

# **NOTES ON THE KURIL ISLANDS**

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Notes on the Kuril Islands by H. J. Snow

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BY  
CAPTAIN H. J. SNOW, F.R.G.S.

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.  
1897.

## NOTE.

By PROFESSOR JOHN MILNE, F.R.S.

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THE only maps in which very many of the places mentioned in the following notes can be found are the Admiralty Charts, numbered 2128 and 2405.\* Any one who compares these notes and charts, the originals of which were drawn by Captain H. J. Snow, with the scanty literature and imperfect maps previously existing, will at once recognize how very much has been accomplished by the patience and perseverance of an individual. New rocks and shoals have been indicated, whilst supposed dangers of a like character have been removed. The position of islands have been corrected relatively and in longitude, whilst anchorages, tide rips, watering-places, sea-lion and seal rookeries, have been located and described. The shortest route between Vancouver and certain ports on the Asiatic coast has been freed from uncertainties and dangers, while Canadian-Pacific steamers, whalers, and a large fleet of pelagic hunters have now harbours of refuge opened which may be approached with comparative safety. In short, after shipwrecks, risks, and dangers, the escapes from which have often seemed incredible, independently of the geological, natural history, and general scientific notes which have been collected, Captain H. J. Snow, whilst sacrificing by his publications his own professional interests as a hunter, has entitled himself to recognition from all who navigate and patrol the fog-bound shores of the rocky Kurils.

SANDS, NEWPORT, I.W.,  
October 19, 1896.

\* Appended to this memoir.



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE Kuril Islands being but little known geographically or otherwise, the following notes may perhaps be of some small value.

They are the outcome of many visits, extending over a number of years, in the course of which every island has been visited, and each one circumnavigated many times.

The remarks upon the physical features of the islands, the climate, winds, currents, inhabitants, fauna and flora, are all from personal observations. For a few general particulars as to their discovery, annexation by Russia, eruptions of volcanoes, etc., I am indebted to various authorities.

The heights of the mountains given are from sextant observations, and are generally the result of an average of a number of sights, taken at various times, and at different distances; so they may, I think, be taken as approximately correct.

On the charts \* accompanying these notes the positions and forms of many of the islands will be found to differ considerably from any hitherto published.

These maps, although not absolutely correct, will I trust be sufficient for all practical purposes of navigation.

Many of the bays, capes, islets, and mountains of the Kurils, not being named on any published charts, in describing them I have called them by the names by which they are generally known to the hunters frequenting the islands.

H. J. SNOW.

JAPAN,  
1885.

\* By permission of the Hydrographer, the Admiralty Charts of the Kuril Islands, with Captain Snow's corrections, accompany this memoir.





# NOTES ON THE KURIL ISLANDS.

By CAPTAIN H. J. SNOW, F.R.G.S.,

HOLDER OF GRANT AND DIPLOMA FOUNDED BY ADMIRAL RACK.

## I.

### HISTORY OF THE OCCUPATION OF THE ISLANDS.

THE Kuril Islands were discovered by De Vrees, a Dutch navigator, in 1634. They are also said to have been discovered in 1654 by a merchant named Taras Stadukin, who sailed from the Kolyma River. He passed through Bering Strait, and followed the coast of Kamchatka, doubling the southernmost cape, and making the discovery of the Kurils.

In 1711 the Russians first invaded the islands, and in 1736 all those to the north of Yotorup became subject to Russia.

In 1738 Spanberg sailed with three small vessels to examine the Kurils, and wintered in Kamchatka.

In 1766-7 a voyage was made amongst them to collect a fur-tax, and in 1795 the Russian-American Company established a factory on Urup.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Japanese established themselves on Yotorup, and in 1806-7 the Russians made descents on that island.

In November, 1830, the Russian-American Company took formal possession of the Kurils.

In 1875 all the Kurils north of Yotorup were handed over to Japan by Russia, in exchange for the southern part of Saghalin.

In 1884 the Japanese government removed the few remaining Kurilsky Ainu to the island of Shikotan, thus leaving the islands from Urup to Shumshir without a single inhabitant.

## II.

## PHYSIOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF THE ISLANDS.

ALTHOUGH these islands, with the exception perhaps of the two southernmost, Yedorup and Kunashir, are never likely to be of much commercial importance, they are of interest as forming part of the long line of volcanic vents extending along the western side of the Pacific Ocean from Northern Kamchatka, down that peninsula, through the Kurils, Yezo, and Japan, to the Philippines.

Professor John Milne, F.R.S., of the Imperial University of Japan, our great authority on earthquakes and volcanoes, has published some notes on the Kurils which he made in 1878, when on a flying visit to these islands, which notes were supplemented by others made on one or two subsequent visits to Yedorup and Kunashir.\*

The Kuril chain of islands extends in almost a straight line in a north-east direction, from the east coast of Yezo to the southern extremity of Kamchatka, a distance of about 630 geographical miles. This line may be regarded as a line of weakness in the Earth's crust, out of which, at fairly equally spaced intervals, volcanic materials have been ejected to form islands. Parallel with the main fissure, on its western side, is a second line of vents at wider intervals, and apparently of more recent origin. This line runs through Alaid, Shirinki, Makanrushi, Ekarma, Chirinkotan, Baikoke, and Makanruru to the volcanoes on the peninsulas standing out from the north-west coast of Yedorup (which, from appearances, were once separated from that island), and across to the Sirotoko peninsula of volcanoes forming the north-east point of Yezo.

The islands nearest to Yezo—Kunashir and Yedorup—are evidently the oldest, and at one time may have been connected with Yezo, their fauna and flora being identical. Next in age,

\* *Trans. Geol. Soc.*, vol. ix. pt. ii. 1886; *Geolog. Mag.*, Dec. 2, vol. vi. and vol. vii.