

The Birds of the Belcher Islands, N.W.T., Canada

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Abstract. The Belcher Islands in S.E. Hudson Bay possess a rich avifauna reflecting both proximity to the Hudsonian life zone and a low-latitude extension of the arctic (tundra) biome. Utilizing 3 seasons observations by the author, local informants' opinions and literature sources, the status of each of the 56 species reported as occurring on the Belcher Islands is reviewed. Nineteen species are known to breed on the Islands, six species occur seasonally during migration flights, and a further thirteen can be classed as rare or accidental visitors. One species reported in the literature (Ivory gull) is considered an erroneous report. The numerical and breeding status of some species (e.g. red-throated loon, red-breasted merganser, raven etc.) likely fluctuate from year to year, whereas certain other species (e.g. arctic tern, surf-scooter, white-rumped sandpiper, common redpoll) appear to have suffered a decline in status over a period of years.

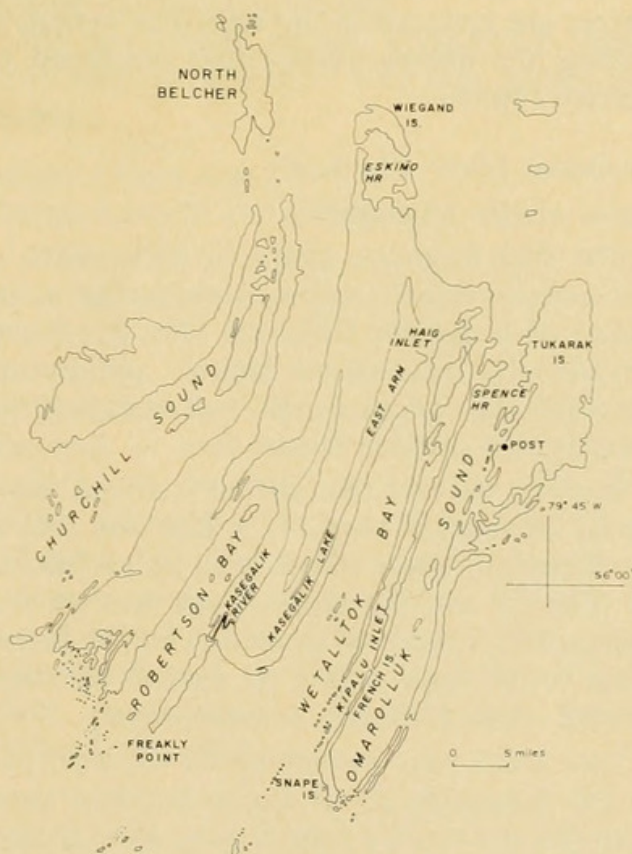
The Belcher Islands represent a landmass approximately 2000 square miles in area, situated less than 100 miles from the southeast coast of Hudson Bay. The Islands present a typically arctic environment, being greatly influenced by the surrounding cold waters and frequent strong winds of Hudson Bay.

Large areas of the Belcher Island archipelago are covered by tundra vegetation, or by lichen-encrusted glaciated outcrops; nowhere are trees found. This treeless condition contrasts with the adjacent Ungava mainland, which at this latitude falls within the Hudsonian life zone. The Islands are generally low lying; cliff-development and the occasional rounded hills are usually not more than two hundred feet in height. Rivers are very few in number, and short in length; standing water is extremely abundant, ranging in size from temporary tundra pools to the large Kasegalik Lake, over forty miles in length.

The birds of Ungava are now fairly well reported in the literature, at least with regard to their distribution (e.g. Harper 1959; Todd 1963). However, the avifauna of the Islands in the east Hudson Bay has received only scant

attention until now (Sutton 1932; Manning 1946, 1949; Todd 1963), and the following is offered as a further contribution to the existing records of birds breeding and visiting this extensive southern pocket of the arctic biome.

The first reliable reference to the Belcher Island avifauna, appears to be in the popular account of the 1938 Carnegie Museum expedition to Ungava and the Belcher Islands



(Twomey and Herrick 1942). The use of trinomials in this present paper is based on the known distributions of the nominate races, rather than examination of Belcher Island specimens.

The writer visited the Islands from May 10 until September 2, 1959, and the following year from April 19 until September 29. The area

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was again visited from February 28 until April 16, 1961. Most of the time was spent in the region between the southwest corner of Kasegalik Lake and the Kasegalik River mouth. Visits were made to Tukarak Island by way of Omarolluk Sound and French Island on a number of occasions at all seasons. Eskimo Harbour, Snape Island, Spence Harbour and some other locations were visited briefly. The western and southwest parts of the archipelago were only visited in winter, and the North Belcher Islands were not visited at all. Owing to the absence of records from other parts of the Belcher Island group, it is not possible to assess how representative of the total avifauna, these somewhat localized observations are.

The Belcher Island names for most common species are included in the text. The system of spelling the names follows that employed by Thibert (1954).

COMMON LOON (TUDLIK)

Gavia immer (Brunnich)

The first loons to arrive in 1959 were of this species. A pair was seen swimming at the mouth of Kasegalik River on May 31; it was collected by an Eskimo hunter, and by the following day another pair had occupied the same stretch of open water.

In 1960 the first loon of the year was heard on the evening of May 24. A pair was shot in the Kasegalik River mouth area by an Eskimo on May 31 and the crop of one was seen to contain the remains of an arctic char. A female taken in the same region on June 3 had been feeding on sticklebacks, (*Gasterosteus*).

Two loons were swimming on the tidal part of the Kasegalik River a few hundred yards from the mouth. By June 9 they were feeding together but apart from a few weak attempts at courtship display, breeding activities had not commenced by June 26.

In the Kasegalik Lake outflow area, nesting activities were observed on June 18. The first eggs were seen in an Eskimo tent a mile east of the Kasegalik River mouth on July 10.

Common Loon were observed in the central regions of Kasegalik Lake during August.

ARCTIC LOON (KUDLULIK)

Gavia arctica pacifica (Lawrence)

This bird was first heard on June 11, 1959. The first sighting was on June 14 when a pair was seen on the open water by the Kasegalik River mouth.

None were seen in 1960.

Twomey reports this species breeding on Tukarak Island and in Omarolluk Sound (Todd 1963).

RED-THROATED LOON (KRUKSUT)

Gavia stellata (Pontoppidan)

A pair was observed on the sea one mile east of Kasegalik River on June 23, 1959. A pair was seen on June 30 in a bay of open water at the southwest corner of the still ice-covered Kasegalik Lake.

On July 3 a pair, possibly nesting, was disturbed on a small pond on the cliff-top at the south end of the East Arm of Kasegalik Lake.

No birds of this species were observed in 1960.

According to Twomey, this is the commonest of the Loons on the Belcher Islands; he also reports this bird nesting on the archipelago (Todd 1963).

WHISTLING SWAN (KRUTJUK)

Olor columbianus (Ord).

A pair was seen flying north over the interior of Tukarak Island on May 17, 1959, and another pair also flying north reported by an Eskimo at Freakly Point on May 24.

The only record in 1960 was a pair feeding at the western entrance of Eskimo Harbour. The date was uncertain, but the skull was brought into our camp near the Kasegalik River on June 16, one of the pair having been shot some days before.

The species was reported by some Eskimos to nest on the North Belcher Islands, and on islands in the north of Churchill Sound. However, this was refuted by another informant, who had recently walked over the land in question; this informant had seen swan nests on Mansel Island in earlier years (cf. Manning 1949). However, the former presence of Swans on the North Belcher Islands is suggested by

the local names for the two largest islands in the group, *krutjuktogassak* and *krutjuktog*: it appears they were already becoming scarce however, thirty years ago (Burwash 1927) although they were still nesting locally in 1938 (Todd 1963).

CANADA GOOSE (NUDLIK)

Branta canadensis interior Todd.

This is the most widespread wildfowl on the Belcher Islands, and plays an important role in the subsistence economy of the Eskimos from early May to September.

The first birds were seen on April 30, 1960 at the outflow of the Kasegalik Lake, where a single bird was on the open water below the falls and three others were flying. During the first week of May many were seen each day flying in small groups of around six birds, in the neighbourhood of Kasegalik River. However, on May 7 the trader reported that no geese had been seen in the northeast of the Islands. One was seen that day about twenty miles to the southwest of the Post, in Omaroluk Sound.

In 1959, numbers were seen on the southeast coast of Tukarak Island on May 17 and on May 9 we had seen a small group flying over the sea ice about 40 miles east of Tukarak Island. On May 13 Eskimos arriving at the Post from Churchill Sound had a Canada Goose with them.

By the end of the second week of May, 1960, pairs were being flushed from likely nesting areas, and the first egg was found on May 20; another nest, with two eggs was found on the following day. These were from the central part of Kasegalik Lake, about twenty miles north-east of the outflow. By May 30 the Eskimos were reporting large numbers of eggs each day. The first eggs in 1959 were found on May 22 (3 eggs) and two more nests with three and one egg, on May 23.

Pipped eggs were seen in a nest in the Kasegalik River region on June 25, 1960, and a gosling was brought into camp by an Eskimo on June 26, 1959. Goslings were numerous by June 30, 1959, the adults being flightless by this date.

The largest number of eggs seen was six (June 9, 1959) but five eggs were seen on three occasions (May 30, June 23, and June 25, 1960). A pair of adults with five goslings was seen at the mouth of Kasegalik River on July 2, 1959.

HUTCHINS'S GOOSE

Branta canadensis hutchinsi (Richardson)

These are taken infrequently by the Eskimos mainly during the southern migration, when Hutchins's Goose appears to associate with Blue and Lesser Snow Geese, at least on the ground. Specimens were seen in Eskimo tents south of Kasegalik River on September 20 and 22, 1960.

Measurements from a single female (September 22) were as follows:

Weight: 1450 grams. Extended wings: 1230 mm. Total length: 570 mm. Lower bill: 29 mm.

BRANT (NUDLINAK)

Branta bernicla hrota (Muller)

A flock of 12 or 14 Brant were seen on the water by an eider islet in Robertson Bay on June 11, 1960. This was the only sighting and these birds are not known commonly by the Eskimos. However, Brant are reported to have occurred in considerable numbers "until recently", on the Belcher Islands (Manning, 1949), although according to an earlier source (Flaherty 1918) this species only periodically appeared on southern migration. Twomey reported mixed flocks of Brant and Blue Geese flying northward in May and flocks of from fifteen to twenty-five Brant in late August, 1938 (Todd 1963).

BLUE and LESSER SNOW GEESE (KANGOK)

Chen caerulescens caerulescens (Linnaeus)

On May 10, 1959, about twelve were seen flying over our camp on a small island some 15 miles east of Tukarak Island. The first birds in 1960 were observed as large flocks flying northward on May 20. Flights of between 35 and 50 birds were frequent, and a large flight of about 100 birds was observed on May 25. About one-third of this flight was thought to be Snow Geese.

The first bird on the southern migration appeared on August 25, 1960, when a single Snow goose was seen in a flock of approximately twenty-five feeding Canada Geese on the west side of Eskimo Harbour. On September 1, large flights were heading south on a strong northerly wind, and approximately one hundred and fifty Blue and Snow Geese were feeding on a sedge meadow at Spence Harbour.

The birds are taken at most Eskimo camps on the Belchers during this southern migration, particularly on the south coast, where large numbers feed in the marshy areas waiting a following wind or calm conditions before continuing south.

BLACK DUCK (IVURAKRANITAK)

Anas rubripes Brewster

Two Black Ducks were seen flying over the Kasegalik Lake outflow area on May 20, 1960. On May 22 a Black Duck was taken by an Eskimo at a spring fishing lake, about twenty miles to the northeast. A female was taken next day on the East Arm of Kasegalik Lake. Three birds were seen on a small pool of open water on the still frozen Kasegalik River on May 25.

A flightless bird was observed on an island in the Kasegalik River on June 26, 1960, and similarly a flightless adult was seen on June 28, in 1959.

The testes of birds examined at this time were very small:

June 25: 10×5 m. 12×5 mm.

June 27: 13×4 mm. 15×5 mm.

The Eskimo assert that this duck does not breed on the Belcher Islands.

PINTAIL (IVURAK)

Anas acuta Linnaeus.

The open water by French Island was frequented by a pair of Pintails on May 28, 1959. Three days later three birds were seen flying over the open water by the mouth of the Kasegalik River.

A male examined on May 30, 1960, had very enlarged testes. Pairs were seen flying, and on ponds, fairly frequently in the Kasegalik River area during the first weeks of June. By June 18, pairs were being flushed from likely

nesting locations bordering streams but the first eggs were not located until July 21, 1959, when a nest with five eggs was found in willows about one mile north of the Kasegalik Lake outflow.

On July 22, 1960, a female with six downies was seen on a pond by the mouth of Kasegalik River. The female led the young into sedges bordering the pond, then entered into a distraction display, consisting of dropping the wings and jumping vigorously and conspicuously from hummock to hummock away from the pond.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (GMELIN)

Anas carolinensis

This bird may appear infrequently on the Islands. It was known to one informant, who had shot a specimen in Kipalu Inlet. It was also observed in late summer 1959 (Dr. I. A. McLaren, personal communications).

AMERICAN GOLDENEYE (KUTIKUK, also KUTIKUDLAK)

Bucephala clangula americana (Bonaparte)

Small flocks of males were seen in late June on the Kasegalik River, usually where the current is swift, either above or below rapids. They are often associated with American Mergansers and sometimes Canada Geese. The earliest sighting was on June 13, 1960, when two males flew over the Kasegalik River mouth from the east. The previous year a point on the Kasegalik River about two miles northeast of the river mouth was a favoured spot for Goldeneye, a small flock of about twenty birds being first observed there on June 21.

The expanded river below the falls leading from Kasegalik Lake was also a favoured locality, and on June 16 and 23, 1960, flocks of from fourteen to sixteen and eight males respectively were observed at this place. Testes of a bird examined on June 27, 1959, were very small, measuring 18×6 mm. and 11×5 mm.

On June 31, 1959, several were seen inland on tundra ponds, often associated with American Mergansers.

The last sighting was made on September 28, 1960, when three males were seen on the sea by Snape Island.

OLDSQUAW (AK'AGINERK)

Clangula hyemalis (Linnaeus)

This bird apparently winters in the open water to the south and west of the Belcher Islands. A female was seen on March 1, 1961, in an Eskimo tent at the southwest end of Robertson Bay. It was collected in a tidal current that keeps unfrozen most winters a few miles from the mouth of the Bay.

By the end of April, the Oldsquaw is found on open water among the Islands, such as at French Island, or the open water at the mouth of Kasegalik River. Pairs are seen on most tundra pools during the first weeks of May. A nest with one egg was found near the outflow of the Kasegalik Lake on June 1, 1960, and a pair collected on June 8 had testes and ova in ripe condition. Testes measured 35×17 mm. and 34×16 mm. Largest ovum measured 24 mm diameter. However, large flights of unpaired birds were still common at this time. Twenty-five at the Kasegalik River mouth were unpaired on June 8 and continued to fly and feed as a flock until June 17 without change. By June 20 the number was reduced to fifteen, only two of which seemed loosely paired during feeding activities on the river.

A nest with one egg was seen on an eider islet two miles west of the Kasegalik River mouth on June 11, 1960. There was no down in the nest at this date, but on June 21 the nest was down-lined and with a total of seven eggs. On July 6, 1960, two more nests were found on this Island, under flat rocks; one nest had a four foot overhang of rock, the other five feet. There were eleven eggs in each nest.

The first young in 1959 were seen on July 10, when a brood of four with an adult female was observed in the Kasegalik River.

Females with broods of eight, four, and eight ducklings respectively were seen on July 7, 17, and 22 within a short distance of the Kasegalik River mouth.

A female with four ducklings was seen in the southwest part of Eskimo Harbour on August 25, 1960.

HARLEQUIN DUCK

Histrionicus histrionicus (Linnaeus)

Manning (1949) reports a skin in the National Museum of Canada, collected on September 2, 1927 by Burwash. According to Manning, on that date Burwash was on a small island a few miles east of the main Belcher Island archipelago.

HUDSON BAY EIDER (MITERK)

Male only (MITERK AMAULIK)

Somateria mollissima sedentaria Snyder

This is an abundantly nesting species with a somewhat localized distribution on the Islands. It winters in large numbers at the floe edge and open water places among the Belcher Islands. Ecological observations on this species will be reported later.

KING EIDER (MITERLUK)

Somateria spectabilis (Linnaeus)

Male (MITERLUK AMAULIK)

Not a common bird in the southern part of the Belcher Islands where some large concentrations of Hudson Bay Eider are nesting. However, it is reported by one informant to have a localized nesting population, in fairly large numbers, on some small islands in the North Belcher group.

A single male was seen on the ice at the mouth of Kasegalik River on June 3, 1959, in a flock of approximately 25 Hudson Bay Eiders. Again, on June 14 two immature birds were seen at the same location, this time in a flock of about thirty Hudson Bay Eiders. On June 17 an immature bird was brought into camp by an Eskimo from the same area of the River.

Only one bird was seen in 1960. This was in the kill of about 50 Hudson Bay Eiders made at the Southwest part of Robertson Bay on June 17.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (ANINGESSIK)

Melanitta deglandi (Bonaparte)

The first birds, ten or eleven, were seen on open water by French Island on May 27, 1960.

In 1959, three were seen at this open water pool on May 28, and again on May 29. A single

bird was seen with Eiders and Oldsquaws at the mouth of Kasegalik River on May 31, 1959.

Small numbers in flocks of from four to ten birds were seen on several days during June and July in Robertson Bay and Wetalltok Bay. However, large flocks of white-winged and dark-winged Scoters were seen in Eskimo Harbour in late August. Several hundred birds were estimated to be on the water at the northwest end of the Harbour.

It was maintained by several local informants, that only male birds occur on the Belcher Islands. However, Twomey notes that during the period May 29 until August 2, 1938, males only were seen but after that date four females were sighted in Omarolluk Sound (Todd 1963).

SURF SCOTER

Melanitta perspicillata (Linnaeus)

These scoters have been recorded as occurring fairly abundantly on the Belcher Islands at various locations, viz. Tukarak Island, Eskimo Harbour, Kipalu Inlet, Wetalltok Bay, and the North Belcher Islands (Twomey and Herrick 1942; Todd 1963).

None were definitely observed in 1959 and 1960, although the large numbers of dark-winged and White-winged Scoters occurring in mixed flocks observed in Eskimo Harbour may have included this species.

AMERICAN SCOTER (ANINGESSIK)

Oidemia nigra americana Swainson

A pair were brought into camp by Eskimos on June 21, 1959, one mile east of Kasegalik River. The gizzard of the male was empty but the female had three small *Mytilus* intact in the gizzard. The ovary and oviduct could not be located. The testes were very small. Right testis: 8×3 mm. Left testis: 15×6 mm.

On July 4, 1959, eight were seen on the sea one mile east of the Kasegalik River.

In 1960 the only birds seen were those in large flocks (with White-winged Scoters) in Eskimo Harbour during the last week of August. It is not possible to state whether these particular birds were American or Surf Scoters.

AMERICAN MERGANSER (AKPUNGIYORALUK)

Mergus merganser americanus Cassin

Two males were seen on the open water of Kasegalik River by the rapids half a mile east of the river mouth. They were diving at the edge of the fast-ice still covering the river between rapids on May 26, 1960. The previous year a single male had been observed at this place on May 31.

When the river became ice-free the same locations at the heads of rapids or below falls seemed favoured. In 1960, at these points, four males were observed on June 18 and six males and females and seven males and females on June 23 when groups were seen on rapid sections of the river some two miles apart.

In 1959, pairs were frequent along the east bank of the Kasegalik River about five miles or more upstream from the tidal limit.

The first young were seen on August 17, 1960, when an adult and four fledged young were swimming on the sea on the west side of Robertson Bay.

Many were seen flying over the central parts of Kasegalik Lake on August 31, 1959.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (AKPUNGIYOK)

Mergus serrator serrator Linnaeus

On May 23, 1960, a male was brought into camp by an Eskimo. It had been collected on the still frozen East Arm of Kasegalik Lake. A bird shot on June 28 had very large testes, measuring approximately 65×22 mm. Pairs were first seen on June 7, 1959. A female examined on June 8 had small, but developing ova. It had been feeding in Kasegalik River, and the gizzard contained the spines of sticklebacks (*Gasterosteus*).

A pair was seen on a lake about three miles northeast of the River on June 9.

In 1960 the only pair observed was on a small lake nearly one mile south of the west entrance to Eskimo Harbour, on August 25.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (KRINURAK)

Buteo lapopus s. johannis (Gmelin)

Frequently seen near precipitous inland cliff faces, and also to a lesser extent near coastal cliffs. Three inland nesting sites occupied in

1959 were re-occupied the following year; one 1959 coastal site near the Kasegalik River mouth appeared to be usurped by a pair of Peregrines in 1960 though hawks took up a new site about 150 yards distant on the same cliff.

The Kasegalik River valley presented a number of suitable cliffs and a total of eight locations were noted between the River mouth and source where hawks exhibited territorial behaviour.

The earliest sighting was May 4, 1960, when a pair were seen in the neighbourhood of the Kasegalik Lake overflow. It was not until May 9 that this pair re-occupied the ledge hawks had used the previous year.

On May 30, 1960, a pair of light-coloured hawks were seen attacking a Herring Gull over the mouth of Kasegalik River; they chased the gull far out over the frozen Robertson Bay. That evening one of the hawks at this location was calling in flight in front of the cliff face; the other bird was responding from a ledge about thirty-five feet from the base of the cliff. After some minutes of wheeling flight, both birds occupied the ledge and periods of silence and soft cooing alternated for several minutes.

Nine of the thirteen birds seen in 1960 were judged to be of a "light-phase"; no decision was made on the remainder. Five of the seven birds seen in 1960 were "light". No decision was made on one pair. However, none of these birds were collected and the need for caution in gauging colour phases is recognized.

Three fledged young were raised by the pair nesting at the Kasegalik River mouth in 1959. The young were taken by Eskimos for pets. Two of the three nestlings were seen and marked size difference was noted, as well as plumage difference.

A nest with young was observed less than two miles south of Spence Harbour, on September 1, 1960.

Apart from the relatively large concentration of these birds in the Kasegalik River valley, several sight records were made at other locations. These were one mile north of the Post on Tukarak Island (May 18, 1959); southeast

Kasegalik Lake (June 4, 1959); ten miles southwest of the Post (May 28, 1960); southwest Eskimo Harbour (August 28, 1960); and west Eskimo Harbour (August 28, 1960).

PEREGRINE FALCON (KITAVIK)

Falco peregrinus anatum Bonaparte

A single bird was observed flying northward along the central island chain of Kasegalik Lake on May 20, 1960. On May 29, a single bird was seen flying over a stretch of cliff near the Kasegalik River mouth which the previous year had been occupied by nesting Rough-Legged Hawks. As I passed some fifty feet below, on the sea-ice, the falcon wheeled overhead, calling noisily. Next day a pair was observed on the cliff face at the same location. One flew silently inland as I passed below, and when I approached the base of the cliff the second bird flew silently from the cliff face. The lack of commotion was in marked contrast to the behaviour of the previous day.

On June 19, a single bird was flying in the same general location. Three birds were in flight around the cliffs of a prominent hill on the west side of Eskimo Harbour on August 28. Another three birds flew by similar crags a mile and a half south of Spence Harbour on September 1. The last sighting in 1960 was on September 19, when a single bird was observed hovering over the sea a mile east of Kasegalik River. On July 3, 1959, a single bird was observed on a prominent boulder on the cliff top at the south end of the East Arm of Kasegalik Lake. A pair was seen chasing a sandpiper over one of the islands at the south end of Kasegalik Lake on August 18; a pair was again seen on August 31 at the same location.

The species is reported as breeding on the Belcher Islands (Todd (1963)).

ROCK PTARMIGAN (AKRIT'I)

Lagopus mutus rupestris (Gmelin)

This is not an abundant bird on the archipelago; very few are taken by the Eskimo in the winters, though more are taken each spring. There does not appear to be much flocking or local seasonal movements: a low density dispersed population seeming the normal situation.

In 1959, between May 17 and July 4, ptarmigan were seen singly or in pairs on five separate occasions. In 1960, between April 20 and May 25, ptarmigan were encountered in pairs or singly nine times, and in addition, groups of three, four, and twelve birds were seen once each, in late April and early May. A single bird and a pair were seen during the month of March, 1961.

Territorial behaviour was first observed among ptarmigan near the Kasegalik Lake overflow area in the second week of May. At this time there was abundant snow on the ground, and the all-white birds settled mainly on the snow-patches. A female examined at this time weighed 500 grams and had small developing ova, the largest being 3 mm. diameter. The next week, female ptarmigan were brown flecked, though the males were still completely white. A female of one pair exhibiting territorial behaviour attempted distraction display, but then flew off with the male, before returning some minutes later to the original position. On May 25, a female ptarmigan was examined in Robertson Bay, and the two largest ova each measured more than one centimetre in diameter. At the end of the first week in June, female ptarmigan were in summer plumage, whereas the males were still white. Distraction display by a brown coloured ptarmigan was observed on July 4, and by July 21, a family of two coloured adults and five fledged young was flushed from the tundra near the Kasegalik Lake outflow area. A family of two adults and seven juveniles were still together on August 17. A pair of adults seen near the Kasegalik River on September 19 had almost completed their moult to winter plumage.

Birds examined in May at the Kasegalik Lake outflow were feeding on willow shoots and *Vaccinium* berries.

SANDHILL CRANE

Grus canadensis

My notes on this species have been mislaid. However one was seen in an Eskimo tent in Wetalltok Bay in May 1959; apparently a few are seen on northward migration at this season, but it is not a frequent visitor.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (KODLIKODLIAK)

Charadrius semipalmatus Bonaparte

Several were seen on wet gravel along the Kasegalik River on May 31, 1959. Pairs were observed inland, northeast of Kasegalik River on June 4, and from that day courtship displays were frequently seen in the general area. On June 16 the first nest, with 2 eggs, was found and on July 1 another nest with four eggs was located.

In 1960, the first birds were seen on May 21 in a wet tundra locality some twenty miles northeast of Kasegalik Lake outflow. On June 20 marked distraction display was observed.

A small flock of from six to eight young birds was encountered on August 25, 1960, about one mile south of the west entrance to Eskimo Harbour.

GOLDEN PLOVER

Pluvialis dominica dominica (Muller)

This bird was not known to informants on the Belcher Islands. However, on June 4, 1959, two pairs and one solitary bird were seen inland by tundra pools, between the coast and the south shore of Kasegalik Lake. That same evening six were seen by the coast, adjacent to a stream. There were no more sightings in 1959, and the only record in 1960 was of a solitary bird in fall plumage, seen on marshy ground a mile east of Kasegalik River on September 29.

It has been reported in mid-August on Tukarak Island, and in late August at Eskimo Harbour (Todd 1963).

YELLOWLEGS

Totanus sp.

Listed by Flaherty (1918) as present on the Islands. This species was not known to informants, suggesting that it has the status of an occasional visitor, or small numbers may be present during migration. *Totanus melanoleucas* has been recorded from the King George and Sleeper Islands (Manning 1949); some were seen in Kipalu Inlet, Eskimo Harbour and the North Belcher Islands in August 1938 (Todd 1963).

PURPLE SANDPIPER (LUVILULILAK)

Erolia maritima (Brunnich)

This is the commonest sandpiper and with the Semipalmated Plover, probably the commonest shorebird on the Belcher Islands.

Large numbers were observed by rapids and on the fast ice nearby, along the Kasegalik River on May 31, 1959.

Two pairs were seen inland in the wet tundra between the coast and the south shore of Kasegalik Lake on June 4. The first eggs (4) were found on an island in the Kasegalik River on July 8. By August 18, large flocks were forming inland in the Kasegalik Lake outflow area.

The first bird in 1960 was observed on May 23, and by May 25 several groups of three or four were commonly observed in the Kasegalik River area. No distraction display was observed until May 29, after which date it was frequently witnessed in this locality.

Quite large numbers were seen feeding on the debris at high tide mark on small islands in Robertson Bay on August 17, 1960. The latest date that this species was seen was September 28, 1960, when two birds were on rocks by Snape Island.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER

Erolia melanotos (Vieillot)

This bird has been collected on the Belcher Islands by Murie in late August, 1915; it has also been sighted on Tukarak Island in early August, 1938 (Todd 1963).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER

Erolia fuscicollis (Vieillot)

This species is reported as being abundant, especially in the North Belchers, in late summer of both 1915 and 1938 (Todd 1963).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER

Erolia bairdii (Coues)

A single sandpiper seen on a beach in Eskimo Harbour on August 25, 1960, was thought, from the field notes, to be this species.

LEAST SANDPIPER

Erolia minutilla (Vieillot)

This species has been recorded as breeding on Tukarak Island (Twomey & Herrick 1942). It was not observed in 1959 and 1960.

DUNLIN

Erolia alpina (Linnaeus)

A single specimen, of what was thought to be this species, was observed on the beach, on the west side of Eskimo Harbour, August 28, 1960.

NORTHERN PHALAROPE (SAKPAK)

Lobipes lobatus (Linnaeus)

A pair, still in winter plumage, was seen on June 3, 1959, on a small pool on the cliffs overlooking Robertson Bay, in the Kasegalik River area. During the next week pairs or singles were observed fairly frequently on small tundra pools. The first chicks were encountered on July 10, when a pair of adults and three young appeared on a small pond a few hundred yards east of Kasegalik River mouth.

In 1960 pairs were seen on ponds, often with Oldsquaws, on June 1 in the Kasegalik River area. On July 7, a single bird on a pond acted in an excited fashion as I approached, but despite a search no nest, or other bird, could be detected. By July 31, adults in post-nuptial plumage were seen in the locality adjacent to Kasegalik River.

JAEGER (ISSUNGAK)

Stercorarius sp.

Jaegers are reported as periodically visiting the eastern part of the archipelago and some years may undertake breeding, as in 1938 (Twomey & Herrick 1942). They were not present in 1959 or 1960.

Both Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers probably visit the Islands as both are recorded as present on the King George and Sleeper Island groups immediately to the north of the Belcher group (Manning 1949) and both species were in fact observed in 1938 on the Belcher Islands (Todd 1963).

GLAUCOUS GULL (NAURAK)
Larus hyperboreus hyperboreus Gunnerus

In 1960 the first specimen was seen on May 20 in the outflow region of Kasegalik Lake. The previous year this species was first seen on May 22, when in company with Herring Gulls, a few individuals were seen flying over the tundra south of Kasegalik River.

On May 29, 1960, a pair were seen at the Kasegalik River mouth, on the steep cliffs a pair had frequented the previous year.

What is thought to be a nest of this species with one egg in it, was seen on an eider islet in Robertson Bay on July 2, 1959. This nest occupied the only prominent knoll on the island, although this was only about twenty feet above sea level. On passing close to some very precipitous islands a mile to the north of this low island, several glaucous gulls made very violent attacks on the boat.

On August 28, 1960, six adults and two dusky young birds were seen on the coast west of Eskimo Harbour, adjacent to high cliffs. An adult and juvenile were seen at a similar location two miles south of Spence Harbour on September 1, 1960.

Nesting of this species was reported by Twomey; nests with three eggs were found on two occasions in mid-June on Tukarak Island (Todd 1963).

HERRING GULL (NAURAK)
Larus argentatus smithsonianus Coues

Commonly seen from early May both near the coasts, and also in the vicinity of the Kasegalik Lake.

In 1959, the first gull was seen on May 16, one mile north of the Post, on Tukarak Island. Several gulls, of this species and the preceding, were seen flying over the tundra south of Kasegalik River on May 22, and during the following weeks. Several were encountered during journeys in Omarolluk Sound on May 28, and 29.

Two pairs were seen at the open water below the Kasegalik Lake outflow on May 5, 1960. Pairs and some individuals were seen almost daily in this region and other parts of Kasegalik Lake during May.

TABLE 1. — Herring Gull clutch and egg sizes (mm)
Robertson Bay, Belcher Islands

Date	Clutch size	Egg Length		Egg Dia.	
		Mean	Range	Mean	Range
11-6-60	1,1,1,1, 2,2,2,2, 3.	75.8	71.5-82	50.8	48-54.5
17-6-60	Re- moval of eggs by Eski- mos				
21-6-60	2,2, 3,3,3,3.	—	—	—	—
6-7-60	1,2,2,2, 3,3,3,3, 3,3.	77.8	70-85	51.85	48.55

The first nests were seen on June 11, 1960. Data on clutch sizes and egg dimensions are given in Table 1. These nests were situated on a low-lying eider islet in Robertson Bay. When visited on July 6, several eggs were at the point of hatching. Droppings near the nests contained, in large part, lemming remains. Other nests were located on rocks in shallow lakes, and on rocky islets in the Kasegalik River; similar situations in the Kasegalik Lake were probably used by nesting gulls.

Adults and juveniles were seen on an island on the west side of Eskimo Harbour in late August, 1960, and also a few gulls at Wiegand Island.

Numerous adults and juveniles were flying in the vicinity of Snape Island on September 28, 1960.

It was reported that the hand-reared gulls kept in several Eskimo tents as pets, left the Islands in mid-October 1959.

IVORY GULL
Pagophila eburnea (Phipps)

This species is listed by Flaherty (1918) as occurring rarely. However, as Flaherty made no reference to the abundant Herring Gull in his unrepresentative list of Belcher Island birds, it is probable that this record is in error.

ARCTIC TERN (IMMITKROTALAK)

Sterna parasiadea Pontoppidan

Terns appeared in small numbers in the vicinity of the Kasegalik River mouth on June 22, 1959 and June 20, 1960. This was two to three weeks after the ice had left Wetalltok Bay. A large island in a bay, a mile southeast of Kasegalik River, was the resting place for up to one hundred terns during the summer months. In this general region the small flocks of about a dozen birds were common along the coasts.

A single tern only was seen in the southwest corner of Eskimo Harbour on August 26, 1960. A few days later about six or seven birds were seen flying in Omarolluk Sound a few miles from the trading post on Tukarak Island.

Murie lists this as a common bird in Eskimo Harbour and elsewhere on the Belcher Islands in 1915. He located several breeding colonies; in 1938 Twomey found no evidence of breeding, and only a few individual birds in Omarolluk Sound, Eskimo Harbour and the North Belchers (Todd 1963). Our own records tend to support the changed status of this bird on the Islands since the time of Murie's visit.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (PITSIULAK)

Cephus grylle (Linnaeus)

In the spring of 1959 and 1960, this species was observed near land on the day following the break-up of the sea ice. It seems probable therefore, that this bird is present at the floe edge elsewhere on the Islands considerably earlier than the dates presented here. Break-up in Wetalltok Bay occurred on June 13 in 1959, and at that time about 26 birds were seen on the ice edge and 20 more swimming on the sea nearby. On June 14 they were seen on the open water at the mouth of the Kasegalik River, though at this time Robertson Bay was still ice covered. One light coloured bird was seen in a flock of about 35 swimming guillemots on June 16. Large flocks were observed swimming on the sea about one mile offshore on June 18 in Wetalltok Bay, and in this region flights of up to 100 birds were infrequently encountered.

In 1960 the first birds were observed on June 4 on the open water at the mouth of Kasegalik River. About one dozen birds were

seen, some of which appeared to be paired. On June 11 the ice was sufficiently open in Robertson Bay to allow a canoe crossing to the eider islets there, and during the two mile canoe journey about fifty guillemots were seen on the ice and in the open leads. A nest was found on July 6 on one of these eider islets, beneath a large overhung boulder; each of the two eggs measured 63×43 mm.

On August 17, 1960, large numbers of this species were seen in Robertson Bay. One bird in a small flock was piebald; the wings were normally coloured and the head, back and breast were white.

According to Todd (1963), this bird winters among the Belcher Islands.

SNOWY OWL (OPIK; OPIALUK)

Nyctea scandiaca (Linnaeus)

Owls were more frequently seen in 1960 than the previous year; in both years lemmings were abundant.

In 1959 one was reported flying over the tundra two miles east of the Kasegalik River on May 31. A single bird was seen flying in the same area on June 30.

An owl was shot by an Eskimo in Omarolluk Sound on April 19. One was seen at Haig Inlet on April 25, and another on the ice in central Omarolluk Sound on May 7. On June 2 a pure white individual flew from Kasegalik River westward over Robertson Bay. Two were seen flying over the tundra two miles to the east of Kasegalik River on June 3. A brown juvenile was seen on August 12 near the Kasegalik River mouth, in an area heavily covered by lemming runs.

Two flew over our camp in southwest Eskimo Harbour at dusk, on August 25, and two days later eight brown owls were flushed from a grassy area on the shore a few hundred yards from our tent.

A pair of white owls were seen less than a mile north of the Post on Tukarak Island, and the following day, September 1, a brown owl was seen a mile south of Spence Harbour.

In 1938, it was reported (Twomey & Herrick 1942) that owls could be seen every quarter mile in the interior of Tukarak Island. In 1959

on two crossings of Tukarak Island in early May, no owls were seen, and when they were more plentiful the following year, observations in Omarolluk Sound, where most owls were seen, suggested these birds were at least seven or eight miles apart.

HORNED LARK (KROPANORARUKPAK)

Eremophila alpestris alpestris (Linnaeus)

Two individuals were seen at the Post on Tukarak Island, also several solitary birds and some pairs in the interior of Tukarak Island on May 17, 1959. Courtship displays were noted by the Kasegalik River on May 31.

The following year, a solitary male was seen on May 19 twenty miles northwest of Kasegalik Lake overflow. The first pairs were seen on May 24 by Kasegalik River.

This species was reported as breeding on Tukarak Island in early June, 1938 (Todd 1963).

PURPLE MARTIN

Progne subis subis (Linnaeus)

A bird observed flying north in Omarolluk Sound on May 29, 1959 was not known to the Eskimos; from the brief view obtained, it was thought to be this species.

COMMON RAVEN (TULURAK)

Corvus corax principalis Ridgway

This was not commonly observed, but sightings were more frequent in 1960 than in 1959.

In 1960 one was heard near Haig Inlet (April 25). Another was seen at French Island (May 6); at the mouth of Kasegalik River (August 13), and a pair flying in Robertson Bay (August 17). In Eskimo Harbour a pair was seen a mile south of the west entrance (August 25), and overlooking Kipalu Inlet, a mile south of Spence Harbour (September 1). On September 28 a pair was flying over the sea at Snape Island.

The previous year a single bird was seen flying near the Post on Tukarak Island (May 18) and another solitary bird inland by the cliffs at the southeast corner of Kasegalik Lake (June 4).

Breeding in April has been reported on Tukarak Island where a nest with five eggs was located on a precipitous cliff face (Twomey & Herrick 1942); in that same year, 1938, nests with two eggs (May 10) and four eggs (May 17) were also recorded (Todd 1963).

BROWN THRASHER

Toxostoma rufum rufum

The remains of a bird, not known to the Eskimos, was collected from the shore in Eskimo Harbour, late August 1960. The specimen was later identified by Dr. W. Earl Godfrey, of the National Museum of Canada.

WATER PIPIT

Anthus spinoletta rubescens (Tunstall)

A pipit, first seen in the area near our camp by the Kasegalik River, on May 22, 1959, was in full song by May 30.

The first nest with eggs was found on June 18, 1960, on some vegetated crags overlooking the falls at the outflow of Kasegalik Lake. The same day a second nest, also with five eggs, was found by a small stream two miles to the south. It was situated under a projecting rock, and like the first nest had a south facing aspect. A nest found on June 19 with two eggs, contained three eggs the following day, and six eggs on June 24. It was situated on a well vegetated hillside at the mouth of the Kasegalik River. On June 23 a nest with five eggs was found by Kasegalik Lake. A fledged young bird was seen on July 22.

Several, including juveniles, were seen in the southwest and northern parts of Eskimo Harbour on August 28, 1960, and several more at Spence Harbour on September 1.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER

Vermivora celata (Say)

A single specimen was seen in a willow mat by Kasegalik River on May 22, 1959. On June 1 a specimen was again noted, again in willows at a location about a mile from the earlier sighting. This specimen was collected by Eskimo children, and was unknown to the Islanders. Twomey reports similar accidental records for

the Belcher Islands, when three different species of warbler (Tennessee, Myrtle, and Bay-breasted) were found on Tukarak Island following a storm in late May, 1938 (Todd 1963).

REDPOLL

Acanthis sp

Single birds were seen on May 24 and 26, but from the detailed field notes, were thought to be two different individuals. Both were seen a mile southeast of Kasegalik River.

In 1938, Common Redpolls were seen on Tukarak Island in the spring and early summer; a set of four eggs collected on July 14, 1938, was thought to belong to the Hoary Redpoll (Todd 1963).

LAPLAND LONGSPUR (NASAULIK)

Calcarius lapponicus lapponicus (Linnaeus)

In 1960 the first bird, a male, was seen on May 4, in a small flock of Snow Buntings in the Kasegalik Lake overflow area. Solitary birds (mostly males) were frequently seen during the next week, and pair formation had become widespread by May 26.

On May 24, 1959, the first large flock was seen feeding on willow patches a mile south of Kasegalik River. Some males were still in winter plumage at this time.

This species was seen abundantly in most areas visited, and nests were found on June 21 (3 eggs), June 24 (5 eggs), and July 3, 1959, (two nests, 4 eggs each). The nest found on June 24 contained four normally coloured eggs, the fifth being a pale blue; there was no noticeable size difference.

SNOW BUNTING (AMAULIGAK)

Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis (Linnaeus)

A single male was seen flying north along the east side of Robertson Bay on March 31, 1961, the first sighting of the year according to local informants. A single male was also seen the same day about three miles to the northeast. The next occurrence was on Tukarak Island, April 4, when three or four birds were seen feeding near the Post.

In 1960 single birds were seen or heard about 10 miles south of the Post (April 23), near Haig Inlet (April 25), at the Post (April 27), and at Kasegalik Lake outflow (April 29).

By May 4 a flight of about two dozen birds were feeding on snow-free ridges near Kasegalik Lake outflow (April 29).

By May 4 a flight of about two dozen birds were feeding on snow-free ridges near Kasegalik Lake outflow, and although vocal, no courtship activities were noted. Flights of similar size were frequently noted in the area up until May 10, and by May 12 a few pairs had formed, and some solitary males were singing strongly; no large flights were observed now. Loose pairs were commonly seen during the next two weeks, and on May 26 territorial disputes between males were seen near Kasegalik River.

A fully fledged young bird was first seen on July 22, and large flocks were assembled at the coast on September 21, 1960.

On May 9, 1959, a single bird was observed on the sea ice about 35 miles east of the Belcher Islands. Small flocks (with a few Horned Larks) were seen at the Post on May 17, and a few birds were seen in the interior of Tukarak Island the same day, feeding on *Empetrum* berries. The first distraction display was noticed on May 22 near a pile of boulders in the Kasegalik River area. Quite large flocks, comprising young of the year and young pipits, were seen August 18 through the following week, in the Kasegalik Lake outflow area.

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