

ART. III. ON THE LARIDÆ OF THE NOVA SCOTIAN COAST. BY
J. MATTHEW JONES, F. L. S.

(Read December 13, 1869.)

ACCORDING to the catalogue of North American Birds published by the Smithsonian Institution, I find the following species of *Laridæ* inserted, as having been observed on the North-east coast of this continent. 1. Pomarine Skua (*Stercorarius pomarinus*, Temm.) 2. Glaucous Gull (*Larus glaucus*, Brünn.) 3. White-winged Gull (*L. leucopterus*, Fabr.) 4. Great Black-backed Gull (*L. marinus*, Linn.) 5. Herring Gull, (*L. argentatus*, Brünn.) 6. Ring-billed Gull (*L. Delawarensis*, Ord.) 7. Bonaparte's Gull (*Chroicocephalus Philadelphia*, Ord.) 8. Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*, Linn.) 9. Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*, Kaup.) 10. Fork-tailed Gull (*Xema Sabinii*, Bon.) 11. Wilson's Tern (*Sterna Wilsoni*, Bonap.) 12. Arctic Tern (*S. macroura*, Naum.) 13. Least Tern (*S. frenata*, Gambel.) Of this list of thirteen species nine have been identified by myself, and one by Major Wedderburn, (late 42nd Highlanders,) as occurring on the coast of Nova Scotia, and seven of these are in my own cabinet.

The ten species identified as Nova Scotian up to the present time, are *Stercorarius pomarinus*. *Larus glaucus*. *L. marinus*. *L. argentatus*. *L. Delawarensis*. *Chroicocephalus Philadelphia*. *Rissa tridactyla*. *Pagophila eburnea*. *Sterna macroura*. *S. Wilsoni*.

To this list, it is probable, several other species may be added in the course of time, but in a country like this where the naturalist must rely almost entirely upon his own exertions, to secure specimens and note their haunts and habits, the task of forming anything like a complete list of the several members of any zoological family is not an easy one. I therefore trust my present brief account of the *Laridæ* frequenting the coast of Nova Scotia may merely be received as the commencement of one more complete.

FAM. LARIDÆ.

SUB-FAM. LESTRIDINÆ

1. POMARINE SKUA.

(*Stercorarius pomarinus*, Temm.)*Lestris pomarinus*, Rich.*L. striatus*, Eyton.*Cataractes pomarinus*, Gould.

This bird occurs but rarely on our coast, and literally nothing is known of its habits. A specimen which is in my cabinet was shot at Digby, on the Bay of Fundy shore, after the heavy gale of Oct. 4, 1869, by Mr. W. Gilpin, and kindly given me by his father, Dr. Bernard Gilpin.

SUB-FAM. LARINÆ.

2. GLAUCOUS GULL OR BURGOMASTER.

(*Larus glaucus*, Brünn.)

This fine gull is another rare visitant with us, and only observed in the winter season. The only specimen in my cabinet was shot at the entrance to Halifax harbour by Mr. W. Gilpin. It is found throughout the Polar seas, and has been observed, according to Baird, as far south as New York.

3. GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.

(*Larus marinus*, Linn.)*Larus niger*, Briss.*Dominicanus marinus*, Bruch.

This bird which is known as the "saddle-back" or "saddler" among the fishermen, is a common species with us, and frequents the sand flats in our estuaries and harbours at ebb tide, and, as is usual with gulls, will stand on a flat until the rising water compels it to seek another spot. It is a wary bird, and by no means easy to get a shot at. It breeds on islands off the coast, sometimes in trees, and sometimes on the cliffs. It appears to have an extensive geographical range on this continent, being found on the coast of Greenland and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico. The young of this species, in their immature plumage, have been taken in the Bermudas.

4. HERRING GULL.

(*Larus argentatus*, Brünn.)*Larus fuscus*, Penn.*Laroides argentatus*, Bruch.*L. argentatoides*, Rich.

This may be considered the most common species on the Nova Scotian coast. It breeds in similar positions to the last, and old and young frequent Halifax harbour, particularly in winter, (which very rarely freezes like others in Nova Scotia,) skimming the water in search of food. The young with their light brown plumage are so dissimilar in colour to the old birds that the fishermen take them for a different species. Small flocks visit the Bermudas in the winter months. Its geographical range on the east coast of America is from Greenland to the Gulf of Mexico.

5. RING-BILLED GULL.

(*Larus Delawareensis* Ord.)

Although known on our coast, of the habits or distribution of this species we possess but meagre information. I am inclined to think that this is the species which I have observed keeping company with the steamer the whole way across the Atlantic. It is common to both continents. In the Bermudas it occurs at long intervals in the winter season.

6. BONAPARTE'S GULL.

(*Chroicocephalus Philadelphia*, Lawr.)*Larus Bonapartei*, Rich.*L. capistratus*, Bonap.*Sterna Philadelphia*, Ord.*Chroicocephalus Bonapartei*, Bruch.

This pretty little gull is by no means uncommon during the autumn months, and is named "Mackerel Gull," from its appearing on our coast about the commencement of the mackerel season. It goes northward to breed during the summer months, and returns to us with its young about September and the beginning of October. These gulls are fond of associating together in flocks, moving

from one place to another as the tide ebbs and flows, leaving on the sand flats or gravelly beaches, those little pools, wherein the small fry of fishes, and different species of crustaceans are always present, and on which these little birds principally feed. In the month of October they are very fat, and the flesh is by no means to be despised; indeed, far preferable, I think, to that of our dry and insipid ruffed grouse (*Tetrao umbellus*.) It is found in the most northern parts of the Hudson's Bay Territory, and in the Bermudas we find it not uncommon in winter time. According to Baird it is also found on the Pacific coast of America.

7. KITTIWAKE.

(*Rissa tridactyla*, Bonap.)

Larus tridactylus, Linn.

L. rissa, Brünn.

This species, so often noticed by Arctic voyagers, as occurring abundantly in all parts of the Polar sea, is not uncommon on our shores in autumn and winter. It goes north to breed.

8. IVORY GULL.

(*Pagophila eburnea*, Kaup.)

Larus eburneus, Gmel.

L. candidus, Fabr.

Only one specimen of this Arctic species, as far as I am aware, has been observed on our coast. It was seen by Captain Wedderburn, (42d Royal Highlanders,) some years ago, in Halifax Harbour.

SUB-FAM. STERNINÆ.

9. WILSON'S TERN.

(*Sterna Wilsoni*, Bonap.)

Sterna hirundo, Wils.

S. major, Briss.

Hirundo marina, Ray.

Common on our coast. It breeds on low uninhabited islands in our bays and off the coast. Dr. Gilpin informs me that it also breeds in great numbers at Sable Island, some 90 miles out at sea.

In the Bermudas, on a rocky islet, known as Gurnet's Head, these birds also breed annually. Temperature must be slightly regarded by them during nidification, for while on the Nova Scotian coast, they sit and rear their young, when at nights the thermometer sometimes falls as low as 37° ; in the Bermudas, they are similarly occupied on sandy rocks, exposed to a blazing sun, which, even in sheltered spots on shore, raises the temperature to 87° in the shade.

10. ARCTIC TERN.

(*Sterna macroura*, Naum.)

Sterna arctica, Temm.

This bird, known as the "steering gull" or "steerings" by the fishermen, is very common with us; especially during the breeding season, from the middle of June to the first week in July, when it frequents the small grassy islands in the harbours and shore waters for the purpose of nidification. The nest, if such it can be called, is a mere depression in the earth on the side of a bank, about four inches diameter, with a few bits of dry grass within, on which rest the eggs of very varied colour. Many thousands of young arctic terns must be hatched every summer on our coast. Regarding the habits of these birds as observed by my friend, the Rev. John Ambrose, of St. Margaret's Bay, he thus proceeds in a recent letter:—"They are the most affectionate birds (conjugally speaking) in this country, and greatly remind one of the so-called 'love birds' in this respect. They are almost invariably seen flying in couples or *even* numbers. I have often observed them sitting in couples on buoys or detached rocks, billing and caressing each other, in the most affectionate way, cooing the while in their peculiar manner. Some time ago, when passing a rocky point in a boat, a loaded gun being at hand, a pair of terns flew past, I fired and shot one, when the other immediately flew to the succour of its bleeding and helpless companion, swooping close to it and touching it at times in passing. Its grief seemed so violent, that in sheer pity I fired, and it dropped beside its dead mate, all its sorrows at an end. Since that day I have never fired at a tern."

11. ROSEATE TERN.*

*(Sterna Paradisea, Brünn.)**Sterna Dougalli*, Mont.

I insert this species on the authority of Mr. Thomas Egan, Taxidermist, of this city, who assures me that a specimen was obtained recently, and is now in the possession of Mr. John Roue, of Halifax. Baird gives New York as its northern limit.

ART. IV. PROVIDENTIAL WARNING TO THE LOWER ANIMALS.

BY REV. J. AMBROSE.

(Read February 14, 1870.)

“I FEEL IT IN MY BONES,” is a phrase which, it seems to me, must have originated in some cold country in which rheumatism was not uncommon. For it is well known that rheumatic persons, as well as those whose bones have at any time been broken or severely sprained, are more or less affected in the diseased or injured part by marked changes in the atmosphere. A joint, as I know by experience, weakened by a severe sprain, gives warning of an approaching snow or rain-storm by a sort of warm, uneasy and even sore feeling,—though the sprain was apparently healed several years before. Corns and bunions on the feet also give their proprietors timely notice of approaching storms. Knowledge of this kind may be desirable if it be not too dearly purchased, and I have at various times been warned against what turned out to be inconvenient and dangerous journeys by my prophetic ankle, a barometer which is never forgotten and left at home when its owner goes abroad:—

“O my prophetic soul! my *ankle*.” [*Hamlet*.]

Second-sight, among the Highlanders, is said to have been almost invariably accompanied by a peculiar, and indeed what might be called a diseased state of the nervous system. Weather-

*Just as this paper is going to the press I am enabled to add this new species.
J. M. J.