

Extralimital Occurrences of Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus*, in Maine

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Applegate, Roger D. 1996. Extralimital occurrences of Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus*, in Maine. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 110(4): 715.

Five previous Willow Ptarmigan records in Maine, south of the usual species range, from 1892 to 1988, are summarized. A new record, from Brooks, Waldo County, taken in May 1990, is documented with a specimen.

Key Words: Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus*, distribution, Maine.

The Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus* L., winters primarily on the southern edge of the species breeding range, in the arctic tundra throughout the Palearctic and Nearctic, including the British Isles and Newfoundland. It is reported to wander casually south in winter to Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, central Ontario and Maine (AOU 1983).

Records from Maine include a Willow Ptarmigan in winter plumage shot in Kenduskeag, Penobscot County (44° 50' N, 68° 75' W), on 23 April, 1892 (Merrill 1892). Other reports that are considered reliable are for T6 R7 WELS, Penobscot County (46° 09' N, 68° 38' W), 1951 [Dolley 1951, reported by Vickery (1978), as Sherman Mills], Freeport, Cumberland County (43° 55' N, 70° 05' W), 6 December 1954; Bailey Island, Cumberland County (43° 40' N, 70° 00' W), May 1977 (Vickery 1978); and Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, Washington County (44° 25' N, 61° 54' W), April 1988 (Widrig 1989).

In May 1990 an adult male in winter plumage was taken captive in Brooks, Waldo County (44° 32' N, 69° 07' W), Maine. The ptarmigan later died in captivity and was turned over to Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife officials. The specimen was submitted to the Wildlife Collection, Department of Wildlife Ecology, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04473.

Willow Ptarmigan are considered to be cyclic with an approximate 10-year periodicity of peaks and lows (Johnsgard 1973). Keith (1963: 57) charted data (largely from Williams 1954) on ptarmigan population peaks and found an 8-10 year grouping of peaks. The Maine occurrences of Willow Ptarmigan in 1892, 1951, 1954, 1977, 1988, and 1990 may be related to these peaks.

Some populations of Willow Ptarmigan are considered migratory and this dispersal may be the result of high ptarmigan densities on the breeding range (Watson and Jenkins 1964). Territorial

defence from February to May results in dispersal of excess non-territorial ptarmigan in the population (Mossop 1988). This could account for the preponderance of records of ptarmigan south of the breeding range during April and May.

Acknowledgments

C. K. Williams and A. J. Erskine provided helpful suggestions on the manuscript. K. Kemper collected the Ptarmigan specimen and supplied details. M. McCollough encouraged publication of this note.

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Received 9 January 1996

Accepted 6 September 1996



Applegate, Roger D. 1996. "Extralimital occurrences of Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus*, in Maine." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 110(4), 715–715.
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.357559>.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.357559>

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