

Black Guillemots' Breeding Range Extended into the Western Canadian Arctic

Divoky et al. (1974) have supplied the first nesting records of the Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*) in the Beaufort Sea. They reported 17 nests, most of them under man-made structures, on three of the many barrier islands occurring in Chukchi and Beaufort Seas off the Alaskan coast. These authors suggest that the Black Guillemot could extend its breeding range eastward, partly as a result of man's recent littering practices, which provide suitable debris for nesting.

The purpose of this note is to provide the first nesting record of the Black Guillemot for the western Canadian Arctic on Herschel Island

(69°34' N, 138°55' W), an eastward breeding range extension of about 600 km. Observational records, some of which predate those of Divoky et al. (1974), are summarized in Table 1. Records show that by 1971 guillemots had found access to the inside of the abandoned Anglican mission house built on Herschel Island in 1920.

Taylor and Johnson visited Herschel village in two successive years and found evidence of nesting Black Guillemots in this abandoned frame building (Table 1). The guillemots' nests were approximately 2.7 m (9 ft) above the floor and located on top of a side wall, and between rafters. Several of

TABLE 1—Observations of Black Guillemot in western Canadian Arctic

Observer	Date	Observation	Number of nests	Location
T.W. Barry	1958	6 guillemots	Several?	Under metal warehouses, Herschel Island
T.W. Barry	2 Sept. 1960	10 guillemots		On Pauline Cove, Herschel
T.W. Barry	1964		Several?	Under metal warehouse, Herschel
T.W. Barry	1965	8 guillemots		On Pauline Cove
T.W. Barry	20 July 1965		At least 2 pairs nesting	Under metal warehouses
T.W. Barry	Aug.–Sept. 1966, 1967, 1968	6–12 guillemots		Pauline Cove
B. MacKenzie	1973	guillemots nesting on Herschel for last 3 years		
N. Cooper	1972	3 pairs of guillemots	3	Herschel
N. Cooper	summer 1973	30 pairs breeding	30	Herschel
G.W. Frame (1973)	9 Aug. 1973	2 flying guillemots		55 km NNE of Herschel
T.G. Smith (1973)	July 1971	2 observations of Black Guillemot		Holman Island
Parmelee et al. (1967)	1960	Badly decomposed specimen		Cambridge Bay
P.S. Taylor	12 Aug. 1973	Active nests	10+	Abandoned frame building, Herschel
B.E. Johnson	30 July 1974	Active nests	6	Same building

the lower boards of the interior roof were missing, giving the birds access to the nests, after they had entered the building through the open door or windows (Figure 1). On 30 July one of the latter nests contained two downy young, both measuring about 10 cm (4 in) in length and an adult which was captured, photographed, and released.



FIGURE 1. Abandoned building containing Black Guillemot nests, Herschel Island.

Photographs of this bird and a dead short-winged juvenile collected by Taylor in 1973 (Number 59248 in the collection of the National Museum of Canada) were examined by W. Earl Godfrey, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa and he confirmed that the birds in question were Black Guillemots.

The eastern North American population of the Black Guillemot nests in individual pairs or small colonies on low flat islands, at the base of escarpments, on talus slopes, and among rock rubble and on cliff ledges, sometimes at considerable height (Godfrey 1966). This type of nesting habitat is poorly represented in the western Canadian Arctic.

Only two other alcids occur in the western Canadian Arctic, but the Dovekie (*Alle alle*) is a rare visitor and the Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*) breeds only in a small colony near Cape Parry.

The hypothesis presented by Divoky et al. (1974) of an eastward extension of the Black Guillemot's breeding range has been borne out by our observations. As yet, guillemots have not been

found nesting in suitable debris which exists on islands lying between Herschel Island and Igalik Island, Alaska. Southeast of Herschel Island, potential nest sites would be found in the form of abandoned buildings and piles of driftwood occurring from Herschel Island to Shingle Point, with similar habitat available on offshore islands such as Garry, Pelly, Hooper, Rae, and Pullen Islands. This suggests the possibility of future population increase and range expansion for Black Guillemots in this area.

Greatest danger to the small Herschel Island colony would lie in the destruction of the abandoned building or the harassment of birds by children during the nesting season. Taylor saw children throw stones at the birds and their nests and Johnson found considerable numbers of stones, presumably thrown, but possibly the result of vestigial nest building, mixed with droppings in the nest cavities.

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