

# Birding Nova Scotia

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BIRDING NOVA SCOTIA





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by  
Members  
of the  
Nova Scotia Bird Society



Edited by  
J. Shirley Cohrs

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
CANADA

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

This new 1991 Edition of **Birding Nova Scotia** not only brings up to date the Second Edition (1984), but includes many new birding routes written by those specializing in the areas covered, a new list of Nova Scotia birds which gives seasonal abundance of each species, and a bird-finding index for easy reference.

With all this new information, the advice given in the original publication of 1968 is still valid--and of great importance: "stick to the older, scenic routes; in fact, seek out the smallest roads and slowest pace possible for the most rewarding results."

Good birding,

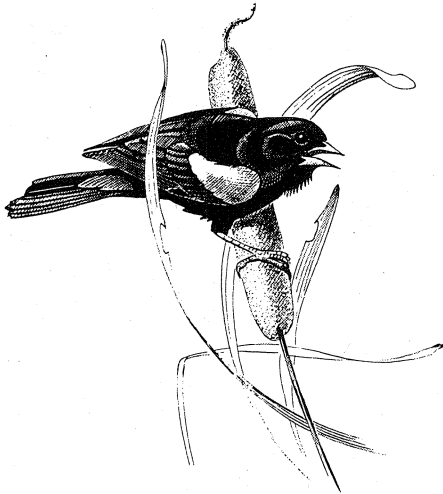
J. Shirley Cohrs, Editor.



## INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been prepared from the records of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, for people planning a trip to the province in search of birds. It is to be used in conjunction with a highway map, obtainable at any Tourist Bureau and also many local service stations. In the back of this booklet is a list of the birds which have been found in Nova Scotia, updated in 1991.

Nova Scotia is about 350 miles long and 50 to 100 miles wide (about 583 by 83 to 167 km). Being a peninsula, the coast is nowhere hard to reach, and for the most part, it is easy to get near enough to the birds to see them with or without binoculars. There are many paved highways and byways from which branch small gravel or dirt roads, leading down to the shore or into the woods. Even among the hardwood stands the trees are not lofty, and visibility is quite good. If you are a bird caller, you will have no problems in the country--our birds are unsophisticated, from the Raven to the Wren.





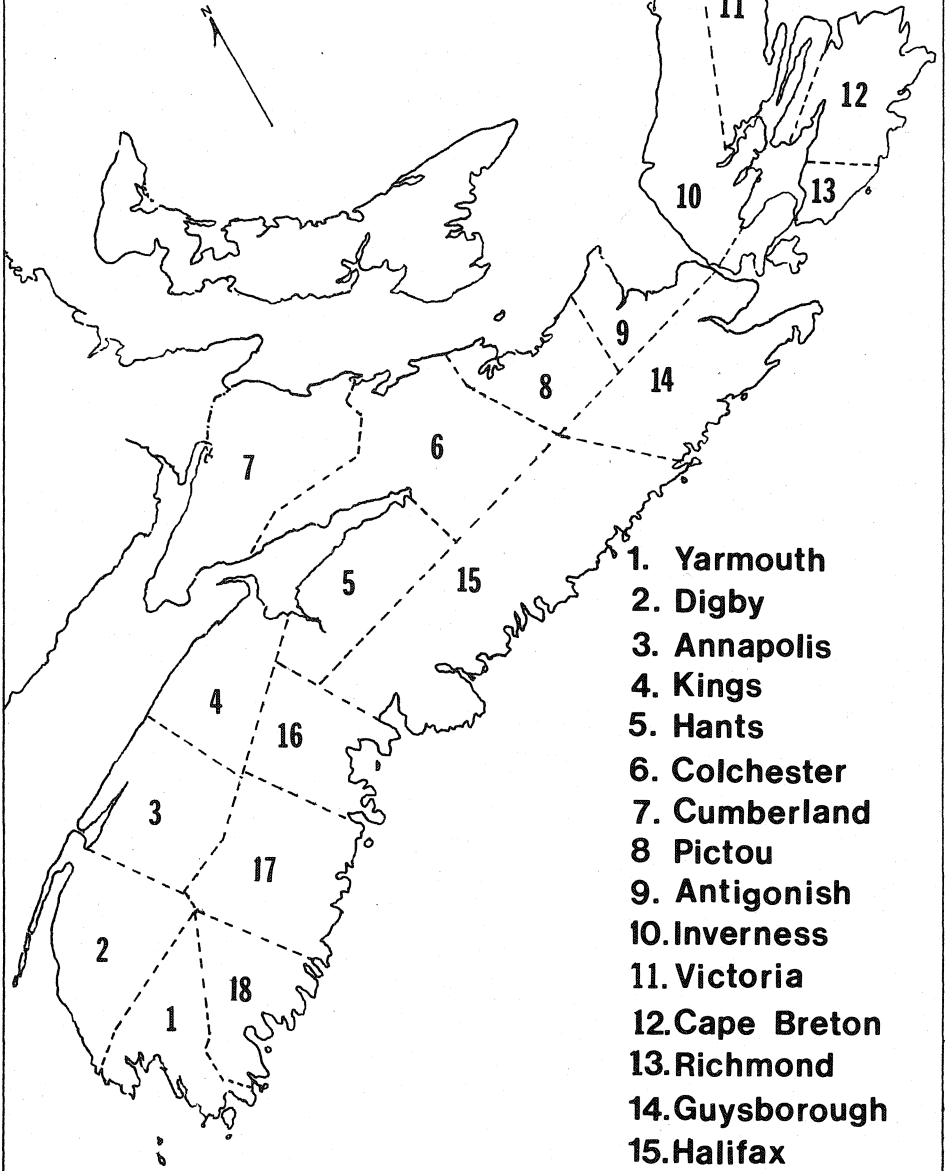
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**COVER:** by Bob Dickie

# Nova Scotia Counties

0 20 40 60 80 100 kilometres  
0 20 40 60 miles

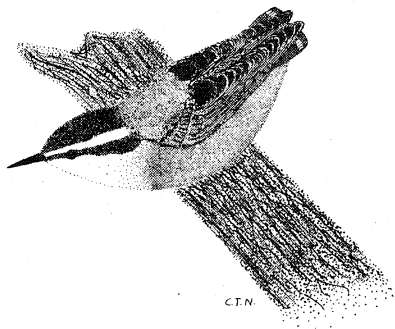


- 1. Yarmouth
- 2. Digby
- 3. Annapolis
- 4. Kings
- 5. Hants
- 6. Colchester
- 7. Cumberland
- 8. Pictou
- 9. Antigonish
- 10. Inverness
- 11. Victoria
- 12. Cape Breton
- 13. Richmond
- 14. Guysborough
- 15. Halifax
- 16. Lunenburg
- 17. Queens
- 18. Shelburne



## WHEN TO FIND THE BIRDS

Visitors usually plan their trips to coincide with summer holidays, June through September. By the first of June, our migratory birds have mostly returned, and those nesting here will still be in breeding plumage, the vocal ones singing until the end of that month. This is the time of year to visit wooded areas, particularly in the early morning, to watch and listen to such birds as the Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-throated Sparrow and the Wood Warblers, twenty-two of which are known to nest here.



Keep in mind that it is apt to be cool in June, and swamps and brooks may be brimming, so coats and high boots are indicated, not to mention insect repellent.

Ducks start incubating in April, and broods are well advanced by mid-May, but some will still be in convoy on the lakes in June and later. The commonest are the American Black Duck, both species of teal and the Ring-necked Duck. In addition to these, many species of ducks and other water birds now breed in the Amherst bog: Gadwalls, Northern Pintails, the American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck; the Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot and Common Moorhen. Common Goldeneye breed in Cape Breton, and Common, Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers can be found breeding locally throughout the province.

In July, it may be hot during the day but the long balmy evenings can be delightful, with the songs of the White-throated Sparrow and the Hermit Thrush still echoing across the inland lakes. Along the roadsides and in the woods you are most likely to hear the incessant chattering of greedy nestlings and fledglings, plus admonitory chirps from harassed parent birds. For those so inclined, this is a good time to brush up on alarm calls.

Early July is the best time to visit the islands off Cape Breton, which are sanctuaries for such breeding birds as petrels, cormorants, eiders, the Razorbill, Black Guillemot and the Atlantic Puffin. If you wait until August you may be disappointed, as very few of these birds will be in evidence.

About the middle of July shorebirds appear, returning from the Arctic, and begin to congregate on the mudflats and beaches along the many miles of mostly rugged coastline. It may be foggy in the morning but usually clears by mid-day. Again, it can be cool directly in the Atlantic breezes even in July, so a sweater and sneakers or the like for rock walking, should replace the cold weather coats and high boots.

By August, the weather becomes more settled and usually remains so straight through October, often our loveliest month, with autumn colour flaming, but with of course, a diminishing bird population. Some of the migrants start leaving in August, although September is the busiest month in this respect. In late September and early October, it is a real experience to visit the islands off the south-western tip of the province, where many birds congregate before their long ocean hop. As in the spring, they seem so concerned with their own affairs that they are indifferent to human approach and can be observed very close at hand.

The migration of most ocean-going birds may be described as feeble off Nova Scotia coasts in spring. In the summer you are likely to see only Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, Common and Arctic Terns and the occasional Osprey. Fall is the time to set up the telescope on beaches and headlands and look out to sea. Bonaparte's Gulls gather in the estuaries from late August through November; Ring-bills appear from September through October, and a few stay all winter. Common Black-headed Gulls may appear in September, and so stay all winter, notably in Halifax Harbour, Cole Harbour and most abundantly at Glace Bay. The white-winged gulls, Glaucous and Iceland, are around from November to March. Kittiwakes are seldom seen close in but are common offshore in winter.

By mid-October, both species of Tern and the Osprey are long gone, but the Common Loon is coming to salt water and a few Red-throats appear, as do the first of the Horned Grebes. Great Blue Herons are concentrated in good places in the shallows, often in large numbers. Leach's Storm-Petrels, usually far out, occasionally come into view, as does the straggling Northern Gannet. Latterly, there have been many reports of gannets flying offshore near Brier Island, Digby County, Cranberry Head, Yarmouth County, and at various points off the South Shore in March and April as well. Double-crested and Great Cormorants are both migrating, Canada Geese are flying in considerable numbers, and the American Black Duck and Green-winged Teal migration is in full swing, a few Blue-winged Teal among them. Eiders and all three Scoters are still going strong, and in Cumberland County, the Greater Scaup and Goldeneye will go through until Northumberland Strait freezes over. These two latter species are not usually seen on the Atlantic coast until January, when flocks begin to build up in the inlets. Oldsquaw and a few Harlequin show in the breakers late in October; Bufflehead start to collect in sheltered water by late November, some years building up to flocks of many hundreds.

This information is given in some detail as we have found visitors disappointed at not finding the above-mentioned species here in summer. The local breeders are present of course, but must be looked for in their special habitats (description to follow in the text). The ice-pack really does break up before high summer.



## WHERE TO FIND THE BIRDS

The principal points of entry to Nova Scotia are Digby, Yarmouth, Halifax, the Sydneys, Caribou and Amherst. Yarmouth, Halifax and the Sydneys may be reached by plane as well as boat; Digby and Caribou are ferry terminals, while the sole overland route crosses the border from New Brunswick at Amherst.

We will now take you around the province, pointing out the general terrain and the birds to be encountered there. Following the tour is a collection of suggested BIRDING ROUTES and "HOT SPOTS". These are in some detail and were written by members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society most familiar with the areas in question.

### YARMOUTH TO HALIFAX BY WAY OF THE ANNAPOLIS VALLEY

Arbitrarily, we shall start at Yarmouth, where Highway No. 101 and old Route 1 take off for Halifax via Digby and the Annapolis Valley. The visitor may arrive in Yarmouth either early in the morning after an all night voyage from Portland, Maine, or in the afternoon, following a six hour trip from Bar Harbour across the Bay of Fundy. If the day is fog-free he will probably have seen SOOTY and GREATER SHEARWATERS, LEACH'S and WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS (hard to distinguish from the deck) and NORTHERN GANNETS--mostly immatures. The same voyage, if made from fall to spring, should yield other pelagics as well, such as NORTHERN FULMARS, RED and RED-NECKED PHALAROPES, KITTIWAKES, RAZORBILLS, MURRES, DOVEKIES and PUFFINS.

Around the town itself, any time after mid-July, when the shore-bird migration is on, the flats and beaches on both sides of Yarmouth Harbour are resting and feeding grounds for SEMIPALMATED and BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, RUDDY TURNSTONES, WILLETS, both species of YELLOWLEGS, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS and PEEP (LEAST, SEMIPALMATED and WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, and at the height of migration, DUNLINS). Flocks of LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER are by no means uncommon in August and early September in the pasturelands bordering the town, and BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS show up occasionally. (See Yarmouth County, Page 13)

North of Yarmouth on Route 1, along by St. Mary's Bay and the Bay of Fundy, ponds, marshes and beaches provide a good shore and marsh bird area, almost up to Digby. Just short of this town, Route 217 turns off to the left for Digby Neck. This long peninsula is a main southward route for hawks and passerines, and from late August through September Brier Island at its western tip often holds fantastic numbers and a great variety of migrants, congregated there waiting for favourable flying weather.

At Digby, the ferry crosses the Bay of Fundy to Saint John, New Brunswick, and passengers aboard the ferry may see the same pelagic species as on the crossings from Bar Harbour and Portland to Yarmouth. The town of Digby is situated on the Annapolis Basin, which is a resort area, but closely backed by wooded country well worth exploring. The Basin itself is, at times, a haven for Day Ducks, particularly BUFFLEHEADS, present in hundreds in some years. (See Digby County, Page 16)

Beyond the Basin, Routes 1 and 1A lead into the Annapolis Valley, which is one of the principal agricultural areas in the province. Up the Valley road the woodland birds give

way to such farm and orchard species as: RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, EASTERN KINGBIRD, four species of SWALLOWS, BOBOLINK, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, SAVANNAH and CHIPPING SPARROWS. (See Annapolis County, Page 20)

The Valley is bounded on either side by ranges of low hills (elevation of 600 to 850 feet) which are dignified by the names of North and South Mountains. These are heavily clothed with mixed conifers and deciduous trees, and harbor a woodland bird population. The North Mountain, which is continuous with Digby Neck, is apparently the main departure route for many hundreds of hawks, especially the BROAD-WINGED during late September and early October.

An evening walk up the North Mountain in the vicinity of Granville Ferry is likely to be rewarded by a chorus of VEERYS; and for anyone inclined for their company, a skillful hoot may bring an answer from one or two BARRED OWLS. PILEATED WOODPECKERS are fairly common in the same area and will sometimes, believe it or not, come to the owl caller. The characteristic hawks of the Valley region are the NORTHERN HARRIER and the AMERICAN KESTREL. Lofty shade trees in the Valley towns offer favourite nesting places for the NORTHERN ORIOLE, country road bridges to the EASTERN PHOEBE and open farm fields to the KILLDEER. (See Kings County, Page 22)

At Windsor, Route 1 crosses to Halifax, and the character of the country changes quite abruptly. In the Ardoise Hill district, the mixed woodland habitat is replaced by a predominately coniferous stand and a thin, sour soil covers the slate and granite substratum. Here the GRAY JAY, PINE GROSBEEK and BOREAL CHICKADEE are common, and BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS are frequently seen. SPRUCE GROUSE, always chancy birds, may be found if the observer follows any of the numerous wood roads leading off the main road. Also to be found nesting in this type of woodland are YELLOW-BELLIED and OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS, and MOURNING WARBLERS; and possibly to be encountered, a pair of GOSHAWKS or a SHARPSHIN. During periods of their abundance, RED CROSSBILLS favour this area, often found "gravelling" at old railway sidings, as may be other finches such as SISKINS, PURPLE FINCHES and GOLDFINCHES.



#### HALIFAX AND ENVIRONS

With Halifax City as headquarters, several side trips to the surrounding area are worthwhile. A pelagic trip out of Halifax Harbour offers a possibility of SHEARWATERS, PETRELS, GANNETS and PHALAROPEs in addition to the inshore species of GULLS and TERNS.

From late fall to early spring, the docks along the waterfront or the sewer outfalls around the shores of Bedford Basin are good places to observe close at hand GLAUCOUS, ICELAND, GREAT BLACK-BACKED, HERRING, RING-BILLED and BLACK-HEADED GULLS. For the past year or two, LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS have tended some of these outfalls. (See Halifax County, Page 28)

HALIFAX TO CAPE BRETON  
BY WAY OF  
TRURO, AMHERST, PICTOU AND ANTIGONISH

Route 2, formerly the sole overland route between Nova Scotia and the rest of the continent, begins at Halifax, passes through Truro along the north shore of Cobequid Bay to Parrsboro, thence northeast to Amherst and across the Tantramar Marsh into New Brunswick. An interesting side trip between Halifax and Truro can be made by turning left from Route 2 at Elmsdale on to 214, leaving this at the Cheese Factory Corner, and following a paved road through Gore and thence through Kennetcook via 354 to Noel, on the shore of Cobequid Bay. From Noel, the road turns right along the coast to Maitland and then follows the west bank of the Shubenacadie River (215) to the village of Shubenacadie, back on Route 2.

This is hunter's country. RUFFED GROUSE, and RING-NECKED PHEASANTS are abundant; the marshes may yield AMERICAN BITTERNS, both species of TEAL, and AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS. SORA and rails are a good possibility and the YELLOW RAIL has been reported at Noel. PIED-BILLED GREBES and RING-NECKED DUCKS nest on the woodland lakes: AMERICAN WOODCOCK breed in the alder thickets and the winnowing of the COMMON SNIPE can be heard overhead on any early summer day. SWALLOWS, BOBOLINKS, REDWINGS and COWBIRDS are abundant in the open lowlands and SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS may be flushed in the salt marshes. RED-TAILED HAWKS, though generally distributed throughout the wooded parts of the province, can be expected with fair certainty in this region. As at Grand Pre, large flocks of HORNED LARKS and SNOW BUNTINGS with usually a few LAPLAND LONGSPURS among them can be seen here in the fall.

Another side trip between Halifax and Truro can be made, to the Musquodoboit Valley. Turn right from Route 2 at Lantz, follow 224 to Upper Musquodoboit, travel by gravel road (may be paved by now) through Dean to Newton Mills on 336, and return on 289 through Middle Stewiacke to Brookfield, back on Route 2. This country is a mixture of farm and woodland, some of which is predominately hardwood. YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS vie here with NORTHERN FLICKERS for the distinction of being the commonest woodpecker. PILEATED and BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS can also be expected. Around the shores of Lake Egmont, the Department of Lands and Forests erected a number of nest boxes for WOOD DUCKS and some of these have been tenanted. At Dollar Lake in the mature evergreens, the BAY-BREASTED WARBLER is probably the most numerous of this family, and BLACK-THROATED BLUES and OVENBIRDS are not uncommon in the hardwood stands. Please see Truro area, page 39

Beyond Truro, Highway 104 turns inland at Glenholme and proceeds to Amherst through the Wentworth Valley, which lies between hardwood covered hills rising to a height of 1,100 feet. On the mountainsides HAWKS and PILEATED WOODPECKERS can again be expected, and GREAT HORNED OWLS are fairly common.

About four miles from Amherst, a paved road leads south across the railway tracks to the entrance of the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary ( A.P.B.S.). This and the surrounding territories (referred to as the Amherst bog) have become a fabulous breeding ground for ducks and water birds. To the BLACK, RING-NECKED DUCK and both species of TEAL, which formerly bred here, recently have been added the GADWALL, COMMON PINTAIL, AMERICAN WIGEON, NORTHERN SHOVELER and RUDDY DUCK; also, the PIED-BILLED GREBE, AMERICAN COOT and COMMON MOORHEN. CANADA GEESE are regular in migrations, and many land birds occur on the wooded slope west of the ponds at A.P.B.S. Please see Amherst and area, page 42

From Amherst, old Route 6, the Sunrise Trail, leads to Pugwash on the Northumberland Strait and thence along the shore to Pictou. There is good birding in season all along this shore and it is hard to say that one place is better than another.

In many places the shore is easily accessible from the main road; in others it may be reached by branch roads, mostly gravel, which often traverse salt marshes or skirt brackish lagoons before reaching the shore itself.

The flats at the mouth of Wallace Bay are very likely places to see HUDSONIAN GODWITS in July and August, up to fourteen having been seen there at times. It is also an excellent place for most other shorebird species in August and September.

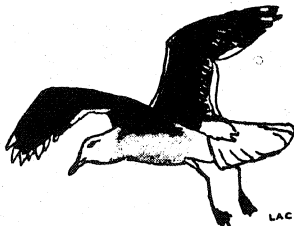
BRANT in the spring, CANADA GEESE, GOLDENEYES and GREATER SCAUP in the fall and BONAPARTE'S GULLS in the late summer are abundant in this general area; where CASPIAN TERNS also are a possibility, on their southbound migration.

Beyond Pictou, the traveller may join the Trans Canada Highway at New Glasgow; but a more interesting route is 245 to Malignant Cove, and from there by a smaller road around Cape George. Beyond Merigomish, a mile from Barney's River Bridge, turn off towards Merigomish Big Island. Here, numbers of migrating DUCKS and GEESE rest on the shallows south of the sandspit leading to the island. Certain shorebirds, notably WHIMBREL, are regular here in the fall.

At Antigonish, the road north along the harbour is convenient for viewing the tidal marsh. Many waterfowl occur in migration, and several species of duck breed here. BALD EAGLES are regular, and a colony of GREAT CORMORANTS is near Jimtown about ten miles north of Antigonish. Permission to visit this colony must be obtained from St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish; but avoid going in May and June, as gulls and ravens prey on the eggs and small young, if adult birds are disturbed at nests. (The migrant DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT nests in good numbers in Pictou Harbour at the Causeway, where it may arrive as early as the first week in April, starting to build nests almost immediately).

The PIPING PLOVER nests on the wide sandy beaches in Pictou and Antigonish Counties, and is now an endangered species. These beaches are being posted; kindly take the care we ask of you in observing these birds.

For birding in Central Nova Scotia (Colchester, Pictou and Antigonish Counties), please see page 37.



Ring-billed Gull

## CAPE BRETON

From Antigonish, one follows the Trans Canada Highway to the Canso Causeway and across it to Cape Breton Island. At the toll-gate return fare is collected, so if you decide to stay in Cape Breton for the rest of your life, as you very well may do, you will lose on the deal. No toll is collected on return from the Cape Breton side.

Canadian author MacMechan has pointed out that Cape Breton reverses the usual definition of an island; the land embraces the water, the salt but nearly tideless Bras d'Or Lake. Around these inland shores the BALD EAGLE is found in greater numbers than in any other part of northeastern North America.

Leaving the Canso Causeway, the visitor has three choices: Route 19, running north along the shore of St. George's Bay; the Trans Canada Highway (105), which heads inland towards the north shore of Bras d'Or Lake; of Route 4, which skirts its southern shore and passes through Sydney to Glace Bay.

We shall, again arbitrarily, follow this last road and branch off at St. Peter's for Point Michaud, one of the best places in the region to observe transient shorebirds. This road circles back and rejoins Route 4, which continues along the shore of the lake to East Bay and thence inland to Sydney. One may then continue along the same route to Glace Bay. Here a Sanctuary, which is accessible from the Donkin turnoff, and Port Morien, reached from Route 4 (by Birch Grove cutoff bypassing Glace Bay) are favoured places for DUCKS and CANADA GEESE for mid-September to March. GULLS, TERNS, COMMON and ARCTIC, and SHOREBIRDS including WILLETS are present in summer. This is the place to see the COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL, present in good numbers, November to April. An alternate trip from Sydney is Route 22 to the restored fortress of Louisbourg, 23 miles (38 km) away. This may also be reached by a more roundabout but much more interesting road which follows the shore from Port Morien. Excellent birdwatching can be had, both at Louisbourg and along the latter route.

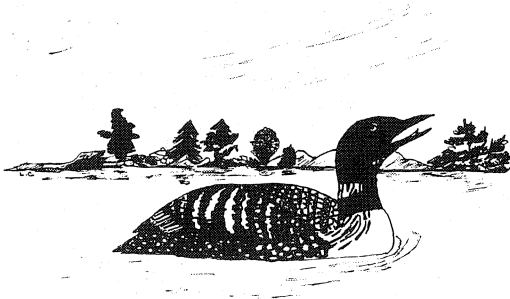


Back at Sydney, one takes the Trans Canada Highway 105, turning off the Big Bras d'Or which is the embarkation point for an expedition to Bird Islands off St. Ann's Bay. This is an important bird colony, featuring LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS, RAZORBILLS, BLACK GUILLEMOTS, PUFFINS, CORMORANTS and GULLS. Make arrangements for the boat trip at the Tourist Bureau at the Canso Causeway as you enter Cape Breton. The boat circles close in under the cliffs, giving every opportunity to watch and photograph the birds. If you wish to have overnight accommodation, it might be safest to inquire at entry to Cape Breton also; at the time of writing there is excellent hotel accommodation.

From Big Bras d'Or, the road joins the Trans Canada Highway just before Great Bras d'Or bridge. To reach Englishtown, the next place of interest, turn off the Trans Canada after crossing Kelly's Mountain onto a paved road which leads to the Englishtown Ferry. Here the spit barring the mouth of St. Ann's Bay is a good place for GULLS, TERNS, and SHOREBIRDS. BALD EAGLES too are fairly common.

From Englishtown, the road follows the shore closely to Ingonish Beach, which is the eastern entry to Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Officials at Park Headquarters here can supply information on good birding spots in the neighbourhood. A Nature Trail behind nearby Keltic Lodge may yield SPRUCE GROUSE as well as WARBLERS and summering EVENING GROSBEAKS.

Money Point at the northeastern tip of Cape Breton, is an arrival site for northern birds during fall migration. A gravel road branches to the right off the Cabot Trail just beyond the village of Cape North and leads to Bay St. Lawrence. From here, a walk out the Money Point road in late September or October can produce FOX SPARROWS, WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS, TREE SPARROWS, possibly NOTHERN SHRIKES and other species fresh from their crossing of Cabot Strait.



Returning to the Cabot Trail, the next good birding stop is Cheticamp River, the western entry to Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Here, on a trail beginning behind the campsite and following along the river, a number of woodland species including BLACKPOLL and BLACKBURNIAN WARBLERS, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, and YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHERS may be seen.

Another excellent place for woodland birds, though somewhat out of the way, is Big Intervale Margaree, near the end of a gravel road which may be reached from the Cabot Trail at Northeast Margaree. Although rather remote, this trip up the river valleys worthwhile for the scenery as well as the birds. The hills around reach up to 1,600 feet.

Route 19 leaves the Cabot Trail at Margaree Harbour and continues down the west coast of Cape Breton to the Canso Causeway. Seventeen miles (28 km) north of this are the Judique Ponds, a series of barrier beach ponds good for DUCKS, SHOREBIRDS and BALD EAGLES. A rough shore road, muddy in wet weather, leaves Route 19 two miles south of Port Hood and runs near the ponds, rejoining the highway close to the southernmost of these.

If, however, the traveller stays on the Cabot Trail, another profitable stop for water birds will be Nyanza on St. Peter's Channel, nine miles (15 km) west of Baddeck on the Bras d'Or Lakes. Seven species of DUCKS breed locally, and GREAT BLUE HERONS, COMMON TERNS, OSPREYS, and BALD EAGLES also occur.

The Trans Canada Highway runs west from Nyanza to the Canso Causeway, thence back to mainland Nova Scotia.

For Birding Hot Spots on Cape Breton Island please see page 44.



## THE EASTERN SHORE TO HALIFAX

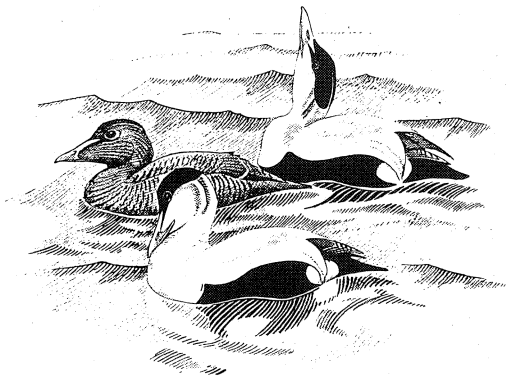
Returning to the mainland, the visitor's best route to the Eastern Shore is 16, which leaves the Trans Canada Highway at Monastery to Canso. Just before reaching the town of Guysborough, two roads follow up either side of the Guysborough Intervale where an exceptional variety of woodland, marsh and water birds may be found.

The barren headland around Canso are covered with dense carpets of crowberry and are a favourite feeding ground for flocks of WHIMBREL, migrating from mid-July to September.

New Harbour, about 25 miles (41 km) west of Canso, forms an oasis in an otherwise barren and rocky coast. The nature of the estuary here affords easy observation of the DUCKS and SHOREBIRDS which make this one of their stop-offs on their southward flight. Look for BAIRD'S and BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS, and GODWITS in season.

Route 316 from Larry's River through New Harbour and inland towards Goldboro and Country Harbour Crossroads, forms part of a Breeding Bird Survey (Nova Scotia Bird Society), and early mornings in June offer a chance of hearing the songs of the MOURNING WARBLER, the WILSON'S WARBLER, LINCOLN'S SPARROW and FOX SPARROW, as well as many of our more usual singers; also, but rarely heard even here, is the GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH.

At Country Harbour Crossroads, a gravel road connects with Route 7 at Melrose; this route follows the St. Mary's River down to Sherbrooke, and there turns west again along what Nova Scotians call the Eastern Shore. This is a rocky coast backed by predominately coniferous woods, inhabited by the boreal species already mentioned, plus BLACKPOLL WARBLERS on the outer wooded headlands and LINCOLN'S SPARROWS in the black spruce bogs. Close in shore, broods of downy young EIDERS tended by watchful mothers and "aunts" are common. The numerous inlets often hold resting flocks of all three species of SCOTERS in early fall.



Near Ecum Secum, the fertile marshes along the river at Fleet Settlement and New Chester contrast with the surrounding boreal country and are the home of GREAT BLUE HERON, AMERICAN BITTERNS and COMMON SNIPE. Such strays as LITTLE BLUE HERONS, EGRETS and COMMON MOORHENS have also been reported from this area.

At Ship Harbour, a side trip may be taken through Clam Harbour and Clam Bay and back to Route 7 at Lake Charlotte. These are resting and feeding areas for SHOREBIRDS; and SPRUCE GROUSE may be hoped for on the roads leading to and from these localities.

At Musquodoboit Harbour, another short side trip to a similar area at Petpeswick is recommended. Here, in addition to a good variety of SHOREBIRDS, one may find nesting OSPREYS, PUDDLE DUCKS and GREAT BLUE HERONS in good numbers.

From here to Halifax is covered in detail on pages 28 to 32 as part of a birding route from Halifax.



SPRUCE GROUSE

## THE SOUTH SHORE

(HALIFAX, LUNENBURG, QUEENS AND SHELBURNE COUNTIES)

The Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia is quite illogically divided in local parlance into two areas: the Eastern Shore, from Canso to Halifax, and the South Shore from Halifax to Cape Sable.

Instead of taking Route 3 (the South Shore Road) from Halifax, the traveller will be well advised to take the new limited access highway as far as Upper Tantallon, thus avoiding the rather dreary sixteen miles of scrub woods and suburban areas just west of the city.

From here on, Route 3 follows the northern shore of St. Margaret's Bay to Hubbards, and although not particularly rewarding to the bird watcher during the summer, the Bay is well populated with COMMON and RED-THROATED LOONS, RED-NECKED and HORNED GREBES, GREAT CORMORANTS, GOLDENEYES, MERGANSERS, OLDSQUAWS, THICK-BILLED MURRES and DOVEKIES from late fall on through the winter. From Hubbards, a side trip around the Aspotogan peninsula during the colder months will provide further opportunity to observe the above-mentioned birds.

Route 3 crosses the base of this peninsula and comes out on Mahone Bay at East River. The woodland along the course of the East River for a mile or more upstream from this bridge, is a particularly good spot for WARBLERS in early summer. This stretch of woods may be explored by taking old wood roads which lead off to the right down to the river.

A few miles beyond East River two roads lead inland across the province: Route 14, from Marriott's Cove to Windsor; Route 12, from Chester Basin to New Ross and Kentville. Both roads provide a variety of woodland and open country habitats.

From Chester Basin, Route 3 follows the coast closely to Mahone Bay, although the traveller in a hurry may take a short cut from Gold River along ten mile stretch of limited access highway. At Mahone Bay, a side trip through Lunenburg to Kingsburg (332) is very well worthwhile in early spring or late fall to look for DUCKS and SHOREBIRDS. During the summer, Ovens Park is well populated with land birds and definitely worth a visit from anyone anxious to add the GRAY JAY to his life list.

If, however, time is short, Route 3A may be taken, which rejoins Route 3 at Bridgewater. Located at the head of tide on the LaHave River, Bridgewater is the centre of a great network of roads, any of which will be rewarding to the searcher for FLYCATCHERS, WARBLERS, FINCHES and their kin. The relatively rich soil of this area supports a large and varied bird population.

Route 331 follows the west bank of the LaHave to Crescent Beach at the head of Green Bay. This area is one of the best places along the South Shore for observing DUCKS, especially SEA DUCKS and SHOREBIRDS during migrations. The hinterland also abounds in bird life. In and around the nearby estuary of the Petite Riviere, WILLETS, SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, BANK SWALLOWS and KINGFISHERS have nested for years. This shore road rejoins Route 3 at Mill Village. (For the next few miles Route 3 and Highway 103 are congruent). (For shorebirding in Lunenburg County, please see Page 49)

Ten miles farther, at Liverpool, Route 8 turns inland and crosses the province to Annapolis Royal. Forty-three miles above Liverpool on this route is the entrance to Kejimikujik National Park, which provides camping facilities. A list of the birds to be found in the park has been compiled and may be obtained from the park naturalists.

Continuing on Route 3 from Liverpool, the next area of particular interest is the series of peninsulas from Port Mouton to Sable River. Some of the inlets between are sanctuaries where great numbers of waterfowl rest and feed during spring and fall migration. Most abundant are CANADA GEESE and AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS, but BRANT, PINTAIL, GREEN- and BLUE-WINGED TEAL, GREATER SCAUP, MERGANSERS, CORMORANTS and GREAT BLUE HERONS are also apt to be present in numbers. (Please see Shelburne County page 52)

From Shelburne to Shag Harbour, Route 3 passes several points which serve as concentration areas of southward migrants. These are East Point below Ingomar, Baccaro Point and Cape Sable. Migrants collect at these places in great numbers under certain conditions of weather and often included among them are exotic species. For example, among those reported from Cape Sable Light and vicinity are: the CATTLE EGRET, BLACK- and YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS, WHITE IBIS, WESTERN KINGBIRD, BROWN THRASHER, PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, GOLDEN- and BLUE-WINGED WARBLERS, CERULEAN WARBLER, PRAIRIE WARBLER, HOODED WARBLER YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD, BLUE GROSBEAK, INDIGO BUNTING, numerous DICKCISSELS and RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEES, LARK BUNTING and CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR.

Before leaving Shelburne County the fabulous Seal Island must be mentioned. Difficult to reach, uncomfortable and primitive, it can provide super birding at the right time of the year. This is definitely not everyone's cup of tea, but is included here for those who might be interested. (Please see Seal Island Page 55)

Route 3 turns north at Barrington and proceeds through a series of villages which merge into one another with little wild country between. It might be just as well to take the limited access highway (103) as far as Argyle Head, where you should return to Route 3, as from here on the territory is good for both land and water birds. At Tusket, a number of roads lead inland through the Tusket River system of Yarmouth County, mixed woods around lakes and interconnecting streams. Three species of THRUSH: HERMIT, SWAINSON'S and VEERY, seem to be about equally common; WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES and ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS are more abundant than in any other part of the province.

Seaward, along the numerous small estuaries are many salt marshes which are breeding grounds for the AMERICAN BITTERN, WILLET, SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER and SHARP-TAILED SPARROW. These continue right up to the town of Yarmouth, which brings us full circle, back to the starting point.

Whether the visitor is planning a trip to Nova Scotia to find some particular species of bird or just to see what can be seen, we hope he or she will not be disappointed, will have an enjoyable trip and will come again.

Bon Chance et Bon Voyage!

## SUGGESTED BIRDING ROUTES

### YARMOUTH COUNTY

A look at the map makes it clear why Yarmouth County is crowded spring and fall with migrating birds. The long points of land extended by numerous islands reach south at the junctions of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Maine, offering a convenient landfall for birds returning in the spring, a jumping-off place for those departing in the fall.

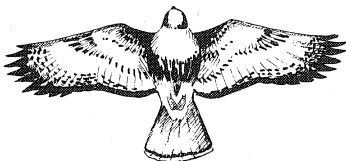
Between these points, shallow protected bays form sanctuaries for wintering ducks and geese, feeding places for loons and grebes and in spring and summer, for herons, bitterns and stray egrets.

Up the Fundy shore, smaller raised headlands, frequently backed by swamp or barachois, form favourite resorts for Killdeer, Snipe and puddle ducks, and a favourite cruising area for Northern Harriers and small falcons.

The country was settled about 200 years ago, and has a good deal of cleared land, but because the soil is stony and rather thin, many old farms have been abandoned and are in all stages of reversion to woodland. The fields were, and some still are, enclosed within characteristic stone walls and hedgerows. The gently rolling hills are mostly wooded and interspersed with vast numbers of lakes and rivers. This back country is easy to reach and explore over an extensive system of secondary and smaller roads, some paved, some gravelled. Here will be found in summer a good variety of our nesting small birds; the Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied, Alder and Least Flycatchers, Eastern Wood-Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher; Tree, Bank, Barn and Cliff Swallow; Black-capped and Boreal chickadee; White- and Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper and Winter Wren; the Gray Catbird, American Robin, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes and Veery; the Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Solitary and Red-eyed Vireo; at least 15 species of Wood Warbler commonly, out of our 22-23 Nova Scotia natives; Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Pine Grosbeak, American Goldfinch; Savannah and Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Northern Junco, Chipping, White-throated and Song Sparrow.

Occasionally a Great Blue Heron will fly over, or a duck, probably a Black Duck or a Merganser; a Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle, Harrier or Osprey; a Willet, Great Black-backed or Herring Gull; a Barred or Short-eared Owl; and still a few Common Nighthawks and Chimney Swifts (sadly diminished of late); the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and in the woods a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated, Hairy or Downy or Black-backed Woodpecker.

Some of these are year-round birds; a winter list would yield only a few, augmented however by a Goshawk perhaps, or a Sharpshin; a Northern Shrike; a few Myrtle Warblers, Goldfinches overhead, Tree Sparrows and Redpolls in roadside bushes; Horned Larks and Snow Buntings on the beaches and open fields.



## CAPE FORCHU.

In Yarmouth town, going north on Main Street, proceed to the Horse Fountain at the corner of Vancouver Street, turn left around the fountain, up the hill, curve right at the Hospital, and almost immediately turn left at the Overton corner. In the summer this is marked Lief Erikson Drive. At Overton, continue left to Yarmouth Bar, on over the causeway to Markland and on to Cape Forchu. The road ends at the Lighthouse. You may then return the way you came, just circling the harbour, or extend the trip by taking the shore road at Overton to continue on up to Pembroke Shore, Cranberry Head (pt.), Sandford and Short Beach. Here, take the crossroad to Lake Darling, thence to Hebron and back to town on Route 1.

This trip is particularly rewarding after mid-July, when the shorebird migration has begun; after mid-August an augmented population of land birds will be found in addition to the myriads of "peep" on the beaches and flats.

## PINKNEY'S POINT - CHEBOGUE POINT.

Pinkney's and Chebogue Points flank the mouth of the Chebogue River estuary on the east and west respectively, and are both arrival and departure points for a number of migrants. They are only three kilometers apart and share much of the same bird population but there are a few differences due to their distinctive habitats.

Just to the north of Pinkney's Point is the large shallow tidal Melbourne Lake which is a wildfowl sanctuary. In the Point area itself, there is a long gravel ridge with salt water on either side stretching north for about a kilometer and known as Cook's Beach. To the eastward there is salt marsh dotted with shallow puddles and traversed by several gravelly ridges, which is about two kilometers across and three in length, north to south.

Chebogue Point, on the other hand, is largely agricultural land, though with a fringe of salt marsh bordering the river, and a gravelly beach at the Point itself. The summer and winter populations of these areas are rather scanty--one exception being the many noisy breeding pairs of Willets on Pinkney's Point marsh--but come into their own during fall migration.

Pinkney's specializes in shorebirds with sometimes fantastic numbers of peep--up to 15,000 or more, roosting out the high tides on Cook's Beach. The common larger shorebirds--Willets, both Yellowlegs, Black-bellied and Lesser Golden Plover, Knots and now and then such uncommon and rare species as Whimbrel, Godwits, Stilt Sandpipers and even a Ruff occupy the puddles and gravel ridges on the marsh.

The commonest big wader is of course the Great Blue Heron, with the Bittern in second place. Night Herons of both species have been seen, as have Little Blue Herons and both species of Egrets.

Melbourne Sanctuary is a spring and fall gathering place for Canada Geese and Black Ducks, numbers of both species sometimes reaching the thousands. Other frequently noted species are Mallard and both Teals, Goldeneye, Bufflehead and both Mergansers. Occasional-to-rare visitors are Snow Geese, American and Eurasian Wigeons, Pintail, Eurasian Teal, and Gadwall.

In open water, south of Cook's Beach, Loons, Eiders and Oldsquaws are regular, with Red-throated Loons, Red-necked and Horned Grebes gathering in early spring.

Peregrine Falcons and Merlins harry the shorebird flocks in late summer and fall, and Harriers patrol the marsh. Landbirds are scarce in summer. Song and Savannah Sparrows live along the edge of the marsh, and Bank Swallows, which nest on the inshore islands, are abundant.

One big difference between Chebogue point and the foregoing area is that it is more clearly a departure route for several species: from late August to early September, Kingbirds and even on Scissor-tailed Flycatcher have been known to join the throng. It is also a southbound route for Kestrels, Merlins and Harriers.

Small land birds also use the route--warblers, Savannah and Sharp-tailed Sparrows, even such forest species as Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Red-breasted Nuthatches, in spite of the open nature of the country.

The shorebird population is scanty compared with Pinkney's Point because of lack of feeding areas, but Black-bellied and Lesser Golden Plover (with once or twice an Upland Sandpiper) and Buff-breasted Sandpipers have been seen on the pasture.

Most obvious summer residents are Barn, Cliff and Bank Swallows, Song and Savannah Sparrows and Bobolinks, In fall, Water Pipits are a nearly sure bet along the gravel beach at the Point itself, and when winter sets in, straggling Harriers and Kestrels, occasional Short-eared Owls and Rough-legged Hawks quarter the pastures. The vegetable fields, grown up to pig-weed, are well populated with mixed blackbird flocks and other seedeaters such as Song, Savannah, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows and Juncos.

Horned Larks and Snow Buntings go through in late fall in considerable numbers both here and at Pinkney's Point, and a few remain all winter.

POSTSCRIPT: The "Pinkney's Point" described above is actually an area which lies to the north of the village of this name. The true point, a stretch of barren to the south and west of the village, is as yet unexplored.

#### AN INLAND ROUTE

An inland route to include Ellenwood Park is suggested for the summer months. This might be preferred if there is fog along the coast. June is the best month to observe the breeding birds, still in bright spring plumage and singing to establish territory. By July, it is considerably more of a challenge to find them, when they have fallen silent and are busy with nesting duties. Common Loons are on the lakes, usually one pair to a lake, and you may find an American Bittern in a bog, see a Red-tailed Hawk sitting on a rampike, a Kestrel hovering over a pasture, or a Ruffed Grouse shepherding a half grown brood along the roadside. The Northern Flicker calls all summer, as does the Red-eyed Vireo. The Robin and the Common Yellowthroat will scold at your approach; the Hermit Thrush and the Purple Finch are generous with summer song, as are a few of the warblers and sparrows. By August, swallows are collecting on telephone wires and Bobolinks and black-birds are generally flocking up, but by now the challenge becomes greater, with young birds in fall plumage.

The inland route will require a half day, or a whole day if there is time, to explore side roads or make a larger circuit. Leave Yarmouth via Route 1, north, and drive up beside the lakes to Hebron. Turn right at the Carleton corner (sign says Carleton-Deerfield) on to 340 north. In summer both Braemar Lodge and Provincial Park signs will also be at this corner. From here, it is about 6.5 miles to the Park as follows: drive to Ohio and continue along 340 north, pass Raynardton and Deerfield signs and turn right at Braemar and Park signs, then after the Pleasant Lake-Greenville sign, turn right into the Park road.

At the entrance to the Park, there is a sign which indicates a road which will lead you by a shortcut back to Yarmouth. This is (at present) rather a rough road at the beginning but is usually excellent for land birds. If you take this road, turn right when you reach Pleasant Lake and follow Route 3 to Yarmouth.

Upon entering the Park, consult the Attendant about the birds present (he may be able to show you a Barred Owl's nest for example) and if you have brought a lunch, there is ample accommodation for picnickers. You may prefer to go on a little farther to Braemar for lunch; if so, drive back along the road leading into the Park and turn right, to drive slightly less than a mile to the Lodge sign.

After leaving (or if you have not entered the grounds) continue along past the Carleton-Gavelton sign (keep straight ahead) and turn right at the Tusket Route 3 sign. After the turn at Tusket Falls (watch the gulls fishing at kiack season) cross one bridge only, and continue to the right, almost immediately to turn right again into a small dirt road, a diversion which soon rejoins the main road. When you have returned to the pavement, turn right and continue towards Tusket. Take care at the crossing of Highway 103. When you reach the junction with Route 3, with the Tusket Bridge on your left, turn right for Yarmouth.

## DIGBY COUNTY

### DIGBY TOWN

Upon arrival at Digby town and before proceeding elsewhere, take time for a look at the harbour. Just north of the old Ferry Wharf a sewer outfall is easily seen from the road. For some years, a stray from overseas, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, maintained itself near this outfall which is always an attraction for gulls, stray or otherwise.

The finest birding in the province at almost any time of year can be found by travelling from Digby down Route 217, along Digby Neck, crossing by ferry to Long Island, thence by another ferry to Brier Island. If you are a serious birder, you should plan to spend several days on Brier Island.

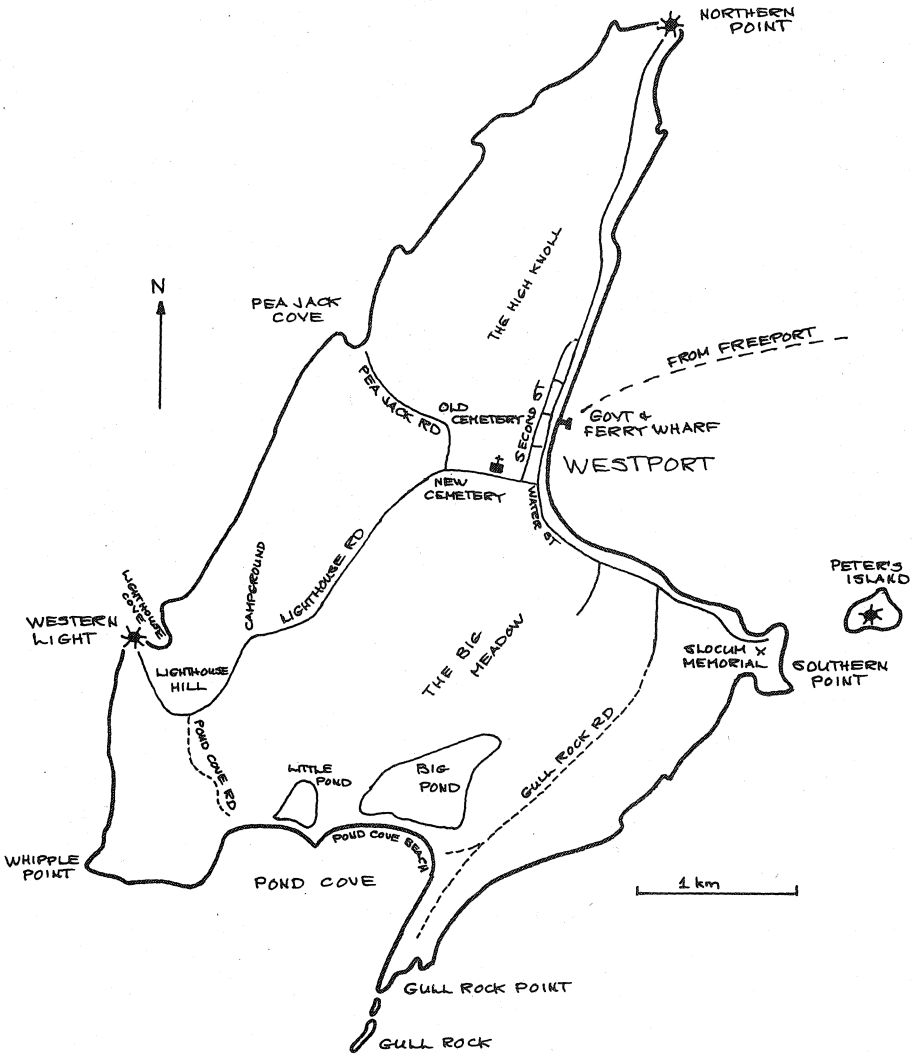
### BIRDING BRIER ISLAND

Brier Island, Digby County, at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, ranks with Seal Island (Shelburne County) and Sable Island, as one of the best birding places in Nova Scotia. More easily accessible than the others, Brier Island's whole natural history is interesting, whether one looks for the invertebrates revealed by its Fundy tides or the rare plants (such as curly grass fern, dwarf birch and the *Avens* (***Geum peckii***)) that occur in its bogs. Its Triassic-Jurassic basalt rocks make the island exceptionally picturesque, especially from the sea or from high points near Northern Point or at the Slocum Memorial (Southern Point).

**Access.** To reach the island, drive SW from Digby on Highway 217 to East Ferry (40 km). Especially in fall, watch the Digby Neck roadsides and power lines for migrants. Just before East Ferry, at Tiddville, a fine marshy pond just south of the road is worth checking for grebes, ducks and egrets, especially in late summer. The ferry to Tiverton across Petite Passage runs 24 hours a day on the half hour, returning on the hour and costs \$1.00 return. From Tiverton, drive 18 km to Freeport, where the ferry across Grande Passage to Westport on Brier Island leaves hourly on the hour, returning a few minutes before the half hour. The ferries are likely to be crowded on summer weekends. Brant overwinter in Freeport harbour. Birding may be good from both ferries: Phalaropes and Kittiwakes occasionally enter the passages; Black Guillemots, both species of cormorants, and eiders are common.



BRIER ISLAND



Accommodation and supplies. On Brier Island three bed and breakfast houses, advertised near the ferry wharf, are open in summer. Groceries, hardware and gasoline are available at a general store in Westport, and there is a post office. In the summer a takeout near the ferry wharf is useful for snacks. Car repairs, medical attention and most other supplies are available only in Digby, so come prepared. Camping is possible along the road to Western Light, at Northern Point, at the end of Pea Jack Road, and along Gull Rock road. Water may be a problem and there are no outhouses.

Birding Brier Island. From the ferry wharf, turn right (N) toward Northern Point. Especially in late summer and autumn this 2 km section of road is worth birding carefully. A few short trails lead into interesting clearings and thickets. Northern Point itself, especially just after the passage of a cold front before dawn in late summer and autumn, can be spectacularly active. Many birds that reach the island before dawn in fall leave toward the N and NE just after dawn, challenging one's skills with warblers and sparrows in flight. Check the isolated spruce thickets near the tip, also the lighthouse lawn and environs for grounded migrants. The older thickets farther south are hard to bird but they frequently harbour hundreds of migrants and the occasional rarity; try following the bird-banding paths. Sea watching may be good from the shelter of North Light, especially on the flood tide and in northerly gales.

Left (S) from the ferry wharf, Water Street runs about 1 km to Southern Point, opposite Peter's Island. Check the fish plant for gulls, also the marsh on the right and the shore on the left for herons, shorebirds and the rarer gulls. Front yards and thickets along the road should not be overlooked. A dead-end road running right just past the marsh has Lois and Lester Pugh's feeder at the end, along with a fine wet thicket and a good view of the marsh (locally called "The Big Meadow"). At Southern Point is a memorial to Joshua Slocum, who lived on the island for a time, and a good view of Peter's Island, where Arctic and Common Terns (sometimes a few Roseates) nest beginning in late May. Eiders, loons and alcids ride the strong current past the point in winter. Gull Rock Road, marked by a sign, runs SW 3 km to Pond Cove. The whole road and the raspberry thickets at Gull Rock Point are worth birding carefully, especially in fall. Gull Rock, offshore to the S, harbours a large flock of Purple Sandpipers in winter. Harlequin Ducks are regular, though scarce from November to March.

Westport itself can provide some splendid birding. Check every thicket, multiflora rose hedge and deciduous tree. Ditches may hold sparrows or even unseasonal warblers in early spring and late fall. The spruce hedge along Bailey's Field Lane is a fine shelter for vagrants. The village is best birded on foot, especially along Second Street, from the Lighthouse Road to Pugh's Lane, or the reverse. A weedy field with large deciduous trees behind Westport Marine Salvage should always be examined carefully. The fine feeders at the Brier House and in Raymond Robicheau's front yard attract many birds. It is possible to walk across the fields just behind the houses on Second Street as far as the church on the Lighthouse Road. Only the dogs will mind; the human residents are quite tolerant.

Lighthouse Road runs 4 1/2 km from Westport to the Western Light. Just above the town on the left, the new cemetery can be good during migrations. To the right, opposite the new cemetery, Pea Jack Road leads 1 km to the sea. The old, overgrown cemetery and the gravel pit should be birded on foot. Sea ducks, loons and grebes often come into Pea Jack Cove. The walks from Pea Jack Cove to Northern Point or to the Western Light are rough but beautiful. Along the Lighthouse Road, check the power lines and field edges for kestrels, bluebirds (especially in April and October), sparrows and warblers. The "campground" area about 3 1/2 km from Westport is worth checking for passerines in spring and fall, Saw Whet Owls in March-April and October, and soaring hawks in August-October. Opposite Pond Cove Road, on the right, is the rocky ridge of Lighthouse Hill, a fine hawk-watching vantage point in late summer and autumn. Scan the water off the Western Light for the occasional fin or humpback whale that may be feeding near shore. At the Western Light check the powerlines and lawns. A sea watch, especially in windy fall weather, may yield phalaropes, gannets, alcids, kittiwakes and sea ducks. Lighthouse Cove, visible to the N from the base of the light tower, is a good place for Red-necked Grebes, eiders, Brant and gun-shy pond ducks in winter.

Pond Cove Road is a lane leading S from Lighthouse Road toward Whipple Point and the west end of Pond Cove. It is best walked; check especially around the cottages and in raspberry thickets. Just below the cottages the road divides; the trail to the right goes about 1 km to Whipple Point, the westernmost point of Nova Scotia, where winter duck-watching can be good. Try walking from Whipple Point to the Western Light for fine views of the shore and sea. The left branch leads to the barachois beaches of a small pond, then the big pond of Pond Cove. Both ponds are worth checking for ducks and herons. When the water is low, the big pond in particular can be very good for shorebirds. Also check the beach carefully for shorebirds, especially the rocks and piles of rotting algae at each end. Baird's and Buff-breasted Sandpipers are regular on Pond Cove beach from the end of August through October. Brant frequently overwinter in the Cove, and the large flock of summering eiders is always worth checking for surprises. The head of the Big Pond may be good for ducks, herons and shorebirds, though human harassment is affecting this area, which has been proposed as an ecological reserve. Please keep disturbance to a minimum.

Seabirds and whales. Strong tidal currents, rough bottom topography and high marine production combine to make the Bay of Fundy waters off Brier Island an outstanding area for seabirds. The best places for seawatchers, preferably with a telescope, are Northern Point and the Western Point. In August-September vast flocks of phalaropes and shearwaters may gather along the plankton-filled slicks northwest and west of the island. As long as terns are present jaegers are possible, mainly Pomarines and Parasitics. Manx Shearwaters are regular among the abundant Greaters and Sooties. Seabird and whale-watching trips are available daily from July to October on a well-equipped modified fishing boat, staffed by a cetacean biologist and local fisherman. Their success rate with whales is very high. For information on four hour and eight hour trips offshore, call (902) 839-2995 in Westport, or enquire at the Brier House.

The Seasons. Typical of Nova Scotia, birding is at its best on Brier Island in autumn. Beginning in mid-August, flocks of warblers and Red-breasted Nuthatches arrive during and after the passage of cold fronts. September is usually the peak month; Northern Point and the roadsides are often alive with birds, especially for an hour or two after dawn. By late September the dozens of cruising Sharp-shinned Hawks and a few Merlins have terrorized the migrants into skulking invisibility, but the numbers remain high. In October large numbers of sparrows, Juncos and winter finches begin to appear. Even in November, finch numbers are often high, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs appear in Pond Cove, and some surprising vagrants or summer holdovers may appear in Westport. When the freshwater freezes, usually in mid-December, land birds begin to disappear from the island except in Westport, where a few feeders and many septic tank seeps provide food and unfrozen ground. In mid-winter, Westport and the sea are the main attractions. During NW gales, thousands of Kittiwakes and alcids may pass by Northern Point and the Western Light. Thick-billed Murres and Dovekies are quite common, though often hard to identify in the scudding sea-smoke and bone-chilling winds. Eiders and gannets are on the move in March; Saw Whet Owls and Woodcock begin their breeding vocalizations. Early spring trips to the island--in March and April--have been rewarded by a remarkable array of southern warblers and herons, especially if the winds have been SW. May is often slow; the alders leaf out late in the month and warbler waves are few and late--usually after the 20th. Spring birds trickle in, quite unlike the autumnal floods. Even in early June, migrants and vagrants may occur, but by early July the island is dominated by its small array of breeding species, notable Blackpoll, Yellow-rumped and Black-throated Green Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Boreal Chickadees. In truth, less is known about the breeding species than about migrants and vagrants, a situation the Breeding Bird Atlas project should correct.

In Summary and Conclusion. Brier Island has something for the birder at any time of year, but if your time is limited and your disappointment threshold is low, try mid-September, when the passerine migration is at its peak and the sea still has shearwaters and phalaropes to offer. Late May is a good second choice, provided a warbler-flycatcher arrival happens. As on most islands, birding is very much an on-off affair on Brier Island. Long periods of uninteresting birding are common, broken, often unexpectedly, by some truly spectacular days. The hard core rarity seeker is best advised to try Seal Island or yearn after Sable Island. However, for sheer numbers and diversity, enlivened by scarce species now and again, Brier Island in September and October is hard to beat.

Birding has begun to make its mark on the island. Birders are now a recognized, though little-understood part of the local scene. Their presence can have a positive effect, awakening the community to its unusual natural surroundings. On the island, hunting goes on practically year-round and all-terrain vehicles have begun to cut the bogs and meadows to ribbons. The presence of birders and their comments on the value of Brier Island's beautiful and unusual natural environments can awaken the island's residents to the need to preserve them undamaged.

#### ANNAPOLIS COUNTY

##### BIRDING IN THE ANNAPOLIS ROYAL AREA

The Annapolis Royal area offers an interesting variety of habitats for year-round birding. Located at head of the Annapolis Basin off the Bay of Fundy, it makes an excellent base point for exploring those waters and surrounding land.

The main attraction, especially during spring and fall migrations, is the Ducks Unlimited Marsh located within the town's boundaries and easily accessible. Hundreds of ducks, particularly Bufflehead, Black Ducks and Green and Blue-winged Teal, can be seen gathering there in spring and fall. Flocks of Water Pipits, Horned Larks, and Savannah Sparrows commonly stop over as well. One can often be rewarded with sightings of less common ducks, gulls and waders. Snowy Egrets and a Yellow-crowned Night Heron have been spotted.

To reach the reconstructed dykes on the marsh where you will hike, park your vehicle in the Historic Gardens parking lot on St. George Street, the town's main street. Enter through the main entrance (off season is Thanksgiving to June, no fee) and take time to enjoy the Gardens, interesting year 'round. In winter the fruiting shrubs are attractive to lingering robins and the occasional Northern Mockingbird and invite large flocks of Bohemian Waxwings.

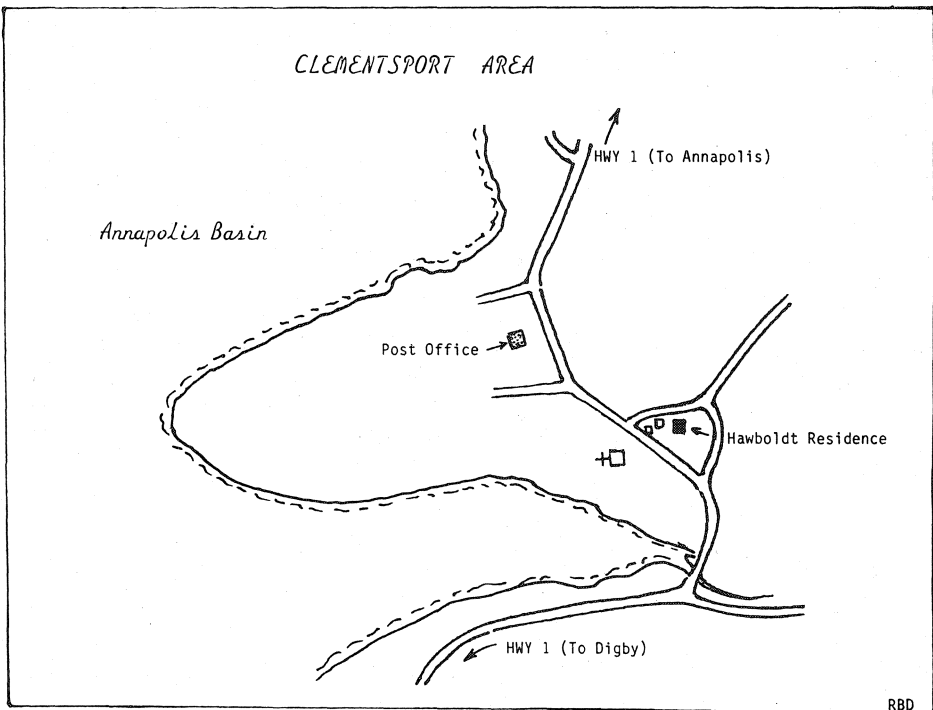
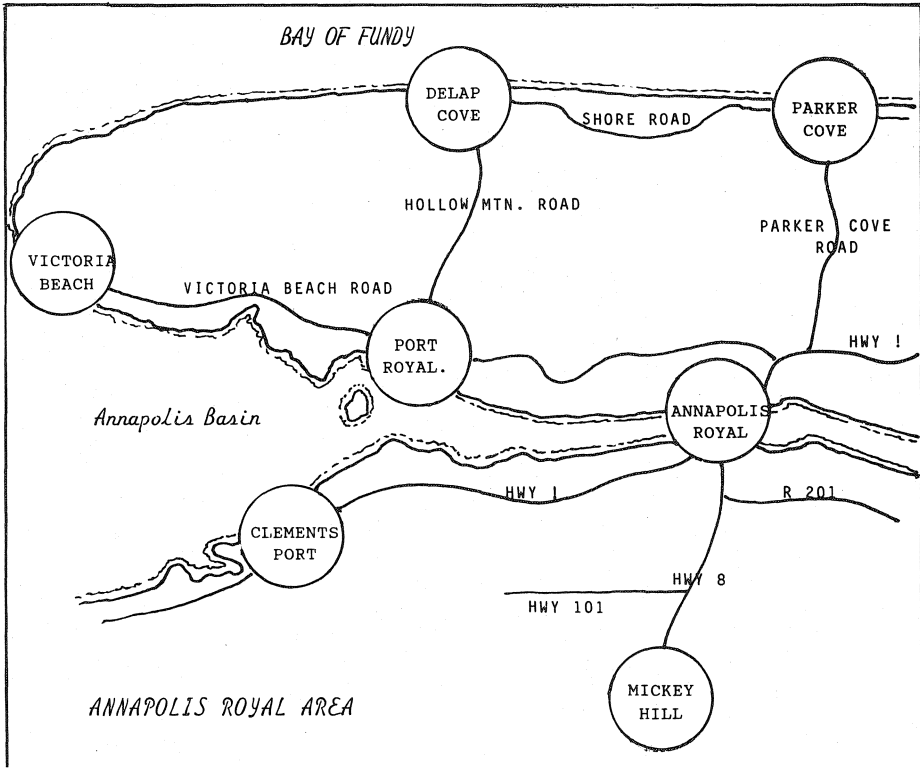
Keep to your left, go through the pergola and follow the path to the most distant lookout. You will see a trail through the grasses which takes you along the dykes. Walking there is rough and can be muddy. This can also be a windy spot so dress appropriately. Plan to stay a couple of hours, if possible. There is no easy way to climb the hill, so return the same way.

If you have less time or inclination for hiking, a stop at the Annapolis Causeway can be rewarding, particularly in late fall and early winter. Use the parking lot at the Tidal Power Plant and then check along both sides of the highway.

Leaving the causeway, travelling east, make a left-hand turn taking the road to Port Royal. The Queen Anne Marsh can be worth checking. In Granville Beach, look for a small stone cairn on the left hand side for the Stoney Beach Cemetery. The road beside it leads down to the Annapolis Basin through fields and is easy walking.

Then continue along the highway to Port Royal National Historic Park. This site provides an excellent point for viewing seabirds.

At Victoria Beach, land's end, you view Digby Gut, which connects the Annapolis Basin to the Bay of Fundy. Again, ducks and gulls can be numerous.



Victoria Beach is where the highway ends. A walk along the last few kilometers provides an excellent view. Often, especially during spring and fall migrations, there is much activity in the trees along the roadside. Try to catch one of their spectacular sunsets.

Also not far from Annapolis, are coves along the Bay of Fundy which provide excellent birding. For such an outing cross the causeway, heading east. Do not take the Victoria Beach road this time but continue driving east. Watch for a left hand turn to Parker's Cove, just a couple of kilometers from the causeway. A short drive over the mountain brings you to a "T" intersection in Parker's Cove. Turn left and you will see the wharf which offers excellent footing for observing sea ducks, loons and grebes. Gannets have been viewed there in March. This is an exposed spot; dress accordingly. Try to arrange a morning visit if you want back-lighting.

If you continue along in a westerly direction, you will soon arrive at the new Delaps Cove Wilderness Trail. Watch for a large sign on the left. This 12 km trail loops along the shore and through the woods. Maps are available at the tourist bureau in Annapolis Royal.

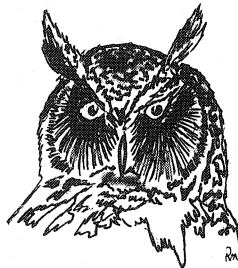
Another beautiful wilderness trail is located at Mickey Hill, just a 10-15 minute drive from Annapolis on Highway 8. This is a Bowater's Pocket Wilderness, constructed along a small river. Picnic tables are a bonus. This might provide a welcome stop on your way to Kejimikujik.

To the immediate west of Annapolis is Upper Clements. A walk around the Upper Clements Wildlife Park will no doubt yield many woodland species.

You may want to picnic at the Upper Clements Provincial Picnic Park, just across the highway from the wildlife park. If you walk across the railway track from the parking lot, you will find a little path to the beach. There is a large marsh to the right. This is an interesting spot for shorebirds in late summer and ducks in the winter. A copy of the tide tables would be useful.

### KINGS COUNTY

Kings County lies in Western Nova Scotia, bordered by Hants and Annapolis Counties and offers unique opportunities for inland birding, possibly unrivalled anywhere else in the province. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the excellent variety of habitat, including parts of the Annapolis Valley and the Dykeland areas to be found nowhere else, and secondly, the excellent tradition of birding in this area, started by the late Dr. Robie Tufts and continued by numerous local enthusiasts.



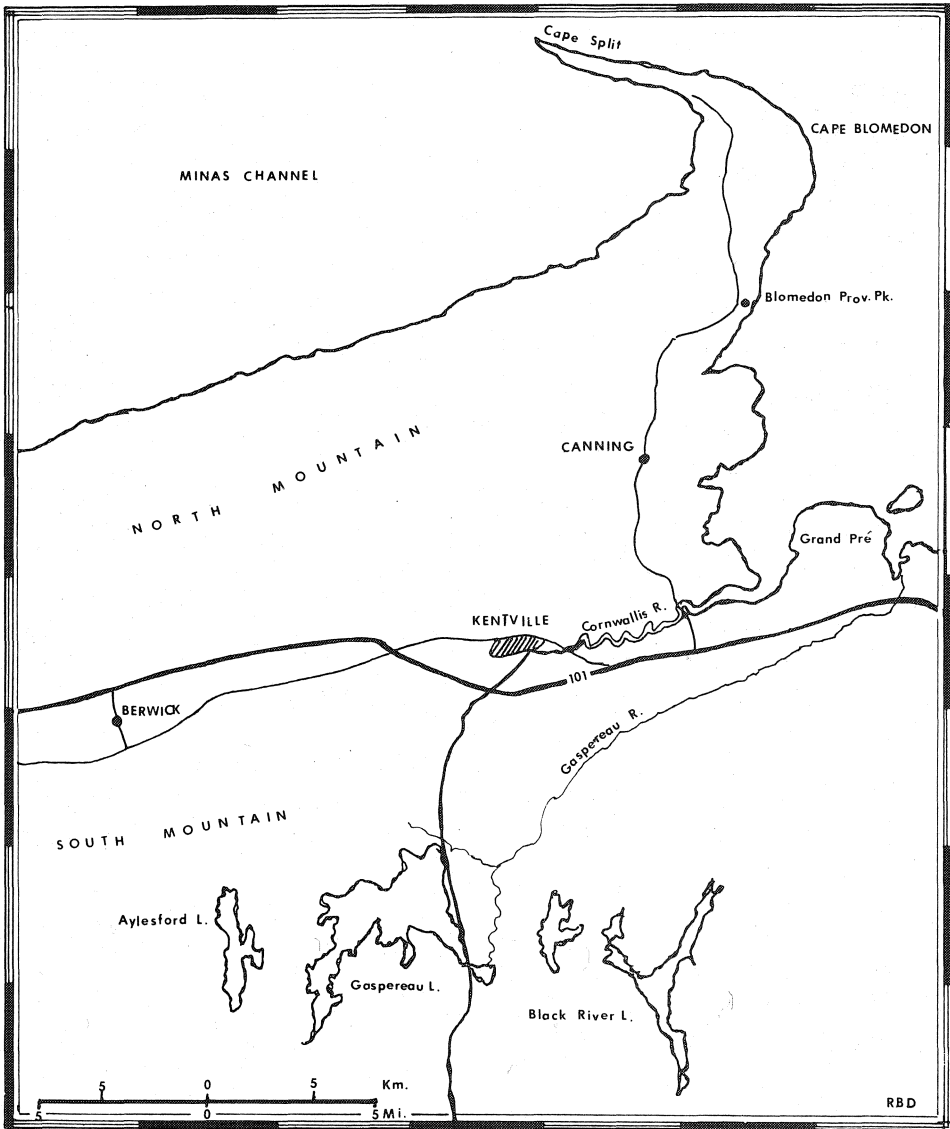


FIG. 1

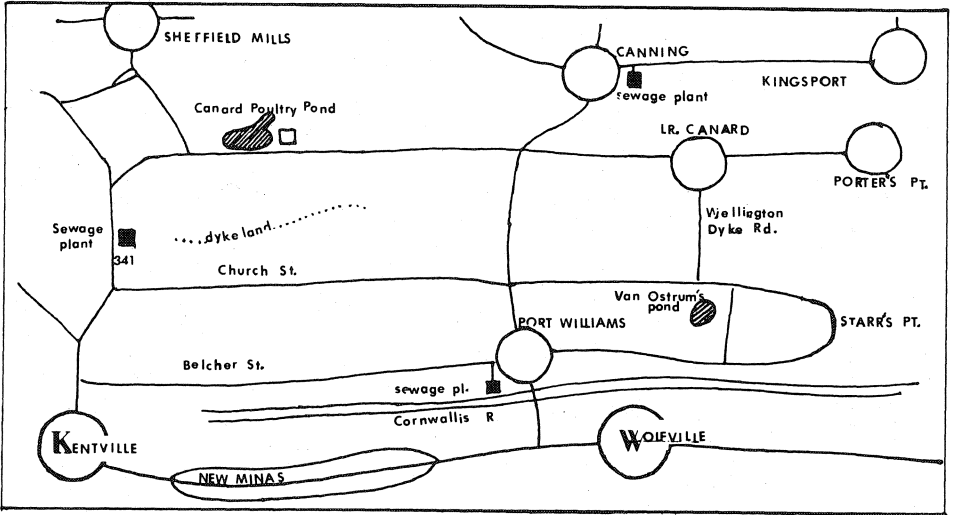


FIG. 2

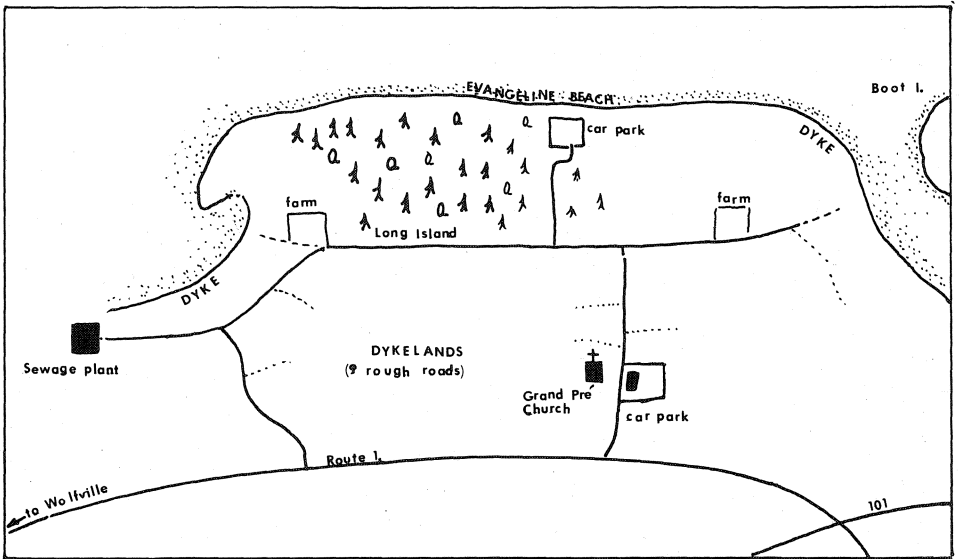


FIG. 3



Kings County is bordered on the north by the coast of the Bay of Fundy with the basalt escarpment of the "North Mountain", running parallel to the coast and curling round to end at Cape Split. To the east are the mudflats and extraordinary tides of the Minas Basin, and to the south, a huge area of mixed forests, lakes and woods roads trails off towards New Ross and New Germany. The southern escarpment is the South Mountain and in between is the Annapolis Valley with its open farmlands, fields and small towns full of shade trees and shrubbery. At the eastern end this opens out into a wide expanse of what was once tidal marsh, but since being dyked over the last three centuries by the Acadians and their successors, is now a fertile flat plain (Fig. 1).

Because of the sheltering effects of the north and south mountains the Annapolis Valley tends to be hotter and drier than surrounding areas in the summer and colder with more snow in the winter.

We will cover each of the habitats separately and seasonally, since in this area, the latter is all important.

#### The North Mountain and Cape Split.

This area is typical dense mixed woodland with a few open areas, cut edges, streams, ponds, etc. In spring and early summer, the whole area yields birds typical of the habitat--woodpeckers, flycatchers, vireos and a good variety of warblers. The most pleasant way of sampling this area is to drive out from Canning on Route 358 to Scott's Bay, right to the end--park at the end of the dirt road and hike out to Cape Split. The walk to the end (the "Big Split") and back takes several hours, depending on one's fitness and the local conditions and is well signposted. In late May, or early June, the warbler-watching is excellent and Black Guillemots may also be seen in the water below. In the fall, warbler migration here can also be good and hawk migration is sometimes very rewarding as one can often look down on hawks (Red-tails, Northern Harriers, etc.) as they ride the thermals around the cliffs.

One excellent spot in this area in both spring and fall is Blomidon Provincial Park. Go through Canning, turn left and follow the signposts through Pereau to the Park. The sodded area above the car park and inland to the left of the entrance hut is excellent for warblers, particularly Blackburnian, Bay-breasted and Cape May and other good birds can include Black-backed Woodpecker and Boreal Chickadee.

#### The South Mountain and Beyond

This is a huge area south of Route 1, between Wolfville and Greenwood. There are several lakes (Gaspereau, Aylesford, Black River, George) that have summer cottages around them and a vast system of woods roads that crisscross all over the place. The best approach is to get a map, head off down Route 12 from Kentville to New Ross or from Aylesford to Lake George and hike down any woods road and pick a likely spot to explore. The time to go is early summer, and the whole area is under-explored as far as birding is concerned. Two good spots, however, are: 1. Butler Road - off Route 12, just after Gaspereau Lake on the way from Kentville to New Ross, excellent for all mixed woodland species including Mourning Warblers. 2. The area around White Rock, Lumsden, Black River Lake, easy to get lost in, in the maze of roads without a topographical map or someone who knows the area. Note. There is a system of dams and canals here which means that more of the water (at Lumsden and White Rock) remains open in winter. Look for Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneye and Bald Eagles here.

## Towns

Wolfville, Kentville, Berwick, Aylesford and Kingston, all have an abundance of tall trees, hedges, shrubbery, etc., and in the spring and summer there are plenty of birds to see--orioles, grackles, robins, warblers, vireos, etc. In winter, feeders are popular and apart from the usual juncos, Evening Grosbeaks, etc., there are always rarities to be seen -- in recent years, Cardinal, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Yellow-breasted Chat. The Wolfville Christmas bird count encompasses Wolfville, New Minas and Kentville and always comes up with interesting suburban birds in winter. For instance, in Kentville, Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks as well as the "feeder birds" are seen regularly.

### The Dykelands - Fig. 2

In summer, typical open-country birds are seen (Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows) and in winter, hawks (see below).

### Canard Pond

A small, reed-fringed pond next to the Canard poultry plant next to the Kentville-Canning road (well signposted) is the dykeland hotspot. Spring and fall produce good waterfowl (Pintail, mergansers, Shoveller, Ruddy Duck) and there are shorebirds present in fall (especially Solitary Sandpipers). The bushes on the edge always have warblers, Red-winged Blackbirds, Swamp Sparrows in season; there is a big gull-roost in winter and the whole place is a haunt of Bald Eagles and hawks in winter as well.

### Van Oostrum's Pond - near Starr's Point (Fig. 2)

Similar to the above but less consistent. In early spring, Canada Geese are regular for several weeks in the surrounding fields and some years ago four Snow Geese appeared with them.

## Sewage Plants

Near Kentville, Canning, Kentville and Port Williams (Fig. 2) are small sewage treatment plants with shallow banked ponds rich in nutrients (for birds!). These are worth checking in the fall for shorebirds and can produce unusual species such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpipers. Also in recent years, the Port Williams plant has had Black Tern and Wilson's Phalarope in spring and there is an old report of Upland Sandpipers nesting at the Kentville sewage plant.

## Grand Pré

Good all year. The area is dykeland crossed by dirt roads that can be driven with care, although in winter, only the main road and part of the Long Island and Boot Island roads are drivable.

SPRING - The trees around Grand Pré Park and church are good for common "open woodland" birds.

FALL In the last week of July and the first week of August, huge flocks, (sometimes 30 or 40,000 strong) of shorebirds congregate here. Most are Semipalmated Sandpipers but also Dowitchers, Black-bellied Plover, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover--Hudsonian Godwits are regular. It is essential to get the tide right (times are published in tide tables daily in the **Chronicle Herald**) since at low tide all the birds are miles out feeding beyond view in extremely unpleasant, thick, cloying mud and at high tide, many of the birds fly inland to roose in fields around the area. The best time is one hour before and one hour after high tides when the birds congregate along the beach. Drive to the parking lot at Evangeline Beach and walk towards Boot Island to see part of the beach covered with "carpets" of sandpipers and occasionally flying in vast flocks a little farther up the beach. Right at high tide it is also possible to see smaller flocks of shorebirds in some fields, mainly to the east of the main road.

Late in the fall, there are fewer numbers of shorebirds and they are more spread out but Black-bellied and Lesser Golden Plover are both common; Red Knot and Whimbrel occur as well as those already mentioned.

It has only recently been realized how biologically rich the Minas Basin is and the shorebirds are only one manifestation of this. There have been excellent articles about this area including the shorebirds in several recent popular Canadian magazines well worth reading.

Note: There are other areas along the Minas Basin which are almost as good as Grand Pré for shorebirds at the same time of the year with the same constraints upon the tides. The best of these areas are Porter's Point and Kingsport Beach (Fig. 2).

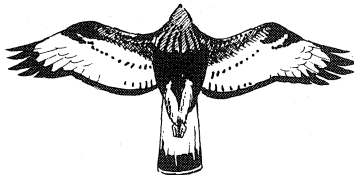
WINTER - A slow drive along the main road will normally provide Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and pheasants, but the real specialities of this area in the winter are the hawks (See below).

#### Hawk-watching in Winter

The dykelands and Grand Pré hold large numbers of diurnal raptor in winter, particularly Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles. The last few years have been pretty good with high prey populations (mainly voles). It has been easy to see up to 50 Red-tailed Hawks on a good morning's drive around and recent Christmas bird counts in the area have yielded excellent hawk counts. The best areas are to drive from Wolfville to Port Williams, then to Canning, and then past Canard Pond to Sheffield Mills and look carefully at every fencepost and telephone pole on the way! Also, a careful look around Grand Pré in similar fashion is highly rewarding and Rough-legged Hawks seem more common there. In any of these areas, Northern Harriers are also regular and of course, there is always the chance of something special such as Gyrfalcons or Peregrines. Bald Eagles occur all over the area but tend to be concentrated in certain spots (see below).

#### Raptor "Hot Spots"

1. The "Long Island" area of Grand Pré (Fig. 3) - good for all hawks and eagles and seem to attract the big falcons more than the rest, when they turn up.
2. Gaspereau - between the village and Melanson (signposted from Route 101). Here is where Bald Eagles congregate at Cyril Coldwell's "feeder". The best time is early morning in late January and February.
3. New Minas - between Greenwich and the golf course, turn off at the Hostess Potato Chip plant (sign posted and easily visible by its cloud of steam) and look out over the Cornwallis River behind the chip plant for eagles and buteos.
4. Sheffield Mills - in the last few years, another hot-spot for Bald Eagles, again best in the early morning around a farm by the crossroads. Look in the trees for roosting birds.
5. Canard Pond - see above.



## HALIFAX COUNTY

### COLE HARBOUR TO CHEZZETCOOK

The eastern Shore of Nova Scotia stretches away from the entrance to Halifax Harbour, red headlands thrusting out between long estuaries and quiet bays fringed with light sand. Houses are slowly spreading out from the city of Dartmouth, but the forest, a mixture of hard and soft wood, still covers most of the area.

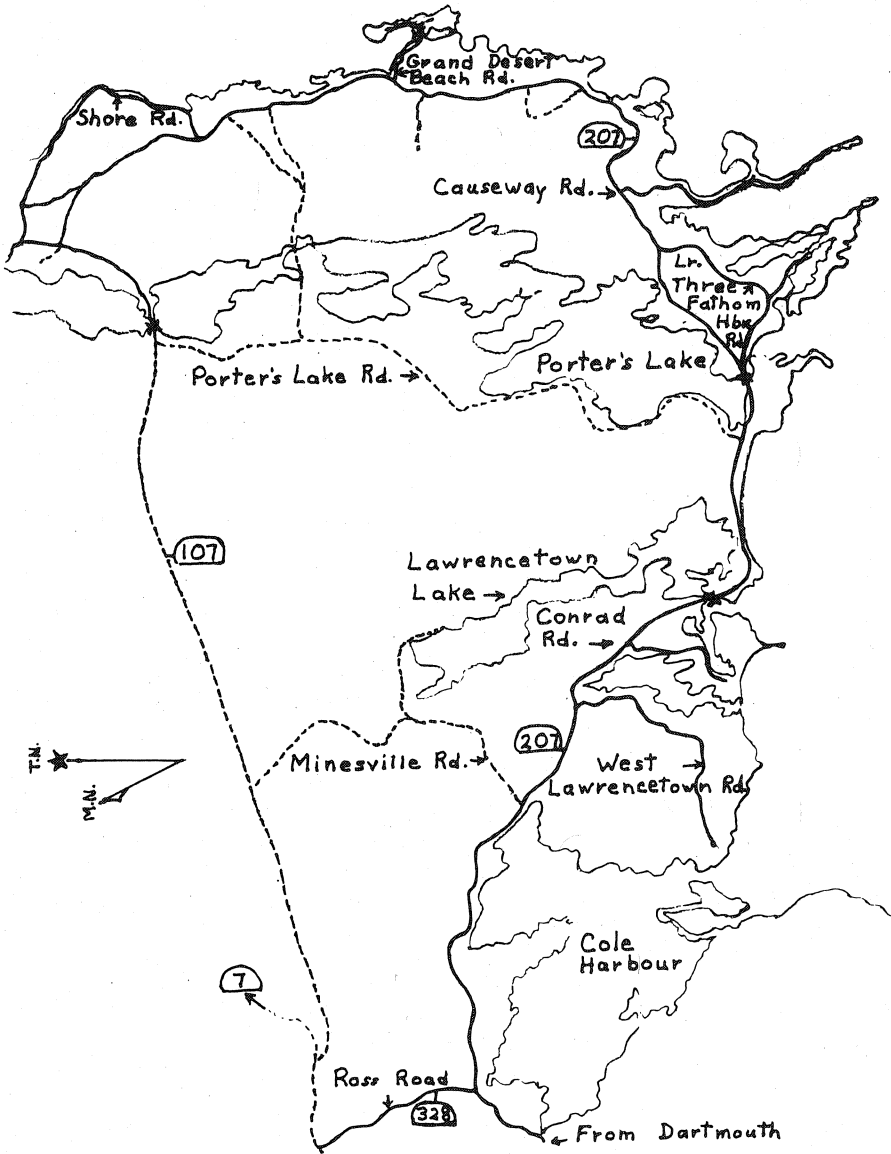
Conveniently, an old abandoned railway (the tracks recently removed) runs near the shore, crossing marshes and lakes, winding deep into the silent woods. Walking along the roadbed is a good way to find birds if you have the stamina to walk for miles but it is an idea to have a friend pick you up at some prearranged spot where the rail line meets a road.

For most of us it is better to set out by car from Dartmouth along Portland Street, which eventually becomes the Cole Harbour Road. Not many years ago, this was a dirt road used by the farmers of Lawrencetown and beyond to bring their produce to market, a long and arduous journey with a horse-drawn wagon. Now it is busy with the traffic from the burgeoning housing developments of Colby Village and Forest Hills. Pause for a moment at the top of Long Hill. The old meetinghouse on the right always marks the end of the hustle and bustle for me.

Spread out before you is the first of the salt marshes that draw the birds to the calm shelter of these productive wetlands. In the late winter, thousands of Canada Geese feed on the eel grass left exposed by the retreating ice. They are usually accompanied by a variety of Bay Ducks in small flocks. The Micmac called this place by a name which meant "flat water" but we know it as Cole Harbour. In years past, a dyke was built up along the outer edge and sheep grazed on the resulting meadows. Now, in most places, the water is shallow enough for Great Blue Heron to feed at low tide.

Our route takes us along the inner edge of the harbour but not, at first, near the shore. This part of the road makes the transition from suburbs to houses lining the roadside and small farms; from hills to low country—part land, part water—never far from the sea. Route 207, which begins where Ross Road intersects Cole Harbour Road, is part of the scenic Marine Highway that passes through Lawrencetown, Three Fathom Harbour, Seaforth, Grand Desert and West Chezzetcook before joining Highway 107. We call it Lawrencetown Loop. All the small roads leading off to the left (inland) side will produce a variety of woodland birds according to the season but the roads leading to the ocean (right-hand side) will be more rewarding.

The first of these is the West Lawrencetown Road, about 5 km from the Ross Road corner. Travel in for approximately 300 meters and stop where the old rail line crosses the water of West Marsh on your left. A trip along the track in any season is worthwhile; even in winter a nearby feeder will keep the finches, sparrow, chickadees, nuthatches, Blue Jays and Mourning Doves abound. Warblers are plentiful in spring and fall migrations. If there is any open water, look for the resident Kingfisher and Black Ducks. In spring and fall, there are usually Green and Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, all three mergansers, sometimes Common Teal in April, and the common shorebirds on migration south in late summer. From late spring through summer we see American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, nesting Snipe, Double-crested Cormorants and all four swallow species. Look for Wilson's Phalaropes, Stilt Sandpipers and Ruffs in the autumn. You may continue down this road to the ocean but it is generally not worth your time.



Returning to Route 207, driving east again takes you along the edge of West Marsh where a quick stop gives a different view of the pond with, perhaps, different birds. The next turn-off to the right, Conrad's Road, takes you to Conrad's Beach, which is part of a Coastal Heritage Park System, now under development. Low tide exposes the mud flats in the area and these are heavily used by migratory shore birds. The small ponds to the east make good hiding places for Pintail, Mallards and Black Ducks. Sanderlings can be found winding along the beach. Piping Plover and Willets nest here in suitable habitat, as do Savannah Sparrows. The more common gulls, Black-backed and Herring are abundant: Ring-billed, Black-headed and Bonaparte's Gulls show up in early winter. Arctic and Common Terns fly about in summer--check the terns seen in late fall; they are likely to be Forster's. Watch for hunting Northern Harrier and Osprey. The rocky island on your left as you look over the sea from the top of the sand dunes can be reached at low tide and Purple Sandpipers feed among the exposed rocks in the winter. Sea ducks are plentiful at this time: Common Eider, Oldsquaw, all three scoters, Red-breasted Mergansers along with Common Loons in their sober winter plumage...and, once, a Harlequin Duck. The small grove of trees is excellent for passerines in migration; the dune grasses attract Horned Larks and Snow Buntings in winter, Meadowlarks possibly in the fall.



Continuing along Route 207, brings us to Lawrencetown Lake which drains to the sea under two bridges, one for the railway, one for the road. It is worth walking along the old rail line from here to the point where it meets the road again. The wooded island to the north supports two, sometimes three, Osprey nests. At any time of year, there are ducks on the lake. In early and late winter, you could find in addition to those that may already have been seen, Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Widgeon or Gadwall. Look for Bald Eagles in the trees at the back. The marshy areas will sometimes attract Little Blue or Tri-coloured Heron in the spring. Listen for Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the summer. Off Rocky Beach, just past the road bridge, there are large concentrations of Common Loons in late winter accompanied by Great Cormorants. Climb to the top of MacDonald Head for a likely look at Red-necked and Horned Grebes, sometimes a Pied-billed Grebe or a Red-throated Loon. Unfortunately, the restaurant at MacDonald House is not open in winter--just when we need it--but makes a welcome stop in the warmer months.

As you start down the other side of the hill, take a moment to enjoy the view, especially if the surf is rolling after a storm. That is another part of Lawrencetown Lake on the left as you pass the recreational portion of Lawrencetown Beach. For many years, Snowy Egrets and/or Glossy Ibis regularly arrived here in spring and stayed until the cold weather sent them south again. We wondered if a nesting colony might be established but that did not happen, in fact, they are now seen infrequently and the clump of stunted spruce where they perched at the edge of the marsh looks empty. Snowy Owls do not often wander this far south but, when they do, the dunes provide snow-free hunting.

Farther along, where the bridge spans Rocky Run, is a road leading right, which passes through Lower Three Fathom Harbour. Again, it is crossed by the rail line and we often walk to the right along the old line, carefully negotiating the trestle bridge and continuing through some scrub, keeping a lookout for seasonal offerings: Redpolls, Gold- or Purple Finch, Pine Siskins, Boreal Chickadees, Woodpeckers, perhaps a Brown Creeper in the cold months, warblers through spring to fall, Ruffed Grouse drumming in spring. If you continue past the marsh where we find nesting Red-winged Blackbirds in summer, you will come to a hill on your left that overlooks the water. A rough road winds along the east side of the hill to Chimney Point (marked Half Island Point on maps). There are usually seals in the channel. Scaup dot the water in the winter and, very occasionally, a Dovekie or one of the murrens is sighted. On the way back to the car, visualize a Scarlet Ibis standing in one of the moss hung spruce trees overlooking a hidden muddy bay--we may not be able to count it as a wild bird but it made an exotic picture.

At one place, the road forks. Before circling left back to the main road, explore the possibilities of this dead-end section. The area offers a nice combination of water-oriented and woodland birds like Grey Jays, Juncos, Pine Grosbeaks or the Crossbills. Crows, of course, are everywhere but a Raven should be heard if not seen.

Travelling east on Route 207, it is only a short distance to Causeway Road, which leads to an attractive fishing community on a long spit of land ending at Wedge Island, reachable over a rough causeway at low tide. This is another good spot for Purple Sandpipers. The best birding however, is enjoyed before this point is reached. Three Fathom Harbour begins in a long shallow bay cut by the road, giving an excellent view from the car. Shorebirds abound in late summer and early fall. There, as elsewhere along the shore, we find Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted, Semipalmated, Least, White-rumped and Pectoral Sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers, Turnstones; rarely Knots, Lesser Golden Plover or Killdeer. Later, we see Canada Geese, Bufflehead and Goldeneyes...look carefully for a Hooded Merganser among them. Arctic and Common Terns find good fishing all summer. This is the place to watch for a wandering Black Tern. It is also a photographer's delight at any time of year.

Enroute once more, it is time to look for Red-tailed or Rough-legged Hawks, any of the falcons or a Northern Shrike. When you have driven through Seaforth, watch for the sign indicating the turn-off to Grand Desert Beach (sounds like a contradiction in terms) and explore along this road in all directions. In winter, great flocks of Canada Geese float in and out of the inlet with the tide. Avoid the area in hunting season--the birds do too. Shorebirds linger late on these shallow flats. The thick stand of trees attracts Waxwings and Kinglets, as well as the passerines already noted. Swamp Sparrows may be found along the wet edges of the alders. We saw our first Ipswich Sparrow here but they can be seen in small numbers all along the Eastern Shore except in winter.

West Chezzetcook is an attractive village which marks the end of our usual safari. Following the Shore Road takes us past the last of the ponds and marshes that mark the end of the inlet. Sometimes a Northern Shoveler or Pintail graces a pool; Bay Ducks bob in the water beside the ice of early and late winter-- in fact, just about any type of species could show up here from Hawks to Hummingbirds. Continuing to the end of our loop will bring you to Highway 107 for a quick trip home.

Water and woodlands each attract different species and, because here the two are so closely linked, there is never a season without birds. This shore seldom produces real rarities but there is always something interesting, often unexpected, so we turn the corners with anticipation and every journey is its own reward.

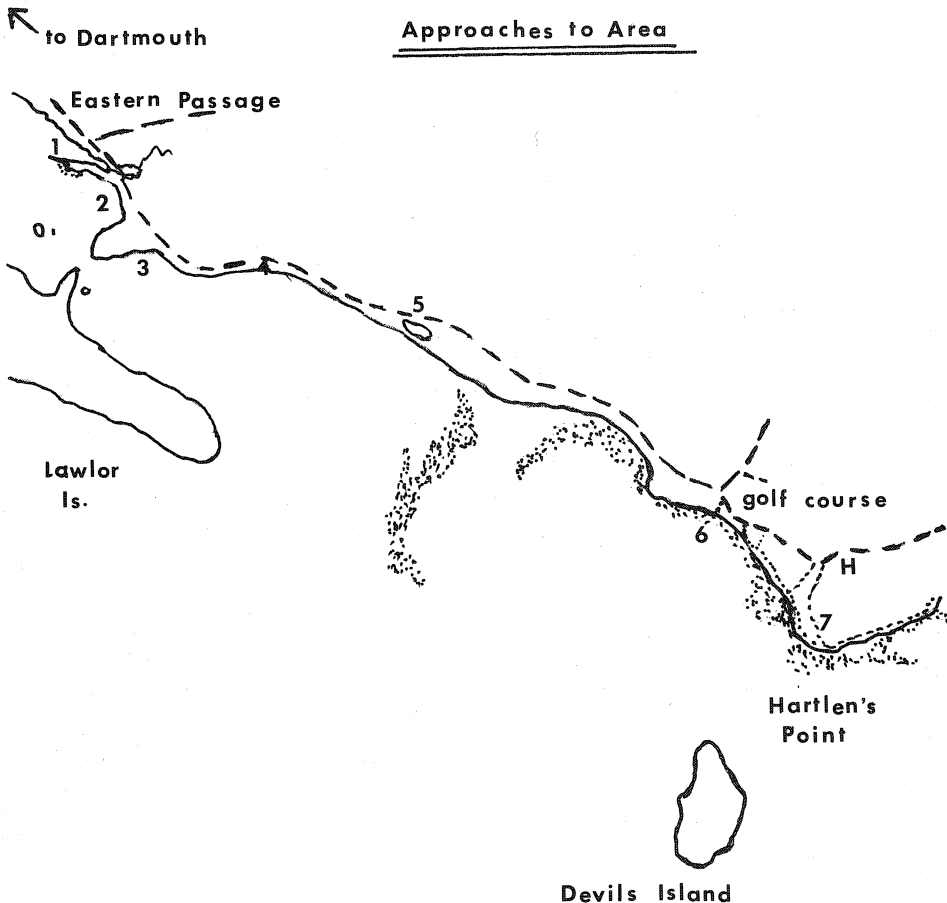




### HALIFAX HARBOUR APPROACHES - HARTLEN'S POINT

One of the finest birding spots in close proximity to the city of Halifax is found at Hartlen's Point. It comprises the entire point of land that forms the northeast side of the entrance to Halifax Harbour. The point begins past the last houses on the approach road and contains a large golf course, second growth alder thickets, a spruce bog, a small hardwood thicket, a salt marsh, a mud flat, a short sandy beach, and about two miles of cobble beaches and rocky ledges. These varied mini-habitats, together with the presence of a well-treed golf course, on a point thrust into the Atlantic, combine to make the area an effective migrant trap. The adjacent lighted cities of Halifax and Dartmouth only ten kilometres away, and the powerful lights of four nearby lighthouses, work together under suitable weather conditions during both spring and fall migrations to cause notable "fallouts".

To get to Hartlen's Point, first get to Portland Street in downtown Dartmouth, headed north. Travel north to the traffic lights at Pleasant Street and turn right. The extension of Pleasant Street becomes Highway 322. Travel along, keeping the sea on your right until you reach the village of Eastern Passage. Your tour will begin at a wharf that shelters a number of fishing boats on your right.



## AREA 1

The car may be parked off road at the area marked "2" and a trip on foot to the end of the wharf can be rewarding.

In late fall through to March, a number of gulls may be seen including Ring-billed, two races of Iceland, a possible Glaucous, and occasional smaller gulls (Black-headed, Mew). Scan the shores of Lawlor's Island for Common and Red-throated Loons, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, Thick-billed Murres (occasionally Common Murres) mergansers and various sea ducks. Bald Eagles, hawks, and in summer Herons and Osprey are often seen soaring over the islands.

## AREAS 2 &amp; 3

These areas are combined because they are the two sides of a sand spit, the north side being a mudflat and the south a beach rock shorebird roost and a wide sand beach. In the migration months of July to October look for any of the regular shorebirds, and search the scrubby grass for sparrows, Lapland Longspurs, Water Pipits and Horned Larks.

## AREAS 4 &amp; 5

These areas are shown as typical lookoffs for the winter birder. Any place from 3 to 6 (on the map) where the car can be parked off the road should be sought for a scan to seaward. Particularly in winter the various winter seabirds on view in the harbour approaches may provide the best birding of your visit (Oldsquaw, Common Eider, the three scoters, grebes and alcids). During the migration periods, especially the fall migration, a trip on foot around the pond at 5 can be rewarding with shorebirds, American Bitterns, Great Blue Herons, Snipe and various sparrows.

## AREA 6 and 8

This is the first lookoff on the point itself. From late fall to early spring it is worthwhile to scope Devil's Island. For more than 50% of the past winters Snowy Owls have been present and various winter hawks hunt the island, especially Rough-legged. Patience is needed but you can scan from the comfort of your car and while away the time by viewing the alcids, grebes, scoters, eiders, Oldsquaw, Goldeneye, scaup, loons and Great Cormorants on the water. From 6 to 7, a number of rough tracks lead to the rocky shore. The multi-year build up of rotted kelp along this shore is a favourite feeding ground for shorebirds and birds of the shore such as pipits, longspurs and Horned Larks. The rough fields marked as 8 between the road and shore can be searched for sparrows at any season, and unusual migrants in May and in the fall.

## AREAS 7 &amp; 9

The shoreline in these areas with few exceptions reveals more of the same in the way of winter birding. In fact, your winter birding trip will likely end here unless you are a hardy soul with time to spare. On the other hand, in both migration seasons, and especially the fall season, the best birding begins here! The exceptions are the regular early winter attendance of a number of the raptors including Merlin, Kestrel, sometimes Peregrines, Harriers and regularly at 7 and 9, Short-eared Owls throughout the winter. While this guide has deliberately avoided rare occurrences, it should be mentioned that there is always a possibility of rarities at these locations. Birds seldom seen in Nova Scotia have been found here. For example, both Broad-billed and Little Stint Sandpipers have been seen at 7 and 9. Greater Golden Plover have been seen on shore and on the golf course, and a number of rare-for-Nova Scotia passerines have been sighted in areas 10,11 and 12. Before ending the visit to the best winter areas we should switch from quality to quantity. On the right day you may be rewarded by large rafts of 5000 or more eiders, or mixed flocks of scoters numbering 2500 or more. Large groups of feeding Common Loons, and rafts of several hundred Greater Scaup are not uncommon.

## AREA 10

This and the remaining three areas will be described as if you were visiting at some time in the fall migration. Spring birds are fewer and comprise fewer species, particularly the shorebirds and western strays. As you stand with your back to the air beacon tower at 10, there are thickets of alder and mountain ash trees to your right. Look for warblers, flycatchers, Catbirds and berry eaters such as thrushes, tanagers, Mockingbirds, and so on, as you work your way down the hill and to your right to Area 11. Also look for small falcons, accipiters and Broadwings here and at the following locations.

Roving flocks of the local resident birds, including Boreal Chickadees, will be found.

## AREA 11

At the bottom of the hill a road runs parallel to the edge of the cove and salt marsh. To the left are the lower ends of several golf greens, while to your right alder and birch thickets separate you from the cove. The road and a series of trails should all be birded carefully for it is here that most of the passerines sighted at Hartlen's, and certainly most of the uncommon or rare ones have been found. Along with the regular migrating warblers to be expected in Nova Scotia, one or more sightings of Blue-winged, Pine, Prairie, Cerulean, Connecticut, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers have occurred, as well as White-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos. The visitor should not expect such birds, but if rarities are to be found, they will be here and the commoner migrants are often here in great numbers.

## AREAS 12 &amp; 13

The access road along the shore proceeds to area 12 at the head of the cove and then one takes to the edge of the golf fairways to 13. Birders give way to golfers on this portion of your walk. Permission to bird the area is granted on the understanding that we will not interfere with the prime use of the property, and if the course is busy, omit area 13. This spot does provide a good view of the birds on Cow Bay and the beach at Silver Sands, but these can be viewed from the other end of Silver Sands spit. The largest and most mature of the hardwoods in the area are found here and as well as the previously mentioned passerines, look for woodpeckers and Pine Grosbeaks.

The cove, its shores and the salt marsh which is accessible at half tide with proper footwear, should be carefully birded. Many of the passerines in the surrounding brush are easily seen from the marsh, rails can be found regularly and it is one of the few spots near the cities that can produce Marsh Wrens. Many of the shallow-water and mud-seeking shorebirds may be found. It is also in this area that you should search carefully for sparrows and look carefully for exotics.

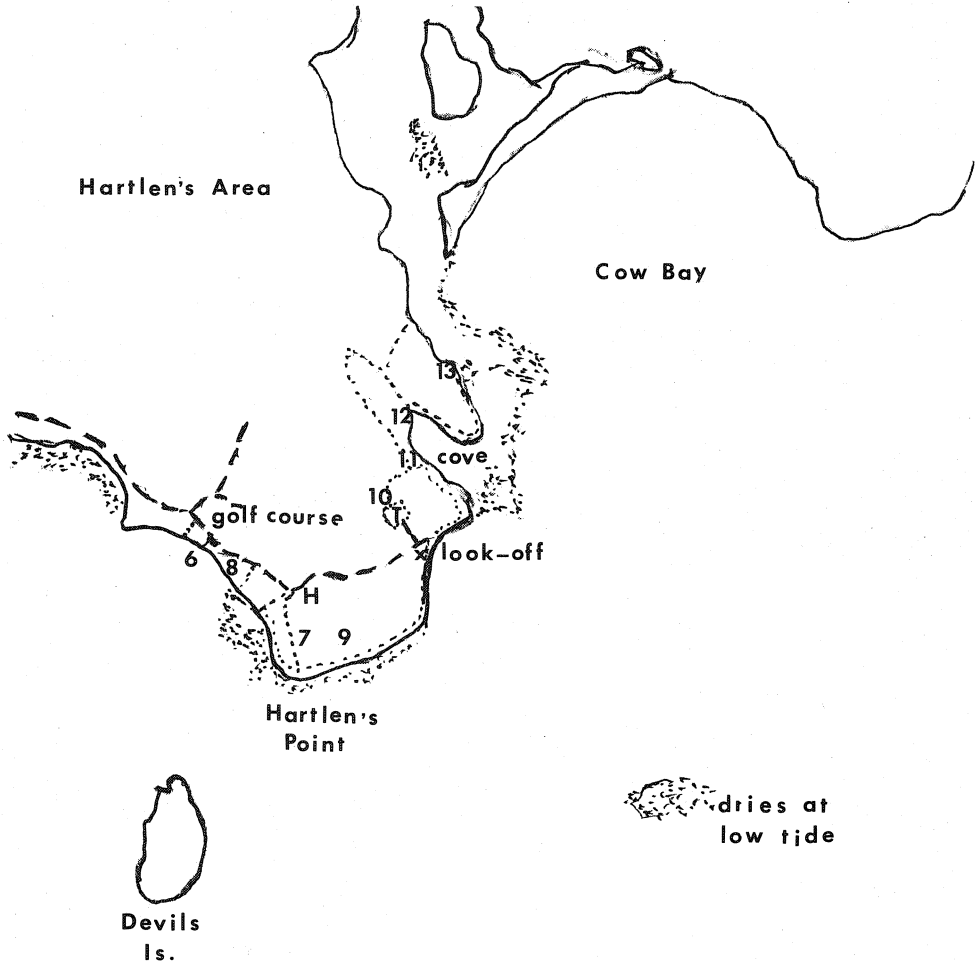
## SHOREBIRDS

Many of the shorebirds can be seen at the cove at half tide. They can be found anywhere along the shores of the point where thick beds of rotting kelp are found, at rest on rocky outcrops at high tide or on the fairways themselves in the early morning before golfers rise (or on rainy days when they don't rise). Only a few species pass through the area on their northern trip but many can be seen in the fall. Since many visitors are interested in shorebirds, a rough timetable is included here.

During the first half of August, the species most often seen are Willet, Least, White-rumped and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Red Knot, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Hudsonian Godwit, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers, Whimbrel and Short-billed Dowitchers.

## LOOKOFF

The high point of land marked on the map as "lookoff" can be the end of the winter birding trip and the beginning of a mid-May to mid-June or a fall (mid-August to mid-November) trip. The lookoff itself is a good point to scan the sea, the shore and the cove below. You have two choices here, either to proceed down the hill to the shore of the cove, or to walk up the road to the air beacon, pass by it to area 10 and proceed down the hill to the cove. Whichever is chosen, you may return by the alternate route to cover the area.



In the second half of August, the shorebird collection is augmented by Black-bellied and Golden Plover, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstones and a few early Dunlin. Bird eating falcons, accipiters and hawks begin to appear now. These larger flocks of shorebirds may contain interesting strays but most of the real rarities occur later.

By mid-September, another shorebird peak of remaining adults and larger numbers of juveniles appears. Some of the species numbers peak around now and late species like Pectorals arrive.

Many of the shorebirds linger on into October, but by mid-November only a few are left. It is still worthwhile birding the area because this is the time of exotic strays from Europe or Asia, and the winter seabirds are arriving to begin the cycle again.

#### TIPS

Here are a few tips to make your trip worthwhile:

Have waterproof footwear with you unless the ground is frozen hard. Most areas are wet underfoot.

There is no coffee available nearer than Eastern Passage village.

There are no bathroom facilities in the area.

Even if it is warm and sunny in Halifax, it can be cold, windy or foggy at Hartlen's Point.

The best time for passerines is before 9 a.m. and birding tapers off by noon.

The best time for shorebirds is two hours after high tide, and the best of all is if this coincides with first light in the morning so that the birds are hungry. The best time for roosting birds is at high tide. The times of high and low tide appear in the local newspaper.

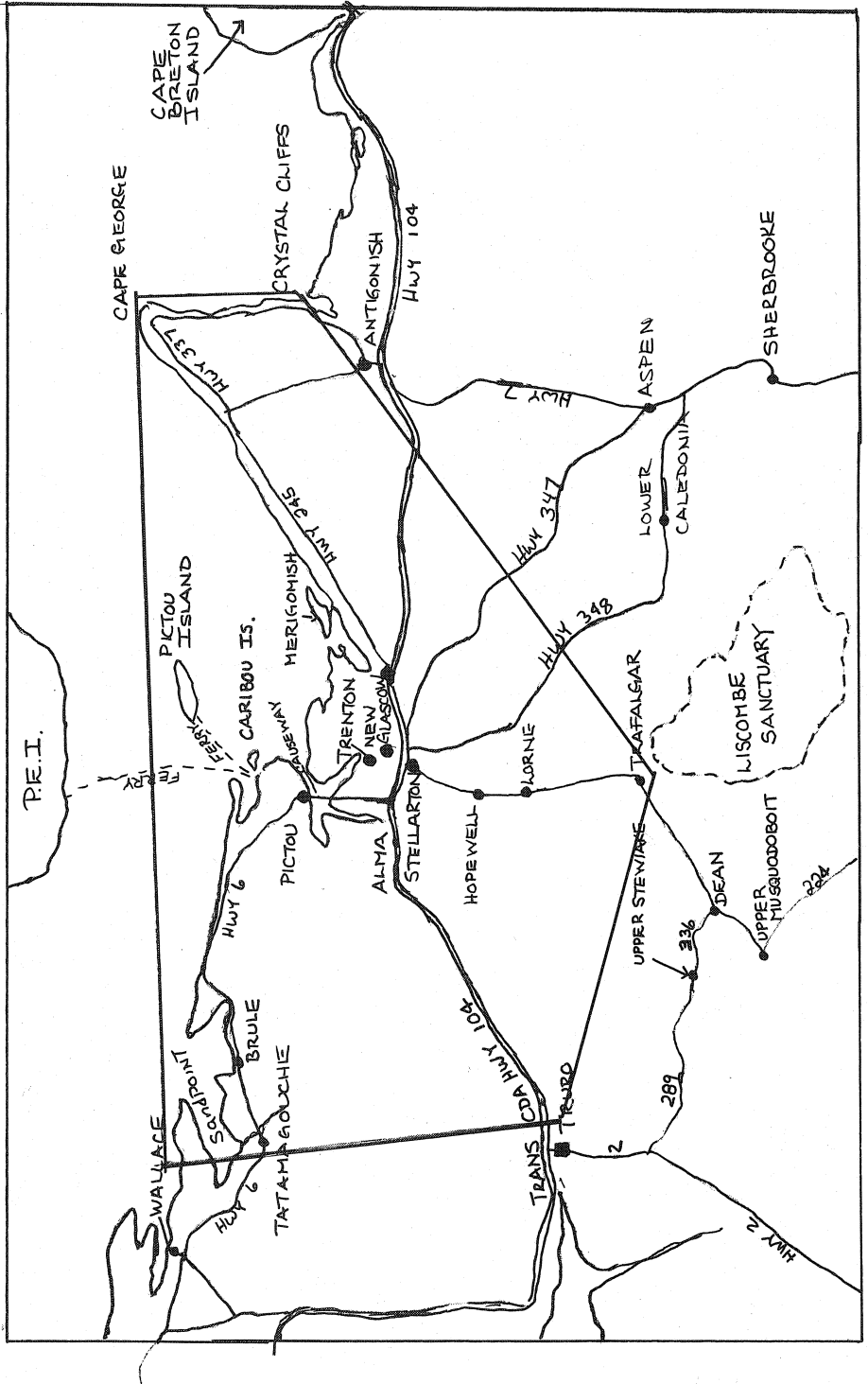
Watch for flying golf balls!

### CENTRAL NOVA SCOTIA

#### COLCHESTER, ANTIGONISH AND PICTOU COUNTIES

The scope of the bird watching opportunities referred to herein is within rather well-defined geographic limits in the central part of Nova Scotia. The specific boundaries of the area, which resembles a pentagon in shape, with side of unequal length, are as follows: north from Truro to Tatamagouche (both Colchester County); east via the North Shore to Cape George (Antigonish County); south along the shore of St. George's Bay to Crystal Cliffs; and the remaining line from Crystal Cliffs south-west to Trafalgar (near the junction of four mainland counties--Colchester, Pictou, Guysborough, Halifax), thence west to Truro.

The area contains various types of habitat wherein bird watchers can discover and observe many different species of well-known birds. A brief summary of the types of habitat to be found are: salt marshes, tidal flats, and beaches; swamps, bogs, and inland lakes; meadows, interales, and upland fields (either under cultivation or used for pasturing livestock); woodlands--with essentially hardwood or softwood trees, or mixture of both--in various stages of growth, and areas where tree cutting operations have recently taken place. The topographical features of the area include numerous rivers and streams which provide conditions that are conducive to bird life.



## TRURO AREA (Colchester Co.)

The point of beginning for the delineation of the designated area was Truro--quite often referred to as "the hub of Nova Scotia". Its principal attraction for bird watchers and other nature lovers is Victoria Park, a magnificent natural woodland area which has been described in tourists' brochures as "1,000 acres of scenic beauty". This outstanding outdoor recreational facility is situated within the town limits, not more than ten minutes' walk from the downtown business and shopping area. The park is crisscrossed with a veritable network of roads, paths, and trails so persons travelling there on foot can explore every nook and cranny of it at will. There are some particular spots within the park where many different species of birds can be observed, namely in the vicinity of the town reservoir and along well established paths adjacent to the brook that flows from there through a deep gorge, down a sizeable cataract on which there are two sets of falls, and on to the Salmon River. On certain days after the spring migrants have returned, a bird watcher would be able to tabulate as many as 45/50 different species of thrushes, grosbeaks, warblers, woodpeckers, flycatchers, etc., on a stroll through the park.

On either side of the Salmon River, west of Truro, there are some excellent places to engage in bird watching at certain times of the year. On the south side of the river there are vast expanses of salt marshes where from mid-July to late fall large flocks of various species of shore birds congregate to feed in preparation for the continuation of their migration journey. The species that can be observed include various Sandpipers--Least, Semipalmated, White-rumped, and Pectoral--Black-bellied Plovers, Yellowlegs and Canada Geese. It is not unusual to see a Great Blue Heron, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, and Black Ducks; nor is it uncommon to see a Northern Harrier or a Bald Eagle flying past, or to catch sight of a Red-tailed Hawk perched in a tree where the woods are close to the highway.

Robins and sparrows--both Song and Savannah--are very much in evidence throughout the area from spring until fall; Bobolinks are quite numerous over the meadows and hayfields; Red-winged Blackbirds abound in places where cattail swamps are adjacent to the highway.

On the north side of Salmon River, on the westbound highway, near Debert, is a Game Sanctuary known as McElmon's Pond. On this body of water various species of water birds can be observed from the time the ice disappears in the spring until late fall. The pond is a haven for migrating ducks--Widgeons, Pintails, Blue- and Green-winged Teal--and for immense flocks of Canada Geese, especially during the fall migration period.

Having described some of the outstanding bird-watching locations in and near Truro, mention will now be made of other places of equal or superior merit within the pre-designated area. Some of the best of these are in and around the village of Hopewell in Pictou County.



PICTOU AND ANTIGONISH COUNTIES

A bird watching expedition in the Hopewell area might well begin at St. Columba Church which is located about two miles south of the more thickly populated part of the village, and a very short distance from the river that flows through that part of the countryside. There is a public park adjacent to the church property and bordering on the river, a situation that is ideal for a great many species of warblers and other small songsters. Common Mergansers and Black Ducks are two species of waterfowl commonly seen in the river. Spotted Sandpipers are often seen flying low over the water, or maybe heard giving their vocal signals by which their positions can be determined, usually on stones along the beach where they stand and teeter as they call. Woodpeckers such as Downy, Hairy and Pileated, nuthatches and creepers can be located on the trunks and branches of the many large elm trees (now mostly dead) within the park; vireos, Catbirds and Veerys are commonly seen there also.

Another extremely interesting spot in Hopewell is a large marsh which is located about two miles from St. Columba Church. As one approaches the marsh, a feeling of expectancy is aroused by the sound of Snipes "winnowing" overhead. Various small birds including Swamp Sparrows and flycatchers add to the excitement, as does the presence of great numbers of swallows of the four common species--Bank, Barn, Cliff and Tree. Birds that nest quite regularly in the marsh are Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Harriers and American Bitterns. Sora and Virginia Rails are sometimes heard but, as one would expect, they are seldom seen.

About three miles from St. Columba Church, on the outskirts of Hopewell, the highway divides; one way leads to Lorne and the other to Trafalgar (pronounced Traf-algar, with the accent on the first syllable). The territory through which either road passes is excellent for bird watching.

The road through Lorne continues on past Dryden Lake where Wood Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks and other water birds are often seen. For the entire distance the highway passes through woodlands of deciduous and coniferous trees where various small passerines can be observed.

Another of the many delightful places to go bird watching in Hopewell is the Mill Road (due east of St. Columba Church). Warblers, and a wide variety of woodland birds can be seen in the proper season. At the eastern end of Mill Road and adjacent to it is Grant's Lake which affords an excellent opportunity to see grebes, loons and other water birds. Often a Northern Waterthrush will be heard and seen near the lake; also, Spotted Sandpipers are frequently seen along the road beside the lake.

Many of the so-called birds of prey are to be found in the Hopewell area: owls--Great Horned, Barred and Saw-whet--Goshawks and Broad-winged Hawks nest in the woodlands. There are also Pileated Woodpeckers, Ruffed and Spruce Grouse, as may be confirmed by members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society who have attended Field Day excursions to the area.

One particular place in Pictou County that has a special attraction for bird watchers in the wintertime, is at Trenton where there is a considerable expanse of open water immediately below the electric power generating plant. Large flocks of various species of water birds are to be found there (the water being relatively warm after passing through the turbines of the plant), and they can be seen to good advantage from the elevation of the highway bridge that crosses the East River at that point. Some of the species that have been seen there from time to time are: Common, Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers; Goldeneyes--Common and Barrow's; Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Black Duck, Mallard, American and Eurasian Wigeon, Canada Goose, Herring, Black-backed, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls.

There are many opportunities around Lyon's Brook and Alma to see and observe Bald Eagles and Ospreys engaged in their nesting activities; some of the nests are in exposed positions where they can be seen from a nearby highway.

The North Shore of Nova Scotia from Tatamagouche to Merigomish (Big) Island, a



distance of approximately 75 miles, is a marvellous place to observe the shore birds that pass through the region during the fall migration period. Three favourite spots of many local bird watchers are Sand Point (near Tatamagouche), Caribou Island, and Merigomish Island; there are other intermediate spots that are well worth exploring.

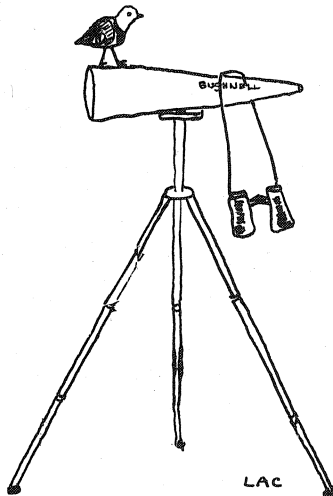
Typical observations at Caribou Island during the fall season would be: in the late summer and early fall--Great Blue Herons, Bonaparte's Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, Black Ducks, Northern Harriers, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, Dowitchers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Greater and Least Yellowlegs, Willets, Ruddy Turnstones, Spotted Sandpipers, Purple Sandpipers, eiders, Gannets and several species of ducks, as well as Rough-legged Hawks and Snow Buntings.

As a result of visits to Merigomish (Big) Island over a period of years, further additions could be made to the previous list, namely: Kestrels, Merlins, Sanderlings, Hudsonian Godwits, Golden Plovers, White-winged, Surf and Common Scoters, Canada Geese, Snow Geese, Double-crested Cormorants, Glossy Ibis, Great or Common Egret, Caspian Terns, Snowy Owls, and once, a White Pelican.

There are two other locations of interest to bird watchers in the designated area of Central Nova Scotia that should be included: one is at Pictou Causeway where for several decades, a colony of Double-crested Cormorants has been nesting on the pilings and the remains of a wharf or some similar structure. These birds have proven to be a great attraction to large numbers of people who pass that way, regardless of their interest in bird watching. The second place is at Crystal Cliffs, about ten miles from Antigonish on St. George's Bay, where a colony of Great Cormorants has been nesting for many, many years. The nesting site which is on the face of the cliff has to be approached by an obscure and almost indistinguishable trail for nearly half a mile, over rough and uneven ground. However, the sight of the nests which the viewer sees when looking over the parapet-like ridge at the summit of the cliffs is well worth the risks and hazards involved in making the ascent.

Mention should also be made of a colony of Great Blue Herons that nest on Pictou Island. A trip to that isolated spot can be accomplished by arrangement with the operator of the ferry that services the residents of the island, or with some other boatman.

This is a summary of some of the places in Central Nova Scotia where one may bird watch with pleasure and satisfaction; they are highly recommended to anyone who is interested in exploring them.



CUMBERLAND COUNTY

## AMHERST AND AREA

Most of the common birds can be seen in their usual areas at the appropriate seasons and are not treated in this account. Advice on where to see regular, but uncommon species, birds that are rare elsewhere but available in Nova Scotia, and rarities that have been seen on a number of occasions can be found here.

Specific sites mentioned below have been described using Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates. These consist of two letters followed by four numbers in the case of the 1:250000 scale topographic maps, and two letters followed by six numbers for the 1:50000 scale maps. The two 1:250000 scale maps referred to are titled "TRURO 11-E" and AMHERST 21-H". The 1:50000 referred to is "AMHERST 21-H/16". These maps are for sale during normal working hours at 16 Station Street, Amherst.

## WINTER (mid-December to mid-March)

The dyked grasslands on either side of the main highway, in the area of the Nova Scotia/New Brunswick border, as well as along the secondary roads harbour Rough-legged Hawks, Snowy Owls during incursion years and Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs all winter.

Open channels under or near road bridges over tidal waters at Pugwash (MF4977), Port Phillip (MF4277), Maccan (MF0262), and almost any similar Cumberland County shoreline can yield all three mergansers, (the Hooded is uncommon), Common Goldeneye, and the occasional Barrow's Goldeneye.

The mature hardwood stand around Fenwick (MF1065) is home to Barred Owls and Pileated Woodpecker year round.

## SPRING (mid-March to end of May)

In the salt marshes and adjacent dyked grasslands to the southwest of Amherst town and out to Amherst Point (MF0274) can be found Canada Geese (up to 1500), sometimes accompanied by one to five Snow Geese. These are commonest mid-March to mid-April.

In the fresh water in or near the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary (parking lot MF0217210), Eddy Marsh (MF)45777), and Amherst Marsh, you may find many of the ducks, waterfowl, herons and egrets. Most of the eastern dabbling ducks including Gadwall, American Wigeon and Northern Shoveler are found including frequent sightings of Eurasian Wigeon and the Eurasian Green-winged Teal. Pied-billed Grebes, American Coots, Common Moorhens (seen less often), American Bitterns and other marsh birds are readily seen in the sanctuary. The Amherst area is the most likely area of Nova Scotia to search for the more uncommon marsh birds and waterfowl such as: Snowy, Cattle, and Great Egrets; Black-crowned, Green-backed and Little Blue Herons; and rarely, Glossy Ibis.

The tidal inlets and coastal waters between Northport (MF3367) and Malagash (MF8072) hold Willets and migrating shorebirds from late April/early May, and at Linden (MF3682) up to two hundred Brant in late April.

Colonies of Purple Martins can be found in the urban areas of Amherst, Oxford and Collingwood Corner. These are at 207 Victoria St. and 3 Hillcrest Road in Amherst, at the Department of Lands and Forests office off Trans Canada Highway Exit at Oxford, and along the roads from Collingwood Corner to Williamsdale and Wyvern. The martins arrive in early May and nest in these areas.

A pleasant spot for observing warblers on the Victoria Day holiday (May 24), is at the Ducks Unlimited impoundments one kilometre south of Maccan. One path runs between the Maccan River and the railway track, with a parking spot off the road at the bottom of the hill (MF038526). Another path crosses a pond, east of Highway 302 (MF038626) from the same parking spot.

#### SUMMER (early June to mid-August)

In the freshwater impoundments mentioned above may be found nesting Black Ducks, Mallards, Pintails, Gadwalls, Wigeon, Shoveler, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, and in some years, the occasional Ruddy Duck or Redhead may be present. Other uncommon but regular visitors that may be seen in these wetlands are Marsh Wrens, Black Terns and Wilson's Phalaropes.

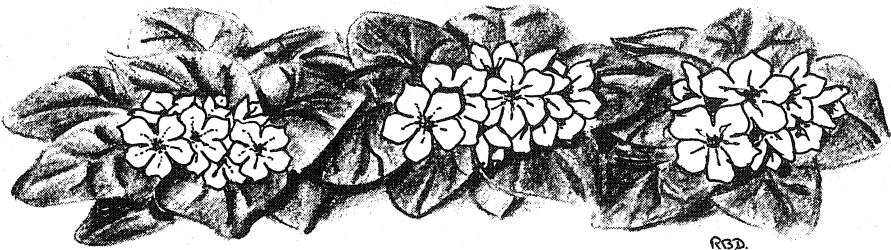
Broad-winged Hawks, while not abundant, breed in the mixed hardwood forests along the north shore of the county. In the upland blueberry fields in the Cobequid Mountains, particularly on the mountain shoulders, you may find Vesper Sparrows; more frequent here than elsewhere in the province.

A number of gravel spits extend into Northumberland Strait along the north shore. Semi-palmated Sandpipers have bred on such spits at Northport, Pugwash and farther east. To avoid disturbing these nest sites, it is best to be cautious until July. Beginning then, the return migration of the shorebirds will often fill these spits and the coastal mud and sand flats with a variety of migrants. The tidal flats near Fox Harbour often feeds Hudsonian Godwits (up to 30), Whimbrels (irregular in their attendance), and fair numbers of shorebirds. The observing period runs from late July to the end of September.

Short-eared Owls can be seen in the coastal grasslands, both dyked and natural. They are known to breed near Amherst and at Fox Harbour (MF6478). Birders are requested to avoid the nesting areas until at least late June.

#### AUTUMN (mid-August to mid-December)

The stubble fields, corn fields and pastures near Linden, Port Phillip, Wallace, and the tidal estuaries nearby, harbour and feed large flocks of Canada Geese, up to 5000+ individuals during the months of October to December. The tidal estuaries and near-shore waters contain flocks of most of the regular Nova Scotia fall and winter waterfowl. They move along the shoreline in flocks of up to 100, and occasionally up to 1000, depending on the species. Many are subject to hunting after October 1st, so, Sunday, a non-hunting day is the best choice at this season.



Mayflower (Trailing Arbutus) -- Provincial Flower of Nova Scotia

## CAPE BRETON

### RICHMOND COUNTY

#### ISLE MADAME

Crossing the bridge onto Isle Madame takes you along Lennox Passage which is a concentration area for waterfowl and shorebirds. Of particular note in this area is the concentration of Whimbrel on Petit de Grat and Cape Auger that occurs in mid to late August. The birds arrive here after winding their way from barren to barren along Cape Breton's southeast coast. They show up first in North Sydney and on Scaterie Island. They seem to favour crow berries and blue berries on these stopovers.

#### POINT MICHAUD

A candidate for our province's Special Places Act this beach area is an important stopover for migrating shorebirds the appropriate season.

#### FRAMBOISE

One of the best saltmarsh systems along the southeast coast. Many birds can be seen foraging here. During migrations this is an ideal spot to see a variety of birdlife. The barrier beach system in this area is a usually deserted beach area with a variety of wildlife use. A dirt road a couple of kilometres past the south side of Fullers Bridge leads to this beach.

### CAPE BRETON COUNTY

#### ROUTE 4 FROM JOHNSTOWN TO EAST BAY

Running along the southern shore of the Bras D'or Lakes to the East Bay hills, this area is a great Bald Eagle area. They nest in the brook ravines running up from the lake into the hillsides and perch along the lakeshore where they feed extensively. The red islands off Johnstown are a nesting area of cormorants, gulls and mergansers.

#### LOCH LOMAND ROAD

This secondary road that can be entered from Big Pond is a good stretch of road to view Spruce Grouse and Gray Jays, especially the first ten kilometres ending at the Enon Road. Continuing down the Enon Road two kilometres is a marshy area with a good variety of waterfowl species, rails and bitterns. Ten kilometres farther, the road branches off to Stirling, Framboise (previously mentioned) and Forchu. Loons are common in the lakes along this roadside.

#### GLENDARRY

Enter along the road opposite the firehall in Big Pond. Two kilometres out, this road forks. The right fork takes you out to the Glendarry Valley and numerous woodroads. These roads are wonderful owling areas. In addition, the young forest stands in this area are good foraging areas for hawks, particularly during spring and fall migrations.

#### BEN EOIN BEACH

Eagles and gulls, including Bonapartes are common in the fall feeding on silversides in this pond.

# CAPE BRETON ISLAND



## GLACE BAY

Glace Bay Harbour is a concentration area for gulls from late fall to early spring. Glaucous, Iceland, Ring-billed and Black-headed Gulls can usually be closely observed along with the common Herring and Great Black-backed species.

Glace Bay Sanctuary located at Big Glace Bay Lake is accessible from South Street. Taking the Marconi Trail towards Donkin past the former site of the Heavy Water Plant gives you three access trails marked by posted gates. In spring this is a good area to observe most of the common ducks of Cape Breton as well as the uncommon Pintail and American Wigeon.

At the corner, where the road divides toward Donkin or Pt. Morien, an old dirt road gives access to the east end of Glace Bay bar. The bar and adjoining saltmarsh complex, provide nesting habitat for many birds, Common and Arctic Tern and Willets, to name a few. Rare and uncommon visitors often show up in this area after wind storms.

## MARCONI TRAIL

Follow the Marconi Trail east past Donkin to Schooner Pond Beach. A lovely cattail marsh is located behind this beach. Here Eastern Kingbirds and three species of swallow are usually seen. Ducks of various species, American Bitterns and Pied-billed Grebes are often seen here if one spends some time.

A walking trail following the cliffs to the northern head of Morien Bay starts at Schooner Pond. If you are fortunate enough to come to this area in winter, uncommon seabirds are often spotted. In spring and fall Gannets feed in the waters below you. In summer this is the home of a Kittiwake colony.

## PT. MORIEN BAR

South along the Marconi Trail lies Morien Bar. In spring and fall thousands of Canada Geese can be seen feeding in the flats off this sandspit. Southern birds, uncommon to our shores, often settle here after storms. The sand spit itself is a wonderful shorebird area from mid-July through September. Large numbers of birds are not usual here but the species variability is quite special.

## LOUISBOURG

Turning off the Louisbourg highway, Route 22, onto Havenside Road will take you to Louisbourg Harbour. This secluded cove is a good spot to observe waterbirds and migrating shorebirds. Eagles and numerous gulls can be seen from the Government wharf downtown.

While visiting the Fortress look for the colony of Cliff Swallows that live in and on the fortress buildings. Take a look at the beaches and marshes outside the fortress walls for water and shorebirds.

## SYDNEY

Wentworth Park in Sydney is always worth a short visit. Waterfowl are always present and among the common Black and Mallard Ducks one is often surprised to note uncommon waterfowl. This is especially true in late fall and spring. Gulls of various species feed in the harbour near this park.

## PETERSFIELD PROVINCIAL PARK AND POINT EDWARD

Travel on Route 4 to the traffic lights at Sydney River and turn at the Cape Breton Shopping Plaza. Take the bridge across Sydney River. Turn right immediately after crossing the bridge and follow the road winding its way along the harbour's shore (239). Loons, gulls and waterfowl are normally seen. Just before the Coastguard College, look for the entrance to Petersfield Park. There is a good parking area, with boardwalk and a nearby picnic area with tables and water supply. This park was originally a large estate with extensive gardens and exotic shrubs. Many have prospered in a semi-wild state lending the area a varied and unusual habitat. Birdlife is therefore varied and abundant. Many paths meander through the property, some through wooded sections, others along the shore. Remnants of the former estate can be spotted in many locations.

After leaving the park, turn right and continue on the same route to Point Edward. At the junction of Rudderham Road is a good spot to observe shorebirds at low tide.

Continue on this route to North Sydney. A detour to Leitches Creek on Route 223 will often reward you with the sighting of a Bald Eagle loafing in the trees along the creek's edge. A little farther along look at the power line crossing the highway. Osprey nest along this line and the power corporation has seen fit to let them remain.

## BIRD ISLANDS

The road to Big Bras d'Or, which meets Highway 105 halfway across Boulardarie Island, is marked as the best way to the Bird Sanctuary Islands of Hertford and Ciboux. The best time to visit this colony is in the spring and early summer. By August, many of the birds are leaving. It is wise to call ahead for space on the boat which circles the islands close under their cliffs. The telephone number in Nova Scotia is 1-674-2384 and outside Nova Scotia, 902-674-2384. Most visitors make the trip for sightings of Atlantic Puffins and Razorbills, but Kittiwakes, Black Guillemots and both Double-crested and Great Cormorants nest here. Common and Thick-billed Murres and Northern Gannets are often seen in the area. For many, the grey seals loafing around the islands are the highlight of the trip.

## VICTORIA COUNTY

### ST. ANN'S

Along this bay, be on the lookout for nesting Canada Geese, descendants of a Lands and Forests release a few years ago. Waterfowl and shorebirds are seen in this area as well.

### NORTH RIVER

North River Provincial Park is about fourteen miles north of St. Ann's South Gut on the Cabot Trail. Turn onto a gravel road just beyond the North River bridge. Paths through mixed woodlands lead to trout and salmon pools, so clear the fish can be seen on their lies. The variety of forests along these trails makes this a wonderful area to see a wide variety of woodland birds.

## CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Check with Park staff for special sightings throughout the year.

#### INGONISH AREA

Ingonish River Estuary is rich in shorebird life, especially during the spring and fall migrations. Waterfowl feed and nest in this area and Great Blue Herons are commonplace. At low tide many species forage in this area.

The Freshwater Lake area and the Clyburn valley within Cape Breton Highlands National Park are especially rich in warblers during the spring and nesting period. Clyburn Valley is a good area to listen for owls and woodpeckers.

#### MIDDLE HEAD

Common and Arctic Terns nest on this headland as do Black-backed Gulls.

Aspy Bay is an excellent area for shorebirds and waterfowl in both nesting season and during migration.

#### PLATEAU WETLANDS

Greater Yellowlegs, a rare breeder throughout most of Nova Scotia, nest on many of these wetlands. The larger lakes of this region usually have a nesting pair of Common Loons.

#### INVERNESS COUNTY

##### RINGWASH AND CHETICAMP RIVER VALLEYS

These are excellent warbler areas, particularly during migration. Woodland areas have high woodpecker numbers while waterways are common Kingfisher hangouts.

#### MARGAREE RIVER

A classic salmon river and Nova Scotia's candidate for The Heritage River Program. From Margaree Harbour to Lake Ainslie and the narrower sections of this river, the habitat diversity along this valley make it an excellent area to view birdlife of all types common to the province.

#### MABOU

Glendyer Station, located on Highway 252 to Mabou, is a nice spot to start a walk along the abandoned railroad. Follow the railroad along the Mabou River. Along the Southwest branch you will find numerous waterfowl. Eastern Kingbirds, Kingfishers and many wading birds are found in this area. Taking the highway towards Inverness, you will notice a dirt road beginning at Glenora Falls. This road leads past pasture land out to Cape Mabou. Along this trail woodpeckers, grouse and many hawks are commonly observed.

#### RIVER DENYS BASIN

The best area to see numbers of Bald Eagles in a section of the province where eagles are commonplace, is River Denys Basin. The shallow waters and numerous large perch trees throughout this area make this an eagle's paradise. Although best appreciated by boat, there are numerous areas where one can see numbers of eagles from the shore.

Big Harbour Island deserves special mention for the variety of birdlife nearby. Marshbirds and waterfowl frequent the shallow ponds while old farmlands provide habitat for Bobolink and Lincoln's Sparrows.



LUNENBURG COUNTY-A SHOREBIRD ROUTE

Within a short distance of each other lie two of the best shorebirding spots in the province, Crescent and Cherry Hill Beaches. They are different in geography (sand spit and rock berm) and thus offer different types of birding.

Crescent Beach joins the mainland to the first of the LaHave Islands (Bush Island), being, as the name suggests, a long thin crescent of sand with the sea (Green Bay) on the south side and sand dune, salt marsh and sand flats on the north. The narrow road to the islands runs between the two, making it possible to view many of the birds from the car (indeed, it makes a good 'blind'). Cherry Hill, on the other hand, although similar in that there is a long sand beach backed by dune and salt marsh, is much "wilder" with no road. It is a two mile hike to the "top end", where most of the birds are to be seen and the terrain is fairly rough with cobble rocks much of the way. Crescent attracts great numbers of shorebirds, while Cherry Hill is renowned for the exciting rarities.

The best time of the year to visit these beaches for shorebirds is from mid to late July to the end of September, although October can be rewarding as well. Birding the loop from Bridgewater via Route 331 to the junction with 103 past East Port Medway (Exit 17), is rewarding at any time of year but as we are dealing here with shorebirds, we will confine remarks mainly to that season and to the two aforementioned beaches.

Follow Route 331 from Bridgewater along the west bank of the LaHave River and keep going past the village of LaHave and West Dublin to the entrance to Crescent Beach (approximately 16 miles). The best time of the tide to view shorebirds here is approximately three hours before or after a high or low--that is--mid tide. Then the birds are bunched up, quite close to the road on the sand flats and, if you remain in the car, will not "put up". The flats are broad, so that, should the tide be lower, scoping is good, or you can get out and walk out towards the edge. Should you miss the tide and find the flats covered, many of the birds can be found in the grassy area a mile farther up the beach on the left, just before and after a large stand of spruce trees.

In mid July, the Short-billed Dowitchers arrive, building in a week or two to large flocks of 200-300. Look also at this time for Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plover, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Black-bellied Plover come in around the end of the month, the adults first, still in their breeding plumage, followed by the immatures in winter dress. Red Knots may be seen then too, not in great numbers but always present. By mid August, the White-rumped Sandpipers should be in and the Sanderling are arriving. Last "regulars" to come are the Dunlin in early September. All of these species can be seen on the flats from the road. Some of them, especially the Sanderling and other small peeps, are also found on the beach side chasing the wavelets and roosting at high tide beyond the tide line. Look among them for the rare Baird's and Western Sandpipers. Opposite the spruce stand on the beach side are a group of rocks called "The Follies". Look here for Ruddy Turnstones after the end of July, and if you are very late in the year, for Purple Sandpipers.

A few other species may be seen from time to time: a scattering of Lesser Yellowlegs arrive each year; the odd Hudsonian Godwit occurs (and once, a Marbled Godwit); sometimes a Stilt Sandpiper or a Wilson's Phalarope or the western race of Willet.

It must be mentioned that, if you can tear your eyes away from the shorebirds, there are many other species to be seen at Crescent, especially in late summer and fall. Sea ducks (scoters, Eider, Oldsquaw) as well as grebes and loons abound in Green Bay as winter approaches, while migrating Black Ducks, Mallards, mergansers, Pintail, etc., are seen off the other side. Savannah, Song, "Ipswich" Sparrows hop around the dunes and many species of migrating warblers dodge about the spruce trees. Great Blue Herons nest nearby and build to 30-40 in the fall, perhaps with a Little Blue Heron or Snowy or Great Egret among them.

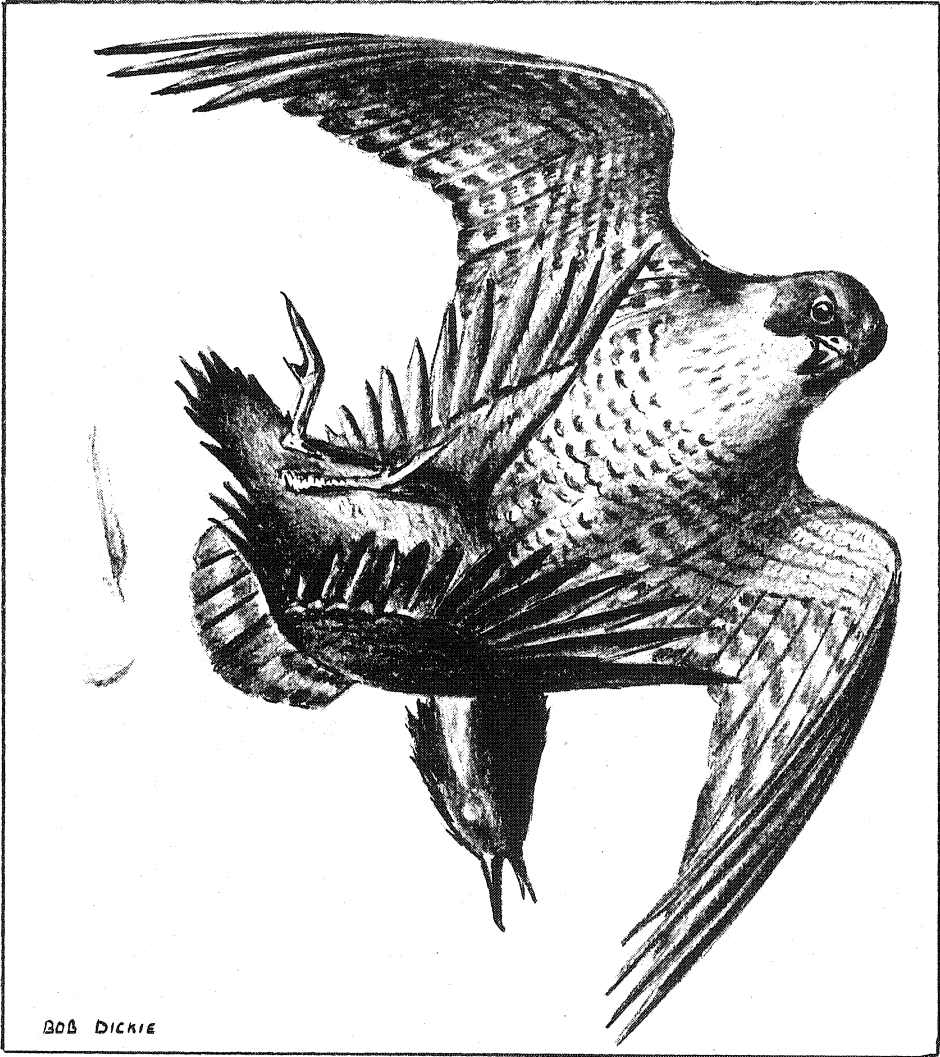
To get to Cherry Hill from Crescent, continue on Route 331 past the villages of Petite Riviere and Broad Cove. About 1 1/2 miles past Broad Cove, you will see a large building on the left with a sign "United Communities Fire Hall"; turn left here onto a dirt road leading down to the beach (a good quarter mile for assorted passerines in the fall). Then you are on your own. A good plan is to walk slowly up the salt marsh side (look for Pectoral and Least Sandpipers in the grass) and as you get closer to the top of the beach (mid tide again, is best), you will see shorebirds on the right: Black-bellied Plover, Piping Plover, Lesser Golden Plover (late August), Red Knot, Short-billed Dowitcher; there should be Willets, Semipalmated Plover, White-rumps, Semipalmated Sandpipers and, later, Dunlin.

Eventually, the land ends in a shallow channel between the beach and Great Island. To the right is a small round outcropping of rock covered with spruce trees. Walk around it to view the edge of the sand on the far side (Ruddy Turnstone, Golden Plover, Black-bellied Plover and peeps). Then, turn left across the top of the beach and over to the sand side. This is good area for Whimbrel in the grass, Baird's Sandpipers on the beach and, almost every year, a few Buff-breasted Sandpipers (early September). Yellowlegs (more Lesser here than at Crescent) fly over and the occasional Hudsonian Godwit is around. Rarities on Cherry Hill have included Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Eurasian Whimbrel and Eurasian Curlew. Peeps abound on the beach on the way back, affording a good opportunity to scan for the rarer species.

For other birds at Cherry Hill (ducks, grebes, etc.) please reread the Crescent Beach paragraph; most may be seen here. In addition there are many Common and Arctic Terns, a few Roseates and, rarely, a Gill-billed Tern. In the grassy areas Savannah and Sharp-tailed Sparrows flit about with a few "Ipswich" and sometimes Lincolns as well. From the top of the beach, scope out to seaward and you may be rewarded with Northern Gannets or a Kittiwake. Northern Harriers, harassing the shorebirds, are common and the occasional Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Rough-legged Hawk (late fall) have been seen at this time of year. As fall progresses Canada Geese appear, and sometimes Brant followed by Great Cormorants and overwintering duck such as Bufflehead, Goldeneye and Scaup may be seen.

Having exhausted Cherry Hill (or perhaps vice versa), proceed on Route 331 past Vogler's Cove and East Port Medway to join Route 103 at Exit 17. You may turn right to return to Bridgewater (approximately 20 miles) or left towards Liverpool and Yarmouth.





BOB DICKIE

SHELBURNE COUNTY

## MATTHEW'S LAKE

Matthew's Lake ( Little Harbour Lake on some older topo maps ), is situated in Shelburne County, approximately 20 km south of Sable River on Route 103. This large marsh, beach and tidal lagoon area can be reached by turning south at Exit 23 off Route 103, proceeding about 4 km to the Little Harbour turn on the left and then going about 12 km to the Little Harbour Country Store at the crossroads. Proceed 4 km straight through this intersection (south) to the end of the gravel road where there is a small parking area and turn-around at Hemeon's Road.

After parking and examining the ocean nearby and also Black Rock to the east and Ram Island to the south for gulls, guillemots, cormorants and eiders, as well as possible shearwaters, fulmars and phalaropes (during summer and early fall), follow the track west along the beach for about 2.5 km to the access to the Matthew's Lake sand and mud flats (see map). The timing of your arrival is quite important to the success of your shorebirding, which is the primary attraction of the area. The greatest numbers of shorebirds, particularly during the fall migration, will be seen on the flats in the middle of the lake at low tide. This area is approximately another kilometer north of the beach. Low tide in the lake lags behind low tide in the ocean about 2 1/2 hours, so that arrival at the flats should be timed for approximately 2 1/2 hours after the tide tables say it will be low water at either Lockeport or Halifax.

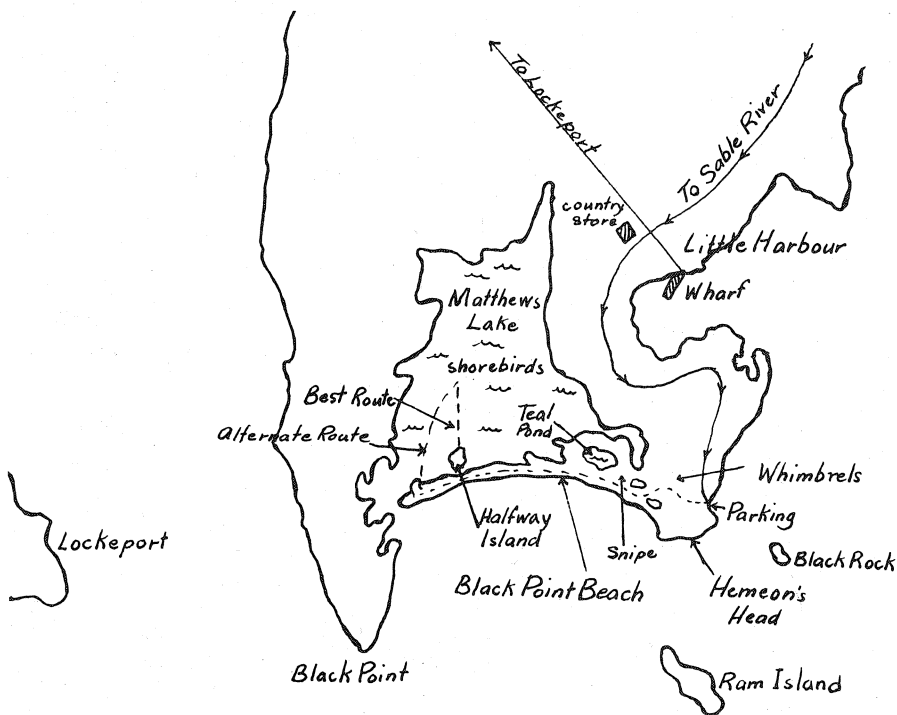
At this time, except during periods of very high tides, the flats can be reach "dry shod" or ankle deep at worst, and birded for about 2 1/2 hours before the rising tide will force a decision to leave or swim! The whereabouts of the birds at high tide is a bit of a mystery, though many can be seen along the ocean on Black Point Beach, especially just west of Hemeon's Head, and near the lake outlet on the west end of the beach.

Now for the birds: between many years of examination for the Maritimes Shorebird Surveys and other observations, some twenty-seven species of shorebirds have been seen, about as great a variety as any of the census areas in the Maritimes. The actual total numbers are not great; to see a thousand or so during August and early September is common, but this is a good area for Hudsonian Godwits (August) Red Knots, Dowitchers, Whimbrels, White-rumped Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers (late), as well as the more common species. Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Baird's Sandpipers and Curlews (very rare) are also possible. There seems to be at least one pair of Semipalmated Plovers breeding here and a pair of Greater Yellowlegs have been observed during the breeding season and acting "suspiciously". The birds seem to be tired, especially during the fall migration and can be approached quite closely. The area around the first pond you pass is especially good for Snipe in the fall (as many as 25) and also Bitterns, Sora and other rails.

The area shown as "Teal Pond" is especially good for both teals and other ducks such as Black, Mallard, Gadwall and Pintail. Common Egrets have also been seen here. The lake itself harbours many hundred Canada Geese during the late fall and winter, as well as goldeneye, mergansers and Brant (spring). Offshore, a few thousand eiders gather during the summer molt and this is a good spot to watch the parade of gannets during late September and October. Needless to say, this whole area is not a good place to bird during the duck hunting season.

Other than the waterbirds, the fall migration seems to be a good time here to observe Merlin, Peregrine Falcons, Harriers, warblers and also western rarities such as Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Western Kingbird, Cardinal, etc. These latter birds are more often seen along the road and shore between Sable River and Hemeon's Head.

One final note: Black-headed Gulls have been seen numerous times during winter and early spring and it has been suggested that they may eventually breed here. Also, a few pairs of Roseate Terns are breeding nearby, probably on Ram Island.



## CAPE SABLE

"Cape Sable--sea island Beauty"--is an important lightstation, open to the public, and has shorebirds or seabirds any time of year, with a wide variety of migrants. It is an island and you will need boatage to and from The Hawk, Cape Sable Island. Leave Route 3 at Barrington Passage, follow Route 330 through Clark's Harbour until a righthand (southward) signed turn leads shortly to The Hawk. For a small boat (the Island is near), enquire at the Post Office. According to tide, weather and choice, arrange landing and pick-up at the western or eastern extremity of Cape Sable. A three mile walk separates these points.

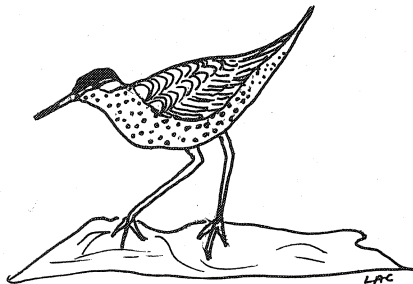
This walk reveals **all** of Cape Sable. Landing below grassy western dunes, from late June through fall migration, you find: dowitchers, peep and plover feeding on the beach or great sand flats stretching eastward; over a hundred nest cavities of Bank Swallow in the dune faces; nests or young of Piping Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Savannah and Song Sparrows. At Black Point (rocky, turf) more nest cavities in the seaward bank may be seen; on the inner slope there may be Least and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Upland Plover and hummingbirds among the thistles.

At high tide your path (and the width of the island) for the next half mile consists of a high cobblestone seawall; otherwise, sand beaches continue. On both sides there may be hundreds of shorebirds feeding or drowsing and preening. In this stretch, Common and Arctic Terns nest and we have seen, among other treats, Curlew Sandpiper, Western Grebe, Golden Eagle, Turkey Vulture and sometimes a cruising petrel.

Southeast, the island widens and includes: an area of swampy pasture (American Bittern, night herons, stray egrets, Glossy Ibis); a brackish pond (teal, both yellowlegs, three species of phalarope); the lightstation whose tall buildings, the most southerly on Canada's east coast, beckon migrants and strays. Over 30 species of warbler have occurred here, giving excellent viewing as they catch flies around the buildings. Look for the Rufous-sided Towhee, Yellow-breasted Chat, Brown Thrasher and thrushes in grass along the seawall; an abundant kelpfly population just over the wall supports hundreds of Barn, Cliff, Bank and Tree Swallows.

To Steven's Point landing, take the cross-country tractor road, or continue along the seawall for views of surf, gulls and shearwaters. The rocky, seaweedy, eastern shore hosts Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, Willets and plovers. Sand beach and high dunes reform as you reach the landing--walk's end.

Taken in winter, the walk presents mainly bay and sea ducks: eider, three scoter species, two mergansers, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Oldsquaw (delightful song); Red-necked and Horned Grebes; white-winged gulls, murres, Dovekies, Black Guillemot; Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs, replacing shorebirds, feed among debris exposed at tideline, or on windswept dunes where occasionally Snowy Owls and Northern Harriers hunt plentiful mice. Juncos and a few hardy sparrows also endure. Besides the species named, most birds common in the rest of Nova Scotia occur at Cape Sable; chances are, a trip there will well reward the birder.



## SEAL ISLAND

The Seal Islands (Seal, Noddy, Mud, Flat and Round) lie south of the Tusket group off the southwestern corner of the province where the Atlantic inflow enters the Bay of Fundy. Seal Island proper, only 3 km long and a km or less in width, is 20 statute miles (32 km) west of Cape Sable and 30 miles (48 km) SSE of Yarmouth. Despite its maximum elevation of only about 15 meters, the island is a haven for migrant and stray birds nearly unparalleled in the Atlantic Provinces. Rarities such as Pacific Loon, Wilson's Plover, Ruff, Franklin's Gull, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Say's Phoebe, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, Rock Wren, Townsend's Solitaire, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Cassin's Sparrow and Harris' Sparrow are only a few of the extralimital species seen on the island during the past twenty years.

Champlain and the chronicler Nicolas Denys noted the island, including its seals, in the 17th century, but it was uninhabited until 1823, when Mary Crowell Hichens, her husband Richard, the Edmund Crowells and John Nickerson moved there to rescue shipwrecked sailors. The Hichens were responsible for the first government wharf, built in 1827, and for the establishment of a lighthouse which became active in November, 1831. The Crowell family and their relatives tended the light until recent times. Seal Island is now inhabited mainly by lightkeepers, lobster fishermen (from November through May), Irish Moss rakers (in summer), Mrs. Mary Nickerson (a descendent of Mary Crowell Hichens), and a large flock of sheep. Birders arrive in season, not necessarily in synchrony with migrants.

Access. Clark's Harbour, Shelburne County, is the traditional jumping off point for Seal Island. From Halifax, follow Route 103 about 240 km to Barrington Passage. Turn south about 20 km to Clark's Harbour. From Yarmouth, Route 103 leads south about 70 km to Barrington Passage. There is no regular boat service to Seal Island. Lobster fishermen will occasionally take passengers during the autumn and spring; at other times of the year, access may be difficult and expensive. It is probably best to contact members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society for help, or join one of the NSBS field trips (usually in September or October). Fishermen from Pubnico occasionally make the trip. The crossing takes two hours or more. It is often rough, cold and wet. At low water, you may have to go ashore in a skiff, which may be wet, strenuous and at time, dangerous.

Accommodation, equipment and supplies. A trip to the island should not be undertaken lightly. You must be completely self-sufficient, which means food, sleeping bags, a gas lamp, camp stove and fuel, warm waterproof clothing and good boots. Water is easily available on the island. There is no medical service. In emergencies, the lighthouse personnel can contact Clark's Harbour Coast Guard, which has a lifeboat but no aircraft. Accommodations must always be arranged well in advance. Some NSBS members maintain the North Home, which is primitive but cosy and can sleep 6-10, provided they are not squeamish. It boasts one of the most derelict and one of the best-ventilated outhouses in Atlantic Canada. More comfortable accommodation (for parties of 6-8) is available at the East Side from Mrs. Mary Nickerson, who lives on the island from early spring until late autumn. Contact her well ahead at P.O. Box 336, Clark's Harbour, N.S. B0W 1P0, to reserve a cabin.

The seasons on Seal Island. Most birding trips to the island have been in May and from August through early November. Early spring, winter and summer are poorly known ornithologically. Birding in mid to late April may be quite exciting, especially if southwesterly winds have brought early migrants or occasional southern vagrants. Early May, as in the rest of Nova Scotia, may be very quiet, as migrants trickle in against prevailing northerly winds. From mid May onward, dramatic warbler and thrush arrivals may occur when west winds prevail. Late May and early June are good time to look for western vagrants amidst the late-returning migrants. The breeding species are poorly known (at least until atlassing is complete), but Herring and Black-backed Gulls occupy a large colony in mid-island, Blackpoll Warblers are common, a few other common woodland species probably nest, including Boreal Chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-throated Green Warblers, Yellow Warblers, a Magnolia or two and Redstarts. Leach's Petrels may nest successfully in the thick forest (they are often heard on foggy nights) and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, recorded as breeders in the 1950's, may still breed. One or two pairs of Black-crowned Night Herons may be present.

In mid August the warbler and flycatcher migration begins, peaking during September. By late September floods of warblers, sparrows and finches occur on the island every few days, most of them sheltering from patrolling Sharp-shinned Hawks and Merlins. In late September and October Peregrines are common (up to 4 at a time), many of them of the Arctic breeding race **tundrius**. A Nova Scotian birder frequently recalls seeing a Gyrfalcon and a Yellow-throated Warbler in the same binocular field one day in early November, but finches and sparrows predominate then, especially after the passage of a cold front. November is probably the most interesting autumn period for western (and a few southern) vagrants.

Birding the island. Because it is so small, the entire island may be birded in a day or less. A good strategy is to work the south end in the morning and the north end after lunch. Some birders prefer to start in the north at dawn, especially in late summer and autumn, because the clearings near Race Point may be full of birds for an hour or two before they disperse or leave the island.

Beginning at the east side, going south, carefully examine the gardens behind Mary Nickerson's old house (still called "Mrs. Hamilton's House" by many) and the copse in front. Check lobster traps at the East Side, the clearing behind the church, and especially the tide-line and thickets around the Salt Water Pond. Follow the shore south and westward, checking thickets, trail and beach rocks for migrants. The iris bed just north of Mother Owens' Point and The Bar can produce surprises.

At the light, check lawns, clearings and forest edges. You may return to the East Side by the road, take the wet path to the back of Mrs. Hamilton's house, or walk to the West Side (2 km) past Ship Pond, staying close to the shore. This stretch may have Upland Sandpipers in May or August-September, and Golden Plovers in autumn. Check the open places and forest edges for vagrants.

The West Side Village is the best island hot-spot. Check the lobster traps, piles of debris, staging and intertidal areas. In autumn the lobster traps can be a gold mine. Scope the pond for ducks, grebes and waders.

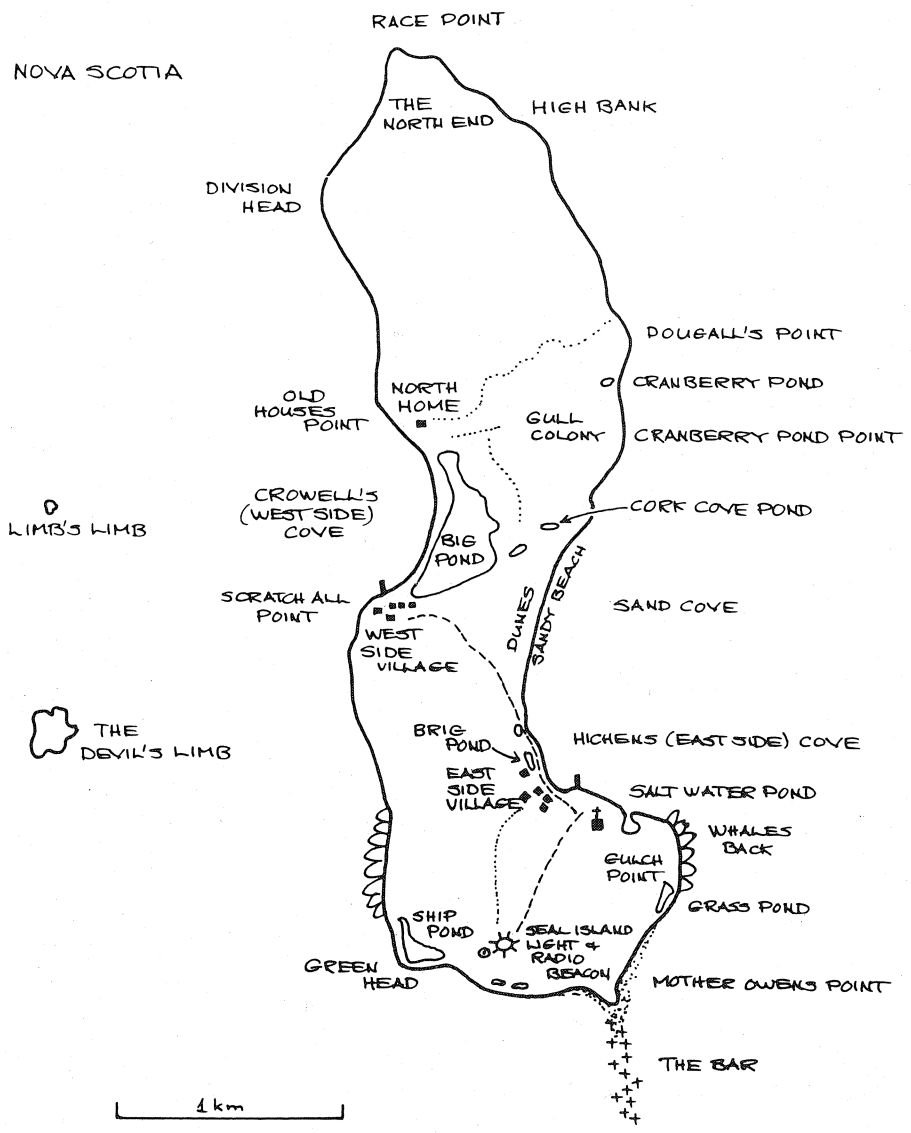
Do the North End according to weather, attempting to bird with sun or rain and wind behind you as long as possible. The beach flat (the "goose green") between the West Side and the North Home may be good for waders or passerines. Check the wood edges for migrants. A twisting, poorly-marked path from behind the North Home leads northeastward through thick forests (and the island's only hemlock stand) to near Dougall's Point. Another path leads from south of the North Home to the gull colony, from thence to the east side of the Big Pond. Both are hard to bird.



THE RACE

SEAL ISLAND

NOVA SCOTIA



Going north from the North Home, watch the cliff edge, where exhausted migrants may be on the ground. Clearings with dead trees should be examined minutely. At the North End, carefully work the clearings and wooded patches looking for skulking vagrants. Seabirds occasionally pass by Race Point and eiders are abundant. Then follow the forest edge south, checking the beach rocks periodically for land birds. The Cranberry Pond area is worth careful attention, also the patches of woods and raspberry thickets close to the shore just south of the gull colony. Between the Big Pond and the sandy beach is a rich marshy area, well worth checking for rails and small herons. The southeast side of the Big Pond is the only good wader habitat on the island, provided the water level is low. Return to the West Side or East Side Villages along the road, simultaneously watching the road, the forest edge, the Big Pond and the sky. Anything can happen!

Seabirds are few around Seal Island, with the exception of Common Eiders and Black Guillemots. In late autumn (October-November), early-morning passage of a cold front and rising NW winds may bring seabirds (gannets, shearwaters, kittiwakes, jaegers, a few skuas) close to the West Side. Race Point may be good for seawatching then. During southerly storms try whiling away the landbirdless hours seawatching from the south side of the island near Mother Owens' Point.

Birding on Seal Island is always a gamble. Long periods (a few days or a week) may pass with few birds, then the miracle occurs--the island is alive, or an unexpected vagrant appears out of nowhere. Three or four day trips may yield 40 species--or 140, depending on one's luck. Take a good book and a healthy dose of optimism.

In summary and in general. Birding Seal Island is one of Nova Scotia's best experiences for the hard-core aficionado, or for the naturalist. The island's remoteness and the palpable feel of bird migration lend mystery and high expectation to every trip. However, the future of the island is uncertain; it is privately owned and could be sold at any time to a less sympathetic owner. Seal Island has the potential to be a fine bird observatory, in the European sense. Active and vocal birders should try to assure that this remote, lovely and remarkable place is both respected and managed for its natural values.



## NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

## Seasonal checklist

The charts on the following pages include all 304 birds that regularly occur in Nova Scotia, including the surrounding coastal waters. Accidental species which are possible have not been included in the charts, but are listed separately.

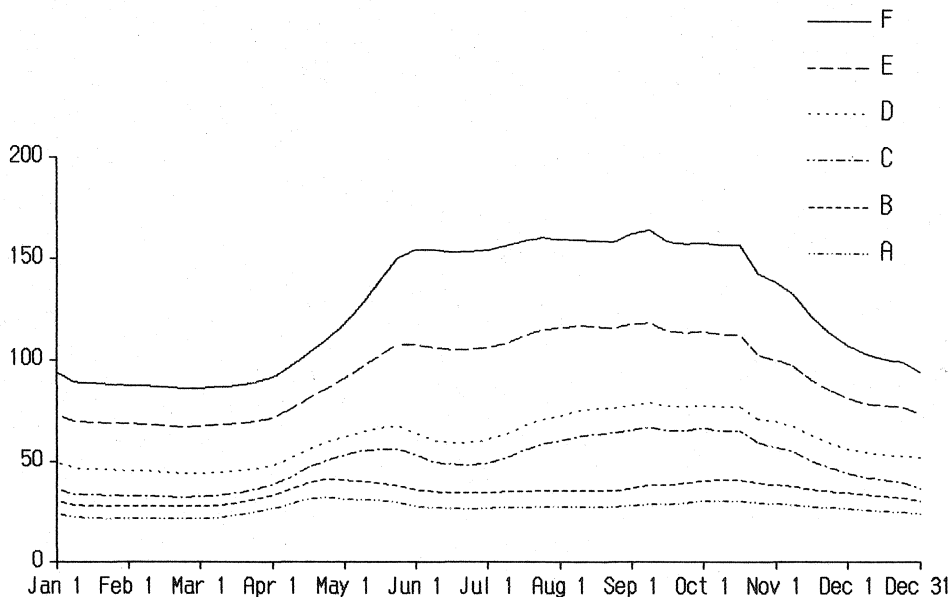
These charts are designed to show the abundance of a particular species at different times of the year. However, these are averages for both dates and locations.

## LEGEND

- Common in suitable habitat
- ▨ Fairly common
- ▧ Uncommon
- ▦ Rare
- ... Very Rare
- # Irregular in numbers
- X Local Breeder

The graph below shows a summary of all the birds by season. The year runs from Jan. 1 on the left to Dec. 31 on the right. The top curve shows the total number of species which can be seen at any given time in the right habitat. The lower curves are cumulative totals for:

- (a) Waterfowl plus Herons
- (b) As above, plus Raptors
- (c) As above, plus Shorebirds
- (d) As above, plus Gulls, Terns and Alcids
- (e) As above, up to Shrikes (i.e. also includes Owls, Woodpeckers, Flycatchers, Thrushes)
- (f) All species (as above plus Vireos, Warblers, Sparrow and Finches)

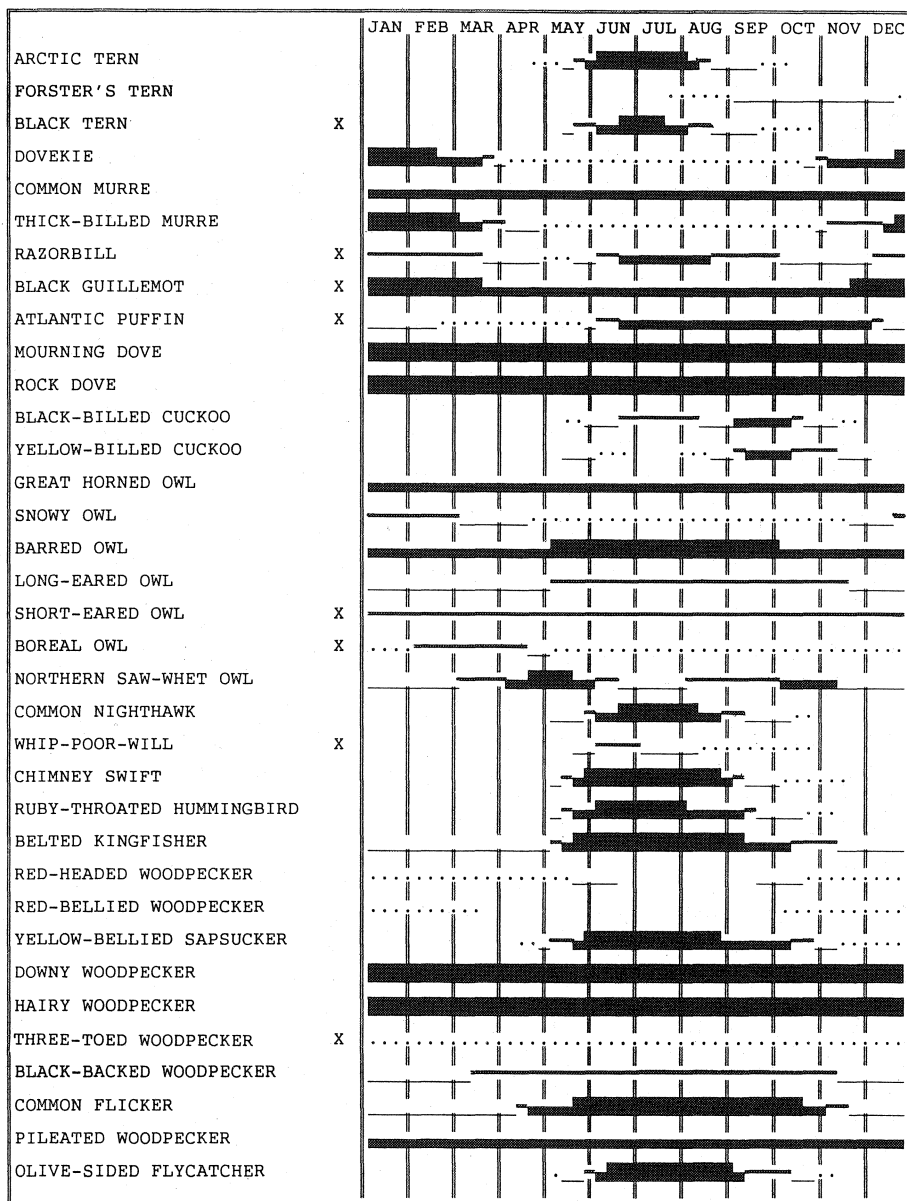








	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER						..		—	—			..
PECTORAL SANDPIPER					..	..		—	—	—		..
PURPLE SANDPIPER	—	—	—	—	..							—
DUNLIN								—	—	—	—	
STILT SANDPIPER					..	..		—	—			..
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER				..	..			—	—			..
RUFF				..	..			—	—			..
SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER					—	—	—	—	—			..
LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER								..	..			..
COMMON SNIFE					—	—	—	—	—	—		..
AMERICAN WOODCOCK			..	—	—	—	—	—	—			..
WILSON'S PHALAROPE					—	—		—	—			..
RED-NECKED PHALAROPE								—	—			..
RED PHALAROPE								—	—	—		..
POMARINE JAEGER								—	—			..
PARASITIC JAEGER								—	—			..
LONG-TAILED JAEGER								—	—			..
GREAT SKUA								..	..			..
SOUTH POLAR SKUA								—	—	—		..
LAUGHING GULL	..				—	—		..	..			..
BLACK-HEADED GULL	—	—	—	—	..	..		—	—	—	—	—
BONAPARTE'S GULL								—	—	—	—	..
MEW GULL			..	..				..	..			..
RING-BILLED GULL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
HERRING GULL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ICELAND GULL	—	—	—	—	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	—
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	—	—	—	—	..	..		..	..	..	..	..
GLAUCOUS GULL	—	—	—	—	..	..		..	..	..	..	—
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE	X	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SABINE'S GULL	..				..	..		..	..			..
IVORY GULL								..	..			..
CASPIAN TERN					..	..		—	—			..
ROSEATE TERN								—	—			..
COMMON TERN						—	—	—	—	—		..





	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
EASTERN WOOD PEWEE						■	■	■	■	■		
YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER						■	■	■	■	■		
ALDER FLYCATCHER						■	■	■	■	■		
LEAST FLYCATCHER						■	■	■	■	■		
EASTERN PHOEBE					■	■	■	■	■	■		
GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER						■	■	■	■	■		
WESTERN KINGBIRD						■	■	■	■	■		
EASTERN KINGBIRD						■	■	■	■	■		
HORNED LARK	X	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
PURPLE MARTIN	X					■	■	■	■	■		
TREE SWALLOW						■	■	■	■	■		
ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW						■	■	■	■	■		
BANK SWALLOW						■	■	■	■	■		
CLIFF SWALLOW						■	■	■	■	■		
BARN SWALLOW						■	■	■	■	■		
GRAY JAY						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
BLUE JAY						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
AMERICAN CROW						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
COMMON RAVEN						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
BOREAL CHICKADEE						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
BROWN CREEPER						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
HOUSE WREN						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
WINTER WREN						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
MARSH WREN						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
EASTERN BLUEBIRD						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
VEERY						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
SWAINSON'S THRUSH						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
HERMIT THRUSH						■	■	■	■	■	■	■



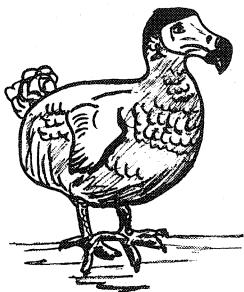




## A C C I D E N T A L S

## SELDOM SEEN BUT POSSIBLE

PACIFIC LOON	BARN OWL
WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD	NORTHERN HAWK OWL
AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN	CHUCKS-WILL'S-WIDOW
BROWN PELICAN	SAY'S PHOEBE
MAGNIFICANT FRIGATEBIRD	SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER
TUNDRA SWAN	CAVE SWALLOW
WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE	CAROLINA WREN
BARNACLE GOOSE	SEDGE WREN
WILLOW PTARMIGAN	NORTHERN WHEATEAR
PURPLE GALLINULE	VARIED THRUSH
SANDHILL CRANE	LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE
NORTHERN LAPWING	GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER
WILSON'S PLOVER	BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER
AMERICAN AVOCET	TOWNSEND'S WARBLER
ESKIMO CURLEW	CERULEAN WARBLER
MARbled GODWIT	WORM-EATING WARBLER
CURLEW SANDPIPER	LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH
FRANKLIN'S GULL	KENTUCKY WARBLER
LITTLE GULL	BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK
GULL-BILLED TERN	LARK BUNTING
ROYAL TERN	CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR
LEAST TERN	BREWER'S BLACKBIRD
SOOTY TERN	HOARY REDPOLI
WHITE-WINGED DOVE	WILD TURKEY



















CONNECTICUT WARBLER

MOURNING WARBLER

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

HOODED WARBLER

WILSON'S WARBLER

CANADA WARBLER

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

SUMMER TANAGER

SCARLET TANAGER

NORTHERN CARDINAL

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK

BLUE GROSBEAK

INDIGO BUNTING

DICKISSEL

RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE

TREE SPARROW

CHIPPING SPARROW

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW

FIELD SPARROW

VESPER SPARROW

LARK SPARROW

SAVANNAH SPARROW

IPSWICH SPARROW

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW

SEASIDE SPARROW

FOX SPARROW

SONG SPARROW

LINCOLN'S SPARROW

SWAMP SPARROW

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

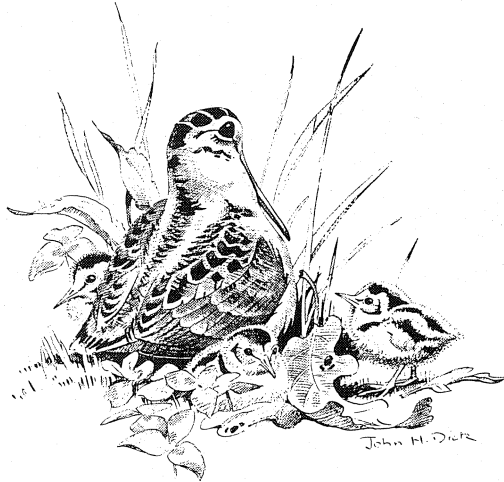
EVENING GROSBEAK

DARK-EYED JUNCO

LAPLAND LONGSPUR

SNOW BUNTING

BOBOLINK	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD																		
EASTERN MEADOWLARK																		
YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD																		
RUSTY BLACKBIRD																		
COMMON GRACKLE																		
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD																		
ORCHARD ORIOLE																		
NORTHERN ORIOLE																		
PINE GROSBEAK																		
PURPLE FINCH																		
HOUSE FINCH																		
RED CROSSBILL																		
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL																		
COMMON REDPOLL																		
PINE SISKIN																		
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH																		
HOUSE SPARROW																		



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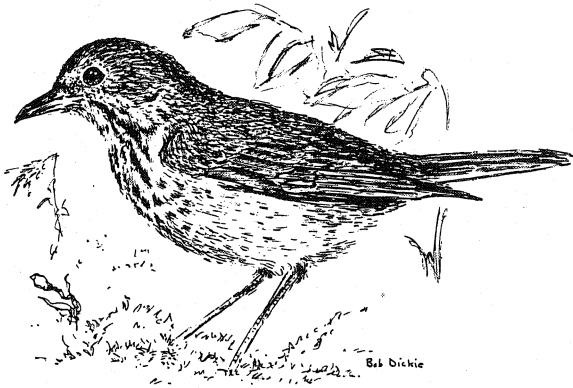
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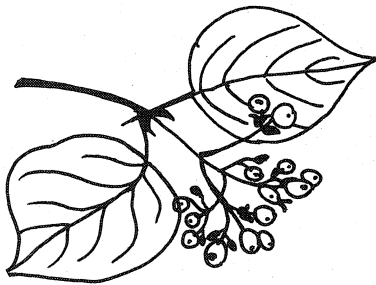


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Formed in 1955, the Nova Scotia Bird Society has more than one thousand members. The activities of the society are centered around the observation and study of the bird life of this province and the preservation of habitat.

Our magazine **Nova Scotia Birds** is published four times a year (three magazine issues and a Fall Flyer) to coincide with the main events in the birding year--the Spring Migration, the Fall Migration and Winter Birds, including the Christmas Counts. Amongst other features the magazine issues contain bird reports from all over Nova Scotia, articles, letters, field trip schedules and reports, bird sketches and many photographs.

Field trips range from early morning warbler walks and all day outings, to overnight expeditions to off-shore islands.

Meetings are held at the Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax, on the fourth Thursday of the month, September through April, starting at 8 p.m.

The society's **Sanctuary and Scholarship Trust Fund**, a registered charity, receives donations which are used to acquire and administer bird sanctuaries and to finance theaptor Rehabilitation Programme which is set up to provide veterinary and recovery services for injured hawks and owls.

