

ESKIMO CURLEW: A VANISHING SPECIES?

J.B. GOLLOP, T.W. BARRY and E.H. IVERSEN. 1986. Special Publication No. 17 Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4P 3B4 160pp. Paper \$9.00.

Shorebirds need all the attention they can get, for their crucial migratory stopover and wintering habitats are dwindling and many are experiencing increased human disturbance in all phases of their life cycle. Unfortunately we know little about population biology, distribution, or habitat needs of most shorebird species, so cannot prepare sound management plans for many. This is especially true of threatened and endangered species. The publication being reviewed here is therefore both valuable and timely, for it provides a comprehensive account of the nearly extinct and virtually unknown Eskimo Curlew.

Routine introductory material accounts for the book's first 14 pages. This is followed by a summary of known recent sightings (41 sightings of about 80 birds in the period 1945-85), then by notes on field identification, nomenclature and common names (totalling 11 more pages). The Eskimo Curlew is contrasted and compared with the Whimbrel and Little Curlew in plumage and general measurements. Recent photographs and pencil drawings are included, plus a

rather poor figure (reproduction) illustrating differences in tarsal scutellation between the Eskimo and Little Curlew. The descriptions are good, but should have included means and standard deviations for culmen, wing chord, and tail measurements. The sex reported for many museum specimens of Eskimo Curlew may be wrong (p. 33), but some attempt should have been made to characterize sexual dimorphism in this species because it is so pronounced in the family. A map showing localities of known museum specimens (study skins, eggs) and recent sightings would have been a useful addition. Also, the authors should have indicated which institutions hold known specimens, perhaps in an Appendix.

Pages 26-32 provide a fascinating account of Roderick MacFarlane's travels and collecting activities in the 1860's, when he collected about 40 breeding adult Eskimo Curlews and about 30 nests in northwestern Mackenzie District. Photographs of habitat, and a summary of recent Canadian Wildlife Service surveys in the same areas, are included. Despite intensive and extensive searches by Barry from 1958 to the present, no trace of the species has been found. The authors do not indicate if more surveys are planned.

Nine pages provide a useful overview of the Eskimo Curlew's life history, pieced together from MacFarlane's notes on

the breeding grounds and from many other sources for migratory and wintering areas. This section is well written and well integrated, though the range map of one food species, crowberry (Map 5), seems unnecessary.

The next 67 pages ("The Eskimo Curlew's Year") give a detailed summary of sightings, specimens, hunting records and notes, broken down by geographic regions within sections on Breeding (2 pages), Fall Migration (44 pages), Winter (4 pages), Spring Migration (16 pages), and North Atlantic Stragglers (1 page). Each entry includes a specimen total, a note on status, general notes from diverse sources, dates and localities of sightings and specimens, plus commentary. The authors have sifted carefully through a vast amount of literature in preparing this section, which contains a wealth of information summarized as economically as seems possible. Scattered throughout are tables, maps (no. 6, followed by 1-4 then 7), and photographs. The main part of the book ends with some notes about Bodsworth's book "Last of the Curlews" and the animated movie based on it.

Some important Appendices are included: one on MacFarlane's specimen notes; one on George Cartwright's Labrador observations (1770-86); an excerpt from an 1877 hunting guide; and two on bird names in the text. The latter two could have been combined somehow. An extensive bibliography (nearly 600 references) completes the volume.

The book is well organized, despite the confusing numbering of the maps and scattering of habitat shots from pages 27 to 119 (amidst the Appendices). Most of the maps are useful though some of the printing is too small for my taste and the different kinds of lines drawn on them are sometimes hard to distinguish (e.g., Map 2). The map of Galveston Island, Texas,

is poorly reproduced and has tiny lettering. The two maps (nos. 3 and 4) summarizing migration and distribution contain a lot of information and were very thoughtfully designed. The habitat photographs are generally of good quality, and many readers will wish that more from Barry's surveys were included because they are of such interest. The two photographs from Labrador (Figs. 15, 23) are fuzzy and their scale is hard to appreciate.

The publication ends a bit abruptly. I think that the authors owed it to their readers to recommend where future efforts should be placed to try to locate the breeding grounds or to establish a rigorous, intensive survey of stopover areas or wintering grounds. This and other shortcomings all suggest a lack of polish to the overall production. However, none of my criticisms about the work's structure or appearance can detract from its worthy intent or from the immense amount of information carefully gleaned and summarized from historical records, and used to reconstruct life-history attributes and the annual cycle. This book will be the touchstone for future work on this species, and deserves to be widely read, used, and built upon. — Reviewed by *Edward H. Miller*, Collections Management Program, British Columbia Provincial Museum, 675 Belleville Street, Victoria, British Columbia, V8V 1X4 and Biology Department, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700, Victoria, British Columbia. V8W 2Y2

NOTICE OF CORRECTION:

The caption for Figure 6 on page 20 of *Eskimo Curlew* should read: "Front views of, from left to right, Eskimo Curlew, Little Curlew and Whimbrel."

BIRD CONSERVATION, Volume 1

STANLEY A. TEMPLE, Editor 1983. Published for the International Council for Bird Preservation, United States Section, by the University of Wisconsin Press. 148 pp. Paper \$12.95.

Bird Conservation is the first of an annual volume published by the U.S. Section of ICBP "to promote the preservation of wild birds, especially in the Western Hemisphere and in relation to U. S. problems of U. S. activities abroad." This publication has been created to provide a vehicle for exchange of information more rapidly than it is accomplished by regular scientific publications. Also, Bird Conservation will include preliminary reports of management activities not normally published by ornithological or wildlife management journals. This volume is organized into three main sections. The first section includes several reports on bird conservation activities written by persons directly involved in the projects. The second section, "Bird Conservation News and Updates," includes shorter reports by experts and the third section is a review of recent bird conservation literature.

Focussing on birds of prey, topics in the first section include the restoration of the Peregrine Falcon in the eastern U. S., protection of Bald Eagles in the northern U.S., and the California Condor reproduction and the recovery program. Philosophical problems are addressed by the authors. These include differences in genetics of reintroduced populations, hands-on versus hands-off approaches to recovery of endangered species and the justification of spending large sums of money in the seemingly hopeless attempt to save a few individuals of a doomed species.

The second section presents information on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Federal Endangered Species Program and the Snake River Birds of Prey Area. In addition there are summaries of conservation projects dealing with Bald Eagles, Harris' Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, Whooping Cranes, parrots of the world, endangered woodpeckers, the Dusky Seaside Sparrow and birds of the tropical South American rain forests. In the third section 162 references are listed and some of the papers are summarized briefly.

The popular writing style used in the well organized reports of this publication make them enjoyable to read. There are a few blemishes, such as the spelling of "rectrix" without a c and the uncritical acceptance of the fact that Whooping Cranes adopt the migration route of their sandhill foster parents as evidence that migration behavior is learned in cranes.

This volume was intended to focus on raptors. Other groups of birds will form the focus of future volumes. Despite the intentional focus on raptors, it is apparent that birds at or near the top of food chains receive a disproportionate amount of attention from conservationists. This is not only because these species are most vulnerable but it also reflects a bias, I believe. It is also apparent that most management efforts represent manipulations of the birds themselves rather than the protection and improvement of their habitat before species become threatened. For example, habitat management on small plots of marshland distributed in a checkerboard fashion in central Wisconsin has saved the endangered Greater Prairie Chicken from extinction.

Bird Conservation does not live up to its aim of disseminating information faster than is achieved by existing publications.

Except for very few 1982 references most information is presented to 1981 even though the publication date is 21 October 1983. Perhaps this shortfall reflects the growing pains of an otherwise useful addition to conservation literature. — Reviewed by *Josef K. Schmutz*, R.R. # 2, Box 123, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7K 3J5

BIRD CONSERVATION

Volume 2, published in 1985 contains references to 1983. This volume concentrates on island birds.

THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES

JEAN GIONO. 1985. Chelsea Green Publishing Company, Chelsea, Vt. 56 pp. with afterword by Norma Goodrich. Woodcuts by Michael McCurdy. Hardcover \$13.50 U.S.

This magnificent and moving tale was originally published in *Vogue* in 1954 under the title *The Man Who Planted Hope and Grew Happiness*. (The identity of the original translator is unknown.) It is a simple tale of a man, Elzeard Bouffier, who devoted his life to the planting of trees. This single-minded devotion of a single man resulted in the transformation of a desert into a pleasant and productive land.

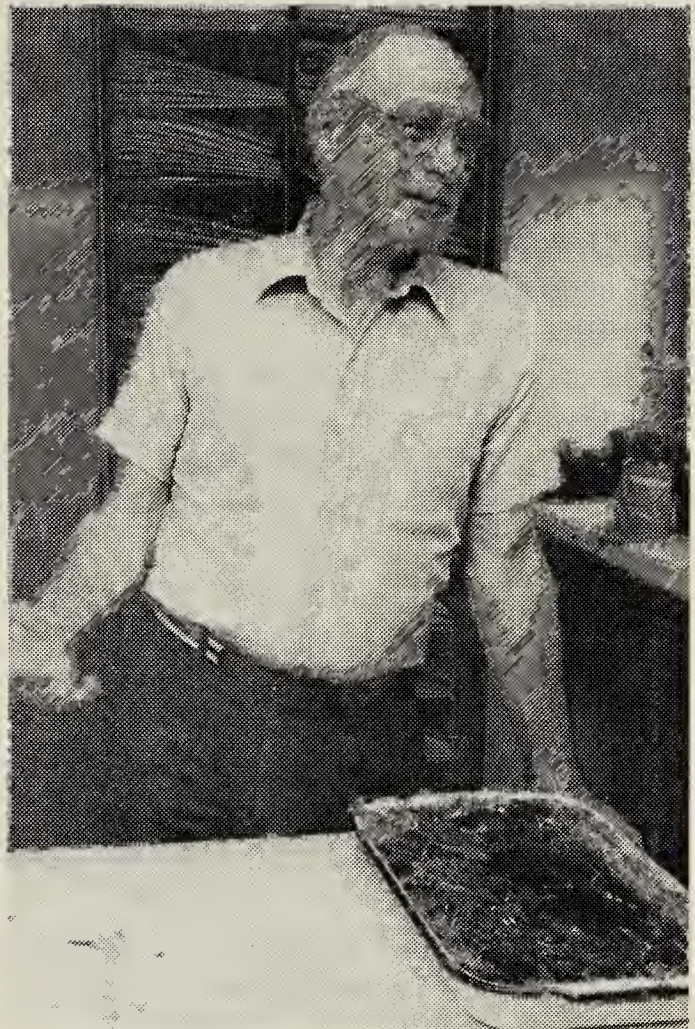
The illustrations are fittingly done from woodcuts, a medium infinitely suited to a story about the value of trees. The simple black and white engravings project the starkness of the original desert as well as the bounty of the recreated land.

One can detect a tongue-in-cheek humour in Giono. He states, for example, that this man could not have accomplished what he did if it had become known to "the administration." "If he had been detected he would have had opposition." He describes with irony the discovery of this "natural forest" by the government, and describes the wonder with which they observe this natural phenomenon of which they had been unaware.

At the same time this many-times reprinted story is an inspiration. It gives the lie to the belief held by so many that one person can do so little to change the direction of events on this earth. I recommend this book both to lovers of trees and nature and those who need to regain a measure of respect for the human race. Whenever a feeling of despondency needs lifting this book will provide a ray of hope. I will treasure my copy and keep it in a prominent position on my library shelf. — Reviewed by *Sheila M. Lamont*, Box 414, Raymore, Saskatchewan. S0A 3J0

HONORARY DEGREE - DR. GEORGE LEDINGHAM

At the fall convocation of the University of Regina on 1 November 1986 Dr. George Ledingham was presented with an honorary degree. A leading environmentalist and conservationist, and a valued member of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, George Ledingham has been recognised several times in the past few years for his work and dedication towards the establishment of the Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. Knowledgeable in all fields of natural history, George has been an asset to any gathering which he has attended, and through his professorship at the University of Regina he has also been able to introduce many students to the study of botany. Now Professor Emeritus, he is curator of the herbarium at the University of Regina. His dedication will continue to be an inspiration to those around him.



CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Effective since 1 September 1986 the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada (NPPAC) has had a new name, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. The society was formed in 1963 in response to calls for a group to watch over our national parks. It is a private, non-profit, charitable and educational organization for the promotion of the protection of national, provincial and territorial parks and other places of national significance such as wilderness and natural areas. There is a national office and six regional chapters, as well as a quarterly journal Park News.

Information on the programs, membership, etc. can be obtained by calling **(416) 366-3494**, or write the society's national office at **69 Sherbourne Street, Suite 313, Toronto, Ontario. M5A 3X7**

CHRISTMAS BIRD AND MAMMAL COUNTS

Count period is from **Thursday 18 December 1986 to Sunday 4 January 1987**, inclusive. Count area should be a circle 24 km (15 mi.) in diameter. Count forms will be mailed to compilers who submitted counts in 1985. Anyone else wishing to send in a count please write for forms to: **Mary I. Houston**

**863 University Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 0J8**

Reports of counts should be sent to Mary Houston as soon as possible after they are taken. To be included in the report in the March 1987 Blue Jay they must reach Mary by **9 January 1987** at the very latest.

NORTHERN FOREST OWL SYMPOSIUM

Biology and conservation of northern forest owls of the world will be the focus of a symposium to be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba 3-7 February 1987. For information contact R.W. Nero, Wildlife Branch, Department of Natural Resources, Box 14, 1495 St. James St, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3H 0W9

1987 SNHS TOURS

A Series of Nature Tours is currently being organized for 1987. Planned destinations include: Moose Mountain Park & the Souris River (16-18 May); Cambridge Bay, NWT (July); Old Wives Lake (18 July); Hudson Bay Botany Tour (31 July - 3 Aug.); Dinosaur Museum at Drumheller, Alta. (1-3 Aug); Grey Owl's Cabin at Prince Albert National Park (8 Aug.); Duck Mountain Mushroom Tour (12-14 Aug.); Whooping Crane Tour from Saskatoon (4 Oct.).

In conjunction with the CNF Conference in Saskatoon on June 5-8, the society is planning nature tours to: Turtle Lake (2-5 June); Batoche (7 June); Beaver Creek Botany (7 June); Beechy (7 June); Last Mt. Lake (8 June); Cypress Hills (8-12 June); Churchill (8-15 June); Qu'Appelle Valley Botany (8-10 June).

For further information about these tours write to: **Stan Shadick, 3F-1800 Main Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 4B3**