

Murre also differs from the Common Murre in the fact that the feathering on the bill does not reach the cutting edges of the upper mandible at the gape. With regard to this feature, the apparent hybrid depicted in Tschanz and Wehrlin (1968) could be considered, with some justification, as intermediate. With respect to the bill, attention should also be paid to the tips of the mandibles, which are horn-colored in *lomvia*, as is the angle of gonys in winter (Sluys MS).

There are some differences between *lomvia* and *aalge* in the amount of streaking on flanks and thighs. The Thick-billed Murre shows some brownish black streaks only on the lower part of the flanks. In the Common Murre the amount of streaking varies geographically. For example, birds from Bear Island, Faeroes, and Shetland are generally heavily streaked, whereas birds from the Baltic Sea and Britain generally show few streaks (Sluys MS). Thus, the amount of streaking is not a very reliable character to use in an assessment of the hybrid nature of certain specimens, because in *aalge* character expression depends on the population studied. The same holds true for the amount of brown spotting on the under wing- and primary-coverts. Brown spotting is generally absent on under wing- and primary-coverts of the Thick-billed Murre.

Uria lomvia and *U. aalge* differ in the color of the shafts of the primaries. In *lomvia* these are brownish black and dark horn-colored only at the base, whereas in *aalge* they are for their greater part horn-colored, becoming pale brown at the tips.

In the assessment of the hybrid origin of any particular murre, all the mentioned features should be taken into consideration, weighed carefully, and documented by means of photographs, sketches, or biometrical data. Meager evidence based on a single character should not be considered sufficient in such a difficult problem.

Cairns and deYoung wrote that hybridization could be more extensive than is suggested by the single record of Tschanz and Wehrlin (1968). Tschanz (1972), however, showed that, despite similarities in certain behavior patterns and vocalizations, both species also produce different vocalizations and have different behavior patterns. Certain behavior and calls induce responses only in animals of the same species. Tschanz suggested that the differences in behavior patterns between the two species may act as isolating mechanisms. This seems very likely and I consider the paucity of hybridization records to be representative of the true situation.

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Evidence for Hybrid Murre Reconsidered—A Comment

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In his paper, Sluys (1983) expresses scepticism on a recent record of a possible Common Murre-Thick-billed Murre hybrid (*Uria aalge* × *U. lomvia*) (Cairns and deYoung, 1981). His dismissal of the possible hybrid is based on the view that "meager evidence based on a single character should not be considered sufficient in such a difficult problem." This argument ignores the fact that a hybrid origin for the bird in question was suggested by three characters, which were intermediate between parental forms. Sluys

correctly points out that the one character he considered (the gape mark) does not provide conclusive evidence for hybridization. Likewise, the other intermediate traits we mentioned, namely head and back coloration and the degree of pointedness of the white plumage in the neck region, show intraspecific variability and do not constitute decisive evidence. Intermediate states of three characters in the same individual, however, suggest either a purebred with a statistically improbable combination of aberrant traits, or a hybrid.

Tschanz and Wehrlin (1968) showed that Common Murre-Thick-billed Murre pairing is possible, so the behavioral barriers that normally prevent hybridiza-

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tion are not inviolable. Unfortunately, the criteria judged by Sluys to be necessary in assessing possible hybridization require, for critical analysis, a bird in the hand, which is impossible to obtain in most murre colonies (including our study site) without causing unacceptable disturbance. Thus, the question of the extent of hybridization between the two murre species will likely remain open for some time.

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