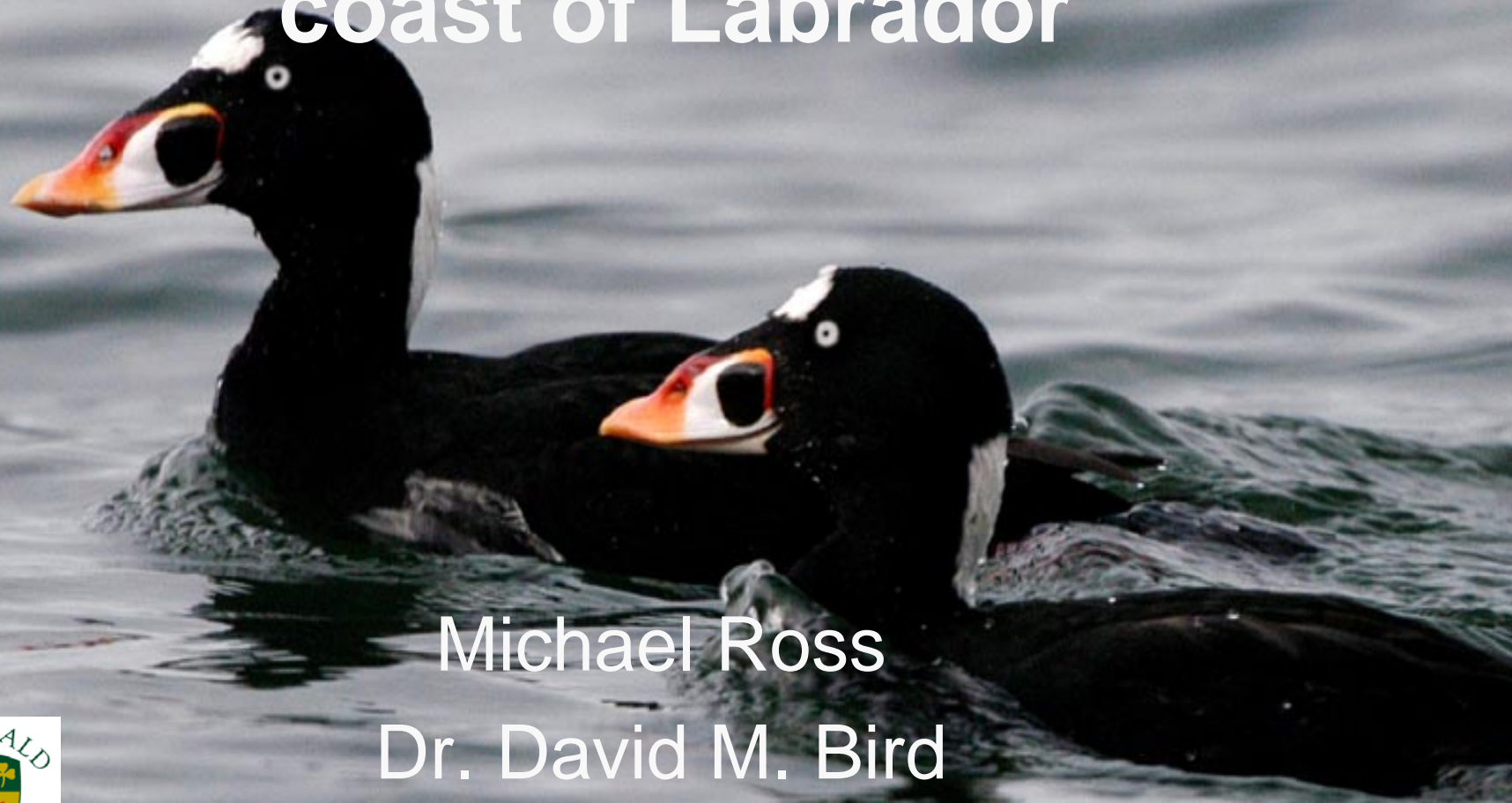


Moult ecology of Surf Scoters (*Melanitta perspicillata*) off the coast of Labrador



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Moult

- **Scoters undergo synchronous wing moult**
 - Flightless for period of ~6 weeks
 - Decreased mobility, increased predation risk
- **Behaviour and ecology during moult one of the least documented aspects of Surf Scoter biology**

(King 1974, Murphy and King 1984)



Objectives

1. To compile time-activity budgets
2. To document habitat use
3. To determine behavioural effects of disturbance



Methodology

Study Site

- Research conducted around Nain, NF
- Igloosiatik Island



<http://atlas.gc.ca/>



Igloosiatik Island

Methodology, cont'd...

Behaviour – Time-activity budgets

- Scan-sampling of entire flock
 - Note activity of 50 individuals within a flock
 - Locomotion, comfort, loafing, foraging, alert, social
 - Scans distributed throughout moult
 - Three different time blocks
 - Morning, afternoon, evening



(Altmann 1974, Maxson and Pace 1992)

Preliminary Results

Early Moul

- Foraged from sunrise to 11am and from 4pm to sunset
- Loafed from 11am – 4pm
- Birds clustered



Late Moul

- No specific behaviour pattern
- Birds scattered

Conclusions

Evident change in behaviour during molting period

Possibly to maximize energy conservation during molt

Possibly to minimize chances of predation



Future Work

Disturbance

- **Voisey's Bay shipping route**
- **No design set out**
 - Systematic disturbance to note effect on birds
 - Variations in distance, time and other factors



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