



## The Little Blue Heron in the San Francisco Bay Region

On August 10, 1940, Mrs. Kelly, Mrs. Austin, and I observed an adult Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) in the Mountain View Marshes near the southern end of San Francisco Bay. This is not far from where Gordon Bolander and Commander Parmenter reported seeing an immature of this species on August 22 and 23 of last year (*THE GULL*, November, 1939).

The bird, first detected by Mrs. Kelly, was found among a large group of American Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and Black-crowned Night Herons which had gathered in a disused salt works evaporating basin. It was slimmer than a Great Blue Heron and much shorter; about the size of a Snowy Egret. Its head and neck were a rusty maroon and its wings and body were dark slaty gray. At a distance it appeared quite black. The bill was pale bluish gray with a black tip and the legs were dark. The bird was still in nuptial dress as it had long gray "aigrettes" on the back. The head, due to elongate feathers, had a bushy appearance.

For some time we watched the bird feeding. It did this in water three or four inches deep, where it ran back and forth, repeatedly covering the same twenty-foot stretch of water. Moving rapidly, it would with each step lift its feet high and clear of the water. Sometimes while running or when suddenly turning it would spread its wings to help maintain its balance. This behavior was a successful means of hunting, for several times while in motion it caught small fish by striking out to the side with its bill.

The bird remained in approximately the same place for more than three hours and we had ample opportunity to study it.

The appearance of this species in the Bay Region, though unusual, is not illogical since it breeds in Lower California, from whence the wandering habit, common in herons, might easily bring it this far north.

Frank G. Watson, Berkeley, California. August 27, 1940.



## Scaup's Nest in Berkeley

Mr. Vernon Dean of the City of Berkeley Recreation Department, recently called to my attention a duck's nest on the small island in the Berkeley aquatic park. He was also kind enough to facilitate my getting out to the island to see the nest on June 28th. It proved to have been upset and abandoned for some time. Although no birds have been seen to go to the nest, we feel confident that it was built by a Lesser Scaup (*Nyroca affinis*). A pair of these birds has been seen near the island almost every day throughout the summer, and no other ducks have been seen in the vicinity since the flocks of Scoters and Scaup left the aquatic park in the early spring. The assumption that the nest belonged to a Scaup is further corroborated by Dr. Alden H. Miller, who is inclined to the opinion that one egg from the nest is of this species, although it was too far decomposed to render a definite identification possible.

It might be assumed that the pair of Scaup which (despite precedent to the contrary) attempted to raise a brood in the Berkeley aquatic park, were unable to migrate, being cripples or otherwise abnormal. However, I have no evidence to support such a conclusion. On the other hand, both the male and the female birds observed near the island were able to fly well.

No definite statement can be made a propos the destruction and abandoning of the nest. It was broken up in such a way as to suggest that it had been flooded. I must confess that examination of the location would not support the notion that it had been flooded by a rise in the water level of the aquatic park. It would also seem improbable that an automatic sprinkler system, with which the island is equipped, could have thrown out enough water to destroy a duck's nest. An unusually hard rain and poor drainage might have inundated the area where the nest was built. It might be well to note in this connection that a Killdeer's nest on the border of the pond adjoining the southern end of the aquatic park was destroyed by flooding in the latter part of March. This instance was obviously due to the mechanical control of the water level of the pond. But, as far as I know, the level of the aquatic park has not been subject to any change connected with the alterations in the level of this little pond.

David Gelston Nichols, Berkeley, California. August 14, 1940.



### National Audubon Society's Program in California

Inauguration of a broad wildlife program in California looking towards a popularization and appreciation of nature among young and old was announced recently by the National Audubon Society with the appointment of Charles Albert Harwell, former park naturalist at Yosemite National Park, as California representative of the society. The announcement was made public by John H. Baker, executive director of the society.

Expansion of the society's program in California has been made possible by a bequest of \$150,000 from Mrs. Regula Albertus of San Rafael, Marin County, California.

The program will encourage the establishment of new wildlife sanctuaries under competent supervision, and will include the formation of Audubon societies in localities throughout the state, the promotion of Junior Audubon Clubs, and lectures and radio talks designed to attract widespread interest and participation in conservation work.

Mr. Harwell will also organize and conduct Audubon Wildlife Tours similar to those which the society has promoted elsewhere, principally in Florida and Virginia, providing opportunity for members and friends of the society to observe, under expert guidance, a variety of wildlife forms in their natural habitat.

The executive director stated that it was the society's hope that land and buildings might be made available in California for an Audubon Nature Camp, modeled after the camp which the association has operated for the past five years in Muscongus Bay, Maine.

"California," said Mr. Baker, "affords many scenic sites with abundant flora and fauna ideal for field training of adult leaders to teach and arouse enthusiasm for the conservation and appreciation of wildlife. We intend to establish such a camp in California not later than the summer of 1942."

Other work of the program will include co-operation with state officials in the enactment of legislation and the drafting of regulations favorable to the preservation of wildlife.

Mr. Harwell, a native Californian, was educated in the schools of the state and was graduated from the University of California in 1914, later receiving his master's degree there after graduate study at Columbia and Leland Stanford Universities. He served as principal in the Berkeley, California, schools until 1929, when his outstanding work in nature education brought him to the attention of the National Park Service, which offered him the position of park naturalist at Yosemite.

As park naturalist, Mr. Harwell directed the museum and the Yosemite School of Field Natural History, which each summer trains twenty college graduates for naturalist positions with the National Park Service. He also inaugurated a junior nature school at Yosemite which has served as a pattern for similar schools in other large national parks.

Prominent as a lecturer, having spoken before numerous scientific, church, school, college, service clubs and scout organizations, Mr. Harwell has devoted a large part of his life to the study of birds. He served as chairman of the state committee which select the state bird of California, being heard once each week for two years on a National Broadcasting Company radio hookup to popularize the contest in which 165,000 ballots were tabulated, resulting in the popular choice of the California Valley Quail, later proclaimed state bird by the legislature.

Mr. Harwell has been a member of the Audubon Association of the Pacific since 1928, becoming its president in 1929. At the end of his term he resigned to accept the position of park naturalist of the Yosemite National Park. The Association wishes him every success in his new undertaking.



### September Field Trip

The September field trip was taken to Alameda, Bay Farm Island and East Oakland just east of the High Street bridge, on the 15th, to observe shore birds. The day was warm, without wind and at times overcast.

As the tide was high, 5.1 feet at the time of starting the party, riding in two automobiles, immediately went to the Radio Range. Along the bay shore many fishermen were gathered so that the Sanderlings and Sandpipers were loafing only near the bend of the road on the far side.

On the tin can bordered shore of the small pond at the garbage dump hundreds of Least and Western Sandpipers covered the ground. Willets, one Greater Yellow-leg, and several Black Turnstones also had found this protected spot while waiting for their feeding grounds to become available. This is certainly not the place where one expects to find Turnstones. This species is being seen more frequently in the vicinity of Alameda than formerly. Later we found these birds feeding along the bay shore at Fernside and on the algae-covered piling on the shore of the lumber yard.

On most of the pools at the golf course and along the shore across the bridge Northern Phalaropes were observed. Godwits were particularly numerous at Fernside. Thousands of Pintails were in San Leandro Bay. Twenty-eight species were observed, as follows: California Heron; Pintail and Ruddy Ducks; Sparrow Hawk; Clapper Rail; Black-bellied Plover; Killdeer; Hudsonian Curlew; Western Willet; Greater Yellow-leg; Least Sandpiper; Long-billed Dowitcher; Western Sandpiper; Marbled Godwit; Sanderling; Northern Phalarope; Western, California and Ring-billed Gulls; Forster Tern; Horned Lark; Shrike; English Sparrow; Meadowlark; Red-winged and Brewer Blackbirds; Savannah and Song Sparrows.

Members attending were Mesdames Austin and Kelly; Misses Blake, Cohen, Werner; Messrs. Heynemann, Kirker, and three guests.

Junea W. Kelly, Leader and Historian.



### Audubon Notes

**October Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday evening, the 10th, at 8 o'clock, in the Ferry Building.

Dr. and Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds will give an illustrated lecture on "Birds of the Pacific Slope."

Members may bring guests.

**October Field Trip** will be taken on Sunday, the 13th, to Lake Merced. Take Municipal car "K" to St. Francis Circle, transfer to "M" bus and get off at Nineteenth Avenue and Junipero Serra Boulevard. Party will meet at 9:30 a. m. Bring luncheon. Leader, Gordon Bolander.



**September Meeting:** The 277th regular meeting was held on Thursday, the 12th, in the Ferry Building, with twenty-seven members and guests present. President B. K. Dunshee presided.

Mrs. David G. Nichols, of Berkeley, was elected to membership.

The speaker of the evening was Mr. Frank G. Watson, who gave a most interesting talk on the White-tailed Kite, its nesting sites and habits, and especially its actions about the nesting area. The talk was illustrated with drawings made upon the blackboard.



The **California Conservation Council** will hold a series of meetings at Asilomar, Monterey County, California, October 17th to 19th. Of interest to our members will be the Nature Walks, one on "Birds and Trees" to be taken with Dr. Harold C. Bryant, and on "Seashore Life," with Dr. P. Victor Peterson of

the State Teachers College, San Jose, on the mornings of the 18th and 19th.



**Birds of Treasure Island**

In the December, 1939, issue of THE GULL was an article by the editor on the birds found on Treasure Island during 1939. Of these the Anna Hummingbirds, English, Nuttall and Song Sparrows are again in 1940 abundant, and, no doubt, nested on the island. Nuttall Sparrows were seen feeding young.

The Barn Swallows returned and raised another family. They were first seen on May 25th and last on September 24th. Robins, too, have been fairly numerous.

To these may be added the records of Commander Parmenter, who noted a Caspian Tern flying over the Island July 16, 1940, and a Barn Owl flying north, apparently coming from Yerba Buena Island, on the 29th.

Quail, which last year were brought to the island for the Shasta-Cascade Building exhibit and which were noted about the gardens all last year, were seen this year on August 5th by Commander Parmenter in the gardens of the Mission Trails Building with a family of six chicks, not over two or three days old.

**Audubon Association of the Pacific**

Organized January 25, 1917

**For the Study and the Protection of Birds**

- President.....Mr. B. K. Dunshee...Room 714, 245 Market St., San Francisco
- Corresponding Secretary.....Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....519 California St., San Francisco
- Treasurer.....Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.