

**DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME BIRDS SUPPOSED TO BE UNDESCRIBED,
FROM THE COMMANDER ISLANDS AND PETROPAULOVSKI, COL-
LECTED BY DR. LEONHARD STEJNEGER, U. S. SIGNAL SERVICE.**

By **ROBERT RIDGWAY.**

The following apparently new species form part of a fine collection of birds from the Commander Islands and the vicinity of Petropaulovski, Kamtschatka, lately received at the National Museum from Dr. Leonhard Stejneger, U. S. Signal Observer at Bering Island. The writer was requested to describe them in case they appeared, after due investigation, to be new.

1. *HALLETUS HYPOLEUCUS* Stejneger, MS.

SP. CH.—*Young* ♀ (No. 89127, collector's No. 1055, Bering Island, May 15, 1882). Ground color of pileum, nape, upper back, rump, with lesser and middle wing-coverts dirty white, spotted with grayish brown, the spots of the latter color being chiefly subterminal, but often occupying the tips of the feathers; upper part of rump with white largely predominating; greater wings-coverts and longer scapulars uniform dusky, bordered terminally with mottled dirty grayish white; tertials uniform slate-dusky; upper tail-coverts mottled dusky terminally, mottled white basally; remiges uniform brownish black; rectrices blackish dusky, the inner webs much mottled with pale grayish and buffy white. Side of head with a broad and distinct stripe of nearly uniform brown, occupying the entire orbital, and auricular regions. Entire lower parts white, all the feathers with distinct dusky shafts; those of throat streaked with pale brown, those of jugulum and upper breast with a large terminal spot of dusky, many of the feathers of sides and abdomen with small and usually indistinct brown terminal spots; thighs and crissum dirty white, the feathers with dusky terminal spots, these largest on crissum, and on upper and inner portions of thighs coalesce so as to form the predominating color. Underside of wing white, spotted with dusky. Bill dusky, inclining to yellowish at tip and base, the rictus yellow; "iris faint yellowish white"; feet deep yellow, claws black. Wing 24.50 (ends of primaries much abraded), tail 13.50, culmen 2.25, depth of closed bill 1.50, tarsus 3.60 (naked portion in front only 1.75, after raising the feathers), middle toe 3., hind claw 1.80.

This eagle is perhaps the eastern representative of *H. albicilla*, although the latter, according to Sharpe (Cat. B. Brit. Mus., i, p. 304), occurs "in Kamtschatka, the Aleutian Islands, and Japan," and also in China, "as far as Amoy." It is barely possible, however, that all references to *H. albicilla* in the above-named countries may in reality apply to the present bird or (especially so far as the Aleutians are concerned) to *H. leucocephalus*, the latter occurring abundantly, not only throughout the Aleutian chain, but also in Bering Island, where, according to Dr. Stejneger, it breeds.

I have never seen a specimen of true *H. albicilla* at all resembling in coloration the bird described above, while its reference to *H. leucocephalus* seems to me out of the question, the proportions differing decidedly from those of the latter species; the bill and feet being much larger than in a specimen of the bald eagle of equal size so far as other measurements are concerned. I am therefore strongly inclined to agree with Dr. Stejneger as to its distinctness from either of the above-named species, although, as suggested above, it may be the eastern representative race of *H. albicilla*.

Dr. Stejneger's remarks concerning this specimen are to the following effect:

After alluding to the fact that *H. leucocephalus* not only occurs but also breeds on Bering Island, and that the *Thalassoastus pelagicus* can only be considered an irregular if not wholly casual visitant—"a lonely straggler from Kamtschatka"—he says: "It seems that a third species of sea eagle must be added, not only to the fauna of Bering Island, but even to the list of known birds, for I have never seen a young *Haliastur* with the whole lower surface white and the upper parts with dark tips and edgings on a whitish ground, such as my No. 1,055. This, a young female, still with black tail, was shot the 15th of May, and measures 890^{mm} (35 inches) in length, with a stretch of wings of 2.220^m (87.40 inches). Iris faint yellowish white,* bill horn-brown, cere yellow, with horn-brown shadings on top; feet bright golden yellow.

"Compared with the young of *H. leucocephalus* of the same age, it has, apart from the white color of the body, the tail-feathers, under tail-coverts and axillars, still darker colored. The size is in some respects inferior to that of the bald eagle, the specimen sent representing the maximum of its kind, being not larger than an old male of said species.† The bill holds fully the size of that of a young *H. leucocephalus*, and the feet likewise, but the body, the wing, and tail are smaller.

"I have little doubt that this bird growing old would have assumed an almost uniform white plumage below, with white tail‡ a supposition corroborated by the statement of Mr. Grebnitzky that he had himself seen an eagle on the island having the lower parts and the tail white.

* In the young of *H. leucocephalus*, even when two or more years old, the iris is usually if not always deep brown, and the bill and cere blackish, while in *H. albicilla* the iris is always (?) brown in the young, and sometimes in the adult also!

† Upon this point I am inclined to disagree with Dr. Stejneger, and as for size and proportions, would rather compare the specimen with the adult male of *H. albicilla*.

‡ In Dr. Stejneger's specimen, the middle rectrices have been moulted, and those of the new dress are just making their appearance. They are even darker in color than the old ones, although similarly marked, which would indicate either that the individual in question would not have attained its perfect plumage the next year or else that the adult does not have a white tail. That the specimen is not in its first year is clearly indicated by the character of the plumage, as well as by the date of its capture (May 15th); while that it is probably more than two years old is strongly suggested by the light color of the bill and cere which in *H. albicilla* and *H. leucocephalus* do not become yellowish until the bird begins to assume a portion of its adult livery.

"That we have not to deal with an albino is evident not only from the color of the eyes, but also the character of the whole plumage, the white color having a normal appearance, while the dark colors are deep and distinct.

"After due consideration, I come to the conclusion that the present species is sufficiently distinct from *H. leucocephalus*, and consequently also from *H. albicilla*. There are two other species, however, of which I know only the names, viz, *H. leucoryphus* (Pall.) and *H. leucogaster* (Gm.); but Dr. Dybowski, who is well acquainted with the former, asserts that it is quite a different bird, while Dr. Henry Guillemard, who has collected in Central Africa, and is autoptically familiar with the latter, repeated the same assurance when seeing my bird during a day's visit here. Both received the impression that the species is still an unknown one."

It is, perhaps, needless to remark that Dr. Stejneger's bird is very distinct from both *H. leucoryphus* and *H. leucogaster*.

2. ACROCEPHALUS DYBOWSKII Stejneger, MS.

SP. CH.—*Adult* ♂ (No. 89151, Petropaulovski, Kamtschatka, July 5, 1882). Above, rather light olive-brown, more decidedly olive, or somewhat tinged with russet, on rump and tail, and slightly more grayish across nape; a distinct superciliary stripe of pale buffy-grayish, paler anteriorly; a rather indistinct gray loreal streak, and a narrow brown postocular streak along upper edge of auriculars; auriculars, sides of neck and breast, and entire sides, light grayish-olive, the first very narrowly and indistinctly streaked, especially anteriorly, with white; remaining lower parts dull white, very faintly shaded across jugulum with pale brownish-gray; crissum, buffy-white, and flanks tinged with deeper buff. Tail much graduated (the lateral feathers .65 of an inch shorter than the intermediæ), all the rectrices showing indistinct, faintly darker bars, the inner webs (except of middle feathers) decidedly darker than the outer, and the four outer pairs distinctly tipped with pale grayish, becoming nearly pure white on tips of inner webs, these pale tips growing gradually narrower toward middle feathers. Maxilla dark brown; its edge, with the mandible, pale-brownish (in dried skin), the base still paler; "iris hazel"; legs and feet pale flax-brown (in dried skin), the toes slightly darker. Wing 2.85, the secondaries 2.15; third quill longest, second and fourth equal; tail 2.40, culmen (from frontal feathers) .48, bill from nostril .31, tarsus .90, middle toe .60.

Dr. Stejneger sends the following interesting account of the habits of of this species:

"The loud song, consisting of the syllables *wit'she-wit'she-wit'she-witsh*, and somewhat resembling the sound made by whetting a scythe, was heard, especially towards night, from all sides, among the high grass and willows which cover the swampy slopes of the mountains with a thicket almost impenetrable to both foot and eye. It was but seldom I

could get a glimpse of a watchful songster, as he, clinging to the middle of an upright stalk of some high grass or orchid, did his best in a singing match with another of his own kind or a *Calliope kamtschatkensis* or *Carpodacus erythrinus*. But no sooner did I move my gun to secure the longed-for specimen than he silently disappeared, as traceless and suddenly as if he was the possessor of Dr. Fortunatus's cap. The only way to obtain one was to watch patiently near his favorite perch, with gun in hand. For hours have I sat thus in the wet swamp, almost desperate from the stings of the numberless bloodthirsty mosquitoes, which I did not dare to wipe off for fear of driving away the silent bird, who, after watching my immovable figure until satisfied of his safety, came cautiously nearer, slipping between the stems and branches near the ground; uttering finally a very low, thrush-like *tak*;—*tak*;—*tak*;—*tak*; with his tail held upright, very much in the manner of a long-tailed wren. If I kept absolutely quiet he would sometimes come close to my feet, looking curiously up at me with his dark pretty eyes. But before the challenge of a rival had attracted his attention and provoked a reply, which he usually began with a short trill, it would not be advisable to move a muscle. Then it would be time to lift the gun, very slowly, hesitating as often as he suspiciously stops his song, until the report puts an end to it forever, and I held in my hand a badly mutilated specimen, unfit for preservation; the alternative being to return without anything, since by killing him at longer range it would be impossible to find the small plain-looking bird in the dense and luxuriant mass of vegetation.

“Should the species prove to be a new one, I propose that the name of its first discoverer be affixed to it, that the *Acrocephalus dybowskii* might rest as a memento of his meritorious and unwearying work in Kamtschatka.”

3. ANORTHURA PALLESCENS Stejneger, MS.

SP. CH.—*Adult* ♂ (No. 88994, U. S. Nat. Mus., collector's No. 1644, Bering Island, Sept. 20, 1882). Above dull smoky-brown (far less rusty than in *A. alasensis*), uniform on pileum, nape, and upper back, but lower back and rump barred with dusky, the wing-coverts and upper tail-coverts still more distinctly barred with the same; middle wing-coverts tipped with a small deltoid spot of pure white; outer webs of five outer primaries spotted with brownish-white, the remaining quills with outer webs plain dull brown. Tail brown, crossed by 6 or 7 rather wide bands of blackish, the last three or four rendered more distinct by a decided lightening of the brown against their posterior edge; on the middle rectrices, however, the bars much less distinct and more irregular. Lores, an indistinct superciliary stripe, malar region, chin, throat, jugulum, and sides of breast dull light-brownish buff (much paler and duller than in *A. alasensis*), the middle of breast and upper part of belly much paler, or inclining to brownish white; sides, flanks, and

crissum brownish white, broadly and distinctly barred with dusky, the sides more tinged with brown. Auriculars dusky brown, streaked with the color of the throat. Bill brownish-black, more brown on lower basal portion of mandible; "iris dark brown"; legs and feet dark brown. Wing 2.15, tail 1.60, culmen (from frontal feathers) .50, bill from nostril .38, tarsus .75, middle toe .55.

A young bird from Copper Island is colored more like *A. alascensis*, and may be the same species or an intermediate race. The upper parts are entirely uniform rusty brown, becoming brighter rusty on rump and upper tail-coverts.

This new race is totally unlike the Japanese *A. fumigata* (Temm.), which is a small form of very dark coloration, and somewhat like *A. hyemalis pacifica* of the Pacific coast of North America, but, as a matter of course, very distinct. In large size and general proportions it agrees quite closely with *A. alascensis* (Baird), but the coloration is entirely different, as the following comparative diagnosis may show, the comparison being made between two adult males in autumnal plumage (the one of *A. pallescens* obtained September 20, that of *A. alascensis* October 21):

A. PALLESCENS.—Above dull smoky-brown, the lower back, rump, and upper tail coverts distinctly barred with dusky; indistinct superciliary stripe, lores, malar region, chin, throat, and sides of breast dull pale brownish-buff; lower breast and upper belly dull brownish-white; sides, flanks, and crissum brownish-white, broadly and distinctly barred with dusky. Wing 2.15, tail 1.60, culmen (from frontal feathers) .50, bill from nostril .38, tarsus, .75, middle toe .55. *Hab.* Bering Island.

A. ALASCENSIS.—Above, bright rusty brown, becoming more rufous posteriorly, the lower back, rump, and upper tail-coverts without trace of bars; superciliary stripe, lores, malar region, chin, throat, jugulum, breast, and sides, deep fulvous-buff, the belly similar, but slightly paler; flanks and anal region rusty brown, narrowly and indistinctly barred with dusky; crissum bright rusty-brown, each feather tipped with a pure white spot, this preceded by a dusky one. Wing 2.10, tail, 1.50, culmen .60, bill from nostril .40, tarsus .80, middle toe .60. *Hab.* (of specimen described) Unalashka.

There are several species or races of this genus belonging to the elevated regions of Central and Eastern Asia, which appear to be more or less nearly related to this new form, but I have not been able to make a direct comparison with any of them. The one which seems to come nearest, judging from descriptions, is *A. neglecta* (Brooks) from Gilgit and Cashmere (alt. 5,000–10,000 ft.), but there appear to be decided differences of coloration, while the habitat is of itself an almost certain indication of their distinctness. (*Cf.* SHARPE, Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., vi, p. 278.)

4. HIRUNDO SATURATA Stejneger, MS.

SP. CH.—Similar to *H. erythrogastra*, but much more richly colored beneath, the lower parts in the male being about the same color as the throat of the male in *H. erythrogastra*, and of the female a shade darker than the same parts in the male of that species. *Adult male* (No. 89165 Petropaulovski, June 28, 1882): Upper parts rich violaceous steel-blue (exactly as in *H. erythrogastra*), the wings and tail less glossy and more greenish; forehead, malar region, chin, and throat, rich chestnut (a shade darker, especially on throat, than in *erythrogastra*), the steel-blue of the neck encroaching on the sides of the jugulum, and extending interruptedly across the latter in the form of a narrow, broken collar; remaining lower parts rich chestnut rufous. Rectrices marked with white, exactly as in *erythrogastra*. Wing 4.70, lateral tail feathers 4.15, middle pair 1.75, culmen .30, width of bill at base .25, tarsus .40, middle toe .40. *Adult female* (No. 89166, same locality and date): Similar to the male, but chestnut of forehead less extensive, that of throat, etc., paler, the lower parts paler rufous, but still a shade or so darker than in the male of *H. erythrogastra*. Wing 4.60, lateral rectrices 3.60, middle pair 1.85.

This elegant swallow needs no comparison with the Japanese *H. gutturalis*, which is pure white beneath, and otherwise very different.

(?) ANTHUS JAPONICUS Temm. & Schleg. (*A. stejnegeri*, sp. nov., if distinct.)

SP. CH.—*Adult, summer plumage*: Above light raw-umber brown, very distinctly streaked with black, these markings broadest on the back, the exterior feathers of which have the inner webs chiefly dull whitish, producing, when the feathers lie in natural position, a distinct stripe on each side of the interseapular region; scapulars much less distinctly streaked with dusky, and without light edgings; middle wing coverts dusky, broadly and very distinctly streaked with brownish white; greater coverts more narrowly tipped with brownish white or very pale buff, and edged with light brown; remiges dusky, edged with light brown; middle rectrices similar, but others dusky, the outer pair mostly dull brownish white, or pale dull buff, with a dull brownish dusky space along edge of basal half of inner web; next feather with the outer web pale dull brownish buff, and the inner web with the terminal portion and stripe along shaft, nearly to the base, of the same color. Lower parts buffy white, the whole jugulum yellowish buff, of varying intensity, and distinctly, though not always sharply, streaked with dull black; superciliary stripe and side of head generally pale buff, the auriculars more brownish, especially along upper margin, where sometimes streaked with dusky; a small dusky spot immediately in front of eye, and throat sometimes bordered along each side by an interrupted series of narrow blackish streaks (these usually, however, nearly or quite obsolete); sides and flanks streaked with blackish, and longer lower tail-coverts also sometimes streaked. Maxilla brownish black, the tomia light brown-

ish; mandible pale brownish, darker terminally, paler at base; "iris dark brown"; legs and feet deep brown, the tarsi rather paler. Wing 3.10-3.45, tail 2.25-2.50, culmen .48, bill from nostril .35, tarsus .95-1, middle toe .65-.70, hind claw .40-.50. First, second, and third quills longest, and nearly equal (first, however, usually longest), fourth decidedly (.15 of an inch or more) shorter.

The six specimens collected by Dr. Stejneger differ more or less from one another in details of coloration and proportions. The minimum dimensions, as given above, are represented by a female (No. 89135, collector's No. 1231) from Copper Island. All the remaining specimens being males, there is much uniformity of size among them. The coloration varies much in intensity, notwithstanding the birds were all killed on nearly the same date. The deepest colored individual is No. 89134, from Copper Island. In this the lower parts are bright, though (except on breast) rather pale, yellowish buff, with a sulphury tinge, approaching white only on the abdomen and chin; the lower tail-coverts are a deep creamy buff, the longer with a distinct dusky streak near end. Along each side of throat extends quite a distinct though broken line of fine sagittate markings, extending almost if not quite to the chin. The palest example is No. 88992, from Bering Island. In this, the lower parts are buffy white, the breast and jugulum more distinctly buffy; the crissum is creamy white, or buffy white, and entirely immaculate; there is no trace of the line of dusky streaks along side of throat. Other specimens are variously intermediate, and there can be little doubt that the variation is, in part at least, purely individual.

There being no copy of the *Fauna Japonica* (*Aves*) accessible to me, I am unable to verify the conjectured identity of this species with the *Anthus japonicus* of Temminck & Schlegel. Even if not this species it is probably already described, but I have not been able to find any description at all applicable; and in view of the possibility of its proving new to science, I propose that it should bear the name of its talented discoverer.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, *February 13, 1883.*

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW GENUS AND SPECIES OF ALCYONOID POLYP, FROM JAPANESE WATERS, WITH REMARKS ON THE STRUCTURE AND HABITS OF RELATED FORMS, ETC.

By ROBERT E. C. STEARNS.

The interesting form herein described was obtained by Mr. W. J. Fisher, while acting as naturalist to the Tuscarora Telegraph Sounding Expedition, under Commander George E. Belknap, in 1873. The specimens were purchased of Japanese fishermen at Enosima, by Mr. Fisher, who kindly presented them to the author. They now form a part of the collections in the United States National Museum at Washington.