Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 26: Snowy Owls Aboard The Louis?

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At approximately 71° N, 132° W, the *CCGS Louis S. St-Laurent* left the ice cover of the Beaufort Sea and entered an endless view of deep blue
crashing against the hull gave way to a more peaceful soundscape: the sloshing of water, the humming of the engine, the sweep of wind across

In this tranquil seaborne din, the intercom of the *Louis* piped with a surprise announcement.

Attention all crewmembers, attention all crewmembers. Two Snowy Owls have been spotted on the port side of the ship.

Work and conversations came to an immediate halt. Few birds have been spotted throughout the expedition, and those that have been observe
species known to winter on the Beaufort Sea.

Snowy Owls roost in the tundra. They feed primarily on small land-dwelling rodents like lemmings and voles. When wintering, the birds frequent
presence 120 nautical miles from the closest coastline came completely unexpected.

A female Snowy Owl flies alongside the *Louis* and lands on the ship's deck.

One male and one female flew alongside the ship. The male Snowy Owl appeared almost entirely white, while black streaked the female's pluma

The birds' behavior suggested they had been flying without a chance to rest for quite some time. They circled the ship and surveyed safe landing
side of the ship to provide an open, undisturbed area for landing.

The birds appeared disoriented and tired. When the male landed on the helicopter deck, he remained still and occasionally ruffled his feathers. H
presumably looking for his mate, who was nowhere to be seen.

A female Snowy Owl on the ship's deck.

A male Snowy Owl rests on the helicopter before descending and landing.

If owls seldom go out to sea and they weren't delivering messages to wizard oceanographers predestined for Hogwarts, then what were they doi of land? The sheer distance of their journey suggests additional forces sent them so far away. The trip was not deliberate.

The most likely cause of their forced migration was a violent windstorm that powered through the Kugluktuk region earlier this week. Winds of up helpless birds to sea.

As one shipboard biologist hypothesized, once out of sight of the shoreline with only the sun, moon, and stars to use for navigation, the birds bec

For the birds, their respite aboard the *Louis* was much needed. For the humans on board, their presence reminded everyone of the Arctic's biolo

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