

BIRDS OF SABLE ISLAND, N.S.

By W. E. SAUNDERS.

Sable Island lies about sixty miles south of the nearest coast of Nova Scotia, and 150 miles a little southeast, from Halifax. Most people who have any idea at all about Sable Island think of it as a desert sandbar, over which shaggy ponies glean a scanty subsistence from the tough native grasses and on whose shore many lives have been sacrificed by shipwreck during the past three hundred years ; but I viewed the island from an ornithological standpoint, and as usual the point of view made all the difference in the world. Instead of being a desert island on which there was scarcely anything to interest one, it had for several years been known to me as the only home in the world of the Ipswich sparrow, and so far as I knew only one ornithologist had enjoyed the privilege of seeing this bird during the season of housekeeping. It is called the Ipswich sparrow from the fact of the first specimen having been killed by C. J. Maynard near Ipswich, Mass. Had its life history been fully known when it was named it would of course have been called the Sable Island sparrow, and such should be its name now, for not only is Sable Island the only breeding ground in the world, but an island upon which no other land bird breeds. When an ornithologist has an opportunity of visiting a bird whose summer home is so little known, there is small wonder that he should forget all about the reputation of the island as a desert and think only of the rare treasure, ornithologically-speaking, which is to be obtained there.

So it may be imagined that I very gladly accepted the invitation to be one of the party that was to reach Sable Island on May 16, and remain till the 23rd to make some experiments in planting the island with forest trees ; and looking back on our trip it must be said that not only were my own expectations of enjoyment more than realized, but even other members of the party who had no great expectations were very loath indeed to leave when the last day came.

More than forty persons have their constant residence there, and the men of these families are employed in the work of the life saving stations and the two lighthouses. Every morning and