

**Great Auk** *Pinguinus impennis* (unknown, 0, 0). **RV** Extinct.

(Bred Baffin Island, Gulf of St. Lawrence across the northern Atlantic, including Iceland, Norway and the British Isles).

A flightless species that is now extinct. Historically appears to have been abundant and its remains have been discovered in kitchen middens at White Park Bay, County Antrim at the end of the last century. *Knowles* 1891. Two claimed at Belfast Lough in 1835 can not be verified although Thompson (vol. III, p. 239) had no doubts about their provenance.

Great Auk formally bred on rocky, isolated islands with easy access to the shoreline. The nearest colonies were on Papa Westray (Orkney Islands) and St. Kilda (about 40 miles west of Scotland). It wintered off the coasts of North America as far south as New England and Europe as far south as northern Spain. Their bones have been found in Florida, although they may have been brought there by humans, rather than naturally. It was initially killed in large numbers for food and eggs by local inhabitants and later for its feathers. The last bird in Britain was captured in June 1840 on St. Kilda. In 1844 the last known pair were killed and their egg destroyed at Eldey Island, Iceland. The last live bird was seen on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland in 1852.