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ORNITHOLOGICAL RESULTS OF THE BAFFIN ISLAND EXPEDITIONS OF 1928–1929 AND 1930–1931, TOGETHER WITH MORE RECENT RECORDS

BY J. DEWEY SOPER

(Continued from page 239)

55. Nyctea nyctea (Linnaeus), SNOWY OWL. Eskimo: $A \ddot{u}k'p\ddot{k}$.—On the 1928– 1929 expedition the Snowy Owl was so scarce that not a single one was noted until July 12, 1929, when a solitary bird was recorded as the party ascended Blue Goose River northeast of Camp Kungovik. It was not observed again that season. During 1930–1931, at Lake Harbour, the species was comparatively rare. In the former season the writer saw only three individuals during August, none in September, and only one during October. It was not again noted up to the time of leaving the country in early August, 1931. The writer has records of the Snowy Owl nesting at Amadjuak Bay and Cape Dorset (1926), so it may be assumed that scattered pairs breed throughout southern districts. Judging from personal observations made at Pond Inlet in the late summer of 1923, the species is much commoner in far northern sections of the island.

56. Otocoris alpestris (Linnaeus), HORNED LARK. Eskimo: $K\bar{o}p\bar{e}nwa''pa$.— There is still some uncertainty regarding the true identity of the southern Baffin Island horned larks. The races are not easy to define, and this is especially true where ranges meet or overlap, as they obviously do on Baffin Island and apparently, as well, on Southampton Island. It now appears fairly certain, however, that southern Baffin Island birds are referable to both *hoyti* and *alpestris* (see Soper, 1928: 108–109, and Sutton, 1932: 211).

On the whole, the population in this territory appears to be a mixed one, but with *alpestris* characters predominant. With much more collecting carried out from eastern and western extremes, it appears probable that birds from the southeastern part of the island will prove to be the strongest in those characters which typify

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alpestris, while those to the west and north become progressively farther from this form and nearer to *hoyti* [Gross (1937: 36) refers specimens from the near-by Button Islands, Hudson Strait entrance, to O. a. alpestris, while Taverner (Bray and Manning 1943: 532) provisionally identified Manning's specimens from Taverner Bay, Foxe Basin, as O. a. hoyti]. If the above conclusions prove correct, the statements of range in the 1931 A. O. U. Check-List (pp. 212-213) will need to be modified to extend the territory of *hoyti* considerably northeast of the west coast of Hudson Bay, and *alpestris* north of Hudson Strait.

The following notes compiled at the end of the writer's 1928-1929 and 1930-1931 expeditions cannot definitely refer to the subspecies; they will have to serve the southern Baffin Island birds as a whole, concerning occurrence, relative abundance, nesting, etc.

Horned larks appear in small numbers along the south coast of Foxe Peninsula during the spring migration, but they are not known to occur or nest there during the summer. In 1928, the birds were seen only during the last days of August at Nuwata and at various places along Foxe Channel as far south as King Charles Cape. Examples were first noted at Bowman Bay on June 3, 1929, after which they occurred daily there in small numbers until June 13. During the latter half of June, only one individual was recorded, but about the Blue Goose nesting ground it was rather commonly dispersed on low granite outcrops in early July. This circumstance offered a good example of the peculiarities of local distribution, for at Camp Kungovik, only a few miles away, it was absent, though the two localities are very similar in nature. The number of larks frequenting the above area, and the volubility of the singing males, unquestionably indicated breeding, though no nests were found. With the exception of a solitary lark recorded at Cape Alberta on August 4, the bird was not observed again after we left the Bowman Bay plains on July 24. At Nettilling Lake the birds breed in abundance.

This is one of the scarcest of small land birds that visit the Lake Harbour region. During the spring migration in early June, moderate numbers were seen from day to day if considerable time were spent in the field. At the height of summer and during the autumn, it is rarely encountered, though it is known to breed there to a very limited extent. The first spring record in 1931 was represented by a small band of six individuals on June 5. From this date until June 13, a few were noted nearly every day, after which they were rarely seen. On June 25, a single individual was observed several miles up Soper River, and one was collected there three days later. On July 8, an adult pair with two young, just awing, were seen on Copeland Island in North Bay. While we were cruising along the coast in the neighbourhood of Itivirk Bay and Tanfield Cape on July 10, several were met with on rocky hillsides.

Horned larks are not nearly so common along the south coast as in the interior about Nettilling and Amadjuak lakes. The Eskimos also report them breeding in larger numbers over the higher plateau region north of Lake Harbour than in the coastal areas. This bird is very hardy and begins nesting when much snow still lingers, earlier than either the Snow Bunting or Lapland Longspur.

57. Corvus corax principalis Ridgway, NORTHERN RAVEN. Eskimo: $T\bar{u}l''\bar{u}auk'$. —This bird is of widespread occurrence in southern Baffin Island, and is one of the few species that figures as a relatively common permanent resident throughout. Though broadly covering an immense territory, it is often notably erratic and local in distribution, and especially so during the winter months. As the bird is largely coastal in habit, it is rather rarely observed far inland, but odd individuals or pairs may appear at random in almost any locality. They usually nest on high cliffs overlooking the sea. This choice of site renders it both difficult and hazardous to reach the nests, so that eggs are rarely secured. On May 6, 1928, we obtained from an Eskimo a set of six fresh eggs which was taken from a cliff the previous day, at Pudla Inlet, near Dorset Harbour. It is understood from the natives that these birds sometimes nest in mid-April. The sexes necessarily take turns in covering the eggs as sub-zero temperatures may prevail at this period and occasionally into early May. Height of abundance is reached in bold, mountainous terrain near the sea, such as in the Cumberland Sound region. Ravens consistently diminish in numbers westward to the flat tundra lands bordering Foxe Basin, from which they are absent except as rare stragglers.

58. Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa (Gmelin), GREENLAND WHEATEAR. Eskimo: $Ek \ddot{a} l'' i g \ddot{a} k'$.—The writer's experience from 1923 on indicates conclusively that this bird is one of the rarest of the avifauna over most parts of southern Baffin Island. Previous to the expedition of 1930–1931, the few authentic records of its occurrence on the island existed only for the Cumberland Sound region. Upon reaching Lake Harbour in late July, 1930, the writer was told of a "small grayish bird with white in the tail" which had nested in a crevice of a rock near the post about a month earlier. Details made it appear certainly referable to *leucorhoa*, though nothing was seen of it during the remainder of the season. In 1931, a single example was observed on June 12, and another two days later. Nothing further developed until June 27, when a breeding pair was found on the property of the Anglican Mission; the nest was found containing six eggs.

Forbes (1938) found eleven of these birds in a restricted area in early August, 1937, at Brewster Point, Frobisher Bay, where the species was nesting. He is of the opinion that it is not as rare on Baffin Island as ornithologists have been led to believe. It is certainly more common locally along the eastern coast than earlier surmised, but it is now a well-known fact that the species is entirely absent from very large areas of the island. There are no records of its occurrence anywhere in extreme southern and southwestern Baffin Island, nor in huge tracts of the interior to the northward. Manning (Bray and Manning, 1943: 532) reports a single specimen taken at Taverner Bay—so far as known the only record for the western part of the island flanked by Foxe Basin.

59. Anthus spinoletta rubescens (Tunstall), AMERICAN PIPIT. Eskimo: Ingšk"tāyūk".—The American Pipit, like the Snow Bunting, is of widespread and almost universal distribution in southern Baffin Island. In abundance, however, it varies markedly from place to place. As its preferred haunts are among the rugged hills of mountainous districts, it is found most plentiful in suitable localities along the seacoasts of the south and east, where lengthy fiords occur with their protected coastal valleys and more luxurious vegetation. The extensive lowlands of the interior are less suitable and attract a much smaller population. From the swampy tundras of the west, relieved by no outcropping granites, the birds are entirely absent, except for a few scattered individuals that resort to beach lines during migration.

In 1928, pipits were found inhabiting all suitable rocky country in Foxe Peninsula up to mid-September. They first appeared at Bowman Bay on June 4, 1929, and soon became tolerably common on the scattered granite ridges. On July 15, a nest was found with five nestlings about two days old. This nest very closely resembled that of the Snow Bunting, both in structure and situation. It was bulkily built of dead grasses under a shelving rock, but instead of a lining of ptarmigan feathers, such Vol. 63] 1946

as is invariably used by the Snow Bunting, it had one firmly and neatly woven with fine, dead grasses exclusively. At Cape Alberta on July 24 a nest was found in a crevice of a low cliff overlooking the sea, holding three young not more than four or five days old; near by, on July 26, another nest was found under a boulder, with three downy juveniles of about the same age. After this, only a few scattered individuals were noted along the coast as far west as Garnet Bay.

In the Lake Harbour region, the pipit is widely distributed, and breeds freely throughout. It is customarily observed daily until about September 27, when most of the birds abruptly disappear. A few individuals, however, sometimes linger until early October. In the summer and fall of 1930 it was a comparatively common habitué of every section of the rocky country explored. The following spring it was first seen on May 29. By June 5, the birds were abundant and the males universally in song. On June 20, a nest was found embedded in the soil of a rugged hillside under cover of a protruding ledge of rock; it contained six fresh eggs, in color drabgray, thickly and evenly speckled with cinnamon-drab. The tinkling, elfinlike melodies of the American Pipit are among the most familiar sounds of the Arctic wilderness.

60. Acanthis hornemanni hornemanni (Holboell), HORNEMANN'S REDPOLL. Eskimo: Shětshåg" $\ddot{c}dk'$.—As in other parts of Baffin Island, Hornemann's Redpoll does not appear to inhabit Foxe Peninsula during the summer months. In the autumn, however, these birds begin to make their appearance in varying numbers, usually in small flocks, but groups of upwards of one hundred individuals have been noted. Unidentified redpolls were frequently heard and seen about the lakes of the interior north to Tessikjuak Lake and Moukjunil River in late September, 1928. The first dependable record of the species in western Baffin Island came with the collection of several specimens from a flock of thirty at Dorset Harbour on October 11. Additional specimens were taken in the same locality on October 21. Hornemanni was not observed in the Lake Harbour region during 1930–1931. It occurs, apparently, only as an irregular migrant on Baffin Island. In Greenland it breeds north to 70 degrees but is not yet known to do so anywhere in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

61. Acanthis flammea rostrata (Coues), GREATER REDPOLL. Eskimo: Shětshåg"ēdk'.—On the 1928–1929 expedition, unidentified redpolls were met with on August 30, at Lona Bay, near King Charles Cape. Specimens were secured from a large flock at Andrew Gordon Bay on September 27, all of which appear referable to *rostrata*; other flocks were seen in Catherine Bay the next day. Another example of this subspecies was taken at Dorset Harbour on October 10. The writer observed no redpolls in the district after October 21, though Henry Voisey reported a solitary individual on November 23.

On March 28, 1929, a solitary, darkish redpoll (apparently *rostrata*) was observed along the Foxe Basin coast in latitude 67° 28' N., while we were en route to Hantzsch River. This was the only redpoll observed during the winter. On June 2, a single example flew over Camp Kungovik, Bowman Bay, the first and last seen during the spring and summer. Redpolls referred to this species were observed with fair regularity at Lake Harbour in 1930, from September 27 until October 24. Specimens were collected on several occasions which answer to the description of *rostrata*. In 1931, the only record is that of two unidentified individuals noted on June 4.

On the whole, redpolls are relatively scarce on the island and seem very irregular in their habits of migration. In numerous localities the writer has not encountered them at any season, but customarily they occur in the fall, not to be observed again

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until the following autumn. Apparently there are no redpoll nesting records for Baffin Island.

62. Loxia leucoptera leucoptera Gmelin, WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL.—Sutton (1936) records an example of this species that was secured by John T. Ford in the spring of 1933, at Lake Harbour. It appeared during three days of very stormy weather. This is evidently the first record of its occurrence north of Hudson Strait.

63. Junco hyemalis hyemalis (Linnaeus), SLATE-COLORED JUNCO. The writer collected a female specimen of this bird at Lake Harbour on June 2, 1931—the first record for Baffin Island. This point is some 325 miles north of the upper limit of tree growth in northern Quebec.

64. Zonotrichia leucophrys leucophrys (Forster), WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW. —On July 23, 1939, Peters (Shortt and Peters, 1942: 347) saw "a few" of these birds at Lake Harbour; this constitutes the first record of the species for Baffin Island. Across the strait to the southeast, Gross (1937: 38) found the species "especially abundant" at Port Burwell. Manning (Bray and Manning, 1943: 534) collected an immature female at Taverner Bay, west coast of Baffin Island, on September 17, 1939; the specimen is now in the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa. In view of the locality where it was taken, over 700 miles north of the tree limit, this is a most unusual occurrence.

65. Calcarius lapponicus lapponicus (Linnaeus), LAPLAND LONGSPUR. Eskimo: $K\delta w'' l \bar{e} g \check{a} \check{k}'$.—The distribution of this bird on Baffin Island is in marked contrast with that of the Snow Bunting, owing to its choice of terrain of an opposite character. It inhabits localized flats of a swampy nature, but its favorite breeding grounds are wide, moist tundras interspersed with ponds and streams and studded with grassy tussocks. Such conditions are frequently available within the granitic areas proper, where rocky hills and ridges enclose green stretches almost meadowlike in character. Here the longspurs gather and nest in large numbers, filling Arctic June days with voluble rhapsodies of song. In general habits the Lapland Longspur may be said to resemble the Savannah Sparrow of more southern regions, though much of its individualistic charm rests in its Arctic associations and its wild and brilliant singing on the wing. Such ideal localities, as sketched above, occur about Nettilling Lake, along the Foxe Basin coast, and in northern Foxe Peninsula, where the birds nest in abundance. Over large, localized areas of the island, however, they are entirely absent, or appear only briefly during migration.

In the mountainous coastal areas of southern Foxe Peninsula, the longspur is seldom observed. A few pairs, however, nest in scattered, boggy valleys in association with small lakes. During the summer of 1928, the birds were seen in numbers only on the swampy, coastal plain about Nuwata. The last recorded for the season were a few small migrating flocks at Tessikjuak Lake on September 21.

The following spring the first longspurs appeared at Bowman Bay on June 4. In three days, birds of both sexes were common, and by June 10 they swarmed in thousands over the restricted strips of snow-free tundra. This great army of migrants was further augmented up to the middle of the month, when the majority moved on to more northern resorts. Large numbers remained to breed, however, and by a wide margin were the most abundant summer residents of the tundra. On June 11, the males were first heard singing half-spirited snatches of song, but the first mad outbursts of their full and brilliant repertoire was not general until June 20.

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The first completed nest, with a single egg, was found on June 26, and by July 2, sets of four or five fresh eggs were common. By July 9, sets varying from three to six eggs were usually well incubated; the larger sets examined were invariably in a more advanced state, whereas sets of two or three eggs were nearly, if not quite, fresh. This suggests the possibility that the older birds begin earlier and lay more than first-year breeders, which are probably responsible for the later and smaller clutches. The nests are compact structures of dead grass, lined with ptarmigan feathers, built securely in the side of the moss- and grass-grown tussocks well above the water and snow of the swampy lowlands.

Incubation appears to require from twelve to thirteen days. The first nestlings of the season were observed on July 13, and a few days later they were quite general. The males ceased singing between July 12 and 15, except for occasional short outbursts for a few days from a minority of individuals. At Cape Alberta, where longspurs were abundant, young were flying on July 27. The birds were seen in fair numbers on the lowlands all along the south coast of Foxe Basin to Kommanik River, and across most of the interior to Hudson Strait during the second week of August. At this time the first pronounced tendency to autumn flocking was in evidence.

The longspur nests locally throughout the Lake Harbour district, but is relatively scarce both as breeder and migrant in this part of the island. In 1931 it was first observed on June 2, when a pair was resorting to a swampy area beside a small lake. Longspurs were nowhere encountered along the coast during the remainder of the season. A few breeding pairs were seen far inland along Soper River in late June and early July. The Eskimos state that the species nests abundantly on swampy flats of the plateau country far back in the interior toward the headwaters of this stream. Where the terrain is uniformly rocky, without marshy lowlands, the race is entirely wanting, except probably for wandering flocks during migration. Consequently, it is relatively scarce in the mountainous eastern half of Baffin Island, but reaches the height of abundance on the great grass tundras of the West. In addition to the lowlands flanking Foxe Basin, the Lapland Longspur nests prolifically about Nettilling, Anadjuak, and Mingo lakes; to a somewhat lesser extent along the lakechains west of Nettilling Fiord, and north of Amadjuak Bay, respectively; and on broken, grassy plains immediately north of Chorkbak Inlet.

66. Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis (Linnaeus), EASTERN SNOW BUNTING. Eskimo: $K\bar{o}p'en\bar{u}a\check{u}k''$.—The Snow Bunting is practically omnipresent in the granite areas of Baffin Island, from mid-May until mid-October, and, on the whole, constitutes the most abundant land bird of the territory. Nothing is more charming to the traveller than these friendly and confiding birds as they soar and sing over the dreary wastes of the Arctic lands. Their songs are exquisite outbursts of melody rendered from rock perches or, lark-fashion, upon the wing. Evidently no place however desolate and repellent in the Far North but may be occupied by these birds, where they spend more than a third of their lives and rear their young.

In the summer of 1928 the birds were found abundant everywhere along the rockbound coasts of Foxe Peninsula and over granite areas of the interior. The first signs of autumn flocking were noted in late August, a feature that was very pronounced two weeks later. Numbers gradually diminished after September 20 until the last, hardy stragglers finally disappeared on October 14. An Eskimo reported a single individual near Cape Dorset on January 26, 1929, which was the first true winter record for Baffin Island.

The Snow Bunting is exceedingly hardy; it is the first small land bird to arrive in the spring and the last to leave in the autumn. In southern Baffin Island the first intrepid males arrive by the first week of April, but the migration is not pronounced until the middle of May. The earliest arrival at Dorset Harbour in 1929 was on April 6. No females were noticed until about mid-May, after which their numbers grew rapidly until the maximum population was well established by early June. Upon our arrival at Camp Kungovik on May 24, many had already become established on the few low, granite ridges, though they were not as numerous as along the south coast a week before. By June 3, however, swarms were frequenting the bare tops of the ridges and the snow-free strips of tundra, yet the maximum number was not reached until after June 8. Sporadic half-singing commenced on June 9, but full, rapturous outbursts were not general until June 20.

Collectively, the birds were mated early in June, with nest building under way by the third week of the month. On June 28, several nests were found with from one to three eggs, and the first full sets early in July. These varied in number from four to seven, many of which were still fresh as late as July 6. At the same time, other sets were considerably incubated at this date, and some of the birds were observed engaged in building nests even as late as July 2. There is thus a wide individual range in the date of egg-laying, as well as considerable discrepancy, apparently, in this general time, according to season and locality. Thus the first eggs were observed at Nettilling Lake (1925) on June 16, and full sets by June 20, whereas, as stated above, full sets were not noted at Camp Kungovik, in 1929, until the early days of July.

Nests are invariably secreted under boulders or in crevices among rocks. The first nestlings were seen on July 12, and several newly hatched broods the following day. The period of incubation appears to be from twelve to fourteen days. Both sexes bear food to the young. The male ceases singing shortly after the eggs are hatched and the care of the young begins, though occasional outbursts may be heard for a time, reminiscent of the love lyrics of June. The first young awing were noted at Cape Alberta on July 27, and a week thereafter they were common throughout the country to the westward.

In the Amadjuak-Lake Harbour region the species is everywhere generously dispersed along the coasts, on rocky islands, and in the interior. In 1930, the last individual of the season was observed on October 26. The following spring the earliest was recorded on April 5; the birds did not become common, however, until June 7.

No situation, apparently, is too barren or desolate for the Snow Bunting, for it is found universally distributed except on extensive, marshy lowlands and lofty heights of the eastern mountains that are covered by perpetual fields of ice and snow. Nesting habits require rocky terrain, so where this is lacking, as in the western grass plains, the birds are absent except during migration. In Baffin Island it has never been ascertained to what altitudes the Snow Buntings nest in true mountain tracts, but in the eastern region where ranges rise to heights of 5,000 feet or more, there are many slopes of southern exposure apparently suited to them up to 2,000 feet. In late summer and early fall, the writer has found the birds commonly occupying such slopes up to 2,500 feet, with scattered individuals at considerably greater elevations.

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