

*Birds* 25: 615, 1971) and released. It was attacked by Glaucous-winged Gulls (*Larus glaucescens*) and Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*) but managed to escape.

Mention should also be made here of a Scaled Petrel which was found dead on board the ship *Naess Pioneer* by D. H. Mobberley on 17 March 1972 about 315 miles off the Queen Charlotte Islands (51°23' N, 140°54' W). The specimen was kindly donated to the Vertebrate Museum at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, where it is catalogued as Number 13685.

This visitor from southern oceans is probably of casual occurrence along the British Columbia coast.

#### *Parakeet Auklet*

On 24 February 1971 this species was observed on three occasions by Campbell while aboard the ship *CNAV Endeavor* about 15 miles off the central west coast of Vancouver Island. At 0830 hours one scampered out from behind a scrub pail along the deck and escaped before it could be caught. The bird was contrastingly dark above and light below, the short dark bill appeared rounded, and a light superciliary line was noticed. Twenty-five minutes later another bird was seen about 35 feet from the ship and at 0920 hours a third bird was seen. No photographs were obtained.

The status of this species off the west coast of Canada needs further clarification. This Alaskan bird may indeed be a regular winter visitor to the British Columbia coast, especially since it has

been recorded in Washington and Oregon (Jewett *et al.* 1953; Gabrielson and Jewett 1940, p. 317).

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## Unequal Distribution of Snowy Owls on Eastern Melville Island, Northwest Territories

An aerial survey of Peary caribou (*Rangifer tarandus pearyi*) and muskoxen (*Ovibos moschatus*) on eastern Melville Island was made by helicopter during August 1972. The Dundas Peninsula and all of Melville Island east of the central constriction formed by the head of Liddon Gulf on the south and the southeast corner of Hecla and Griper Bay on the north (111°00' W) was flown over on a 6.4 km transect grid. Because of personal interests, we recorded all raptorial birds along the transect lines. Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*) are readily detectable from a helicopter, and we believe that most owls within the survey strips were observed.

Eastern Melville Island was divided into six strata that corresponded to the boundaries of the major geographical land units (Figure 1). All survey flights were flown 165 m above ground level at speeds averaging about 130 kph. Observations were recorded on 6.4-km (4-mile) to-the-inch maps and described on audio tape. It required 8 days, between August 7 and 25, to fly 3,700 km of transect lines. A strip 0.8 km wide was surveyed by an observer on each side of the helicopter. A total area of about 6,000 km<sup>2</sup> was surveyed, constituting about 24% of eastern Melville Island.



TABLE 1. — Observed distribution and estimated numbers of Snowy Owls on eastern Melville Island, Northwest Territories in July 1961 and August 1972.

Stratum <sup>a</sup>	Owls observed		Area surveyed (km <sup>2</sup> )		Total area (km <sup>2</sup> )		Estimated owls on stratum	
	1961	1972	1961	1972	1961	1972	1961	1972
I, II	3	0	290	1,170	4,670		48	0
IV	0	2	440	1,820	7,250		0	8
VI	36	20	310	1,380	5,610		652	89
Totals	39	22	1,038	4,370	17,530		700	97

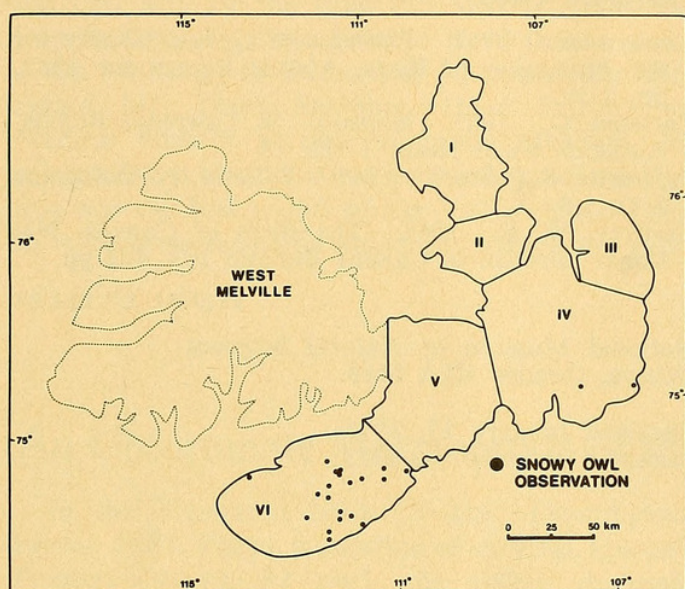
<sup>a</sup>See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. Observed distribution of Snowy Owls on eastern Melville Island, Northwest Territories, August 1972.

The resultant observations revealed a very unequal distribution of Snowy Owls by strata (Table 1). Stratum VI (Figure 1), 23% of the entire land mass, held 91% of the observed Snowy Owls. The south coast of stratum IV contained the other two snowy owls observed. None was observed within strata I, II, III and V — an area of about 11,200 km<sup>2</sup> or 47% of the survey area. In total, over two-thirds of the surveyed portions of eastern Melville Island were without Snowy Owls.

Tener (Tener, J. S. 1963. Queen Elizabeth Islands game survey, 1961. Canadian Wildlife

Service, Occasional Paper No. 4. 50 pp.) surveyed eastern Melville Island from the air in July 1961. He saw 36 Snowy Owls on the Dundas Peninsula (stratum VI), 3 on the Sabine Peninsula (strata I and II), and none on the rest of eastern Melville Island, (strata III, IV, and V). A comparison of the 1961 and 1972 observations is given in Table 1.

The density of Snowy Owls observed in stratum VI in 1972 (1 owl/69 km<sup>2</sup> or 1 owl/26.6 mi<sup>2</sup>) is low compared to observations made by Manning et al. (Manning, T. H., E. O. Hohn, and A. H. Macpherson. 1956. The birds of Banks Island. National Museum of Canada Bulletin 143, p. 106). They saw 1 Snowy Owl/mi<sup>2</sup> and 1/10 mi<sup>2</sup> during 2 consecutive years on the same area of Banks Island. Tener's (1963) 1961 observation of 1 owl/8.6 mi<sup>2</sup> on the Dundas Peninsula is within the range of densities reported by Manning et al. (1956).

The variation in estimated populations of Snowy Owls in 1961 and 1972 suggests that 1972 was a low period in Snowy Owl occurrence on eastern Melville Island. The observed distribution of Snowy Owls in both 1961 and 1972 indicates that the Dundas Peninsula is a favored habitat.

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