

North-East Greenland, Summer 1997

Antti Below

Here is a short report about the trip I made to NE-Greenland in summer 1997.

The exact place was Traill Island (72°30'N). Our international group (8 persons) made actually different kinds of studies on mammals and the observations below were made mainly by us Finns (undersigned and Mr. Paavo Hellstedt). The trip took place from 21st of June to 28th of July. The area, where we made these observations, was covering about 100 square kms.

Weather

Nights -4°C - +4°C, days +3°C - +12°C. Rain occurred during 12 days. The fjord (except the estuaries) was almost totally frozen whole time.

Birds list

- RED-THROATED DIVER (*Gavia stellata*)
4 nests, which all were depredated by arctic foxes.
- "BIG" DIVER (*Gavia adamsii/immer*)
One individual in Karupelv estuary in the beginning of July.
- COMMON EIDER (*Somateria mollissima*)
Scarce breeder, about 20 individuals were seen.
- KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*)
Scarce breeder, 4 females were seen.
- LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*)
5-10 pairs.
- BARNACLE GOOSE (*Branta leucopsis*)
45 pairs on cliffs near our camp. In mid July I counted along the Karupelv river about 350 individuals, mostly moulting birds but also about 40 young birds.
- PINK-FOOTED GOOSE (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)
In the end of June some migration by non-breeding birds arriving to moulting areas. For example one day we saw 250 migrating P-f Geese. Breeding birds from the middle of island arrived with their chicks to the seashore in the middle of July.
- GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*)
No observations because of lack of lemmings.

- PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus mutus*)
Common breeder.
- RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*)
Common breeder.
- SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)
Common breeder. One bird with an Icelandic ring.
- DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)
Common breeder.
- KNOT (*Calidris canutus*)
Quite common breeder.
- TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)
Common breeder.
- LONG-TAILED SKUA (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)
Only 6 pairs laid eggs which also hatched. Nestlings died soon by starvation because of lack of lemmings. There were also birds hanging around without breeding, the biggest flock consisted of 80 birds (couple of years ago a flock of 350 birds was observed in the same area!)
- PARASITIC SKUA (*Stercorarius parasiticus*)
Two pairs, of which only one bred. The nestling died by starvation soon.
- GLAUCOUS GULL (*Larus hyperboreus*)
About 15 pairs. Also a flock of 60 non-breeding birds were seen.
- GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*)
Only one adult seen.
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*)
One individual passing the camp. Few years ago I would have identified this bird as race *graellsii* but who knows nowadays about these gulls. It might have been *heuglini* or some other "darker-backed gull".
- SABINE'S GULL (*Larus/Xema sabini*)
3-4 pairs on one island. The breeding began very late, in mid-July.
- ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*)
About 60-80 pairs on two islands. Also a very late breeder.
- SNOWY OWL (*Nyctea scandiaca*)
No observations because of lack of lemmings.
- HOUSE MARTIN (*Delichon urbica*)
3rd of July one individual was flying above the Karupelv River and trying to catch insects. According to bird list we had, this was the fourth observation of this

species in Greenland. Last one was in 1989 and other two in the beginning of this century.

- WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)
Quite common breeder.
- RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)
One pair bred successfully.
- SNOW BUNTING (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)
Very common breeder.
- LAPLAND LONGSPUR (*Calcarius lapponicus*)
One male in June. Breeding area is a little bit southwards from Traill Island.

Mammals:

One WOLF, three POLAR BEARS, about 30-40 MUSKOX, three nests of ARCTIC FOXES and some ARCTIC HARES and COLLARED LEMMINGS. Also three species of seals. The Wolf (white one) was the second observation of this species in the area since it disappeared in the beginning of this century.