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Notes

Ross' Goose Breeding on Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories

During part of July 1984, Peter Burke and the author were participating in the *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas* project in northern Ontario. Part of our assignment included assisting the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources staff with a goose banding program.

On 13 July 1984 we were involved in gathering wild geese into pens as part of this project. One flock of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) was being "rounded up" on the northwest shoreline of Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories. Included in the flock of approximately 50 geese were several Canadas, two or three Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*), one "Blue" Goose, and an adult male and two juvenile Ross' Geese (*Chen rossii*).

Photographs of the adult male Ross' and the goslings (Figs. 1 and 2) were obtained both in the hand and in the pens. The adult did not appear to be a hybrid and exhibited features one would expect in a "pure" Ross'. The juveniles were similar to young Snow Geese, but differed in that they were much whiter in appearance. No notable difference was found in bill structure between them and young Snow Geese. They were, however, much more aggressive than the young Snow Geese while in the pens.

Photographs were submitted to the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, for evaluation. The impression of the reviewers was that the birds were likely pure juvenile Ross' Geese, but the possibility of hybridization could not be ruled out definitively.

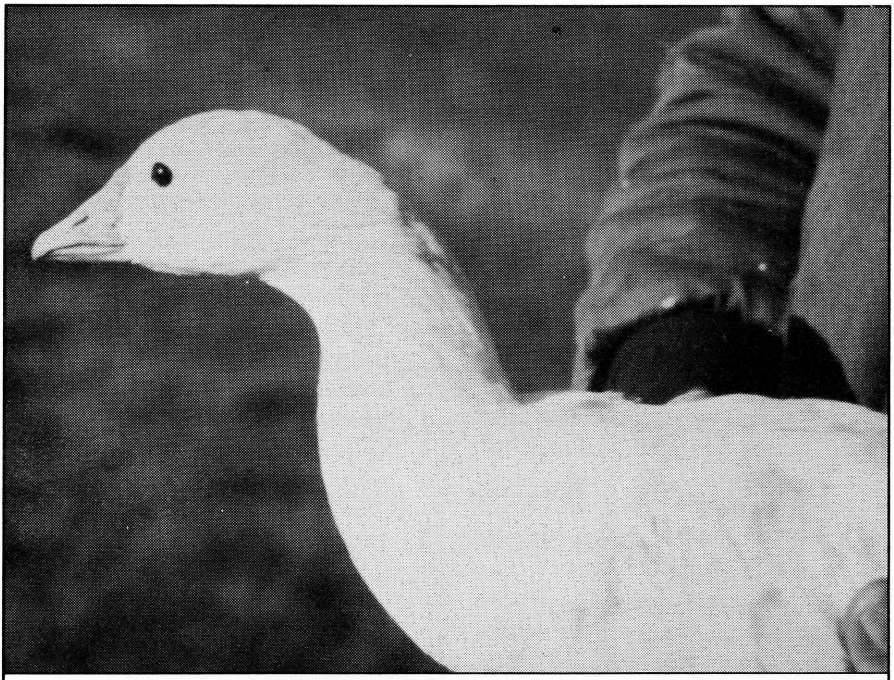

Figure 1: Adult male Ross' Goose, Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories, 13 July 1984. Photo by *G. Carpentier.*

No female Ross' Goose was found on that date or on subsequent ones. Likewise, no female Snow Goose was found attending the young birds. The male Ross' seemed to be the only attendant bird to the young.

The Ross' Goose is a rare breeder in most of Canada's low Arctic, from MacKenzie (Perry River), Keewatin, Southampton Island, to northeast Manitoba (Godfrey 1986). The only other documented nesting attempt in eastern Canada involves a pre-fledgling Ross' Goose found 29 July 1975 near the mouth of the Brant River, Kenora District (Prevett and Johnson 1977).

This sighting appears to represent the first nesting of a Ross' Goose in the Northwest Territories, and the second for eastern Canada. Although not recorded in Ontario, this was the only breeding record for Ross' Goose obtained during the Atlas (Prevett 1987).

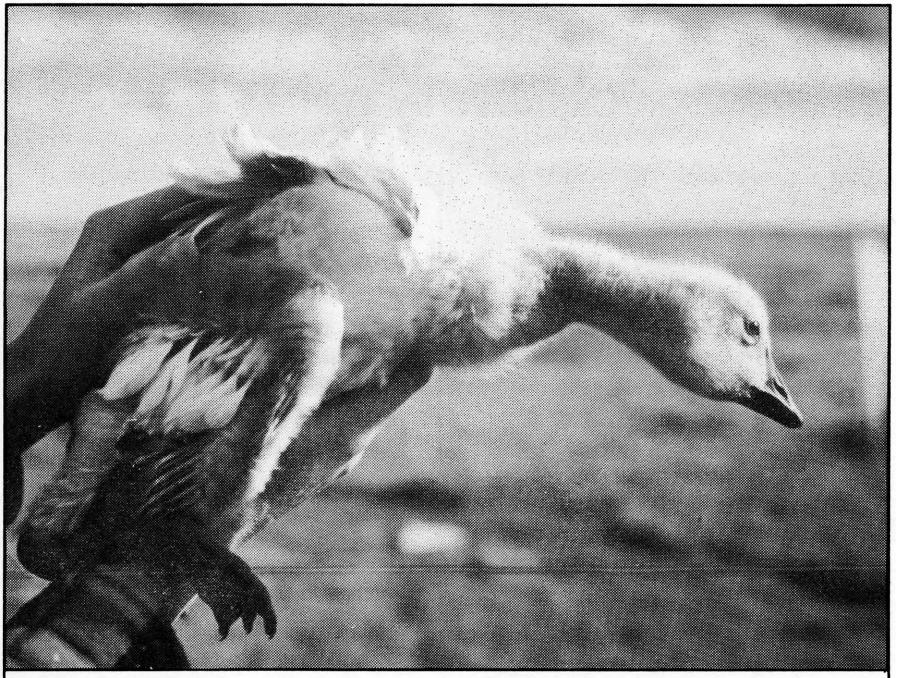

Figure 2: Juvenile Ross' Goose, Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories, 13 July 1984. Photo by *G. Carpentier.*

[*Eds. note.* Although all islands in James Bay and Hudson Bay belong to the Northwest Territories, Akimiski Island was included in the geographic area covered by the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* (Cadman *et al.* 1987). Akimiski Island is situated in James Bay 25km east of the mouth of the Attawapiskat River, Kenora District, Ontario.]

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Semipalmated Sandpiper Captured by Turtle

At approximately 1700h on 23 May 1989 I was looking for a female Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) which others had told me was in the west sewage lagoon at Stoney Point, Essex Co.

While walking the length of the dike separating the two lagoons, I noticed a small sandpiper in obvious difficulty, less than a metre in from the side of the east lagoon. All of the bird's lower body was under water, and it was flapping its wings in an apparent attempt to reach the edge of the pond.

At this point I realized that the large "rock" beside the bird was actually a turtle, and that it had one of the sandpiper's legs in its jaw, underwater.

The other leg, minus the foot, was trailing in the water behind the bird. The trailing leg was black which, in conjunction with the size and plumage details, confirmed the bird's identity as a Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*).

Because there was nothing I could do to help, I continued on to find the phalarope, a female in full breeding plumage. Five to ten minutes later, on returning to the place where the sandpiper had been, there was no sign of it or the turtle.

Not being familiar with turtles, I was unable to identify the species which had captured the sandpiper, although I did notice that the ridge on its back seemed quite pronounced rather than smooth.

[*Eds. note*: On the basis of the description provided above, this was probably a Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*). A similar case of predation involving a snapping turtle and a shorebird was observed in Ontario by M. Parker. The turtle captured and partially consumed a Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) at the Tara sewage lagoon, Bruce Co. on 12 August 1985 (Oldham 1988).]

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Short-billed Dowitcher Breeding on Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories

As part of the *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas* project (1981–85), Peter Burke and I surveyed much of the north shore and part of the interior of Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories.

On 12 July 1984, while working the coastal fringe of the northwest part of the island, we discovered a single adult Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) in an extremely agitated state. The bird vocalized incessantly as it flew in low circles over our heads. After every one or two cycles, it perched at the top of small willow bushes (*Salix* sp.) and continued to call. Eventually it flew to a more distant perch and remained silent but observant.

Figure 1: Juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher, Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories, 12 July 1984. Photo by *G. Carpentier.*

Feeling that a nest or young might be found in the vicinity, we searched the area thoroughly. After approximately 15 minutes Carpentier found a fairly large, flightless juvenile hiding in the grass.

Since it strongly resembled the adult seen nearby, and already exhibited most of the expected morphological features of the Short-billed Dowitcher, it was identified as this species.

Photographs were taken in the hand to document the nesting (Fig. 1). It was accepted by the Atlas Data Review Committee as the only confirmed breeding of the Short-billed Dowitcher for the Atlas period (Harris 1987).

The bird was subsequently released and shortly thereafter was joined by its "parent".

The Short-billed Dowitcher is a widespread breeder across Canada, from the southern Yukon and MacKenzie, northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Quebec, and northwest British Columbia, Ontario, and Labrador (Godfrey 1986.)

Few Ontario breeding records were available prior to the Atlas. Tuck (1963) found a downy and recently fledged young at Winisk, Kenora District, in 1963 and Manning (1981) found it nesting at nearby North Twin Island, N. W. T., in 1981. Although no material evidence (i.e., nest or eggs) was found, the former record represents the only known breeding record for Short-billed Dowitcher in Ontario.

The observations recorded in this note represent one of the few published records of Short-billed Dowitcher breeding in eastern Canada and, in fact, appears to expand the species' known breeding range in central Canada southward by about 20km, compared to Manning's (1981) observations.

[*Eds. note:* Although all islands in James Bay and Hudson Bay belong to the Northwest Territories, Akimiski Island was included in the geographic area covered by the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* (Cadman *et al.* 1987). Akimiski Island is situated in James Bay 25km east of the mouth of the Attawapiskat River, Kenora District, Ontario.]

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