

SNOW BUNTING

Plectrophenax nivalis

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

P.n. townsendi

Snow Buntings breed in arctic terrain and winter to north-temperate latitudes throughout the Northern Hemisphere (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1954b, Cramp and Perrins 1994b, AOU 1998). Along the w. N American coast they are rare but regular in California, as far S as the Channel Is (CBRC 2007). A surprising number of individuals have been recorded in winter as vagrants to the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*, representing the southernmost records of this species throughout its range.

The first record was of a first-cycle female collected on *Kure* 10 Mar 1963 (Clapp and Woodward 1968, Woodward 1972; USNM 493358; [HRBP](#) 5485, 5492-5494) and another female was observed there 15-18 Nov 1977 (Rauzon 1978). On *Midway*, individuals were observed during the winter of 1964-1965 ("probably this species"; Clapp and Woodward 1968, Woodward 1972), 5 Feb 1998 (first-cycle female; [HRBP](#) 1173-1176, published *AB* 52:262), and 1 Oct 2006 ([HRBP](#) 5495 published *NAB* 61:164). At *French Frigate* one was observed 9-15 Nov 1979 (*E* 41:78).

The specimen has been identified as *P.n. townsendi* (Clapp and Woodward 1968, PP examination), which breeds in the w. Aleutian, Pribilof, and adjacent Russian Is, and therefore is the most expected subspecies to reach the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The other individuals could not be confirmed as this subspecies; it is possible that *nivalis* of Europe and most of N America (including most of Alaska), or *vasowea* of Siberia and e. Russia, could also occur in the Hawaiian Islands.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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<http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>