

BIRD WATCHERS BRAVE WIND; SEE PTARMIGAN, SNOW BUNTING

Early-rising neighbors of the Leonard Peyton's in College saw some unusual traffic beginning at 5:45 a.m. on March 26 as 16 members and guests of the Fairbanks Bird Club gathered there to start their first organized hike of the 1966 season.

Led by George Newell, the Club's President, the group drove to the top of Ester Dome to begin the walk. Facing a 20-knot wind, the bird watchers followed the west ridge of the Dome, looking for ptarmigan and other open-country birds.

After nearly an hour a lone rock ptarmigan flushed from its shelter in a thicket of dwarf birches. It stood in plain view for several minutes, its winter plumage gleaming even whiter than the windblown snow, before flying across the ridge.

Bob Weeden, who has studied ptarmigan around interior Alaska for several years, said the ptarmigan probably was on his way northeast to breeding grounds in or near the White Mountains.

Another migrant bird, a snow bunting, flashed across in front of the group as the bird-watchers returned to

their cars. This bird, a black-and-white relative of the sparrows, was in the vanguard of a heavy influx of snow buntings expected shortly in the Interior.

By 9:00 the windblown and rosy-faced hikers were ready for chow—which they got in abundance at the home of Judy and Bob Weeden on Grenac Road.

The Club plans to hold weekly bird walks, in conjunction with the Fairbanks Garden Club, beginning April 23. The annual migration of waterfowl should be well under way at that time.

On May 7 and 8 the Club will sponsor a trip to Tok, where cranes, hawks, and smaller birds concentrate in their passage from interior Canada to Alaskan and Siberian breeding grounds.

On June 18 and 19 the Club plans another special outing, this time to Eagle Summit on the Steese Highway. The group has sponsored this trip twice before and hopes to make it a traditional trip.

The fine display of alpine flowers is at its peak in late June, and many birds rarely seen in Fairbanks are commonly found on their nesting grounds at the Summit.