

*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 12, Number 1

April, 1970

FALL AND WINTER BIRD REPORT

1969 - 1970

Winter came late in Nova Scotia following one of the rainiest falls in years. The first snow fell on November 30, just enough to cover the ground, but soon disappeared. Another heavier fall two weeks later was washed away by the torrential rain of December 27. By the first of the year winter closed down, and during January and most of February temperatures were generally in the 20's or lower, but seldom reaching zero, except inland.

A comparison between this winter and that of '68 - '69 shows some similarities both as to weather and bird populations and some sharp and interesting differences: both winters were late in arriving, and both distinguished by light and temporary snowfalls, so that feeding conditions for land birds were good. This winter's lower temperatures, however, coated the shallow inlets and estuaries with ice and reduced the feeding areas for geese and some species of ducks. Horned Grebes were again scarcer than Red-necks, and white-winged gulls were a little below normal in the Halifax area, although fair numbers were seen around Cape Breton, particularly at Glace Bay Sanctuary.

Among the winter land birds, Pine Grosbeaks were again common, and Bohemian Waxwings and Redpolls reappeared but in fewer numbers than last winter. Black-capped Chickadees were normal in numbers but Boreals somewhat down following a heavy movement of both species during the latter half of October. White-winged Crossbills, very scarce last winter, have been common along the Atlantic coastal area, although there have been no reports of these or of Pine Grosbeaks since mid-February.

Other finches apart from Redpolls have been very scarce: widely scattered small flocks and singles of goldfinches and siskins, and a scant half dozen Purple Finches reported throughout the winter. The finch situation shows up plainly in Dr. Macpherson's summary of the Christmas Counts, the same relative abundance continuing through the season.

The Dovekie episode, reverse migration of swallows and other observations of unusual interest are dealt with in the

more detailed report which follows.



COMMON LOONS have been present in normal numbers. One unusual sighting was 10 birds closely bunched riding head to wind like a flock of ducks, observed by C.R.K. Allen, just beyond the breakers at Lawrencetown Beach, Hfx. Co., on Feb. 8. RED-THROATED LOONS were commoner than usual in late fall, but RED-NECKED and HORNED GREBES were definitely down, noticeably from East River, Lun. Co., to Chezzetcook, Hfx. Co., where both are usually very common. PIED-BILLED GREBES have wintered successfully in several localities. One was seen as late as Jan. 15 at Ingonish, and 1 at Rocky Run near Three-Fathom Harbor, Hfx. Co., on Feb. 8, where 3 had been present on Jan. 24. Neily reports that in Cape Breton this species seemed to be more numerous than Horned Grebes. The largest number in one sighting was 20 in a pond near Bartlett's Beach, Yar. Co., Dec. 25 and for several days thereafter (Daniel Banks).

Dr. Harrison Lewis has sent to us the following description of a WESTERN GREBE, a first sighting for Nova Scotia, by Betty June Smith of Cape Sable. Dr. Lewis is convinced, as anyone who reads this must be, that the bird in question was undoubtedly a Western Grebe.

"I wish to report sighting one Western Grebe, in winter plumage, at Cape Sable on February 6, 1970.

When first seen, the grebe was no more than 15 feet away, slightly up slope from me on gravel and rock seawall, just beginning to flap down (seaward). Startled, my first impression - from its size, rather loon-like build, and the shape of its head - was just "large grebe". Then I noticed its striking coloring: back and back of neck, very dark, right up over the crown. Upper surface of wings very dark with one large white wing patch, close to the body, on rear of wing only. These features were very clear as the bird passed right in front of me at a distance of perhaps 10 feet, with wings full spread. Later when it swam this wing patch did not show.

The underparts, neck-front and cheeks were white, the neck coloring differing noticeably from that of Holboell's "(Red-necked)" Grebe, one of which I once studied with binoculars, under good conditions, as it swam in an ice-and-water pond in the field. The grey neck front of the Holboell's Grebe shaded into darker grey at back of neck, while the white neck-front of

this grebe ended abruptly at the very dark back of neck.

This grebe differed from Holboell's Grebe also in that the face was plain white right to the dark crown - no chin-strap effect of facial markings.

Its bill was long and sharp, light in colour. I did not note colour of feet and legs; it gave no cry. It was a very large grebe - but I had never been that close to a grebe before and I do not feel capable of estimating this one's length in inches.

It flapped heavily down the rock beach and across some yards of flat sand, flapped thankfully, I'm sure, into the water, and swam off shore, nervously looking back frequently, showing erect head carriage. It did not dive while I was watching.

The grebe's journey to the water took about a minute, and I watched it swim a ways out, so that I observed it for only two minutes, more or less. The conditions were excellent: clear, noontime sun through very light cloud.

Did I realize this was an unusual record for Nova Scotia? No. Later, on reading up Western Grebes in Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds, I did notice "rare on Atlantic coast" but even that did not alert me to its rarity in Nova Scotia. Finally, before reporting it casually to Dr. Lewis, I thought I'd better check its provincial standing. So, -

I have set down the features that I saw, not many, but easily and clearly seen, and I believe that they correspond to the features illustrated and described in the Peterson Guide as those of the Western Grebe."

The only tube-nose reported during the period was a WILSON'S PETREL at Cape Sable on Oct. 19. GANNETS were seen in considerable numbers at Cape Sable (21 on Oct. 16, "plentiful" on Oct. 17); and at Pictou, where there were 83 on Nov. 8. A dead gannet picked up at Cape Sable on Oct. 14 had been banded as a young bird at Barachois, P.Q., on Sept. 9, 1967 (B.J. Smith).

GREAT BLUE HERONS were present through November at several points in central N.S., and obligingly remained for the Christmas Counts. One was seen from Jan. 1 to 11 at Cape Sable, another at Pinckney's Point, Yar. Co. on Feb. 5, and still another feeding on the tide flats at Villagedale, Shel. Co. on Feb. 6. On Oct. 23 a flock of 27 left Cape Sable and flew southwest in an erratic indecisive manner but apparently held to their course as they were not seen again. A CATTLE EGRET was present for two weeks during November in a pasture at Shag Harbor, Shel. Co.,; and another for several days following Nov. 22 at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. One GREEN HERON made a brief stopover at Cape Sable on Oct. 22.

Another sight record, a first for Nova Scotia, is of a flock of BARNACLE GEESE, seen at Port Hebert Harbor, and reported by Dr. H. F. Lewis in the Shelburne Coastguard:

"During the evening of November 20, Ranger Ed Turner walked down the west side of Port Hebert Harbour. There he saw a flock of seven geese standing by themselves on the shore. They seemed loath to fly.

On November 21st. he returned in daylight and found them still present and reluctant to fly, as though they were very tired. He approached within 50 yards of them without putting them to wing and observed details easily. He states that they were undoubtedly Barnacle Geese, an European species that is known to stray occasionally to North America, but that is not listed in Tuft's 'Birds of Nova Scotia'.

Barnacle Geese somewhat resemble Canada Geese, but are readily distinguished by their white foreheads and dark breasts. Mr. Turner describes them as "about the size of the smallest Canada Geese that occur here". They nest in East Greenland, Spitsbergen and Novaya Zemlya and winter on the coast of north-western Europe. They feed largely on marsh grass rather than on plants of tidal flats. Their note is a short, loud trumpet-like clang."

Nearly as unusual as the above is a flock of 6 BLUE GEESE which appeared at Yarmouth on Feb. 28, and are, at time of writing, being fed by Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Veinot in a field near their house. (Reported by Clark Higby.)

Five or six BLACK DUCKS eked out an existence in the Cole Harbor - Lawrencetown area despite hunters and ice-covered inlets; and a few, together with a female AMERICAN WIDGEON, joined the tame ducks and geese at Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth. Four other wintering American Widgeons were at Mabou, seen there on Dec. 28. The pre-spring build up of GREATER SCAUP at Three-Fathom Harbor began earlier than usual this year when 32 were observed there on Feb. 1 and about 60 on Feb. 8. A lone BARROW'S GOLDENEYE was at Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co. on Jan. 18, and another, or the same bird, there again on Jan. 24 (Eric Cooke). Another rarity was added to the long list for Brier Island when Eric Mills saw a female KING EIDER at about 100 yards distance, and was able to note all distinguishing marks. Date of this sighting was Dec. 22. A King Eider was seen there again by the Lents on Feb. 2. There were 25 RUDDY DUCKS at Amherst Point Sanctuary during November, and 3 at West Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. from Oct. 25 to Nov. 2. According to report, there was a strong flight of Ruddies throughout the Northeastern Maritime Region this fall.

HOODED MERGANSERS are reported from three localities: 5 at Musquodoboit Harbor Nov. 26, one at Chebogue Point, Yar. Co. on Oct. 12 and 3 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. on Oct. 25. Other duck species appear to be normal in numbers, except OLDSQUAWS are reported as very scarce at Cape Sable and RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS are uncommon along the coast near Halifax, judging from the small number of observations received.

Winter hawk reports are routine, all the regular wintering species having been seen in fair numbers. A DUCK HAWK which should have been noted in the last issue was at Chebogue Point, Yar. Co. on Oct. 13, another was seen on the

Halifax West Christmas Count; and a MARSH HAWK was at Cow Bay, Hfx. Co. on Jan. 31, uncharacteristically "hawking" over the ocean. Among the reports of BALD EAGLES it is heartening to note that several are immature birds. Still another rarity is 2 GOLDEN EAGLES seen in company with 4 Bald Eagles at French Mountain, Cape Breton, on Oct. 7 by D. and V. Hebert, American ornithologists of note, who were delighted with this sighting, relayed to us by Davis Finch. Although outside the report period, this sighting is unusual enough to justify inclusion.

Nova Scotia enjoyed a flutter in AMERICAN COOTS when a total of 38 birds was seen in various parts of the mainland during November. The largest number in one sighting was a flock of 24 near Beaver River, Yar. Co. on Nov. 11 (M.W. Hilton). One late bird was still at Cow Bay, Hfx. Co. on Dec. 14.

The mild weather in late fall encouraged many shorebirds to linger past their normal time. A few SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER were still about in November, the last being seen near Ketch Harbor, Hfx. Co. on the 22nd. There are several reports of KILLDEER from central and western N.S. during December and January, and one on Feb. 23 at Cape Sable. Two GOLDEN PLOVER were seen at Hartlen Point, near Dartmouth, on Nov. 16 and 2 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER in the same area on Nov. 22, both observations by C.R.K. Allen who claims he has witnesses that these were two different pairs of birds! This is topped, however, by a report of about 20 Black-bellies at Cape Sable on Dec. 22.

A few COMMON SNIFE overwintered in open boggy places, the last reported being 4 apparently healthy active birds at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. on Feb. 28. Dr. R. W. Tufts has requested us to ask anyone having records of wintering snipe to kindly send them to him at Wolfville, and give details especially of habitat.

A very late SOLITARY SANDPIPER was still at Cape Sable on Oct. 22. GREATER YELLOWLEGS distinguished themselves by staying for the Christmas Count in the Halifax area, an unprecedented event. A LESSER YELLOWLEGS, about a month behind schedule, was observed at Morien Bar on Nov. 1. A large flock of over 150 KNOTS touched down at Cape Sable on Oct. 27. PURPLE SANDPIPERS are reported from Cape Sable in smaller than usual numbers: 4 on Dec. 15, 6 on Dec. 28, 1 on Feb. 9 and 20+ on Feb. 17. Sixty-two were logged on the Brier Island Christmas Count, Dec. 23, and 19 on Glace Bay's Christmas Count at Port Morien.

Reports of SANDERLINGS are surprisingly light, only 8 in all, 5 from Cape Breton and one each from Pictou, Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., and Cape Sable. The last report is of 250-300 seen there on October 10.

The White-winged Gulls seem for the most part to have stayed east of the Strait of Canso this year. Single GLAUCOUS GULLS were seen twice in Cape Breton during October and November, and there was a total of 8 reports from the same region between Dec. 14 and Jan. 9. Sable Island reported 2 on Dec. 28 and Halifax 2 on Dec. 27. The greatest concentration of ICELAND GULLS was 76 logged on the Cape Breton Highlands National Park Christmas Count on Dec. 27, 94 on the Glace Bay Count on Dec. 29,

and 128 seen in Chedabucto Bay during a helicopter survey after the "Arrow" disaster. The Halifax West Christmas Count produced 20 of this species but the only other mainland records are of three singles between Jan. 12 and Feb. 16 at Cape Sable and a lone adult bird on the Halifax waterfront on Jan. 25.

Local birders pay little attention to GREAT BLACK-BACKED and HERRING GULLS except to jot down 'numerous' or 'normal' on their field cards. However, a rough proportion for the two species in the Halifax area this winter is 38 Herring Gulls to 8 Black-backs.

The largest number of RING-BILLED GULLS seen at once is the 46 reported in the Sydney Christmas Count. Singles up to 5 or 6 are seen on nearly all trips in the Halifax area but there are no reports from elsewhere.

Not content with practically all the white-winged gulls, the Cape Breton branch of the N.S.B.S. also kept the lion's share of BLACK-HEADED GULLS. They recorded a startling total of 102 on the Sydney Count Dec. 26, 5 on the National Park Count Dec. 27, also 17 on the Port Hood Count and 29 on the Glace Bay Count. Watchers in the Halifax area had to make do with singles or at best small parties of 4 to 8 birds during January and February. The only other record for this species is one seen during the Digby Count on Dec. 28. BONAPARTE'S GULLS have been absent during the winter, the last record being of 2 seen off Lingan, C.B., on Nov. 9.

Brier Island would appear to be the BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE centre of N.S. Reports of huge numbers have come from here in previous years and this past winter has been up to standard. Eric Mills and Wickerson Lent reported 1,000+ on the count day and said that this was a great understatement. Dr. Mills writes: "Since Kittiwakes were going by the island constantly for at least 8 hours, I estimated 500+ off Western Light at 1000 hours and the same number at Northern Light at 1200 hours. There were probably many thousands of birds in all, many of them working up to the N.W. in the face of a N.W. gale. They were very acrobatic and graceful, swooping and diving over the waves."

A single very late TERN is reported from Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., on Nov. 15. The bird was observed at quite close range in flight and was either an Arctic or a Common.--- in our local jargon, a COMIC TERN.

MURRES, Thick-billed and unidentified as to species, made their tragic appearance after the wreck of the tanker in Chedabucto Bay. Three dead or dying birds were picked up on Feb. 15 at Moose Bay, Guys. Co., and 3 more dead birds at Petit de Grat, Rich. Co. on Feb. 28. Nineteen others so coated with oil that they could not be easily identified were found along the shore in the Chedabucto Bay area on Feb. 15. Other sightings of live and healthy Murres are 2 at Osborne Head on Nov. 27, and 5 at Brier Island Dec. 27. Dr. R. W. Tufts tells of picking up a THICK-BILLED MURRE at Coldbrook, Kings Co., on Dec. 14. The bird was very thin but when placed in the

Cornwallis River headed downstream for Blomidon after eluding repeated attacks by a Great Black-backed Gull.

Another Alcid which met disaster this past season was the DOVEKIE. On the morning of Nov. 1 several were seen flying inland over Osborne Head at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, although the day was calm so that there could be no suggestion of their being blown ashore. On the afternoon of the same day, a steady eastward flight was observed just off the beach at West Lawrencetown as birds passed continuously, in singles or groups of up to 6 or 7. On the following morning at Sandy Cove just west of the mouth of Halifax Harbour about a dozen Dovekies were seen in shallow water at the head of the Cove, struggling to keep from being washed ashore by a fresh southerly wind. One dead bird was found here which seemed to be in an extremely emaciated condition. Another visit to West Lawrencetown on the afternoon of the 2nd. found an even more concentrated flight still to the eastward, and a dying bird on the dunes back of the beach. This bird too appeared to be in an advanced state of starvation. Two days later (Nov. 4) a live Dovekie was picked up at Caledonia, Queen's Co., 35 miles from the nearest salt water. It died the following day. Davis Finch reports that this disaster was part of a larger pattern which extended all the way from N.S. to Rhode Island. Speculations as to cause are idle but it is reasonable to guess that it was due to a major widespread failure of some important food item.

Later Dovekie records of singles or several birds seen as late as mid-February from Cape Breton to Yarmouth indicate that some survived.

The only BLACK GUILLEMOT reports are from the extreme ends of the province: 10 seen between Oct. and mid-Feb. in Cape Breton, 3 at Cape Sable Dec. 27, and 20 at Brier Island on Jan. 1. Two COMMON PUFFINS added spice to the St. Peter's, Richmond Co., Christmas Count on Dec. 27.

MOURNING DOVES, 42 in all, have been seen in coastwise regions (with 2 exceptions of one bird each in Round Hill, Anna. Co. and Big Intervale, Inv. Co.). Fourteen of these doves were seen on Cape Sable, 21 in the Halifax-Chezzetcook area, and there are no reports since Christmas. One YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO Nov. 9 was observed near Port Maitland, Yar. Co. by Leta Delaney, and one other "freshly killed and mostly eaten by a predator", Nov. 18, at Round Hill, Anna. Co., was found by W. E. Whitehead.

This was not a SNOWY OWL year, but 2 have been noted, 1, Dec. 17, at Starr's Point, King's Co. by Dr. R. W. Tufts, and 1, Dec. 23 at Mabou, Inv. Co., by Eugene Hawley.

At least 10 BELTED KINGFISHERS stayed the winter, 5 in Cape Breton, 5 on the mainland in the Yarmouth-Shelburne-Queens area. Ross Dobson, Park Naturalist at Kejimikujik wrote that the HAIRY WOODPECKER was much less plentiful than the DOWNY in the park, and W. E. Whitehead noted the same thing in the Annapolis Valley. We have a few more BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS, 1, Oct. 13, at Petite Riviere, Lun. Co., 1, Nov. 19 at Kejimikujik, and 1, Dec. 23 at Ingonish, besides those seen on

the Christmas Counts.

A laggard EASTERN KINGBIRD stayed until Oct. 18, seen at Port Williams by Ethel Crathorne, and this year no Westerns have been reported. HORNED LARKS as usual were first noted in numbers in Cape Breton, 40+ on Oct. 9 at Cheticamp Island; then a flock of 20+ Oct. 19 at Eastern Passage, Hfx. Co. built up to 200 or more in the vicinity by Nov. 1, and rapidly dwindled to the vanishing point. Further reports are in the Christmas Counts and have come in from Yarmouth county of November flocks of up to 30 birds, a few still there until Feb. 14; and 15 at Brier Island Feb. 19. J. S. Erskine reported these larks less common than usual around Wolfville.

The swallow story this year is most extraordinary. In 1939 and again in 1948 (Tufts: The Birds of Nova Scotia) TREE SWALLOWS stayed in N.S. in some numbers up to mid-November. This year we have records extending to late January, when 2 Tree Swallows were watched flying over a swamp at Port Maitland, Yar. Co. The observers, the Edgar Crosbys, report one bird still around on Jan. 25, and "believe it exists on the little bugs and spiders that come up on the snow, and the bayberries, plentiful this year around the open swamp". It is possible that these birds were survivors of a "flock" of 3 seen by Israel Pothier Nov. 12 to 17 at Wedgeport, but other reports are widely scattered up the coast: 5, flying over the dunes at Clam Bay, Nov. 23 (C.R.K. Allen); 3, West Middle Sable, Nov. 25 (Harrison Lewis in the Shelburne Coastguard); and 1, at Barrington Passage, Dec. 26 (the Arthur Coffills).

Almost as extraordinary was the sighting of a BANK SWALLOW, Nov. 9, "in flight along shore, occasionally heading seaward, then coming back to shore" at Cape Sable by the Sidney Smiths; and of a BARN SWALLOW, hawking over the beach Nov. 8 near Sambro, Hfx. Co., by C.R.K. Allen. The Smiths also wrote to Dr. Lewis of 3 Barn Swallows, present in late November at South Side, Cape Sable Is., which appeared to have "taken up residence in a large fish packing building where they seemed determined to spend the winter" according to Dolph Cunningham, who first spotted them.

The GRAY JAY has been around in good numbers this winter, but observations of the BLUE JAY are conflicting. Lewis reports it scarce in Shelburne County; Whitehead "usual numbers" in the Annapolis Valley; Holdway "more than usual numbers...no doubt due to the increase in the areas planted with corn in 1969" at Pictou; and Neily "usual" in Cape Breton. Driving along a silent and apparently lifeless woods road in Hants County, C.R.K. Allen became aware of a sudden commotion, and Blue Jays came boiling out of the trees, 25 in all, and half-a-dozen crows with them, giving what he described as their "mobbing cry". They dropped out of sight and from where they dropped a Goshawk rose and winged away quite unperturbed. This was the afternoon of Jan. 11, and Allen concluded there were more birds in the wood than usually meet the eye.

If anyone wishes to make a study of the COMMON RAVEN, visit the "Piggery" outside of Dartmouth. There are always ravens there, but more in late winter, and the count at present (early

March) is 60, which is impressive when they rise in a body from so small an area. The COMMON CROW has been abundant all winter, generally distributed, the first and last and sometimes the only land bird seen on late February field trips.

As mentioned above, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES have been present in good numbers this winter, but BOREALS less so, in the woods at any rate. A puzzling incident occurred in Halifax, when, on Oct. 14 ten chickadees of both species were picked up dead on the campus of the Nova Scotia Technical College, close by the wall of the recently erected buildings. On the 15th. two more were found and another 2 on the 16th. An original suspicion of poisoning was quickly discarded in favor of accidental death; that is, that the birds, unaccustomed to finding a building on their flyway, had killed themselves by flying against the windows during a migratory movement. This was confirmed with rare neatness when on one of these days a student passing near the building heard a light thump and saw a chickadee fall to the ground.

"An invasion" of Black-caps at Cape Sable, Nov. 27, marks one wave of migration of this species; for the Boreal, we have a report of 40+ in the Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. area Oct. 19, an apparent movement, according to observers familiar with the territory. Davis Finch has written that Boreals last fall staged one of the "real flights of the year, unprecedented numbers pushing far south". These chickadees did appear at feeders throughout the winter, reported very generally, and in two cases, were noted on the trays. Ray Bowditch actually saw one eating sunflower seed. The reason for this note is that it has often been questioned that the boreal birds eat foods provided at feeding stations, but are simply "present", perhaps attracted by the other birds there.

The WHITE-BREASTED and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES have been noted by observers in all parts of the province, and as far as our records show, in equal numbers. A noticeable thing is the number of BROWN CREEPERS seen, both in the woods and at feeders, a dozen or more reports, and again, seen on feeding trays, at any rate investigating the food. These birds also showed very general distribution, from Yarmouth to Victoria counties. A HOUSE WREN lit at Cape Sable Oct. 13 (Betty June Smith). A WINTER WREN stayed at the Piggery, near Dartmouth, at least until Jan. 10, noted there by Ian McLaren and his bird-census-taking students.

Four MOCKINGBIRD reports have come from Glace Bay during the winter - whether of 4 birds or 1 is anybody's guess. The only other reports for the period are: 1 at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. on Nov. 1, one on the Digby Christmas Count, and 1 at Lockeport, Jan. 28. A rather late CATBIRD appeared at Cape Sable on Oct. 22, and a really tardy one at Cole Harbor on Nov. 1. All BROWN THRASHER records are from the extreme southwestern end of the province. There were 2 or 3 birds at Cape Sable from Oct. 23 to 28, one at Arcadia, Yar. Co. from Nov. 9 to 11, and one at a feeding station in Sable River on Jan. 16 and again on Feb. 15.

ROBINS went through as usual in great successive waves

from October to the middle of November. They harvested this year's bumper crop of rowan berries and then petered out quickly to the normal winter population of singles or small flocks in and about towns where hawthorn berries were available.

Other thrushes contributed their stragglers to the record: there was a GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH at Cape Sable on Oct. 21, a SWAINSON'S at Round Hill, Anna. Co. on Oct. 28, a VEERY at Wedgeport on Nov. 1 and a HERMIT at the Dartmouth Piggery on Jan. 8.

Another sight record of a BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER has been sent in by Wayne Neily. The sighting was on Oct. 12, at Sydney, by Betty Reid, and the description of the bird detailed and accurate.

Ross Dobson says the GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET is abundant in the hemlock stands at Kejimikujik (a name never intended to be written). Elsewhere they have been difficult to find, particularly late February and early March, although well reported on most Christmas Counts. A few fall RUBY-CROWNS were usual, but 1, Nov. 22 at Yarmouth (noted in her garden by Mrs. Aaron Churchill) and 1, Dec. 31 on the Baddeck Christmas Count are exceptionally late records.

The WATER PIPIT arrived 32 strong Oct. 9 at Cape Sable; 52 were seen at Chebogue, Yar. CO., Oct. 12; 50, at Wedgeport Oct. 13; and 30+ at Eastern Passage, Hfx. Co. Oct. 19. Thereafter a few reports from the same areas are of smaller and smaller flocks, 12 at Cape Sable Jan. 1 being the last report received, and none from other parts of the province.

BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS appeared again this year but as a feeble echo of last year's invasion. There were 1 or 2 flocks of about a dozen birds at the Sydneys from Dec. 6 to 19; a flock of 12 at Pictou on Dec. 26 increased to 21 by Jan. 1 and shrank to 9 by Jan. 9. Eight were recorded from Wolfville on the 12th. of January, 3 at Hebron, Yar. Co. on Jan. 20 and 1 at Liverpool on Feb. 7 and 8.

CEDAR WAXWINGS were plentiful during the fall but had departed by Nov. 15. The only record for winter is of 1 at Greenwich, King's Co., on Jan. 4.

A total of 6 NORTHERN SHRIKES has been reported: 4 from Cape Breton between Dec. 8 and Feb. 19; one at Dartmouth on Nov. 22 and another also in Dartmouth on Jan. 2.

B. J. Smith reports 1,000 STARLINGS leaving the country via Cape Sable on Oct. 19. No doubt they will return in due course.

A good record of an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (the 6th. or 7th.?? for Nova Scotia) has come in from C.R.K. Allen, who watched it for a considerable length of time close at hand, in the shrubby back of the Halifax County Home Oct. 25. A laggard PARULA was noted Nov. 1 at Wedgeport. Sizable flocks of MYRTLES were noteworthy Oct. 12 to 26 in Halifax, Lunenburg and Yarmouth counties, thereafter one was rarely encountered in the field.

Myrtles often winter here successfully, but they had been invisible so long it was a pleasant surprise to see a flock of 12 flitting about the trees in Glen Margaret, Hfx. Co., on Mar. 1. They were, of course, in drab winter plumage, but otherwise appeared to be in good condition. A rare winter record of a BLACKBURNIAN, Dec. 24, comes from Yarmouth, and a number of PALMS have been seen, the latest one Jan. 20 at Marion Bridge, Cape Breton Co. Wayne Nelly quotes the Husseys (who saw it) as writing: "Our poor Palm Warbler....came faithfully (but) was not seen after Jan. 20, when we had the zero weather".

There have been 12 stray YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS observed in Yarmouth, Shelburne, Halifax and Annapolis counties, and 2 of them on the Eskasoni, Cape Breton Co. Christmas Count. On Nov. 20 at Annapolis Royal, M. Wetmore noted a WILSON'S WARBLER, and another, Dec. 1, was seen at Wolfville "hunched in a snowy bush" by J. S. Erskine. A few AMERICAN REDSTARTS were late getting away, seen on Cape Sable in Oct., the last one there Nov. 16.

A most unusual laggard was a female BOBOLINK, which puzzled a number of people in Yarmouth town, and was finally identified by Clark Higby, at whose feeder it stayed from Dec. 19 to Jan. 7.

The MEADOWLARK as usual has been observed more often since October than in the summer. Several visited Cape Sable up to Dec. 9; 1, West Middle Sable, Shel. Co., Nov. 1; 5 (4 in one place, 1 in another) in the Chezzetcook area, Hfx. Co. Nov. 11 and Jan. 18; and 1, Pinckney's Point, Yar. Co. Jan. 27. Fifteen in all, of these birds have been reported for the season.

The REDWINGED BLACKBIRD made a clean sweep at migration, very, very few have lingered this year. The last record of any number is of 10 to 12, Oct. 23 at Tusket, Yar. Co. Since then, as far as we know, 3 individuals only have been seen, at feeders, with the exception of 6, all females, feeding with a flock of Cowbirds, Feb. 7 at Pictou. Eric Holdway, who sent in the record, wrote "most unusual, I've never before seen females earlier than May 10th."

A dozen or more BALTIMORE ORIOLES lingered up until Christmas, generally distributed, none reported since.

RUSTY BLACKBIRDS and the COMMON GRACKLE were observed in mixed migratory flocks numbering in the thousands, in early November, up to the 9th., at Annapolis Royal and in Yarmouth County, and have been extremely scarce since. Two grackles at Sable River Nov. 28, 1 at Portuguese Cove, Hfx. Co. Dec. 6, and 1 on the Glace Bay Christmas Count Dec. 29 indicates nothing much except the widespread scarcity. The BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD reverses the picture, having been scarce all fall, and then plentiful from late December on. The flocks mentioned numbered from 20 to 500 birds, and distribution was general. A SCARLET Tanager "female or winter male, tanager size and shape, green above, yellow below, dark wings, no wing-bars" appeared Nov. 11 in a backyard at Brazil Lake, Yar. Co., observed by the Arthur Neals, D. Kirk and M. Hilton.

The DICKCISSEL has been reported from Yarmouth, Shelburne, Annapolis, Lunenburg, Halifax and Inverness counties, 18 birds in all, from Oct. 13 (at Tusket, Yar. Co.) to the present date, Mar. 10, when 1 or 2 are known to be still present at feeders in the Halifax vicinity.

The EVENING GROSBEAK has been fairly abundant all winter, and evenly distributed. The flocks at feeders number 30 to 100 birds. One or 2 of these grosbeaks wandered to Cape Sable during October, where the Smiths say they have been coming in small numbers since 1965. An albino Evening Grosbeak caused some comment in Shelburne County, where it was seen in several localities, probably the same bird, is the opinion of Dr. Harrison Lewis, who reported it in the Shelburne Coastguard. An all-white grosbeak, but for a yellow patch on its head, it travelled with the flock, but like most albinos, seemed shy and unaggressive.

Except for a few in Sydney in late January, the PURPLE FINCH disappeared from the scene Oct. 27, according to our reports. PINE GROSBEAKS, on the other hand, remained plentiful and widespread until late February, when they became less evident at any rate. COMMON REDPOLLS, as mentioned in the introduction, were encountered rarely but regularly throughout the winter (Oct. 30 to Feb. 22 in our records) in flocks up to 250 individuals, with a rare 1 or 2 at feeders. The Oct. 30 occurrence oddly enough was on Cape Sable, the last date, Feb. 22, 55 birds at the top of Smoky, Vict. Co. Ralph Johnson of Liverpool mentioned 12-18 Redpolls in the birch trees back of his house during February, the first he had seen there since 1958. J. S. Erskine reported Redpolls abundant around Wolfville up to the end of Dec., when his report was received.

The PINE SISKIN appeared in sizable flocks (80+) in Yarmouth and Halifax counties during October, then went into partial eclipse until very recently. Since the first of March, Siskins are reported "building up" at feeders, in the same localities. Ray Bowditch had 25, at Armdale, Hfx. Co., at last report.

The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH remained in fair abundance until the end of December, thereafter was rarely encountered in the field. Small flocks (6 to 20 birds) have stayed the winter at feeding stations throughout the province.

Only two records of the RED CROSSBILL have reached us; 1, Nov. 23, with a flock of White-wings in the Clam Bay area, Hfx. Co.; and 2, Mar. 1, at East Dover, Hfx. Co., both sent in by C.R.K.Allen.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS, common all summer, appeared regularly in wooded areas, in small flocks (10 to 30 birds), most sightings in December. Thereafter they have slowly dwindled, the last reports being both for Feb. 14, 2 birds in Yarmouth, 3 in Halifax counties.

TOWHEES appear wherever birdwatchers are concentrated. There are 13 reports for the period Oct. 20 - Jan. 18; 5 from Yarmouth and immediate vicinity, 3 from Shelburne Co., 3 from

the Halifax-Dartmouth area and 1 each from Kentville and Glace Bay. One wonders how many attempted to winter in Hants, Colchester and other counties where observers are "rare or accidental".

SAVANNAH SPARROWS did not appear to winter in their usual numbers in the coastal areas near Halifax this year despite the open winter; there was one report of 6 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., on Dec. 14, and none thereafter. The only other observation is of 1 at Prospect, Hfx. Co. on Jan. 25. A dead GRASSHOPPER SPARROW was picked up by Beverley Smith at Cape Sable on Oct. 23 and forwarded to the N.S. Museum.

Three OREGON JUNCOS have been reported: 1 from Village-dale, Shel. Co. Nov. 1, 1 from Dartmouth Jan. 8 and 1 from Yarmouth Feb. 15. This species hybridizes freely with Slate-colored Juncos and it is difficult to say whether the bird observed is a pure-bred or a hybrid. The Yarmouth bird was, however, clearly and sharply marked and could very well have been of unmixed ancestry.

SLATE-COLOURED JUNCO observations indicate that they are present in normal winter numbers and TREE SPARROWS commoner than in most winters, though not as plentiful as in 68-69.

Several WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS were seen in late October in the vicinity of Halifax and up to 4 at one time during the same period at Cape Sable.

A few FOX SPARROWS lingered at Dartmouth Piggery until early January, but SWAMP SPARROWS, common there in October had disappeared by early Nov, although reported from the Sydney area as late as Dec. 29 (Christmas Counts). SONG SPARROWS as usual wintered in small numbers over the whole province.

Thirteen LAPLAND LONGSPURS at Glace Bay Sanctuary on Oct. 26 is the largest number of this species reported. The only other observations to hand are of 1 to 3 birds at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. Oct. 25 - Nov. 2 and of 3 at nearby Cow Bay Dec. 14.

SNOW BUNTINGS went through with a rush in late fall. The Smiths at Cape Sable report 2 Oct. 22, 35 Oct. 23, and "many" Oct. 30-31. Thirty were seen at Lawrencetown Oct. 25, 200+ in the same locality Nov. 1 and 5 on Nov. 2. None thereafter from either area. The only other report of any numbers is of 200 at Scotchtown, C.B., (no date given) and of 24 at Kejimkujik on Nov. 4.

Feeding Stations

Descriptions of bird population and behaviour at feeding stations were full of interest and information as usual. Twenty-five to thirty species were in casual to regular attendance: Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Gray and Blue Jays, Black-capped and Boreal Chickadees, White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches, the Brown Creeper, Robin, Starling, House Sparrow, a few Redwinged Blackbirds, Grackles, many Cowbirds, a few Dickcissels, Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, American Goldfinch, White-winged Crossbill, Rufous-sided Towhee, Slate-colored Junco, and Tree, White-crowned, White-throated, Fox and Song Sparrows.

Baltimore Orioles, fairly frequent visitors in late fall, disappeared after Christmas. The probable Oregon Juncos mentioned in the above main report were at the Richardsons' in Shelburne Co., at the Topples' at Lake Loon, Hfx. Co., and at the Nickersons' in Yarmouth. The last-mentioned bird was described as follows: seen 10 feet from window, light bill, black head, pinky-buff sides, brownish back, light belly, outer tail feathers white. The outstanding oddity of the winter was the female Bobolink at Clark Higby's in Yarmouth, which fed by preference on the suet stick. It appeared first on Dec. 21, and was last reported Jan. 5. At Bass River Joyce Starratt had a Robin, red-breasted but otherwise white with a few dark spots on the back and wings, a very strange looking bird!

As a rule, people find their chickadees most engaging, admire the handsome lordly Evening Grosbeaks, tolerate the Starlings and English Sparrows, but have little patience with the Cowbirds, especially when they arrive 100 strong to clean up spread seed like a vacuum cleaner. Hawks too are unpopular, and Sharpshins, Pigeon and Sparrow Hawks took some toll at most feeding stations this winter.

Dr. J. B. Hardie of Pine Hill, Halifax, has expressed concern about the dubious behavior of some of his woodpeckers. Usually the most exemplary of birds, he has noted a triangle, a female Hairy and a male Downy, who travel and feed together, and a female Downy who arrives to chase her mate away (from the female Hairy) and replaces him at the side of the interloper. Possibly this irregular association could explain the parentage of that curious hybrid mentioned some time ago in our Instant Birdwatching column, the Fuzzy Woodpecker (Dick Brown, please note).



Contributors to this fall and winter report have been: Allen, C.; Babcock, Mrs. R.; Banks, D.; Barbarita, Mrs. J.; Belliveau, R.; Bowdich, R.; Burke, A.; Chant, E.; Christie, D.; Churchill, Mrs. A.; Clayden, M.; Coffill, B.; Cohrs, S.; Cooke, E.; Crathorne, E.; Crosby, E.; Cunningham, N.; Delaney, L.; Dieltgens, R.; Dobson, F. and E.; Dobson, R.; Dwyer, M.; Eaton, M. and R.; Erskine, J.S.; Finch, D.; Findlay, D.; Fullerton, S.; Gray, R.; Guillena, J.; Hardie, J.; Harvey, C.; Hawley, E.; Higby, C.; Hillier, W.; Hilton, M.; Hinds, B.; Holdway, E.; Hopkins, H.; Hughes, R.; Hurlburt, A.; Hurlburt, H.; Hussy, F.; Jeffries, D. and C.; Johnson, R.; Kirk, D.; Lent, W. and M.; Lewis, E.; Lewis, H. (from the Shelburne Coastguard); Lunn, J. and G.; MacInnis, E.; MacIntosh, G.; MacKenzie, Mrs. E.; MacLaren, I.; MacLaughlin, Mrs. J.; MacLean, S.; MacLeod, E.; Mills, E. and A.; Mills, W.; Morris, Mrs. D.; Neal, A. and L.; Neily, W.; Nickerson, G.; Nickerson, M.; O'Callighan, M.; Pearce, P.; Pothier, J.; Purdy, O.; Reid, B.; Reid, C.; Richardson, M. and E.; Robertson, F.; Saunders, A.; Smith, B.F.; Smith, Beverley; Smith, S. and B.; Sollows, V.; Starratt, J.; Stockley, M.; Stubbert, E.; Topple, B.; Tufts, R.; Unwin, Mrs. A.; Welch, D.; Wetmore, M.; Whitehead, W.; Williamson, H.

To all of the above, sincerest thanks, from the Editor.

Corrections

In the Nova Scotia Bird Society Newsletter, Volume 11, Number 1, April, 1969, page 30, a Sora Rail should read Virginia Rail. Dr. R. W. Tufts, who was misquoted, points out that the immature Sora is not black, and that the Virginia Rail was of particular interest to him, in this plumage so late in the season (Nov. 11).

Dr. Tufts has also sent in notification that the possible Western Sandpiper, collected at Brier Island last September, and reported in the Newsletter (Vol. 11: 101, 1969) has been identified as a Semi-palmated Sandpiper (*Ereunetes pusillus*). Several experts were puzzled by this bird because of its enlarged bill, but both Dr. Earl Godfrey at Ottawa and Dr. Jos. Aldrich in Washington agree that the study skin made from the bird sent to them was that of a Semi-palmated. The Western Sandpiper returns to hypothetical status.

ANY GREAT BLUE HERON COLONIES?

Dr. Robie W. Tufts has asked us to issue an appeal for

information on Nova Scotia colonies of Great Blue Herons. He would like to know: exact location, number of active nests, and the latest date when the colony was known to be occupied. Any members having information on such colonies are asked to write to Dr. Tufts at Wolfville, or to the Editor, who will pass it along.

Sighting of an Albatross

by E. Thompson

"I thought you might be interested in my notes on the albatross sighting from the "Bluenose" on July 12, 1968. First I might note that it was one of my best crossings ever for numbers with Greater Shearwater (504), Sooty Shearwater (6), Leach's Petrel (527), Wilson's Petrel (201). The numbers of Leach's Petrels were (are) unprecedented in my experience with over 150 in view together at one point. Anyway, this is what I wrote to Robert Woodruff last year:

I left one bird off the 7-12 list (unfortunately a trip I made alone). I first picked up the bird at a great distance as it approached from my left. Although we were passing through a fair sized concentration of petrels at the moment, something persuaded me to stick with it. After about ten seconds, although it clearly appeared to be a procellariiform, I was beginning to realize that this was no regular shearwater. It was showing alternately its upper and underside, coming along with no noticable wing movements. Also, there was something wrong about its wing and body proportions. By now I was making out an all-white head and white rump, and all-white underparts. It was my good fortune that the bird kept approaching, and was going to pass directly in front of the ship. I was impressed by the size of the bird, clearly much larger than the Greater Shearwaters which were around, in fact giving the impression of being twice as large, and perhaps even more by the tautness of its wings -- for some reason they reminded me of paper stretched over a kite frame -- being quite unlike any shearwaters I had ever seen. It did pass directly in front of me, at perhaps 75 yards, at which point the black edgings on the under wings were more or less noticable. Although I strained, I could not make out any yellow in or at the base of its bill -- it appeared overall black. The bird was seen about 30-35 miles from the Nova Scotia coast on the trip to Yarmouth.

I believe the bird in question to be an albatross (the first I have ever seen), the odds very much favoring a Yellow-nosed although from the description the Gray-headed is not eliminated. If, however, yellow was in fact missing from the bill, then the bird almost certainly was an immature Yellow-nosed as the head was not gray and the under wings not mostly dark as

would be true for the Gray-headed."

The above record was sent to us by Davis Finch, Editor, Northeastern Region, Audubon Field Notes, who comments: "This record has never been published but I think it is about as 'good' as such a sight record can be. Ed is wholly reliable....and I consider his caviat about Gray-headed Albatross to be over-cautious. As you know, there are specimen records of Yellow-nosed Albatross for Quebec, N.B., and Maine, and a photograph record off N.Y. in 1960."

In another communication from Mr. Thompson, a trip on the "Bluenose", Sept. 30, 1969, is described:

"The trip over was uneventful: G. Shearwater (131), Wilson's Petrel (6), Leach's Petrel (7), Petrel (sp.) (3), Red Phalarope (63), N. Phalarope (31), Phalarope (sp.) (135), Parasitic Jaeger (1), G. Cormorant (15), R.-R. Auk (2), W.-w. Crossbill, R.-th. Hummer, P. Finch. On the return we had: G. Shearwater (85), Sooty Shearwater (1), Leach's Petrel (3), Petrel (sp.) (1), Red Phalarope (41), N. Phalarope (1), Phalarope (sp.) (22), Gannet (4) (3 immature, 1 subadult), Sabine's Gull (3 adults about 10-12 miles from Yarmouth). The sea was extremely rough for about the first two hours of the return and then became very calm. Curiously, every bird we saw on the return was within about 20 - 25 miles off Yarmouth, most of the Shearwaters and Phalaropes well within sight of land. There was a two-hour period before dark when we saw not a single bird.

Another item of possible interest: Dovekies have been sensational all along the Maine coast. On Nov. 2 I saw over 100 in one-half hour at Schoodic Point, and I heard that the day before they were passing at the rate of almost 500 per hour. I have seen at least a few on every visit to the coast since, the last being Nov. 29 when we had 17 along Deer Isle."

Davis Finch says he has credited us (N.S.) with the Sabine's Gulls. Most of the pelagic (and land) birds mentioned have been seen, or at least glimpsed, from our shores, but anyone wishing for a better look should pick a clear day and make this crossing. We have discussed the possibility of a Society field day aboard the Bluenose, but gave it up due to the unpredictability of the weather, and the difficulty of the overnight stay, Yarmouth to Bar Harbor and back. This, of course, need be no deterrent to individuals.

SUMMER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE, 1970

May trips, Halifax area:

- May 13 - Pockwock - meet at turnoff to Pockwock from the Hammonds Plains Road at 6.30 a.m.
Eric Mills.
- May 20 - Brookside Road - meet at turnoff to Brookside Road from the Prospect Road at 6.30 a.m.
Fred Dobson.
- May 27 - Susie Lake - meet at the Armdale Rotary at 6.00 a.m.
Ben Doane.
- May 30 - all day in Hants County - meet at Mt. Uniacke at the old railway crossing at 8.00 a.m.
C.R.K. Allen.

Provincial Trips:

- June 13 - AMHERST POINT SANCTUARY. President Eric Mills. Meet at the Information Bureau, N.S. - N.B. Border at 6.30 a.m. Latecomers will be met at 8.30 at the same place.
- June 28 - Pleasant Bay, Inverness Co. Wayne Nelly. Meet at intersection of the Cabot Trail and the Red River Road at 8.00 a.m.
- July 19 - Carleton, etc., Yarmouth Co. C.R.K. Allen. Meet at Carleton Post Office at 7.30 a.m.
- August 30 - Port Joli, Queens Co. B. K. Doane. Meet at the turnoff from Route 3, at the old schoolhouse (now Community Centre) at 8.30 a.m.

Cape Breton trips to be announced later.

SPRING MIGRATION REPORTS DUE JUNE 21.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Ian McLaren

The past year was a relatively quiet one for the Nova Scotia Bird Society, which probably means that the end of my term as President is timely and due. Dr. Mills and his fresh visions will be welcomed by all.

This is not to say that some of our more important activities have lapsed. In particular, our Newsletter continues to grow in size and substance. Special thanks must again be rendered to its busy Editor, Mrs. Dobson, and to the Nova Scotia Museum, which doubled its usual grant in aid of publication of the Newsletter. In addition, the admirable efforts of Mrs. Dobson and Mr. C. Allen produced a booklet on bird-finding in Nova Scotia. This has proven very successful, and copies have been snapped up by tourist bureaus and associations as an inducement and aid for bird-watching visitors.

Our other contributions to the public good may seem slender. As I stated in my annual report of last year, I think that we should resist becoming too deeply committed as a society to conservation issues. This past year has seen the proliferation and activation of groups devoted to environmental quality in Nova Scotia. This is good, but one senses the danger that more organization will lead to more mutual hand-wringing and less action on specific issues. I think that, for the present, the Society should act only when its somewhat narrow concerns are clearly involved. I would like to see a well-founded federation of like-minded societies in Nova Scotia, preferably with a salaried executive head, through which our group could act on larger issues. In the meantime, your President and Executive have been involved in small ways. For example, we helped to block plans for a naval bombardment range on a wild and roadless coastal tract of Guysborough County, by contributing letters; TV interviews, and by involvement in public meetings with authorities. However, similar tactics were unsuccessful in getting restrictions on destructive use of the dune beach of Martinique Beach Sanctuary in Halifax County. Dr. Mills and our new executive members will have to become involved in such matters.

I think our most important activities are pleasureable. Again our members in the Halifax and Sydney regions benefitted from evening meetings in winter. I regret that the larger metropolis, where the "action" is supposed to be, and where most of the executive live, was quite outclassed by the Cape Breton Branch, who hold monthly meetings at Sydney; my congratulations to them. For our more scattered members, the Newsletter is perhaps the primary return for their dues. It is therefore a great pleasure to see that most of the letters and articles in the Newsletter come from such members. I urge all contributors to send in their field notes on time (deadlines in each Newsletter). I have also spoken to some good birders around the province who unfortunately are simply not in the habit of sending their notes in at all; please do. Perhaps most important for our new members are field trips. Our five all-day trips on the mainland and eight on Cape Breton, and even those early morning trips near

Halifax that were not rained out, were all well attended. If you haven't enjoyed that curious blend of competition and co-operation that motivates a roving band of birdwatchers, read Wayne Neily's wry accounts of the Cape Breton trips in the November 1969 Newsletter.

Finally it is my pleasure to thank some members for their work on behalf of the Society or its aims in 1969; my thanks to other members of the executive may be taken for granted. Again we benefitted from the wise counsel of Robert Kanigsberg, Q.C.; Willett Mills, always of help to us in many ways, audited our accounts and, with C. Allen and Dr. Lloyd Macpherson, acted as trustee of our Sanctuary and Scholarship Fund (please remember this). Dr. Macpherson again collated our Christmas bird census for publication in the Newsletter and elsewhere. Members will be pleased to learn that Dr. Robie Tufts is revising his "Birds of Nova Scotia"; so much has happened since the first edition that he is kept very busy. I cannot single out the many members who have contributed time and effort to projects such as the Breeding Bird Surveys in spring (out before dawn) and the Maritime Nest Records Scheme, but we are grateful to all.

With that I take leave to become a Past President, perhaps more appropriate to my "figurehead" inclinations. I assure you that you all have given me much more pleasure than I have been able to repay in service.

Executive officers elected at the General Meeting of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, Dec. 10, 1969, for the year 1969-1970 are as follows:

President:	Dr. Eric Mills
Vice-President:	Dr. B. K. Doane
Secretary-Treasurer:	Miss Molly Clayden
Membership Secretary:	Miss Ethel Crathorne
Editor:	Mrs. J. W. Dobson
Cape Breton Branch Representative:	Mr. Wayne Neily
Members of the Executive:	Miss Sylvia Fullerton
	Mr. Ross Anderson
	Mr. Ross Dobson

On behalf of the Society as a whole, sincere thanks to those of our members who without fanfare or kudos spent many weary hours extracting notes for the Newsletter, folding papers, stuffing envelopes, pounding the address-o-graph, licking acres of stamps, and manhandling heavy boxes of mail into their cars and down to the post box, late in the evening. One minute's silence, please!

- P. R. Dobson, Editor

Dr. McLaren speaks for many of us in saying that our chief benefits from the Nova Scotia Bird Society are pleasurable, and should be.

Nevertheless, he was not unmindful of our responsibilities, and to this end invited Dr. Donald Dodds of Acadia University to speak to us at the Annual Meeting concerning environmental care. Dr. Dodds' address was forceful and to the point. He warned us to think carefully about the development of industries, to overcome regional disparity. Stepped up industry brings in its train more people, requiring more regulation, less personal freedom, a deterioration of the environment and consequently of both mental and physical health; and on a wider scale, international resource competition which can and does result in war. Is one really better off having more money and living in a crowded and ruined environment? Dr. Dodds suggested that we should not waste too much effort on a "brush fire" approach (i.e. saving one small cherished area) but direct our major efforts towards watchfulness of the whole region, if we are interested in maintaining or improving our present natural surroundings.

CAPE BRETON NOTES

A 50 per cent increase in membership during the late fall and winter season brought the membership of the Cape Breton Branch of the N. S. Bird Society to 106 at the time of writing. At the time of the formation of the Cape Breton Branch, in the fall of 1966, 35 members from Cape Breton Island were registered with the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

The Society has been fortunate in being provided free quarters for their meetings, held on the last Friday of October, November, January, February, March and April, in the James McConnell Memorial Library in Sydney. Special speakers, films and slide shows on birds and other nature subjects are featured.

Of special interest this winter was a slide show of native flowering plants by Miss Katherine MacLennan of Sydney. In February, the society broke from the regular pattern and held its monthly meeting in the Miner's Museum at Glace Bay, where Wayne Neily, Naturalist at the Cape Breton Highlands National Park, gave an illustrated talk on Atlantic Parks.

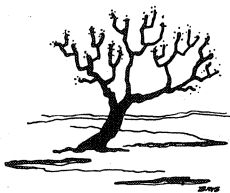
A large part of the membership joined in the Christmas Count which was conducted in 10 zones on the island, one more than the previous year.

During February plans were made for a series of late winter and early spring field trips, including: a survey of part of the Isle Madame shore affected by oil from the wrecked tanker Arrow (28 Feb. '70); "Stories in the Snow", a study of animal and bird tracks, to be held in the C.B. Highlands National Park on March 14 under the leadership of Wayne Neily; "Tree and Shrub Identification" on the Morrison Road between Birch Grove and the Sydney-Louisbourg Highway on March 22 (Sunday afternoon) will be under the direction of Mrs. D. A. MacLean of Glace Bay.

Two field trips on "Spring Migration of Water Birds", aimed at people who are free to participate on Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays, will be held in the Glace Bay Sanctuary - Morien Beach area on April 8 (2 - 4 p.m.) and April 11 (9 - 4). On April 25, a day-long trip to the Mabou area is scheduled to check on "Spring Migration of Land and Water Birds" to be led by Robert McNeil. Scheduling of later "birding" trips from May through September, has been postponed, waiting for announcement of the Provincial Trips, so that no conflict of dates will ensue.

Officers of the Cape Breton Branch for the year 1970 are:

President:	Mrs. C.B. Reid, Sydney
Vice-President:	Frank Robertson, New Waterford
Secretary-Treasurer:	Francis MacKinnon, New Waterford
Recording Secretary:	Wayne Neily, Ingonish Beach



CHRISTMAS COUNTS IN NOVA SCOTIA - 1969

Edited by L.B.Macpherson

Despite the fact that more counts were made last year, more people participated last year and many species were scarcer this year, last year's record high of 114 species identified was raised to a quite remarkable 124 species. More remarkably, 10 new species were added to the list of birds that have been seen on Christmas Counts in Nova Scotia in the past 14 years. The list now stands at 157.

Before summarizing the Counts, a few critical comments must be recorded. First, the number of Counts taken on the mainland of the Province has decreased. On the other hand Cape Breton Island has been most competently organized by Wayne Neily, with 10 Counts established and 9 done this year. Only 12 others were carried out in the whole remainder of the Province. A few obvious places where Counts should be organized (obvious because there is a sufficient number of persons to draw on) are Truro, New Glasgow, Antigonish, Windsor, Kentville, Annapolis Royal, Liverpool, Bridgewater and Chester. Many other spaces exist on the map. A number of Counts being made, badly need help from more people. Secondly, the centers and boundaries of Count areas must be clearly and permanently established and established areas must not be trespassed on by adjoining or competing groups. All in an area must get together and pool their resources. Your Editor and Wayne Neily intend to prepare some advice and suggestions before the 1970 Counts. A final critical comment relates to the transmission of information about the identification of an unusual or rare species. For better or for worse, the compiler of a Count has the task of convincing the Editor that the bird in question was, in fact, seen. Little communication or value is established if the substantiating detail consists only of "seen by John Smith" and the Editor does not know John Smith. The minimum amount of information required is the name and experience of the observer, the location and habitat of the bird observed, the distance between observer and bird, the optical aid used, identifying field marks noted and the general visibility conditions at the time. With this information the Editor has some chance of coming to a reasonable and rational decision. So much for complaints.

On this year's 21 Counts the 10 species most frequently reported were: Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Starling, Crow (on 21 Counts); Blue Jay, House Sparrow (on 20 Counts); Raven, Black-capped Chickadee (on 19 Counts); Black Duck, Boreal Chickadee (on 18 Counts).

The most abundant species were: Herring Gull, 13,289; Starling, 9926; Canada Goose, 5260; House Sparrow, 4955; Great Black-backed Gull, 4803; Crow, 4094; Black Duck, 3335; Brown-headed Cowbird, 2597; Black-capped Chickadee, 1019; and Black-legged Kittiwake, 1011.

The rarest species, those seen on one Count only (although occasionally more than one bird) were: Shearwater, Brant, Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Harlequin Duck, King Eider, Marsh Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Ruddy Turnstone, Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Sanderling, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Puffin, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, Tree Swallow, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Bullock's Oriole, Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Rufous-sided Towhee, Ipswich Sparrow and Vesper Sparrow. Those underlined are the species newly added to the Nova Scotia Christmas Count List. Some details of, or comments on each new species are noted below.

Shearwater: Halifax (east), by Jean Boulva. He had a good look, but of short duration. It was one of the small species, black backed, with rapid wingbeats. He thinks it was probably a Manx, possibly an Audubon's, but prefers reporting only that it was a shearwater.

American Widgeon: Port Hood, by Wayne Neily and Eugene Hawley. Four birds of the species, essential field marks noted, were seen by telescope at 250 yards, in with a flock of Black Ducks.

Ring-necked Duck: Brier Island, by Wickerson Lent and Eric Mills. Seasoned observers and good observation conditions.

Greater Yellowlegs: Halifax (east), Sylvia Fullerton and party. A flock of 8 on Chezzetcook tidal flats. Seen by others on subsequent days.

Common Puffin: St. Peters, sighted by young William Digout, later seen by Katherine MacRae. Head and bill noted.

Tree Swallow: Halifax (east), Eric Mills and party. A flock of 7 seen over Lawrencetown tidal marshes. (Other December flocks were reported from Barrington and Yarmouth.)

Wilson's Warbler: Halifax (east), Ian McLaren and Joe Mortenson. A mature male, with black cap, seen leisurely, in a brush pile in a swampy area on the outskirts of Dartmouth. Seen by others on the following days. An almost unbelievable observation, as the bird should have been in Mexico, but there can be no doubting it.

Bobolink: Yarmouth, by Clark Higby. Another remarkable observation but good description given, viz.: "like a buffy sparrow - large - with stripes on crown and a ragged, pointed tail." At feeding station, and reported by others previously.

Bullock's Oriole: Halifax (west), by Ian McLaren. At feeding station with other orioles for 10 days prior to Count Day; subsequently trapped, is alive and well, caged, for release in the spring after identification is re-confirmed.

Brewer's Blackbird: Sable Island, by Christel Bell. Noted as size of Rusty, heavier bill, purplish reflection on head, greenish wash on back, color of eyes not as piercing as Rusty's, more whitish.

For most common species the number of birds of a species seen, or the number of times the species was reported, was remarkably similar in 1968 and 1969. A few species, however, varied significantly, either in numbers seen or Counts reporting or both. These are tabulated below.

	1968		1969	
	Counts/Individuals		Counts/Individuals	
Horned Lark	6	211	3	23
White-br Nuthatch	9	27	11	50
Red-br Nuthatch	11	61	5	16
Robin	14	364	11	43
Baltimore Oriole	3	4	6	14
Dickcissel	1	1	4	8
Evening Grosbeak	20	1557	15	596
Purple Finch	15	355	2	2
Common Redpoll	17	4535	10	480
Pine Siskin	9	443	4	65
Am. Goldfinch	16	1170	9	99
Red Crossbill	4	73	1	1
Tree Sparrow	15	312	9	131

Summaries of 21 Counts are recorded below, in more or less north to south order. The species' names bracketed are those seen in the Count Period but not on the Count Day. The appropriate parts of two overlapping counts have been combined; some Counts not made in the Count Period have been omitted.

HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK, Victoria Co., 27 December 1969.

Twenty-nine observers, 58 party-hours.

Observation conditions: poor.

Totals: 32 species identified; about 1575 individuals.

(Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Canada Goose); Black Duck, 38; Greater Scaup, 2; Common Goldeneye, 66; Oldsquaw, 23; Common Eider, 14; White-winged Scoter, 1; Common Merganser, 11; Red-breasted Merganser, 13; Bald Eagle, 2; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Glaucous Gull, 5; Iceland Gull, 76; Great Black-backed Gull, 275; Herring Gull, 554; Ring-billed Gull, 1; Black-headed Gull, 5; (Dovekie); Black Guillemot, 1; (Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker); Gray Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 7; Raven, 29; Crow, 151; Black-capped Chickadee, 45; Boreal Chickadee, 40; Brown Creeper, 3; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 19; Starling, 90; House Sparrow, 31; Evening Grosbeak, 8; (Pine Grosbeak); Common Redpoll, 1; White-winged Crossbill, 7; Slate-colored Junco, 21; Snow Bunting, 2.

Observers: Mary Barker, Tracy Black, George Calder, Gordon Doucette, John Farquharson, Irene Gettas, Michael Gillis, Clyde Harvey, Isabel MacDonald, John D. MacDonald, Dorothy MacHattie, Fred MacHattie, Francis MacKinnon, Betty McGuire, Larry McGuire, Janice McNeil, Robert McNeil, Anne Moore, Art Moore, Wayne Neily (compiler), Betty Reid, Frank Robertson, Barbara Rochester, George Rochester, Lorraine Rochester, Sidney Smith, Murray Stockley, Jean Timpa, John Timpa and Frank Westhaver.

MARGAREE, Inverness Co., 30 December 1969.

Nine observers, 16 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium becoming poor.

Totals: 28 species identified; about 556 individuals.

Red-necked Grebe, 12; Pied-billed Grebe, 1; Black Duck, 50; Common Goldeneye, 44; Bufflehead, 2; Oldsquaw, 4; Common Merganser, 59; Red-breasted Merganser, 21; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Bald Eagle, 2; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Iceland Gull, 21; Great Black-backed Gull, 12; Herring Gull, 6; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Gray Jay, 4; Blue Jay, 17; Raven, 25; Crow, 90; Black-capped Chickadee, 20; Boreal Chickadee, 14; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5; Northern Shrike, 1; Starling, 81; House Sparrow, 34; Common Redpoll, 21; Slate-colored Junco, 6; White-throated Sparrow, 1.

Observers: Ann Bellis, T.S. Bellis, Peter Chiasson, Gerald Hart, Marjorie Hart, Georgina Hennessey, Wayne Neily (compiler), Isabel Taylor and W.A. Thompson.

PORT HOOD, Inverness Co., 28 December 1968.

Three observers, 9 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium.

Totals: 24 species identified; about 835 individuals.

Common Loon, 4; Red-throated Loon, 2; Horned Grebe, 1; grebe sp., 1; Pied-billed Grebe, 1; Black Duck, 105; American Widgeon, 4; Common Goldeneye, 15; Red-breasted Merganser, 7; Bald Eagle, 2; Iceland Gull, 3; Great Black-backed Gull, 12; Herring Gull, 42; Black-headed Gull, 17; (Snowy Owl); Belted Kingfisher, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 8; Blue Jay, 2; Raven, 108; Crow, 97; Black-capped Chickadee, 19; Boreal Chickadee, 14; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5; Starling, 285; Pine Grosbeak, 16.

Observers: Mrs John Cameron, Eugene Hawley and Wayne Neily (compiler).

BADDECK, Victoria Co., 31 December 1969.

Thirteen observers, 21 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium.

Totals: 23 species identified; about 808 individuals.

Black Duck, 54; Common Goldeneye, 48; Common Merganser, 81; Bald Eagle, 7; Great Black-backed Gull, 7; Herring Gull, 22; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Gray Jay, 16; Blue Jay, 20; Raven, 38; Crow, 94; Black-capped Chickadee, 69; Boreal Chickadee, 41; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 30; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 1; Starling, 136; House Sparrow, 109; Pine Grosbeak, 14; White-winged Crossbill, 7; Slate-colored Junco, 8; Swamp Sparrow, 1.

Observers: W.F. Black (compiler), R. Campbell, M. Fuller, I. MacFarlane, J. MacKillop, B. MacLeod, J. MacPherson, R. MacPherson, D. Munro, W. Neily, J.G. Nicholson, R. Wheeler and R. Wyer.

THE SYDNEYS, Cape Breton Co., 26 December 1969.

Twelve observers, 36 party-hours.

Observation conditions: good.

Totals: 44 species identified; about 7266 individuals.

Common Loon,1; Gannet,1; Great Cormorant,2;
Black Duck,56; Greater Scaup,343; Common Goldeneye,176;
Bufflehead,8; Oldsquaw,52; White-winged Scoter,60; Surf
Scoter,10; Common Scoter,42; Bald Eagle,1; Glaucous Gull,11;
Iceland Gull,31; Great Black-backed Gull,864; Herring Gull,2865;
Ring-billed Gull,46; Black-headed Gull,102; Dovekie,1;
Mourning Dove,6; Hairy Woodpecker,3; Downy Woodpecker,4;
Gray Jay,7; Blue Jay,74; Raven,42; Crow,259; Black-capped
Chickadee,53; Boreal Chickadee,7; White-breasted Nuthatch,2;
Robin,1; Golden-crowned Kinglet,13; Starling,1034;
Myrtle Warbler,1; Palm Warbler,1; House Sparrow,695;
Baltimore Oriole,6; (Brown-headed Cowbird); Evening
Grosbeak,93; Common Redpoll,120; Pine Siskin,2; Goldfinch,49;
Slate-colored Junco,70; Tree Sparrow,48; Swamp Sparrow,1;
Song Sparrow,3.

Observers: Jean Aguinaga, George Hay, Georgina
Hennessey, Hedley Hopkins, Mary Large, William Large,
Frances MacKinnon, Maureen MacKinnon, Robert G. McNeil,
Mrs Duncan MacQuarrie, Betty Reid (compiler), Frank Robertson.

GLACE BAY, Cape Breton Co., 29 December 1969.

Fourteen observers, 27 party-hours.

Observation conditions: good.

Totals: 39 species identified; about 6773 individuals.

Great Blue Heron,1; Canada Goose,550; Black Duck,849;
Greater Scaup,150; Common Goldeneye,3; Oldsquaw,2; Common
Eider,5; Red-breasted Merganser,3; Sharp-shinned Hawk,1;
(Bald Eagle); Purple Sandpiper,19; Glaucous Gull,68;
Iceland Gull,94; Great Black-backed Gull,1563; Herring
Gull,2185; Black-headed Gull,29; (Downy Woodpecker); Horned
Lark,4; Gray Jay,5; Blue Jay,31; Raven,19; Crow,172;
Black-capped Chickadee,29; Boreal Chickadee,3; Red-breasted
Nuthatch,1; (Mockingbird, Robin); Golden-crowned Kinglet,14;
Starling,606; House Sparrow,246; Baltimore Oriole,2; Common
Grackle,1; Brown-headed Cowbird,20; Dickcissel,1; Evening
Grosbeak,19; Pine Siskin,53; Goldfinch,4; White-winged
Crossbill,3; Savannah Sparrow,3; Slate-colored Junco,4;
Tree Sparrow,9; Swamp Sparrow,1; Song Sparrow,1.

Observers: Roberta Beecher, Mrs L.L. Buffett, E. Chant,
Henry Cosnick, R. Deiltgens, G. Ellerbrok, A.J. MacDonald,
William Hillier, Mrs James MacLachlan, S. MacLean (compiler),
E. MacLeod, G. Naish, W. Neily, Anne Petnesky, F. Robertson,
T. Ryan.

ESKASONI, Cape Breton Co., 20 December 1969.

Nine observers, 26 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium.

Totals: 26 species identified; about 704 individuals.

Black Duck,38; Common Goldeneye,22; Bufflehead,1;
White-winged Scoter,4; Common Merganser,5; Red-breasted
Merganser,15; Bald Eagle,13; Pigeon Hawk,1; Great Black-backed
Gull,37; Herring Gull,74; Belted Kingfisher,1; Hairy
Woodpecker,2; Blue Jay,3; Raven,6; Crow,64; Black-capped
Chickadee,80; Boreal Chickadee,33; Golden-crowned Kinglet,31;
Starling,136; Yellow-breasted Chat,2; House Sparrow,71;
Pine Grosbeak,9; Common Redpoll,42; Pine Siskin,3;
Goldfinch,4; Slate-colored Junco,12.

Observers: Evelyn MacInnis, Francis MacKinnon,
Michelle MacKinnon, Ian McNeil, Robert G. McNeil (compiler),
Wayne Neily, Andrew Raniseth, Betty Reid and Mildred Phillips.

SALMON RIVER, Cape Breton Co., 20 December 1969.

Seven observers, 14 party-hours.

Observation conditions: poor, improving.

Totals: 23 species identified; about 457 individuals.

Red-tailed Hawk,3; Ruffed Grouse,4;
Great Black-backed Gull,3; Herring Gull,16; Kingfisher,1;
Hairy Woodpecker,1; Downy Woodpecker,2; Gray Jay,8; Blue Jay,15;
Raven,6; Crow,113; Black-capped Chickadee,9; Boreal
Chickadee,3; Golden-crowned Kinglet,13; Northern Shrike,2;
Starling,80; (Palm Warbler); House Sparrow,62; (Baltimore Oriole)
Evening Grosbeak,15; Pine Grosbeak,14; Common Redpoll,56;
(Goldfinch); Slate-colored Junco,9; Tree Sparrow,22.

Observers: Audrey Duchemin, Ruth Goode,
Hedley Hopkins (compiler), Cecil Hussey and Mrs Hussey,
Mildred Phillips and Betty Reid.

ST. PETERS, Richmond Co., 27 December 1969.

Six observers, 15 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium, improving.

Totals: 26 species identified; about 468 individuals.

Red-throated Loon,2; Horned Grebe,3; Common
Goldeneye,10; Oldsquaw,28; Common Eider,25; White-winged
Scoter,2; Common Merganser,13; Red-breasted Merganser,8;
(Bald Eagle, Ruffed Grouse); Great Black-backed Gull,22;
Herring Gull, 39; Common Puffin,1; (Short-eared Owl);
Gray Jay,2; (Blue Jay); Raven,8; Crow,51; Black-capped
Chickadee,1; Boreal Chickadee,15; (Brown Creeper); Golden-
crowned Kinglet,4; Starling,107; House Sparrow,99;
Brown-headed Cowbird,1; Dickcissel,4; Pine Grosbeak,14;
White-winged Crossbill,2; Slate-colored Junco,1;
Fox Sparrow,3; Song Sparrow,2.

Observers: Clarence Digout, John Digout,
Murdock Digout (compiler), William Digout, Alex MacLean and
Katherine MacRae.

AMHERST, Cumberland Co., 23 December 1969.

Five observers, 12 party-hours.

Observation conditions: very good.

Totals: 26 species identified; about 1356 individuals.

Canada Goose, 5; Mallard, 1; Black Duck, 52; Common Merganser, 84; Rough-legged Hawk, 4; Bald Eagle, 1; Marsh Hawk, 1; Pheasant, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 107; Herring Gull, 375; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 4; Raven, 39; Crow, 223; Black-capped Chickadee, 14; Boreal Chickadee, 1; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Starling, 110; House Sparrow, 162; Brown-headed Cowbird, 100+; Evening Grosbeak, 38; Pine Grosbeak, 6; Common Redpoll, 14; Goldfinch, 8;

Observers: Evelyn Lowerison (compiler), Lindsay Myers, Dora Myers, Mrs Morris Scovil and Alan Smith.

NORTHPORT, Cumberland Co., 26 December 1969.

Two observers, 6 party-hours.

Observation conditions: very good.

Totals: 11 species identified; about 350 individuals.

Black Duck, 42; Oldsquaw, 19; Great Black-backed Gull, 7; Herring Gull, 136; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 9; Raven, 19; Crow, 54; Black-capped Chickadee, 4; Starling, 16; H. Sparrow, 43.

Observers: Duncan MacNeil and Robert G. MacNeil.

PICTOU, Pictou Co., 26 December 1969.

One observer, 6½ hours.

Observation conditions: good.

Totals: 14 species identified; about 286 individuals.

(Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser); Iceland Gull, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 3; Herring Gull, 29; Blue Jay, 16; Crow, 15; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Robin, 2; Bohemian Waxwing, 12; Starling, 96; House Sparrow, 82; Brown-headed Cowbird, 2; Evening Grosbeak, 22; Tree Sparrow, 1.

Observer: Eric Holdway.

SPRINGVILLE, Pictou Co., 27 December 1969.

Four observers, 6 party-hours.

Observation conditions: poor.

Totals: 20 species identified; about 482 individuals.

Black Duck, 12; (Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk); Pigeon Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 37; Herring Gull, 104; Ring-billed Gull, 3; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; (Downy Woodpecker, Gray Jay); Blue Jay, 2; Raven, 7; Crow, 56; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; Boreal Chickadee, 16; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; (Robin); Golden-crowned Kinglet, 14; Starling, 108; House Sparrow, 79; (Evening Grosbeak); Pine Grosbeak, 14; Common Redpoll, 11; (White-winged Crossbill, Slate-colored Junco); Tree Sparrow, 3; Snow Bunting, 4.

Observers: Harry Brennan, Kevin Brennan, Fred Kenney (compiler) and Margaret Kenney.

SABLE ISLAND, (Halifax Co.), 28 December 1969.

Two observers, 6 party-hours.

Observation conditions: very good becoming poor.

Totals: 21 species identified; about 278 individuals.

Black Duck,15; Pheasant,18; Killdeer,5;(Common Snipe);
Glaucous Gull,2; Great Black-backed Gull,19; Herring Gull,35;
Ring-billed Gull,1; Thick-billed Murre,5; (Dovekie); Belted
Kingfisher,2; Hairy Woodpecker,1; Common Crow,5; Starling,8;
Myrtle Warbler,3; Palm Warbler,1; House Sparrow,60;
Brewer's Blackbird,1; Brown-headed Cowbird,10; Dickcissel,2;
Evening Grosbeak,1; (White-winged Crossbill);
Ipswich Sparrow,78; Slate-colored Junco,6.

Observers: Christel Bell (compiler), Norman Bell.

HALIFAX (EAST), Halifax Co., 20 December 1969.

Twenty-seven observers, 58 party-hours.

Observation conditions: good.

Totals: 75 species identified; about 6528 individuals.

Common Loon,10; Red-necked Grebe,6; Horned Grebe,13;
shearwater (sp.),1; Gannet,1; Canada Goose,640; Mallard,2;
Black Duck,75; Greater Scaup,11; Common Goldeneye,2;
Bufflehead,50; Oldsquaw,51; Common Eider,12; White-winged
Scoter,27; Surf Scoter,9; Common Scoter,23; Common
Merganser,18; Red-breasted Merganser,42; Sharp-shinned Hawk,1;
Bald Eagle,1; Pigeon Hawk,1; Ruffed Grouse,9; Virginia
Rail,1; Killdeer,3; Common Snipe,4; Greater Yellowlegs,8;
Sanderling,2; Iceland Gull,1; Great Black-backed Gull,210;
Herring Gull,1240; Ring-billed Gull,11; Black-headed Gull,8;
Dovekie,1; Black Guillemot,1; Hairy Woodpecker,3; Downy
Woodpecker,6; Horned Lark,1; Tree Swallow,7; Gray Jay,8;
Blue Jay,19; Raven,120; Crow,265; Black-capped Chickadee,278;
Boreal Chickadee,96; White-breasted Nuthatch,9; Red-breasted
Nuthatch,7; Brown Creeper,6; Winter Wren,1; Robin,2;
Golden-crowned Kinglet,62; Starling,2040; Myrtle Warbler,15;
Palm Warbler,2; Yellowthroat,2; (Yellow-breasted Chat);
(Wilson's Warbler); House Sparrow,630; Eastern Meadowlark,1;
Red-winged Blackbird,1; Common Grackle,2; Brown-headed
Cowbird,9; Evening Grosbeak,24; Pine Grosbeak,92; Pine
Siskin,7; Goldfinch,10; White-winged Crossbill,153;
Rufous-sided Towhee,1; Savannah Sparrow,19; Vesper Sparrow,1;
Slate-colored Junco,35; Tree Sparrow,33; White-throated
Sparrow,12; Fox Sparrow,4; Swamp Sparrow,6; Song Sparrow,23;
Lapland Longspur,1; Snow Bunting,20.

Observers: Jean Boulva, Hazel Carmichael, Ethel
Crathorne, Ronald Dicks, B.K.Doane, Evelyn Dobson, Fred
Dobson, Phyllis Dobson, Elizabeth Doull, Rosemary Eaton,
Sylvia Fullerton, John Hamilton, Ward Hemeon, Frank Himsel,
Barbara Hinds, Roger Hughes, W.A.Hughs, A.R.Lock,
Ian McLaren, L.B.Macpherson (compiler), Ann Mills,
Eric Mills (organizer), Willett J.Mills, Joe Mortenson,
Winifred Smith, Betty Topple and Wesley Topple.

HALIFAX (WEST), Halifax Co., 27 December 1969.

Twenty-five observers, 60 party-hours.

Observation conditions: very poor.

Totals: 62 species identified; about 6848 individuals.

Common Loon,4; Red-necked Grebe,3; Horned Grebe,2;
Canada Goose,1; Black Duck,7; Oldsquaw,27; Common Eider,6;
White-winged Scoter,2; Surf Scoter,3; Common Scoter,1;
Red-breasted Merganser,2; Bald Eagle,1; Peregrine Falcon,1;
(Pigeon Hawk); Sparrow Hawk,1; Ruffed Grouse,1; Common
Snipe,1; Purple Sandpiper,1; Glaucous Gull,2; Iceland Gull,29;
Great Black-backed Gull,680; Herring Gull,2100; Ring-billed
Gull,5; Black-headed Gull,11; Bonaparte's Gull,5;
Black-legged Kittiwake,11; murre (sp.),5; Dovekie,6; Black
Guillemot,7; Hairy Woodpecker,4; Downy Woodpecker,19;
Blue Jay,20; Raven,11; Crow,130; Black-capped Chickadee,193;
Boreal Chickadee,51; White-breasted Nuthatch,16;
Red-breasted Nuthatch,6; Brown Creeper,6; Brown Thrasher,1;
Robin,6; Golden-crowned Kinglet,44; Starling,2500;
(Yellow-breasted Chat); House Sparrow,480; Red-winged
Blackbird,1; Baltimore Oriole,4; Bullock's Oriole,1;
(Common Grackle); Brown-headed Cowbird,138; Dickcissel,1;
Evening Grosbeak,160; Purple Finch,1; Pine Grosbeak,8;
Common Redpoll,4; Goldfinch,15; White-winged Crossbill,20;
Savannah Sparrow,2; Slate-colored Junco,40; Tree Sparrow,1;
White-throated Sparrow,6; Fox Sparrow,9; Song Sparrow,10;
Lapland Longspur,5; Snow Bunting,10.

Observers: Ray Bowditch, Hazel Carmichael, John Cohrs,
Shirley Cohrs, Ethel Crathorne, B.K.Doane (organizer),
Ann Doull, Elizabeth Doull, G.H.Edsall, Sylvia Fullerton,
Frank Himsl, Barbara Hinds, Roger Hughes, A.R.Lock,
Ken MacKay, Bernice McLaren, Ian A.McLaren, L.B.Macpherson
(compiler), Eric Mills, Willett J.Mills, Harding Moffatt,
Joe Mortenson, Winifred Smith, Betty Topple and
Wesley Topple.

WOLFVILLE, Kings Co., 21 December 1969.

Twelve observers, 33 party-hours.

Observation conditions: good.

Totals: 44 species identified; about 10258 individuals.

Canada Goose,30; Mallard,8; Black Duck,304;
Green-winged Teal,1; Common Goldeneye,3; Common Merganser,1;
Sharp-shinned Hawk,1; Red-tailed Hawk,12; Rough-legged
Hawk,4; Bald Eagle,2; Ruffed Grouse,2; Pheasant,8; Gray
Partridge,4; Common Snipe,2; Great Black-backed Gull,465;
Herring Gull,1924; (Ring-billed Gull); Mourning Dove,17;
Yellow-shafted Flicker,1; Hairy Woodpecker,4; Downy
Woodpecker,5; Horned Lark,18; Blue Jay,71; Common Raven,150;
Common Crow,1625; Black-capped Chickadee,86; Boreal
Chickadee,7; White-breasted Nuthatch,10; Brown Creeper,2;
Robin,13; Golden-crowned Kinglet,3; Starling,1643;
House Sparrow,1317; Baltimore Oriole,2; Brown-headed
Cowbird,1968; Evening Grosbeak,142; (Purple Finch); Pine
Grosbeak,16; Common Redpoll,128; Goldfinch,8; Savannah
Sparrow,1; Slate-colored Junco,218; Tree Sparrow,12;
White-throated Sparrow,4; Song Sparrow,15;(Lapland Longspur);
Snow Bunting,1.

Observers: P. Austin-Smith, Sherman Bleakney, Curtis Chipman, Cyril Colwell, Russell Eagles, Mark Elderkin, John Erskine (compiler), Rachael Erskine, Mary Forbes, Harold Forsyth, Wayne Neily and Robie W. Tufts.

KINGSTON, Kings Co., 29 December 1969.

Six observers, 24 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium.

Totals: 35 species identified; about 1513 individuals.

(Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose); Black Duck, 8;
Common Goldeneye, 7; Bufflehead, 2; Oldsquaw, 7; Common Eider, 6;
White-winged Scoter, 7; Surf Scoter, 2; Red-breasted Merganser, 1;
Goshawk, 1; (Sharp-shinned Hawk); Red-tailed Hawk, 2; Ruffed
Grouse, 12; Pheasant, 5; Gray Partridge, 12; Great Black-backed
Gull, 12; Herring Gull, 18; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy
Woodpecker, 6; Gray Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 16; Raven, 10; Crow, 495;
Black-capped Chickadee, 35; Boreal Chickadee, 4; White-breasted
Nuthatch, 2; (Red-breasted Nuthatch); Robin, 1; Golden-crowned
Kinglet, 10; Starling, 208; House Sparrow, 282; Red-winged
Blackbird, 100; Common Grackle, 102; Brown-headed Cowbird, 11;
(Evening Grosbeak); Pine Grosbeak, 20; Common Redpoll, 83;
Slate-colored Junco, 17; Song Sparrow, 3; (Snow Bunting).

Observers: Alan Bent, Murray Bent, Gordon Greer,
Frank Hawkins, Thelma Hawkins and Larry Neily (compiler).

DIGBY, Digby Co., 28 December 1969.

Twelve observers, 6 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium.

Totals: 31 species identified; about 771 individuals.

Common Loon, 4; Great Cormorant, 1; Black Duck, 50;
Greater Scaup, 200; Oldsquaw, 4; White-winged Scoter, 7;
Surf Scoter, 3; Bald Eagle, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Great Black-backed
Gull, 18; Herring Gull, 34; Black-headed Gull, 1; Hairy
Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 16; Raven, 1;
Crow, 35; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Boreal Chickadee, 5;
White-breasted Nuthatch, 4; (Mockingbird); Robin, 3; Starling, 50;
House Sparrow, 226; Red-winged Blackbird, 3; Common Grackle, 23;
Evening Grosbeak, 47; Slate-colored Junco, 9; White-throated
Sparrow, 2; Fox Sparrow, 4; Song Sparrow, 3; Snow Bunting, 8.

Observers: Louise Daley (compiler), Bernice Emerson,
Harold Emerson, Ann Rogers, Anna Ruth Rogers, John Rogers,
R. McLeod Rogers, Roderick Rogers, Harold Sulis, Vera Sulis,
Marjorie Tupper and Percy Weir.

YARMOUTH, Yarmouth Co., 28 December 1969.

Nineteen observers, 15 party-hours.

Observation conditions: good.

Totals: 42 species identified; about 7830 individuals.

Red-necked Grebe, 3; Great Blue Heron, 3; Canada
Goose, 4000; Black Duck, 1550; Greater Scaup, 40; Common
Goldeneye, 100; Oldsquaw, 40; Red-breasted Merganser, 10; (Goshawk);
Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Pheasant, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 200;
Herring Gull, 500; Dovekie, 1; (Mourning Dove); Hairy
Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 6; Blue Jay, 41;

Raven,13; Crow,59; Black-capped Chickadee,65; Boreal Chickadee,7; White-breasted Nuthatch,1; Red-breasted Nuthatch,2; Mockingbird,1; Brown Thrasher,1; Robin,7; Starling,537; Myrtle Warbler,6; House Sparrow,205; (Bobolink); Red-winged Blackbird,4; (Baltimore Oriole);Rusty Blackbird,1; Common Grackle,20; Brown-headed Cowbird,320; Evening Grosbeak,37; Pine Grosbeak,2; Goldfinch,1; White-winged Crossbill,6; Slate-colored Junco,9; Tree Sparrow,5; White-throated Sparrow,8; Fox Sparrow,3; Song Sparrow,12.

Observers: Mrs Earle Cann, Mrs Aaron Churchill, Mrs Allen Hatfield, J.Clark Higby, Jack C.Higby, Marion Hilton (compiler), Mrs Adele Hurlbert, Mrs Helen Hurlbert, Miss Marjorie Kenney, Marsdon Kenney, William Lent, Mrs Clarence McGray, Mrs Fred Nickerson, J.Israel Pothier, Mrs Olive Purdy, Celia Sollows, Ted Sollows, Vera Sollows and Mrs Percy Wyman.

BRIER ISLAND, Digby Co., 23 December 1969.

Two observers, 8 party-hours.

Observation conditions: medium to good.

Totals: 41 species identified; about 4309 individuals.

Common Loon,13; Red-necked Grebe,6; (Horned Grebe); Gannet,11; Great Cormorant,172; Canada Goose,34; Brant,1; Black Duck,30; Ring-necked Duck,1; Common Goldeneye,102; Bufflehead,1; Oldsquaw,78; (Harlequin Duck);Common Eider,500+; King Eider,1; White-winged Scoter,16; Surf Scoter,6; Common Scoter,11; Common Merganser,9; Red-breasted Merganser,19; ducks (sp),500+; Red-tailed Hawk,1; Ruddy Turnstone,1; Purple Sandpiper,62; Dunlin,1; Great Black-backed Gull,250+; Herring Gull, 1000+; Black-legged Kittiwake,1000+; murre (sp),2; Dovekie,33; Black Guillemot,44; alcids (sp),200+; Hairy Woodpecker,1; Blue Jay,3; Raven,15; Crow,41; Black-capped Chickadee,5; Boreal Chickadee,3; Robin,8; Golden-crowned Kinglet,3; Starling,55; House Sparrow,42; (Evening Grosbeak); Pine Grosbeak,18; White-winged Crossbill,7; Fox Sparrow,1.

Observers: Wickerson Lent and Eric Mills.



STARLINGS NESTING IN EASTERN NOVA SCOTIA

by A. J. Erskine

The Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) has become a common breeding bird on Cape Breton Island since 1934, when it was first found nesting there (A. O. Gross, 1937; Auk, 54:12-42). While working in eastern Nova Scotia from 1960 to 1968, I checked the contents of a number of Starling nests and rechecked some if my work took me nearby after a suitable interval. I learned relatively little that was new about Starlings (cf. B. Kessel, 1957; Amer. Midl. Nat., 58:257-331), but I did learn what kinds of information can be obtained from casual observation of nests.

All nests, except one, were in old Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) holes; and few starlings were flushed from old buildings in these rural areas. The sites do not represent the full range of Starling nest sites in the area. Of 32 sites, 25 were in telephone poles - mostly between Scotsville and Kenloch in Inverness County, and between Lower l'Ardoise and Point Michaud in Richmond County; six were in trees or stubs (usually of balsam poplar); and one was in a duck nest box on a stub in open water.

Fifteen sites used by Starlings were also checked in succeeding years. Of these, Starlings occupied five in three years and six others in two years. A Flicker occupied one when it was next checked; three were unusable.

Laying dates (to +2 days) were determined for only 22 of the 50 nestings (Table 1). Nests with eggs checked once were assigned to the mid-point of incubation, but with less precision (+7 days). Such nests (median start 18 May) suggested appreciably later laying dates than did those dated more precisely. The complete nesting cycle in Starlings requires at least 37 days: 4 eggs laid at daily intervals, 14 days incubation, 19 days of fledging (personal data, from British Columbia). The earliest, accurately dated first nesting started on 8 May. Therefore, a second nesting following a successful first attempt could not have started before 15 June. The only clutch started after this date (19 June 1961) was in a site used by Starlings earlier in the same year.

Laying dates found here may be compared with those for 13 nests in Glace Bay from 1965 to 1967, reported by Rev. Ford Alward. These nests were in buildings in a large town - a micro-environment warmer than that of nests in telephone poles or trees, despite the cooler spring climate in the Glace Bay area. Few of these nests could be dated precisely, but the figures assigned suggested a median date of 2 May for ten assumed first nestings. This is 12 days earlier than the median date for my nests, and six days earlier than any of mine. With this early start, apparent second nestings were also more common; three nests, including two used earlier in the same year, contained broods initiated on 8-11 June.

Clutch size is best determined from nests visited twice (or more often) during incubation. I had two counts for only four clutches, three with 5 eggs and one with 4 eggs. As egg losses are low for most hole-nesting birds (M.M. Nice, 1957; Auk, 74: 305-321), the main error in using clutches counted only once is that laying may not have been completed at the time of the visit. After sets with only one or two eggs were omitted as probably incomplete, the mean clutch size for all other nests hardly differs from that for nests checked twice (Table 2).

My data on nest success are fragmentary, as follow-up visits were seldom made at suitable intervals. Of 39 nests found with eggs, 10 were known to have hatched, 5 probably did so, and 5 failed before hatching; the other 19 were not followed up. Of those that hatched, one certainly fledged young; and judging from the manure around and below the entrance holes, the rest probably did so.

This report shows the futility of expecting meaningful results from small series of unplanned nest records. The only point established, and that not beyond question, from these 63 records is that first nestings occur earlier, and second nestings more frequently, in urban than in rural situations in eastern Nova Scotia. Relatively few Starling nests are detected until after the young are hatched, even in those parts of the Maritimes for which long series of records are available. However, there are sufficient data in the files of the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme (now housed at the New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, N.B., in care of David Christie) for a number of other, more easily studied species. Summaries of this kind are worth considering for any species of which 150-200 or more records are available from a single county or group of adjacent counties.

(Canadian Wildlife Service, 400 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa 4, Ontario.)

Table 1. Laying dates of Starling nests examined in eastern Nova Scotia, 1960-68. Accuracy \pm 2 days except for records in parentheses.

Laying date	Number of nests started	
5 - 9 May	1 (+ 1)	(for accurate dates only)
10 - 14 May	10 (+ 4)	Median laying date
15 - 19 May	4 (+ 9)	14 May;
20 - 24 May	3 (+ 6)	interquartile range
25 - 29 May	3 (+ 6)	12-21 May.
30 May-3 June	(1)	
4 - 8 June	(1)	

19 - 24 June	1	
	<hr/>	
	22 (+ 28)	

Table 2. Clutch sizes of Starling nests examined in eastern Nova Scotia, 1966-69. Clutches counted only once, except 3 x c/5 and 1 x c/4.

Clutch size	Number of clutches	
c/1	1	
c/2	3	
c/3	4	
c/4	9	Mean (omitting c/1 & c/2)
c/5	10	4.70 eggs.
c/6	6	
c/7	1	
Total	34	

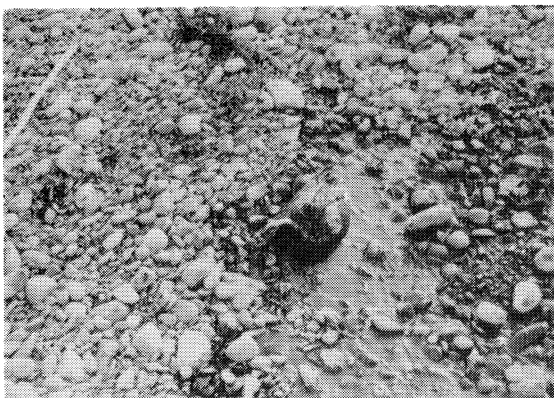
Report on Oil Spill

by W. Neily

On February 4, 1970, the tanker Arrow, containing 16,200 tons (3,800,000 gallons) of Bunker "C" oil went aground on Cerberus Rock, about 3 miles southwest of Arichat Ouest.

The following Sunday the ship broke up into two sections, the bow containing an estimated 4,000 tons, the stern 6,000; the rest of the oil escaped into the bay. The bow section sank onto the rocks so that it was nearly submerged and 4 days later on February 12, the stern slipped off its ledge and sank to a depth of about 90 feet.

At the time of writing (March 21) it is estimated that about 9,500 tons remain in the two sections of the ship. Efforts to remove this by pumping have been severely hampered by high seas, the depth of the sunken stern section, and the rotten condition of the hull.



Oldsquaw, oiled and moribund.
Moose Bay, Guysborough Co.

W. Neily

In the portions of the bay that were heavily oiled, virtually all birds were wiped out (from Petit de Grat Island to Janvrin Island). Over all of Chedabucto Bay the diving birds were hardest hit, as they had to stay in the water to feed, and even if only slightly oiled, could not long survive exposure to the cold water due to loss of their natural insulation. Gulls stand a better chance of surviving as they are more at home on land and can feed there.

On February 8, and during the following week, members of the Environmental Committee of the Cape Breton branch of the Nova Scotia Bird Society visited the area to examine the damage. Canadian Wildlife biologists were present from February 9 on, and on February 15 a co-operative survey was done to attempt to determine the numbers of various species still alive in the area. Peter Pearce, Tom Wood, George Watson and myself covered the affected area by helicopter and found about two thousand birds still alive. Most abundant were Herring Gulls (452), followed by Oldsquaw (429), Goldeneye (409), Black Ducks (169), Red-breasted Mergansers (135) and Iceland Gulls (128).

On the basis of sample shoreline surveys we estimated up to three thousand dead birds already on the beaches, etc. The official C.W.S. estimate based on known numbers of birds dead (per mile) and the total number of miles of shoreline oiled (lightly or heavily) was 2,300. Most of these were Oldsquaw, with Murres (both species), close behind. Some Scoters, Mergansers, Grebes, Dovekies, Black Guillemots and Bufflehead were also found dead, and a very few gulls. This does not include the birds which have crept back into the woods to die, or those affected by the oil slick as it moved out into the ocean.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

We now live in Bermuda where my husband works at the Biological Research Station. At the end of August the Bedford Institute research vessel C.S.S. "Hudson" put in to St. George's and the chief scientist, John Butters, invited my husband and me to accompany the ship back to Halifax where we had been planning to fly the following weekend.

En route I performed a daily "bird watch" along with Chris Leary the official bird watcher from P.I.R.O.P. What follows is my personal and unofficial account of the birds I saw during the trip.

Our cruise track was ladder-shaped; we went North for 30 miles then East for 230 miles, North for 30 miles then West for 230 miles; this pattern continued for about 8½ days. At the western edge of our track the birds were more numerous and it was here that I saw my first CORY'S SHEARWATER, a large white-bellied shearwater very distinguishable from another lifer, AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER which was much smaller and darker above than Cory's. We saw hundreds of these birds during our watches. Also on the western side of the track we had a great number of LEACH'S PETREL and also WILSON'S PETREL and I found them difficult to distinguish. As I was just getting the hang of them, another little one flew by showing a white rump which extended around and under the abdomen. In pointing out this field-mark I was told by my expert that we had just seen a HARCOURT'S or MADEIRAN PETREL. We had so many of the two common storm-petrels during the cruise I finally learned to distinguish the Leach's from Wilson's. We also had a WHITE-FACED or FRIGATE PETREL, small, light grey.

We saw a great number of LONG-TAILED TROPIC BIRDS for the first few days, one of which was further north than should be expected. He was probably blown north by the hurricane, as these birds were just starting to leave Bermuda, where they breed, when we left.

Land birds we had around the ship included a BOBOLINK which was said to have been aboard since Halifax, a KENTUCKY WARBLER, a GOLDEN ORIOLE, and some sand-peeps, also a DOWITCHER. This unfortunate bird had broken its neck and was brought to us at midnight by one of the ship's officers.

In addition to birds we saw schools of PILOT WHALES or BLACKFISH as the sailors call them, the COMMON and the SPOTTED DOLPHIN, schools of which played in the bow-waves, also a group of porpoise. Every now and then a TURTLE, barnacle-backed and basking in the sun would float by. There were flying fish, schools of jelly fish, mats of Sargassum Weed which floated on the surface in long wind-rows, and of course the tracks of man, in the form of floating plastic bleach bottles, among other things.

As we neared Nova Scotia and the weather became noticeably cooler, the Cory's and Audubon's Shearwaters gave way to the GREATER SHEARWATERS and the SOOTY SHEARWATERS, the ones we see, off our coast every summer. When finally the GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS and HERRING GULLS started to appear, I knew we were home. It was an unforgettable experience.

Patricia Pocklington
Sept., 1969
Bermuda

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

In the November '68 issue of the Newsletter, Mr. Coldwell tells of finding feathers and several dead birds in a small pool in which he saw three bullfrogs.

In the same issue Dr. Tufts quotes from his notes "Woods, water and sky". A correspondent had told him about finding the fresh remains of an olive-sided Flycatcher in the stomach of a bullfrog.

In the November 1969 issue of the Newsletter, Mr. Pothier refers to a picture in the Geographic showing a bullfrog grabbing a low flying bird.

Mr. Coldwell asked for comments.

I have three bullfrogs in one of my small pools. Two came from a lake with very dark water. They are very dark. The third I caught in a meadow through which flows a fairly fast stream. This one is bright green.

I built a beach on this pond about the size of a chesterfield. Each evening the bullfrogs and a dozen or so others show up for supper. They are fed liver. This must be fastened to a line and dangled in front of them. It is quite a ceremony but we laugh so much at the antics we feel it is well worth the time. Sometimes the bulls will jump another frog. As a rule they give warning by growling first. Sometimes the other fellow moves in the nick of time and the bull lands floppo. Again he may land on the other fellow, who in due course comes out from underneath. Nobody seems to get hurt.

If you cut a piece of liver an inch or so long the thickness of a lead pencil and hold it in your fingers so that it dangles, a bull will jump for it...and so will the others. The liver and your fingers will go into the frog's mouth. The mouth is quite firm but not sharp or hard and for the life of me I cannot see how it could tear meat from a bird.

My bulls measure about 6 inches from stem to stern. They can high jump from the beach about a foot. The broad jump from this position is 18 inches to two feet. For a water jump I would halve these distances.

