

NOTES ON A COLLECTION OF BIRDS FROM
MANSEL ISLAND, HUDSON BAYBy GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON¹

During the summer of 1929, while on my way to Southampton Island, I became acquainted with Mr. Albert T. Swaffield, one of my fellow passengers on board the *Nascopie*, who had been detailed by the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a fur-trading post on Mansel Island. I knew that but little was known of the bird-life of this island, and I was eager to learn whether the same species occurred there as on Southampton, so hastened to ask Mr. Swaffield to save for me, if possible, such specimens or pieces of specimens as might come into his hands from the Eskimos, or to preserve in some way parts of such birds as he himself might kill as food. I knew that he would be exceedingly busy in building his winter quarters, in traveling about on the island, and in trading with the natives, so I did not request him to prepare the specimens carefully nor to keep complete data.

The material which Mr. Swaffield collected reached me in mid-summer of 1930, just as I was leaving Southampton. Though the rough skins and fragments were not in good condition they were, nevertheless, readily identifiable and most of them were accompanied by a label with a statement of the date of capture. I brought the collection back with me so as to be able to make the necessary comparisons, and have prepared the following list in the belief that it may be of interest.

Mansel Island lies just south of the mouth of Hudson Bay, about midway between Coats Island (the island just south of Southampton) and the region of Cape Wolstenholme. It was discovered in 1613 by Captain (later Sir) Thomas Button. It was supposed at the time to be a group of islands, and the name "Mansel's Islands" appeared on contemporary charts. Later the island was referred to as "Mansfield's Islands" (John Barrow, 'A Chronological History of the Voyages into the Arctic Regions', 1818, p. 200). It was named by Button in honor of Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Mansel, whose niece Button married (James White, "Place-Names in Northern Canada", Report Geographic Board of Canada, 1910, p. 402).

I have never been on Mansel Island; but I remember noting it from one of the Revillon Frères schooners during the late summer of 1926 as an exceedingly flat, dull-gray piece of land.

Gavia stellata. Red-throated Loon. Four specimens were secured. One, taken October 21, 1929, may have been a cripple, since the date is very late. Two were secured on May 24, 1930. A pair of wings were taken from an immature specimen secured in the fall of 1929. This species probably nests.

Cygnus columbianus. Whistling Swan. An adult was secured on June 4, 1930. The silken plumage of the crown of this specimen is tipped with rich golden brown. The yellow spot at the base of the upper mandible is very small but distinct. Probably nests.

Branta canadensis hutchinsi. Hutchins Goose. One was secured during the summer of 1930. Only the wings were preserved. These measure 387 mm. Probably nests.

Branta bernicla hrota. American Brant. Wings of a brant taken on September 15, 1929, are probably referable to this species, though there is no way of distinguishing with certainty the wings of *bernicla* and *nigricans* so far as I have been able to determine. Probably nests.

¹ The author wishes to express his thanks to Dr. A. A. Allen, of Ithaca, New York, and to Drs. Harry C. Oberholser and Herbert Friedmann, of Washington, D. C., for assistance in the preparation of this paper.

Chen hyperborea hyperborea. Lesser Snow Goose. The wing of a white goose secured on June 3, 1930, is included in the collection. This wing measures 399 mm. Probably nests.

Clangula hyemalis. Old-squaw. An adult male and female were secured on September 6, 1929. This species probably nests along the coastal lakes.

Somateria mollissima borealis. Northern Eider. An adult male in breeding plumage was taken on May 20, 1930. The lateral frontal processes at the base of the upper mandible are not, perhaps, as narrow and pointed as in typical specimens of *borealis*, but they are decidedly too narrow and pointed for *dresseri*. The wings of an adult female eider, probably also of this form, and secured on September 21, 1929, were preserved. This species probably nests on little islands in the larger lakes, or on rocky islets in the salt water.

Somateria spectabilis. King Eider. An adult male was taken on June 5, 1930. Probably nests.

Pluvialis dominica dominica. American Golden Plover. A specimen in immature plumage was secured during the fall of 1929. Probably nests.

Squatarola squatarola. Black-bellied Plover. An adult bird was secured on May 19, 1930, and an immature during the fall of 1929. Probably nests.

Arenaria interpres morinella. Ruddy Turnstone. An immature specimen was taken on September 10, 1929, and an adult male in full breeding plumage on June 8, 1930. Probably nests.

Phaeopus hudsonicus. Hudsonian Curlew. A specimen, probably young, and in fresh winter plumage, was taken during the fall of 1929.

Calidris canutus rufus. American Knot. A handsome adult in almost perfect summer plumage was taken on June 11, 1930. There were mere traces of winter plumage on the rump, lesser and greater wing coverts, and belly. The bill and wing agree with those of female specimens in length.

Arquatella maritima. Purple Sandpiper. Parts of an adult in breeding plumage are included in the collection, but these fragments are not accompanied by a date. Measurements of the bill are those of a male specimen.

Pisobia fuscicollis. White-rumped Sandpiper. An adult in breeding plumage was secured in mid-summer of 1930. Probably nests.

Phalaropus fulicarius. Red Phalarope. An adult female in full breeding plumage was taken on June 10, 1930. Probably nests.

Stercorarius parasiticus. Parasitic Jaeger. An adult of the light phase was taken on September 30, 1929. Probably nests. It is surprising that no other jaegers are to be found in the collection, since all three species are known to occur together in this general region.

Larus argentatus smithsonianus. Herring Gull. An adult in summer plumage was brought in to Mr. Swaffield in mid-winter. The actual date of capture is not known. Probably nests.

Pagophila alba. Ivory Gull. A specimen in the handsomely marked plumage of the immature bird was taken on November 25, 1929.

Xema sabini. Sabine Gull. An adult was secured on June 2, 1930. This species probably nests on islands in the lakes. It is surprising that no Arctic Terns, *Sterna paradisaea*, were included in the collection, since this tern and the Sabine Gull are frequently found together in this part of Hudson's Bay.

Uria lomvia lomvia. Brünnich Murre. Wings were preserved from specimens secured on September 6 and 16, 1929. The faded appearance of the tips of the primaries suggests that the birds may not yet have completed their post-nuptial molt. This species is known to nest abundantly along the northeastern end of Coats Island and at Cape Wolstenholme.

Cephus grylle mandti. Mandt Guillemot. One specimen, in handsome winter plumage, was taken on November 25, 1929. Judging from the immaculacy of the white patch in the black wing and from the redness of the feet, I take it to be a full adult. The plumage of the head, neck, and underparts is largely clear white. If loose boulders are to be found on promontories and off-shore islands about Mansel this species probably nests; and it very likely winters in whatever open water is to be found about the island.

Nyctea nyctea. Snowy Owl. Several specimens were secured during the year. One taken on November 4, 1929, was heavily barred. Probably nests.

Hirundo erythrogaster. Barn Swallow. It is indeed interesting that in a single year's collecting at random such a straggler as this should be taken. One was secured on June 14, 1930. The tail of this specimen is noticeably short, measuring only 68 mm. It appears to be an adult. I sent this bird to Dr. Harry C. Oberholser of the Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., for final identification. Dr. Oberholser in his letter says: "The female nearly always has a shorter tail than the male and apparently your specimen is one of the former sex."

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, November 13, 1931.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A Bat-eating Sparrow Hawk.—In the depths of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, a Desert Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius phalaena*) was seen to pursue, capture, and devour a small bat. This occurred at 4:35 p. m., October 30, 1930, in the inner cañon of Hermit Creek, about sixty feet above the stream bed and at a point directly below Hermit Camp, elevation 3000 feet. Mr. Ben H. Thompson also witnessed the incident.

The little inner gorge was in shadows, though the sun still brightened the plateau above. The hawk flew low over the edge of the plateau, and while under observation it was seen to be pursuing a small fluttering object which I instantly took to be a bird. My immediate thought was to make sure that it was a sparrow hawk thus engaged in so unorthodox a pursuit. My field glasses were trained on the hawk and followed it while it dived at its prey, which proved to be a small bat. It dived repeatedly, not following the bat about, but striking at it and then gaining a little height before bearing down again. Once, however, it followed the bat into the overhanging recess toward which it was retreating and chased it out again. At about the seventh attempt, the little bat was caught in its talons and carried to the top of the ledge over the recess. The bird remained there for about two minutes, picked at its prize a couple of times and then flew to a rock on the plateau above. In flight, the sparrow hawk was silhouetted against the evening sky and its extended talons could plainly be seen clutching the body of the little bat whose wings appeared to be folded.

On the rock the sparrow hawk proceeded to consume its prey. Once Mr. Thompson saw three or four inches of entrails dangling from its beak. The process of eating took about three to five minutes. A little later the sparrow hawk opened its mouth wide and disgorged a small piece of something, we could not tell what. When the chase occurred it was still daylight, but by now it was beginning to get dusky. The sparrow hawk flew over the little gorge once more but did not hesitate, and passed out of sight over the hill. The bluish wings and red tail with strongly marked black terminal band showed it to be a male.

Because the bat appeared to be of a uniformly silver gray color and of such very small size, I believe that it was the Canyon Bat (*Pipistrellus hesperus hesperus*), rather than the Little Pallid Bat which is also found in the Grand Cañon. However, this cannot be asserted with any degree of finality.

This occurrence is noted in detail because the known natural enemies of bats are few.—GEORGE M. WRIGHT, *Berkeley, California, October 12, 1931.*

Bird-eating Ground Squirrels.—I do not know in just what year I made the following observation, probably 1903, but it does not matter. I was doing a little collecting on the plains just northeast of Colorado Springs that spring, and on the way to my traps walked along a road bordered by uncultivated ground, and beside which was a telephone line with several wires. Pale striped ground squirrels (*Citellus tridecemlineatus pallidus*) lived in holes on this land and I often noticed feathers, usually of Horned Larks (*Otocoris alpestris leucolaema*), near the holes and wondered if the squirrels had caught the birds and how.