

The distance between S.W. Iceland and N.W. Greenland/Ellesmere Island is about 1400 miles. This would take about a further 28 hours flying. If the same rate of weight loss continued then a further 50 to 55 grams would be used up. Thus taking a mean starting weight of 200gms. the weights of Knot on arrival on their breeding grounds if they made a direct flight from Morecambe to Greenland would be between 105 and 115 grams. This is very close to the minimum weights recorded in Morecambe Bay and probably is only a little above the critical weight, i.e. that below which death must follow.

Although this is rather hypothetical the weight loss can be calculated theoretically and for the Morecambe Bay - Iceland flight the theoretical weight loss would be 38.17gms., almost exactly the observed weight loss.

The adaptation of Knot weight build up is clear. They would normally fly to Iceland with quite a large reserve fuel supply, where they refuel. If, due to weather conditions, they miss Iceland on their flight, they will have enough energy to reach the east and probably the west coast of Greenland. Because Greenland has relatively few good feeding areas for Knot, especially in early May, the birds overflying Iceland will be under more physical stress than others and may be expected to survive less well. The large increase in weight in Iceland is undoubtedly because the Knot cross the centre of Greenland and have to fly over the Greenland Ice cap.

Summary

- 1) The spring passage of Knot in Morecambe Bay occurs between late March and early May.
- 2) Summer plumage is attained at the same time as the passage occurs.
- 3) Knot increase their weight rapidly in late April, a rate of increase of 2.99gm./day has been recorded in Iceland.
- 4) The average departure weights lay between 200 and 210 grams. Weights of up to 226gms. have been found in Morecambe Bay and 229gms. in Iceland.
- 5) The weight loss from Britain to Iceland is 35-40gms. observed and 38.17gms. calculated. Weight is lost at the rate of 2gm./hr. during flight.
- 6) Only a small percentage of Knot could reach their N.W. Greenland breeding areas directly from Britain without refueling in Iceland.

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