

SPRING BIRD PHENOLOGY ON ST. LAWRENCE ISLAND, ALASKA

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During the summer of 1966, the writer was able to record the first arrival of a number of species of Alaska birds when he was stationed

near Gambell (63° 51' N, 171° 36' W) on St. Lawrence Island, studying the breeding biology of two species of plankton-feeding alcids. Field work

TABLE 1 — BIRD PHENOLOGY CHART

Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska

Species	Arrival Date, 1966	Arrival Date, Fay and Cade, (1959)
*Pelagic Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>).....	.....	late April
*Emperor Goose (<i>Philacte canagica</i>).....	.....	May 10
*Oldsquaw (<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>).....	.....	resident
*Common Eider (<i>Somateria mollissima</i>).....	.....	early May
*King Eider (<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>).....	.....	April
*Glaucous Gull (<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>).....	.....	April
*Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>).....	.....	.....
*Ivory Gull (<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>).....	.....	"early spring"
*Black-legged Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>).....	.....	May 10
*Common Murre (<i>Uria aalge</i>).....	.....	late April
*Thick-billed Murre (<i>Uria lomvia</i>).....	.....	May 19
*Snow Bunting (<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>).....	.....	May 1
Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis</i>).....	May 15	middle May
Pigeon Guillemot (<i>Cepphus columba</i>).....	May 17	middle May
Horned Lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>).....	May 19	.....
Pomarine Jaeger (<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>).....	May 20	middle May
Crested Auklet (<i>Aethia cristatella</i>).....	May 21	May 20
Least Auklet (<i>Aethia pusilla</i>).....	May 21	.....
Tufted Puffin (<i>Lunda cirrhata</i>).....	May 23	early June
Yellow-billed Loon (<i>Gavia adamsii</i>).....	May 23	May 16
Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>).....	May 23	April
Whistling Swan (<i>Olor columbianus</i>).....	May 24	May 24, 1956, 23 miles south Gambell
Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>).....	May 25	.....
Parasitic Jaeger (<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>).....	May 26	.....
Lapland Longspur (<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>).....	May 28	May 20
Steller's Eider (<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>).....	May 28	late May
Red Phalarope (<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>).....	May 29	May 20-30
Long-tailed Jaeger (<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>)....	May 29	.....
Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>).....	May 30	late May
American Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>)....	May 30	.....
Ruddy Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>).....	May 30	.....
Rock Sandpiper (<i>Erolia ptilocnemis</i>).....	May 30	May
Dunlin (<i>Erolia alpina</i>).....	May 30	May 19
Semipalmated Plover (<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>)	May 31	May 28
Gyr Falcon (<i>Falco rusticolus</i>).....	June 1	May 21
Horned Puffin (<i>Fratercula corniculata</i>).....	June 1	May 15-20
Western Sandpiper (<i>Ereunetes mauri</i>).....	June 6	.....

* Species present at the time of my arrival in Gambell on May 13, 1966

began on May 13 and continued till September 14. Observations presented here were made on land within a three-mile northeast-to-south radius of Gambell on the northwest cape of the island and offshore on the Bering Sea. Typical winter conditions prevailed until about the end of the first week of June with temperatures ranging between 28°F. and 40°F. By June 3 snow melt had begun on Sevuokuk Mountain, about two miles east of Gambell, and on portions of the tundra. The Bering Sea ice had broken into floe ice about the middle of April providing leads and open water where seabirds abounded.

Phenology concerns itself with a study of the phenomena of plant and animal life in relation to seasonal changes. The scientific value of phenological data has been aptly discussed and defended by Glendenning (1943) and Leopold and Jones (1947). The former author states that phenological data may be of no scientific value if nothing is done with the records beyond personal comparison year by year. However, "phenology when properly organized goes much further than this, and when the data from hundreds of observers are sifted, tabulated and averaged some striking facts relative to climate, wild life and cycles are often revealed." Phenological lists are few for arctic and subarctic regions, obviously owing to the lack of observers in these areas at the proper time. The purpose of this note is to record the "first appearances" of some birds in the vicinity of Gambell in 1966 (see table 1). It is realized that one year of observations does not provide significant information as it stands alone; however, many avian spring arrival dates have been previously recorded in this area by Fay and Cade (1959) and provide a basis for comparison. Table 1 shows the spring arrival dates for 25 species of birds plus 12 species already present in the area at the time of my arrival in Gambell on May 13. Where possible, spring arrival dates for the same species have been taken from Fay and Cade (*op. cit.*);

those species with spring arrival dates for more than one year have been averaged to give the date which appears in table 1.

LITERATURE CITED

- Fay, F. H., and T. J. Cade. 1959. An ecological analysis of the avifauna of St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 63:73-150.
- Glendenning, R. 1943. Phenology the most natural of sciences. Can. Field-Nat. 57:75-78.
- Leopold, A., and S. E. Jones. 1947. A phenological record for Sauk and Dane Counties, Wisconsin, 1935-1945. Ecol. Mono., 17:81-122.

POSSIBLE SIGHTING OF A GREEN HERON

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On June 22, 1966 Roy Murray and I were driving along a small creek draining into Payne Lake east and south of Radville, Saskatchewan. Sitting on pasture land close to the creek were three Black-crowned Night Herons, with their characteristic long crests. A few feet from the nearest night heron was a bird about two-thirds of the size of the night herons, a much darker bird with no crest but with much brighter coloured legs. When we stepped out of the car, the smaller bird flew off to the northeast while the night herons remained. We believed it to be a Green Heron.

The A.O.U. *Check-list of North American birds* (1957) states that the Green Heron breeds in southeastern South Dakota and in spring and summer will wander north to southern Manitoba (Brandon) and to northeastern North Dakota. It is not listed in *Birds of Alberta* by Salt and Wilk (1966) and is not on the Saskatchewan field check-list, nor is it listed for either of these provinces in Earl Godfrey's *Birds of Canada* (1966).

It should be stressed that this report is just of a possible sighting, not a positive observation of a Green Heron, but it will serve to alert people in the area to the possibility of a wanderer appearing.