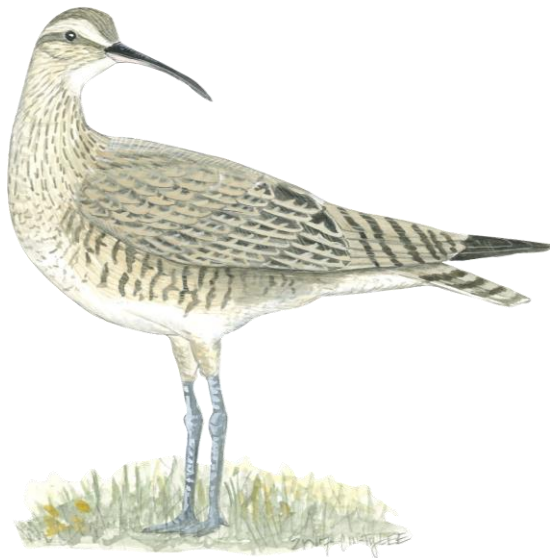

Remembering the Eskimo Curlew



Welcome to this collection of writing entries from the art and writing contest, "Remembering the Eskimo Curlew" held October 2019 - February 2020. Children in grades 1-8 were invited to share their ideas about how they will remember the Eskimo Curlew, a migratory bird that once traveled through Galveston Island in great numbers but is now believed to be extinct.

A sculpture has been erected in Galveston Island State Park to celebrate this bird.

Many thanks to all of the young writers and artists who shared their talents in this competition.

Looking for the Eskimo Curlew

By Charlotte Low, Grade 3

I went looking for the Eskimo curlew, only to find that they are extinct. At first, I was in shock of such a thing! They were such pretty birds, and I felt ashamed of what we did!

A New Telescope

By Clementine Hayes

Hi! My name is Alex. Today is my seventh birthday, and I got a new telescope. The next day I woke up in the middle of the night. I wanted to try my new telescope. When I looked, I saw the Eskimo curlew. I was shocked and happy. And I took care of the bird and her eggs.

Me and the Eskimo Curlew

By Zahra Dhilawala, Grade 3
(Scholarship Winner)

I gaze up as the sky fills with Eskimo Curlews. Through my binoculars, I can see their curved bills and the white speckles on their brown bodies. They are only one foot long, but together they seem gigantic. I quickly check my field guide and jot down *Numenius borealis* – Eskimo Curlew (at least a hundred) in my notebook. Then I turned my attention back to the sky.

Just then I hear a loud sound. I see hunters shooting at the sky. “At the Eskimo Curlews!” I suddenly realize. I feel like yelling “NO!” but what could I possibly do? Unknown to me, way south of here in Argentina, farmers are destroying the winter home these curlews just left. I have no idea that these birds will go extinct soon. When I look up again, the gunshots have stopped, the curlews have scattered, and the sky is mostly clear.

Excited about seeing the curlews, I head home. In the afternoon, me and my family go to a spot where the curlews feed. I watch them probe the ground with their curved bills. The coastal prairie they feed on seems to stretch forever. With my binoculars, I can make out their favorite food, the Rocky Mountain grasshopper. I can also see them eating earthworms and berries.

Looking out, I hope that in the future, Eskimo Curlews are not hunted, and their habitat is not destroyed so that these beautiful birds will last forever. Picking up my pen, I get an idea. I write the first words of a letter to the President, urging him to pass a law to protect all the birds that are in trouble.

Feathered Friends

By Nova Adame, Grade 4

My name is Regenold V. You can call me Reggie. I am an Eskimo Curlew. My friends and I are tired from flying. My friends' names are Georgia, Georgie, and Violet. We fly in from the Arctic tundra.

I see a huge building in construction and behind it is a big wooden figure. It looks nice to rest on. I settle on the flat wooden surface. I begin to close my eyes, but underneath me starts to rumble and a huge car almost runs me over! I do a sign with my fingers that I am ashamed of doing. We fly away to find a safer place to rest than the Mountain Speedway Rollercoaster!

I soon realize that the town I am in is Galveston, Texas. When I tell my friends this news, they are shocked! We find a place called Murdoch's. It is crowded with people. We perch on the roof and peek inside. We hear someone singing. Then we go inside to see who it is, and a large person shoos us out.

I see a lady with a hat that has a bird on it. I fly down onto the hat to find out what kind of bird it is, but a tiny kid shoves me off. The lady doesn't notice what is happening. I went back to the roof. My friends are laughing.

"You thought that was a real bird!" said Georgie.

"No, I did not!" I hollered.

"Did, too!" cried Georgie, Georgia, and Violet at the same time.

We rested on the beach for a couple days, then we took off to the mainland. We went to rest at a farm to eat some bugs.

We were peacefully eating bugs by the tractor when we heard a gunshot. It landed right next to my head! I think it was because the farmer thought we were eating his seeds. My friends and I flew away as fast as we could, and we didn't stop 'till we got to South America!

The End

Note: The building under construction is the Buccaneer Hotel in 1929.

Extinction

By Radiance Crowder, Grade 5
(Scholarship Winner)

When I walk outside my door,
I spot some animals and I'm heartbroken there isn't more.

Extinction is when an animal cannot be found,
And their voices are forever turned down.

Extinction is coming around,
But our hands are not bound.

Extinction can be caused by a person,
And the population will worsen.

Like the Eskimo Curlew,
Extinction can be caused by you.

Pollution and over-hunting,
Now is the time for confronting!
Extinction could even be caused by global warming,
As now the world is transforming.

All animals deserve a chance

To get a chance

At the living dance.

Eskimo Curlew

By Alexis Hawkins, Grade 5

**The Eskimo Curlew is now extinct so what is there left for me?
I feel like the birds that we hear chirp chirp have taken over.**

**The Eskimo Curlew was very important; they even went back
in**

fourth year by year.

**They would even go to Antarctic tundra - now how does that
sound!**

The Eskimo Curlew was an admirable bird of Galveston.

**The Eskimo Curlew was not just called by that name. They
were once called "Doughbird."**

The Eskimo Curlew was special as special as me.

**The Eskimo Curlew was extinct because they were all affected
by a gun.**

That is why they are important.

Bernard and Ally

by Molly Carnes, Grade 6

I would like to introduce you to an amazing bird named Bernard. Bernard was an Eskimo Curlew, a bird about 30 centimeters long, who liked to eat berries, insects, worms, and snails. Bernard has a really cool story.

One warm, spring day Bernard was searching for something delicious to eat when he wandered from the nature preserve into the backyard of a house nearby. He was happily eating some berries that were growing along the fence. Suddenly, one of the backyard chickens that lived there charged at him! He was so surprised that he flew up quickly and got tangled in a bush! Bernard managed to free himself from the bush and flew off onto the fence far away from the chickens. “Whew, that was a close one,” he thought.

Bernard spotted another Eskimo Curlew. He flew over to her and said, “Hi, do you want to fly around with me and eat some snails? I know where they like to hide!” “Yes!” said the other bird enthusiastically. Bernard learned that the bird’s name was Ally and they became great friends and were having a great time until Ally became ill. She said she needed to rest, but Bernard could tell she needed help quickly.

He flew over to a group of people not too far away and got their attention. They followed Bernard to where Ally was lying ill. They knew just what to do! The people scooped Ally up and rushed her to the bird rescue center. It was a long night for Bernard as he waited to see what would happen to Ally. Thankfully, by the morning Ally was as good as new and the people took her back to where they found her. Bernard was waiting for Ally and was so happy to see her. They flew off together and began hunting for insects and berries again.

Bernard and Ally knew they would be friends forever. It was time to keep moving, however. They were migrating north and had rested long enough. They knew they would come back to Galveston again. In fact, the people that rescued Ally were certain that they saw them every spring until one year they didn’t. They looked for them the next year, and the next year, but still no Eskimo Curlews. They often wondered whatever happened to those birds.

Plight of the Eskimo Curlew

By Janie Adame, Grade 7

The Eskimo Curlew, almost extinct,
Is in much more danger than you think.
Their twittering whistles will be no more,
If the farmers shoot them all before
They get a chance to eat the bugs
That make all the farmers' crops dud.
The pretty blue legs that walked the beach,
The strong, shiny wings that never leeches
Anything but strength, from their own bodies.
Never to fly the world at all,
To roost and lay eggs, never again.
What use did we have to kill this bird?
This twelve inch high, beautiful, innocent bird.
An Eskimo Curlew, small as can be.
An Eskimo Curlew, nevermore will we see.

The Eskimo Curlew

By Ariell Calvert, Grade 8

The Eskimo Curlews nested in the tundra of western Arctic Canada and Alaska. They belong to the Scolopacidae family. A Scolopacidae is a type of shore bird. At the moment the Curlews are critically endangered due to the amount of them killed in the early nineteenth century. There was around two million of them killed. There are only about seven thousand individual Curlews left.

The Curlews lack of fear and habit to travel made them an easy target for hunters. They were hunted because they were considered good to eat. They feed on mostly snails, worms, grasshoppers, and berries.

The Eskimo Curlew has not been spotted since 1962 in Galveston Texas. There have been reports of sightings in 1987 and 1996 but none of sightings have been confirmed. The Eskimo Curlew was known as the “doughbird” because of the thick layer of fat developed during migration. The Curlews were put on the endangered list in 1967.

The Last Time

By Jaylen Belive, Grade 8
(Scholarship Winner)

I remember watching the Eskimo Curlew migrate over our town. We couldn't wait for them to fly over. I was just scared that some of the hunters might shoot them while they flew over. The sheriffs were always trying to stop them but they couldn't be everywhere at the same time. More than 2 million of them per year got killed.

The Curlew were flying to Canada because the tundra is where they could raise their young. The Curlew was one of the most numerous shorebirds in North America with a population in the millions. The reason they were dying so fast is because they were being hunted down so that they could be put in pies and eaten, but my question is how could they eat a 1-pound bird and say that's an actual meal?

This bird species looked the same compared to other birds. The only way to tell was by their beaks - the female had a bigger beak than the male, but since they were so small you couldn't really tell, so we just tried to keep our distance..." Here they come!" Guess they came ear- BAAM!, the hunters are here! The sheriffs were trying to spot them but the crowd was so big that you couldn't see anyone.

After a while the gunshots stopped and the Curlew flew on like nothing happened. Now they were on their way to the tundra. They were so pretty and small. They were so small that you couldn't get the best view of them, but you could see their colors, a warm brown, white speckles - the cool thing about them was their legs. The legs of the Curlew were dark grey-blue, dark green, dark brown. The legs seemed more colorful compared to the feathers - how weird. Seeing the Eskimo Curlew flying over was magical. Too bad their population was decreasing each day.

Now 55 years later they are extinct, I couldn't believe that these tiny birds died out so quickly, especially since they were pretty fast. At least I have the memory of such magnificent birds and can tell people my experience of seeing them for the last time.

The Eskimo Curlew Remembered

By Evelyn Adame, Grade 8

April 10th 1962, a group of lucky birders saw the last Eskimo Curlew (*Numenius borealis*) to feed on Galveston shores. In fact the last picture taken of an Eskimo Curlew was on Galveston Island (1962) and the last confirmed sighting after that was of a bird being shot by a hunter, 1963, in Barbados.

This bird, related to the Wimbrel and the Long-Billed Curlew, is only twelve inches tall (about thirty-six centimeters). It nests in the Arctic tundra, making an annual trip to South America for the winter. Though we haven't heard their soft twittering whistles in over fifty years, the Eskimo Curlew hasn't officially been declared extinct but it is, unfortunately, a lost bird.

You may ask, "How could such a harmless bird become so very lost?" I'm sorry to say that countless curlews were shot by hunters and farmers believing that the birds were digging up and eating the seed they planted, when the poor birds were just eating bugs. Another contributing factor was the extinction (through the loss of its habitat) of the Rocky Mountain Grasshopper, a significant food source for the Eskimo Curlew.

A six foot tall statue of the Eskimo Curlew will be the newest edition to the "Lost Bird Project" created by Todd McGrain. Since Galveston was the last place the bird was seen, the statue will be placed at Galveston Island State Park in the spring of 2020, to commemorate our feathered friend, with an unfortunate fate.