

console ourselves with the thought that its low price renders it accessible to every one. It is a remarkable literary achievement; fully worthy of the time in which it appears.—F. M. C.

Dwight on the Ipswich Sparrow.¹—Dr. Dwight's memoir doubtless constitutes the most complete biography which has ever been published of any North American bird. Beginning with its discovery by Mr. Maynard at Ipswich, Mass., in 1868, scarcely a fact in the recorded history of this coast-loving Sparrow is omitted, while the author's experience with it in its summer home enables him to present a monograph admirable for its completeness. From 1868 to 1885 the pages of our text-books, ornithological and natural history journals, show an increasing number of records of the occurrence of this species in late fall and winter on our coasts from New Brunswick to Delaware. The fact of its regular presence in numbers was then definitely established and, in the oft-quoted words of Mr. Dutcher, it was "relegated to the commonplace." In 1890 it was recorded by Dr. Rives from Virginia and by Mr. Worthington from Georgia, but until 1894 its summer home was a matter of speculation. Strong evidence was furnished, it is true, that the bird bred on Sable Island. It remained for Dr. Dwight, however, to finally settle the question by visiting the island from May 28 to June 14, 1894.

As a result of his visit he gives us chapters on the 'History of Sable Island,' 'Physical Aspect of Sable Island,' 'Climate,' 'Flora,' 'Mammals,' 'Birds,' and an extended bibliography.

Sable Island is twenty miles long with a maximum width of one mile. It is described as of probably glacial origin and consists of rolling sand-hills sometimes eighty feet in height resembling in almost every particular, save greater size, the stretches of sand dunes to be found along our Atlantic seaboard. In the hollows among the hills, however, "grasses grow luxuriantly in many places, and a large part is carpeted with the evergreen Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum* L.) and Juniper (*Juniperus nana* Willd.) which are very characteristic productions."

Distant eighty-six miles from Nova Scotia, Sable Island is farther from the mainland than any continental island off the coast of eastern North America. Its fauna is, therefore, of peculiar interest. No indigenous mammals were found. Many species of both water and land birds occur as transients, but only ten species were nesting at the time of Dr. Dwight's visit. These he gives in the relative order of their abundance as follows: *Sterna paradisæa*, *Sterna hirundo*, *Ægialitis semipalmata*, *Ammodramus princeps*, *Tringa minutilla*, *Ægialitis meloda circumcincta*, *Sterna dougalli*, *Merganser serrator*, *Anas obscura*, and *Actitis macularia*.

¹ Memoirs of the Nuttall Ornithological Club. No. II. The Ipswich Sparrow (*Ammodramus princeps* Maynard) and its Summer Home. By Jonathan Dwight, Jr., M. D., with a colored plate. Cambridge, Mass. Published by the Club. August, 1895. 4to. pp. 56; Pl. I. \$1.50.

Three pages are devoted to the nine water birds included in this list among which are several species (*e. g.*, *Sterna dougalli*, *Tringa minutilla*, *Ægialitis semipalmata*, and *Æ. meloda circumcincta*) whose presence as breeders was not to be expected, and the succeeding twenty-two pages (pp. 20-42) are given to the biography of the Ipswich Sparrow, the only breeding land bird. Its synonymy, variations in plumage, size, distribution and migration, habits, song, nest and eggs, and food are here treated in detail. Six nests and five sets of eggs, three of four and two of five eggs, are described, showing that in its nidification the bird closely resembles its near ally the Savanna Sparrow.

The Ipswich Sparrow is a permanent resident on Sable Island, occurring in reduced numbers during the winter, and the most important part of Dr. Dwight's paper is his conclusion that Sable Island constitutes the bird's entire breeding range, and that it is there "a good example of an island species, probably related at one time to the Savanna Sparrow of the mainland by ties that cannot now be traced." The Ipswich Sparrow may thus claim the distinction of being the only bird of northeastern North America which illustrates the effects of isolation in an insular home.

Dr. Dwight's memoir is characterized by such thoroughness of research, both in the field and study, as to be practically above criticism. We may, however, add to the synonymy the following records which appear to have been overlooked: *Passerculus princeps* Roosevelt, 'Notes on some Birds of Oyster Bay, Long Island,' 8vo. leaflet, published by the author, March, 1879; Editor, Forest & Stream, XIV, 1880, p. 6 (notice of a paper read before the Linnæan Society by C. H. Eagle, "reviewing our present knowledge of the pallid sparrow (*Passerculus princeps*) and mentioning the capture of two specimens at Rockaway, L. I., January, 1880)."

'Birdcraft' is included in the bibliography on the basis of "Unimportant mention in a popular work," when, in fact, it gives the breeding ground of the Ipswich Sparrow as "Sable Island, Nova Scotia" and describes its song, nest, and eggs!—F. M. C.

Loomis on California Water Birds.¹ — In pursuing his studies of the migration of birds, Mr. Loomis passed the morning of each day in a small boat at from one-third of a mile to ten miles off shore. He justly claims that the phenomena of migration may be more readily observed over the sea than on the land. Aside from other and more obvious reasons, he remarks that "migration over the ocean continues during the daytime to an extent not usually observed on land, resembling, perhaps, more the night migration of land birds." Thus while the birds which pass a given station might not be noted on shore, they do not escape the observer who can maintain a fairly thorough watch over an area enclosed by a circle six

¹ California Water Birds. No. 1. — Monterey and Vicinity from the middle of June to the end of August. By Leverett M. Loomis. Proc. Cal. Acad. Sci., Ser. 2, V, pp. 177-224, 1 map, June, 1895.



Dwight, Jonathan. 1895. "Dwight on the Ipswich Sparrow." *The Auk* 12, 377–378. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4068950>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54232>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4068950>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/88774>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Smithsonian

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.