

ESKIMO CURLEW. A VANISHING SPECIES? By J.B. GALLOP, T.W. BARRY and E.H. IVERSEN. Regina: Saskatchewan Natural History Society, 1986. 160 p. Maps, illus., tables, photos, bib. Softbound. Cdn\$9.00.

This book, the latest in the special publication series of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, is an attempt to compile the history and biology of the Eskimo Curlew, *Numenius borealis*, largely in the words of the people who were its contemporaries. This historical approach is one of necessity because, like an increasing number of species today, this bird was brought to the edge of extinction about 100 years ago by the thoughtless actions of people. Despite this limitation, however, the authors have done an excellent job of providing not only a valuable historical record, but also the focal point through which present conservation efforts can be directed to save this extremely rare species.

The major part of the text deals with the Eskimo Curlew geographically, beginning with the arctic breeding grounds and followed by fall, winter and spring accounts corresponding to the bird's movements between North and South America. When information is available for any locale, the authors give: (1) an estimate of the number of museum specimens that have existed, (2) a statement of status based on a review of the literature when the species was abundant (1870-90), (3) a listing of all dates found, (4) quotations that relate information on numbers, habitat, behaviour, voice, food, hunting, etc., and (5) a listing of place names reported in the literature but not mentioned in the text. In producing this synthesis, the authors have consulted some 600 papers and have had to make decisions concerning the authenticity of accounts and reliability of identifications. They readily admit that some records used were probably of misidentified Whimbrels, *N. phaeopus*, but also state that their liberal use of sightings gives them no more validity than when they were originally reported.

The remainder of the book is organized into brief sections, including a dedication (to the memory of R.R. MacFarlane, responsible for providing much of what we know about Eskimo Curlew breeding), a foreword (by C.S. Houston), glimpses of the bird (seasonal quotations), acknowledgements (manifold), an introduction, current status (sightings, 1945-85), field identification (compared with the similar Whimbrel and Little Curlew, *N. minutus*), a list of other scientific and common names for the bird, its life history briefly stated and an account of two nest searches for Eskimo Curlews a century apart (the former being MacFarlane's work, the latter the recent efforts of the Canadian Wildlife Service). Five appendixes precede the extensive bibliography.

Overall, the book is extremely interesting to read, both from ecological and historical perspectives. It is clearly written and thoughtfully laid out. The excellent illustrations by A.R. Smith and the photographs of birds and their habitats complement the text. Very few errors were found: Figure 6 appears to be wrongly labelled — the front views of Little Curlew, Eskimo Curlew and Whimbrel should read Eskimo Curlew, Little Curlew and Whimbrel. Maps 5 and 6 are out of order with respect to their page numbers and should be maps 1 and 2. The book lacks an index, and its value as a source of reference may have been increased with the inclusion of one. These are minor quibbles, however, and I strongly recommend the book to anyone with an interest in conservation issues. At Cdn\$9.00 it is excellent value for money.

In his foreword, C.S. Houston asks why the Eskimo Curlew has received so little attention. In contrast to other Canadian endangered species, virtually no money has been spent to study or protect the bird. Could it be, as Houston notes, because its extinction has been treated as a foregone conclusion? Fortunately, numerous recent sightings show that this has not happened yet. The authors of this book have gained our attention; it is now up to us.

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STEF: A BIOGRAPHY OF VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON, CANADIAN ARCTIC EXPLORER. By WILLIAM R. HUNT. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986. 334 p. Notes, bib., index, maps, illus. Hardbound. Cdn\$29.95.

This book is a measure of the fascination Vilhjalmur Stefansson holds as a prophet and controversial figure in arctic exploration. Public controversy and his voluminous writing (indicated in the bibliography) make it difficult to chronicle and explain his very full life and influence. By and large this is a sympathetic treatment of Stefansson and his accomplishments throughout the full range of his life.

Initially Hunt discusses the nature of the explorer/publicist of the period: the desire to reach certain goals as well as desire for public recognition that characterized these men. Driven by passion, ruthless and tenacious, courageous and egotistical, these adventurers captured public imagination. This concept is a key to understanding Stefansson. Interestingly, the study shows how his life intertwined with so many other explorers — Peary, Amundsen, Shackleton, Macmillan, Wilkins and Canadians Bartlett, Camsell, Finnie and Fitzgerald.

Ideas interested Canadian-born, American-educated Stefansson. This was evident at university, including Harvard, where he was a theological student who studied anthropology. Even then he loved public debate; later he found lecturing attractive. After his active life as an explorer, Stefansson's writing and advocacy of northern development reflected his passion for ideas. He was determined to overcome adversity — in schooling or controversy of negative publicity.

After studying diet in ancestral Iceland, in the tradition of shoestring budgets he came to the Canadian Arctic as a researcher in a joint Danish-American expedition. Following the pioneer anthropological method of Boaz, Stefansson spent time learning the Inuit language as well as following Inuit hunters to record techniques and lifestyle. At this time he heard about Victoria Island natives who looked like Europeans.

His imagination fired, when the expedition ended, he quickly organized another with his biologist friend Rudolph Anderson. Initially he continued to perfect his hunting and linguistic abilities, while making perceptive observations on Inuit life, including the negative impact of European traders and missionaries. Alone he travelled east and, by contacts with other natives, eventually in 1910 met the "Blond Eskimo," who were surprised at his ability to survive. Though Hunt suggests his book *My Life With the Eskimo* downplayed his speculation that they were descendants of the lost Greenlanders, fanned by journalists this embroiled him in a controversy that haunted him thereafter. The experience also demonstrated his faith in adapting, something rejected by other explorers and missionaries. And it created the publicity and the public recognition he sought.

Eight months after returning, he organized the government-backed Canadian Arctic Expedition. This was his single command of a large expedition. Increasingly his personal interest shifted from ethnology to classical geographic discovery. Hunt outlines an expedition beset with difficulties. The *Karluk*, a refitted but questionable whaler holding supplies of the Northern Party exploring sea and ice, got locked in and drifted to Siberia, where many scientists were lost despite a heroic rescue by Captain Bartlett. Stefansson's absence hunting contributed to the controversy. This exacerbated already poor relations with Anderson and Geological Survey scientists when as leader he requested supplies. As Diubaldo more fully pointed out, Ottawa officials were never fully reconciled to Stefansson's leadership and plans. Hunt discusses both the *Karluk* affair and charges of desertion or inadequate preparation, and the quarrels with the Southern Party, which Stefansson minimized. Other charges were systematically dealt with in a chapter entitled "Gossip." In this the study is sympathetic to Stefansson.

Nonetheless Stefansson managed to conduct extensive oceanographic studies with the faithful Storkerson. Additionally, using his travelling skills, he managed to discover lands. Hardship, illness and near starvation coupled with his triumphant demonstration of the ability to live off the land sparked public interest.

This ended his active exploration. Despite living to 1962, his activity becomes less important to Hunt than the controversy and ideas with which he dealt. At the peak of his influence, with an almost proprietary sense, he became more of a promoter and propagandist. His influence in Canada, already shaken by quarrels over the results of the Canadian Arctic Expedition and resentment in the civil service, was dealt a further blow by two failed schemes. Although he advocated the domestication of muskox to assist the Eskimo, he sponsored a reindeer-herding scheme on Baffin Island. Using second-hand reports, he ignored, as Jenness pointed out, lack of lichen preferred by reindeer. Stefansson blamed failure on Lapp herders. Hunt does not mention similar proposals in northern Quebec.

More crucial was his "blessing" of a fatal attempt to claim Wrangel Island, based on the *Karluk*. Though Hunt correctly points out the men did not follow his advice, by custom, law and interest, Canada's claim was spurious.

His reputation lay not so much in what he accomplished but in the books he wrote in place of expedition reports. The books were often controversial. Hunt notes that *My Life With The Eskimo*, describing his second expedition, was criticized by Anderson's wife for ignoring her husband's contributions, relegating them to an appendix. Discussion of the "Blond Eskimo" minimized his early explanation of the Greenland origins. In *The Friendly Arctic*, dealing with the CAE but published in 1921, he minimized conflicts, putting others in a less favourable light. The theory of the friendly Arctic was a theme he would always return to. By adapting to conditions he spoke of survival. Hunt notes that was in contrast to the Amundsen-Nansen view of hardship and suffering.

Other books, articles and lectures resulted. He passionately defended Peary's claims. *Adventures of Errors* related several frauds. *Northward Course of Empire* stressed the need for northern development in contrast with the traditional wilderness theory. Controversy followed *New Compass of the World* because an article on the U.S.S.R. angered McCarthyites. His crowning achievement, *Arctic Encyclopaedia*, was cut short when funds were withdrawn.

Though Hunt speculates as to why he was ignored in Canada but not why the U.S. accepted him, Stefansson continued to advise the Americans. He helped plan the Alaska air route, he advised the U.S. Army though Diubaldo suggested the *Arctic Manual* was considered out of date. Stefansson assisted in establishing Dartmouth College's northern program.

There are some errors, from variance in the spelling of Canada's west coast naval base to the publication date of *Arctic Manual*. In commenting on Stefansson's analysis of the discovery of the remains of Andrée's ill-fated balloon attempt to cross the Pole in 1897, Hunt places White Island near Southampton Island, not between Svalbard and Franz Josef Land.

By diaries, articles, books and correspondence, Hunt illuminates Stefansson's many sides: bibliophile, publicist, hard worker, prophet of arctic air and submarine links, independent thinker and actor, weak leader, promoter of northern development. Maps and illustrations allow the reader to follow his progress.

More balanced than LeBourdais, fuller than Diubaldo, it is a biography of an important figure. Hunt does not analyze in detail, except in early contacts, his scientific achievements. Though in 1962 his dietary research was seen as perceptive, Diubaldo suggested his research was superficial. Jenness was more systematic. Yet Hunt notes he could not hate his detractors.

What emerges is a publicist/explorer who helped create interest in the Canadian North.

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ICEBERGS: A BIBLIOGRAPHY RELEVANT TO EASTERN CANADIAN WATERS. Edited by LYNNE M. HOWARD. Environmental Studies Revolving Funds Report No. 030. Ottawa: ESRF, 1986. Softbound. Cdn\$55.

This report was prepared under the auspices of the Environmental Studies Revolving Funds (ESRF) office through a contract to the Arctic Science and Technology Information System (ASTIS) at the Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary. It was published by the ESRF office, which is administered by the Canada Oil and Gas Lands Administration for the Departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa. Funds for ESRF activities are provided from special levies on the oil and gas industry and are dependent on the level of the latter's exploration activities. The year 1986 will long be remembered as marking a major downturn of the Canadian oil and gas industry's activities in the offshore arctic and sub-arctic regions. Therefore the recent appearance of this particular bibliography, directed mainly as it is toward the oil and gas industry, is almost, and certainly unexpectedly, epitaphic. However, a recovery or restructuring of oil prices could easily see an immediate reversal of current research trends and make this bibliography a basic requirement for anyone working in the arctic offshore environment. Nevertheless, there will still be a core of researchers who will need this report.

On first reflection the point of reviewing a bibliography would seem to be abjectly obscure. However, a scan of the 1135 citations presented in this report reveals a basis for some form of constructive review, which I will now attempt.

The book comes in a handy, attractive paperback format, has clear, bold headings that are author oriented and contains concise, useful abstracts of the referenced material. A versatile selection of useful indices is available: subject, geographic, title and serial. At the end of each citation there is a major location code, which enables an interested reader to access the material through inter-library loans. A complete list of relevant libraries and addresses is provided. As the author (editor) states in her introduction, "there are undoubtedly some works which should be in this bibliography but which have been missed. We would ask the reader's help in locating them." There are two omissions worth mentioning. They both refer to iceberg calving from Jakobshavn Gletscher, which is the largest single iceberg-producing glacier in Greenland. The references are Lingle *et al.*, 1981, and Hughes, 1986.

An initial but premature reaction was that *ice islands* had been missed out since they are not specifically mentioned in the Introduction under scope of the bibliography. The subject index does contain the item *ice islands*, but the terminology is not always used correctly. Since the bibliography is meant to be relevant to eastern Canadian waters, it would seem at first sight that the ice islands of the Arctic Ocean have no place here. But this is not so, as we may see from entry 797, the documentation of the drift of the fifth and easternmost fragment of the Ward-Hunt Ice Shelf, which underwent a major calving in 1962. That particular mass of ice (WH-5) initially blocked Robeson Channel before moving south through Kane Basin and Davis Strait. Evidence that this might not have been the only recorded instance of the escape of ice islands from the Arctic Basin through Robeson Channel is provided by Loewe (1971), another reference that was missed. However there is some confusion whether this account truly referred to a piece of Ellesmere Island shelf ice or whether it might have originated in Greenland. This uncertainty is created by an apparent quotation from Franz Boaz's 1885 work that refers to the total thickness of the ice (described then as an iceberg) as being between 100 and 150 m. Loewe considers that the full description "fits that of a typical ice island." Reference to Armstrong *et al.*, 1966, shows that this cannot be the case. However, if one accepts an error in the thickness (which can only have been estimated), then Loewe's conclusion would seem to be correct and the account immediately becomes a valuable piece of information, because it is relevant to the problem of estimating the *return time* for arctic *ice islands* that exit through Robeson Channel. They thus clearly pose a threat to operations in eastern Canadian waters. My discussion