night, mostly while flying, and was used in various social circumstances. The **Roh- roh-roh** call is a series of squawks uttered spontaneously by herons on the feeding grounds. Herons also commonly give this call as they arrive at their nest. It probably advertises territorial ownership on the foraging ground. The **Landing** call is similar to the Roh-roh-roh call, but is given when arriving at the nest. It could function in mate recognition.

Belted Kingfisher:

Megaceryle alcyon

Description

The Belted Kingfisher, one of the most widespread landbirds in North America, remains poorly studied. Stands about13” A pigeon-sized bird, blue-gray above, white below, with bushy crest, dagger-like bill, Male has blue-gray breast band; female similar, but also has chestnut belly band. The belted kingfisher is often seen perched prominently on trees, posts, or other suitable "watchpoints" close to water before plunging in head first after its fish prey. They also eat amphibians, small crustaceans, insects, small mammals and reptiles

Habitat

Species favors streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, and estuaries or calm marine waters in which prey are clearly visible. Stream riffles, a major source of prey, may be important cues for assessing prey abundance and thus habitat quality; small territories have proportionately more riffles than large territories. Prefers waters that are not obscured or overgrown by vegetation. Masses of floating or emergent aquatic plants may deter birds regardless of prey availability. Appears to prefer open running waters and noticeably absent from turbid waters.

Distribution

In North America, generally withdraws from most of Canada (except coastal British Columbia), but individuals may remain in ice-free areas. Relatively common inland where frost-free period is longer than 180 d/yr but at the northern limit of its mapped winter range in the interior it is very rare, and may not remain through winter in most years. Winters in the Aleutian Is. and along the coast of Southeast Alaska where they are year-round residents.

Nesting

This bird nests in a horizontal tunnel made in a river bank or sand bank and excavated by both parents. The female lays five to eight eggs and both adults incubate the eggs and feed the young. T he nest of the belted kingfisher is a long tunnel and often slopes uphill. One possible reason for the uphill slope is that, in case of flooding, the chicks will be able to survive in the air pocket formed by the elevated end of the tunnel. Nest site probably selected during courtship when the pair flies to a suitable bank and the male begins to slash and probe the substrate with his bill while the female remains perched nearby, calling continuously. Male may fly repeatedly back and forth from the female to the bank. Clutch size 5-8 of pure white, glossy eggs. Males and females share Incubation duties.

Vocalizations

Always alert, a kingfisher begins Rattling at the slightest disturbance. The acoustic signals appear to comprise fixed and variable components. Fixed patterns convey individual identity, while variable properties are evident during territorial disputes. *Four vocalizations and their behavioral context*. **Scream**. Characterized by a high pulse rate. Emitted by both sexes either when retreating from a confrontation or while displaying a threat. May also be given as a greeting or when a mate is approaching. **Harsh** Call. Characterized by long intervals. Usually by the male in early breeding season and before nest building. **Rattle** Call. The most common vocalization emitted throughout the year as a series of harsh sounds forming a mechanical rattle. Rattle may be continuous or a short volley. Given in a wide array of behavioral contexts including territorial disputes, response to intruders in, or hesitation in approaching . **Warbling** Call. has a lower sound intensity than other calls. Usually given by the female when soliciting copulation or before courtship feeding. Sometimes given by the male when feeding older nestlings.

Black oystercatcher:

Haematopus bachmani

Description

The black oystercatcher is a large entirely black shorebird, with a long (9 cm) bright red bill and pink legs. It has a bright yellow iris and a red eye-ring. Its plumage varies slightly from north to south, being darker further north. They feed on Molluscs, especially mussels and limpets. The black oystercatcher is a species of high conservation concern throughout its range (U.S., Canadian, Alaskan, and Northern & Southern Pacific Shorebird Conservation Plans), a keystone indicator species along the north Pacific shoreline and a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service focal species for priority conservation action.

Habitat

Rocky seacoasts and islands, less commonly sandy beaches

Distribution.

This conspicuous black bird is found on the shoreline of western North America. It ranges from the Aleutian Islands of Alaska to the coast of the Baja California peninsula.

The black oystercatcher is the only representative of the oystercatcher family (Haematopodidae) over most of its range, overlapping slightly with the American oystercatcher (H. palliatus) on the coast of Baja California. Within its range it is most commonly referred to as the black oystercatcher, although this name is also used locally for the blackish oystercatcher and the African oystercatcher. Its scientific name is derived by John James Audubon from that of his friend John Bachman.

Nesting

Black Oystercatchers nest on non-forested islands with shell or gravel beaches and will defend territories that encompass both nesting and feeding areas. Males and females appear to form long-term pair bonds, and the pair returns to the same territory year after year. Both male and female help build a small scrape on the ground, well above the high tide mark. The nest is sparsely lined with pebbles or shell pieces. The female lays 2-3 eggs. These are very hard and can even survive being submerged by a high tide or very high water levels. Incubation takes around 26–28 days Both the male and the female incubate for about 3½ -4 weeks. The downy hatchling can leave the nest as soon as the down dries Unlike many other shorebirds, the parents bring food to the young for a prolonged period of time. At the age of about five weeks, the young can fly and begin to forage on their own but, are still provided with food by their parents.

Vocalizations

Loud, sharp keee note, usually given singly or in series at 2- to 5-s intervals and lasting 0.3–0.4 s; sometimes a disyllabic kee-ah. Given throughout year in variety of contexts; 1 to several calls appear to communicate information about a bird's location to conspecifics, particularly mates. Used on arrival and departure from high-tide roosts. Pairs call before departure from and approach to nest, mate, or territory; also during tandem flights

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Description

The Ruddy Turnstone, a small, robust, Holarctic shorebird, is 1 of 2 species that make up the genus Arenaria and 1 of the most northerly breeding species of shorebirds. Although well known from its migratory movements and winter distributions on southern seacoasts throughout the world, its summer activities on the breeding grounds have only recently received attention and remain poorly known, particularly in northern parts of its range. An opportunistic feeder, the Ruddy Turnstone feeds on rocky and sandy beaches during winter and on migration, by turning over rocks, pebbles, seaweeds, shells, and other items with its stout, strong, and slightly upturned upper mandible, also used to probe, jab, and dig for food in winter and summer.

Habitat

In migration, largely coastal on rocky shores, but also sand, pebble beaches, and mudflats with seaweed/kelp debris and beds of mussels or cockles,some shorelines and beaches of inland freshwater lakes where they occur only during migration. Habitats frequented food-rich, usually crustaceans or mollusks.

Distribution

It breeds in tundra regions of northern North America from Alaska to Greenland. High-arctic Canadian and Greenland birds winter mainly along coastal shores in Britain and Ireland and south along the Atlantic coast of southwestern Europe (Iberian Peninsula) and northwestern Africa (some farther south); those breeding south and west of north Devon Island, Nunavut, winter mostly in northern Brazil, but also along both coasts of North and Central America from Long Island (New York) and coastal Gulf of Mexico and central California south through the West Indies and along coastal South America to Tierra del Fuego.

Nesting

In northern parts of range, nests mostly on aven hummocks or tundra habitat, with nest cup scraped into top. Typically 4-egg clutch, sometimes 3, rarely 2 or 5. Incubation by both sexes, but usually only sporadically by male

Vocalizations

Major adult calls: Contact Rattle, a short tremolo/staccato chuckle or twittering metallic kitititit, given throughout the year, mostly outside breeding season when in flocks along shore, in feeding groups and sometimes in flight but also on breeding grounds as extended “purring rattle” by birds in flocks or individual in aerial pursuit of predator, or as staccato, rolling cackle/rattles: “ cut-i-cut-cut ” and “ tuk-i-tuk ” Alert Call, all used to “warn” and “alarm,” given on ground, throughout the year, as a sharp, metallic “ teuk ” or “ keu ” or in flight as a loud, irregularly repeated “ teu ” also described as “ kliu,” “ tche,” “ shia ”, and “sharp whistle” to silence feeding flocks