

Annotated check list of birds in the Kvichak River area, Bristol Bay,

May 17-June 20, 1959.

ANNOTATED CHECK LIST OF BIRDS IN THE KVICHAK RIVER AREA, BRISTOL BAY

May 17 - June 20, 1959

The following check list of birds in the Kvichak River area is a summary of casual observations made during a field investigation of beluga whales on the Kvichak River. The work on belugas entailed considerable travel on the Kvichak River particularly below Levelock and thus an opportunity for recording observations of birds. During periods when weather conditions did not permit work on the river, observations were extended to the various habits adjacent to the river. Observations above Levelock are based on a boat trip by Archie S. Mossman to Igingig on Lake Illiamna on June 19 and 20 and on aerial survey to the same point on June 1. The list of birds is far from complete because wooded habitats were not observed except at Levelock, and several small shore birds and sparrows were not identified and thus are missing.

Counts of birds between various locations on the river were initiated and will in the future provide an index to seasonal and annual changes in bird populations. Similar counts were made from the air in routine flights between Levelock and King Salmon.

Specimens collected and preserved as study skins include: Arctic loon (2), greater scaup (2), Amercian scoter (1), parasitic jaeger (2), glaucous-winged gull (2), Bonaparte's gull (1), and Sabine's gull (1). In addition, several of each of the gulls and the Arctic tern were taken by Archie S. Mossman for information on their food habits as part of a study on gull and tern predation on red salmon.

Common Loon: A single pair of loons was observed between Naknek and King Salmon on the Naknek River on June 19. (A.S. Mossman reports that loons nest in the Wood River Lakes. 1958)

Arctic Loon: Common on the clear water portion of the Kvichak River. Two specimens were taken by Archie S. Mossman at Egg Island on June 19 & 20.

Red-throated Loon: Common on the clear water portions of the Naknek and Kvichak Rivers but only occasionally on the turbid water area of the lower Kvichak. The red-throated loon is the most abundant of the three loons observed.

Horned Græbe: Common summer resident of the marshes and ponds bordering the Kvichak River. A nest with 4 eggs was found at Copenhagen Creek on June 7. The eggs, though still tended, had not hatched on June 20. A second nest without eggs was found on June 16.

Cormorant: Cormorants, probably Baird's, were seen in passage following the river on only a few occasions. Cormorants are said to nest on islands in Lake Iliamna and the birds observed may have been moving between this nesting colony and the Bering Sea.

Whistling Swan: Nesting pairs of swans are scattered widely throughout the Bristol Bay area and several pairs were observed on the Kvichak River during the summer. No large flocks of non-breeding birds as observed in previous years, however, were seen this season.

Lesser Canada Goose: Common in flocks along the Kvichak River during the summer. No nesting birds were observed.

Cackling Goose: A single flock of 13 was observed in Kvichak Bay in late May, but are not considered summer residents.

Black Brant: Two or three small flocks of brant were seen on Kvichak Bay in late May. Brant are not common summer residents.

White-fronted Goose: This is the most common goose in the Kvichak River area. None were observed nesting, but many hundreds, probably yearlings, were present in the marshes bordering the lower Kvichak River and were frequently seen in flocks on mud flats exposed at low tide.

Mallard: Occasional as a summer resident through^{out} the Bristol Bay area. A newly-hatched brood was seen at Copenhagen Creek on June 16, and a nest with 7 eggs found at Egg Island on June 19. (Reported to winter at Mosquito Point and in open water areas on Branch River)

Baldpate: A single flock of 7 drakes was observed at Copenhagen Creek on June 12. These were apparently males gathering for the post-nuptial molt.

Pintail: Pintails are the most abundant species of duck nesting in the Kvichak River area. Courting pairs were frequent along cut banks of the river on May 20, although nesting was probably in full swing by this time. The first brood was observed near Koggiung on June 8 and contained 9 young. Another brood was seen on June 12 and two on June 16 at Copenhagen Creek. My own observations and the consensus of residents of the area indicate that pintails are much more abundant this year than they have been for the past several years.

Green-winged Teal: Occasional pairs were observed through^{out} the summer and although no nests or broods were seen, teal are believed to be breeding residents of the Bay area. (*♀ with 8 downy young observed at Harsmia Ck Lake Alchmagik by Archie S. Hestman on July 21*)

Greater Scaup: Next to pintails, the greater scaup is the most common nesting duck on the lower Kvichak River. Two nests in an early stage of incubation with 6 and 8 eggs respectively were found at Copenhagen Creek on June 16, and one nest with 8 eggs, 2 with 9 eggs and one with 10 eggs at Kaskanak Flats and Egg Island on June 19.

Old Squaw: Common in the Kvichak River area. A nest in early incubation containing 7 eggs were found at Copenhagen Creek on June 16. A nest with 5 eggs and a newly hatched brood with 7 young were observed at Egg Island on June 19.

Western Harlequin: Only occasionally observed on the Kvichak River, but are frequently along the smaller clear water streams throughout the Bristol Bay area.

Surf Scoter: The least common of the scoters present in the area and usually seen with flocks of American or White-winged Scoters. Individuals seen are probably non-breeding birds.

White-winged Scoter: Common on the Kvichak River in small flocks or occasionally mixed with flocks of American Scoters. No pairs to indicate a breeding population were observed.

American Scoter: The most abundant of the scoters on the Kvichak River. Evening flights in aggregate to several hundreds of birds were frequently seen moving upriver from the Bay at Levelock during May and early June. Most birds observed were probably non-breeding yearlings but many pairs were observed on small lakes and ponds bordering the Kvichak River to indicate that nesting scoters may be common.

American Merganser: Occasional on the Kvichak River with greatest abundance in the clear water area of the upper Kvichak where nesting may occur.

Red-breasted Merganser: Common throughout the Bristol Bay area but probably nesting only on clear water streams and on larger lakes. Two nests with 8 eggs, one with 9 and two with 10¹⁶ were found at Egg Island and the Kaskanak Flats on June 19. All nests were still in early to middle stages of incubation. *Flock of 105 at Egg Is. on June 19*
Broods of 5 & 7 on Alchmagik on Aug 1

Goshawk: One sight record only on the upper Kvichak River.

Bald Eagle: Occasionally seen throughout the Bristol Bay area.

Marsh Hawk: Occasionally seen throughout the Bristol Bay area and probably is a nesting resident although no nests have been found.

Gyr Falcon: One sight record only on the upper Kvichak River.

Peregrine Falcon: A single sight record on Kvichak Bay at Copenhagen Creek.

*Bronze-winged (?) golden-eye with brood of 3 young on Lynd Ck at Lake Raska
broods of 9 & 5 on Alchmagik Aug 1.*

*to print
- 12 found
on July 14 at Egg Is
- A.S.H.*

Willow Ptarmigan: Common year-long residents of the Bristol Bay area. Nesting occurs chiefly on the open, drier, upland tundra. A nest was found at Copenhagen Creek on June 7. This year's nesting population appeared to be slightly greater than that of last year, but ptarmigan are considered to be at a low stage of their cycle.

Rock Ptarmigan: Rock ptarmigan were not observed during the present field season but are reported to be common in the mountainous areas of the Bristol Bay region and are referred to by residents as "Mountain Ptarmigan".

Black Turnstone: Abundant on the marshes and mud flats of Kvichak Bay. A nest containing two newly-hatched young was found at Copenhagen Creek on June 16 and another with 4 young on the Kosmanak Flats on June 19. The nest on Copenhagen Creek was situated in moss under a dwarf birch on upland tundra. The nest mold was deep and well formed, and was sparsely lined with bits of lichen.

Wilson's Snipe: Occasionally observed along the Kvichak River, but most frequently noted by their courtship flights and accompanying call. No nests were found, but snipe undoubtedly breed throughout the Bristol Bay area.
Residues says way down in population from 1957.

Aleutian Sandpiper: Observed on only a few occasions in late May and early June, and were presumed to be migrants.

~~Short-~~
Long-billed Dowitcher: Commonest of the shore-birds nesting on the marshes of Kvichak Bay. A nest with 4 eggs was found on June 12 and were hatching when examined on June 16. A second nest found on June 16 was near the piping stage and a third was hatching. The nests were all in clumps of relatively fine grass or sedge of moderate length as compared to the ~~coarser~~ sedges at the marshes edge.

Northern Phalarope: Common on the small lakes and ponds along the Kvichak River and undoubtedly breeds in the area.

Parasitic Jaeger: Common along the Kvichak River wherever there are gulls and terns. The major food of jaegers on the Kvichak River is undoubtedly obtained by robbing gulls and terns, and the residents of Levelock were unaware that the jaeger is considered a predator on birds, mice, and a robber of duck nests by the Eskimos further north. The light color phase predominates.

Long-tailed Jaeger: Occasional throughout the Bristol Bay area but much less common than the parasitic jaeger. Identification is based only on sight records.

Glaucous-winged Gull: Common throughout the Bristol Bay region. Nesting birds were not observed on the Kvichak River, but a colony is present on Picnic Island in Mushagak Bay. Birds collected for food habits studies on the Kvichak River had brood patches and several adult females had ova that indicated that nesting of glaucous-winged gulls was behind that of short-billed gulls by one or two weeks. *Also on Is in Lake behind a Pa. Kozgung.*

Mottled snowbird found on Wood River Lakes, Arctic collected one (now in Ufa) in 1957 on Alaknagika

Short-billed Gull: Most common of the gulls in the Bristol Bay region. Nesting birds may be found in marshy areas anywhere along the Kvichak River but are only rarely found on inland ponds and lakes. Concentrations of nesting birds are present at the Kaskanak Flats, at Egg Island, and in the marshes bordering the west bank of the river between Squaw Creek and Copenhagen Creek. Adult birds were frequently seen with nesting material in their beaks on May 20 and by June 7 most or all clutches appeared to be completed. The first young were found on June 13 and the peak of the hatch occurred on June 16 and 17. A second, smaller series of eggs which may represent re-nesting were a week or more behind the initial peak. The short-billed gull population on Kvichak River is believed by Archie S. Mossman to be considerably below that of previous years. The smaller number of birds this year was particularly noticeable at Egg Island where intensive egging by Igingig natives may be destroying the colony, and in counts of birds passing along the river at Levelock.

Bonaparte's Gull: Occasional along the Kvichak River and probably nests in the Bristol Bay region. *Active banding on newly fledged young on Alknayak*

Sabine's Gull: Occasional on Kvichak Bay but not observed on the Kvichak River above Squaw Creek. This gull is much less common in the Bristol Bay region than the similar Bonaparte's Gull.

Arctic Tern: Common on the Kvichak River where it may usually be found nesting in association with the short-billed gull. Situation of nests, however, is generally in short grass or barren areas as compared to the rank sedge type frequently used by the short-billed gulls. Terns nest more frequently on upland types than do the gulls, but both species show decided preference for islets or points on small lakes. Terns nest slightly later than gulls and most eggs examined on June 20 were just pipping.

Short-eared Owl: Common in the second growth willow-alder type at Levelock in late May but not observed in the open marsh or tundra areas below Squaw Creek.

Violet-green Swallow: Common in all the villages of the Bristol Bay region where it has come to depend largely on man-made structures for nesting sites.

Barn Swallow: Known only from the Squaw Creek cannery where a breeding colony is located. *Common at Mosquito Point*

Raven: Occasional along the Kvichak River. No nesting birds were observed.

Robin: Common throughout the wooded portions of the Bristol Bay region and in all towns and villages.

Bohemian Waxwing: *First ones Archie has seen also - notable in 5 or 57* Common at Levelock where several nesting pairs were observed. The present abundance of waxwings may represent a recent large increase in population or possibly a range expansion because residents of Levelock were not familiar with this species. Two nests were found, both in small spruce trees about 4 feet from the ground. In both nests the first eggs were laid on May 28 and both (were clutches) completed 4 days later with 4 eggs each.

*Bank Swallows on Lower Wood River at Chogging is Snow Point
Tree Swallows at Levelock.*

Northern Shrike: Observed on two occasions in late May in Levelock. No nesting birds were found, but shrikes are probably residents of wooded areas of the region.

Yellow Warbler: Common on the Kvichak River where willows or alders grow adjacent to stream banks.

Redpoll: Common at Levelock in May and early June but not frequently observed later.

White-crowned Sparrow: Common in wooded or brushy areas along the Kvichak River.

Alaska Longspur: Common in open tundra areas below Squaw Creek. Also on Kachanok Flats.

Yellow crowned sparrow at Hansens Ck.

No Water thrush at Levelock

Common at Hansens Ck Aug!

Yellow Tige at Hansens Ck - breed all around Alchmaganak & Kuchak

Calvin J. Lensink
Associate Biologist
July 3, 1959

A red poll found dead at Levelock ¹⁹⁵⁷ had a band from Quebec placed on it the previous year.

Supplemental checklist of birds in the Kvichak River area, Bristol Bay.

Supplemental Checklist of Birds in the Kvichak
River Area, Bristol Bay

An annotated checklist of birds of the Kvichak River area, Bristol Bay was prepared by Lensink (1959) from observations made between May 17 and June 20, 1959. Birds observed during this period are listed below without comment. Two additional trips (September 4 to October 3, 1959 and May 15 to June 19, 1960) have resulted in corrections and additions to the original list. Species on the original checklist are listed below without comment; additions are in annotated form.

Common Loon	Greater Scaup
Arctic Loon	Old Squaw
Red Throated Loon	Western Harlequin
Horned Grebe	Surf Scoter
Cormorant	White-winged Scoter
Whistling Swan	American Scoter
Lesser Canada Goose	American Merganser
Cackling Goose	Red Breasted Merganser
Black Brant	Goshawk
White-fronted Goose	Bald Eagle
Mallard	Marsh Hawk
Baldpate	Gyrfalcon
Pintail	Peregrine Falcon
Green-winged Teal	Willow Ptarmigan
Rock Ptarmigan	Arctic Tern
Black Turnstone	Short-eared Owl
Wilson's Snipe	Violet Green Swallow
Aleutian Sandpiper	Barn Swallow
Long-billed Dowitcher (1)	Raven
Northern Phalarope	Robin
Parasitic Jaeger	Bohemian Waxwing
Long-tailed Jaeger	Northern Shrike
Glaucous-winged Gull	Yellow Warbler
Short-billed Gull	Redpoll
Bonaparte's Gull	White-crowned Sparrow
Sabines Gull	Alaska Longspur

September 4 to Oct. 3, 1960

* Red-throated Loon: Erroneously reported earlier as the most common of the loons. Arctic loons, however, are far more abundant than Red Throated loons except locally in turbid water areas of Kvichak Bay where the latter are believed to nest on adjacent small lakes.

Holboell's Red-necked Grebe: Observed only once during the period of observation.

1. Reidentified as the short-billed dowitcher by Francis Williamson.
- * Cited on original checklist for May 17 to June 20, 1959.
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Sooty Shearwater: Many shearwaters were observed on July 4 by Archie S. Mossman and on October 4, 1959 by Lensink. In both instances the observations followed severe Westerly storms and the resulting inland "invasion" or drift resulted in a considerable mortality.

Northern Fork-tailed Petrel: Several individuals were observed on October 4, 1959 following a severe Westerly storm.

Northern Leach's Petrel: Observed on October 4 under conditions as cited above.

- * Whistling Swan: Archie S. Mossman observed a flock of at least 75 birds on the upper Kvichak River on June 18. In September, family groups were commonly observed throughout the Kvichak River and Bay Region.
- * Cackling Goose: Only a single flock of 13 birds was identified in the spring but in September Cacklers were abundant on the Copenhagen and King Salmon Creek Flats bordering Kvichak Bay.
- * Lesser Canada Goose: Common in the spring but rare by September.
- * White-fronted Goose: Common in spring but none were observed in September.
- * Baldpate: Flocks of several hundred were observed on the upper Kvichak River by Archie S. Mossman on June 18-20, 1959. Baldpates were not observed in September.
- * Pintail: The most abundant duck in the fall as they were in spring although locally less abundant than green-winged teal.

Shoveler: Common on tidal flats and inland ponds on Kvichak Bay in September.

Gadwall: A small flock from which one bird was shot was observed on September 29, at Copenhagen Ck.

* Green-winged Teal: Teal were very abundant on the tidal flats of Kvichak Bay in September.

* Goshawk: Several individuals were observed on lower Kvichak Bay in September. Local eskimos recognize this hawk as the "Ptarmigan Hawk".

Short-billed Dowitcher: Should be substituted for the Long-billed Dowitcher for which it was erroneously identified on the original checklist.

* Short-billed Gull: Short-billed gulls are early migrants, and although they were the most abundant gull during the nesting season, they were rare in September.

* Arctic Tern: As in the case of the short-billed gull, terns are abundant in the nesting season, but most had left the Kvichak area by September.

Tree Swallow: Omitted from the original checklist, but is the most common of the swallows in the Kvichak area.

Semipalmated Plover: Common in the fall.

Black-bellied Plover: Observed only occasionally in the Kvichak area. Local residents recognize this species as the "Tundra Snipe".

* Black Turnstone: Rare or absent in September.

* Wilson's Snipe: Rare or absent in September.

Downy Woodpecker(?): Observed at Copenhagen Ck. on September 5.

Alaska Grey Jay: Common at Levelock and occasional to the open tundra area of Lower Kvichak Bay in September.

Magpie: Common along the Kvichak in the fall but rare or absent in the spring and summer when it is reported to be confined to the higher elevations.

Chickadee: The black capped (?) chickadee was abundant at Levelock and occasional on the open tundra off Kvichak Bay in September, although it was not common at Levelock in spring.

Water Pipit: Pipits were identified tentatively only on September 5, near Copenhagen Ck. on Kvichak Bay.

* Bohemian Waxwing: Waxwings were absent at Levelock in September, although common in the spring.

Orange-Crowned Warbler: Occasional in September but was not identified in May or June.

Rusty Blackbird: Two individuals were observed on a boat trip on Branch (Alagnak) River.

Snow Bunting: Occasional small flocks were present on the tundra off Kvichak Bay in September.

May 15 to June 19, 1960

Osprey: Common on the upper Kvichak but only occasional in tidal areas.

Red-backed Sandpiper: Common on tidal flats in Kvichak Bay in Spring. Although no nests were found the red-backed sandpiper is probably a breeding resident.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: The most abundant sandpiper of the Kvichak area where it is usually found on tidal mud flats.

* Barn Swallow: No barn swallows were observed at Squaw Creek (Naheen) where they have been reported previously.

Varied Thrush: Common summer resident from Levelock to timbered areas of the upper Kvichak.

Swainson's Thrush: Observed at Levelock where it probably nests on several occasions.

Orange-Crowned Warbler: Occasional at Levelock.

Pileolated Warbler: Common at Levelock.

Savannah Sparrow: Common from Levelock to Copenhagen Ck. on Kvichak Bay.

Golden Crowned Sparrow: Common at Levelock.

Birds Reported to be Winter Residents

Mallard	Alaska Grey Jay
Greater Scaup	Spruce Grouse
Willow Ptarmigan	Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker (?)
Rock Ptarmigan	Hairy Woodpecker (?)
Bald Eagle	Redpoll
Snowy Owl	White-winged Crossbill (?)
Great Horned Owl	Snow Bunting
Raven	Dipper
Chickadee	Magpie

Collections 1960

<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Locality</u>
CJL 1 - 60	Greater Yellowlegs	Levelock
" 2 - 60	Double Crested Cormorant	Vic. Kashaniak Flats, Kvichak River
" 3 - 60	Arctic Loon	"
" 4 - 60	Short-billed Dowitcher	Copenhagen Ck., Kvichak Bay
" 5 - 60	Short-billed Dowitcher	" " " "
" 6 - 60	Red-backed Sandpiper	" " " "
" 7 - 60	Semipalmated Sandpiper	" " " "
" 8 - 60	" "	" " " "
" 9 - 60	Black Turnstone	" " " "
" 10 - 60	Red-backed Sandpiper	" " " "
" 11 - 60	Sooty Shearwater	" " " "
" 12 - 60	Northern Phalarope	" " " "
" 13 - 60	" "	" " " "
" 14 - 60	Short-billed Dowitcher	" " " "
" 15 - 60	Black Turnstone	" " " "

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