

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF EXTREME NORTH-EASTERN LABRADOR

By **BERNHARD HANTZSCH**

TRANSLATED BY M. B. A. ANDERSON

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(Continued from page 12)

*Ursus maritimus* Erxl. var. *ungavensis* ? (Knottn.-Mey.). Eisbär. Nennuk. POLAR BEAR.<sup>22</sup>

From two skulls collected by me and now in the Royal Zoological Museum in Dresden, Theodor Knotterus-Meyer suspects that there is an independent subspecies of the polar-bear in our district: (Über den Eisbären und seine geographischen Formen: Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft Naturforschender Freunde zu Berlin, 1908, p. 181). Every year some individuals are killed during the winter months, occasionally near the houses; seen more rarely in summer, most regularly on Button Islands, where at the beginning of August, 1906, three old animals were pursued by Paksau, who was to be my companion later, and another Eskimo. A skin is worth six to fifteen dollars.<sup>23</sup>

*Ursus americanus sornborgeri* Bangs. Schwarzer Labrador-Bär. BLACK BEAR. Aklak.<sup>24</sup>

Rarely comes to the southern parts of this district. Skin is worth about three to five dollars.

*Gulo luscus* (L.) Vielfrass. WOLVERINE. Kabvik.—Rather rare, more in the south. Skin, three to five dollars.

*Mustela caurina brumalis* Bangs. Marder, LABRADOR MARTEN. Kabviaitsik.—Seldom northward beyond the border of the forest.

<sup>22</sup> *Thalassarcos maritimus* (Phipps).

<sup>23</sup> The Ungava Polar Bear, for which Knotterus-Meyer tentatively suggested the name *Thalassarcos maritimus ungavensis* on the basis of an adult female and a male cub collected by Bernhard Hantzsch, is considered of very doubtful tenability by many North American mammalogists, although admitted to the lists of Miller (1924) and Anthony (1928). In addition to the typical Polar Bear, *T. maritimus* (Phipps) with type locality Spitsbergen, Knotterus-Meyer (1908) recognized *T. marinus* Pallas (from mouth of Ob and Yenesei Rivers, Siberia), and described four additional new species: *T. grælandicus* (East Greenland, wandering west to Julianehaab), *T. spitzbergensis* (North and West Spitsbergen, Seven Islands), *T. jenaensis* (East Spitsbergen, Jena Island), and *T. labradorensis* (Labrador coast, from 55° southward to Newfoundland, and most southern points of Greenland). It hardly seems probable that such a widely-ranging holarctic species which spends much of its time on drifting ice-floes and is occasionally carried down as far as Iceland and Newfoundland, should split into four races in the comparatively narrow limits around southern Greenland and the Labrador peninsula. Knotterus-Meyer's diagnoses, while based upon elaborate skull measurements, no less than twenty-seven to each skull, appear to make little if any allowance for the wide range of individual variation which is so marked in a series of bears from any one region.—R. M. Anderson.

<sup>24</sup> This subspecies not now recognized.—R.M.A.

Skin is worth ten to sixteen dollars.<sup>25</sup>

*Putorius vison* (Briss.) Mink. MINK. Kanojorniu.—Not frequent in the southern part. Skin, six to twelve dollars.<sup>26</sup>

*Putorius cicognanii* (B.p.). Hermelin. ERMINE. Terriak.—Not rare. Observed by me twice. Winter skins worth up to twenty-five cents.<sup>27</sup>

*Trichechus rosmarus* L. Walross. ATLANTIC WALRUS. Aivek.—At present has noticeably decreased in number in these districts. It is said to be still secured most regularly in the vicinity of the Ikkerasak, as long as there is thick pack ice there. Four individuals observed by me once only. Flesh and stomach contents are relished, the blubber used as with seals, the thick skin cut into strips of leather. Among other things they make harpoon and kayak paddle tips from the tusks.<sup>28</sup>

There occur the following species of seals, Seehunden. Eskimo, Puije:

*Cystophora cristata* (Erxl.). Klappmütze. Netsivak. HOODED SEAL.—Quite rare at present. Skin is worth two to six dollars, according to size.

*Halichærus grypus* Fabr. GRAY SEAL. Grauer Seehund.—Apparently occurring only rarely.

*Phoca barbata* Fabr. Bartrobbe. Ukjuk. BEARDED SEAL.—Frequent. Skin is worth one to four dollars.<sup>29</sup>

*Phoca vitulina concolor* DeKay. Gemeiner Seehund. Kassigak. ATLANTIC HARBOUR SEAL.—Not especially frequent; skin worth one-half to one dollar, that of younger animals worth the most.

[P. 255.]

*Phoca grælandica* Fabr. Grönländischer Seehund. GREENLAND SEAL. Kairoluk.—Frequent. Skin, fifty cents to three dollars.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The North Labrador Marten, which is listed by Miller (1924) and Anthony (1928) as *Martes brumalis* (Bangs) should undoubtedly be placed as a sub-species of the Eastern American Marten and stand as *Martes americana brumalis* (Bangs). The marten, where not driven out by civilization or trapped out, range from southern Canada to the northern limit of trees without any appreciable dividing line, and are more or less variable in any district. The *Martes caurina* group is now understood to be restricted to the Rocky Mountains and Pacific coast districts.—R.M.A.

<sup>26</sup> *Putorius vison* (Briss.) MINK. Mink. Kanojorniu.—Not frequent in the southern part. Skin six to twelve dollars.

<sup>27</sup> Bonaparte Weasel. Probably here the typical form *Mustela cicognanni cicognanni* Bonaparte.—R.M.A.

<sup>28</sup> The walrus is now placed in genus *Odobenus* Brissen (1762) the species stands as *Odobenus rosmarus* (Linnaeus).—R.M.A.

<sup>29</sup> The Bearded Seal is now placed in the genus *Erignathus* Gill (1866) and the species stands as *Erignathus barbatus* (Erxleben).—R.M.A.

<sup>30</sup> The Greenland Seal, Harp Seal or Saddle-back now stands as *Phoca grælandica* Erxleben.—R.M.A.



*Phoca hispida* Schreb. Ringelrobbe. RINGED SEAL. Netsek.—By far the most common species. Skin worth twenty to sixty cents.

Killinek has the reputation of being the district which has the greatest abundance of seals among the Moravian stations in Labrador. Hunting begins as early as March or April. For this purpose they start out with dog-sleds for localities where the female seals are accustomed to give birth to their young, for example, Operngevik, which means spring hunting place. The young seals, yellowish white in colour, which do not go out into the water as yet, are lying in sheltered cavities on ice-cakes. The Eskimos beat or kick the helpless little creatures to death, and are often able to capture the anxious mother too, that stays watchfully nearby. They like to make coats for small children from the beautiful soft pelts of the young. Later in the year the seals are pursued in the kayak, and shot at with guns whenever their heads rise above the surface of the water. If the seals are swimming in deeper water, then as a rule small shot is used to wound them only. Then the Eskimos follow the creatures which soon become weaker from loss of blood, as quickly as possible, until they are close enough to harpoon them. If the seal dies beforehand, it sinks and in most cases is lost. But in the Autumn the animals are often so fat, that they float on the surface. If the seals are lying on the ice-cakes or swimming in shallow coast waters, the hunters prefer to shoot at the head or the heart in order to cause immediate death, which occurs very easily with these animals. A large bright red, bloody surface marks the spot where the prize sank under the water. It is pulled up with a large hook or a noose, a thong is pulled through the nose or fin-like feet and it is tied to the kayak. Probably half of the seals shot or killed are lost, since the animals are hunted with guns and no longer merely with harpoons as in former years.

As a more sensible way the autumn hunt must be mentioned, which is carried on with great zest at Killinek, as long as the sea is entirely free of ice. They shut off the neighbouring inlets with immense large-meshed nets, the swimming seals become entangled in the mesh-work, cannot escape, and being mammals, soon drown. About 800 were collected in 1906 in this way at Killinek, along with sixty white whales. (Missions Blatt der Brüder Gemeine, 1907, p. 271.)

During these weeks life at the station has no other interest than the hunt. Everyone, from Eskimo child to missionary is busy with it. In my time only a few people possessed any nets; the others rented such nets from the station, but had to turn in half the catch. The thought

occurs, that much damage is done to the valuable nets, especially by sharks or by ice which suddenly appears. Whenever the weather permits at all, they inspect the nets once or twice a day. This must be done quietly and carefully. [P. 256.] The captured seals are often permitted to bleed to death in the water, and are brought near the store-houses on the beach. That is the men's work. In rather severe cold now begin the duties of the women, which are by no means easy. They lay the animals on their backs, cut the body from the chin to the tail with a semi-circular-shaped knife (*Ulo*), which has a handle, and cuts down deep through the layer of blubber, which is under the skin, until the dark flesh is visible. Then they skilfully and quickly peel off the blubber with the attached pelt, in a quarter to three-quarters of an hour, according to the size of the animal. As a rule the outer part of the webbed flippers are cut off and at last the flexible blubber-lined hide lies on one side, the slender body deprived of its fat, on the other. The best pieces of the flesh, the liver, etc., are kept for their own use, though for this purpose they prefer the animals which have been shot to those drowned. They keep the less desirable pieces as winter food for the dogs; the remainder, especially the entrails, they give the dogs at once. The greedy creatures pull and tear at the long intestines, and cover themselves with blood and other less pleasant matter, so that they seem very uninviting in appearance and odour. But this time is the great time of the year for the dogs, in which they stuff themselves up to the neck and thus acquire strength for the work of the winter. In a special blubber house near which as noted I had my strong smelling work room for eight days, the layer of blubber is separated from the skins. Much skill is needed for this task, not to cut into the soft hide with the knife, sharp as a hair. Then the skins are salted down mostly in casks for later export in this condition. They dry other skins as far as the weather of the late season permits, spreading out the skins wide. The subsequent dressing, which is necessary if the skins are to be used for clothing material, consists mostly of freezing several times, thawing, kneading and squeezing, and finally careful washing in strong hot soda or soapy water, in order to remove the fat. Women who can prepare the thick hides neatly and make them comparatively soft, such as the skins of the bearded seal, which are used for boots particularly, are looked upon with favour by the men.

Such blubber as is destined for export is cut up into strips by selected blubber-women, who do not look particularly attractive during this



work. It is then ground up with simple machines, the resulting mass distilled in large vats, the oil placed in casks, the residuum used as dog-food. In some family households the beautiful old custom is still in vogue, where the women cut off strips of blubber, put it in their mouths, work it with their teeth, and spit the liquid chewed from the blubber in the shallow blubber lamp where it serves as material for burning. Old women have their molar teeth worn down to the gum from this

work, and have only short broad incisor and cuspid teeth. [P. 257]. They occasionally use the dried and stretched out entrails for window panes, as they do caribou sinew for thread.

*Sorex merriami miscix*, Bangs. Spitzmaus. SHREW. Uksunavik.—Probably only in the south of this district.<sup>31</sup>

(To be continued)

<sup>31</sup> *Sorex cinereus muscix* Bangs.—R.M.A.

## AN ANNOTATED LIST OF VASCULAR PLANTS COLLECTED ON THE NORTH SHORE OF THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE, 1927-1930

By HARRISON F. LEWIS

(Continued from page 18)

### LEGUMINOSÆ

TRIFOLIUM PRATENSE L., var. EXPANSUM Hausskn.

Betchewun, September 3, 1929, grassy clearing. Natashquan, September 10, 1927, turf near house. Recorded by St. John as *Trifolium pratense* L.

TRIFOLIUM REPENS L.

St. Mary Islands, July 25, 1927, turf near boathouse on the western island.

TRIFOLIUM HYBRIDUM L.

Natashquan, August 5, 1927, grassy roadside.

\*TRIFOLIUM AGRARIUM L.

Matamek River, September 5, 1928, doorway, and Natashquan, August 5, 1927, grassy roadside.

VICIA CRACCA L.

Natashquan, August 7, 1927, wooded roadside. The Bluff Harbour, August 1, 1927, at site of an old building on big island.

\**Astragalus Fernaldi* (Rydb.) n. comb.

*Atelophragma Fernaldi* Rydberg, Bull. Torr. Bot. Club, 55: 126, 1928.

Ile au Bois, July 7, 1930, turf on sand just above outer beach. Comparison made with paratype, M. L. Fernald and K. M. Wiegand Coll., No. 3632, Blanc Sablon, August 6, 1910, now No. 93148 in Nat. Herb. of Canada, which shows fruits but no corollas. Rydberg, in his original description of the species, says, "corolla purple", but the material seen growing by me, which was all in anthesis, had much paler corollas, near the "French Gray" or "Lilac Gray" of Ridgway's "Color Standards and Nomenclature", 1912.

\**Oxytropis johannensis* Fernald.

Ile au Bois, July 7, 1930, turf on sand just above outer beach. Abundant, far outnumbering *Astragalus Fernaldi*, in close association with which it was growing.

*Lathyrus maritimus* (L.) Big., var. *aleuticus* Greene.

St. Mary Islands, July 23, 1927, turf near shore of eastern island. Whale Head, July 10, 1927, turfy bank near Jas. Mauger's harbour. Net Island, July 4, 1927, in moss and lichens on low, rocky point. Recorded by St. John as *Lathyrus maritimus* (L.) Big.

*Lathyrus palustris* L. var. *pilosus* (Cham.) Ledeb.

Wolf Bay, July 31, 1927, low, grassy flat near shore of the island called "The Black Land".

### CALLITRICHACEÆ

*Callitriche palustris* L.

Kegaska, September 4, 1927, in 3 inches of water in slow-flowing brook. St. Mary Islands, July 23, 1927, small pool in rock on eastern island.

*Callitriche anceps* Fernald.

Bradore Bay, August 27, 1927, in 1 foot of water in slow-flowing brook on calcareous sandstone.

### EMPETRACEÆ

*Empetrum nigrum* L.

Fright Island, June 4, 1927, edge of spruce and fir woods on high bank. Natashquan, May 15, 1928, matted by the roadside on a rocky hill and shedding pollen on this date. One of the most abundant vascular plants of the region.

*Empetrum atropurpureum* Fernald & Wiegand.

Seven Islands, September 11, 1928, sandy roadside. Thunder River, September 2, 1928, granitic crest. Mascanin, August 20, 1928, granitic crests. Harrington Harbour, July 25, 1928, edge of vegetation on granite at shore of mainland. Sholiaban, July 23, 1928, edge of vegetation on granite near shore of mainland. Also observed at Hospital Island (Harrington Harbour), Baie Johan Beetz, and Magpie.





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