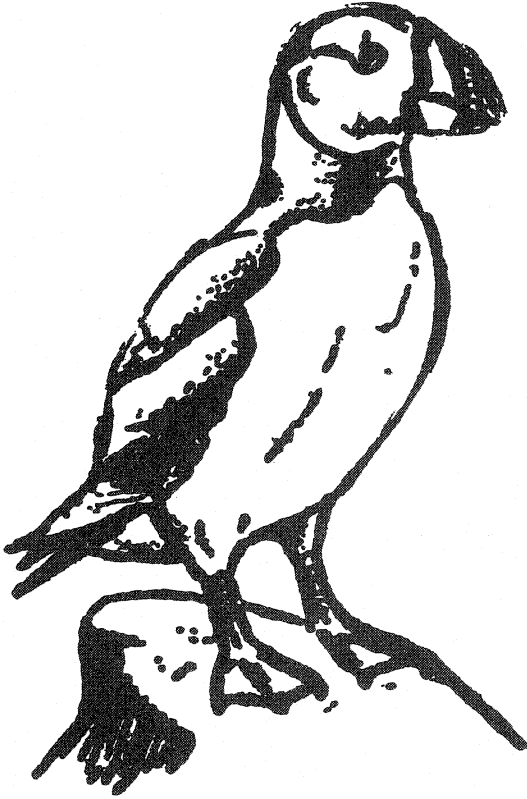


*Nova Scotia  
Bird Society*



*Newsletter*



NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER

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Volume 11, Number 3

November, 1969

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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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c/o Nova Scotia Museum  
Spring Garden Road  
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NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 11, Number 3

November, 1969

NEWS OF THE BIRDS - SUMMER and FALL

Leaning away from the continent out into the Atlantic, bathed alternately by waters from the Arctic Current and the Gulf Stream, and buffeted by every wind that blows, Nova Scotia and its outlying islands serve as a resting place for a strange company of sea- and air-borne birds.

How many these are, and how far strayed, has been brought home to us increasingly of late. The birds have always come; we have only begun to see them. As competent observers multiply, the records multiply, and this year we have outdone ourselves.

To name a few: Manx Shearwater, American Flamingo, American Avocet, Western Sandpiper, Sabine's Gull, Greenland Wheatear - new records all, from every point of the compass. The little Shearwater habitually ranges the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean; the Flamingo, the Bahamas; the Avocet, western U.S.A.; the Western Sandpiper, Alaska and the southern Atlantic States; Sabine's Gull, and the Greenland Wheatear, the Arctic.

These are only a sampling of the extraordinary sightings to follow, a sort of bird-watcher's dream. (It was also an Editors' nightmare.) Two of the above-mentioned birds are now museum specimens (The Flamingo and the Western Sandpiper) and one has been adequately photographed (the Avocet). We owe the Manx Shearwater and the Sabine's Gull to distinguished American ornithologists: Davis Finch, Robert W. Smart and Lawrence Sansone III.

Sincere thanks to these visitors, and to the members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society upon whose reports the following account is based.

A nesting pair of COMMON LOONS was observed from July 1 to Aug. 27 at Barrington (J.R.G.), a single chick seen with the adults on July 10. Holdway reports 22 Common Loons from Pictou on Sept. 2, and another 16 on Sept. 16. The first, and so far, only report of RED-THROATED LOONS is one of five

birds observed by W.M. and C.R.K.A. on Oct. 19 at Osborne Head, Hfx. Co. The first HORNED GREBE of the season was seen off Caribou, Pictou Co., Sept. 13, by the NSBS field trip party. Three PIED-BILLED GREBES were seen Sept. 6-8 by the Seal Island party there at that time; one was observed from Sept. 11 to 13 on a brackish lake near Pembroke, Yar. Co. (D.K. and M.H.). One was seen at Tangier, Hfx. Co., on Sept. 20 (I.McL. and C.R.K.A.), and one on Sept. 21 by C.R.K.A. in the Chezzetcook area, Hfx. Co.

The Captain of the "Lurcher" lightship again, but unfortunately for the last time, has produced good records, previously almost unavailable, of the pelagic birds. The GREATER SHEARWATER first appeared at Lurcher on June 6; by July 11 they were present daily in numbers up to 200; they were observed in smaller numbers (2 - 60) until Sept. 27. About 400 were seen from the ferry "Bluenose" on July 6, following the boat or in small flocks sitting on the water. These were observed by Robert W. Smart of New Hampton, N.H., and Lawrence Sansone III of Los Angeles, Calif., the report sent to us kindness of Davis Finch. Fifty plus were seen on Aug. 14 from a scallop boat S.W. of Brier Island by E.M.

SOOTY SHEARWATERS were seen first at the Lurcher lightship on May 28, were present until Aug. 13 "in small numbers" and another was seen on Aug. 25. The Smiths saw a single bird on June 17 on Cape Sable Island. Northumberland Strait yielded 4 to E.H. on July 5. Ten "always as scattered individuals" were seen from the ferry "Bluenose" on July 6 and E.M. saw 2 on Aug. 14 SE of Brier Island, from the scallop boat. A new record for the area was a single MANX SHEARWATER seen on July 6 from the ferry "Bluenose" by R.S. and L.S. The report reads:

MANX SHEARWATER - 1. A small, black and white Shearwater flew past the boat at medium distance. It was smaller than the Sooty but considerably larger than the Leach's Petrel. The flight was very much like the Sooty with much scaling over the waves interspersed with a few rapid flaps. The flight behaviour was too much like the other shearwaters to be an Audubon's. Sansone is familiar with the species on the California Coast and Smart has seen it off Mass. (collected specimen). Light conditions were excellent and the wind moderate. It was seen on the Yarmouth side of the Lurcher lightship.

Twenty-five LEACH'S PETRELS were seen from the Blue- nose by R.S. and L.S. on July 6 (see their comment on the Wilson's Petrels). C.R.K.A. had an exciting experience on July 15, when driving across the Canso Causeway: "Leach's Petrel - Large numbers feeding on the windward side (NW side) of Canso Causeway, July 15. Water dotted with them as far as the eye could see - must have been several hundred at least. Many small groups and 'singles' flying low across causeway." WILSON'S PETRELS were seen from Lurcher lightship throughout the summer, from May 8 until mid-August, in numbers as great as 24 on one day. Twelve were seen on July 6 (R.S., E.S.) from

the ferry "Bluenose" ('very few petrels and all carefully identified'). E.M. saw one from his scallop boat on Aug. 14, SW of Brier Island. A single individual was seen by the NSBS party on Sept. 6 on the boat trip to Seal Island.

Three GANNETS were seen (E.M.) on July 26-28 at Brier Island; one also seen on Aug. 1 at Lurcher lightship; one imm. at Brier Island on Aug. 15 and one on the 29th. at Lurcher lightship. Two more were seen on Sept. 6-8 at Seal Island.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS were present throughout the summer, with 32 nesting pairs being reported from Pictou Harbor (E.H.) between May 21 and mid-July. Migrating flocks were in evidence in Shel. Co. between Aug. 21 and 31 (J.R.G.) and in Yarmouth Harbor in mid-Sept. (D.K. and M.H.).

GREAT BLUE HERONS were seen throughout the summer in fairly large quantities. D.W.F. writes "a count of 112 between Barrington and Yarmouth on Sept. 8 included an impressive gathering of 82 in Yarmouth Harbor." The latest report of this species was of 3 still lingering at Cole Harbor, Oct. 19 (W.M. and C.R.K.A.). A COMMON EGRET was sighted by Frank Robertson, July 17 near Waterford Lake, Cape Breton Co. Important sightings were made of 3 smaller herons, the LITTLE BLUE, GREEN and BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT. The LITTLE BLUE HERON was carefully observed feeding in fresh water at Pictou (E.H.). Local residents reported that it had been there for a couple of weeks. Another was present on Brier Island Oct. 13 (NSBS party). The GREEN HERON was seen at Westport, Brier Island, between July 26-28 (E.M.). Two sightings of BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS have been reported. One was seen regularly throughout the summer on Fish Island (B.J.S.) and a second was present for several days feeding upon snails in a garden pond in Halifax City (Mrs. G. Macgregor Stewart), Aug. 27, observed also by C.R.K.A. and others. Three nesting territories of the AMERICAN BITTERN were noted at Pictou (E.H.), and sightings have been normal elsewhere throughout the season.

#### Would You Believe A Flamingo?

When one of our local birders, all agog over a recent rare sighting phones his pal and says:

"You'll never guess what we saw flying over Martinique Beach today", the answer is apt to be

"Oh - - - a Flamingo no doubt."

The little bit of well-worn wit in this reply is no longer valid, for a genuine live AMERICAN FLAMINGO has finally made it to Nova Scotia. The bird was first seen on or about Oct. 13 by a number of residents of the Cape John (Pictou Co.) area, and for several days thereafter. The duck hunting season opened on Oct. 15 and the bird was seen alive on the morning of that day. It was picked up dead that afternoon by Alvin Holmes and was later found to have been shot.

It is reasonable to guess that this bird was brought north by tropical storm Kara which put out to sea from the region of the Bahamas early in October and brushed Cape Race, Nfld. on Oct. 17, passing well south of Sable Island en route.

Whether or not this Flamingo was a Florida escape is anybody's guess and will probably never be known, but the plumage, according to witnesses who are familiar with captive birds of this species, is much richer in tone and this, combined with the fact that it was capable of sustained flight, gives us some reason to believe that it was a true wild bird.

The first record received of returning CANADA GEESE is from Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. where they were heard on Sept. 10 (R.E.) and flocks of from 12 to 150 are reported from Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co.; Guys. Co.; Boulderwood, Hfx.; and Pictou. The status of MALLARDS as wild strays to Nova Scotia is uncertain, as birds of this species have recently been released in the province. Touring members of the Florida Audubon Society report two sightings: one at White Pt. Beach, Queens Co., on July 4, and one at the Eastern Shore Bird Sanctuary on July 7. BLACK DUCKS apparently had a good breeding season as many broods at various stages were reported through late June and early July. The only PINTAIL reported so far is one at Brier Island on Aug. 13 (E.M.). No reports of breeding GREEN-WINGED TEAL have been received but large concentrations of 100 or more birds were seen during Sept. at the normal gathering places along the coast. BLUE-WINGED TEAL were on the move as early as Aug. 10 when one was seen at Cape Sable (S.S.). The last reported sighting was of several in a mixed flock with Green-wings near Brooklyn, Hants Co., on Sept. 27 (C.R.K.A.). The latest report of RING-NECKED DUCKS is of a flock of 7 at East Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. on Oct. 19, in company with a female GREATER SCAUP (W.M.).

Members of the Florida Audubon Society report a COMMON GOLDENEYE in the Ingonish area on July 8 and an OLDSQUAW off Yarmouth on July 4. Two other of the latter species were at Broad Cove, Lun. Co., during the early half of August (S.F. and B.H.).

An unusual sighting of 5 RUDDY DUCKS at Lawrencetown Beach, Hfx. Co. on Oct. 19 is reported by I.McL., E.M. and D.W.

GOSHAWKS have one thing in common with Hummingbirds: most sightings are fleeting glimpses. Alert watchers managed to spot 6 in N.S. during the past summer and fall. Gallaghers saw 2 adults in Shelburne Co. on July 18 and 2 immatures in the same locality on Aug. 7. Members of the Florida Audubon Society booked one somewhere in the province on July 8 and another was seen at Wedgeport on Oct. 13 (C.R.K.A.).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS were not seen at all during the summer months but were present in numbers at Brier Island in mid-October when the NSBS party estimated over 50 during the

Thanksgiving weekend (Oct. 11-13). C.R.K.A. saw 6 during the same period at Wedgeport, Yar. Co. The Brier Island party also logged 3 COOPER'S HAWKS, the only ones of this species reported during the period.

The BROAD-WINGED HAWK migration passed down the spine of Digby Neck unobserved this year - (we miss Joe Johnson!), but scattered individuals were seen at Round Hill on Aug. 18 (W.E.W.); Brass Hill Aug. 24 (J.R.G.) and Brooklyn, Hants Co. Aug. 28 (C.R.K.A.).

BALD EAGLE reports are scanty in mainland N.S. (23 seen in Cape Breton), 1 seen several times at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. (R.E.), 1 at Pictou Aug. 4 (E.H.) and 1 at Sheet Harbor, Hfx. Co. July 2 (M.F.). The nesting pair reported in the last issue had succeeded in bringing off at least one immature by late August (C.W.).

Reports of nesting OSPREYS come from Halifax and Lunenburg Counties. There were 2 occupied nests at Pepeswick Head on June 2, each containing at least 1 chick, observed by Bill Carrick of the Miska Wildfowl Sanctuary, and adults were seen feeding young, July 14 at Indian Point (S.C.). A company of 6 Ospreys was seen by the Gallaghers at East Baccaro Beach on July 26. Dan Welch estimated 15 pairs from Musq. Hbr. to Martinique Beach, three pairs nesting adjacent to the latter area (see Welch's article to follow).

Like the Sharp-shins, PIGEON HAWKS only showed up at migration time. The Seal Island party (Oct. 11-13) who saw none of the former species (cf. 50+ at Brier Island same dates) made up for this by recording 30+ Pigeon Hawks. Other sightings were: 3 at Brier Island same date (NSBS), and 1 at McNab's Island Sept. 21 (E.M. et al).

SPARROW HAWKS began to move early; 11 were seen in the Barrington area on Aug. 29 (J.R.G.). Migration was still under way, however, over a month later when 8 were seen in central Hants Co. Sept. 27; 6 at Chebogue Pt. on Oct. 13 (C.R.K.A.), and 25 at Brier Island on the same date (NSBS party).

A family of SPRUCE GROUSE (parent with 4 young) was seen back of Green Bay, Lun. Co., June 24 (S.C.); and 2 adult RUFFED GROUSE with 2 young, June 21, seen in Shel. Co. (J.R.G.). Ruffed Grouse were plentiful in the Barrington area in Sept., according to Ben Doane. A RING-NECKED PHEASANT escaped with its life, fleeing from a hunter's shot Oct. 14, at Petite Riviere, Lun. Co., (witnessed by H.M.). A first record of the AMERICAN COOT nesting in Nova Scotia comes from Cumberland Co., thanks to A.D. Smith, Wildlife Biologist. A flightless young bird of this species was captured and banded on Aug. 20, 1969, on the Missaquash Marsh. See note to follow.

A newly hatched PIPING PLOVER was reported (S.S.) on Cape Sable June 26. Exactly a month later 2 young plus 4 adults were seen in the Barrington area by the Gallaghers who also



saw 5 adult birds in the same locality on July 2. The only other report is of 2 seen by Holdway near Pictou on Aug. 7.

Holdway reports first arrivals of SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER in the Pictou region on Aug. 7, although these birds were arriving in south-western N.S. in numbers by mid-July. On Brier Is. there were 15+ July 26-28, 40+ Aug. 12, and 400 on Aug. 13 (E.M.). In the Barrington area, J.R.G. reports 10 July 26, 350 Aug. 24, and 100 Aug. 30. There were still over 150 at Cook's Beach, Yar. Co., on Oct. 12 and 12 at Eastern Passage, Hfx. Co. on Oct. 19 (C.R.K.A.).

KILLDEER have become commonplace in recent years, especially in Yarmouth and Shelburne Counties, and a number of sightings of singles or several birds have been reported from this region. The only nesting record is of two or three young at Brass Hill, Shel. Co. (J.R.G.).

GOLDEN PLOVER had arrived at Amherst by Aug. 22 when three flocks of 10 each were seen there (E.L.). There were 4 at Yarmouth on Aug. 29 (C.R.K.A.) and 4 seen earlier at Cape Sable had increased to approximately 150 by Sept. 15 (S.S.).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER records are from the southwestern end of the province except for 4 Aug. 20 and 14 Aug. 31 in Pictou (E.H.). If this uneven distribution means anything it probably indicates concentration of shorebird-conscious birders. Over 100 of this species seen at Cape Sable on June 14 (S.S.) must have been late spring migrants, and a single bird on July 7 at Yarmouth (C.R.K.A.) could have been a non-breeder. Four hundred at Chebogue Pt., Yar. Co. on Aug. 29 (C.R.K.A.) and 300 at nearby Barrington on Aug. 30 (J.R.G.) may indicate the peak of migration in this area.

The first RUDDY TURNSTONES reported were 3 near Barrington on July 26 (J.R.G.) and at least one was still around on Sept. 16 when it was seen at Chebucto Hd., Hfx. Co. by E. Mills et al.

Eight to ten WOODCOCK on Seal Island Oct. 11 and 12 (NSBS party) also indicates a movement, as the dense Black Spruce cover on the island is not normal habitat for these birds.

A movement of COMMON SNIFE was apparently in progress during Thanksgiving weekend (Oct. 11-13) as the NSBS party reported them "all over the place" on Brier Island. Five were flushed from a small bog at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. on Oct. 19 (W.M. and C.R.K.A.).

WHIMBREL were reported in small numbers during the period July 15 - Aug. 15, the greatest numbers seen at any one time being 7 at Martinique Beach on July 27 (P.C. and D.W.).

The Gallaghers reported two nesting pairs of SPOTTED SANDPIPERS in the Barrington area - one nest seen on June 16 with 4 eggs, and a separate one observed on June 18, also with

4 eggs. A single bird was reported at Lurcher lightship (R.A.D.) on Sept. 26. The latest record received was of a lone individual in Bedford Basin on October 19 (F.D.).

A single SOLITARY SANDPIPER seen by Holdway (Pictou) on Aug. 10 was the first record for the fall migration of this species; the second, another single bird at Brier Island (E.M.) was only three days later on Aug. 13. Scattered reports of sightings from all over the province were received during early September, the last record being of two birds seen Sept. 23 (M.H.) at Markland, Yar. Co.

WILLETS were around in good numbers throughout the breeding season in their accustomed locations. D.D. Findlay saw an adult with 3 young July 23 at Pt. Michaud, Rich. Co. Wayne Neily writes that this is one of the very few definite breeding records for Cape Breton. Eric Mills noted a flock of 30+ July 26-28 on Brier Island at Pond Cove. A bird identified tentatively as a WESTERN WILLET was observed Sept. 29 at Martinique Beach by I.McL. He says: "Western (?) Willet: A very large, pale, long billed willet was seen standing beside a greater yellowlegs on an offshore rock at high tide at Martinique Beach. If I were Davis Finch, I'd call it a Western Willet." (A Western Willet was identified by Davis Finch on Sable Is. Aug. 30.)

Holdway observed the "first migrants" of the GREATER YELLOWLEGS - 11 birds on Aug. 7; 10 were seen by E.M. on Brier Is. on Aug. 12. They occurred regularly all through September and individuals were found throughout October. The last record is of one seen at Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co., on October 19 and 20 (E.M., I.McL., D.W.).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS were recorded by E.M. at Pond Cove, Brier Island, on July 26-28. Holdway saw his first migrants (3) in Pictou on Aug. 7. The latest report for the province is of 3 Lessers seen by I.McL. and C.R.K.A. on Sept. 20 at Harrigan Cove, Hfx. Co.

Three KNOT reports have been sent in; one bird was seen on Aug. 16 by the Smiths on Cape Sable; and groups of 3 and 6 were seen on Aug. 24 and 30 in Shelburne County by the Gallaghers.

A very early PURPLE SANDPIPER was seen by D.F. and Nancy Murphy at Seal Island on Sept. 6. The PECTORAL SANDPIPER was first observed by Holdway in Pictou Co. Aug. 10, 14 birds in a brackish pool, over rotting stranded seaweed. The Smiths saw 10 on Cape Sable Aug. 16. The last report received was of 5 seen at Lawrencetown Beach, Hfx. Co. (I.McL., E.M., D.W.) Oct. 19.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS were first seen on Aug. 12, 15+ in number, by E.M. at Brier Island. The Gallaghers saw two groups, one of 40 and the other of 10, on Aug. 24 and 30, in Shelburne Co., and 10 were seen at Lawrencetown Beach, Hfx. Co. Oct. 19 (I.McL., E.M. and D.W.).

The BAIRD SANDPIPER was the subject of three reports, by competent birders. One and two were seen and "clearly identified" on Sept. 4 and 5 by D.F. and I.McL. at Brier Island; two sightings on successive days were made on Sept. 6-8 at Seal Island by the NSBS party; and another NSBS party saw one on the Sept. 13 field trip at Caribou, Pictou Co. (R.A.).

The LEAST SANDPIPER migration began with "500+" reported by E.M. from Brier Island on July 26-28 (but only 20 there on Aug. 12). One was seen at Lurcher on Sept. 9; the last Least was seen at Kelly's Cove, Yar. Co. on Oct. 13 (C.R.K.A.).

Only two DUNLIN reports were received: one, Sept. 25 at Eastern Passage (NSBS party); "a few" seen on each day of Oct. 11-13 by the NSBS party at Brier Island.

The SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER was reported by the Smiths to be "arriving" at Cape Sable on July 8, and at Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co. by I.McL. on July 7. E.M. observed "175+" on July 26-28 on Brier Island. One was at Lurcher on Sept. 9, 2 on Sept. 21 at McNab's Island (NSBS party), but none seen by the NSBS party at Caribou, Pictou Co., Sept. 17.

The first sight record for the province of the LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER was recorded by I.McL. and C.R.K.A. on Sept. 20. They studied two of these birds at Martinique Beach and I.McL. later saw what may have been more. In his words, the birds were "very long-billed, one decidedly droopy and one with quite rusty, barred forebreast, "keep" notes clearly heard, another "long-billed", a bird with rusty underparts and long bill, too far to hear, was noted on same day at New Harbor. A bird with brown upper parts and trace of rust on Sept. 29 at Grand Desert Beach, with godwit and yellowlegs, may have been long-billed, but could not be induced to speak to me. Two others at Martinique on same day were, vocally, short-billed, and were quite grey. All dowitchers at this season should be looked at closely, and listened to for diagnostic voice differences."

Nine STILT SANDPIPERS, an extraordinary number, were seen by E.M. on Brier Island on July 26-28 ("with dowitchers and yellowlegs, some in spring plumage"); 3 were seen at the same place again by E.M. on Aug. 12. Two were observed on McNab's Island by a NSBS party on Sept. 21.

The first reports of the returning SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPER are from Holdway (Pictou Co.): 6 on July 25 and 10 on July 30. "1000+" were reported by E.M. at Pond Cove, Brier Island, on July 26-28, and "500+" were present there (E.M.) on Aug. 12. The NSBS parties at both Brier and Seal Islands reported small numbers on Oct. 11-13.

This season, a banner one, produced the first two records for Nova Scotia of the WESTERN SANDPIPER. If it wasn't for all the other rarities seen during the season, these would seem incredible findings; however, as the following account indicates, the birds were very carefully studied. The first observation is by Davis Finch:

"Western Sandpiper - certainly two, and I'm quite sure three birds of this species were observed at Pond Cove, Brier Is., Sept. 4; the observation was made at close range (under 50 feet) under excellent conditions, using a 30X telescope. The two unquestionable Westerns were instantly separable from the Semis they were feeding with by bill length alone, but other field marks were carefully noted: the very thick base of the bill, the relatively pale head, the more boldly marked back with obvious orange scapulars (also present in many semis at this season), and the distinctive note, a HIGH "cheesp" when the birds flushed. I brought Wickerson Lent to see the birds and try to collect one of them; he saw them well in my scope and concurred unhesitatingly that they were Westerns. However, by a stroke of remarkably bad luck, two shots at optimum range failed to kill either of them, although in each case a semi at the fringe of the shot pattern was killed. Wickerson had to go on duty, but he left the gun with me; I spent virtually all afternoon trying to find the birds again, walking up and down the edge of the ponds at Pond Cove, to no avail, although I believe I saw another rather distant individual, briefly." (Ed. Note: One bird was collected on the following day by Wickerson Lent and has been sent to the National Museum in Ottawa.)

The second observation, or rather set of observations, is by Ian McLaren:

"Western (?) Sandpiper. I have been looking over flocks of semi-palmated sandpipers in September, and have seen two or three birds at least that I am convinced were Westerns. These should be looked for at this time of year, and may prove to be regular. The bird guide pictures are a bit misleading, as only extreme individuals have bills as long as generally pictured. The voice is said to be diagnostic -- and one bird at Conrad Beach on September 25 had a rather thin "jeep", unlike the lower "krip" of semi-palmated. It had a long, but not exceptionally long, bill, and trace of rust scapulars. Another young bird on Sept. 14 at Sandy Cove was quite long billed and rusty on scapulars. This was tele-photographed at close range and slides sent to Godfrey for scrutiny."

Another BUFF-BREADED SANDPIPER appeared this year, reported by Davis Finch as seen - "one at close range on the dry part of the pond beach at Pond Cove, Brier Is., Sept. 4, with Golden Plovers and Black-bellies."

We have more records than usual of HUDSONIAN GODWITS this fall - 41 birds in 11 sightings - and all with one exception from the Atlantic coast. Some of these are undoubtedly repeats as Cook and Welch saw 9 birds on July 27 at Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co., on July 29, 5, and on July 30, 8, at this same place. A single bird was seen at Pt. Michaud, Rich. Co., Aug. 23 on the NSBS field day. A single at

Martinique and another at Grand Desert, Hfx. Co. on Sept. 29 were late stragglers (I.McL.). Other sightings were: 3 at Brier Island Aug. 12 (E.M.), 8 Aug. 29 and 3 Aug. 30 near Brass Hill (J.R.G.), and 2 Sept. 25 at Cow Bay (NSBS party).

On the night of Aug. 28, the Editor received a phone call from Dr. and Mrs. J.R. Gallagher of Barrington, reporting an AMERICAN AVOCET, sighted by them on Cape Sable Island during that day. The call was also an S.O.S. for further witnesses, who subsequently came, and were able to observe the bird in excellent circumstances, and concur in the identification: These were the Sidney Smiths of Cape Sable, and Dr. Ben Doane of Halifax and Barrington. On Aug. 29 the bird, in good plumage, was watched "feeding vigorously in the shallow water at Dan'el's Head, thrusting its head and neck in right up to the shoulders, sweeping through the water for its food." Two color photographs were obtained.

Another Avocet was seen Sept. 16 on Sable Island, observed by the Bells.

A large flock of over 500 RED PHALAROPES were SW of Brier Island on Aug. 14 (E.L.M.) with 2 stragglers remaining near Seal Island Sept. 6-8. Sightings of NORTHERN PHALAROPES were regular during the summer with a major migration observed at the Lurcher lightship (R.A.D.). Fifty plus birds were observed every day between Aug. 29 and Sept. 5.

Davis Finch reports sighting a POMARINE JAEGER and a PARASITIC JAEGER from the Bluenose ferry fairly close to Yarmouth Sept. 8. An immature PARASITIC was also seen from the Bluenose on July 6 by R.W. Smart. ("Identified on the basis of size as compared to the gulls, and the moderate amount of white in the wing. It was not nearly heavy enough for a Pomarine and there was far too much white for a Long-tail.")

Of particular interest is the observation of 2 SKUAS. These were also seen July 6 by R.W. Smart from the Bluenose. Following is the report as received from Mr. Smart, kindness of Davis Finch:

"The first was seen in the water directly in front of the boat. It was uniformly dark brown with noticeable light tan marks on the nape. When it flew it came back past the boat in perfect light so that the large white areas in the wings showed well. It was an adult bird. It was less than half way across on the morning trip. The second was seen in the vicinity of the Lurcher lightship. It never came close to the boat but the wing pattern and large size and heavy body were obvious. Several times it was seen harrying Great Black-backed Gulls. Sansone has seen the species on the California coast and Smart has seen it a number of times off South Africa."

RING-BILLED GULLS passed through on schedule from late August through September and left as usual a sprinkling of birds

which will winter in tidal inlets and near sewage outfalls.

The first sighting of five BLACK-HEADED GULLS for the winter season (3 birds) was made on Oct. 19 at Lawrencetown Beach (I.McL., E.M. and D.W.). Although only two reports of any number of BONAPARTE'S GULLS were received, it is probable that their movement resembled that of the Ring-Billed Gulls. There were 36 seen on Aug. 7 at Pictou (E.H.) and 40, Sept. 17 at Caribou, Pictou Co. (NSBS party). A first sight record for Nova Scotia of SABINE'S GULL is reported in detail elsewhere in this issue. COMMON TERNS were still on location at their nesting colony July 26-28 at Brier Island (E.M.) and a very late movement was seen from Lurcher lightship on Sept. 30, when 19 were observed (R.A.D.).

ARCTIC TERNS were present with Commons at the Brier Island colony July 26-28 (E.M.) and a high count of 40 was reported by J.R.G. from the Barrington-Cape Sable area July 2. The only ROSEATE TERN report for mainland N.S. is of one seen by the Florida Audubon Society party near Antigonish July 5.

A THICK-BILLED MURRE was seen, about 150 feet from shore, Aug. 23 at Ben Eoin, Cape Breton Co. (W.N.). Two unusual DOVEKIE records - perhaps of the same bird - come from Lurcher lightship. One was seen on July 3, and another on July 20 (Doucette and Romain). A bird picked up alive in Halifax City in late October and given to George Power is the only other record to date, and a most unusual one. It was conveyed to a beach in all haste, and released.

Three reports of the BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO are: 1, July 5 at Antigonish (Florida Audubon Soc.); 1, July 7, at Round Hill, Anna. Co. (W.E.W.); and 1, Aug. 10 at Cape Sable (S.S.), the usual wide but scanty distribution, scarcely sufficient to keep the tent caterpillars in check. Some of us heard a Black-bill this summer for the first time - at the Martinique Beach field trip, a curious hollow throbbing sound.

A GREAT HORNED OWL at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co., Sept. 23 "hooted steadily from 3.30 a.m. till the first glimmering of dawn, at an average of every 24 seconds", according to Rosemary Eaton, who commented "I got rather annoyed with this persistent owl, but then reflected how lucky I was to be kept awake by a Great Horned Owl and not the roar and rumble of traffic and unmuffled exhausts."

Another BOREAL OWL, at Brier Island this time, is vouched for by Eric Mills and Ian McLaren, who saw it there Oct. 11-13. Dr. Tufts' owl, Judy, is doing very well. (See Newsletter 11:40 (1969).

Migration of the COMMON NIGHTHAWK went almost unrecorded, but the Eatons at Cole Harbor witnessed a flocking on Aug. 18, when 50 at least appeared in the vicinity, none seen there before or following that date.

With apologies to Evelyn Lowerison I shall quote her

letter verbatim: "I also had a nesting card for the CHIMNEY SWIFT. I saw the adult birds entering the chimney so went up on a ladder with a flashlight to look down and found three-quarter grown young (date Aug. 1st.), they were halfway up the chimney and clinging to the bricks, making squeaky noises, so I said 'Ah ha, a nesting record'. When I examined the chimney three days later, you wouldn't believe it - the 'Chimney Swifts' were bats, all 4 with teeth bared, and so far up you could almost touch them."

The feathered Chimney Swift was around in good numbers this summer, the last one seen to date was at McNab's Island, Hfx. Co. Oct. 4 (I.McL., F.D.). One of the sights of the Sept. 6 to 8 Seal Island trip was 25 RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS feeding in the jewelweed back of the landing. Hummingbirds were around generally in good numbers throughout the summer.

YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKERS were abundant during the season as usual. A nest with young, on June 17 was found in Shel. Co. (J.R.G.). Holdway reports that numerous small flocks of migrants were appearing in late Aug. in Pictou and Doane recorded 35 over a 2-day period Sept. 13-14 in the Barrington area. One late bird at Eastern Passage, Oct. 19, was seen by F.D. and party.

WOODPECKERS were in evidence over the nesting period but no unusual sightings were recorded. A PILEATED WOODPECKER was seen at Cox Lake, Hfx. Co. Sept. 28 (E.M.), and 2 were observed at a nest NW of Warren Lake, Vict. Co., July 1 to 7, gone by Aug. 10 (P.H.). A RED-HEADED WOODPECKER was seen on Brier Island Oct. 14 by Wickerson Lent. A nesting record of the YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER came from Shel. Co. (J.R.G.) with sightings of individuals from the same area and Sheet Harbor (I.McL. and C.R.K.A.), and Hants Co. (Florida Audubon Society). Two BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS were reported from Lower Ohio, Shel. Co. (J.R.G.) and Joggins area (D.C.).

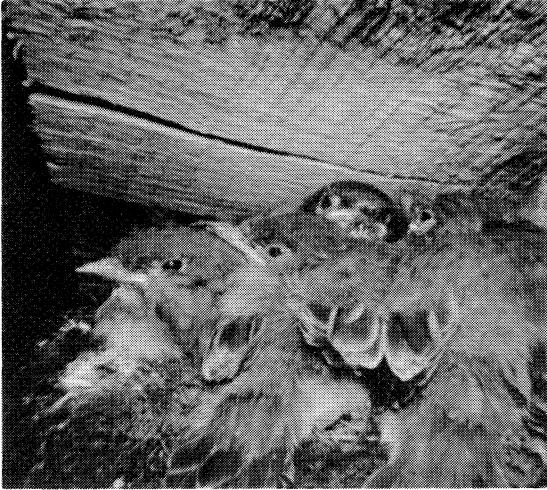
A normal number of resident Flycatchers was noted during the summer and some records have come in of rarities: The GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER brightened the day for three fortunate observers. C.W.H. saw one on June 22 in his garden in Halifax, and another was seen "through a window at 12 feet" by Holdway on August 4. The third was observed on Sept. 25 from Lurcher Lightship (R.A.D.).

The second and third nest records this summer of the EASTERN PHOEBE were reported June 18 by D.K. and M.H. near Lake Annis, Yar. Co. and by the Gallaghers in Shel. Co. The latter nest sported three young birds; see accompanying photograph next page.

Evidence of a fall migration of the EASTERN WOOD PEWEE is provided by the Seal Island party, who saw "70+" from Sept. 6-8.

Return of the HORNED LARK is indicated by the presence of one, seen on Sept. 19 by W.M. and C.R.K.A. at Eastern

Passage, Halifax County, 12+ there Oct. 19.



The TREE SWALLOW is reported as "very numerous in the Pictou area this year, leaving late Aug." (E.H.), and large numbers were noted at Brier Island (100+) through July and Aug. (E.M.). Eric Mills also noted a flock of 20+ "hunting over the city" in Halifax, Sept. 24. The Gallaghers report "scarce after Aug. 24" in Shel. Co. Holdway found three territories of BANK SWALLOWS at Pictou; Mills noted 20+ birds at Brier Is. July 26-28, and Bank Swallows were seen from the Lurcher, 2 to 5 at a time, on four dates late Sept. (R.A.D.). The Gallaghers found 25 active nest holes in 3 locations in Shel. Co., and saw adults feeding young early July. They also report active nests of BARN SWALLOWS (3 and 4 chicks per nest) July 4 and 7. Evelyn Lowerison wrote of 20 nests of Barn Swallows, one built so awkwardly the young kept falling out. She finally put the 2 in with 4 nestlings in another apartment, where the parent birds fed all 6 successfully. Aug. 30 C.R.K.A. noted the Barn Swallow in flocks at Tusket, obviously preparing for departure. Most had left Brier Island previously (mid-Aug.) according to E.M. The CLIFF SWALLOW is well reported. Nests in the Barrington area had young by July 4 (J.R.G.). At Cameron Sett., Guys. Co., a colony of 17 nests averaged 4 young per nest by July 8. All had left the nests by Aug. 1 (E.L.). The PURPLE MARTINS at Amherst did very well, 8 pairs raised "the usual brood of 4 each" at 72 Church St.; 16 pairs at the Tennant colony did equally well. The Martins finally left on Sept. 5, "late for them, they usually leave around Aug. 25" (E.L.).

Normal numbers of BLUE JAYS were resident during the summer period with nests of both GRAY and BLUE JAYS being reported from Shel. Co. (J.R.G.). Of particular interest to CHICKADEE watchers are the reports of BOREAL CHICKADEES; all



were of sightings of large numbers of the birds, with up to 30 being counted in one area. The usual migrating flocks (up to 50) were seen Sept. 6-8 on Seal Island. WHITE-BREASTED and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were present in normal numbers with large flocks of Red-breasted Nuthatches seen on Seal Island Sept. 6-8 (70 individuals) and in the Barrington area Sept. 13-14 - 100 individuals (B.D.). Migrating WINTER WRENS were also present on Seal Island Sept. 6-8 where 30 were seen.

Two MOCKINGBIRDS in the wild were observed up an old logging road at Green Bay, Lun. Co., June 27 (S.C.). Another Mockingbird report has just come in, from Wolfville, of one seen Oct. 12 in the garden at the Thextons, where one had previously spent the winter (R.T.). The most notable CATBIRD of the season (catbirds were present in normal numbers) was heard giving a good imitation of a Whip-poor-will, Shel. Co. (J.R.G.). BROWN THRASHER reports are all in Sept.: 1 Sept. 13-14, Barrington (B.D.); 1, Sept. 16 at Chebucto Head (E.M., I.McL., D.W.); 1 sighted from the Lurcher Sept. 26 (R.A.D.); 1, Sept. 28, "alighted aboard the Nuttall tuna boat at the mouth of the Tusket River. It was brought ashore and released", according to the report from Lower Wedgeport (J.I.P.); and 1, Oct. 11-13, seen at Brier Island by the NSBS members there at the time.

Harrison Lewis comments in his column in the Shelburne Coastguard that breeding success of the ROBIN seems to have improved as the season advanced. Flocks of 100 and 300 were noted in the Chebogue area Oct. 12 (C.R.K.A.), and the countryside is still hopping with them at the time of writing (Oct. 24). Keltie Hebb described an extraordinary performance which she witnessed July 31 in her garden at Fleming Park, Hfx. Co., of a misguided robin attempting to reduce a 12-inch snake to edible portions, to take home to the nestlings, finally flying off with the snake dangling by the tail from its beak.

The thrushes are all accounted for, good numbers in evidence of late, of the HERMIT and SWAINSON'S THRUSHES along the wood edges; a GRAY-CHEEKED reported in the Yarmouth area July 3 by the Florida Audubon Society group and 6 VEERYS in the same area by the same group and the Gallaghers in August. An EASTERN BLUEBIRD was spotted from the Lurcher Sept. 23. It is going to be difficult to rate the reports of rarities seen this summer, but an outstanding candidate for first place is the sight record of the GREENLAND WHEATEAR sent in by Ward and Phyllis Hemeon and the Bill Simoneaus, from Col. Co. Aug. 16:

"On a drive in the Sand Point Beach Road toward the lighthouse at Five Islands, Colchester County, on Saturday, August 16, at approximately noon-hour, a small bird showing a predominant white patch at the base of the tail flew up in front of the car and then along a few yards, coming to rest shortly on a turned-up sun-dried old tree root at the very edge of the road. We immediately stopped the car and it was perhaps about two or three car lengths in front of us. With us were my sister and husband, Blanche and Bill Simoneau, of

Lynnfield, Massachusetts (she, particularly, is a very active birder and has led the spring walks at Lynnfield on several occasions - but, unfortunately, no previous experience with Wheatears either).

Much smaller than a Flicker (perhaps half the size), in flight the flash of the white patch at the base of tail not unlike the Flicker. We noted this patch of white and also more white showing when in flight or moving the wings, thin bill, black or dark line through the eye and, to me, the color of an "unwaxed" Cedar Waxwing or plain brown on the back. The underparts were a lighter or buffy brown - no streaks.

After observing the bird for a few minutes, it was disturbed by an oncoming car and flew off across a small marsh green area to a rocky (perhaps I should say stony) beach or bar. We walked toward it, observing it through binoculars and noted its "bobbing" and also the "upright" way it held itself, and the restless way it moved along on the beach. After about 15 minutes, it flew off out of our sight.

The trip had not originally commenced as a birding trip and, strange as it may seem, although we all had binoculars, we discovered there was not a bird book in the car. Blanche thought it might be a Wheatear (one had been seen in their area last year and she along with some others tried to locate it without success), so a Wheatear was the first bird we checked on arriving back at our cottage and it fitted the description perfectly for a female Greenland Wheatear - a "lifer" for all of us."

The appearance of more than normal numbers of GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS in the southeastern part of the province during Sept. could indicate a better than normal nesting season. The report of 100 individuals from Seal Island Sept. 6-8 may confirm this. RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS were seen in much smaller numbers throughout the area, with a count of 15 individuals being made Sept. 6-8 on Seal Island.

The first fall record of WATER PIPITS was of 2 on McNab's Island Sept. 2 (NSBS party). By Oct. 12 and 13 fifty plus were in the Chebogue area (C.R.K.A.) and on Oct. 19, W. Mills and C.R.K.A. reported 30+ at Eastern Passage.

CEDAR WAXWINGS were present in flocks of from 4 to 70 during the period July to Sept., reported from Pictou, Cumb. Co., Seal Island, Barrington, and Shel. Co. generally. R.E. observed a brood of 4 young birds in her garden in Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co., July 23.

Of particular interest is the sighting of three LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES together, by members of the NSBS field trip on July 26, at Petit Etang, Cape Breton. One also was seen Aug. 12 on Brier Island (E.M.).

Special vireo reports are of two rare ones: the PHILADELPHIA VIREO, seen twice this summer: first record from M.H. in Yar. Co. on Sept. 23, "Bird was facing me - breast was white, sides tinged with yellow. Vireo type bill - top of head seemed brownish; line through eye was like picture in ZIM". The second record was from Lurcher lightship (R.A.D.) on Sept. 29. The Seal Island party were fortunate enough to see a WARBLING VIREO on Sept. 6-8.

Notes on the WOOD WARBLERS could be copious, as all of our breeding species have been fully accounted for. David Christie mentioned an unusual abundance of the TENNESSEE at Joggins, Cumb. Co., June 22, due perhaps to the incursion of Spruce Budworm over the border. A KENTUCKY WARBLER stayed around the light buildings at Cape Sable Sept. 6 to 12, giving ample opportunity for observation by Sidney and Betty June Smith. The Smiths also have sent a fall record for the YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: 1, Sept. 1, at Cape Sable.

The PRAIRIE WARBLER, (first seen on Sable Island) was present on Seal Island for some length of time. One was seen Sept. 6, 3 the following day, on the island (D.F. and I.McL.), and 1 or 2 were still around for the Thanksgiving week-end, Oct. 11-13, and well observed by members of the NSBS party there at that time. On the Sept. 6-8 trip to Seal Island, a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (Eastern Race) was identified by Davis Finch and Ian McLaren. It may be recalled that this rare (to N.S.) species was first found on Sable Island by Ian McLaren last year, and a color slide of the bird sent to the National Museum at Ottawa. This was accepted as proof of identification. Another color slide was obtained of the 1969 bird, and also submitted to Ottawa. Warbler counts of note on Seal Island Sept. 6-8 (21 species of warbler seen) were: Black-and-White, 25, Yellow, 20, Cape May, 30, Northern Waterthrush, 60, Yellowthroat, 30, and American Redstart, 45.

From the Lurcher lightship, the only migrating warblers noted during Sept. were 4 Yellows and 3 Yellowthroats. By the Thanksgiving week-end, Oct. 11-13, relatively few warblers were found on Brier Island: Myrtles, Palms and 1 Black-throated Green; whereas on Seal Island on the same date, 10 species were seen: Myrtles, Palms, Yellowthroats, and Redstarts numerous; Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Nashville, Yellow and Magnolia also present. A few Myrtle Warblers are still being seen round about the countryside, and may stay the winter, if the bayberries hold out.

A single EASTERN MEADOWLARK was seen on Brier Island Oct. 12-13, "flying back and forth, undecided which direction to take" was suggested by Eric Mills.

The REDWINGED BLACKBIRD continues its incursion into the southern end of the province, noted in five different areas in Shelburne Co., June through August by the Gallaghers. Total number of birds noted was only 8, as compared with a series of flocks numbering over 800 birds seen flying over the Kennetcook

Marshes in Hants Co. Aug. 17 (C.R.K.A.).

The Gallaghers report 2 adult BALTIMORE ORIOLES feeding 3 young, June 24 in Shelburne town. These orioles have been well reported for the season. They were very much on the move early in Sept. Twenty were counted on Seal Island Sept. 6-8 (NSBS party), and 5 on Chebucto Head Sept. 10 (E.M. and R.H.). (This was the big day mentioned in a letter from Aaron Bagg, when 28 different species visited his Massachusetts garden, including 18 Baltimore Orioles.) Here in Nova Scotia, 6 more were noted Sept. 13 at Barrington (B.D.); 1 at Yarmouth (M.H.); and Sept. 20, 28 and 30, one bird each day was seen from the Lurcher (R.A.D.). There were no orioles on Seal Island by the Oct. 11-13 trip.

The RUSTY BLACKBIRD was flocking for departure during late September, 26 seen Sept. 27, in central Hants, 100+ Sept. 21 near Seaforth, Hfx. Co. (C.R.K.A.). A big flock of Rustys came into Brier Island Oct. 13 (none there the previous 2 days of the Thanksgiving trip), and the same thing happened at Seal Island, where the number went up to 200+ on the 13th. (NSBS party). Eric Mills noted the dramatic increase in bird numbers of several species Oct. 13 at Brier Island, with the high pressure weather system moving in, accompanied by a shift of wind around to the north.

Along with the Arthur Spencers, who first spotted it, Sara MacLean observed "an undoubted BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE", Aug. 5, at Glace Bay. They watched it for nearly an hour, 11 to 12 noon, among a flock of Common Grackles, Starlings and Robins, on a lawn under some cherry trees, in which the birds were interested. Field marks were well noted, and it was seen perched, flying and walking, plainly visible with and without glasses. The bird was around for several days. Unfortunately, no picture was taken. A Boat-tailed Grackle was recorded on Sable Island two years ago.

Two SCARLET TANAGERS can be added to the list, one seen in Shel. Co., July 3 (F.A.S.), and a fall record Sept. 16 at Chebucto Head (E.M., I. McL. D.W.).

An INDIGO BUNTING was present for a week from Oct. 10-17 at the feeder of Rosemary Eaton, Cole Hbr., Hfx. Co. The rare bird alert went out immediately. Did anyone else get to see it?

Betty Topple reports the sighting of a DICKCISSEL on Oct. 11 at Lake Loon, Hfx. Co. Nine were seen at Brier Island on Oct. 13. One was "so tame that it could be approached within 6 feet as it slowly munched a large green grasshopper". (E.M.).

EVENING GROSBEAKS were seen throughout the province during the summer and another observation has been recorded of adults feeding young. This was on Aug. 16 at Round Hill (W.E.W.)

Willett Mills writes:

"On August 20, 1969 at Troy, three miles from Port Hastings, Inverness County on Cape Breton Island, I saw a flock of nine Evening Grosbeaks feeding on the fruit of a wild cherry tree. In the flock were five immature, two adult females, two adult males and one sex and age not known. As I watched them a male fed two immatures and later a female fed two immature birds.

Dr. Robie Tufts told me that this is the fifth record of Evening Grosbeaks breeding in Nova Scotia. The first record was on August 1, 1958, at Ingonish Beach, Cape Breton and the other three were on the Nova Scotia mainland. Dr. Tufts says the nest is extremely hard to find. Who will find the first?

From records received, the PINE SISKIN and AMERICAN GOLDFINCH were around in larger than usual numbers, distribution general, throughout summer and fall in Nova Scotia.

RED CROSSBILLS and WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS were very common throughout the whole province. Numbers of White-winged Crossbills have remained large up to the time of writing (Oct. 20).

The sighting of 3 RUFUS-SIDED TOWHEES on Brier Island Oct. 12-13 represents the only record of this bird for the season.

The IPSWICH SPARROW was seen twice in September, on the mainland; 1, Sept. 13-14, South Side, Cape Sable Island (B.D.) and 1, Sept. 13 at Caribou, Pictou Co. (NSBS party). A late date for Ipswiches is Oct. 19, when 8 were observed at Lawrencetown Beach (E.M. and I.McL.). Ben Doane also mentions a concentration of SAVANNAH SPARROWS (35) near Barrington Sept. 13-14. There were 60 Savannahs on Seal Island Sept. 6-8 (NSBS party). Three rather late SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS were seen in the beach grass at Petite Riviere Oct. 12 (M.H., P.D., F.D.) and 2 more Oct. 19 at Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co. (E.M., I.McL.). Two LARK SPARROWS were observed Aug. 10-11 at Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co. (I.McL.). A migratory movement of the SLATE-COLORED JUNCO is indicated by a concentration of 200+ in the Barrington area Sept. 13-14 (B.D.); "numbers" in along the roadsides of Hants Co. Sept. 27 (C.R.K.A.) and a few noted on successive dates Sept. 19 to 30 from the Lurcher lightship (R.D.). A note from the Gallaghers describes a Junco nest with 3 eggs June 30 in which a Cowbird egg appeared July 1, the other eggs destroyed. On July 3, the nest was deserted.

The first TREE SPARROW of the season was spotted at West Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., Oct. 19 (W.M. and C.R.K.A.). CHIPPING SPARROWS, up to 15 in flocks were gathering at Chebogue Point, Yar. Co., Oct. 13, according to C.R.K.A. and they were "numerous" on Brier Island on the same date (E.M.). A FIELD SPARROW also was at Brier Island on the Oct. 11-13 week-end, observed by the NSBS party. A few WHITE-CROWNED

SPARROWS have been noted: 1 imm. at McNab's Island Oct. 4 (I. McL., D.W., F.D.), and 4, Oct. 13, at Brier Island (NSBS party). Migrating WHITETHROATS, 30+ are reported Sept. 13-14 in the Barrington Area (B.D.), and C.R.K.A. saw 6 at Seaforth, Hfx. Co. in a flock Sept. 21, one in good song!

A migratory movement of the SONG SPARROW is well marked by the counts of 100 at Barrington (B.D.), 300 at Seal Island (NSBS party) on the Sept. 13-14 week-end. On Oct. 12 the first 6 LAPLAND LONGSPURS of the season were seen, 5 at Pinckney's Pt., Yar. Co. (C.R.K.A.), and 1 on the same date on Brier Island (E.M.). It is interesting to note that there was a build-up of land birds seen from the Lurcher lightship from late August on; particularly mentioned in the two weeks following this date were Sparrow Hawks, Woodpeckers, Flycatchers, Nuthatches, Vireos, Warblers, Blackbirds, Grosbeaks, Finches and Sparrows. We deeply regret the recent decision by the federal government to remove the lightship from the Lurcher shoals off Yarmouth. Thanks to Captains R.A. Doucette and J.L. Romain of the lightship, we have been privileged to receive many landbird migration reports and sightings of the pelagics in our offshore waters, formerly and in future unavailable to us on a year round basis. Grateful thanks to Captain Doucette and Captain Romain, and sincere good wishes on their retirement.

It is regrettable that the bulk of the Cape Breton records arrived too late for inclusion in the above report. For the story of Cape Breton summer birds, see the Field Trip accounts further on in the Newsletter. Observers who have contributed to this Newsletter (identified by initials only in the bird report) are as follows: Charles Allen (C.R.K.A.), Ross Anderson (R.A.), Fred and Evelyn Dobson (F.D.), R.A. Doucette (R.A.D.), Michael and Rosemary Eaton (R.E.), Davis Finch (D.W.F.), Marjorie Fraser (M.F.), Sylvia Fullerton (S.F.), J.R. and C. Gallagher (J.R.G.), Ward and Phyllis Hemeon (W.H.), Marion Hilton (M.H.), Barbara Hinds (B.H.), C.W. Helleiner (C.W.H.), Peter Hope (P.H.), Roger Hughes (R.H.), Eric Holdway (E.H.), Dorothy Kirk (D.K.), Wickerson Lent (W.L.), Evelyn Lowerison (E.L.), Ian McLaren (I. McL.), Sara MacLean (S. McL.), Eric Mills (E.M.), Willett Mills (W.M.), Henry March (H.M.), Wayne Neily (W.N.), J. Israel Pothier (J.I.P.), Sidney and Betty June Smith (S.S.), Lawrence Sansone III (L.S.), Robert W. Smart (R.S.), Robert Thexton (R.S.), Betty Topple (B.T.), Dan Welch (D.W.), Charles Wise (C.W.), W. E. Whitehead (W.E.W.).

Included on the Sept. 6-8 Seal Island trip were Ben Doane, Ian McLaren and Davis Finch; McNab's Island Sept. 21 were Eric Mills, Roger and Mrs. Hughes, Dan and Mrs. Welch, W. Stobo and wife; Seal Island Oct. 11-13, Lloyd and Betty Macpherson, Dan Welch and wife and Ross Anderson; Brier Island Oct. 11-13, the Eric Mills and the Ian McLaren.

## BIRDS ON SABLE ISLAND

by Ian McLaren

Sable Island continues to produce outstanding records, some of which seem to bear little relationship to the main migration pattern elsewhere in the province, and therefore seem worth separate coverage here. This year in addition to the regular observations by Mrs. Androschuk (E.A.) and Mrs. Bell (C.B.), we have received notes made on short visits by Messrs. Jean Boulva (J.B.) and Davis W. Finch (D.W.F.). Mr. Finch, as regional editor of the "Audubon Field Notes" has now a new perspective on the uniqueness of Sable Island when considering future records.

**Cattle Egret:** A mummified specimen, probably a few weeks or months old, was picked up by Mr. Tony Lock on July 7.

**Green Heron:** One on June 9 (J.B.).

**Western Willet:** One on Aug. 30 was observed under ideal conditions by D.W.F. and was a typical example of the western race, being long-legged, long-billed, and larger and paler than the resident birds of the province. It is worth noting that almost all the late birds in New England are of this race. We should keep our eyes open for them.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** Aug. 30, one (D.W.F.).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** A flock of 12 with an equal number of Black-bellied Plovers was noted by J.B. on June 8.

**Upland Plover:** The individual (?) noted in the last Newsletter was last seen on June 9 (C.B.).

**American Avocet:** An individual spent about a half-hour near the West Light on Sept. 16, giving ample opportunity for close study by both Bells.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Two well-studied by D.W.F. and Wayne Stobo on Aug. 27.

**Ivory Gull:** An individual spent much of the day around the Bell's house on June 20. Its black legs and black, yellow-tipped bill, and otherwise immaculate appearance marked it as an adult. It was somewhat harried by the Herring Gulls. The date is almost as extraordinary as the record itself.

**Sabine's Gull:** An adult in winter plumage was well observed by D.W.F. on Aug. 27, feeding with terns just beyond the surf. It was observed for two or three minutes with a scope. "The forked tail could not be appreciated, but the diagnostic wing pattern left no doubt whatever about the bird's identity." This species normally migrates offshore at this season, and its presence on Sable Island is not unexpected.

- Black Tern:** There are several records of this unusual species. One on May 31 - June 1 (J.B.), 3 on July 7 (C.B.), 2 on Aug. 23-27 (C.B., D.W.F.), and 2 on Sept. 17-19. The July record is perhaps most unusual.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** One on June 14 (J.B.) and June 17 (C.B.).
- Coot:** Two on the unusual date of July 2 (C.B.).
- Flycatchers:** Again this year these "peaked" late, with 9 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, 2 Rewees and 3 Kingbirds on June 9.
- Cave Swallows:** Only one thing could surpass last summer's extraordinary observations and specimens of this West Indian Swallow, and that is this year's observations of the same species in mid-late June! This species, easily distinguished as a "Cliff Swallow" with a rust forehead and pale throat, was first seen by both Bells and by E. Garvie on June 14, when 3 were perched for some time on the Bell's clothes-line. The next day, two were perched there with 4 Cliff Swallows, 3 Bank Swallows, and 3 Tree Swallows. Two on June 20 and one on June 30 suggest that these birds stayed on the island for some time, like last year's. As was the case last year, these swallows arrived after strong southerly winds. Clearly they should be looked for again and elsewhere.
- Rough-winged Swallow:** Two were carefully observed several times on Aug. 7 by the Bells. Tree and Bank Swallows were around for comparison.
- Brown Thrasher:** One on June 13 (C.B.).
- Mockingbird:** One on June 3 (J.B.).
- Water Pipit:** One on Aug. 6 (C.B.) was very early or had summered locally (?).
- Warbling Vireo:** One on June 4 and another, or the same bird, on June 13 were well-studied by J.B., who is familiar with this bird in Quebec.
- Prairie Warbler:** As many as 4 and possibly 6 individuals were noted by C.B., D.W.F., and J.B., beginning on Aug. 26. One on Sept. 10 may have been the last of this group. Three on Sept. 22-23 (C.B.) may have been new arrivals. It is hard to believe that this species has been overlooked in the past, and the observations of this year and last seem to indicate a real change in status.
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** One was noted on Aug. 3 by C.B. and another or the same bird on Aug. 21, 22, 24, 26, and Sept. 2. At times it was seen together with Northern Waterthrushes and gave ample opportunity for close study by both Bells. In addition to the broad, very white eyestripe and white underparts, the unmarked throat was clearly noted. It was somewhat larger than the Northern Waterthrushes with which



it associated.

Yellow-breasted Chat: One on Aug. 29 (D.W.F.) and Sept. 3-4 (C.B.).

Hooded Warbler: A male on Sept. 10 (C.B., J.B.).

Baltimore Oriole: There was a notable flight of 10-15 individuals on Sept. 8-10 (C.B., J.B.).

Indigo Bunting: One on June 10-13 (J.B., C.B.) and another on Aug. 14 (C.B.).

Dickcissel: As many as three present between Aug. 27 and Sept. 12 (C.B., J.B., D.W.F.).

Lark Sparrows: One on Aug. 29 (D.W.F.) and Sept. 16 (C.B.).

Gambell's White-crowned Sparrow: A picture of the bird noted by E.A. and C.B. in late May (last Newsletter) has been received from David Higgins. It was taken during the first week of June. The slide shows the white in front of the eye very clearly. It has been forwarded to the National Museum of Canada for filing as a Nova Scotia "first".

#### American Coot Breeding in Nova Scotia

by A. D. Smith

A flightless young American Coot Fulica americana was captured and banded on August 20, 1969 on the Missaquash Marsh, Cumberland County, Nova Scotia. The above is believed to be the first breeding record of the American Coot in the province of Nova Scotia.

The American Coot has been recorded as breeding at Williamstown Lake, New Brunswick, in 1944 and at Harvey Station in 1941 (Squires, 1952). Boyer (1966) notes spring and summer records at the Jolicure Lakes, Westmorland County, New Brunswick, but was unable to find evidence of breeding other than courtship display by three birds at Midgic on April 26, 1949.

The American Coot is a rare summer visitor to the Missaquash Marsh, but in some years is quite common throughout the fall. Personal records from 1966 notes on the Missaquash Marsh are as follows: June 16 (2), August 8 (1), August 22 (2),

October 14 (8), October 18 (27), October 23 (20), October 28 (1),  
October 31 (2).

Squires, W. Austin. 1952. The birds of New Brunswick. New  
Brunswick Museum. Monographic Ser. 4:164 pp.

Boyer, George F. 1966. Birds of the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick  
Border Region. C.W.S. Occasional Papers No. 8. Ottawa.

The Palm Warbler and Other Birds  
of a Nova Scotia Bog

by Daniel A. Welsh

Territoriality and breeding of songbirds have often been studied independently, and there are many conflicting ideas and observations. In order to develop a fuller picture of their importance and interrelationship and to investigate the significance of bigamy, I undertook a study of the Savannah Sparrow at Martinique Beach in summer 1969. I also carried out a less extensive study of the Palm Warbler (Dendroica palmarum hypochyrsea) and this is reported here. This bird was chosen because, unlike most warblers, it breeds in relatively open habitats, and is readily observable.

The study area was a bog-heath measuring about one mile by one-quarter to one-half mile, near Bayer's Settlement, Hfx. Co. It is composed of an open area of bog-heath grading into bog and swamp, and completely surrounded by forest. The many "bays" in the forest area proved to be the main habitat of the Palm Warbler. This note summarizes my observations without attempting to analyse or discuss them. A more complete account is being prepared for publication. The accompanying note on other birds may be of interest to readers who seldom penetrate a Nova Scotia bog in the "fly season".

All ten males and their females on the study area were carefully observed throughout the summer. Japanese mist nets were used to capture many of the birds which were banded and color marked. Familiarity with the birds enabled identification of those that could not be caught.

Territoriality:

The territory of a male was considered to be that area in which he was normally found, established singing patterns,

and which he would defend against intruders.

The first singing male was observed on April 27 in the southernmost portion of the territory he occupied all summer. The second male began singing on May 2 and all ten territories were established by May 15.

All territories were set up around the edge of the open bog and in each case was expansible in at least one direction into an area unoccupied by other males. Borderlines were usually natural boundaries of some type such as forest edges or tree rows. All males set up song posts which they used more or less throughout the summer. Males aggressively defended their territories when necessary but there was generally little intrusion after the initial establishment phase.

#### Nesting:

Seven of the ten known nests were found, all of which were close to the ground, usually in association with ground juniper. Eight of the ten males are known to have had females and one had two females simultaneously. The normal clutch size was four or five eggs. Incubation time was eleven days and young were usually in the nest ten days. Young were successfully brought off of six of the ten nests, the others being lost to predators.

In some cases both male and female participated in feeding and in others the female managed alone. The main feeding role of the male appeared to occur after the young had left the nest.

Two of the eight females attempted a second clutch neither of which was successful.

The first nest was completed, with a full complement of eggs, by May 30 and the last was laid July 23. Feeding of fledged young was not noted after Aug. 3 and most territorial and breeding behaviour had ceased by the end of July.

#### Breeding Birds of the Bog:

The following is a list of birds normally seen in the bog during the Palm Warbler study. Where possible approximate numbers on the study area and dates of arrival are given. These birds are presumed to have bred although it is not certain in all cases. It should be noted that much of the area is heath and bog forest and the whole area is surrounded by coniferous forest. Many of the birds listed herein were found along the forest edge.

Osprey: three pairs were breeding in the area adjacent to the bog. These birds were present before May 8 and were part of a population of at least fifteen pair in the area from Musq. Hbr. to Martinique Beach.

Spruce Grouse: two pairs were breeding in the area, of which at

- least one bred successfully. One bird was killed by a fox May 18/69.
- Ruffed Grouse: one pair bred successfully in the area.
- Flicker: at least two birds were in the area, arriving before May 8/69.
- Hairy and Downy Woodpecker: both species were present in the area throughout the summer.
- Eastern Kingbird: one pair remained in the area for the summer after arriving May 28.
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: these birds were found in three positions in the study area and presumably bred.
- Gray Jay: at least ten pairs were in the general study area throughout the summer although no idea of their respective ranges was obtained.
- Blackburnian Warbler: one pair bred in the area. No date of arrival can be given.
- Chestnut-sided Warbler: at least four pairs bred in the area after arriving on or before June 2.
- Blackpoll Warbler: arrived May 25. Only one or two pairs lived in the study area but this bird was common elsewhere.
- Palm Warbler: there were ten males in the study area, the first arriving on or before April 27.
- Ovenbird: there was at least one pair living in the area.
- Yellowthroat: by far the most commonly seen birds. At least 25 pairs lived in the area after arriving May 19.
- American Redstart: one pair lived in the area after arriving June 4.
- Brownheaded Cowbird: this bird was seen on several occasions and may well have bred in the area.
- Savannah Sparrow: one pair remained in the bog throughout the summer arriving before April 27.
- Slate-colored Junco: a very common bird in the area and several nests were found.
- White-throated Sparrow: arrived before April 27 - at least 30 pairs bred in the area.
- Lincoln's Sparrow: seven or more pairs bred in the area after arriving May 8.
- Swamp Sparrow: two pairs bred in the area after arriving May 15.

- Song Sparrow: ten pairs or more bred in the area and arrived before April 27.
- Common Crow: three pairs bred in the area.
- Black Capped Chickadee: at least one pair bred.
- Boreal Chickadee: there were many, but no idea of their total numbers was obtained.
- Robins: several pairs lived in the area. One black-backed individual, in appearance like the Newfoundland race, was seen on June 2.
- Hermit Thrush: two pairs or more bred in the area, arriving before May 9.
- Swainson's Thrush: seven or more pairs bred in the area, arriving before May 8.
- Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets: many of each were seen in the area but no estimate of numbers is possible.
- Red-eyed Vireo: present all summer and presumably bred. Approximate arrival May 25.
- Tennessee Warbler: several pairs bred in the area after arriving around June 2.
- Nashville Warbler: at least eight pairs bred in the area. Approximate date of arrival was May 28.
- Yellow Warbler: one pair bred in the area. Arrived around May 18.
- Magnolia Warbler: arrived May 12 and had established territories by May 18. At least 8 pair bred in the area.
- Myrtle Warbler: at least 15 pair bred in the area after a May 10 arrival.
- Black-throated Green: many (20?) bred in the area after arriving May 13.

## CAPE BRETON FIELD TRIPS

Louisbourg - May 12, 1969



Left to right: Mary Willms, Sara MacLean, Gordon Neish, Jim How, Rheal LeBlanc, Betty Reid, Francis MacKinnon.  
Note "fogged out" background.

As grey dawn crept over this historic town, seven eager naturalists met to inaugurate another season of Nova Scotia Bird Society Field Trips. An inauguration deserves a president and we had one, Mrs. Sara MacLean of Glace Bay, president of the Cape Breton Branch, being on hand to start the year right.

It was an unusually clear day for Louisbourg; you could occasionally see up to fifty feet into the fog, and the rain and wind weren't very heavy. It was a bit chilly, but then, it was early May, so, nothing daunted, we began our quest.

While I was officially leading the expedition, I was relying heavily on the knowledge of the local area possessed by one of our group, Jim How, the chief of interpretation for the Fortress of Louisbourg N.H.P. Mrs. Betty Reid, Mrs. Mary Willms, and Gordon Naish, all of the Sydney area, along with Rheal LeBlanc, one of the seasonal naturalists at Cape Breton Highlands National Park, made up the rest of the group at that point.

At the very first stop those of us who were not quite awake brightened up, as we spotted two American Pipits feeding at the edge of the beach. These were "lifers" for some of the party and proved to be the highlight of the morning. As we continued along the coast and through the misty woods to the lighthouse, however, many birds were active; the White-throated Sparrows, Tree Swallows and Myrtle Warblers were just becoming common.

At the lighthouse, Francis MacKinnon of New Waterford, who hadn't overslept too much, joined us, as we watched Great Cormorants appear occasionally along the rocky headlands. We worked our way back towards the Fortress, building up a total of 22 species for the two hour field trip.

By the time we reached here, thoroughly chilled and wet, we were ready to gratefully accept Mr. and Mrs. How's hospitality and a hot cup of coffee that provided the finishing touch to a very enjoyable morning.

- Wayne Neily

#### All Day Trip to Marble Mountain - June 28

Very hot (91°). Hazy. Visibility not good. Twenty-two observers and 60 species.

On this trip, the treat that I had been holding out like a carrot for two years was a boat cruise out to the islands where the Herring Gulls, Blackbacks and Double-crested Cormorants nest. Alas for such plans - the motor of Mr. McNichol's boat was ailing that day.

However, Marble Mountain was new territory to almost all the group, certainly new birding territory, and the nesting sites seemed to be forgotten in the charm of a wooded hillside. Leading this part of the day was a real pleasure. We had several young observers in the party. Two of them, Billy and Clarence Digout, sons of Murdoch Digout of St. Peters, are extremely good naturalists. With the advantage of twelve and fourteen year old eyes and ears along with their knowledge, we spotted a number of little things the older folk might have missed. I consider that Billy Digout is perfectly capable of conducting an all-day trip by himself, something I should hesitate to say of any other boy of his age.

So ardent was the group by this time that in spite of a couple of miles of up-hill travel, they had to be almost shanghaied into accepting a return by car to Miss Rowena Bloss' cottage. There we picnicked in her garden, combining lunch with bird watching.

In the afternoon we drove to Mr. and Mrs. McNichol's home six miles down the road at Malagawatch where Mr. McNichol

led us to the eagle's nests. I say "nests" since there are two within sight of each other. Is this not unusual? The area must be very rich in the requirements of baby eagles to permit so much togetherness.

Some of the party made a side trip to the sand beach at Big Harbour Island where a pair of Semi-palmated Plover proved to be so tame that they could be "herded" along the beach without taking wing.

This I think was a most satisfactory day for all those who took part. We had observers from Glace Bay, Sydney, North Sydney, New Waterford, St. Peters, Florida, Long Island, New York, and Ingonish in the group. No one even mentioned the bird islands that we had missed!

- Sara MacLean

Cheticamp Trip - July 26



Left to right: Steve Smith, William Foote, Beth MacRae, Gloria LeBlanc, Rheal LeBlanc, R. T. Harper, Diane LeBlanc, Mrs. Harper, Marjorie Foote, Francis MacKinnon, Molly Bourguignon, Sarah Findlay, Betty Reid, Kay MacRae, Doug Findlay.

The weather was almost ideal, and 30 interested persons turned out for the third all-day field trip in Cape Breton this



year. Most were permanent or summer residents of Cape Breton Island, but some were from as far away as Virginia (Mr. & Mrs. R.T. Harper, Roanoke) or Ontario (Mr. & Mrs. A.R. Heaton and family, Windsor). Another special visitor from Ontario was Mrs. Fred Bourguignon of Ottawa who was visiting the Findlays and joined them on this trip.

At Cape Breton standard starting time, 9:00 a.m., we left the Information Bureau at the Cheticamp entrance to Cape Breton Highlands National Park and began walking up the Salmon Pool Trail. At the entrance to this trail a little swishing brought forth a very annoyed Mourning Warbler, who scolded us for four or five minutes, giving everyone a chance to observe him. In the process, he made such a commotion that several other birds were attracted to see what was going on, including a family of Black-throated Green Warblers, with the young just able to fly, a nattyly-attired Black-and-White Warbler, and a striking Blackburnian.

This act was hard to follow, but as we wandered up the woodland trail along the Cheticamp River, the sharp eyes of some of our active Cape Breton members of the Society, such as Mrs. Betty Reid, Mrs. Katharine MacRae of St. Peters, Francis MacKinnon of New Waterford, and Mr. and Mrs. William Foote of Lime Hill, Inv. Co. (and Burnt Hills, N.Y.), soon picked out most of the expected woodland birds, along with some less common ones, such as the Bay-breasted Warbler, the Ovenbird and its cousin the Northern Waterthrush, a Hermit Thrush, and the unpredictable Pine Siskins.

Leaving this area of mixed and coniferous woods, we next ventured into the hardwood grove west of the Cabot Trail, toward the mouth of the Cheticamp River, in a vain search for Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. However, we did add Rusty Blackbirds and Song Sparrows here, so it wasn't a total loss.

After all this walking, everyone was ready for lunch, so we travelled by car to the picnic area below the Great Cliff in the Rigwash Valley. By this time Rheel LeBlanc, seasonal naturalist for that section of the National Park, had joined us, and there were several others present, including Beth MacRae of St. Peters and a number from Inverness Co. - Gloria and Diane LeBlanc of Cheticamp, Mrs. Jean Rosner and ten of her group from the Sight Point Camp, including the nature counsellor, Steve Smith.

After a leisurely lunch and a quick trip to Presqu'il to pick up Bald Eagles, Black Guillemots and a Spotted Sandpiper, we were ready to head for Cheticamp Island to spend the afternoon watching shorebirds. The sun was shining brightly, the tide was right, it was the right time of year, and these mud flats are known to be among the best in Cape Breton for shorebirds. When we reached there, however, at the end of a dusty three-mile drive, we found ourselves victimized by the Harvard or Murphy's law. (For the uninitiated, this law states that under the most carefully controlled circumstances, an organism will do as it damn well pleases.) After much searching,

we found exactly two shorebirds - one Greater Yellowlegs and one Least Sandpiper.

Well, our brave and courageous leader, namely me, had the nerve to stand up to the jeers and catcalls of hundreds (at least 25) of angry and disappointed birdwatchers and say "Onward!" So we went onward, to the lighthouse at Pt. Enragee, where there were no birds either, except a few Great Cormorants, but there was a good view of the Gulf Coast. Thence we back-tracked a bit and struck off through the jungle (or local equivalent thereof) to a small great Blue Heron colony. This was a memorable experience for all, especially for those who hadn't seen such a colony before, and since when we reached the cars again it was nearly dinnertime, this seemed a good place to bring the field day to an official close.

A few diehards did stay on after dinner, when we were joined by Dr. Austin Cameron, who had been working earlier in the day. Another trip to the island for shorebirds proved almost as futile as the first, but on the way we stopped at Petit Etang to look for a bird that had eluded us all day. We were about to give up again when the ever-alert Mrs. Reid spotted it sitting on a barn roof somewhat less than a half-mile away. We went across the road to get a better look and saw at least three Loggerhead Shrikes. This was our 57th. species of the day and provided a fitting highlight to end an enjoyable midsummer excursion.

- Wayne Neily

#### Cape North - Sept. 6

A total of 27 persons gathered at Cape North Village this Saturday morning for the fifth and last of the all-day field trips in Cape Breton this season. Most of us approached the meeting point from the east, and as we came to the crest of the South Mountain and looked across the valley containing Cape North to the North Mountain range beyond (which we planned to explore), an ominous sight greeted us. The North Mountain itself was barely visible through a tremendous sheet of rain, mixed with fog in places.

As we gathered and introductions were made all round, we found that besides the majority of Cape Bretoners, we had two "Nova Scotians", a couple from Florida, Mr. & Mrs. Mark Danner, and a Mr. & Mrs. Helmboldt from Connecticut. Our special guests from the mainland were Mr. & Mrs. John Erskine from Wolfville. Most of the group were from "the Sydneys" area, although Mrs. Kay MacRae, Willie Joe and Clarence Digout came up (down) from St. Peters and Francis and Maureen MacKinnon from New Waterford.

Since the rain in the valley was not very heavy, we decided to visit Dingwall first. There, around the Harbour salt-marsh and pond areas we picked up a very co-operative Great Cormorant, a Great Blue Heron, perched in a tree near the water, two Bald Eagles, a few Sanderlings and Blue-winged Teal, a Bonaparte's Gull, and assorted other tidbits.



Left to right: Mr. Helmboldt, Mrs. Large, Georgina Hennessey, William Large, Clarence Digout (background), Willie Joe Digout, Maureen MacKinnon, Mrs. Danner, Carol Ann Green, Doreen Magnon, Ronalda Crawford, Allan Calder, Christina Brewer, George Calder, Francis MacKinnon, John Erskine.

Returning through Cape North, we were joined by the secretary-treasurer of the Branch and Mrs. Robertson, who had arrived from New Waterford in time to pick up our trail. We then proceeded northward to Sugar Loaf, stopping at one point for shorebirds, ducks and gulls, and at another a remarkable wave of small land birds. There must have been hundreds, with Myrtle Warblers, Blackpoll Warblers (in CFW plumage), Kinglets, and White-throated Sparrows dominating, but with at least three Cape May Warblers in the group, the most of that species that I have ever seen in one day in Nova Scotia.

By noon we reached the provincial picnic area at Cabot's Landing, and stopped for lunch at this historic spot. This is the spot that Sebastian Cabot indicated on his mappe monde of 1544 as the "prima terra vista" of his father's expedition. As far as I know the notes pertaining to this land-fall of June 24, 1497, provide the earliest bird records for the province of Nova Scotia. You might say that bird watching in

North America began here in Victoria Co., at least the record-keeping kind. Cabot noted here "Halcones prietos como cuervos Aquillas, Perdices, Pardilles y otras muchas aves de dviernas maneras", which I would roughly translate as "Birds of prey such as dark eagles, probably immature, grouse, small finches and many other birds of various types". Although we missed the grouse, an eagle did soar by as we were eating, and we added a Swamp Sparrow and some Rusty Blackbirds to our list as well.

After dinner we drove to the top of the mountain at Cape North, where fog and a heavy, driving rain prevented much activity as well as blocking the view. Returning to sea-level, we went out to the wharf at Bay St. Lawrence where some Arctic and Common Terns and a small flock of White-rumped Sandpipers put in brief appearances. After driving out as close as we could get to Cape North itself and scouring the woods of the hillside, it was decided to officially end the trip there, so that any wishing to take the famous road to Meat Cove would have time to do so before dark. (It wasn't considered advisable for the whole cavalcade to tackle it in this weather. So the rest of us worked our way back to the Cabot Trail, eventually accumulating 52 species.)

With the chilling rain, everyone was ready for a cup of coffee by the time we reached Cape North Village again. As we sat around Morrison's general store cum restaurant cum museum discussing the day's sightings, it was evident that it would take more than foul weather to dampen the spirits of this group.

- Wayne Neily

Other field trips held in Cape Breton during the season were May 12, at Louisbourg, Wayne Neily leader; May 19, Glace Bay area, Sara MacLean leader; May 26, Ball's Creek, Mary Hay leader; June 2, Baddeck, Gladys MacRae leader; and Aug. 23, Point Michaud, Murdock Digout leader.

Field trips on mainland Nova Scotia were held at Brier Island, Digby Co., May 25, Eric Mills leader; Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co., July 19, Ian McLaren leader; Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., Aug. 16, C.R.K. Allen leader; and Caribou Island, Pictou Co., Sept. 13, Ross Anderson leader.

These were all enjoyable occasions, but the "President's Field Day" at Martinique was truly memorable. The weather was right, the tide was right, and the birds co-operative. Dr. McLaren and his students had set the stage for us, and we were not allowed to miss one item of the show. Martinique is about

three miles long, and heavy walking in soft sand, but we slogged from one end to the other and back before lunch. On the way back we came upon a patch of wild strawberries, and fell upon it like locusts, not one berry was left. With that to sustain us, we made it back to the cars, sun and wind burned to a crisp, legs aching, and no skin left on our feet.

We saw a lot of birds. The Savannah Sparrow nests were particularly interesting, areas well marked for the study being made by Dan Welch. The Plover chicks were hatched, and Dr. McLaren caught one for us, fully two inches long, and set it on the sand, where it stayed still as a mouse to be inspected and photographed. The most outstanding bird of the day was a Whimbrel, out standing on a headland, where it struck a pose and held it, displaying its long curved bill. It was good to hear the Blackpolls singing, and the White-winged Crossbills again. The woods were full of them, as well as Pine Siskins, Rusty Blackbirds, and warblers of all sorts. Martinique combines habitat for land, shore and water birds. It is now a sanctuary, and worth a visit any time of year.



"We slogged through soft sand from one end of the beach to the other and back before lunch."  
(Martinique Beach).

Pictures of the Field Trips are courtesy of Wayne P. Neily, who attended them all.

Letter from Suva, Fiji Islands - (a far afield trip)

"we were extremely fortunate in New Zealand, in that one of our first friends was an ardent bird watcher - a retired Malay rubber planter, now sheep farming in the North Island. He took us all over the place and wrote letters of introduction to people right through N.Z., so we had a wonderful time. Land birds are relatively few, and native land birds even fewer, since many of the species were introduced from Europe, like the Skylark, Chaffinch and Yellow Hammer. But we did see the Rosella (a brilliant parrot) and Kookaburras (only one colony, migrants from Australia) as well as Kiwi (very rare now), Weka (a kind of Rail) and Tui (a honey eater).

Shore and pelagic species are legion. Stilts, Godwits, Wrybills (an interesting species, with the bill curved to the left), Stints, Plovers and Oystercatchers (quite different from ours), N.Z. Grey Duck, Scaup and Dabchick, these were the principal shorebirds. The Australian Black Swan is naturalised, as is the Mallard and the Canada Goose (one sighting). On the pelagic side, Caspian Tern, White-fronted Tern, Least Tern, Southern Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, Black-billed Gull, Wandering Albatross (right in Wellington harbor), Black-browed Molly-mawk, Cape Pigeon and various Shearwaters.

Here in Suva we have all kinds of migrant waders on the shore, including Whimbrel and a large variety of land birds right around the back door, from the Swamp Harrier down to the four-inch Orange-breasted Honey-eater.

As you may gather, we're having quite a time - bird-wise and otherwise. But we still will be glad to get back to Canada."

- John B. Hardie

NESTING SHARP-SHINS - AGAIN

by D. D. Findlay

The N.S. Bird Society Newsletter of July 1969 (page 70) tells of our 1968 nesting Sharp-shinned Hawks. This is about our 1969 nesters. For continuity I suggest re-reading the 1968 bit.

When we got to the Guysborough cottage May 31, there was a Sharp-shin on last year's favourite perch. A neighbour saw one there two days earlier. Gradually we realized we had a mated pair. They were rather quiet, unobtrusive birds with no

sign of nesting until July 3 when both birds chased a female Sparrow Hawk away from last year's supposed nesting site.

We saw two regularly up to July 20. They chased away all birds mentioned last year with two notable exceptions: they tolerated Crows but not Blue Herons. One gave chase to a Kingfisher but he turned on the hawk which made off. As July 20 approached the hawks grew much noisier 'ca-ca-ca-ing' at man or bird activity. On four different occasions one snatched away a dead bird the other was plucking, all at the favourite perch.

July 20 was a red-letter day. The first man landed on the moon and six Sharp-shins appeared on the perch. They looked like a child's drawing of 'Partridges in a Pear Tree'.

Last year's adult birds had dark blue backs with barred, rather than striped, brown breast markings. This year's had striped, brown markings with a hint of barring on the lower flanks. It was easy to tell the adults from young. The latter were clumsy, inept perchers with different plumage. For example, the adults had clear white throats with a necklace of fine brown stripes. The young had dingy, brownish-yellow throats without a distinct necklace.

The family murdered and ate an astonishing number of birds and mouselike mammals. I did not watch them dawn to dusk but did see them eating the following: Spotted Sandpipers, their favorite prey, Chickadees, Cedar Waxwings and a beautiful adult male Purple Finch who put up a gallant but futile fight.

My notes indicate the adults left the young to fend for themselves about Aug. 15. Rather curiously, the young were attracted to a yard square patch of heather on the lawn nearby. Two stamped around on top of the patch while the other two circled the clump perimeter pecking like hens at whatever insects the others scared out.

The young remained here another week and then disappeared. We didn't see another Sharp-shin until Sept. 30. An adult female appeared on the perch for four days killing a Chickadee and small mammal. We haven't seen another up to this writing.

The question pops up "were these the birds that nested here last year?". I don't know. This year's adults were less aggressive, quieter and more maturely plumed. Perhaps last year's birds were over-enthusiastic first-year nesters. Anyway, about 200 days of their company made it clear that Sharp-shins are unendearing, efficient, little killers.

Note from Lower Wedgeport

J. Israel Pothier

"Again living in the past, I enclose two letters, one addressed to Cyril Coldwell, dated April 8, 1934, the other more recent from Cyril Coldwell addressed to me dated Sept. 21, 1961. You may find it interesting that a Rough-legged Hawk would live for 18 months with a flock of hens without molesting them. That hawk could not be called a Hen-Hawk or, on second thought, maybe it could be called the Hen's Friend or Protector. I would have loved to be home and have a chat with Cyril, next time I drive up the valley I surely will stop and see him.

By the way, last year in one issue of the "Newsletter" Cyril Coldwell and Lloyd Duncanson had found a dead bird in a pond occupied by bull frogs. They were wondering if such a thing could happen that a frog would kill or drown a bird. According to the book that I received last Christmas from the National Geographic, it shows a picture of a frog grabbing a low flying bird flying over a pond. So it does happen."

(On April 8, 1934 Mr. Pothier wrote to Cyril Coldwell: 'I am shipping you today the Rough-legged Hawk. I have had this hawk since early in February. I trapped it in a Jack Miner crow trap. I have been feeding it with calf meat, moose meat, etc. The first day I had it, it killed a crow and ate it, that I had placed in the cage. It is quite tame, and allows me to handle it; however, you must talk French to it as it might not understand English.'

Mr. Coldwell replied to a recent inquiry that he had kept the hawk 18 months, in an enclosure with his hens. 'It never molested the hens, and kept the enclosure free of rodents'.)

Mr. Pothier continues:

"P.S. I just re-read "The Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson. With the late banning of D.D.T. (dichloro-diphenyl-trichlore-ethane) and all the chlorinated hydrocarbon by-products, in the National Parks and recently by the province of Ontario, it is to be hoped that in some cases these deadly chemicals not only to the insects, birds, fish and mammals and a health hazard to mankind will be used in Nova Scotia with the greatest care. I noted what the late Miss Carson said about the good work done by Dr. A. D. Pickett in Nova Scotia. To quote: Dr. Pickett uses special care to select chemicals that will do as little harm as possible to insects, parasites and predators. Recognizing that they had a strong ally in nature, they devised a program that makes maximum use of natural controls and minimum use of insecticides."

Thanks to Dr. Pickett and a few others like him, Nova Scotia has had a good record in environment care, and a recent American visitor spoke this summer of our "unspoiled roadsides



and woods". Perhaps bird-watchers are more conscious of such areas than others, but many of us are distressed by the increasing amount of spoilage of roadsides and woods. Can we do anything about this? We can sponsor groups like the pupils of Atlantic View School in West Lawrencetown who have cleaned up Conrad's Beach. We can continue protesting the use of roadside spray. Nova Scotia is a beautiful province, it is worth our while to keep it that way. (Editor's note.)

### FAIR - or FOG?

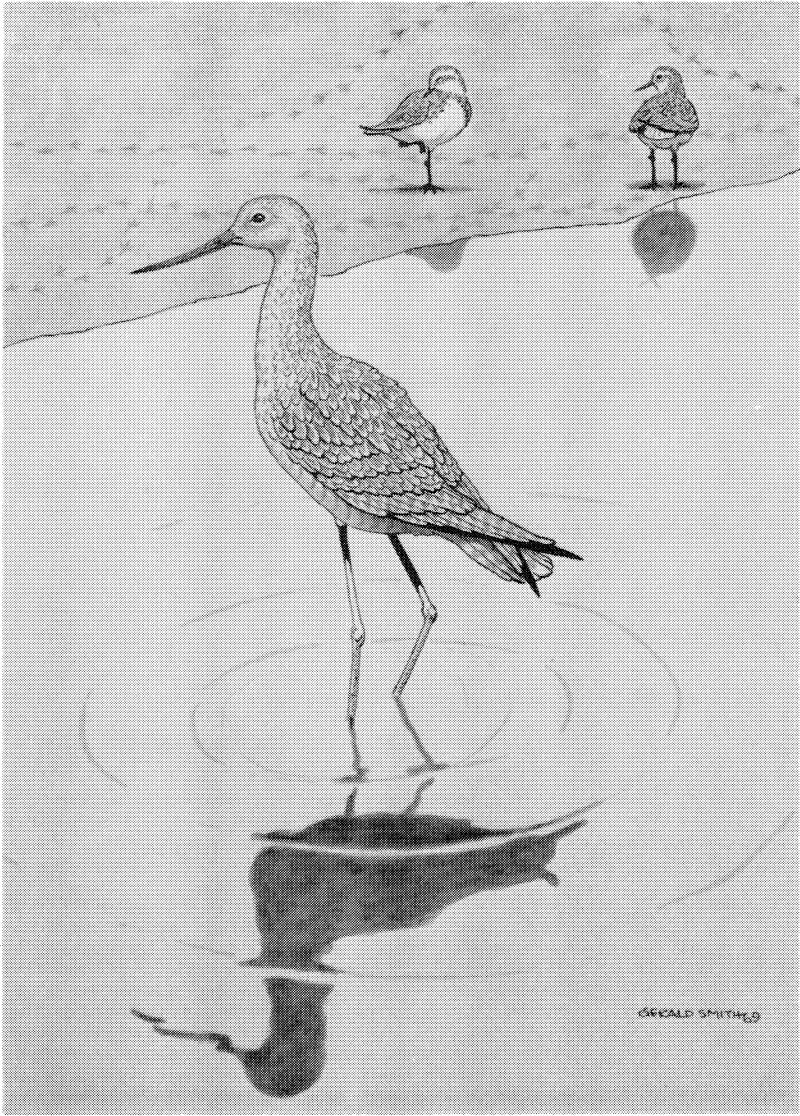
by Betty June Smith

Say "Summer" and we of Cape Sable would likely answer, "Fog!" It's grey and woolly as Sid goes out at dawn to milk; Song Sparrows nesting in the pasture, on all sides but unseen, insistently "Chip!" or trill the patterned notes a friend interprets, "Chip-chip-chip-chireeeee, kinder!" The gulls are navigating in spite of zero visibility: down through the fog comes a hoarse croak as Black-backs and Herring Gulls from mainland colonies come to feed along our southern beach. From the salty pond we hear sharp, high cries as dainty Tern dip and splash for terrified gudgeons; we know a Great Blue Heron, too, flies in at dawn to fish there, but like the others he is only heard -"Grank!"- not seen.

This summer we regularly heard the peculiar croak of Black-crowned Night Herons, for three came to the pond almost daily, from some northerly (nesting?) point. Each had a favorite spot to fish in the shallows, two on rocks; one on a twisted, half-sunken tree trunk. There it poised motionless, minutes at a time, almost impossible to spot though I scanned with binoculars, until it darted down its beak upon some luckless minnow. Sometime between noon and night they would leave, always with a few doleful farewell croaks. The foghorn answered with its deep "oooh-uh". Did that help these strangers find their way?

Sid, returning, flushes a "quiver-wing", her anguish giving away her secret; then our children's voices break through the fog and they share with Daddy the thrill of finding a nest, touching the eggs spotted like the sandpiper mother, kept warm and dry under grasses that cleverly protect them from predators and chilly fog.

Zero visibility still as the cowhands cross the yard, the beach, 100 feet away, invisible, the white lighthouse an almost-visible brightness through over-all grey. As the climbing sun breaks through, the fog draws back a quarter-mile,



revealing the lighthouse, fog-alarm, octagonal, soggy-shingled Old Light, the nearer sandhills, white and glittering-wet beyond the fields and garden. Southward, the Horse Race - the south-easterly Cape Sable shoal where, on an otherwise clear and sunny day we can see fog forming as warm air crosses the chilly, racing tidal chop. Here, in February 1860, the ship HUNGARIAN first grounded, dragged and sailed on into deeper water westward. Now Cape Island fishermen troll for pollack; gulls and tern dip for small fish and scream for handouts around the boats. Sooty Shearwater and Red Phalarope skim by.

Stuffed, the gulls settle on Old Man Rock at low tide line. High and rough, it is host for gangling cormorants as they hang out their wings to dry; crows and gulls light to pick out crabs, mussels and sea urchins; Purple Sandpiper wheel and flash around it, briefly lighting. Summering eider rise and fall on the swell amid the periwinkled rockweed at Old Man's feet. When rough seas smash into tons of flying spray on its outer face, the eider joyously circle the rock, diving ahead of breakers but riding over the swells about to break, but not quite breaking - a most glorious body-surfing, and never have I seen an eider misguess when to dive and when to dive deep!

If a land breeze routs the fog, we see the mainland of Cape Sable Island and other islands north and west; the green-and-white, gull-dotted crescent of our sand beach curving west to Black Point. Because the HUNGARIAN struck again on the main ledge that runs seaward here, and perished with all on board in the ponderous surf, the Canadian Government in 1861 established Cape Sable Light station. Since then, a light and fog horn have saved many men and ships - but the light has wrecked numbers of small aerial navigators! Though we've recorded few disasters, we do find bird victims from time to time. Last summer several small flocks of Red Phalarope, fog-blinded, struck the lantern and fell to the ground, dead or hopelessly crushed.

Our light sends out four constant rays through a turning lens - the effect is of a horizontal windmill. In heavy summer fogs the beams seem semi-solid. Hundreds of Petrels circle the lantern, crying weirdly, flickering in and out of the beams in apparently deliberate play, continuing for hours and seldom causing injury.

With few birds here through the nesting season, occasional strays are very welcome! Two records are a Black Skimmer (1964) and two Glossy Ibis (1965). Both sightings came in a break in continuous, dense coastal fog; the birds were flying determinedly westward like tourists back-tracking on the wrong turnpike. Usually the fog conceals all birds that don't light right on the end of our binoculars.

Still, we know that coming to the inner flats to join our Spotted Sandpipers, Piping Plover and Willets are Dowitchers, Ruddy Turnstone, Hudsonian Curlew, Knots, Pectoral and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Killdeer, Semi-palmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Least and White-rumped Sandpiper and Silver Sanderling. With clearer August days, we see Yellowlegs and

American Bittern around the ponds, Wilson's snipe, Upland Plover and Mourning Dove among the dunes. A few warblers light up the yard - Yellows, Yellowthroats, Magnolias and Myrtles. These are southbound, so summer's ending: Sid and his dad go across the island to watch a rare Solitary Sandpiper, leaving me a little miffed that I can't go - too busy packing for annual vacation. But next day as I leave, behind the tractor load of luggage and camping gear, a slim dark shorebird flies up with a strange cry, from the roadside. I hold Patches' leash tight as the Solitary Sandpiper flies away to safety in the deep rushes.

Please send WINTER REPORTS

by March 1, 1970.







