

THE OCCURRENCE OF EUROPEAN BIRDS IN NOVA SCOTIA.—
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At intervals there have been taken on the eastern shores of the Western Hemisphere, birds which belong more strictly to the Old World, and the purpose of the paper is to record a few recent occurrences of the kind in Nova Scotia, such as those of the European Widgeon, the European Teal, and the Lapwing, as well as to bring together some particulars of all such previous records as have come to my knowledge. To this is added some information about the Dunlin and Wheatear, which have been, apparently erroneously, stated to have been taken in this Province.

Of the nine species mentioned, all belong to the so-called "Water Birds." Two of these are members of the order *Anseres* (Ducks, etc.), one of the *Paludicolæ* (Rails, etc.), and the remaining six of the *Limicolæ* (Snipes, Sandpipers, etc.). Nearly all of them are known to occur in Greenland or Iceland, and their breeding range is within or approaches the Arctic Circle. We have no instance, that I know of, of a bird with an exclusively more southern breeding area, occurring in Nova Scotia.

The few dates available for the occurrences given, are as follows, arranged in order of months: 9 Jan., 14 Feb., 17 Mar., 23 and 27 May, 1 and 28 Sept., Oct., and 12 Dec. Although these data are far too scanty to form any definite conclusions, one is led to think that the occurrences may be mostly referable, as would be expected, to the vernal and autumnal migrations. The winter and very early spring dates, however, are difficult to account for, unless the birds

had remained here after the fall migration, whereas one would expect them to have passed southward to escape the severe season of the year. The March record could be accounted for by the bird being then in transit northward under the vernal migratory impulse.

Judging by the evidence, we are fully justified, I think, in assuming that these north-breeding water-birds have arrived on our coast by way of Iceland, Greenland, and Labrador or Newfoundland, which is the usual route taken by European birds coming to eastern America; and that none of them have ever flown directly across the whole Atlantic Ocean, as is a popular belief among many people who are not ornithologists. At the time of migration, they have, no doubt, been turned in our direction by heavy easterly gales or other stress of weather, rather than from any mere individual motive or impulse. The prevailing winds in the North Atlantic are from the southwest and west, with easterly eddies about the coast of Greenland, but a flight is apt to encounter an adverse easterly gale at any time. In passing to the mainland of North America, the greatest flight these storm-strayed individuals would have to undertake, would be only about the same as that they had been in the habit of successfully taking from the British Isles to Iceland.

Of course, some of our American birds are similarly met with casually in the Eastern Hemisphere, as in the case of our Baldpate or American Widgeon, and other birds, which are recorded in lists on the east side of the Atlantic.

EUROPEAN WIDGEON. *Mareca penelope* (Linn.). A.O.U. No. 136.—A male of this species was shot at Melbourne, on Chebogue Harbour or River, about five miles southeast of Yarmouth, Yarmouth county, Nova Scotia, on 9th January, 1912, by James Allen. It was mounted by Benjamin Doane, taxidermist of Yarmouth, and in November, 1912, was

purchased from him and added to the collection of the Provincial Museum at Halifax (accession no. 3829). The head and neck are rufous-brown; crown creamy-white. Length, as mounted, about 18.00 inches; wing, 9.85 inches; tarsus, 1.40 inches; bill, 1.32 inches. E. C. Allen, of Yarmouth, who first informed me of the taking of the bird, said that there were two other ducks like it in its company at the time; but these, I think, may have been Baldpates (*Mareca americana*) with which it is sometimes found.

This, I think, is the first fully-recorded instance of this European bird's occurrence in Nova Scotia, for although mentioned in Andrew Downs's "Catalogue of the Birds of Nova Scotia" (*Trans. N. S. Inst. Nat. Sc.*, 1888, vii, 147), with the mere statement "rare," no other particulars are given, and it is not included in Dr. J. B. Gilpin's "Semi-annual Migration of Sea Fowl in N. S." (*Trans. N. S. I. N. S.*, v, 138). The word "rare," at any rate is not sufficiently strong to correctly indicate it as a mere accidental visitor. The locality "Nova Scotia" given in Coues's *Key to N. A. Birds* is referable back (per *The Auk*, Jan., 1889, p. 64) to Downs's statement. M. Chamberlain, in his edition of *Nuttall's Ornithology*, vol. ii, 1891, p. 313, says that "every year more or less examples are seen along our coast from Nova Scotia to Virginia". Chapman in his *Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*, 1912, p. 194, says the species "is of rare but regular occurrence in Eastern North America," and has been taken in New York, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Greenland, south to Nebraska, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, and Florida, as well as in Alaska, British Columbia, and California. All the Nova Scotia references, I am convinced, can be referred to Downs's vague note.

The species is a native of the northern part of the Eastern Hemisphere, and it breeds within the Arctic Circle in Iceland, and very possibly may be found breeding in Greenland. Its somewhat regular casual occurrence in parts of North America,

and its being found in Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland, make it almost doubtless that it finds its way here, as other species do, under stress of weather, along that route, which would furnish resting places, and that it does not fly directly across the Atlantic from the east.

It has been mentioned that our own American Widgeon or Baldpate (*M. americana*) occurs casually in Europe. It breeds as far north as lat. 68°, which is about the same as that of Iceland.

EUROPEAN TEAL. *Nettion crecca* (Linn.). A. O. U. No 138.—The first known occurrence of this European species in Nova Scotia, was a specimen taken near Halifax, by Dr. J. B. Gilpin, on 1st September, 1854. It was mounted by the late Andrew Downs and shown at the Dublin International Exhibition of 1865, and was purchased there by Sir Arthur Guinness for his collection. (See Gilpin, "Sea Fowl of N. S.," *Trans. N. S. Inst. Nat. Sc.*, v, 141; Chamberlain, *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*, 1887; and Downs, "Catalogue of Birds of N. S.," *Trans. N. S. I. N. S.*, vii, 148).

Another specimen, an adult male, not hitherto recorded, was shot at Mineville, near Lawrencetown, Halifax county, N. S., on 14th February, 1913, by J. R. Shaw of Mineville; and was purchased by the Provincial Museum (accession no. 3980). The long scapulars are creamy-white internally, and black externally, producing two very conspicuous contiguous longitudinal bands, as is typical in this species. There seems to be also a very slight difference in the tint of the green of the speculum of this specimen as compared with that of the Green-winged Teal. Another duck which was shot in company with the one just mentioned, lacks these bands, and is evidently a male of the ordinary Green-winged Teal (*Nettion carolinensis*), which otherwise much resembles it. This specimen is also in the Museum collection (accession no. 3981.) The two above records are the only ones for this province known to me.

This species is a native of Europe, breeding as far north as Iceland, and a few specimens have been killed in Danish Greenland and one in Labrador, and it occurs casually on the North American Atlantic coast as far south as Washington, D. C.

CORN CRAKE. *Crex crex* (Linn.). A. O. U. No. 217.—The late James McKinlay, a local ornithologist of Pictou, N. S., in October, about the year 1873, while snipe shooting on a wet grassy spot about a mile in the rear of Pictou town, shot a specimen of this Old World species. It remained long unidentified in his collection, until it was examined by Frank M. Chapman, author of the *Birds of Eastern North America*, when he visited Pictou in July, 1898. It is the only record for this province. (*Vide* information furnished me by Mr. McKinlay, 21st July, 1898, and his note in *The Auk*, Jan., 1899; also Macoun's *Cat. of Can. Birds*, 1909, p. 154.) This bird is a native of Europe and northern Asia, and occurs casually in Greenland, Newfoundland, and as far south as New Jersey and the Bermudas. Sandford, Bishop and VanDyke (*Water-fowl Family*, 1903, 294) say it breeds regularly in Greenland, but I do not find this noted in other works.

DUNLIN *Pelidna alpinia alpinia* (Linn.). A. O. U. No. 243.—This Old World representative of the American Red-breasted Sandpiper is taken occasionally in Greenland, and has been also recorded as accidental on the west side of Hudson Bay, on Long Island, N. Y. and at Washington, D. C. It breeds in Scotland and the islands to the north thereof, and occasionally in England and Iceland, etc., north to latitude 74°.

Gilpin, in his "Shore Birds of Nova Scotia" (*Trans. N. S. Inst. Nat. Sc.*, v, 1882, p. 384), says that he had never met with the Dunlin in Nova Scotia, and he does not mention it in his list on page 385. On page 386 he says, "I have no distinct recollection of . . . seeing Dunlin's Sandpiper," but

adds, "I think there is a Dunlin immature bird in the Halifax Museum." A specimen in the Provincial Museum, unaccompanied by exact locality or date of capture, which is evidently the one referred to by Gilpin, is apparently a Red-backed Sandpiper in winter, or some state of immature plumage, its measurements being as follows: wing, 4.66 inches; tarsus, 1.00 inch; bill, 1.40 inches; middle toe with claw, .95 inch; middle toe without claw, .85 inch. These measurements all exceed the maximum ones of the Dunlin as given in Chapman's *Handbook*.

Macoun, in his *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*, 1909, p. 177, gives it as a "rare migrant in Nova Scotia," appending to this statement the name of Harold F. Tufts, then of Wolfville, N. S. Mr. Tufts, in his "Notes on the Birds of King's County, Nova Scotia" (*Ottawa Naturalist*, xii, Dec. 1898, p. 175) gives the Red-breasted Sandpiper (*Tringa alpina pacifica*, Coues, = *Pelidna alpina sakhalina*, Vieill.) as "a rather uncommon autumn migrant; observed on the Long Island beach during September;" but he makes no reference in that list to the Dunlin (*P. alpina alpina*).

This note in Macoun's list I had at first thought must have been intended to refer to the Red-back Sandpiper, under which latter name he makes no specific reference to Tuft's record in the *Ottawa Naturalist*, although he speaks of it generally as "a rare migrant along the Atlantic coast." Furthermore, although there is no doubt that the Dunlin might be expected to occur here accidentally, yet the expression "rare migrant" could not adequately represent the mere casual nature of such a bird's occurrence in this Province; whereas it does express the relative rarity of the Red-backed Sandpiper.

Dr. Harold F. Tufts, now of Jamaica Plain, Mass., in answer to a recent enquiry of mine respecting the beforementioned record, writes: "In regard to the Dunlin, I remember well the bird I took for it, —it was shot at Long Island beach,

near Grand Pré, King's county, in the latter part of September, 1898 or 1899—I think 28th September, 1898. I fired into a small flock of sandpipers and brought down a White-rumped Sandpiper, two Red-backed Sandpipers, and one which differed from the latter and which to the best of my ability to identify with the aid of Chamberlain's revision of Nuttall's Ornithology, I decided was the Dunlin, which is said to occur not infrequently on this side of the Atlantic. However, the skin is not in existence now, and even my notes of the time have been lost or destroyed. I really think I was justified in calling the bird the Dunlin."

Dr. Tufts is a careful observer, but as very unfortunately his specimen is not available for reference, the record must stand as one which was probably correct, but which cannot now be absolutely verified.

CURLEW SANDPIPER. *Erolia ferruginea* (Brünn.). A.O.U. No. 244.—This is an Old World species which occurs casually in North and South America, being recorded from Alaska, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and the West Indies and Patagonia. It is said to breed on the Arctic coast of Siberia, and a set of eggs, supposed to be of this species, has been taken in Greenland, where the bird is said to occur. Little, however, is definitely known on these points. Gilpin ("Shore Birds of Nova Scotia," *Trans. N. S. Inst. Nat. Sc.*, v, 383), under the old name *Tringa subarquata*, says he had it noted as taken at Halifax, October, 1864, "but," he adds, "I am not certain."*

*Gilpin's statement is slightly ambiguous on one point. The paragraph from which the above quotation is made, says, "The Cape Curlew I have noted Halifax, October. *Tringa subarquata*, Schinss sand piper, I note Halifax, October 1864, but I am not certain." Now Schinz's Sandpiper is one of the names of the White-rumped Sandpiper (*Pisobia fuscicollis*) and is not, I believe, applied to *E. ferruginea*. In his list on page 385, he gives "*Tringa subarquata*—Curlew Sandpiper," but not the White-rumped (Schinz's) Sandpiper (*P. fuscicollis*); and on the next page he says, "I have not mentioned in this list Schinze's Sandpiper, although my notes give him at Halifax, August, 1864. I have no distinct recollection of the bird, or of seeing Dunlin's an enlarged copy of it, in Nova Scotia."

It is included in his list in the latter part of that paper (p. 385). Downs speaks of it as very rare, and says he purchased one in the Halifax market ("Catalogue of Birds of N. S.", *Trans. N. S. I. N. S.*, vii, 154).

GREEN SANDPIPER. *Helodromas ochropus* (Linn.). A. O. U. No. 257.—The normal habitat of this species, which is the Old World representative of our Solitary Sandpiper, is the northern portions of the Eastern Hemisphere from the Arctic regions to the Cape of Good Hope, and from the British Isles to China. It breeds in Scandinavia, Russia and Siberia, south to Turkestan. D. G. Elliot, formerly president of the American Ornithologists Union, in his *North American Shore Birds*, 1895, p. 127, says "no record is obtainable that this bird has ever been seen alive in North America," and adds that it "is included in our fauna on the strength of a dealer in England having received a skin among a number of American birds from Halifax, Nova Scotia." This, he thinks is but negative evidence, and hardly of that satisfactory kind as to warrant the adoption of the species into the American fauna.

An individual of this species exists among a collection of birds from the Northwest Territories sent to the British Museum by the Hudson Bay Company; and Pennant says he also observed it among birds collected by Mr. Kuckan in North America (Richardson, quoted in Macoun's *Cat. of Canadian Birds*, 1909, p. 192). The A. O. U. *Check-list of N. A. Birds*, 1895, p. 94, notes it as "accidental in Nova Scotia," and Chapman's *Birds of Eastern North America*, 1912, p. 258, admits it as having been "twice recorded from America (Nova Scotia and Hudson Bay, Coues, *Auk*, xiv, 1897, 210);" and other writers mention this species in the same way. (See also *Bull. Nuttall Club*, iii, 1878, p. 49; and *The Auk*, xiv, 1897, p. 210.) If the Nova Scotian record is based, as no doubt it is, on the skin referred to by Elliot,

it must be slightly open to question in the minds of many ornithologists.

RUFF. *Machetes pugnax* (Linn.). A. O. U. No. 260.—On 27th May, 1892, a young ruffless male of this species was shot at Cole Harbour, near Halifax, N. S., and was mounted by T. J. Egan. It was identified by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, as above-mentioned, although some United States ornithologists considered it differed slightly in some points from the European bird, but these, I believe, were insufficient to make any real doubt as to the determination, and the record must be taken as correct.* (See fuller account in Piers's "Notes on N. S. Zoology, No. 3," *Trans. N. S. Inst. Sc.*, viii, 1894, p. 402). It is the only occurrence of the species in Nova Scotia. It has occurred as a straggler on the Bay of Fundy coast of New Brunswick (*vide* M. Chamberlain), and one was killed on Toronto Island, Ontario, in the spring of 1882 (McIlwraith, *Birds of Ontario*, 1894, p. 154).

The Ruff is an Old World species, breeding from the Arctic coast south to Great Britain, Holland, Russia and Siberia; and winters throughout Africa, India, and Burma. It strays in spring and fall to the Western Hemisphere from Ontario and Greenland south to Indiana, North Carolina, Barbados, and northern South America, there being some fourteen records for the Atlantic coast. American records are given by T. S. Palmer, in *The Auk*, xxiii, 1906, p. 98.

WHIMBREL. *Numenius phæopus* (Linn.). A. O. U. No. 267.—This Old World species has once been recorded as taken about 170 miles to the eastward of the Nova Scotian coast. On 23rd May, 1906, a female Whimbrel came aboard the steamship "Bostonian" when she was westward-bound and

*The original specimen, I think, is now in the collection of William Brewster, of Cambridge, Mass., or of Mr. Boardman, and if not, must have been lost in the fire which destroyed T. J. Egan's collection in September, 1904.

almost sixty miles to the southward of Sable Island, N. S., in latitude about 43° north and longitude 60° west. It died a short time before the steamer reached Boston. Mr. William Brewster of Cambridge, Mass., got the skin in October, 1907, and it is now in his collection, there being no doubt about the identification. (*Vide* letter of Mr. Brewster to writer, and his notes in *The Auk*).

The species is a native of the Eastern Hemisphere, and a fair number of specimens have been taken in Greenland, where it is possible it may occasionally breed, although no instance is known of its having done so. It is known to breed in Iceland, Shetland Isles, Scandinavia and Russia. The Nova Scotian record is the only one of its occurrence in North America south of Greenland.

LAPWING. *Vanellus vanellus* (Linn.). A. O. U. No. 269. —Two specimens of this bird have been taken here. The first was one found dead on the shore at Ketch Harbour, eleven miles south of Halifax, N. S., on 17th March, 1897, and was mounted by T. J. Egan. It was very thin and had, no doubt, died from starvation. This was the first record of the species' occurrence in this province. (See Piers, "Notes on N. S. Zoology: No. 4," *Trans. N. S. Inst. Sc.*, ix, 1897, p. 258). The only previous record for eastern North America south of Greenland was founded on a specimen taken at Merrick, Long Island, U. S. A., in December, 1883 (*vide* Dutcher, *The Auk*, iii, 1886, p. 438).

A second Nova Scotian specimen was shot at Upper Prospect, fifteen miles southwest of Halifax, on 12th December, 1905, by a man of that place. It is now in the Provincial Museum of Nova Scotia, accession no. 2954, having been purchased from T. J. Egan, who mounted it, in January, 1906. (*Vide Report of Provincial Museum of N. S. for 1906*, p. 8). It is interesting to note that a Lapwing was also taken at St. John's, Newfoundland, on 27th November, 1905, which

must have come southward at the same time as the Nova Scotian specimen. (Vide *The Auk*, xxiii, 221).

The Lapwing inhabits the northern parts of the Eastern Hemisphere, breeding from Central Europe and Asia, north to the Arctic circle in Europe and latitude 55° north in Siberia; and has twice been found in Greenland (in 1820 and 1847), and has also been reported doubtfully from Norton Sound, Alaska, where Dall mentions the capture of what he supposed to be this species, although he did not himself see the specimen.

European Bird Incorrectly Reported as Occurring in Nova Scotia.

GREENLAND WHEATEAR. *Saxicola ænanthe leucorhoa* (Gmel.). A. O. U. No. 765a.—In conclusion some particulars will be given regarding the Greenland Wheatear, a bird long reported to have been taken in Nova Scotia, and is so mentioned in most books. About the year 1854, or shortly before, J. Cassin obtained a Wheatear skin which had been collected and sent to him by a gentleman from Nova Scotia, and he, not unnaturally, concluded that it had been taken in that province, and so mentioned it as a Nova Scotian occurrence in his *Illustrations of the Birds of California, etc.*, 1st series, no. vii, 1854, p. 208. Nova Scotia until very recently was thus given as a locality for its casual occurrence, for example in the A. O. U. *Check List* of 1895, *Chapman's Birds of Eastern North America*, 1895, etc. According, however, to Brewer in his *History of North American Birds*, i, 1874, p. 60, Cassin's specimen came in reality from Coal Harbour, Labrador, and not from Nova Scotia at all, although the gentleman who collected it was from that province. (See also Stejneger, "Wheatears of North America," *Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus.*, xxiii, 1901, pp. 473 and 479). The most recent works have now dropped Nova Scotia from the localities where it has

occurred, and we can no longer, therefore, consider it as a bird found here, although it is quite likely to be taken as an accidental visitor at any time. The occurrence of the Wheatear in North America at all, was formerly thought to be only accidental or occasional, but the bird has since been ascertained to be a regular breeder in our northern regions, although nowhere appearing as a regular migrant on this continent.

In 1901, Stejneger (*loc. cit.*) separated the form which breeds in northeast boreal America, under the subspecific name *Saxicola ænanthe leucorhoa* (Gmel.), the Greenland Wheatear, A. O. U. No. 765a, recognizing the typical Wheatear, *S. ænanthe ænanthe* (Linn.), A. O. U. No. 765, as the form which occurs in the northwestern part of North America as well as in the Eastern Hemisphere. The Greenland Wheatear (the form which might be found accidentally in our own province) breeds regularly in the Arctic zone of North America, from Ellesmere Land and Boothia Peninsula, east to Greenland and Iceland, and south to northern Ungava, even possibly in part of Quebec. It migrates through the British Isles and France, and winters in western Africa. Chapman (*Birds of Eastern North America*, 1912, p. 499,) says it is "casual in migration to Keewatin, Ontario, New Brunswick [is "N. B." a typographical error for the old "N. S.," Nova Scotia, of his earlier edition?], Quebec, New York, Bermuda, Louisiana and Cuba." Should this sub-species ever occur here, it must now be considered merely as a casual occurrence of a true North American bird.