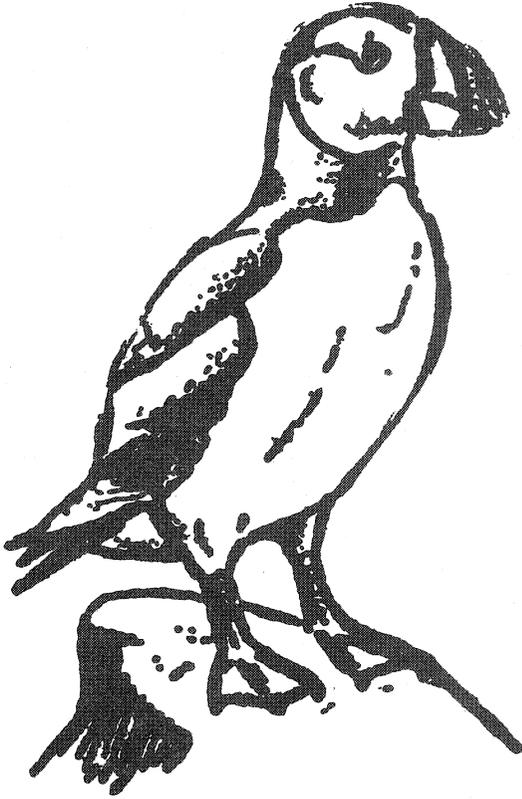


*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

Volume 11, Number 2

July, 1969

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 11, Number 2

July, 1969

THE SPRING MIGRATION

The report to follow covers the period late February through the first week of June, our so-called spring in Nova Scotia. The 1969 season was little better than a continuation of the mild winter, but temperatures comfortable in February felt raw and bitter in May, especially when reinforced with driving rain and boisterous winds.

A few early birds among the migrants suffered from the inclement weather. From Sable Island, Christel Bell wrote: "May 2, very cold and a high west wind, 3 Tree and 5 Barn Swallows found dead, and on May 3, 4 Barn Swallows and 1 Tree Swallow were huddling on the windowsill, too weak to touch the suet." (Swallows arriving only a little later found plenty of food, and more than adequate strength to attack it, as will be seen in a note to follow farther on in the Newsletter.)

One victim of the high winds was a female Red Phalarope. This bird, in brilliant high plumage, was paddling about catching mayflies on an inland lake, May 5, 1969, during the fishing season. Considering that Red Phalaropes usually migrate in spring far offshore, this was a truly astonishing observation.

Reports of other exotic strays this season included one or two Louisiana Herons, a Glossy Ibis, a Wilson's Phalarope and a Blue Grosbeak. All of these have appeared before in Nova Scotia, but very rarely. It is curious that Louisiana Herons should have shown up recently replacing the American and the Snowy Egrets, former wanderers to our shores.

Of possibly deeper significance is the arrival of a number of Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, whose normal range is south and central North America. Red-headed Woodpeckers are notable wanderers, and highly adaptable to change in food. Since severity of climate does not appear to affect them adversely, they may well stay here. They were present last winter, not only at feeders but also in the wild.

Davis Finch, Regional Editor for the N. E. Maritime Region, Audubon Field Notes, has written "Laughing Gulls

have...been acutely scarce this spring along the western Connecticut coast, and I wonder whether this relates to the hurricane.

Regrettably the May Bird Log from the Lurcher Lightship arrived too late for the main report. It does not, however, appear to alter the pattern of migration as indicated by other records. Two more Sooty Shearwaters were seen on May 2, but no Greater Shearwaters throughout the month. Leach's Petrels were seen May 10 to 25, with a peak of "many" (more than 10) May 18. Gannets, 1 or 2 at a time, went by May 10 to 19. There were 2 Sparrow Hawks on the 5th, a few Willets on the 26th, and a flock (around 25) of Northern Phalaropes seen May 11, 18 and 21. A Common Tern passed the ship May 21, a Barn Swallow May 8, a Common Raven May 7. A Catbird, a Brown Thrasher, and a Veery all were sighted May 18. Of the warblers, eight species were noted: Nashville, May 22 and 24; Yellow, May 16 and 18; Magnolia, May 26; Blackburnian, May 15; Bay-breasted, May 15; Blackpoll, May 25; Palm, May 1; Northern Waterthrush, May 14; and of the Sparrows: the Savannah, May 8 and 26; Chipping, May 12; White-throat, May 8, 9, 10 and 14; and Song, May 3. Captain Romain noted that on May 14, 18, 19 and 25 "many birds were flying around the light, but it was too dark to identify them".

Finally, it may be added that the Whip-poor-will has returned to its usual haunts around Williams Lake near Halifax; and that the Swainson's Thrush is now present in abundance.

N. B. Word has just been received from Paul Jeheber of Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, that a Louisiana Heron was sighted in Cornwall Bay, during the spring field trip called "Break a Hundred Day"; a "first" for that area, which is 60 miles up the Hudson River from New York and the ocean.



The first COMMON LOONS reported on fresh water this spring were two at Lake Egmont on April 19 (C.R.K. Allen) but it is probable that pairs were investigating nest sites considerably earlier than this. RED-THROATED LOONS were reported twice, one at Chebogue Point April 8 (C.R.K. Allen) and one May 21 at Chebucto Head (E. Mills). RED-NECKED GREBES were reported to have dropped off sharply in numbers between March 16 and April 4 at Crystal Crescent, Halifax County, and the last recorded sightings were on April 27 at Cow Bay and Lawrencetown Head (E. Mills). Four HORNED GREBES in full breeding plumage were at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County, on April 27, and the last report was of one at the same place on May 18 (E. Mills).

Members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society en route from Clark's Harbor to Seal Island on June 1 saw over thirty SOOTY SHEARWATERS during the 20-mile trip, but not a single GREATER. Both birds nest in the Southern Hemisphere, and it is interesting that the former, at least this spring, arrived first on its summer range. Incidentally, a lone Sooty was seen by Boulva and Hughes at Brier Island on May 24. Lurcher Lightship, about 20 miles off Yarmouth, reported that no FULMARS had appeared up to May 10, but that the first LEACH'S PETREL showed up on that date (J.L. Romain). Betty June Smith at Cape Sable on May 11 says: "a summer sight and sound, petrels wheeling about in the light beams, crying in their high and nervous way." The first GANNETS, three very early ones, were seen off Cape Sable on March 21 (Smiths) and another appeared off Portugese Cove on April 4 (E. Mills and R. Anderson). Other sightings ranged through April and up to May 21, when twelve were seen off Chebucto Head (N.S.B.S. Field Trip).

GREAT CORMORANTS winter in the Halifax area, and the 34 seen at Crystal Crescent April 4 (E. Mills) cannot, therefore, safely be classified as spring migrants. First record of DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS is of seven at Beaver River, Yarmouth County on April 5 (C.R.K. Allen). Four were seen on the 7th at Chebogue Point by the same observer, and six at La Have Islands on April 6 (Fullerton and Hinds). E. Holdway reported three in Pictou Harbour on April 13, twelve on April 15, and sixty-two on April 26. By May 21, the number had reached 104, and birds were incubating on 33 nests, five of which were new establishments. (see illustration)

The migration picture for GREAT BLUE HERONS is confused by the fact that at least several birds succeeded in wintering in the south-western end of the province, and possibly also on the Bras d'Or Lakes, where one was seen on March 7 and 8 (M. Burchell). The first sighting of a probable migrant in Cape Breton was of one at Glace Bay Bird Sanctuary on April 12 (Neily). There were three on March 29 and 30 near Barrington (Doane), one near Argyle March 30 (M. Hilton and D. Kirk) and one April 6 at Eel Brook (C.R.K. Allen). The number in the last area had reached four by April 8, indicating that new birds had moved in, and two were seen considerably further east along the coast at Centreville on April 13 (Lewis). Three were seen at Pictou on April 23, and 25 on the following day (Holdway).

So far, egrets have stayed where they belong, but four LITTLE BLUE HERONS wandered northward....3 were seen by the Lents on Brier Island on April 13, and one by C. Bell on May 1 at Sable Island.

On March 29, E. Mills and R. Anderson startled local members of the N.S.B.S. by reporting an adult LOUISIANA HERON at Cow Bay Pond, about 7 miles east of Halifax. They pursued the bird for some time and were finally able to examine it at leisure through a 20 x 40 'scope at an average distance of 250 yards in full sunlight. On May 4, R. Anderson reported another of this species at Porter's Lake, about 10 miles east of the former sighting. Lents reported a GREEN HERON at Brier Island on May 16, and members attending the N.S.B.S. Field Day on the 24th had a good look at another, or the same, bird in a nearby marsh. Another bird of this species was seen by the N.S.B.S. Seal Island party on May 31 and June 1. AMERICAN BITTERN sightings are scanty, and dates are well within normal range; one was seen May 10 at Upper Stewiacke by Allen, who flushed another at Elmsdale on the 18th. One has been seen from time to time at Round Hill since May 11 (Whitehead), one at Pictou May 20 (Holdway), three in a marsh near Wolfville May 24 (Roulva), and one contributed to the list of 105 species seen by the N.S.B.S. party at Brier Island on the week-end of May 24-25.

A GLOSSY IBIS was seen clearly in a marsh at Cape North Village, Cape Breton on May 16 and 20. All field marks were noted and photographs taken (Neily et al).

CANADA GEESE are, of course, regular winter residents, and we have no reports of any considerable spring movements, although a few reportedly arrived in the Amherst area shortly before March 24 (Neily). The latest sighting of any number is of about 30 near the Yarmouth-Digby county line on April 12 (M. Hilton and D. Kirk), and a single straggler, very tame, was at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County on April 27 (Fullerton and Hinds). The Smiths at Cape Sable report these and BRANT as "up in numbers compared with recent years." The first report of a movement of Brant this year is 1000 at Brier Island on March 23 (Lents). There were 45 at Chebogue Point on April 6, and 50 again at Brier Island on May 24 (E. Mills and R. Anderson).

The only spring reports of MALLARDS are of two at Sable Island on March 31 and May 5 (C. Bell), and of two on March 20 and April 6 at Pugwash Lake (Neily). A BLACK DUCK was incubating 12 eggs near Calder's Lake, Pictou County on May 5 (Brennans) and a brood of 8 newly-hatched young was seen near Brooklyn, Hants County on May 11 (C.R.K. Allen). The only reports of PINTAILS are from the Cow Bay-Lawrencetown area just east of Halifax. Singles were seen on March 29 and April 1, and two were present on May 3. GREEN-WINGED TEAL, which usually arrive early in April, were first reported from Nyanza, Victoria County on April 4, where two males were seen (Neily). A flock of 10 birds of both sexes was at Beaver River, Yarmouth County on April 8 (C.R.K. Allen). The

earliest BLUE-WINGED TEAL report is of a pair at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County on April 13 (Fullerton and Hinds). Joe Ternan reports a pair of WOOD DUCKS at Annapolis on April 10, and two drakes and a duck were "chasing" over the meadows at Elmsdale on May 18 (C.R.K. Allen). A dead bird of this species was picked up on Sable Island in mid-May and constitutes the first record for Sable (I. McLaren). RING-NECKED DUCKS are lightly reported...3 on April 26, Middle Sackville, Halifax County, and four near Upper Stewiacke, May 10 (C.R.K. Allen). There were four near Italy Cross, Lunenburg County on May 3 (Fullerton and Hinds), a pair at Fox Island, Guysborough County, and 3 pairs near Roachvale, Guysborough County May 25 (Armsworthy).

Departure dates for "winter ducks" varied from late April to early May; the last sighting of GREATER SCAUP was of 16 at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County April 20 (Fullerton and Hinds). COMMON GOLDENEYE...2 pairs...were last seen at Miller's Lake near Waverley, Halifax County on April 19 (C.R.K. Allen). The latest sighting of OLDSQUAWS was of 12 at Pictou, May 1 (Holdway). COMMON EIDERS were on the move by Mar 13 at Cape Sable (Smiths) and by March 23 at Brier Island, where 500 were seen on that date (Lents). Forty-six were observed flying northeast past Crystal Crescent, Halifax County on April 4 (Mills and Anderson) and 10, well off course, were seen in the Avon estuary just below Windsor on April 26 (C.R.K. Allen). No definite movement of SCOTERS was reported this spring; apparently the huge flocks slipped by unnoticed. The largest number observed was 100 COMMON SCOTERS at Brier Island on April 12 (Lents).

COMMON MERGANSERS were first reported from the Halifax area, where up to thirteen, some in pairs, were seen as early as March 13 at Cole Harbor. (R.M. Eaton). This species and the following are permanent residents in the province, but, unlike RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS, they seem to prefer inland waters and resort to the coast only when the severe weather of late winter forces them to do so. The sightings in February and March are therefore probably winter birds which have moved from the rivers down into the estuaries. A female Common Merganser with 2 downy young was noted at Freshwater Lake, Victoria County on May 28 (A. Moore). Red-breasts are more strictly sea birds during the winter and are commonly scattered along the entire coast. In late March and during April they congregate in order to take part in mass display performances. One of these was seen at Bel Brook on April 6, and another at Chebogue Point on the following day (C.R.K. Allen).

Accipiters were very lightly reported this spring...2 sightings only, both of SHARP-SHINS. One was surprised as it captured a Fox Sparrow on April 11 in Halifax, and dropped its prey when the observer appeared on the scene (E. Mills). The other was seen by Holdway at Pictou, May 4. RED-TAILED HAWKS come in for little better publicity. One observer reported seven sightings in Colchester and Hants Counties between April 19 and May 24, all

of single birds except for a pair on April 26 near Rawdon. (C.R.K. Allen) Neily had 8 sightings, mostly of singles, in Cape Breton at Big Intervale, Baddeck and Pleasant Bay between March 25 and May 20, and the only other report is of a bird at Sandy Cove, Digby County on May 24 (Boulva). The Kenneys report that BROAD-WINGED HAWKS have been sighted frequently (no first date given) but that no nest has been located so far in the Centerville (Pictou County) area. One of this species was seen May 19 in central Lunenburg County (C.R.K. Allen), one May 25 near White Head, Guysborough County (Armsworthy) and one May 15 at Round Hill, Annapolis County (Whitehead). A ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK was seen April 7 at Chebogue Point, Yarmouth County (C.R.K. Allen), one at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County April 20 (Fullerton and Hinds) and one at Brier Island May 25 (Lent).

A good candidate for the sighting of the season is that of two GOLDEN EAGLES, well observed at fairly close range by Eric Holdway at Caribou on May 13. (See Notes) A pair of BALD EAGLES which give every evidence of nesting is, at time of writing, being watched closely by C.G. Wise. The location of this nest is, for obvious reasons, not being given, but it is on the mainland of the province where no recent breeding attempts have been reported. Four birds of this species are reported from various points in Pictou County by the Kenneys, and two were seen at Dover and Guysborough Intervale on April 4 and May 11 respectively by Eileen Armsworthy. Neily reports over 15 sightings in Cape Breton, where these birds are still relatively common, from mid-March to late May.

MARSH HAWKS appeared on the scene on April 8 when one was seen near Yarmouth (C.R.K. Allen et al). The first record for Cape Breton is May 16, when a female was observed at South Mountain, Victoria County (Neily). The 12 seen at Brier Island April 16 suggests that they were arriving in numbers at that time.

OSPREYS are well-reported, but the numbers are sadly small. Gone are the days when 4 or 5 pairs could be seen on a short birding expedition along the shore from Dartmouth to Head of Chezzetcook. An early arrival was seen near Pubnico, Yarmouth County on April 3 (C.R.K. Allen). The next sighting was of two April 12 at Nyanza, Cape Breton (Katharine MacRae). Other sightings of singles and a few pairs come from widely scattered points.

Only two observers were lucky enough to glimpse a DUCK HAWK this spring. On May 8 at Duncan's Cove, Halifax County, E.Mills and R. Hughes saw either two of this species, or the same bird on two occasions. With Bald Eagles and Ospreys these birds share the doleful distinction of high susceptibility to modern pesticides. The little falcons are well reported; all sightings for PIGEON HAWKS were, with one exception, in the western half of the province or on Sable Island. The exception was one at Pictou on May 11 (Holdway). All reports are of single birds, the earliest being one on Sable Island, March 28 (Bell). Both this species and SPARROW HAWKS winter in limited numbers in Nova Scotia, so that early sightings are not necessarily of spring arrivals. This year,

however, the first report of a Sparrow Hawk at Chebogue, Yarmouth County on April 7 (C.R.K. Allen) was quickly followed by a number of others from along both Atlantic and Fundy coasts. First arrivals in Cape Breton were one at Lingan Road on April 13 (M. Willms) and another on the 15th at Little Smoky (Neily).

Few of our reporters consider the gallinaceous birds newsworthy, and certainly they have no place in a migration report, being strict stay-at-homes. Sightings of SPRUCE GROUSE are, however, always of interest and we have several of these, all from Cape Breton and all of a single birds. One was at Neil's Harbor, Victoria County April 7 (Neily) and one on Franey Trail, Ingonish Beach, May 24 (J.D. MacDonald). Three others were seen in the same general area on April 10 and May 19 & 31 by the same observer. The earliest report of a drumming RUFFED GROUSE was of one at Cole Harbor, Halifax County on March 23 (R.M. Eaton). Another much later was heard and unsuccessfully stalked near Upper Stewiacke on April 28 (C.R.K. Allen). The most newsworthy RING-NECKED PHEASANT was a hen bird on Sable Island May 4, reported as having her tail feathers tweaked by a Cowbird (Bell). Reason for the assault is alleged to be competition for food.

Rails are among the most secretive of birds, and Sable Island offers them little cover. In spite of this a VIRGINIA RAIL lingered near Mrs. Christel Bell's house from May 6 to 21, spending much of its time in the wood pile, but fed on the lawn where it was observed to eat sow-bugs....also known as pill bugs or "wood lice" (terrestrial isopods). The only other rail reported was one of the same species at Porter's lake, Halifax County April 20 (I McLaren).

PIPING PLOVER are among the earliest northward migrants, but are often overlooked because they do not announce their arrival like the spring songsters. The first recorded this year was one at Conrad's Beach, Halifax County on April 5 (R.M. Eaton). Other records are of 4 seen regularly since April 12 and nesting, at Cape Sable (Smiths); two at Lawrencetown, Halifax County April 27 and 28 (Hinds et al) and one at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County May 11 (Fullerton and Hinds). These pale little plover are particularly common on the white sand beaches in Shelburne County, and reporters in that area could supply us with useful arrival and departure dates as well as information on breeding. Our only other breeding plover, the SEMI-PALMATED, is reported only twice this spring: May 8 at Sable Island (McLaren) and May 11 near Chebogue River, Yarmouth County (M. Hilton). On the other hand, KILLDEER, which were practically unheard-of a few years ago, have been observed all the way from northern Cape Breton to Cape Sable. At the latter locality, one of 3 wintering birds was still present on March 11 (Smiths) and 2 wintering birds were still at White Point, Queens County on March 22 (M. Doggett). Three records for April 7 are: several heard calling at Rockingham, Halifax County (Mills), one at Chebogue Point (Hilton and Kirk), and one at Neil's Brook Victoria County (Neily). The Chebogue bird may have found a mate, as D. Kirk reports a pair here from April 15. Other pairs are

reported from Porter's Lake, Halifax County near an old nesting location on April 28 (Hinds) and at East Chezzetcook, Halifax County May 3 (R. Anderson). An incubating bird was also reported from Middleton (D. Bowlby).

GOLDEN PLOVER are seldom reported in spring but this year an immature was well observed at Cow Bay on May 4 (Boulva). BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, which go through in considerable numbers, first appeared on May 11 when 5 were seen at Chebogue (M. Hilton) and one at Crescent Beach (Fullerton and Hinds). The movement was still in progress late in the month, as 67 were observed at Grand Pré on May 24 (C.R.K. Allen et al) and 6 at New Harbour, Guysborough County (Armsworthy). The RUDDY TURNSTONE, a rather uncommon spring transient, was seen just once, at Sable Island on May 26 (Bell and McLaren). WOODCOCK, which often arrive before the last of the winter storms, showed up this year on March 28, when the first one was seen at Cole Harbor (R.M. Eaton). Next report is of one at Middle Ohio April 6 (MacKay per Lewis). On April 28, a nest with 4 eggs was found near White Point, Queens County by M. Doggett. A few COMMON SNIPES survived the winter and therefore, as is the case with some other species, early sightings cannot be classified as spring arrivals. On April 9 one was heard "winnowing" at Chebogue Point (C.R.K. Allen) and on April 22 at Lingan Road, Cape Breton County the first observation for Cape Breton was made by M. Willms. The Brennans report newly hatched young near Springville, Pictou County on May 17.

The number of UPLAND PLOVER seen in Nova Scotia this spring as compared with 1968 showed an increase of 100%...one was seen regularly between April 26 and May 31 at Sable Island (McLaren et al) and another at Cape Sable on May 8 (Smiths). A slightly early SPOTTED SANDPIPER was seen at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County on May 4 (Fullerton and Hinds) and one appeared at the usual nesting spot at Cape Sable on May 12 (Smiths). On the same day 20 birds at Brier Island indicate a definite movement. The first sighting for Cape Breton is of one in Inverness County on May 16 (Neily et al) The first WILLET sneaked by the Yarmouth County observers and was heard by Joe Terman at Annapolis on April 16. Four others appeared at Cape Sable on the following day. The main influx, however, took place from April 26 to May 4. On the 26th there were 40 plus at Eel Lake, Yarmouth County (D. Kirk et al); four were as far up the coast as Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County on April 27 (Hinds)...possibly the same early birds seen at Cape Sable on the 17th. Israel Pothier saw 8 at Argyle, Yarmouth County on April 28 and says that the 27th and 28th are the normal arrival times for this area. He also reports 80 near the Tusket River on May 4. Apparently the movement was still in progress on June 1, as a flock of 19 was seen flying in formation at Seal Island on that date (N.S.B.S. party).

GREATER YELLOWLEGS began to go through on schedule in late April. The first two were recorded from Cheticamp Island, Inverness County by Neily on April 25, and the first mainland report was of

10 at Lawrencetown, Halifax County on the 28th. No great numbers were seen at any time, the largest being 15 in the Lawrencetown area on May 4 (C.R.K. Allen). The latest sighting is of one at Seal Island, June 1 (N.S.B.S. party) but judging from other years, a few stragglers are probably still around. The only reports of LESSER YELLOWLEGS are of 8 near the lower Tusket River on May 3 (Pothier), one at Sable Island from May 24 to 29 (McLaren) and one at Seal Island June 1 (N.S.B.S. party).

PURPLE SANDPIPERS lingered late this spring...there were 50 at Conrad's Beach near Halifax on April 27 and one at Chebucto Head May 14 (E. Mills et al). WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS are rare spring migrants in these parts, but Eileen Armsworthy reports 8 plus at New Harbor on May 25. LEAST SANDPIPERS, which breed on Sable Island, had apparently not appeared by May 31, the latest reporting date from there. On the mainland one was at Cape Sable on May 16 (Smiths), 20 at Crescent Beach, May 18 (E. Mills), 12 at Brier Island May 25 (N.S.B.S. Field Day) and 7 at Seal Island, June 1 (N.S.B.S. party). Single SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPERS were noted on May 18 and 24, and 3 on June 1 at the same localities and by the same observers. The only records of spring SANDERLINGS are of 8 at Martinique Beach on May 17 (Boulva) and of one on Brier Island June 1 (N.S.B.S. Field Day).

One of the most unusual reports this spring was of a female RED PHALAROPE in brilliant breeding plumage, feeding on floating May-flies on Five-Island Lake about 10 miles from the nearest salt water (Moffatt). Between 300 and 500 NORTHERN PHALAROPEs were seen at Grande Passage, Digby County on May 23 by E. and A Mills; 4 were observed at Canso on the 30th (Jarvis) and 3 at Seal Island May 31 (N.S.B.S. party). After Cave Swallows and Varied Thrushes, the report of a WILSON'S PHALAROPE on Sable Island hardly comes as a shock. One was seen and all field marks noted by Ian McLaren and Mrs. C. Bell on May 24, and is, so far as we know, only the second spring record for Nova Scotia. The Wilson Phalarope is a prairie bird, but in migration a few casual records exist spring and fall for both Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

Spring reports of ICELAND GULLS are all from Cape Breton: one north of Presqu'île Inverness County on April 5, 2 at Glace Bay April 12, and 2 at Cheticamp, Inverness County April 25 (Neily). GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS, which are abundant in most of coastal Nova Scotia at all seasons are, according to Neily, scarce in northern Cape Breton during the winter. He reports that spring arrivals appeared this year on April 7, when 5 were seen at Ingonish Beach and 16 at Ingonish. HERRING GULLS apparently did nothing to cause comment during the report period. RING-BILLED GULLS winter here in fair numbers and there is normally also a spring build-up of transients. It is hard to understand, therefore, why the 1969 spring reports are so sparse. These consist only of singles or 2 or 3 birds, seen at scattered points from Cape Sable to Cheticamp. BLACK-HEADED GULLS, present all winter, remained until late April. There were 15 at Halifax (Bedford Basin) on April 4 (E. Mills) and still 5 at Lawrencetown, Halifax County on April 28 (Hinds). Five were at Glace Bay Sanctuary and 17 at Glace Bay

wharf on April 12 (Neily). Like the Ring-bills, BONAPARTE'S GULLS are reported far more lightly than one would expect. One was at Eel Brook, Yarmouth County on April 6 and another, or the same, was seen on April 26 (Hurlbert et al). One was at Lawrencetown, Halifax County May 4 (C.R.K. Allen) and 5 at Glace Bay Sanctuary, May 19 (N.S.B.S. Field Day).

Most reporters on tern sightings did not commit themselves as to whether the birds seen were COMMON or ARCTIC. Israel Pothier, however, says that he and Dr. Robie Tufts some years ago established that Arctic Terns are the first to arrive, and gives the arrival date for this year in Yarmouth County as May 3. The Smiths report terns (sp) at Cape Sable in "early May". Members of the N.S.B.S. who attended the Field Day at Erier Island May 24 reported over 200 Common Terns and 40-50 Arctics, while W. Lent reports that both species arrived at the nesting area on Brier Island on May 10. Holdway reports 8 Common Terns arriving at nesting sites in Pictou on May 13, and according to Neily, 3 appeared at Englishtown on May 17. A ROSEATE TERN was seen at a lake near Hillcrest Pictou County on June 1 by E. Crathorne and the Kenneys.

A THICK-BILLED MURRE in breeding plumage was seen by members of the N.S.B.S. at sea off Seal Island on June 1. A late DOVEKIE was spotted about a mile offshore near Pictou by Capt. E. Holdway on May 1, and 2 even later, May 12, at Sable Island (McLaren). BLACK GUILLEMOTS were beginning to don breeding plumage by April 7 (Neily) and were flushed from nesting locations at Seal Island on May 31 (N.S.B.S. party). Most PUFFIN reports come from the vicinity of St. Ann's Bay, where their colonies are located on Hertford and Ciboux Islands. This year, however, members of the N.S.B.S. party at Brier Island on May 24 were treated to the sight of 7 flying past the Western Light.

THE MOURNING DOVE appears to be widely but thinly scattered all over the province, to judge by a dozen reports totaling 14 birds, April 6 to May 25, from Richmond to Yarmouth counties. This is 4 more than were reported last spring, which scarcely signifies an increase. A YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO stayed on Sable Island May 11 to 13 (McLaren) and a BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO was observed at Seal Island June 1, by the N.S.B.S. party there at that time.

A SNOWY OWL, our single record, appeared in Dartmouth April 12, and stayed for over a week, subsequently seen in Halifax (city). It was in good condition, according to Ethel Crathorne, who reported seeing it perched on a "charcoal gray roof, against which its immaculate white plumage showed to great advantage." Our resident owls are all too rarely reported, but Neily has observed 2 BARRED OWLS, May 6, "acting as though nesting in the area" at Warren Lake, Victoria County, and at Fenwick, Cumberland County, a SAW WHEAT OWL is reported to have taken over a last year's Pileated Woodpecker's nest (D. Myers).

To date, June 2, no WHIP-POOR-WILL has been reported on the mainland....but one was heard May 26 and 31 at Inglis Lake, Cape Breton County by M. Willms. The COMMON NIGHTHAWK had arrived by May 24; one seen at Brier Island (N.S.B.S. party), and was widespread by June 1. The first CHIMNEY SWIFTS put in an appearance May 4, at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County (Hinds and Fullerton); May 11 in Truro (R. Baker), May 15 Wolfville (C. Chipman) and were generally reported by May 17. Peak arrival was May 26, noted at three localities in Cape Breton (P. Hope, W. Neily). Appropriately the RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD reached the Annapolis Valley first, reported May 12 at Round Hill and Annapolis Royal (Whitehead and Ternan); May 14 at Wilmot (T. Hawkins) and May 15 at Wolfville (C. Chipman). The first dates for Brier Island and Pictou were May 24 (N.S.B.S., Holdway); for Guysborough County May 28 (Armsworthy) and for Baddeck, Victoria County May 31 (G. Bartlett). Twenty-five reports of the BELTED KINGFISHER, March 19 to May 24, probably include a number of wintering birds. For the most part, single birds are mentioned, widely scattered, but on May 4, four Kingfishers were observed at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armsworthy), 3 the same day in the Ingonish area (Neily), and on May 5 a Kingfisher was reported from Sable Island (C. Bell). Eileen Armsworthy wrote "3 or 4 here every week since May 4 and a pair May 24" (at Hazel Hill).

The YELLOW-SHAFED FLICKER arrived in force April 8 to 28, first seen April 8 at Wilmot, Annapolis County by Thelma Hawkins. April 12 and 13 Flickers appeared in Lunenburg and Shelburne Counties (Fullerton, Lewis), April 15 at White Point, Queen's County (M. Doggett) and Wolfville, Kings County (C. Chipman), April 16 at Round Hill, Annapolis County (W. Whitehead) and Pictou County (Brennans), and also on Sable Island that day (C. Bell). By April 18 Flickers were in Cape Breton at Freshwater Lake, Victoria County (Neily) and in Halifax County (Allen); by the 22nd in Guysborough County (Armsworthy) and the 26th in Yarmouth County (D. Kirk and others), and Cape Sable (Smiths). Note that this is over two weeks later than the first record, in the Annapolis Valley.

The RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER and the RED-HEADED WOODPECKER were both seen at Brier Island, on the May 24-25 Field Trip. Notes on these will follow this account. The latter bird has figured in five or six reports winter and spring this year, suggesting a possible shift in range. The first species, reported in the last Newsletter, i.e. the Red-bellied Woodpecker first seen January 4, stayed at Crousetown long enough for a number of our members to have a look at it, and for Nellie Snyder to obtain an excellent picture. This will be deposited at the National Museum at Ottawa, in lieu of a study skin. Our more tender-hearted members should be grateful to the inventors of the color camera! A Red-headed Woodpecker, May 17, lit on a post on Cape Sable, where Sid Smith was able to obtain a good view of it, red head and all..."no trouble with this identification", he said. He saw the bird again May 18 in

the upper field, so it certainly is not the same bird as the one seen May 17 in Yarmouth, on a fence along the Wyman Road, and identified by M. Hilton and A. Hurlburt as follows: "on fence post within 2 car lengths of us...we watched him for some time. When we moved car forward he flew to next post, and finally to spruce tree on other side of road. His red head shone in the sunshine...and when he flew, the broad white patch on wings and back would have been unmistakable if we hadn't seen anything but that." There is more difficulty about the Red-headed Woodpecker discovered April 29, at Port George, Kings County by D. Bowlby, which could possibly have been the one reported at Karsdale, Annapolis County at the Thexton feeder last winter. However, this is not necessarily so, and it is extremely doubtful if the 2 birds of this species seen on the Brier Island and Seal Island trips (May 24 and May 31) are the same. So we have a possible six Red-headed Woodpeckers in Nova Scotia, January through June, 1969.

After these dazzling records, we return to our own YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, (which is, after all, a more dazzling bird) arrival dates for which appear to be April 11 to 15, according to the records of H.F. Lewis and Eric Mills. Sapsuckers were present in their usual numbers by May 10, in central Nova Scotia (Mills, Allen) and had reached Cape Breton May 3 to 5 at Ingonish Beach, Victoria County (Neily). Five more BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS were watched with interest this spring; one, May 11 near Barrington (Doane) and one, near Shubenacadie, Mid-May, seen several times by F. Cook and R. MacPhee. On May 13, a male was observed at Rocky Point, Ingonish, and on May 25, a pair at a nest, Warren Lake, Victoria County (W. Neily and others) .

An EASTERN KINGBIRD, May 4 at Cow Bay, Halifax County (McLaren, Doane) and one May 5 on Sable Island (McLaren) were well ahead of the main migration, marked by the arrival of 35, May 15, at Brier Island (Lents). Kingbirds next appeared in Annapolis and Lunenburg Counties (Hawkins, Chipman, Allen) May 18 and 19, and have been observed in good numbers in these localities since then. A GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER appeared at the Topples', Lake Loon, Halifax County on May 27. It was observed in a tree in company with a bright male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a really splendid sight, according to the viewers. Another of these rare flycatchers was seen at Seal Island, May 31, by the N.S.B.S. party. A PHOENIX, April 7 at Chebogue Point, followed by 2 at Cape Forchu April 8 (Allen, D. Kirk, M. Hilton) was the earliest recorded arrival in this group. One was seen April 18 at Ingonish Beach, Victoria County (Neily); One April 20 at Porter's Lake, Halifax County (McLaren); One heard April 26 at Markland (possibly one of the Cape Forchu birds on territory, heard by A. Hurlburt, M. Hilton and D. Kirk); several, April 27 to May 16, in Shelburne (reported by Lewis in the Coastguard); one May 12, attempting to nest under a bridge at Wilmot, Annapolis County (Hawkins), and reversing all usual order, one, May 17, at Cape Sable (Smiths). The YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER appears to have arrived late or been undetected elsewhere, as it is only reported at Brier Island May 24, and on Seal Island May 31 and

June 1, and the two birds seen at each place by the N.S.B.S. parties present. No arrival date has shown up for the TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER, but it was common "singing everywhere" May 31, in Halifax County and Colchester County (C.R.K. Allen). A LEAST FLYCATCHER was noted May 18 in King's County (Neily and party) and many were heard May 19, along the roadsides in Lunenburg County, and not before they were needed, according to C.R.K. Allen. This was one of our first warm days, and the air was shimmering with flies. The distinctive song of a very early EASTERN WOOD PEWEE was heard in the woods near Lake Annis, Yarmouth County, May 4 by M.W. Hilton. Two May 18 dates, one bird each at Brooklyn, Hants County and at Brier Island are reported by Allen and Neily respectively, the only others since then being from Digby and Yarmouth Counties (up to June 1). The OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was seen and heard, two of them, May 31 at E. Stewiacke, Colchester County (Allen) and three, May 31, at Seal Island (N.S.B.S.) party. A few HORNED LARKS, 10, unspecified, have been reported up to May 31 in Halifax and Colchester Counties, single birds; and a few on Sable Island reported by C. Bell.

The first TREE SWALLOW was sighted April 8 at Lower Wedgeport (I. Pothier); followed by 10-12 April 12 over a pond near Bartlett's Beach, Yarmouth County (D. Kirk and M. Hilton); several the same day and following week in Shelburne County (H. Lewis); 1, in Pictou County (Brennans); 2, April 15 at Cape Sable (Smiths) and a wave of 75, April 16 at Brier Island (Lents), plus a few in the Annapolis Valley on the same date (T. Hawkins, W. Whitehead). Tree Swallows were well distributed around the countryside by the first week in May, had reached St. Peters, Richmond County by May 3 (M. Digout), but were still arriving, a concentration of 100 plus noted on Brier Island May 24 by the N.S.B.S. party. A BANK SWALLOW was observed at Five Island Lake, Halifax County on May 1 by two fishermen (Moffatt and Allen) and Bank Swallows were at nesting sites May 24 in Victoria Park, Truro (R. Baker) and May 28, 14 at Pictou (Holdway). The first report from Cape Breton was 2, May 25 in Victoria County (Neily). Pothier also saw one of the first BARN SWALLOWS, April 27 at Lower Wedgeport, the other one being at Cape Sable the same day (Smiths). Other reports followed quickly...seen May 2 at Sable River (Shelburne Coastguard) a concentration of 50 May 2 at Brier Island (Lents); 1, May 4, at Yarmouth (M. Hilton); 2, May 4 at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County (Hinds and Fullerton); 30, May 4 at Chezzetcook, Halifax County (Boulva, Allen); 5, May 5 at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armsworthy); seen May 8 at Wilmot, Annapolis County (T. Hawkins); and present in good numbers generally distributed by May 11. On May 12, 5 were recorded at Louisbourg (Neily and others). Three CLIFF SWALLOWS were seen near Shubenacadie Lake, Halifax County May 10 (E. Mills); small numbers were noted here and there in Digby, Kings, Hants and Colchester Counties May 19 to 31, and 7 were seen May 24 at Brier Island by the N.S.B.S. party. A storm-blown adult male PURPLE MARTIN was picked up exhausted, and did not survive, March 27 at Sable River (identified by H.F. Lewis). Two Purple Martins were noted May 1 at Five Island Lake (Moffatt, Allen) and two the same day at Censo (J. Jarvis). Mrs. Jarvis has

written expressing concern that the 20 to 30 pairs of Barn Swallows usually nesting in her vicinity have been reduced to 2 or 3 pairs this year. To return to Purple Martins, Evelyn Lowerison has written from Amherst: "You will be pleased to know the Purple Martins are back. I went up to Mr. Tennant's yesterday (formerly Percy Black property), there were 12 Martins using the new house he had built last year; the old houses were swarming with Starlings, but none in the new house. I have 6 now, although they have not started to build as yet. It is difficult to describe how lovely it is to hear them early in the morning. They arrived on May 12th, a bit late, as they used to be here on April 29th faithfully."

No exceptional reports have been received of Jays, Ravens or Crows this spring. All appear to be present in their usual numbers, Blue Jays more evident, and Crows less so than on winter field trips. The BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE was present in sufficiently high numbers, 100 plus, on Brier Island May 24 (noted by E. Mills et al) to suggest a migratory movement. Barbara Hinds watched 2 Black-Caps, April 22 at the entrance to Laurie Park, clearing out the rotten wood from the top of a slender, dead tree stump. "They behaved like woodpeckers, and seemed to take it in turns disappearing into the cup and reappearing with beakfuls of dead wood. They flew about 15 yards away to disperse the evidence of nest building, not always dropping it in the same place." A HOUSE WREN came to Cape Sable May 3 and 2 WINTER WRENS April 15 (Smiths). One was seen at Sable April 3 by Eleanor Androschuk, and one was watched May 10 at Lake Loon, Halifax County, singing from the top of a tall spruce (Topples); one also was heard singing at Burnside, Colchester County May 10 (Allen); 3, May 11 at Bear Cove, Halifax County (E. Mills); 2, May 12 at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County (Fullerton and Hinds); and 4 were noted at Brier Island, May 24; 4 at Seal Island June 1 by the N.S.B.S. parties. Neily reports 1 May 25 at Warren Lake, Victoria County.

The MOCKINGBIRD at Irgonish Center, Victoria County is reported to be still around (Neily), also the one at the Robertsons' in Shelburne, which has been there since last October, and 2 were reported May 14 at Brier Island by the Lents, one still present May 24, for the N.S.B.S. Field Trip. April 16 was the early date for the CATBIRD this year...one seen on that day at Annapolis (J. Terman); followed by 1, May 13 and thereafter on Sable Island (McLaren); but 10, May 16, at Brier Island suggests a movement of spring migrants. The only BROWN THRASHERS reported are: 1, April 24, present for some time at Osborne, Shelburne County (per Lewis); 1, May 12 at Cape Sable (Smiths); 1, May 16 at Sable Island (E. Androschuk); 7, May 16 at Brier Island (Lents), some of these seen later by the field trip parties there May 18 and 25; and 1, May 31 at Seal Island (N.S.B.S. party.)

After all, it has not been difficult to establish arrival dates for the ROBIN. On March 23, 100 plus appeared on Brier Island, according to the Lents, and on March 24, 8 or 10 showed up

at Sable River (Robart per Lewis); Thelma Hawkins, at Wilmot, Annapolis County, E. Holdway at Pictou, and the Armsworthys at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County, all noted "the first migrants" on March 25. They were "numerous" at Cole Harbor, Halifax County by March 27, according to the Eatons, and generally distributed, but not settled down, by the first week in April. Holdway at Pictou reported Robins "on territories" by April 26, but another heavy movement was noted by C.R.K. Allen May 3, 1000 plus in the farmers' fields in Colchester County. Some of those Shelburne Robins wasted no time, as a neatly halved egg shell was found by D. Robertson (according to Lewis) on May 14. In Cape Breton, Mary Wiljms kept a daily record for Lingan Road, Cape Breton County, and notes first arrivals April 13, with succeeding "peaks" April 18-19, 23 and 27.

At Brier Island, Digby County, on May 18, Wayne Neily, David McCormick and Lerry Neily report the close observation of a bird "with reddish head, olive-brown back and tail, large spots noted"....identified as a WOOD THRUSH. A HERMIT THRUSH April 26 at Sable Island (C. Bell); 1, April 26 at Cape Sable (Smiths); 1, April 27, heard singing at Five-Island Lake, Halifax County (Moffatt and Allen), and 22, April 28 at Brier Island (Lents), are early dates for this thrush. On May 11, Neily sighted one at Big Bras d'Or, Cape Breton County, and by May 12 reports indicate general distribution. Sable got the first SWAINSON'S, too, on May 16, followed by one, May 18 at Brier Island (Neily and party) 2, May 21 at York Redoubt, Halifax County (E. Mills); one, May 22 at Pictou (Holdway); one, May 23 at Ingonish Beach, and very few other reports. Either the Swainson's is late or scarce this year. Two reports of the GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH are of one or more at Sable Island, first noted April 27 (C. Bell per McLaren), and one, May 26, at Pictou (Holdway). The N.S.B.S. party searched Seal Island for Gray-cheeks on their May 31 trip, but found none. (This island at one time supported a nesting population of the Gray-cheeked Thrush.) An early date for the VEERY is May 18, at Brier Island, where two were seen by Neily and others. An extraordinary sighting of a Veery comes from the C.R.K. Allens, who saw the bird in their own backyard May 27 and 28. What was even more extraordinary was the appearance of a Swainson's Thrush in the same place, May 29 and 30, when it took over from the Veery. Thrushes in metropolitan Halifax are, needless to say, rare, and can be safely classed as migrants. The EASTERN BLUEBIRD has put in an appearance again this year...one seen April 6 at Sable River (Lewis); one, April 18, at Canso (J. Jarvis); one, April 28; five, May 11; and 7, May 22 at Brier Island (Lents). One other Bluebird was watched for some time on May 4, insect-hunting from a fence, near Wolfville (C. Chipman).

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS were first heard singing, 3, April 19 in the Halifax-Hants area (C.R.K. Allen); one, April 20 in Lunenburg County (Hinds); and are reported on Sable Island from April 22 on (C. Bell). The first large number noted is 30 plus, April 26, in full song in the woods at Markland, Yarmouth County (D. Kirk, A. Hurlburt, M. Hilton). Cape Sable reports 2 that day,

and two were heard at Louisbourg, designated "first migrants" by Neily. Barbara Hinds has reported at least one WATER PIPIT "from February 15 onwards, on the shore at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County; 2 still about on April 20, and the last sighting May 10." The Lents counted 12 on Brier Island, March 23. The dates for mainland Nova Scotia are regular but the numbers are small this year. It is interesting that McLaren noted "singles present after May 14", on Sable Island, and 40 plus were seen May 20 at Sunrise, Victoria County by Neily and party. Tufts has given May 10 as the latest departure date in spring.

Flocks of BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS stayed in Cape Breton until April, 35 seen April 7 at Ingonish Center (Neily) and this or another flock of similar size the next day, April 8 at Ingonish by Dr. and Mrs. F. Hattie. Some of the flock stayed around until April 30, seen in the vicinity by M. Barker. A lingering Bohemian Waxwing, May 27, was observed in the trees back of the School for the Blind, Halifax, by M.B. Allen. Very few CEDAR WAXWINGS wintered over, so the 8 seen May 30 at Bedford (E. Murray) were almost certainly new arrivals. There were a few at Seal Island where the N.S.B.S. party saw 3, May 31, and 10 June 1st.

A NORTHERN SHRIKE was still around at Lawrencetown, Halifax County, observed there March 9 by E. Crathorne and the Hemeons. Tufts reports only one winter record for the LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, Dec. 28, 1909. Another late winter or possibly very early spring record of this migrant species just missed the last Newsletter. Ben Doane wrote as follows: "Loggerhead Shrike: 1, at Thomasville near Port LaTour on Feb. 23rd....satisfying all the criteria for distinction from a Northern Shrike, namely, the difference in size, eye mask meeting over the bill, coloring of lower mandible, and lack of streaking on breast, plus behaviour, in that the bird perched on a wire and repeatedly flew down to grab some sort of insects which it found in the marsh grass. The bird was seen at very close range (20 to 30 feet) and observed for twenty minutes or more, permitting an absolutely unequivocal identification of a Loggerhead." STARLINGS continue plentiful throughout all seasons, and no special migratory movement has appeared in our records this spring.



A SOLITARY VIREO, way out in front, came to Cape Sable April 27 (Smiths). One, May 11 at Barrington (Doane) was ahead of most of the others, which became common May 16 to 24, indicated by reports ranging from Yarmouth to Pictou Counties and Cape Breton, where arrival date was May 16, in Inverness County (Neily and party). The RED-EYED VIREO followed as usual about a week later, first

reported, one, May 24, at Brier Island (N.S.B.S. party) and one the same day up in Hants County (Allen). Holdway observed 2 on May 29 at Pictou, and one was seen May 31, 3 on June 1 at Seal Island, by the N.S.B.S. party. The first date for Cape Breton is one, June 3 at Warren Lake, Victoria County (Neily, McCormick, Hope, LeBlanc).

People with good ears report the BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER from May 11 on: 5, May 11, Barrington (Doane); one, May 12, Pictou (Holdway); one, May 15, Halifax (N.S.B.S. party) and one, May 15, Round Hill (Whitehead) being the earliest records. May 16 is earliest arrival date in Cape Breton, when one was seen at Salmon River Trail, Inverness County by Neily, McCormick, Hope and LeBlanc. The TENNESSEE was watched singing its classic 3-part song on May 10 at Burnside, Colchester County by C.R.K. Allen, and 5 or 6 of these warblers were on territory along the road in the same place by May 31. Tennessees reached Port Morien, Cape Breton, May 19 (Neily). A NASHVILLE WARBLER was noted in E. Halifax County May 10 by E. Mills and small numbers were also noted by Doane May 11 at Barrington. May 15 at Wilmot, Annapolis County (T. Hawkins) and May 16 at Pictou (Holdway) are the next earliest dates for Nashvilles, which are lightly reported so far. May 19, one had reached South Head, Cape Breton (Glace Bay Field Trip). April dates for the PARULA are unusual, but two are well vouched-for: one, April 17, in the Canaan Road woods, Yarmouth County (Peters per D. Kirk) and one, April 26 at Markland, Yarmouth County. The Parula was well distributed by May 24, when it had even reached the golf course at Ingonish Beach (Neily).

The YELLOW WARBLER arrived at Brier Island April 28, 15 strong, but was not heard singing until May 11, when it was reported from Yarmouth, 3 (Lewis) and Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County (Hinds and Fullerton). As usual, it has since become our most heavily reported warbler, 86 birds in ten counties up to May 18, since then referred to by the cryptic sign #'s on most reports. We have no mention of the Yellow Warbler from Guysborough County, and Dr. Lewis noted a scarcity in his part of Shelburne County. The Yellow Warbler is first reported in Cape Breton May 19, one at Ingonish Beach (Neily). MAGNOLIA WARBLERS came with the "warbler wave" to Brier Island April 28, when 20 were counted there. Again, May 11 is the first date for song, a number being heard on that date at Broad Cove (Hinds and Fullerton) and 20 plus reported from Barrington (Doane). Magnolia reports from Cape Breton begin May 26, 2 seen at Grantmyre Creek on the Bell's Cove Field Trip. Neily reports the only CAPE MAY WARBLERS this spring; one, May 18 at Brier Island, and one, May 30 at Maple Brook Road, Inverness County. A BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER was heard May 19 in Lunenburg County by C.R.K. Allen, who recommends the south end of the New Ross road for early and abundant wood warblers, but warns that he was finally put to rout there by the black flies. A MYRTLE WARBLER, April 26 at Cape Sable (Smiths) was followed by 2 there on April 30; 100 plus came in at Brier Island April 28. Myrtles had reached Guysborough, Colchester, Pictou and Victoria Counties May 3 and 4... (3 heard by E. Armsworthy, Allen counted 12 plus in a group, the Brennans mention nesting.), and Bras d'Or, Cape Breton County by May 13

(M. Burchell). Ten or more BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS were heard at Barrington, Shelburne County May 11 (Doane) and one on the same day in Truro (Baker). During the following week reports were of "numbers", well distributed about the province. Neither Brier Island, nor Cape Sable mentions this warbler in early reports, although there were 25 plus at Brier Island May 23 and 24.

BLACKBURNIANS have been seen in ones and twos, the first May 17 at Victoria Park, Truro, by Ross Baker, the others at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armsworthy); Pictou (Holdway); Cape Breton County (May 19 Field Trip); Inverness County May 30 by Neily, Halifax County (N.S.B.S. Field Trip); Stewiacke (Allen) and Brier Island (N.S.B.S. party) during the following two weeks. A very early report for the CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER is April 27, when one was seen at Enfield, Halifax County, by Ethel Crathorne. The next date is May 11, one at Cole Harbor, Halifax County (Eaton) and thereafter reported as "numbers" and by May 19, well distributed. Four were seen and heard May 25 at Victoria Junction, Cape Breton County by Betty Reid, and another on June 1, in the Kilkenny Lake area, same county, by Frank Robertson. The BAY-BREASTED is the most lightly reported of the "regular" warblers this year so far, but six were seen on the Brier Island trip, May 24 and 25, two at Seal Island June 1 (N.S.B.S.), 3, May 30, Maple Brook Road, Inverness County (Neily) and one was seen near E. Stewiacke, Colchester County May 31 (Allen). BLACKPOLLS arrived at Cape Canso April 18, a small vanguard of 10 (E. Armsworthy), but a large migration was on in late May, when 20 were counted on Brier Island, 100 plus at Seal Island, others noted at Truro, Cole Harbor, Bedford, Halifax County and even in Halifax city, over the weekend of the 24th, where C. Helleiner observed them in numbers flitting through his garden. They had reached Cape Breton County in time for the May 19 Field Day, when 2 were seen, and 3 more May 30 in Inverness County (Neily). The PALM WARBLER, which with the Myrtle is usually well ahead of others in this group, is reported April 15 at Granite Village, Shelburne County (per Lewis); April 19, Old Guysborough Road, Halifax County (Allen); April 22, Cape Sable (Smiths); one each, then 6 to 8, April 26 at Markland, Yarmouth County (D. Kirk, A. Hurlburt, M. Hilton); one that day and 4 on the 27th at Broad Cove, Lunenburg County (Hinds and Fullerton), thereafter widespread. Palms reached Cape Breton May 8, when one was seen in Victoria County by Neily, 2 more May 9. Although 10 OVENBIRDS were seen on Brier Island April 28 (Lents) they were not reported singing elsewhere until May 13, first date from Wilmot, Annapolis County (T. Hawkins), thereafter common, in wooded areas. The earliest date for the NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH is May 16, one in Inverness County, for a change (Neily and party). May 22 one was seen at Pictou (Holdway). Others followed in the next few days, and Allen reports at least 3 Waterthrushes establishing territories in loud ringing voices May 24 along the road to Burnside, Colchester County. There seems to be only one mention of the rare MOURNING WARBLER, one male, May 31, seen at Seal Island by the N.S.B.S. party. More numerous in Cape Breton, 2 were seen June 3 in Victoria County (Neily and party) and Neily wrote "just becoming common June 5"

Next to the Yellow, the YELLOWTHROAT has been mentioned most often in spring reports this year, the first one 3 days early (according to Tufts) on May 12, at Broad Cove (Hinds and Fullerton); the first one noticed on Cape Sable was May 16 (Smiths) and abundant by May 19 throughout the province generally. (Elizabeth Murray of Bedford sent in a description of a bird in her garden, May 26 as follows: warbler size, grayish back, yellow face and breast, black bib, no wing bars nor stripes, which could well be, as she surmised, a HOODED WARBLER.) Four WILSON'S WARBLERS have been seen; 1, May 24 in Truro (Baker); 1, May 25 Brier Island (N.S.B.S.); 1 May 27 at Pictou (Holdway); and 1, May 28 on the Susy Lake trip, Halifax County (N.S.B.S.) Also commoner in Cape Breton, five reports of Wilson's Warblers totalling 8 birds run from May 19 to 27 (Neily and others). The first AMERICAN REDSTARTS reported were 2, a male and female, April 30 in a south-end Halifax garden, by J.B. Hardie. By May 15 they were well distributed, outsinging all but the Black-throated Greens, in their appropriate habitat. Sable Island shows a slightly erratic pattern for arrival of migrants, which may in fact be wanderers from the mainland, in some cases. McLaren writes of warblers: "First small "wave" in mid May, with Black-and-White, Parula, Magnolia and Yellowthroat on May 13, and Yellow, Cape May, Black-throated Green, Blackpoll on May 14. Mostly singles or ones or twos. Early were two Bay-breasted on May 7. "

No change has been noted this year in the population of HOUSE SPARROWS. Large numbers of BOBOLINKS descended on us about the middle of May. Although only 15 were seen on Brier Island May 15 (Lents), a big flock was observed May 17 near Yarmouth, on the roadsides, flying, singing, perched on the fences, etc. (M. Hilton, A. Hurlburt), and the actual arrival of a flock of 65 plus was witnessed May 18 in the meadow at the Shubenacadie-Nine-mile River junction, by C.R.K. Allen. The noise and excitement were indescribable, as the milling flock descended on bushes and plowed land, every bird talking at the top of his voice. Six had reached Bras d'Or by May 18 (M. Burchell), a few were on Sable Island May 19 (E. Andruschuk); 1, May 20 at Pictou (Holdway); 1, White Point, Queens County, May 23 (M. Doggett); and by May 24, reports are general. Four EASTERN MEADOWLARKS were seen at Canso April 8 (J. Jarvis); 1, still present up to May 10; 1, April 12 at nearby Hazel Hill, at the feeding tray (E. Armsworthy). A Meadowlark was also seen April 29, at Cape Sable (Smiths).

Judging by the sequence of reports, March 26 to 30 brought us the first migrant REDWINGED BLACKBIRDS. A few males of this species were noted on the early date at Tuskent, by H. Hurlburt, and at Wilmot, Annapolis County by Thelma Hawkins; followed by a report of 6, at Middle Ohio, Shelburne County, March 28, and 5 at Sable River, March 29 (per Lewis). On March 29 new arrivals were noted at Cole Harbor, Halifax County (Eatons) and in Pictou County (Brennans). By mid-April most of our swamps and ponds had their rings of Redwings, balancing on the cattails, flashing their epaulettes, and producing a bewildering variety of unmusical "song". The BALTIMORE ORIOLE seems to be on the increase. Perhaps we have to thank Louise Daley and the C.R.K. Allens for some of these, but the simultaneous sight of one male each, May 15,

at St. Peter's, Cape Breton County (M. Digout), at Rockingham, Halifax County (Robertson), near Williams Lake, Halifax County (D. & C. Jeffries), and at Shelburne (per Lewis) could scarcely all be released birds, from Digby and Halifax. May 17 saw another at Rockland, in Shelburne County and one at Truro (R. Baker); May 18, 2 at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County (S. Fullerton) and a female at the feeder, Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armsworthy). May 19, one is reported on Sable Island (McLaren) 2, May 23 and 24, at Bedford, Halifax County (E. Murray); 1, May 24 at Brier Island (N.S.B.S.) and recent word from Yarmouth is that they are "singing all over town" (M. Hilton).

The RUSTY BLACKBIRD presents an unusual pattern, first mentioned at Sable Island...3, March 29 and 30 (Bell, McLaren) and next at Pictou, 1, April 4 (Holdway), and 1, April 7 at Chebogue Point, Yarmouth County (Allen). The Eatons at Cole Harbor, Halifax County saw one April 13, and six were counted April 19, on a trip through Halifax-Hants (Allen and party). Other reports have followed from this region; elsewhere on the mainland, only one report, of the two at Seal Island June 1 (N.S.B.S. party). Rustys have been heavily reported in Cape Breton, April 13 to May 6, totalling up to 50 birds, in five records from Cape Breton and Victoria Counties (Williams, Neily). Although early COMMON GRACKLES were seen in Pictou County (Brennans) and Annapolis County (Hawkins) on March 27, and 2 were noted on Sable Island April 2 (C. Bell), they did not reach Yarmouth and Shelburne Counties until April 8 (Allen, Lewis), nor Cape Breton until April 7 (Neily). By April 27 and 28 they were present in numbers in Halifax and Hants Counties (Mills, Allen), and thereafter generally distributed and plentiful. Large flocks (100-200) of the BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD have been around winter through spring, throughout the province, and were pairing (they could not be accused of nesting) by May 10, according to the Jeffries of Boulderwood, Halifax County, who observed display behaviour on that date, and Holdway in Pictou who described them as paired by May 20.

The SCARLET Tanager wandered to Nova Scotia...one, April 22, picked up dead at Clark's Harbor, Shelburne County (McCormack per Lewis); one, May 11 at Sable Island (E. Andruschuk) and two, May 20, at Brier Island (Lents). A SUMMER Tanager in partial breeding plumage was seen May 18 at Cole Harbor, Halifax County (R. Eaton) and another on Seal Island May 31 and June 1 (N.S.B.S. party). A CARDINAL, observed April 30 at Lockeport, Shelburne County by E. Townsend, is vouched for by H.F. Lewis, in his column in the Shelburne Coastguard.

A ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK on April 24 was seen in Shelburne County (reported by Lewis in the Coastguard), and one, April 25 at Sable Island (McLaren). April 27, 28 and 29 brought 2 or 3 more to each of these localities; May 3, one to Pictou County (E. Crathorne, the Brennans) and thereafter reports became general, mostly of single birds seen, the only "concentration" being 6, May 31 at Seal Island (N.S.B.S. party). On May 17, one was picked up dead at New Waterford, Cape Breton County and brought to F. Robertson for identification. A BLUE GROSBEAK appeared at the Eaton's feeding station at Cole Harbor

Halifax County on May 3. It was a female, and stayed around about two weeks, giving other members of the Bird Society ample opportunity to observe it. Rare birds are seldom so obliging. Rosemary Eaton succeeded in getting a number of excellent color slides of the bird, one of which is reproduced further along in the Newsletter, with the amusing description of her visitors during this time. Subsequently, the Grosbeak or improbably another female, appeared at the 'Topples' at Lake Loon, a few miles away, on May 15, at 8.10 a.m. and stayed there for the day. It has not been seen since.

At least 8 INDIGO BUNTINGS have been reported, but cannot be said to have reached Nova Scotia safely. The first one did, observed by J.B. Hardie at his feeder, south Halifax (city) on April 15. Another was found dead, April 21 at Cape Sable (Smiths); another, also picked up dead, from the deck of the Lurcher Lightship April 25, and no less than 5, alive, seen at Brier Island May 19 (Lents). One of these, or a new one, was on Brier Island for the N.S.B.S. Field Trip, May 24-25. Another "regular stray", the DICKCISSEL, was observed on Sable Island...one, April 27 (C. Bell) and one, May 19 (E. Androschuk).

EVENING GROSBEEKS began to lose interest in town life the last week in March at Pictou (Holdway), at Hazel Hill (Armsworthy) and in Cape Breton (Willms), the second week in April at Truro (Baker) and Round Hill, Annapolis County (Whitehead); not till the middle of May in Shelburne County (E. Richardson) or Halifax County (E. Mills, Jeffries). Although strong evidence points to some Evening Grosbeaks nesting in Nova Scotia, this has not yet been proved. We want a picture!

The PURPLE FINCH was seen all winter, but very few at a time, and returned in numbers throughout April, generally distributed. It appears to be equally common in town and country, and in good voice. The PINE GROSBEEK and the COMMON REDPOLL, exceptionally abundant all winter, disappeared from field trip lists in Halifax-Hants April 19, according to C.R.K. Allen. On Sable Island, Redpolls were last seen (a large group, 25 plus) April 24 (C. Bell) and a flock of 46, May 4, Ingonish, Victoria County (Neily). Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches and PINE SISKINS were still about on Sable in small numbers in late May according to McLaren. Siskins became scarce in the Truro park April 9 (Baker). The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH put on summer plumage April 13 to May 5 by all reports, and continues to brighten the landscape in good numbers.

We are pleased to report an increasing number of RED CROSSBILLS. These have been seen in flocks as follows: 24 plus, April 7, Ingonish Beach (Neily); 6, April 13, Point Pleasant Park, Halifax (N.S.B.S. members); 15, April 18, Hazel Hill, Guysborough County, (E. Armsworthy); 120, April 25, Grande Anse Valley, Inverness County (Neily); "flock", May 17, Victoria Park, Truro (R. Baker); 12, May 18, Reisser's Beach, Lunenburg County (E. Mills and others); 20 plus, Shubenacadie (F. Cook, R. MacPhee); 8, May 24, Billtown, near Wolfville

(J. Boulva); and 2 only seen May 24-25 on the Brier Island trip (N.S.B.S.) The WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL has been "regular throughout the season" at Ingonish Beach, according to Neily, who reports one flock of 22 plus, April 6 in that area. There is still a small flock on mainland Nova Scotia, glimpsed occasionally, the last report for early June in Colchester County (E. Mills).

Spring records of the RUFOS-SIDED TOWHEE start with 2, April 27, at Cape Sable (Smiths). On May 1, and for several days thereafter one of these striking birds was observed at East Baccaro (M. Madden, per Lewis). The Topples had a bright male Towhee May 12, at Lake Loon, Halifax County; one was seen on Sable Island May 15 (E. Androschuk); 3 at Brier Island, May 16 (Lents); one there for the May 18 and 25 field trips, and 2, May 31, for the Seal Island trip (N.S.B.S. parties).

Wandering IPSWICH SPARROWS are first noted at Cape Sable... one on March 13 (Smiths). Three others turned up there April 21, as described in a letter to follow later in the Newsletter. Five were seen March 29, feeding in the seaweed along the shore at Eastern Passage, Halifax County (Boulva); one, March 30, at Conrad's Beach (E. Mills); and one, April 1, at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armstrong). To see an Ipswich one must comb the beaches, as did C.R.K. Allen and party (M. Hilton, D. Kirk) April 6 to 8, at Chebogue Point and Cape Forchu, Yarmouth County, at each of which places this sparrow was noted; as were 2, April 20, at Broad Cove, by S. Fullerton and B. Hinds. A first Ipswich for Cape Breton was observed at Main-a-dieu, Cape Breton County April 26 by Neily, who succeeded in getting a photograph, for confirmation of the record. On May 4, 3 were flushed from the weed along the west side of Cow Bay, Halifax County, by J. Boulva. From Sable Island, Mrs. Christel Bell wrote that on April 20, about 25 to 30 newly arrived Ipswiches joined the resident flock of similar size, in her vicinity. SAVANNAH SPARROWS passed the Lurcher Lightship, off Yarmouth, April 3 to 20, mostly single birds (Romain), and began appearing along the Fundy shore April 8-12 (C.R.K. Allen and party). First indication of an extensive invasion was a series of reports April 17 to 26, at half a dozen widely-separated points throughout the province, 2 to 10 birds seen each time. By May 24, Savannahs were abundant, in appropriate habitat.

It was feared that a June 1 deadline for spring migration reports would cut out the SHARP-TAILED SPARROW, but 2 were heard "singing" May 31, at Seal Island (N.S.B.S. party). The SLATE-COLORED JUNCO arrived at Brier Island, 100 plus March 23 (Lents); Cape Sable 2, March 24, 7 by that same evening (Smiths); 6, March 25, at White Point Queens County (M. Duggett) and at Sable Island March 27.. Lewis in Shelburne County noted a distinct increase about April 1, and Holdway at Picou observed that the main migrants arrived there April 20. The TREE SPARROW had us worried this year by its non-departure on time. On April 7 at Chebogue Point, Yarmouth County, C.R.K. Allen saw a flock of 11 of these sparrows, several of which were singing...the first time he had heard this song. They were on the move April 26, 2 sighted passing the Lurcher, but still at a feeder in Wilmot, Annapolis County April 28 (Hawkins). Final departure date from the Jeffries' feeding

station, near Halifax, May 7, and from Sable Island May 11 (McLaren).

W.E. Whitehead saw 5 CHIPPING SPARROWS April 29 at Round Hill, Annapolis County...Dr. Whitehead comments that Chipping Sparrows are frequently seen there in early spring, and then disappear. The next earliest dates recorded are one, May 3 at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armsworthys); one, singing near the North West Arm, Halifax May 8 (E. Mills); 2, May 12 at Pictou (Holdway); one, May 15, Wolfville (C. Chipman) and "first", May 17, at Victoria Park, Truro (R. Baker). By May 24 reports are general.

A note from McLaren at Sable Island concerns the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: "An overwintering bird disappeared after March 7. Then they appeared in small numbers after first observation of one on April 22. On May 25-28, an individual with white in front of the eye, in the manner of the western race gambelii, was observed several times by the Bells, and independantly by E. Androschuk." A White-crown was seen at Cape Sable May 6 (Smiths); another in Yarmouth County May 7 (Pothier); one, May 8 to 12 and 2, May 11 to 12 at White Point, Queens County (N. Doggett); May 12 arrived at Brier Island (W. Lent); 2, May 16 at Cape Forchu, Yarmouth County (M. Hilton and party); one, May 18 at Cole Harbor, Halifax County (Eatons); one male, May 18, Hazel Hill (Armsworthys). Mrs. Armsworthy wrote: "It was quite a sight, the White-crowned Sparrow, Blackburnian Warbler and Baltimore Oriole, all here at once." On May 20, a White-crown joined another of the same species which had been present all winter, at Glencoe, Pictou County (MacDonald per Brennans). (M. Digout, St. Peters, Cape Breton County also mentions an overwintering bird.) Two adult White-crowns were seen on the May 24 trip to Brier Island (N.S.B.S. party) and two were at Ingonish Beach, Victoria County May 23 (Neily).

Owing to its habits and its habitat (a woodland bird on the edge of its wintering range) the WHITE-THROATED SPARROW is difficult to classify in spring. This is notably a case where we are fortunate in having our Cape Sable reports, and consequently are grateful to Sidney and Petty June Smith. Brier Island can't help us in this case, because it is wooded, and Sable Island appears to be a law unto itself; but the White-throat arriving April 18 at treeless Cape Sable was undoubtedly a migrant, and was followed by "frequent and plentiful arrivals from then on to May 10" (B.J. Smith). This arrival time is borne out by the twenty or more reports, too numerous to list, of an increase in White-throats from mid-April on, along the South Shore, but not common until May 3 at Bras d'Or, Cape Breton County, and May 16 at Pictou. Not as glorious a singer as the Purple Finch or the Hermit Thrush, nevertheless the call of the White-throat in the spring woods is one of the loveliest and most welcome of the bird songs, a sure sign that summer is on the way.

The FOX SPARROW migration was not large in Nova Scotia this spring, but is well defined. It extended from March 25 to April 21, according to our comprehensive reports for the mainland. Eight reports, of 2 up to 12 birds each are for March 25, from Shelburne, Queens, Halifax, Guysborough, Pictou, Colchester and Annapolis

Counties. March 25 was not a week-end day, it was a Tuesday, which makes this rather remarkable, suggesting a sudden and widespread invasion, possibly storm-borne. On March 29 and 30 Fox Sparrows were noted in Kings County (C. Chipman, A. Chisholm) and March 31, 50 at Brier Island (Lents). April 15 and 17 are last dates for seeing Fox Sparrows in Halifax County (Eatons, Jeffries); April 20 at Hazel Hill, Guysborough County (Armsworthy) and April 21, two were sighted from the Lurcher Lightship. At Sable Island a few were seen daily March 28 to April 26 (C. Bell). In Cape Breton, they remained until May 6, according to Neily.

Three reports of the LINCOLN'S SPARROW are: one, May 18, Brier Island (W. and L. Neily); one, May 25, Warren Lake, Victoria County (Neily) and one, watched singing its distinctive song, May 31 near Upper Stewiacke, Colchester County (C.R.K. Allen). The first SWAMP SPARROW reports come from Cape Breton; one each on May 4 and 5 at Clyburn Valley and Ingonish Beach, Victoria County (Neily). It did not reveal its presence on mainland Nova Scotia until May 18, when one was seen and heard at Elmsdale, Hants County (Allen). May 19 Ben Doane saw 4 at Barrington, Shelburne County; Neily calls May 19 "peak" date for the Glace Bay area (where was everybody in between?) and May 20 Holdway reports two males singing on separate territories.

Our thanks go to the Lents at Brier Island as well as to the Smiths at Cape Sable for a migration date on the SONG SPARROW. On March 23, 150 appeared at Brier Island and the same cold day, 5 came to Cape Sable "two singing bravely, though their bills must have been chattering", according to Betty June Smith. Eight more arrived at Cape Sable March 24 a.m., and 19 were there by evening. During the following week, reports of increased numbers of Song Sparrows have come in from all over, and "abundance" is noted by more than one reporter.

One backward look at winter: SNOW BUNTINGS were last seen February 13, at South Brookfield, Queens County by Ross Dobson; February 16, at Cole Harbor, Halifax County by Barbara Hinds, and as late as April 22 in Cape Breton County, by Mary Willms.

This account is long and detailed, but is the best documented Spring Migration Report we have assembled to date. On behalf of the Nova Scotia Bird Society members as a whole, sincere appreciation to all who have contributed to it.

REPORTS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE SEPT. 30, 1969

FIELD TRIPS

The early morning field trips in the Halifax area got away to a cool and quiet start at 6.00 A. M. on May 14 when some twenty sleepy birders assembled at Point Pleasant Park. Sky was overcast and made good its threat of rain shortly before the trip ended at eight o'clock. Birds were scarce or silent but a few beginners saw or heard their first Ruby-crowned Kinglets and added a warbler or two to their life lists.

Weather was even grimmer on May 21 when a handful of die-hards foregathered at Chebucto Head. A steady chill rain on an easterly wind penetrated clothing and blurred binocular lenses. In spite of this a few interesting sightings were scored: two loons, one a definite Red-throat, flew by; twelve Gannets all heading the wrong way to the south-west, and a probable petrel, glimpsed for a moment as it hawked low over the pewter-coloured water.

The day of the Susie Lake trip was made to order and the twelve people who attended were kept busy. There were sixteen species of warblers including Wilson's, Black-throated Blue and Blackburnian, which were new ones to several of the party; most of the other expectable woodland birds were also seen or heard in fair numbers.

The all day Hants County trip which ended the series, made history by being, we think, the first on which it did not rain from start to finish. Heavy foliage made warbler-spotting a bit tricky, but sixteen species were seen, together with fifty-five other kinds of meadow, marsh and woodland bird. The temperature was unseasonably high and the relative humidity 100%, but the black flies were nearly over and the mosquitoes barely in evidence.

Lunch in the shade of Smiley's Park proved an excellent idea. A few outlanders from Colchester County peeled off at this point, but the rest of us continued to plod along the hot dusty roads till well on into the afternoon, completing our list of seventy-one species with an Olive-sided Flycatcher. He was calling insistently from the top of a tall rampike, Quick, Three Beers, and we couldn't have agreed with him more. It was time to head for home.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS BACK

The Double-Crested Cormorants are back on the pilings of the old coal pier in Abercrombie. They can be easily observed from the car on the new road from Pictou to New Glasgow, built for access to the Scott Paper plant at Abercrombie. On April 25th many birds were flying and swimming in the vicinity, and one nest was built. On May 19th there were 33 occupied nests with a brooding bird on each and its mate preening so close as to be almost touching the brooding bird. There were 81 individual cormorants in view.



The above picture (a Doug MacNeil Photo) is reproduced here courtesy of the New Glasgow Evening News, where it appeared Friday, April 25, 1969. It was brought to our attention by Fred and Margaret Kenney of Springville, Pictou County.

GOLDEN EAGLES

I have noted the sighting of two Golden Eagles at Caribou Harbour, N. S. I saw them from the ferry as we were approaching the end of a sandy point, while the birds were soaring about 30 feet over the water. The height of eye from the bridge of the ferry is 45 feet so I was able to see them from above as they wheeled in flight.

By a stroke of good luck one of the birds turned towards the ship and landed with bowed outstretched legs on the bleached branch of a driftwood tree lying on the beach, about two feet high. The legs appeared very thick and black, feathered down to the feet. Both birds had an irregular whitish patch at the base of the tail, more distinctly marked on the bird that perched on the driftwood. The perched bird took to the air when the ferry was about 300 feet away. It circled slowly to glide along a line of spruce and poplar trees that separated cord grass from a salt water lake. With scarcely a flap of the wings it slowly dropped down into the grass and was not seen again although the place was watched for another ten minutes.

Eric Holdway

NESTING SHARP SHINS

Last summer a pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks nested at our summer cottage near Guysboro, N. S. We first saw them June 1st and they stayed around till August 15th. I usually had a 30X telescope trained on their favourite perch in the top limbs of a dead spruce, 65 yards from the cottage. We never actually found the nest but know about where it was, in a thick clump of spruces by a roadside and open field. Sharp-shins are well known and covered by the literature, particularly Bent, but in our seventy-five days' experience with them, we may have picked up some interesting behaviour.

The first airborne young (two) appeared June 15th. Before that the hawks defended the nesting area savagely. They tolerated robins, Song Sparrows, Purple finches, all ducks, terns, Herring Gulls and Blue Herons. On the other hand, they fiercely chased off Blue Jays, crows, ravens, Black-Backed Gulls, Ospreys and a Bald Eagle. One grabbed an Osprey by the upper rump and hung on for perhaps ten seconds. The Osprey departed quickly. In the vicinity of the nest, and when attacking an intruder, there was no flap, flap, soar, Accipiter flight pattern. Their wings were compressed to about the size and shape of a Starling's and beat even faster. They overtook all intruders with ridiculous ease.

After the young appeared they were a little more tolerant, but only a little. All four moved headquarters to their favourite perch. They gave the young flying lessons there. An oft repeated tactic was for one of the parents to skim at high speed about a foot over the grass and shoot up

I could also list a Yellow Warbler, L22901, June 11, 1933 band. The adult female caught May 30, 1935 and the male caught a week earlier at the same nest and also carrying a 1933 band. The female laid 4 eggs, first covering with plant down a strange egg in the nest. (I saw a Cowbird a day later). I notified Robie Tufts, who told me to watch the nest, because it was the first record for Nova Scotia. We had a high wind which tipped the nest, spilling all but the Cowbird egg, which I then shipped, nest and all, to Robie for his collection.

J. Israel Pothier

NOTES from COLE HARBOUR

1. Tolling by Mink

We had heard with interest Jack Brayley's radio accounts of tolling wildprowl by the use of grained dogs; a system devised originally by Indians who had observed a fox's antics calculated to lure inquisitive ducks and geese to within pouncing distance. So we were most intrigued to see an example of tolling in our cove. The ice was just going out and Black Duck were swimming in the cove for the first time this spring (23rd April, 1969).

We saw a small, dark animal dart out from the shore and plunge into the water where a stream ran into the cove. In seconds the mink had caught a smelt and carried its wriggling, silvery prey to an ice cave under a rock. It shot out again and again, diving and bounding back to the Shore. The activities of the mink attracted some Black Duck and they swam up to see what was going on. Gradually they came closer and closer till they were within two feet of the diving mink which, luckily for them, took no notice. Finally there was an enthralled group of eight Black Duck following the mink's angling with the dedication of sidewalk-superintendents watching a man drill a hole in a street. When the mink had enough fish for a meal it withdrew under the rock to eat them.

The show being over - the Black Duck drifted away.

2. Summer Tanager

Early on May 18, my husband saw a scarlet bird; we watched it for some minutes, and it was obviously a tanager. The head, upper breast, back and rump were a gorgeous scarlet (not orange). The lower breast and underparts were yellow, the wings were yellowish green (definitely not black). The eye was dark, with herring. The tail squarish with slightest curving indentation. The bill (yellow) seemed larger than that of a Scarlet Tanager (which I knew from Ontario). It perched low in an aspen poplar and then flew to a maple some distance away and was almost indistinguishable from the red blossoms. We concluded it must be a young male Summer Tanager acquiring its first breeding plumage. Unfortunately it did not stay around. (Since two of our rarer visitors have found their way to Loon Lake, I warned Betty Topple to look out for a Tanager.)

3. Blue Grosbeak

The day my husband left for sea, an undistinguished brown bird appeared on the doorstep - another female House Sparrow I thought. But later, watching it through glasses, I realized it was something unusual. Even Peterson's drawings were unhelpful but I realized it must be a very large Indigo Bunting, or a very small Blue Grosbeak. I put out some grain to try to keep it around till an Expert could come and identify it.

Since the feeder is immediately in front of the house, I asked people to approach with caution, and not by the front drive. Word got around and strange men slipped through the bush from the railway and into the house by the side door. No doubt my reputation is in ruins.

The bird was identified as a Blue Grosbeak by Charlie Allen and others. Unfortunately some of my bird-watching visitors were disappointed, as the grosbeak (or one very like it) departed to the Topples at Loon Lake. The Blue Grosbeak was here from 29th April till 4th May.

The most obvious field mark of the bird here was the tawny appearance of the breast, particularly under the beak. From a distance, it had a yellowish tinge. The top of the head was cinnamon color, and the back a warm olive brown with a very faint suggestion of darker streaks. The head had a peculiar quality, it looked more puffed than feathered.

In behaviour it was like most Grosbeaks, staying in one place and feeding. It did not move or hop much. At first very shy, it gained confidence and sometimes drove off a House or White-throated Sparrow which came too close. Once a squirrel darted right at the bird - it just flew up as the squirrel shot beneath it, and then resumed feeding exactly where it was before. While here it seemed to keep regular hours and was around for the first four hours after dawn and the last four hours before dusk.

Rosemary Eaton



female Blue Grosbeak in company with "White-throats".

Rosemary Eaton

THE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

"The Breeding Bird Survey is designed to measure changes in abundance of North American breeding birds by surveying populations on a large number of randomly located roadside transects. In the past two decades we have witnessed a drastic change in land use, agricultural practices and environmental pollution. With expanding human populations we can anticipate even greater intensity of land use and alteration of wildlife environments."

The above is a quotation from the Breeding Bird Survey, 1966, Special Scientific Report - Wildlife No. 102 of the United States Department of the Interior, by Chandler S. Robbins and Willet T. Van Velzen. Owing to the initiative and energy of Dr. Anthony J. Erskine of the Canadian Wildlife Service, our Maritime provinces participated in the 1966 and subsequent three surveys, and Dr. Erskine has contributed materially to the improvement of statistical methods for valid comparison of year to year changes in bird populations. To quote Dr. Erskine's 1968 Report:

"Factors limiting distribution and abundance of birds have not been previously assessed, except locally, on other than an empirical ("rule of thumb") basis. The random sampling plan used to assess changes in bird numbers will permit systematic collection of distributional data over wide areas. Data on some possible limiting factors such as bedrock, soils, forest cover, and human use are being collected through the Canada Land Inventory, and can be obtained from the data bank when necessary.

Procedure:

The technique used in the Maritime Provinces Breeding Bird Survey was devised and experimented with in Maryland and Delaware in 1965. Since then it has been extended across the settled parts of the United States and Canada (Robbins & Van Velzen 1967, 1968), reaching the Pacific coast in 1968. The procedure used in the Maritimes differs from that in general use only in minor details."

Excerpt from the COOPERATIVE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY OF NORTH AMERICA, 1968

"Sampling Technique: Each one-degree block of latitude and longitude (about 55 miles wide, east to west, by 70 miles long) will be sampled by one or more random transects or "routes". Starting points and compass directions have been determined at random. Each route is covered once each summer by the following standardized procedure: Begin exactly one-half hour before sunrise; make 50 stops one-half mile apart and count all birds heard at each stop or seen within one-fourth mile during a 3-minute watching and listening period. One observer should do all the observing on a given route, but he may have an assistant to help with recording or driving. Unless driving conditions are very poor, most routes can be completed in 4 to 4½ hours."

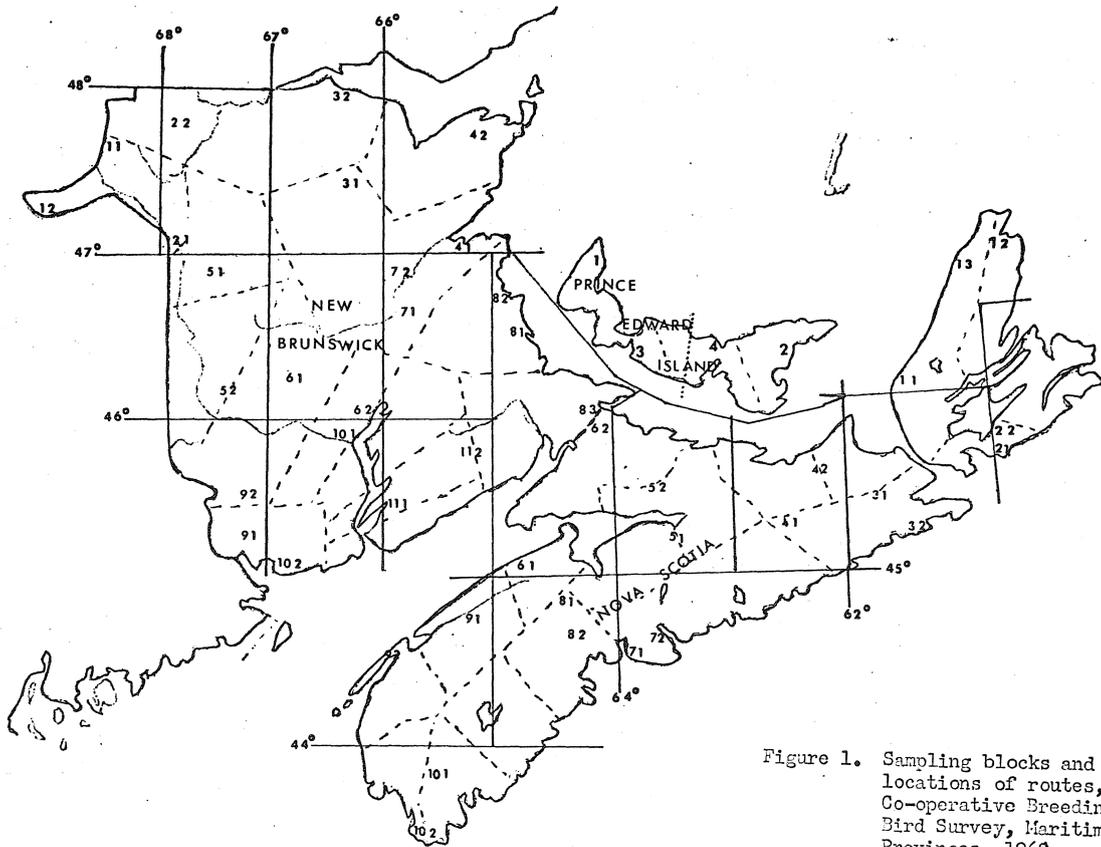


Figure 1. Sampling blocks and locations of routes, Co-operative Breeding Bird Survey, Maritime Provinces, 1968.

"All routes surveyed in the Maritimes were laid out at the Canadian Wildlife Service office in Sackville, and co-operators were requested not to alter the route unless a section was considered to be impassable. In 1968, observers were requested to record details of weather, wind, and temperature at the end of every 10 stops as well as at the start and end of a survey (giving six determinations instead of two). This should permit more accurate assessment of the comparability of weather conditions. Observers were also asked to compare, in a brief statement, the weather and traffic conditions, and locations of stops, in 1968 with those of 1967. To improve comparability further, observers were provided with details of the date and conditions prevailing on the 1967 survey, and the correct starting time and most comparable date (approximate) for the 1968 survey.

Results

(a) Coverage - Coverage was virtually complete, as only one assigned route was not covered. At least one route was covered in each degree block in the Maritimes. Two routes each were covered in nine of ten blocks in Nova Scotia, in ten of eleven blocks in New Brunswick, and in each half of Prince Edward Island. Third routes were covered in blocks NS 1 and NB 8 as in 1967. Approximate locations of routes are shown in Figure 1.

(b) Birds noted - A total of 146 species was listed on the 46 routes surveyed. The numbers of species and of individuals on each route are listed in Table 1, with those for 1966 and 1967 repeated for comparison. Four species, Tree Swallow, Robin, White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow, were found on all routes, and three others, Barn Swallow, Yellowthroat, and Junco, were noted on all routes except one. Average numbers per route of the 20 most numerous species and the percentage of stops at which each was recorded are listed in Table 2, in comparison with similar data for these species in the 1967 survey.

(c) Comparisons of numbers - Methods for comparing numbers of birds reported in different years are being studied. In 1967, we treated the total number of birds of a species seen in each year as a sample of those actually present, and applied the chi-squared test to the hypothesis that the two samples were representative of the same population. On this basis three species showed significant changes from 1966 to 1967. Since the total number of birds seen on the 18 "comparable" routes was 10.9 per cent greater in 1967 than in 1966, the hypothesis that each species might have been expected to show an increase of this size was also tested; three species, including one showing a significant increase under the first hypothesis, showed significant changes under the second hypothesis. Since the aggregate change in numbers of birds seen on the 32 comparable routes in 1967 and 1968 was much less than one per cent, only the first hypothesis needed to be tested this year. Only one

species, Blue Jay, showed a significant change from 1967 to 1968 (a highly significant increase), and no other species even approached this scale of change. Various alternative groupings of routes, obtained by varying the scoring system, were also tested, but the result was unchanged. One or more of three possibilities may be true: That only the Blue Jay experienced a significant (95 per cent probability) change in numbers in the Maritimes between 1967 and 1968; that other species experienced significant changes but that the method of gathering data is not sufficiently sensitive to detect such changes; or that the method of statistical analysis is not sufficiently sensitive to detect changes in the data collected.

The evidence available suggests that the slight differences in weather and date of survey between 1967 and 1968 are unlikely to have disguised real changes in total numbers of birds present along the routes. Despite the miserably cold weather which so greatly retarded phenology in April and May 1967, the rest of that breeding season was neither particularly favourable nor unfavourable, so local conditions are unlikely to have caused great changes from 1967 to 1968. The unfavourable weather in the spring of 1967, on the other hand, could have reduced numbers of some bird species relative to 1966, but the greater familiarity with the survey procedures in 1967 may have masked such effects. Actually, making allowance for improved technique by assuming a 10.9 per cent increase from 1966 to 1967, significant decreases were noted for Ravens and Song Sparrows, both early nesting species which would have been exposed to the cold, wet weather while nesting, prior to the 1967 surveys. Furthermore, most warblers, small insectivorous birds whose food was probably scarce during the cold spell, also showed decreases from 1966 to 1967, although for these species the chi-squared test did not demonstrate significance.

Since the chi-squared test was applied only to the total numbers of a species seen on comparable routes in the two years, it was possible for (say) two or three routes with large increases to balance out a general but smaller decrease on the other routes. A test which gives less emphasis to such extreme values would be more satisfactory, although most other tests involve much more complicated calculations. We have worked out the 1966-1967 and 1967-1968 comparisons using a method described for "The Common Birds Survey" in Great Britain (Taylor, 1965). We have arbitrarily calculated all percentage changes by dividing the smaller number by the larger; this ensures that no changes can be greater than 100 per cent. In most cases the results of the two tests were reasonably parallel, but the change in Blue Jay numbers from 1967 to 1968 was highly significant by the chi-squared test, and not significant by the other method. It seemed worth examining this case in detail. Twice as many Blue Jays were reported in 1968 as in 1967, and increases were noted on 22 routes compared to only six with decreases. Seven routes which lacked this species in 1967 reported from 1 to 9 individuals in 1968. Despite this general impression of increased

numbers, three routes (with increases from 1 to 20, 7 to 21, and 10 to 44) accounted for over half of the total increase. Two of those three routes accounted for 7 of the 10 stops at which more than three Blue Jays were reported, including one flock of 16 birds, one stop with six birds, one with five birds, and four stops with four birds each. With these seven stops omitted, the proportion of stops with Blue Jays having over two individuals each was nearly the same in both years. Both of these routes were surveyed on 2 June, so these larger groups probably involved migrants. The "highly significant" change indicated by the chi-squared test was apparently spurious, which emphasizes the desirability of using more than one test. We shall continue to look for more satisfactory (but not necessarily more sensitive) tests of the significance of year-to-year changes in numbers of birds observed on the Breeding Bird Surveys.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1. Number of bird species and number of individual birds recorded per route

Route number	Number of species			Number of individuals		
	1966	1967	1968	1966	1967	1968
N B 1 1	42	46	43	425	566	460
2 1	43	49	46	522	968	657
2 2	-	-	46	-	-	444
3 1	55	58	66	735	777	839
3 2	-	67	69	-	1184	1169
4 1	64	64	69	723	929	1106
4 2*	56	56	-	604	686	-
		43	46		691	753
5 1	54	52	59	602	870	954
5 2	-	64	65	-	936	1185
6 1*	54	63	-	616	674	-
		73	56		1042	1006
6 2	--	-	54	-	-	818
7 1	-	56	69	-	673	884
7 2	-	71	76	-	1142	1205
8 1	61	71	67	852	947	1003
8 2	70	76	73	862	994	929
8 3	-	52	55	-	651	705
9 1	55	56	55	381	386	384
9 2	70	69	64	809	829	736
10 1	61	64	62	648	743	754
10 2	71	-	52	664	-	430
11 1	78	77	81	655	601	960
11 2	66	77	75	869	947	1020
PEI 1	37	49	48	1538	1355	1373
2	39	42	37	575	725	588
3	-	42	39	-	1141	957
4	-	47	42	-	783	640
N S 1 1	50	50	59	476	536	595
1 2	50	55	57	571	549	728
1 3	-	54	57	-	563	712
2 1	55	47	57	531	467	554
2 2	43	41	48	333	373	399
3 1	55	58	59	517	537	517
3 2	-	-	56	-	-	623
4 1	60	63	62	429	496	546
4 2	-	65	68	-	889	1029
5 1	55	57	51	500	444	492
5 2	54	61	66	542	570	871
6 1	40	46	-	683	854	-
6 2	51	59	55	466	549	540
7 1	52	53	52	784	772	713
7 2	-	59	59	-	624	622
8 1	53	50	52	475	524	571
8 2	55	52	48	514	364	347
9 1	50	42	58	793	727	1021
9 2	-	43	58	-	884	610
10 1	47	51	52	298	496	474
10 2	36	62	55	495	1030	640

* Route was surveyed in 1967 by two observers, one of whom also did the 1966 survey and the other the 1968 survey.

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Sackville, N. B.
6 November 1968.

A. J. Erskine

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

Hurricane "Gladys" was a fierce storm here as you correctly indicated in your letter. However, we did not receive any sightings of laughing gulls or black skimmers within P. E. I. National Park. Both of these species have never been recorded in our ornithological notes by the park naturalist.

After that storm (which incidentally carved our sandy shores into strange and grotesque patterns) the park naturalist made a complete survey of the coastline of this national park and to his surprise found no unexpected birds whatsoever. This was most unusual for a storm of such intensity as "Gladys".

There were many bird species taking refuge in our "behind the dunes" ponds and lakes, but all of these were species which we expect here at this time of year.

Simply for your interest all the following species were found in one single pond, Clarke's Pond, in the Cavendish section of the national park, On October 24th, 1968.

1.	Baldpate	One pair
2.	American Coot	2
3.	Canada Goose	2
4.	Black Duck	245
5.	Pintail	43
6.	Hooded Merganser	one pair
7.	American Merganser	253 males and females
8.	Old Squaw	1 male
9.	Green-winged Teal	3 pair
10.	Buffle Head	3 pair
11.	American Golden Eye	1 male, 5 females
12.	Wood Duck	1 female

(Clarke's Pond is a slightly brackish body of water of about 10 acres, completely sheltered by a relatively high border of dunes, behind an open ocean beach).

This single day, single pond observation series is included here to give you some idea of the abundance of waterfowl using our park waters during fall migration. The particular pond in question is one of the finest areas known to the naturalist for observing waterfowl during fall migration in the entire Maritime area.

Clarke's Pond is a perfect location not only for observing, but also photographing wild fowl.

It has always seemed particularly important to the park naturalist that groups such as the Nova Scotia Bird Society should be made aware of this seasonal facet of P.E.I. National Park, with the hope that a group visit might be undertaken for observation and photography, using bird blinds.

Clarke's Pond is an ideal area in which to use blinds for bird photography. Perhaps this lucky ornithological situation will be of interest to your organization, and even though this national park is not in Nova Scotia, your Society may consider a field trip to this area next season before freeze-up.

We welcome such park use by groups whose principles follow those of the Nova Scotia Bird Society. The park naturalist would be pleased to aid you in any way possible.

Thank you for your keen interest in our natural history. Perhaps our next hurricane will yield richer and rarer results.

Charlottetown, P.E.I.,
Dec. 6, 1968

M. J. McCarron

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

We had several interesting experiences with birds this past year amongst the most notable of which was: a beautiful Marsh Hawk on Sept. 30 which spent some time scanning a tiny marsh only about 50 ft. from me. It seemed quite unaware of my presence. On Sept. 14 we had the pleasure of watching some 100 or more Broad-winged Hawks in mass migration circling up and up over our house and finally drifting away in the distance on the wind. We watched several families of Black Ducks and Mallards grow up on our river and one day while out walking in the woods nearly fell over a Ruffed Grouse with 10 fluffy little babies. Our Cardinals as usual did not disappoint us. We did not find their nests this year but they brought two families of babies to our bird feeder to teach them to fend for themselves.

We also had a Baltimore Oriole nest blow out of an old oak tree by our back door on June 20. It looked like a coconut rolling across the grass. We picked it up and it contained 3 babies almost fully fledged. We managed to hang the nest back up in the tree but only about 10 ft. off the ground.

After a couple of anxious hours the parents ventured into the nest and from then on we had an absolutely fascinating time watching those orioles raise their family. Nothing would keep them from their family. They chased nosy cat-birds, dive-bombed cats and scolded us every time we went out the door. Often one parent scolded to cause a diversion while the other quietly fed the babies (only trouble was the babies wouldn't keep quiet!). Two of the babies soon flew but the third, after two weeks, unfortunately died.

Our greetings to the other members of the Bird Society.

Gulfport, Conn.
Dec. 17, 1968

Gillian Rose

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

At the conclusion of the Ball's Creek trip taken by members of the Cape Breton branch last Spring, Mrs. Reid, secretary of the C. B. branch, offered to show us the raven's nest which she had discovered in Rotary Park. Miss Hilda Wright, Mrs. Reid and her daughter and myself walked into the park about a half mile, then down a deep gully, across a stream, up the other equally steep side, and in through woods another half mile. Here we lost Miss Wright who preferred to keep an eye on the raven parents who were hovering close overhead. The rest of us climbed a tree and got a look at the most enormous baby birds I have ever seen. Their feathers were just beginning to appear and their open mouths, showing a great expanse of satiny pink lining, were big enough to swallow a closed fist - well over six inches across. In fact it was the inside lining of their mouths which caused Mrs. Reid to focus her binoculars on the nest the first time - she thought they were purple finches in the tree - and this from well over a half mile away.

I hate to relate the sad sequel of this little side trip. We left the area undisturbed and saw the parents return to their brood. The next time Mrs. Reid was able to drive out to see them she found, through her binoculars that the nest had been tipped and the four youngsters hung together - a single cord round the four necks. We have had a guilty feeling ever since for perhaps we had drawn attention to the nest.

Glace Bay, N. S.
March 2, 1969

Edith M. MacLeod

P. S. Mrs. Rosemary Eaton's notes are a most enjoyable addition to the Newsletter, aren't they?

E. McL

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

A friend asked me about a big bird, noisy, that he had seen each afternoon at Lumsden Dam, South of Wolfville, as sundown approached, flying above a woodlot, over a cleared field to a poplar where it went in a hole in the tree. I said it probably was a Pileated Woodpecker and had the fun of seeing it arrive on schedule two evenings. The second one, February 8th, it was cold and windy and because Mrs. C. was cold we had left the site, only to have my friend call out at the top of his voice when we were three or four hundred yards away, "Here he comes". I could of course hear "him" &oc - the noise made no difference to the bird - he looked like an airplane swooping over the tree tops - and straight to his tree he came. When we tapped on the trunk he would obligingly pop his head out and view us sternly.

On Feb. 8, a Redpoll landed on my head while I was viewing a small flock feeding on weed seeds on the dyke near the N. S. Light & Power Co. After it left I squeaked a bit and another one came to me, fluttered about the peak of my cap, decided I was not seedy enough to suit, and retired.

On May 4, when walking on the railroad from Green-
wich toward Wolfville and about at the rear of the Harold Stultz residence I saw an Eastern Bluebird. It persisted in keeping its back to me so I cannot report seeing the red breast but could catch the white at sides of the base of breast (just as you see it in some Robins) and its feeding habit was noted and proved to be exactly what Robie Tufts reports in his Birds of Nova Scotia. I saw it for a minute or two, I expect, along a fence on the north side of cutting - it would fly twenty-five to fifty feet, light on the wire fence, drop to the ground, come up to perch, fly again - repeated perhaps three times then it flew out of range to another fence on the dykeland.

On May 15, a Brown Thrasher spent two hours in the yard of three adjoining properties and our own. No trouble to hear him!!! Puzzled me a bit at first thinking of a Veery because of the reddish back but of course there is no real similarity in the song. He returned for a few minutes Friday, Saturday and Sunday, either at six in the morning or sevenish at night. Came one other night but we have not seen nor heard him for a week now.

The Newsletter is always of interest. I enjoyed Mrs. Eaton's diary-like articles some issues ago.

I suppose Dr. Tufts has received all the acknowledgement that one might expect for his fine piece of work "Birds of Nova Scotia" but each time I turn to it I think how fortunate we are to have such a book where so much detail is given concerning nesting habits and feeding habits of our birds as well as the usual descriptions of colour and song

Wolfville, N.S.
May 24, 1969

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

As my first year of birdwatching is completed I would like to drop a word of encouragement to other beginners in this engrossing hobby. Birdwatching is a most insidious pastime - every member of the family becomes embroiled to a greater or lesser degree. So far I have infected my husband, my mother, my teenaged son (now the keenest of us all) and my seven-year-old (who has difficulty with binoculars but manages to tag along behind, keeping unnaturally quiet and occasionally seeing birds that the rest of us have missed). Added to these are several of my neighbours who became intrigued at the sight of the Cohrs family blundering through their gardens in various weathers, "hot on the trail". Several new bird-watchers were added to the brotherhood!

At first, with one or more new birds every day the pace was fast and exciting, but I find that as new sightings become rarer the excitement is still there in seeing the right bird in the wrong place, or at the wrong time, or even in seeing a particularly gorgeous specimen - to say nothing of developing the capacity to match the right song with the right bird. Seasoned "watchers" are usually most patient and helpful - although I am sure they cannot imagine how anyone could confuse a purple finch with a Pine Grosbeak - whereas I found it quite easy!

For help we turned first to Tufts' "Birds of Nova Scotia" which was and is invaluable in that it narrows down the field of possibles to our local area. Then we obtained the famous Peterson's "Field Guide to the Birds" (we now have a copy each which we can annotate at will) and a recently (1966) published paperback "Birds of North America" which I find excellent. The Public Library yielded more background reading, and of course the Newsletters from the Bird Society are interesting and informative.

We already owned two pair of binoculars - a large and heavy 7 by 50 which is particularly useful in poor light as they bring in colour well and have a wide field of vision, and a general purpose 8 by 35 which is less heavy and has better magnification. My son bought himself a 10 by 50 binocular for ordinary birding and a 10 to 20 by 30 telescope which is small, portable and used by us all for seabirds and super magnification of stationary birds.

Records (phonograph variety) have been useful to me in identifying bird calls and songs, one excellent one particularly by the federation of Ontario Naturalists, follows

Peterson's field Guide page by page giving calls and songs of most birds in the text.

As a family we are fortunate in having two bases of operations - a home in Halifax County and a summer place in Lunenburg County. Up to now these have been quite adequate for our activities, but now we hope to cover more territory, as time allows. Experienced "watchers" can sometimes be prevailed upon to let you in on some "hot" spots and give you an idea of what you may expect to find there. Although this is not as much fun as finding out for yourself it saves a lot of time and some unsatisfactory outings. For, of course, there are many unrewarding and discouraging times - winter Sundays spent plunging hip deep through snowladen woods only to return home and record "two Crows and a Herring Gull"! There are days when all birds seem to have vanished off the face of the earth.

However, these kinds of days are more than compensated for by the "Bonanza" days, as when a casual walk leads to a first sighting of a large flock of Red Cross-bills, feeding and chattering while at the same time the first warbler of the year alights almost on your shoulder. As if this were not enough suddenly a beautiful blue Indigo Bunting lands right in your binocular sights and you almost drop them from excitement. This makes up for all the cold dawn arisings, the wet feet and tired legs.

So, onward and up - up at 5. 30 A. M. that is - and always keep your binocs with you during the spring migration! One pair upstairs and one pair down is handy - and never forget to wear them when hanging out the wash.

Armdale, N. S.
May 26, 1969

Shirley Cohrs

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

A male Pheasant has been coming to the yard lately. About a month ago he began crowing and beating his wings during his visits, and I thought surely he was doomed to be a bachelor, but two weeks ago he arrived with his lady friend and she has called here once or twice since that time with him.

I am sure she is nesting just across the road as I hear him crowing all day long. I fear they will come to a sad end one day when the wrong person happens to be passing by.

Regarding the E. Phoebe, this is a "first" for me. It was down by the old iron bridge in front of our house on May 11, May 12 and May 24. Each time I was attracted by the voice, but was able to see it only on May 12. I rather hope it does not decide to nest under the bridge, as children play under there a lot during the nesting season, and I have all I can do to try to see that the more venturesome do not climb up the railings and knock the grackles' nests down!

On Tuesday, April 29, I had a call at suppertime from a neighbour across the river saying she thought they had a Bald Eagle in a tree by their house. I took the binoculars and looked through the picture window and thought for sure she was right. Then my husband and I ran down across the field to get a closer view but when it flew I knew it wasn't an eagle. (not that I've seen so many!) I checked with the book when we got back to the house and it was an Osprey. Someone told me later that a pair nested down the river not far from here last year.

The weather stays very cold and windy so that is partly to blame for my not being outside more to notice what else is around. I find I hear the most interesting voices when I'm busy hanging out a wash!

Wilmot, N. S.
May 28, 1969

Thelma Hawkins

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

While on a routine patrol on our telephone lines in Port George on April 29, I saw a strange bird fly from one pole to another. I noticed quite a bit of white (while flying) below the black wings.

Driving slowly, I was able to get within 15 feet of this bird on the pole. He must have known my camera was home because, I could have taken a dozen photos in the time he stayed on the pole. It was a very beautiful Red-Headed Woodpecker. Being the first one I have ever seen, it was a sight to behold. I have looked for him since, but he has disappeared.

On May 15 while on a job at Zwicker's Lake I heard the Parula Warbler, Least flycatcher, White-throat and the Solitary Vireo.

On May 24, in the evening, at West Paradise, I was back in the woods and heard my first Veery sing as well as a Hermit Thrush, and got some pictures of the Chestnut-Sided Warbler while a Rose-breasted Grosbeak provided the background music.

Reported to me by Mrs. Theodore Crocker of Nictaux was a strange bird and nest in their back field. Investigation proved it to be a female Killdeer and her nest with four eggs.

Must close this letter now with a request for information, from someone in Nova Scotia, who has a pair of Eastern Bluebirds nesting in their area. It would be a great pleasure to see this species.

Many thanks for any information.

Middleton, N. S.
May 28, 1969

Donald M. Bowlby

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

The migrants started to arrive towards the end of March; a Redwing Blackbird and Savannah Sparrow on the 25th of March, 14 Juncos and a dozen or more Song Sparrows on the 30th, and 9 Robins and a Fox Sparrow on the 31st of March.

The only new arrivals in April were the Purple finches, three in the back yard on the 28th.

My favorites, the Willets came on the 2nd of May, 6 of them circling the house, making a great racket, as though they were very glad to be back. Incidentally, I saw a Willet chasing a Crow yesterday, and the Crow was not stopping to argue. They went out of my view, with the Willet still screaming and the crow trying his best to get away from it. I suppose that beak of the Willet would make quite a formidable weapon.

I saw a Bobolink on May 9th across the road from the Tuskat school, and eight or ten Goldfinches on the 18th. The Goldfinches are plentiful this year, but there are only five or six Purple finches where we usually see from 18 to 24. We have a glorious crop of dandelions this spring and the Goldfinches and Purple finches usually flock to gather the seeds.

I have only seen one Catbird at a time at the feeder this year, we usually have three or four. They are great company when I work outdoors. They supervise my weeding from the thorn tree, trying out all their latest calls and imitations.

On May 22nd, we watched a Baltimore Oriole in the thorn tree, and the next morning there were two, both males, and looking very bright and well.

It seems to me that the wind has never stopped blowing since last fall, but the birds seem to be arriving as usual, in spite of everything.

Tusket, N. S.
June 6, 1969

Helen Hurlburt

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

It's been a good spring for Brant and Canada Geese - 60 Brant Mar. 12, 5 on Mar. 27. By 29th, 28 were tending on the eastern shore, apparently feeding on, or among the rockweed; these were seen until Apr. 5, when they appeared at dawn on the western side, just offshore from the station, swimming slowly seaward. After that they moved on, to nesting grounds, I suppose.

Of our 3 wintering Killdeer, one remains, a hardy specimen. Sid came upon it about sundown as it cheerily bathed in a rain puddle, said puddle wide open to a very chilly wind.

The yard was full of new sparrows and juncos this morning, including one Tree Sparrow and three Ipswiches. I thought I'd seen all sizes and conditions of Ipswich Sparrows but this trio amazed me. One was of average size and build, well marked, a "model" Ipswich. One was slim and much paler, and smaller than the first. Words fail me for number 3! If I described his fatness, paleness, and perfection of markings you'd say "super-Ipswich". Really, it was as large as a large Fox Sparrow, and plump, feet hardly to be seen under silvery feathers as he ran around the yard enjoying the bird seed there. I can't see how he managed to fly away. Alas! this beautiful creature displayed a greedy and over-bearing personality, routing his friends from the best parts of the feast, even driving a resident Song Sparrow from the area. I began to see why his travelling companions were so much slimmer!

Cape Sable Light, N. S.
April 21, 1969

Betty Jane Smith

LE RETOUR DE L'HIRONDELLE

For weeks the mayfly had been abundant. Whenever the wind dropped, the bushes along the lake shore erupted in billions of spinners, dancing in their ephemeral mating ritual, their fluttering gauzy wings giving the effect of an exaggerated heat haze over the leafless withered and cassandra. Thousands, mission accomplished, lit on the water and drifted down wind, releasing their eggs - the last act of their short lives.

This was the cue for the trout, large and small, to fan up from the deeps and take their toll.

Perhaps the wind was too strong, that late April afternoon. The few remaining flies clung tightly to the bushes. The trout refused to rise.

The sun sank behind the black spruces, and with it the wind. White-throats and Hermit Thrushes fell silent one by one, as the light failed and a glassy calm extended from the southern shores. Now if ever was the time - and our last chance. We doffed hats, and holding them beneath the twigs knocked such flies as we could garner into them. The dying wind still made small ripples past an adjacent point. We waded out as far as we dared, and shook our precious bait over the water.

The flies drifted slowly down wind, perched on the surface like fleets of tiny craft with dusky three-cornered sails. The air grew chill and the light was nearly gone. We held our breath, and waited.

At last, well out from shore came the soft "slurp, slurp" of rising fish, and a little farther off the slosh of a really big one. Our rods whistled as we false-cast getting out enough line to drop the tiny fuzzy gray hackle there among the feeding trout. Hope, excitement, blood pressure mounted.

And then they came. Out of nowhere, sixty rap-torial monsters swept down over the water with all the intent ferocity of swooping hawks, great predatory hulks of birds, insatiable, beetle-browed, sickle-winged agents of destruction. We leapt, we bellowed, we waved our arms in menace, while they curved, dipped, banked and swooped, and vanished as suddenly as they had come, and with them our lovely little fleet of flies. Not a single circle broke the peaceful surface of the lake.

We stood in silence as darkness settled in and an owl, which really had some business abroad at that time of night, drifted across the cove. What my partner's thoughts were it seemed best not to enquire, for he is a passionate and profane man. My own bitter thoughts were concerned with

the little nesting boxes I had so carefully hung each spring in the garden; the advice I had received and given as to just the right size of entrance hole to the nest, and other means more drastic for discouraging the arrogant House Sparrow, and making homelife safe for the gentle, confiding, the gay and brave little heralds of the summer season - the TREE SWALLOWS.

C. R. K. A.

