



Article

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The authorship and type localities of bird taxa (Aves) collected during the John Ross 1818 Expedition to the Baffin Bay, northwestern Atlantic Ocean

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Abstract

The 1818 expedition to the Baffin Bay, headed by Captain John Ross, resulted in the description of at least six bird species and four bird genera believed to be new to science. My review of publications relevant to the history of the expedition and to its ornithological outputs resulted in the correction of authorship of several of these names, as follows: The genus *Somateria* (Anatidae) dates from Leach (in Anonymous 1818), not from Leach (in Ross 1819c). The author of the genera *Clangula* (Anatidae) and *Xema* (Laridae) is Ross (1819c), not Leach (in Ross 1819c). The species *Larus sabini* (Laridae) dates from J. Sabine (in Anonymous 1819a), not from J. Sabine (1819). The subspecies of *Lagopus mutus* (Tetraonidae) from western Greenland should be called *Lagopus mutus dispar* Ross, 1820c, not *Lagopus mutus saturatus* Salomonsen, 1950, if recognized. Other corrections consider names which are currently not used as valid.

Key words: Aves, nomenclature, taxonomy, Greenland, 19th century, expeditions, Anatidae, Tetraonidae, Laridae, Stercorariidae, Alcidae

Introduction

In autumn 1817, the British Admiralty decided to send a small expedition "for the purpose of exploring Baffin's Bay, and enquiring into the probability of a North-West Passage" (Ross 1819a, 1820a,b). This expedition, made in summer 1818, failed to find the long-sought Northwest Passage, but succeeded in making a number of geographic and natural history discoveries. The region it visited, Davis Strait and Baffin Bay, was ornithologically little explored in the 1810s. Ornithological observations made there, and specimens of birds collected there, thus evoked considerable interest among ornithologists, and four genera and six species of birds were believed to have been recognized on the basis of these data.

Due to historical reasons (see below), descriptions of some of these nominal taxa were published repeatedly in papers authored by different persons. Accordingly, the authorship and the date and place of the original publication of these names are confused and often incorrectly cited in literature. Below I review the nomenclature of the bird taxa described from specimens collected during the Ross Expedition of 1818, specify type localities and comment on the type specimens where possible.

Nomenclatural decisions follow the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999; hereafter "the Code"). Current taxonomic status of avian taxa follows Dickinson (2003). All dates are written in the Gregorian calendar (Mlíkovský 2010). Geographic coordinates are written using the decimal system.

Expedition's itinerary

The expedition consisted of two ships, *Isabella*, commanded by Captain John Ross (1777–1856), and *Alexander*, commanded by Lieutenant William Edward Parry (1790–1855). The ships sailed from the Thames, London, England, on 25 April 1818, reaching Lerwick in the Shetlands on 30 April, from whence they continued on 3 May. In the last days of May the Expedition entered the Davis Strait and continued along the western shores of Greenland toward the north. The Expedition explored the northern end of Baffin Bay between 75–77°N on 23 July