

Swimming ability of Willow Warbler.—While W. Paszkowski and I were banding migrant Willow Warblers (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) at a group of ponds at the edge of Wolfsburg on 4 September 1966, one of the birds we released flew, evidently in confusion, directly into one of the ponds. Immediately it spread its wings and tail feathers so that it did not sink and, holding head and throat above the water, propelled itself toward shore with its wings. Stopping to rest for only a few short intervals, it soon reached the bank where we captured it again and examined it. As with the swimming Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) described by Petrides (Auk, 59: 584, 1942), we could not tell whether the bird used its feet in swimming, but the head and throat remained dry. Similar behavior has been reported in the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) (Broun, Auk, 60: 445–446, 1943), and in both House and Tree Sparrows (*Passer domesticus* and *P. montanus*) (Hickling, Brit. Birds, 43: 292, 1950; Creutz, Vogelwelt, 73: 141, 1952).—ERWIN R. SCHERNER, *Wolfsburg, German Federal Republic*.

Apparent hybridization between Snow Bunting and McKay's Bunting on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska.—The occurrence and possible breeding of McKay's Bunting (*Plectrophenax hyperboreus*) on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, was recorded in 1966 (Sealy, 1967). In 1967 additional observations on this island provide evidence for its interbreeding with the Snow Bunting (*P. nivalis*), a common summer resident here.

On 26 May 1967 an adult male *P. hyperboreus* was noted singing on top of a large boulder at the base of Sevuokuk Mountain and defending a territory against several male Snow Bunting. On 4 June a male *P. hyperboreus*, probably the same one, was foraging on the same territory in company with a female *P. nivalis*. The McKay's Bunting was collected (U.B.C. Mus. Zool. no. 13328); it weighed 43.8 g, showed light subcutaneous fat, and had enlarged testes (13.5×11.1 and 10.5×9.5 mm). The histologic condition of the left testis of this specimen is shown in Figure 1; the presence of spermatids and mature sperm is evident and corresponds to stage 7 of Blanchard (1943). A second male *P. hyperboreus* seen singing on a boulder on top of

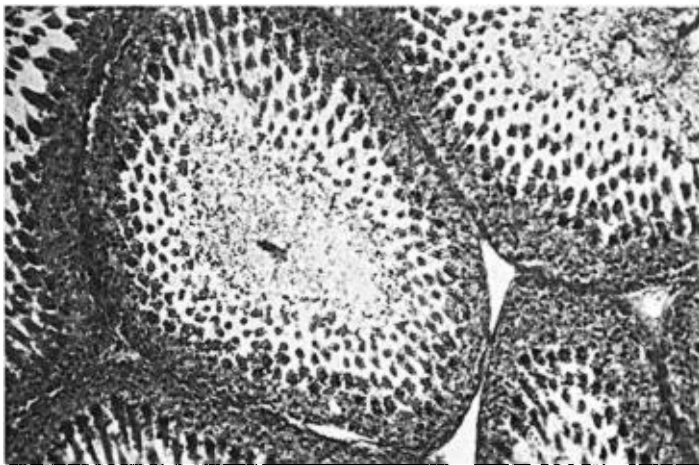


Figure 1. Histologic condition of McKay's Bunting testis, 26 May 1967, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska.

Sevuokuk Mountain 28 June was also paired with a female *P. nivalis*, and a nest was apparently present but inaccessible under a large boulder. On 30 June this male was collected (U.B.C. Mus. Zool. no. 13327); it weighed 42.8 g, was in its first year, and showed heavy subcutaneous fat, and had enlarged testes which were damaged by shot.

Pitelka (*pers. comm.*) suggested that on the basis of the variable distribution of black on the wings of 9 male McKay's Buntings (4 collected on St. Matthew Island, 1 from Nunivak Island, and 4 from Yukon River Delta) in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, *nivalis* and *hyperboreus* may interbreed occasionally. A variable distribution of black on wings is also evident in 25 specimens of *P. hyperboreus* in the California Academy of Sciences collected on Nunivak Island. Occasional interbreeding between these two species may indicate a somewhat greater breeding range for *P. hyperboreus* than previously suspected; the recent St. Lawrence Island records support this. According to the A.O.U. Check-list (1957: 641) *P. hyperboreus* breeds exclusively on Hall and St. Matthew islands. *P. nivalis*, on the other hand, does not occur on St. Matthew Island (Eisfeld, MS, Alaska Dept. Fish and Game, 1966; Gabrielson and Lincoln, 1959). Thus it appears that *P. hyperboreus* may also range during the breeding season and possibly breed outside Hall and St. Matthew islands in areas inhabited by breeding *P. nivalis*; in fact, *hyperboreus* has been recorded possibly breeding on St. Paul Island (Kenyon and Phillips, 1965).

Confusion in the literature reveals the need for further study on the systematic position of *P. hyperboreus* Ridgway. It is given specific status by the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds (1957), but Salomonsen (1931), Vaurie (1959), and others treat it as a subspecies of *P. nivalis* (Linnaeus) without explanation.

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