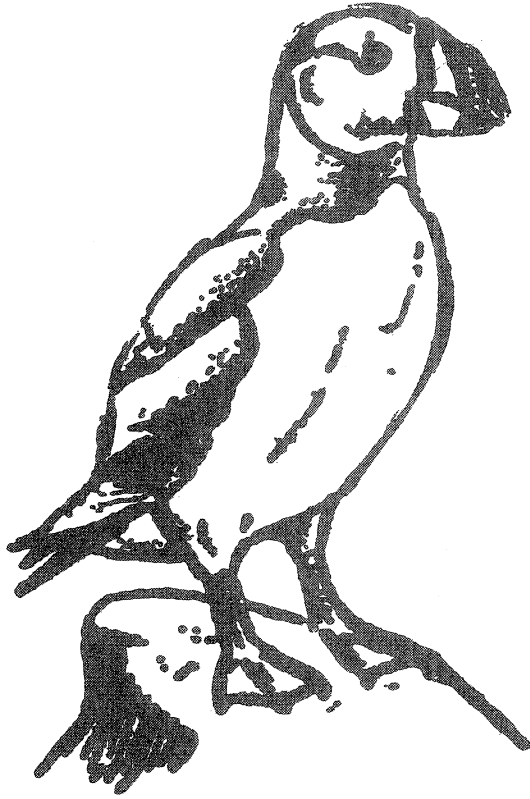


*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 2

JULY, 1970

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Volume 12, Number 2

July, 1970

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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

Incorporated 1957

c/o Nova Scotia Museum
1747 Summer Street
Halifax, N.S., Canada

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 12, Number 2

July, 1970

THE SPRING MIGRATION

Heavy rainstorms and cool temperatures characterized the spring season this year in Nova Scotia. Deciduous trees were slow in leafing out and frost-bitten shrubs had half the extravagant load of blossom we saw last spring. Frost was slow coming out of the ground, so back roads were muddy well into May, but forest fires stayed at a minimum.

Even now, July 5, the nights are very cool and summer has not really come; but the early shorebirds are back, their nesting duties done, and in fact, in spite of the cold, all of the migrants have moved on schedule. The Indians were wise to wear feathers perhaps.

As the following record shows, numbers of birds are normal. Good breeding success for the flying insects means food is no problem at the moment for the nesting birds; possibly the seed-eaters later on will not fare so well.

Thanks to our regular contributors, the spring report is comprehensive and full of interest. Observers on Sable Island have maintained the quota of extraordinary sightings now expectable there. The same holds true for Brier Island and Seal Island, at which latter place a full-scale spring count was made for the first time, bringing to light much information we have long wanted, plus exciting new records. Observations from Breeding Bird Surveys, Society Field Trips, solitary field trips, and just plain backyards have been of equal value in filling in the picture.

MARCH THROUGH JUNE - 1970

A few of both species, the COMMON and the RED-THROATED LOON were still cruising off the coast by April 26 at Yarmouth, and as late as May 31 at Glace Bay; but by May 10 most Red-throated Loons had disappeared and the Common Loon had established itself on inland lakes in various parts of the province. The RED-NECKED GREBE was noted in usual numbers up to April 18 in St. Margaret's Bay and Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co., and off Brier Island, Digby Co., coming into breeding plumage by that time. This appears to be our last inshore date for both the Red-necked

and the HORNED GREBE for the season. At least 6 PIED-BILLED GREBES were seen on June 13 at Amherst Point Sanctuary (2 downy young with 2 adults there the day before). No other nests have been reported as yet.

The Tube-noses made the news this spring, with the sighting of 40 GREATER SHEARWATERS at Sable Island June 3, as described in the Sable Island Report to follow; also, on the same day, over 1,500 SOOTY SHEARWATERS at the same place, both sightings by Davis Finch. One Sooty came close in to be observed at Brier Island May 19, and one at Seal Island May 23. Betty June Smith writes: "On May 23 Norman Cunningham at Cape Sable saw a small, rapid-flying Shearwater, very similar to Audubon's. It flew away to westward, but he had a good look and checked in his Peterson on returning home. Peterson doesn't illustrate the Manx, so we must leave it at that - a small, black above, light below, rapidly flying Shearwater." A definite MANX SHEARWATER was identified by Davis Finch at Sable Island on June 12; and earlier (June 6) 12 LEACH'S and 3 WILSON'S PETRELS.

The first northbound GANNETS were observed March 22 at Cape Sable, "an impressive flight" so described by the Smiths. Since then good numbers have been noted at Brier Island in April and May, also at Pictou and at Sable Island, sightings numbering from 3 to 30 at a time.

The Smiths have received a report on their second dead banded gannet, found on the Cape last winter. This bird was banded at Barachois, Quebec, on September 9, 1967, the same date and place as the first one that they found.

The GREAT CORMORANT was still on the loose up to April 19, seen from Cape Sable April 14, 23 "going NE"; also from Brier Island, 60 April 17, 20 April 18, 10 April 19, but had settled down by May 31, when Sara MacLean counted 62+ nests, 100 or more birds, at Glace Bay. On April 2, 3 DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS flew over Crescent Beach, and on April 17, 18 flew in V-formation over Cranberry Head, Yarmouth County. Double-crests were still moving in up to May 23, past Sable Island and Cape Sable. At Pictou, the first migrants appeared April 14, and Eric Holdway noted 100+ at nest sites by April 29.

A few GREAT BLUE HERONS showed up the first week of April, and were definitely arriving during the following week: reported April 9 at Sable River, Shelburne Co.; April 12 at Yarmouth, Grand Pré, Kings Co., and Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co.; April 13, Brookside, Hfx. Co.; and April 14 at Pictou. The Great Blue is well (generally) reported this spring, but in small numbers, 3 to 5 individuals per area so far.

An unusual number of GREEN HERONS came this way in May: one, May 10 at Cranberry Head (Yar. Co.); one, May 14 near Portugese Cove (Hfx. Co.), identified by Ursula Thomas; one, May 19 at Brier Island; 3, May 23 at Seal Island. There were also four reports of the SNOWY EGRET, one, April 12 to 19, again at the Cranberry Head barachois; one, April 17 at Martinique

Beach, seen at the latter place by Rosemary Eaton, who watched it fly in and noted the "absurd yellow feet" trailing; 1, May 23, at Seal Island; and 1, June 16, in a marsh near Port Clyde "in beautiful plumage, the feathers of its head blowing in the breeze", seen by the Gallaghers.

Another exotic, the BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was at Cape Sable May 29, 3 there May 30 and since. The Smiths had one fishing in a pond there last summer and hope they may be nesting nearby. The earliest date we have for the AMERICAN BITTERN is May 16, at Pictou, but there are 7 June reports, numbering in all 14 birds, over half of them in Cumberland County. It is interesting that the GLOSSY IBIS has been reported only from Sable Island (one bird, mid-May) and Guysborough County, 2 birds May 5, identified there by the Gordon MacLeods.

March 20 to 31 saw the main movement of the CANADA GOOSE, flocks of 1,000 to 3,500 moving at Amherst Point Marsh (Jan VanZoost, H. Harries) and at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. Smaller flocks, up to 300, were reported during this time in flight at Pictou, feeding at Grand Pré dykeland, and in Barrington Bay. Small flocks (20+) lingered in brackish ponds near Yarmouth up until April 20. C.R.K. Allen noted a pair May 2 near Upper Stewiacke (Colchester Co.) which he described as "very tame, possible releases from the Wildlife Sanctuary", hopefully breeding. BRANT have been reported only from Cape Sable, Argyle, Yarmouth Co., and Brier Island; a few (up to 9) off Cape Sable March 2 to 8; 12 at Argyle March 20; plus the fair-sized flocks passing Brier Island in April: 450 April 17, 30 April 18, and 200 April 19. Eric Mills also counted 10 to 125 per day May 16 to 21 feeding off Brier.

Two MALLARDS were reported, lone males, one April 5 at Lawrencetown and one April 17 at Brier Island. Rafts of the BLACK DUCK started breaking up in April, to supply most inland ponds and lakes with at least one pair, and by May 16 broods were well advanced. At Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co., Rosemary Eaton counted 12 ducklings in one brood, the maximum for this season. PINTAIL and TEAL, both GREEN-WINGED and BLUE-WINGED, have been reported in usual numbers, 6 Pintail first seen at Three-Fathom Harbor, Hfx. Co. March 8, by Barbara Hinds, the Teal April 4 and 5 first seen in the same vicinity. The 3 AMERICAN WIDGEONS were still at Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth April 4, apparently having wintered there. A pair of American Widgeons at Amherst Point Sanctuary June 13 obligingly stayed within close view of members of the NSBS Field Trip there at that time. The only WOOD DUCKS reported are the 2 on Sable Island, but the RING-NECKED DUCK is well reported and well distributed. Earliest seen were 6 (3 pairs) in Yarmouth County April 18, of which 2 pairs settled in at Cranberry Head. Other reports are from Lunenburg, Halifax, Colchester and Cumberland Counties, 5 to 6 birds to a lake.

"Wintering" and "permanently resident" ducks disappeared from coastwise (inshore) field trip lists as follows: GREATER SCAUP April 20, COMMON GOLDENEYE April 25, BUFFLEHEAD March 19, OLDSQUAW April 19, COMMON EIDER May 21, WHITE-WINGED,

SURF and COMMON SCOTERS May 23. On March 28 a pair (male and female) of HOODED MERGANSERS, in spring plumage appeared in Cow Bay Pond, Hfx. Co. Eric Mills, Ross Anderson and Ian McLaren were the lucky viewers. A few COMMON MERGANSERS arrived late February and early March, but larger numbers were seen simultaneously on April 19 at Brier Island and in Yarmouth harbor, the flock at Yarmouth numbering 20+. RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS reported at Glace Bay May 16 are expectable, but 2 seen off Seal Island May 23 are rather unusual.

The Hawks have been extensively reported throughout May and June. The GOSHAWK is not often seen, but C.R.K. Allen spotted one April 4 at Beaverbank, Hfx. Co., and said it made his day, which was his all time low for the new year, 8 species only seen. The next day his list went up to 24 species, partly because the territory was better, but also due to several new spring arrivals, notably robins and some of the blackbirds. By the end of April his lists were up to 36 per day, and by the end of May to 58 species. Spring in Nova Scotia is not usually the most highly regarded season of the year, but for the bird watcher it is prime. To continue with the hawks, Sylvia Fullerton and Barbara Hinds saw a Goshawk at Hubbards on May 9; a pair was seen at Granite Village, Shelburne Co. May 10, and 3 others have been reported since, including an adult on nest June 21, in the woods near Upper Ohio, Shelburne County. The Gallaghers say the nest appears to be built on top of an older one and has newly cut pine boughs around the edge. There are 10 reports of the SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, including one over-eager bird which smashed through a window at Captain Holdway's at Pictou, stayed a day to recover, and flew away apparently unharmed. Three Sharp-shin sightings coincide on May 16, one at Glace Bay, one in Lunenburg Co. and one at Brier Island. A COOPER'S HAWK was noted April 23 at Brookside, Hfx. Co. (F.W. Dobson). The RED-TAILED HAWK has been widely reported, and 6 BROAD-WINGED HAWKS have been seen; 2, May 2 in Fenwick, Cumberland Co., 2 at Round Hill, Annapolis Co., 1 May 10 in Yarmouth County (near Braemar), and 1, June 12, near Springhill, Cumberland Co. One or possibly two ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS hunted over the Grand Pré as late as March 21, seen in the vicinity on separate occasions by two observers. The 2 BALD EAGLES in the Lawrencetown area, Hfx. Co. were seen there through March by a number of watchers, and are perhaps nesting nearby by now, as they did last year. Four other March reports of the Bald Eagle are 1, March 7 near Halifax; 1, March 8 at Queensport, Guysborough Co.; and 1, March 4 at West Wentworth, Cumberland Co., all three sightings by David Christie on a visit to Nova Scotia; and 1, March 31, Yarmouth, by C.R.K. Allen. Since then we have only 2 Eagles mentioned, 1, May 20, at Three-Mile Plains, Hants Co., where it caused some excitement for the V.F. Chisholms (it is rare in this vicinity) as it flew to the top of the "gypsum hill" and perched, giving every opportunity for leisurely inspection; and 1, June 2 at Round Hill, described by W.E. Whitehead as "headed south, chivvied by crows". A dozen or more MARSH HAWKS have been seen, generally distributed, the first spring arrival date being April 10, at West Green Harbor, Shel. Co. Similarly the first OSPREY was seen at West Green Harbor, April 13, with numerous sightings since. An active Osprey nest

is being watched at Indian Path, Lun. Co., by the Cohrs family, and another at Brookside, Hfx. Co. by the Fred Dobsons. Only 2 PIGEON HAWKS have been recorded: 1, March 4 at Cape Sable, and 1, May 1 at Round Hill. Migrating SPARROW HAWKS came in via Cape Sable April 11; Yarmouth and Annapolis April 15, and Brier Island April 17. They "arrived" in Colchester Co. April 20 to 26, since when we have received twenty-three reports from various parts of the province, 1 to 3 birds per report.

RUFFED GROUSE were shepherding chicks by June 13. A few pairs of GRAY PARTRIDGE are still to be found, at any rate near the Grand Pré, but they do not appear to be doing as well here as the RING-NECKED PHEASANT, for which we have ten recent reports, numbering 20 birds, including one in Cape Breton.

Eric Mills was able to produce 2 SORAS for members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society attending the President's Field Day at Amherst Point Sanctuary, (June 13 this year), which he described as a "howling success". See write-up to follow. Another of this group (the Rallidae) was found taking refuge in a garage on Windmill Road in Dartmouth April 5. This was a PURPLE GALLINULE, probably brought in by the previous day's gale. It survived till next day. Identification was made by A. Sagar, Betty Topple, Ian McLaren and E. Crathorne.

The only 2 spring sightings of the SEMIPALMATED PLOVER are 3 or 4 birds present May 28 on the beach at Sunday Point near Yarmouth; and 2 adult, 1 immature, seen June 22 at the Airport Parking Lot in Yarmouth. Two reports of the PIPING PLOVER are 3, seen April 1 at Baccaro Beach, Shel. Co., and 2, April 25 at Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co. A recent trip to the latter vicinity (end of June) revealed 4 pairs of Piping Plover established, one pair at Conrad's, one at Lawrencetown Beach, and 2 at Seaforth.

Three KILLDEER, April 1 at Cape Sable were the vanguard of the migrants, 3, April 25 at Cape Sable; 1, April 26 at Brookside, Hfx. Co.; 5, April 27 again at Cape Sable; 24 in all mentioned since then in various places, and 2 nests discovered in late May. One nest is near Cranberry Head, Yar. Co., and one was near Debert, Col. Co.; "was" because Ross Baker saw the parent bird gather 3 chicks under its wings, when he passed there on June 4. A few BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS have been seen, 19, May 21 at Brier Island; 6, May 23 at Seal Island; 1, May 25 at Cape Sable; 18, May 28 at Sunday Point (Yarmouth); and 4, May 31 as far east as Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co.

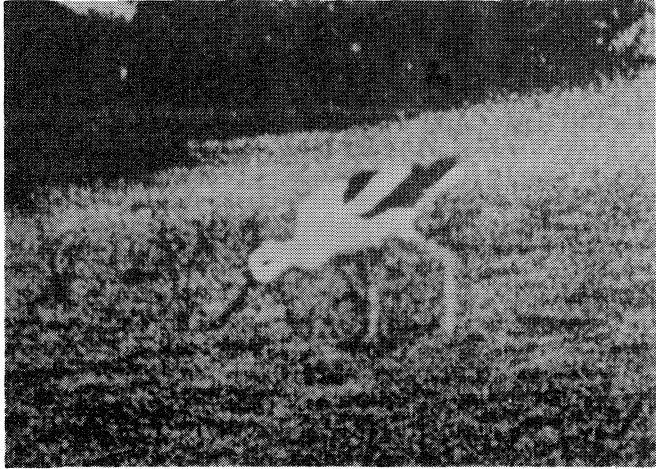
According to our records, the first AMERICAN WOODCOCK to arrive put down at Pine Hill, Hfx. on March 26, seen there by J. B. Hardie. The next day one appeared on Ogilvie Street, in the city (reported by Dr. H. C. Still), and 2 more in the near vicinity during the next two days. By April 17, 4 were at Pictou, where Holdway made a "singing ground count", and Evelyn Lowerison writes that aerial flights went on till May 26 at Cameron Settlement, Guys. Bo. Holdway noted mating flights at dusk April 28 of the COMMON SNIPE, which has been heavily reported, the wintering population obviously greatly reinforced

from late April on.

It was good to hear the familiar cry of the SPOTTED SANDPIPER again in May along the streams and back of the beaches. The first two arrivals were at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co. May 3, and by May 16 it was widespread. The WILLET came even earlier, reported at Cape Sable April 19 and at Smith's Cove, Digby Co. April 26. From Yarmouth, M. Hilton reported the first 2 at False Harbor April 30, and by May 2 "they were in all the regular Willet haunts in groups of 5 to 10". Four had reached Glace Bay by May 10. Both of these Tatlers have been well reported, which is not unusual as they breed here, but a surprising number of records of the GREATER YELLOWLEGS have also come in, starting with 1 April 20 seen at Pinckney's Point, Yar. Co.; 1, April 25 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co.; 1 April 26, near Walton, Hants Co.; followed by 5 May 2 at Chebogue Point (Yarmouth); 1 May 2 up in Col. Co. and 1 May 3 at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co. One was seen May 5 at Cape Sable; 1 May 9 and later at Glace Bay; 6 May 16 to 19 at Brier Island; 12 on Seal Island May 23, and 2 at Petite Riviere, Lun. Co. June 6.

Another rare spring record of the KNOT comes from Brier Island, where Mills saw 2 on May 16. The PURPLE SANDPIPER is seldom included in a spring migration report, but a small flock (6) was observed April 5 on a rock off Chebucto Head. Eric Mills, who reports them, notes that they were "beginning brown plumage". Five more were noted April 17 at Brier Island. The shorebird migration brushed the southern end of the province in May. LEAST SANDPIPERS came, 9 May 16 to Brier Island (one was also seen at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co. on that date), and 20+ at Seal Island, May 20. One DUNLIN and one SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER were also seen at Brier Island May 21, and both SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPERS (20+) and SANDERLINGS (25+) were on the beach at Sunday Point, Yarmouth, May 28.

A stop press item is here inserted. Eric Cook has just telephoned to report an AVOCET at Three-Fathom Harbor, Hfx. Co., seen this morning, July 5. This is the second Nova Scotia record for the Avocet, the first was reported in the November 1969 NSBS Newsletter, seen August 28, 1969, on Cape Sable Island, by the Gallaghers. The picture following was taken next day, at a considerable distance, and was subsequently re-photographed through a microscope. It is a pity we cannot reproduce it in color, which is very good.



American Avocet - Dr. J. R. Gallagher

Two NORTHERN PHALAROPES were sighted May 4 offshore at Pictou, 20+ May 17 off Brier Island, others seen in the light beam May 26 at Cape Sable. At Brier Island, a PARASITIC JAEGER was sighted on May 17, and Parasitic Jaegers were seen "in numbers" at Sable Island, starting May 20; also one sighted at Morien Bay, Cape Breton Co. May 28 by Arthur Spenser. Two SKUAS are big news from Sable Island, 1 June 3 and 1 June 12, seen by Davis Finch (see report to follow).

The last ICELAND GULLS at Glace Bay left May 5, although 2 were seen in June on Sable Island. Both the GREAT BLACK-BACKED and HERRING GULL became more active and evident around our shores in early April. We have no accurate counts except for Brier Island April 17; an estimated 100 Great Black-backs to around 500 Herrings; and for Seal Island, May 20, 30+ Great Black-backs to 350+ Herring Gulls. On June 1, the Smiths at Cape Sable noticed "masses of Great Black-backed Gulls on Horserace Shoals, in air and on sea. Around 3,000 we estimated. Spring records for the RING-BILLED GULL (said to be rare in spring) are: 3, March 28, Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co.; 6, April 1, Yarmouth, and 1, April 18, Brier Island. Four records (even more rare for spring) of the BLACK-HEADED GULL are: 11, March 19 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co.; 20 March 28 at the same place, coming into spring plumage; 1 April 5 at the same place, and 1 May 12 at Glace Bay, still in winter plumage, although Sara MacLean noted some on April 14, getting their dark heads. She wrote "I have never seen them here like this before, they are strictly a winter bird with us." One adult BONAPARTE'S GULL was seen May 19 at Brier Island, and 1 on May 21. On May 19 Eric Mills also sighted a BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE, immature, fishing

with terns at the Northern Light. A stray FORSTER'S TERN was spotted May 23 at Seal Island. The earliest date for the COMMON TERN and an exceptionally early one, is 3 May 2, at Tusket, Yar. Co. Marion Hilton wrote "They flew over the Tusket River then came and sat on a rock together near enough for us to be able to get the black tip on the bill". Tern species, both Common and ARCTIC, up to 200 were at Brier Island May 15; 3 at Cape Sable May 17; 3 at Pictou May 17, where Holdway noted "main migrants going northward May 18, solitary or scattered in two's and three's. Two BLACK TERNS which we cannot properly claim were seen at Front Lake, Jolicure, just over the New Brunswick border, June 13, on the Amherst Shore Field Trip.

On April 11, one RAZORBILL was sighted off Cape Sable. The BLACK GUILLEMOT was noted in increasing numbers at Brier Island from April 17 on. Fifty plus were counted May 23 at Seal Island, where they breed, and "many dozens" May 31 at the South Head of Morien, Cape Breton, where there are nests in the cliffs.

Shirley Cohrs writes: "We had a resident MOURNING DOVE in the garden in Halifax from April 4 to 9. He came every day in the morning and again at 5:30 exactly - sat in the flower bed for as long as an hour at a time....We could see a lilac-rose colored iridescence on his breast." No doubt a wintering dove could have developed this "livelier iris", but we have two other April 5 arrival reports: 1 April 5 at Sable River, Shel. Co.; and a pair April 5 at Markland, near Yarmouth; 2 pairs at Pinckney's Point April 7; 1, April 11 at Prospect, Hfx. Co.; a pair at Sable River April 13, followed by five other reports up to mid-May, of increasingly wide distribution. Last year's arrival date was April 6.

Two BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS have been seen: 1, June 8 in a Halifax garden (A. and E. Doull), and 1, June 14 at Truro, where Ross Baker found it in a clump of trees back of the house. This is double the number we had last year.

Owls were not rare, but two amusing notes are at hand: a baby BARRED OWL sitting in the doorway of the Family Hole (it took up the whole opening) at Ellenwood Park, Yar. Co., where it was pointed out to A. Hurlburt, D. Kirk and M. Hilton by the Park Naturalist; the other note from Brier Island, where Eric Mills heard a SAW-WHET OWL "singing" in a bog, April 17.

WHIP-POOR-WILLS were singing May 20 to June 8 near Granite Village, Shel. Co., and 2, June 21, were heard near Williams Lake, a well-known haunt, by the Donald Jeffries. The COMMON NIGHTHAWK arrived May 23 at Petite Riviere, Lun. Co., and at Seal Island, at any rate that is our earliest recorded date and the next, May 30, when one was seen in Hants Co. (NSBS field trip). Early CHIMNEY SWIFTS flew over Yarmouth May 8, one seen May 10 in Annapolis Co., "arrived" at Truro May 12, and 25 "still flocked, very active, probably just arrived" May 18 at Burnside, Col. Co., as reported by C.R.K. Allen. On May 9, 12 and 15 the RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD was first seen at Round Hill, Anna.

Co., Yarmouth, and simultaneously on the last date at Truro and the Grand Pre. A curious phenomenon deserves comment, two "flocks" of hummingbirds, one numbering 12, in a pear tree in Halifax (McCurdy per Allen) and the other numbering 30+, all day in an apple tree at Glace Bay (Chant per MacLean), both the last of May. Sara MacLean commented "I never heard of such a thing, hummingbirds are so ill-natured"! From his notes Ross Baker writes of the BELTED KINGFISHER "last seen Dec. 21, 1969, returned April 19, 1970", and the majority of our records (21 birds reported) came in the week April 12 to 19, the few earlier being suspect wintering individuals, although very few were seen last winter.

Conspicuous by both call and appearance the YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER is a satisfactory bird to document and from the flood of reports at hand, it emerges that April 2 is the first arrival date, one at Petite Riviere, Lun. Co. seen by S. Fullerton. Following this the Flicker appeared at Truro April 8, Cape Sable April 9, Yarmouth, Round Hill (Annapolis Co.) and Brier Island April 15, Pictou April 18 and thereafter was widespread and numerous (in Cape Breton by May 9). A rare sighting of 3 RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS, April 24 to May 9, occurred near Shelburne, reported by H.F. Lewis; one (male) was seen at Seal Island, May 19-23, and another, June 6, in the John Higby's garden, in Yarmouth town. Although the Flicker reports gave no clue as to route of entry, the YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER plainly came across the Bay of Fundy, appearing April 18 at Brier Island, April 25 at Cape Sable, April 26 (3 birds) at Cape Forchu, Yarmouth. By May 10 it was widespread, although not heavily reported. The Gallaghers report "two pairs on June 26 both feeding young in nesting holes near the Roseway River, Middle Ohio. The nest of one pair is within 100 yards of where a pair has nested each year since 1966."

The EASTERN KINGBIRD arrived as usual May 15 to 22, coming in at Brier Island 4, May 15, 8, May 16, many reports following. The flycatchers are also satisfactory birds, which sit up to be counted, and the Kingbird seems to favor wires, fence or telephone, making it particularly visible, which may account for the number of reports, as Eric Mills called it "surprisingly scarce" at Amherst in June. However, there were 15+ at Seal Island May 23. The Smiths at Cape Sable report 3 WESTERN KINGBIRDS May 23. A GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, May 16 was watched by the Cohrs family for the best part of an afternoon at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co. "He was catching flies and flying about a piece of scrub land at the far end of the beach, so near to the four of us - about 6 ft. at times - that we had a wonderful opportunity to see his beautiful colors - the pale yellow underneath was really lovely." The first EASTERN PHOEBE was seen at Cape Sable March 30, the next, April 25, at Sable River, Shel. Co. Six more Phoebes have been reported: 1, May 3 near the Old Mill Road bridge at Lake Annis, Yar. Co., where a pair nested last year; 1, May 8, near Granite Village, Shelburne Co.; 1, May 24, at Susie Lake, Hfx. Co.; 2, May 24, (and earlier) in central Hants, where their nest was discovered under a bridge; and 1, June 13, near Princeport, Col. Co. The Hants County birds were a highlight of the NSBS field trip,

many of us glad to hear the "song" for the first time. While watching the Phoebes, we were also serenaded by a plaintive Catbird, and two very beautiful Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, all birds near at hand and very visible. The first YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER was heard and seen May 9, on the New Ross road, Lun. Co., that haunt of warblers, flycatchers and black flies in the spring (highly recommended, but go prepared). The first TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER report is of 1, May 27 at Round Hill, Anna. Co. According to reports received, this is our most abundant flycatcher, and so far is of the "wee-be-o" variety. The earliest LEAST FLYCATCHER was seen and heard at Burnside, Col. Co. May 18, and was widespread by May 23. The EASTERN WOOD PEWEE seems to be second in abundance to the Traill's, the first one reported at Cape Sable May 10. The commanding call of the OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was echoing from treetops by early June, widely distributed - first date May 23 at Seal Island. The impression is that there are more of this species than usual this spring.

Once again the TREE SWALLOW arrived in good numbers and in good time, first seen, 1, April 13 at Cape Sable; at Yarmouth April 14, "25-30 flying around drowned bushes at the edge of a flooded area just outside of town" to quote M. Hilton, then 3, April 15 at Chebogue, and "hundreds along the shore ponds near Beaver River" by April 19. April 18 saw the first arrivals at Brier Island, and on April 20, 30 or more were flying low over Miller's Lake, beside the Bicentennial Highway out of Halifax, little wisps of birds, tossing about in the mist and driving rain (which later turned to snow). The BANK SWALLOW came two weeks later, first date noted, May 5 at Lake Annis, Yar. Co. (D. Kirk), near a favorite nesting site. BARN SWALLOWS were first noted at Cape Sable April 27; at Brookside, Hfx. Co. and at Broad Cove, Lun. Co. April 28; and the first CLIFF SWALLOW, May 6, at Brookside, Hfx. Co. The PURPLE MARTIN returned to Amherst May 1, where 12 have settled at the Lowerison martin house, 15 at the Black's, and a few at the Lunn's. All of the swallows are present in good numbers. A count on Seal Island May 19 to 23 gave: Tree 50+, Bank 25+, Barn 50+, Cliff 2 and Martin 10+.

A possible movement of the BLUE JAY is suggested by two sightings: a flock of 27 seen in Central Hants Co., (10 at the Grand Pré), on March 21; and a "close flock" April 1, seen at Barrington, Shel. Co. In Cape Breton, the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE stopped coming to feeders around May 15. There were at least 15 of these chickadees at Seal Island May 19-23, which is interesting, as it has been noticeably missing from autumn Seal Island lists. On May 24, C.R.K. Allen watched a pair of Black-caps busy hollowing out a nest in a stump, in Central Hants Co., and upon a subsequent visit (June 7) found them incubating. BOREAL CHICKADEES numbered 18+, at least 9 pairs, May 19-23 on Seal Island, where they number up in the hundreds in the fall, obviously mostly migrants. The Nuthatches are very lightly reported, possibly scarce. A possible arrival for the RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH is May 15, when 2 were seen at Brier Island, 4 the following day. A HOUSE WREN was on Seal Island May 19-23 plus 6 WINTER WRENS, although May 9 at New Ross, Lun.

Co., and May 11 at Kearney Lake, Hfx. Co., are earlier sightings. That is, if they were sighted, more likely heard, but it is worth getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning to hear the spring song of the Winter Wren.

There are five reports of the MOCKINGBIRD: 1, May 15 at Truro; 1, May 19-23 at Seal Island; 1, May 21 at Brier Island; 1, May 31 at Glace Bay; and 1, June 6-7 at Middle Ohio, Shel. Co. The CATBIRD is first reported 1, May 13 at Cape Sable and 10, May 15 at Brier Island. By May 31 it was widely distributed. The only BROWN THRASHERS were seen at Cape Sable, 1, May 12; at Brier Island 2, May 16; and at Yarmouth (Grove Road) 1, May 23-24. This last bird was singing "enough to drive a man crazy", according to a workman nearby.

A study of the arrival records for the ROBIN this spring is fascinating. Apparently the tail end of an early migration was disappearing from Glace Bay as the first main big wave came in at Barrington. The Smiths at Cape Sable claim the first one which "flew in over the beach and landed right in our midst" March 22. On the other hand, Holdway at Pictou had 15 on March 15, 40 on March 30. There were 2 "dark" robins at Round Hill March 21, 6 at Conrad's Beach March 28, 7 at Gasper-eau March 29, and Sara MacLean wrote "Newfoundland" robins passing through Glace Bay March 30. This was the day they "poured in" between Barrington and Shag Harbor. At Yarmouth Marion Hilton had 1 in the yard March 23, 4 March 26, and saw hundreds April 1 at Chebogue Point. Other reports corroborate this picture (Allen saw 4 Mar. 28; 30+ Mar. 29, 100+ Mar. 31 at Tusket, Yar. Co.), but what about the Halifax area which blossomed forth in robins March 29-31? It looks as if they had come by another route, as Ross Baker in Truro wrote "robins arrived March 29", which was the day Betty Toppie, outside of Dartmouth phoned to say she had 20 new robins, quite starved. On March 30, Dr. Hardie at Pine Hill had 12 bright robins on the lawn (Halifax) and Elizabeth Murray at Bedford an equal number. Rosemary Eaton at Cole Harbor reported around 25 on March 31. Perhaps, on the other hand, these birds simply pushed on north-east, trying to get ahead of the snowstorm (March 29), which left only a thin cover here. They were certainly hungry, like all newly arrived migrants, eating avidly on hawthorne and multiflora rose berries or apples if supplied, their bright red breasts resplendent against the snow. By April 5 the countryside was well populated in the Halifax - Hants - Colchester area (400 birds counted on a casual half-day trip) and at Pictou by April 18, when Holdway reported the "main arrival of migrants in usual abundance".

One WOOD THRUSH was identified by Ian McLaren at Seal Island May 23. The first HERMIT THRUSH was at Cape Sable April 9, the next (reported) April 24 at Yarmouth, the next (2) April 28 at Broad Cove, Lun. Co. Thereafter, reports are widespread and in usual number. The SWAINSON'S as usual was much later: the first 2 reported May 16 at Glace Bay, then 1, May 19 at Cape Sable, and "arrived" May 24 at Truro. One GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH is mentioned, seen May 3 on the Sambro Road near Halifax. The bird was not singing, but obligingly perched on a rock on

the roadside, where C.R.K. Allen could study it carefully in good light. It was obviously a spring bird, and there was no eye-ring, and no trace of buffy - definite gray cheeks. Eight VEERYS have been heard and/or seen: 1, in Yarmouth Co., 5 in Cumberland Co., and 2 at Seal Island, all in late May or early June.

Another sight record of the BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, 2, May 20, seen by Anne Mills outside the cottage at Brier Island is vouched for by Eric Mills. On April 21, at Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co., the Eatons heard the first RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, reported from Cape Sable April 24, Yarmouth area April 26, Shelburne and Lunenburg Counties April 27, and general, singing everywhere, by May 9-10. The WATER PIPIT spring movement was very thin: 1, seen May 21 at Brier Island; 2, May 23 at Seal Island; and 1, June 15 at the Yarmouth Airport.

Twenty-six BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS returned to Pictou Mar. 18, 14 on the 31st., after being absent since January 6. Ten CEDAR WAXWINGS arrived at the Jeffries, Hfx. Co., May 28, and on June 1, flocks of up to 60 birds appeared in Halifax, Sable River, and Yarmouth. One LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was seen April 1 near Yarmouth by C.R.K. Allen. The appearance of 150 STARLINGS April 17 at Brier Island (100 on the 18th.) suggests a migratory movement. May 10 brought the first SOLITARY VIREOS, 3 in the Halifax region - 1 at Brookside, 1 at Boulderwood, 1 near Lake Pockwock. This was followed by 1, May 11 at Sable River, 1, May 16 at Green Bay (Lun. Co.), and 1, May 18 at Burnside (Col. Co.). The other end of the old road from Burnside emerges near Truro, and along here, through Camden, C.R.K. Allen heard 12+ Solitary Vireos May 23, their conversational queries overlapping for a stretch of miles. The RED-EYED VIREO is usually later, but May 9 and 10 brought in the first reports this year, at Broad Cove (Lun. Co.) and Yarmouth respectively. These vireos were abundant by early June, both in town and country.

May is the month of WOOD WARBLERS, flitting in this year again before the trees were fully out, 26 species in all represented, which included 4 rare ones. First sightings may be fortuitous, but probably give a fair indication of time and place of arrival. To give credit where credit is due: BLACK-AND-WHITE, May 3, Yarmouth; GOLDEN-WINGED, 1, May 23, Seal Island (Ross Anderson); TENNESSEE May 18, Green Bay, Lun. Co.; ORANGE-CROWNED 1, April 28 at Wolfville (Mark Elderkin) and 1, May 24 at Brier Island (W. Lent); NASHVILLE, May 11, Kearney Lake, Hfx. Co.; PARULA May 5, Yarmouth and Green Bay; YELLOW, May 9, Yarmouth; MAGNOLIA, May 3, Round Hill, Anna. Co.; CAPE MAY, May 16, Brier Island; BLACK-THROATED BLUE, May 16, Enfield, Hfx. Co.; MYRTLE, April 27, Brookside, Hfx. Co.; BLACK-THROATED GREEN, May 3, Lake Annis, Yar. Co.; CERULEAN, 1, May 24, Brier Island (W. Lent); BLACKBURNIAN, May 16, Brier Island; CHESTNUT-SIDED May 9, Nine Mile River, Hfx. Co.; BAY-BREASTED, May 23, Petite Riviere, Lun. Co.; BLACKPOLL, May 13, Cape Sable; PINE WARBLER, 1, May 23, Seal Island (B.K. Doane); PALM, April 26, Yarmouth; OVENBIRD, May 15, Cape Sable and Brier Island; NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH April 19, Brier Island; MOURNING, May 23, Seal Island; YELLOWTHROAT, May 13, Cape Sable; WILSON'S May 12,

Cape Sable; CANADA, May 25, Armdale, Hfx. Co.; AMERICAN REDSTART, May 13, Cape Sable. For the most part, arrival dates in Shelburne, Yarmouth and Digby counties were within a day of each other, in the Annapolis Valley 2 days later, at Truro 5 days later, at Pictou 10 days later. By the end of May, as far as our records show, only the Palm, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's and American Redstart had reached northern Cape Breton. On May 23-24 there was a huge "warbler wave" through Brier Island, and at that time, 23 species were identified on Seal Island, 21 of our regular ones plus the Golden-winged and the Pine, and good numbers of most present, including 60 Blackpolls.

The first reported BOBOLINKS are 2, May 2, at Granville Ferry, Anna. Co.; and 10, May 15, on the Grand Pré. May 16 a flock of 27 arrived at Brier Island, all bright males but 2, and all singing at once, "an indescribable din" Eric Mills called it. By May 26 a dozen or more were seen at South Head Morien, Cape Breton (Ferguson per MacLean), and by the 30th. they were to be seen in good numbers in all expected habitat. Four pairs have settled in at Sable River, Shel. Co., an unexpected habitat until very recent years. A rare spring record of an EASTERN MEADOWLARK, May 9 at Broad Cove, Lun. Co. comes from Barbara Hinds and Sylvia Fullerton; and a spring record of a rare bird, the YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD May 8-17, comes from Sable Island. The first definite flock of REDWINGED BLACKBIRDS was the 100+ counted by L. B. Macpherson March 29, at Selma, Hants Co. Arrival date of Redwings in Middle Ohio, Shel. Co., was March 30, (20+ birds); at Round Hill, Anna. Co. 5 on April 3; "arrived" Glace Bay April 21; and the first 3 Redwings at Cape Sable April 21. An extraordinary sighting of 5 ORCHARD ORIOLES May 19-23 at Seal Island consisted of 2 females, 2 adult males and 1 black-throated male. There were also 30 BALTIMORE ORIOLES on Seal Island at that time, but earlier ones were seen: 1, May 9 in the Williams Lake area, Halifax (Jeffries); 1, May 12 at Cape Sable and 4, May 19 at Brier Island. On May 23, Ross Baker in Truro watched a Baltimore Oriole clean up two large nests of tent caterpillars, with voracious appetite, the oriole obviously just arrived and hungry. The RUSTY BLACKBIRD came early: 1, March 28 near the County Hospital, Dartmouth; 1, April 3 at Sable River, Shel. Co.; 5, April 5, at Brookside, and 5, April 5 in the Lawrencetown area, (both Hfx. Co.); since then well reported, one flock of 200 to 300 April 12, at Round Hill, Anna. Co.

The arrival and spread of the COMMON GRACKLE, like the other blackbirds, reverses the usual pattern: first migrants at Pictou, 9 March 25, 40 March 28 and 100+ March 30. A flock of 20+ was seen at Selma, Hants Co. March 29, by L. B. Macpherson, and grackles had arrived at Glace Bay by March 30. Not until April 4 did they begin trickling into the Halifax area; were still scarce at Annapolis by April 12; first 2 at Cape Sable April 13, at Brier Island 10, April 17, 20+ April 18 and 30+ April 19. Many hundreds eventually flooded the countryside, well established by May 2. Three SCARLET TANAGERS strayed to Nova Scotia in May: 1 May 5, picked up dead at Allendale, Shel. Co., was sent to the Museum; 1 May 24, a very beautiful first year male, was in good shape although found in Town Point

Cemetery, near Yarmouth; and the last 1, May 25 seen at Lake Loon, near Dartmouth, by the Topples and their neighbors.

Fifteen reports of the ROSE-BREADED GROSEBEAK have come in, totalling 40 birds (12 of them at Seal Island) mid-May to mid-June. There is no particular pattern of arrival and distribution is general, except none yet in Cape Breton. Six INDIGO BUNTINGS were seen May 10 to 23, 3 in various parts of Shel. Co., 3 on Seal Island (which is included in Yarmouth Co.). There was a DICKCISSEL in Glace Bay April 22, one on Sable Island May 24. During the last two weeks in March, EVENING GROSEBEAKS flocked up, disappearing from most town feeders, but descending on a few in the hundreds. These stayed together only a short time, and small roving bands and singles have been seen around the countryside since then. At Glace Bay on May 17 a pair arrived at Sara MacLean's feeder "the male glossy golden and shy but the female.....perfectly confident. She must have been a regular customer." They came only the once.

One of the most missed of our birds, the PURPLE FINCH showed up in a scatter of early records, starting March 30 at Round Hill, Anna. Co., but these were single birds; the real influx started April 28, at Truro and Halifax, increasing in numbers and spread up to May 10, upon which date we have several reports from widely separated localities, 10 to 50 birds per report. The Finches were singing everywhere by the end of May, and "courting" by the roadsides. The PINE SISKIN "increased in numbers starting May 11" in Lunenburg Co., also Kings, Halifax, and Pictou counties, by our reports, but 1 only was seen the end of May at Seal Island and 1 only at Glace Bay (unlike the Purple Finch, said to be in the latter place "in throngs" at that time). The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, also conspicuous by its absence last winter, appeared April 28 at Glace Bay, increasing there steadily after that date; appeared May 23 in Colchester Co. in fair numbers; at Cape Sable May 29 (1), May 30 (7); and by early June was abundant everywhere, singing vigorously. A few small flocks of Crossbills were still around in May and June, the RED CROSSBILL seen in Colchester and Hants Counties (Eric Mills and C.R.K. Allen), the WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL in Lunenburg Co. (S. Cohrs) and at Seal Island.

Outdoing the Icterids in number of species and possibly the Wood Warblers in number of individuals, the Sparrows form one of our largest groups of migrants, and none more welcome. In the vast array of reports received all of our common breeding species are represented, except the Lincoln's - hasn't anyone seen or heard a Lincoln's sparrow this spring? We have on the other hand a number of rare species starting out with the RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, 11 in all, the first seen March 1 at Reserve Mines, Cape Breton by C. Berton, the same or another of these on March 23, seen by A. Spencer. Most interesting, 3 of the Towhees were singing, 2 at Brier Island May 18, and one near Halifax May 31. A few IPSWICH SPARROWS have been seen along the Atlantic coast, starting with 9, in bright plumage, March 28 at Eastern Passage, Cow Bay and Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co.: 1, April 2 at Broad Cove, Lun. Co.; 1, April 3 at Yarmouth; 1,

April 15 at Cape Sable, followed by half-a-dozen other reports from these same places or nearby. At Sable Island nests were active by late May "all territories occupied" (see report to follow). The SAVANNAH SPARROW seemed late this year. Reports of single birds came in the first of April, but they were not "common" in Yarmouth Co. until April 26, Lunenburg and Pictou May 10, and Kings-Hants May 16. Savannahs on Seal Island May 19-23 were estimated at 85 residents. The only SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS mentioned so far were seen on the Amherst field trip, in early June. VESPER SPARROWS are as usual lightly reported, only twice, but both for May 15, 2 at Brier Island, 4 at Aldershot outside of Kentville, where they are known to nest. Migrant SLATE-COLORED JUNCOS started to arrive March 28, with a big increase at Yarmouth over the next three days; "arrived" in Truro April 4; Annapolis Co. March 30 to April 12; Colchester Co. April 20; 50+ at Brookside, Hfx. Co., April 21; and at Glace Bay April 30. At Pictou Captain Holdway noted "Juncos common all winter, no noticeable increase by migration". The TREE SPARROW lingered into April, not seen after April 22 at Pictou, same date at Glace Bay. A very early CHIPPING SPARROW was seen at Chebogue Point, near Yarmouth April 26, but most records are May 4 to 11, and most birds on the northerly side of the province. Two spring FIELD SPARROWS have been identified: 1, May 16 at Brier Island; 1, late May on Sable. Another rare one, the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, sent four representatives: 1, May 7 at Cape Sable; 1, May 11 at Clarence, Anna. Co., (Rona Hunter); 1, May 15 at Brier Island; and 1, May 19-23 at Seal Island. The first WHITE-THROATED SPARROW to open the concert season sang at Round Hill, Anna. Co., April 16. April 22 to May 2 brought the bulk of the newcomers however and by May 10 the birds were in full chorus, in many regions for miles and miles never out of earshot. The population is apparently most dense in Halifax Co., where Eric Mills totalled 78 birds in 5 hours on his Breeding Bird census (69 the next day in Colchester Co.). The FOX SPARROW came March 28, 29 and 30, almost simultaneously Yarmouth to Pictou, flocks of 6 to upwards of 50 birds. In Shelburne Co., Fox Sparrows were reported from seven stations on March 30. At Truro, Ross Baker wrote: "Had the largest numbers of Fox Sparrows ever seen and they stayed for the longest period, namely, March 30 to May 4. On April 15 there were 30/40 in the back yard at one time. Several persons spoke to me about the observance of unusually large numbers and the extended period for which they remained." Evelyn Lowerison counted 50+ at Seafoam, Guys. Co. April 14, and Holdway at Pictou 100+ April 17. The latest record we have is 1, April 20, in Halifax (city). SWAMP SPARROWS have been very scarce, only 9 reports received, starting May 1, 1 at Petite Riviere, Lun. Co. (F. and E. Dobson), and the largest number seen, 10 on the June 13 NSBS field trip to Amherst. Although the SONG SPARROW was heard singing here and there earlier, the first definite influx of migrants came March 28, noted on that date at Yarmouth, Annapolis Co. and Truro; March 30 at Halifax and Amherst. On June 9 and 10 Eric Mills counted 33 and 32 Song Sparrows respectively, as compared with his 78 and 69 White-throats. This cannot be taken literally as a correct ratio of these birds to one another, the Song being a town bird, the White-throat a woods bird, and certainly a more

persistent singer, with a voice of greater carrying power. On partly wooded Seal Island May 19-23 White-throats, eminently visible, as well as audible, counted 20+, Song Sparrows 50+.

At Pictou, March 11, a flock of 20 SNOW BUNTINGS took off for the arctic tundra; also on April 8, another flock at Lingan, Cape Breton (noted by R. Beecher); and a scattered few individuals have been seen since, lagging at Chebucto Head April 5, Brier Island April 17, and Cape Sable April 27, 2 already in breeding plumage.

Contributors and some of our observers by Counties are as follows: Cape Breton, Sara MacLean; Antigonish, Ethel Crathorne, Fred and Margaret Kenny; Pictou, Eric Holdway; Cumberland, Evelyn Lowerison; Colchester, Ross Baker; Hants, Lloyd Macpherson, C.R.K. Allen; Kings, Alice Chisholm; Annapolis, W. E. Whitehead; Digby, Annie Raymond, Eric Mills, Wickerson Lent; Yarmouth, Marion Hilton, Adele Hurlburt, D. Kirk; Shelburne, Betty June and Sidney Smith, H. F. Lewis and his observers for the Shelburne Coastguard column, and the Gallaghers; Lunenburg, Sylvia Fullerton, Barbara Hinds, the Cohrs family, Fred and Evelyn Dobson; Halifax, Ian McLaren, C.R.K. Allen, Eric and Anne Mills, Ross Anderson, Eric Cooke, Shirley Cohrs, the Donald Jeffries, the Topples, Willett Mills, J. B. Hardie, the Michael Eatons, F. and E. Dobson; Guysborough, E. Lowerison.

The Seal Island party May 19-23 consisted of Ben K. Doane, Ian McLaren, Ross Anderson and Philip May.

NEW RECORDS

1. A second record for all of Canada of the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL has recently been confirmed by Earl Godfrey of the National Museum of Canada. This gull was observed on March 25, 1970 at Digby by Davis Finch, Louise Daley, Mary Robert, John Nichols and Herb Margolian. Attempts to collect the bird were unsuccessful, but identification was possible on the basis of a color photograph obtained at the time, which showed the long body, small head, small thin bill and heavily streaked face characteristic of the Lesser Black-back. A Herring Gull included in the picture gave a good comparison for size, about the same.

2. Less certain status is accorded the BULLOCK'S ORIOLE which visited the Ian McLaren's feeder last Christmas, and which remained as a guest of the family for the rest of the winter of 1970. According to Godfrey, this bird was probably a hybrid, Bullock's-Baltimore (the species interbreed) which phenotypically (i.e. in outward appearance) resembled the Bullock's "ninety per cent". (Editor's suggestion: *Icterus bullockii maclarensis*).

SABLE ISLAND NOTES, WINTER-SPRING, 1970

Ian A. McLaren

Mr. Bell was transferred from Sable Island in early March, to take up other duties with the Department of Transport out of Moncton, and we shall no longer be able to enjoy Mrs. Bell's constant stream of noteworthy observations from the island. Her accumulated and detailed notes will continue to serve as a basis for comparison with all future records.

Beginning in early May, several Dalhousie people and others have been on the island, and the birders among them - including Jean Boulva (JB), Dick Brown (RB), Davis Finch (DF), I. McLaren (IM), Joe Mortenson (JM), Tony Lock (AL), Wayne Stobo (WS), and Danny Welsh (DW) - have supplied notes for the following account.

Apart from a tantalizing Christmas Count, winter notes from the island were not included in the last NEWSLETTER. The most outstanding record of the season was certainly the Brewer's Blackbird, which arrived on November 30 and was still present in early March when the Bells left and when it was seen by AL as well. The bird was an unmistakable glossy male, quite distinct from the male Rusty Blackbirds, for which there are a few late fall records. Other more usual strays included a male Scarlet Tanager on Dec. 6, Palm Warblers on various occasions up to January 12, and a Mockingbird that arrived on Jan. 13 and was found dead on Jan. 17.

The spring migration was not as exciting as it can be. A female Yellow-headed Blackbird on May 8-17 was seen by many and well photographed, as the third record from Sable Island. A Glossy Ibis in mid-May (JB), a Dickcissel on May 24 (RB) and a Field Sparrow in late May (DW, JB) were among the more "regular" strays. A few more commonplace Nova Scotian species that have been noted rarely, if at all, on Sable, include a Woodcock on May 28 (JM), a pair of Wood Ducks on May 28-30 (IM, WS, JM), a dying female Whippoorwill on May 9 (AL), and up to three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds daily in late May.

Spectacular counts of pelagic birds, which have hitherto been somewhat underrated by Sable birders, were made by DF, who huddled for as much as 6 hours at a stretch on the exposed West Tip of the island. He made an actual count of 1635 Sooty and 40 Greater Shearwaters passing the tip on June 3, and he and others estimated flocks of up to about 1,000 of the former and 150 of the latter feeding or resting on the water at other times in early June. Sprinklings of Gannets (up to 28), Leach's Petrel (up to 12 on June 6), Wilson's Petrel (3 on June 8, hovering at times over the beach!), numbers of Parasitic Jaegers (first on May 20 by RB), and a couple of Iceland Gulls in early June added to the list. Most exciting were a single Manx Shearwater seen very well on June 12 by DF, and single Skuas on June 3 and 12, both of which came right in over his head as he sat near the west tip.

A census of resident shorebirds and ducks by DF turned up 25 Black Ducks, 57 Red-breasted Mergansers, 24 Semipalmated Plovers, 24 Spotted Sandpipers, and 103 Least Sandpipers. The last may have been under-estimated, as many were sitting on eggs; known dates of completion of four clutches were May 28, June 1, and June 4 (2).

Finally, although numbers of Ipswich Sparrows were down somewhat in the census areas, they seemed bent on making up the deficiency. Almost all territories in the study areas had nests by late May, and young had already left one nest on June 1, ten days ahead of previous records (IM, WS).



Bird migration studies in the
Maritimes: a general review

For centuries men have marvelled at the migrations of birds. At one time, people believed that birds hibernated when they disappeared in autumn; it was thought that they could not fly far enough to reach warmer lands. Although a very few species of birds are now known to hibernate, migration is clearly the rule for many.

How can we know that the warbler glimpsed in the spruce woods of Halifax County in September will find a winter home in the jungles of Panama? We can watch individuals or groups of birds directly; or we can work indirectly, noting whether the birds are present or absent. Many people feel that the direct approach is the more convincing. It can certainly be more dramatic, whether it is the observation of geese flying steadily north in

spring, or the recovery in the southern states of a blackbird banded as a nestling in the St. John River marshes. Nevertheless, the presence in an area today of birds that were not there yesterday clearly indicates a movement though none was observed. This indirect approach was the first to give important results in North America.

In 1885, W. W. Cooke of the U.S. Biological Survey plotted spring arrival dates of several bird species at various points in the Mississippi Valley to show the advance of the "migration front." Brewster (1886) made a pioneering study of visible migration at Point Lepreau, N. B., about the same time, but his approach has been used only locally in North America. Banding was not sufficiently widespread to provide much information until after 1920, and even now recoveries of banded birds of most species are far too few to be informative. Banding has given invaluable evidence of migration of some species, but the indirect approach has provided most of our knowledge of migration in North America. Because the Maritimes follow this general pattern fairly well, it is worth reviewing just what we do know of migration here, using all types of information. In addition, I will suggest some lines of investigation which observers of birds in the Maritimes might follow.

Banding and subsequent recovery of an individual bird locates two points on its migration route. Recovery of many birds of

one species marked in a particular region provides a composite picture of the migration route of that population; any individual may stray from this path to a greater or less extent. In the Maritimes, banding has given us considerable information on the migrations of ducks, but very little about most other species. For example, we know from banding that Common Mergansers reared in northern Cape Breton remain there during October and November, and move to the shores of Guysborough and Halifax counties during December and January. Only in exceptionally cold years, as in 1958, do they travel as far as New England. In contrast, mergansers banded on the Miramichi River in New Brunswick were regularly recovered in New England, so we cannot speak of one migration route from or through the Maritimes even within a single species. More extensive banding of Black Ducks has given a more complete picture (Addy, 1953). Black Ducks seen in the Maritimes in fall may have been reared locally, and these often migrate no farther than the south shore of Nova Scotia; others from Newfoundland travel to New England, while still others from the Labrador coast head for wintering grounds in Virginia. Generally, those that breed farthest north winter farthest south. Many Blue-winged Teal from the Maritimes have been recovered in the West Indies and South America. In some years, birds of this species banded in Ontario and Manitoba were later shot in the Maritimes (especially P. E. I.). Recoveries of banded birds of species

newly established as breeding in the area showed no obvious patterns. Pintails banded near the N. S. -N. B. border in 1948 to 1950 (Boyer, 1966) were recovered as far away as Georgia and Alberta in the autumn following banding. American Widgeons banded in 1965 to 1967 were recovered in Saskatchewan, French Guiana, and the Shetland Islands off Scotland. Banding has also shown us that some Wood Ducks reared in New England move northeast into the Maritimes before starting their southward migration, and a few European Widgeons from Iceland have been recovered in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The Raven, Evening Grosbeak, and Purple Finch are other species banded in the Maritimes for which the data gathered do show some patterns. Surprisingly, Ravens wintering in Nova Scotia were found to be essentially sedentary, rather than migrating thence from more northern breeding areas (Coldwell, 1968; Tufts, 1968). Banding has shown that grosbeaks and finches from the Maritimes extend down to at least New Jersey during their winter irruptions (D. Christie, letter). Although banding gives a general picture of migration routes, it gives little detail about the flyways through the Maritimes. For this we turn to other methods.

Species which winter to the south and breed north of the Maritimes are recognized as migrants whenever they are seen. Compilation of records of such birds, whether at rest or flying,

can show their most common routes. This can be particularly satisfactory for species which follow narrow flyways within the Maritimes, as do the Brant and Fox Sparrow discussed by Aaron Bagg (1963). However, we have relatively few "key migrants," except among the shorebirds; most of our migrant species are also present in either summer or winter. While the wintering race of Horned Larks may be distinguished from the breeding form in the field, at close range, most individuals seen will not be identified to race and will not contribute to knowledge of migration patterns. For most species we have only observations of arrival and build-up of numbers, and of departure at the end of its stay. Much can be deduced about migrations from such data, which will probably remain one of the most important sources of information on bird movements.

The evidence from the shorebird enquiry (Allen, 1967) and recent migration reports indicates that the Maritimes are too small for the advance of "migration fronts" to be detectable, except possibly in early spring. Most birds arrive almost simultaneously across the region, according to reports from observers.

Unfortunately, however, such data often reflect the distribution of observers more faithfully than that of birds. The Nova Scotia Bird Society has no members regularly reporting on migration in Antigonish and Inverness counties; yet my own records suggest that bird migration may easily be detected in these areas. The lack of regular observers is still more acute in northern New

Brunswick and on Prince Edward Island.

Observations of birds believed to be migrating are often helpful in showing details of routes followed under various conditions. Such "visible migration" has received very little attention in the Maritimes - the observations of southwestward migration off Sambro Head (1) in the wake of Hurricane Gladys (Mills, 1969) being a notable, if isolated, example. I attempted to summarize my own scattered records of visible migration in the Maritimes from 1960 to 1968, but the results showed little that could not have been predicted.

I have spent little time on outer headlands and offshore islands where movements of water birds are most easily detected. Point Lepreau, N. B. (2) and Point Michaud, N. S. (3) are both good vantage points for watching visible migration, but the latter is too remote to be convenient for most observers. We have known for some time that a few sea birds, including Brant and Common Eiders, regularly cross the Chignecto Isthmus (4). But others pass east along Northumberland Strait to the Strait of Canso rather than make the 20-mile overland crossing. I have watched Gannets and scoters flying east along Northumberland Strait; and moulting Red-throated Loons, which were apparently swimming along the same route, off Miscou Island (5), Cape Tormentine (6), and Merigomish Island (7). The Canso Causeway (8) is a partial deterrent to sea ducks - I have seen flocks of Common

Eiders and Common Scoters swing right across the strait and circle several times before flying south over the causeway.

Land birds as well as water birds may fly parallel to shore lines, but such movements are more striking where they are concentrated along barrier beaches or between uplands and the sea.

Places I found worthwhile in these contexts included the Merigomish Island spit (7), Dunn's Beach (9) at the mouth of Antigonish Harbour, and the east shore of Cape Breton Island between Englishtown (10) and Indian Brook. Nighthawk migrations in August were particularly noticeable along the flanks of the Cobequid Hills near Folly Lake (11). In spring, ecological barriers may similarly concentrate migration along the coasts (e. g., 12, 13), where the ground may be bare when the woods 20 miles inland are full of snow. Southward movements at this season may involve birds that have outstripped the advance of spring.

Observations of visible migration are not often obtained, except at particularly favourable locations, as many birds migrate at night or at altitudes too high to be seen. Only over a long period and for relatively few species can one assemble a good picture of migration by this means. The movements of hawks in central North America, and of White Storks between Europe and Africa, are good examples of productive studies of this kind.

Various attempts have been made to extend the scope of visible migration studies by mechanical means. Watching birds crossing

the face of the moon was briefly in vogue during the 1940's and 1950's, but the time spent on observations and on the extremely complex analysis needed to convert them to actual movements has not been worth the few results obtained. Lowery and Newman (1967) have shown that interesting and valuable results can be obtained by this method, but it is unlikely that it can ever be used very generally. The same may be said for the use of radar, which is seldom accessible except to a few government employees. Nevertheless, scanning of radar images has shown far greater potential than moon-watching. Major movements of birds may be permanently recorded on movie film (one frame for each full sweep of the radar scanner) for subsequent examination. This technique is already being used at some airports for forecasting bird interference with aircraft movements. Radar scanning was carried out experimentally at Halifax and Sydney, N. S., and at St. Margaret's, N. B., for two months in the fall of 1965, and a continuing program was begun at Halifax in September 1969. When the results of these studies are worked out, we should learn a lot about night migration in general, and about movements of waterfowl and shorebirds in particular.

In closing, I am forced to the conclusion that we know very little about migration routes within and through the Maritimes, except in the most general terms. Visible migration could receive much more attention, and might be very productive if such attention were focussed on places where topographic fea-

tures concentrate bird movement. Such spots are usually good for finding a variety of birds, and for this reason members of the bird society visit many of them regularly. Only a few of the species present will be seen migrating on any one visit, but such observations can be very useful if people will note numbers of birds seen, time of day, direction of flight, and weather and wind conditions, rather than merely check off the rarer species on a field list. Banding in such places, where large numbers of certain species may be handled, may also be useful. But banding requires much more regular coverage over periods of a week or more, so is less suitable for areas which are seldom visited. Most of all, migration studies depend on observations of the more common birds. It is only on these that sufficient information can be assembled to provide a useful picture of migration.

A. J. Erskine

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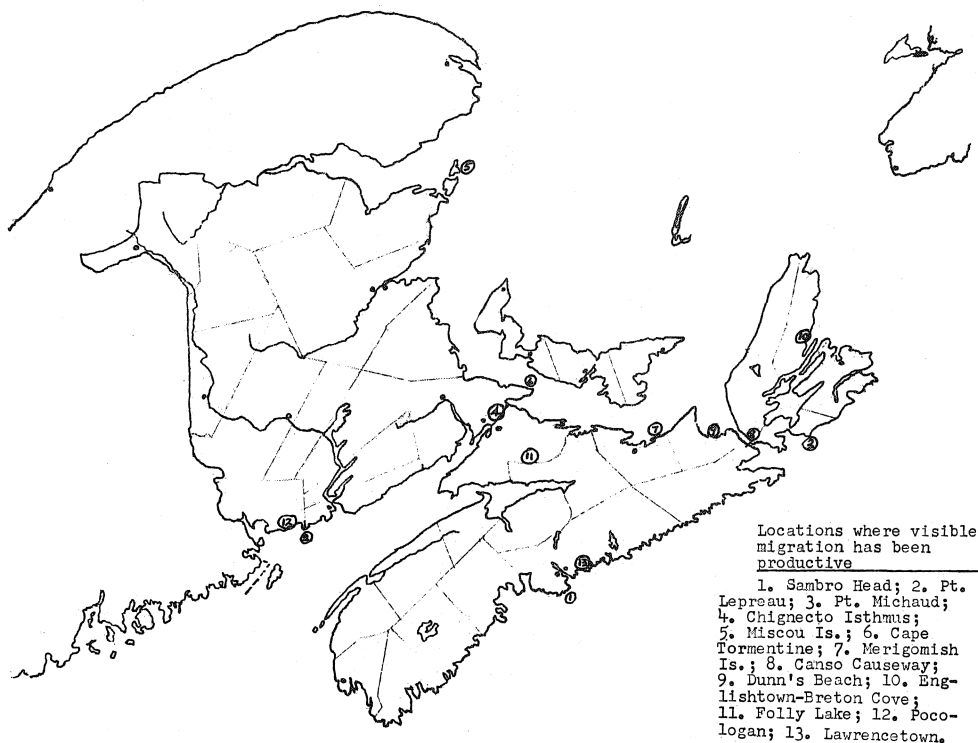
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THE MARITIME PROVINCES NEST RECORDS SCHEME

The Maritimes Nest Records Scheme was begun in 1960 under the direction of Dr. A.J. Erskine of the Canadian Wildlife Service. It is one of a number of cooperative regional programs for gathering nesting information, for example in Canada there are also the Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario, Prairie and British Columbia schemes. Here are the answers to some questions you may have about such an organization:

1. What is a Nest Records Scheme? It is a means for assembling in one place information on bird nests and broods which otherwise might be unrecorded or scattered through the field notebooks of many workers, and which might never become available to other bird students.
2. How does the scheme operate? The central office sends out forms, about the size of a postcard, upon which observations may be recorded. Once a year, all completed cards are sent in to the central office for filing, and a report, summarizing the year's contributions, is sent to all cooperators.
3. What use will be made of the cards in the Scheme? Persons interested in studying a given species can write in to this Scheme, as well as to those operating elsewhere, to request the loan of the cards for that species. Thus, much larger amounts of information are available for breeding studies than might be collected by one person. Furthermore, each card filled in is a permanent record of breeding distribution, and the Scheme may very rapidly provide more information upon actual nests of a species than is published in all the literature to date.
4. How can I, as one interested in birds, help in the Scheme? You write in to the central office requesting cards, which are mailed out to you. You fill in details in the appropriate places for each nest found or brood seen, and send the completed cards to the office by October 1st each year, together with a request for the number of cards you expect to require for the next year. You only need to be able to identify the birds you see nesting, and to accurately record what you see, to participate in the Nest Records Scheme.
5. Should I fill out cards for all nests, even those I visited only once? Yes, a single nest record card should be filled out for every nest of which the species is identified. Even where only one visit is made to a nest, that report is a permanent record of that species having nested in that locality, besides providing information on nesting chronology. It is, of course, preferable to visit nests more than once, when that is possible, though precautions should always be taken not to attract undue attention to the nest, lest predators destroy it.
6. Where is the office? All correspondence and requests for cards and other information should be addressed to the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme, New Brunswick, 277 Douglas Avenue, Saint John, N.B. Your participation would be welcomed.

David S. Christie
COORDINATOR

BIRDS IN TECHNICOLOR

It is only fair to give warning that three studies have been undertaken recently, all involving the color marking of birds. If you plan to roam the beaches this summer, and/or point your binoculars out to sea, do not be surprised to see sandpipers in many-hued vests and terns wearing gaudy leg bands. Should you see such birds, addresses are listed below for receipt of information. The studies are concerned with route and range of migration, and energy consumed thereby. The following notices gave no indication of collaboration and we can only hope that the sandpipers dyed yellow by Dr. McNeil have not been chosen as the green-tinted species by Dr. Salvadori.

1. Shorebird Recapture Operation

The objective of this research is to study the migration routes of North American shorebirds in relation to their flight range capabilities.

A field staff will undertake a marking programme on the Atlantic coast (Magdalen Islands and Sable Island) of southbound migrating shorebirds to know the percentage of birds that use an oversea route to the Caribbean and northern South America as compared with those that follow the coast down to Florida before passing to South America.

Shorebirds will be mist-netted and banded with regular bands from July 10 to October 15, 1970. Furthermore, each bird will have its underparts color-dyed: YELLOW in Magdalen Islands and GREEN in Sable Island. The flight range capabilities of each individual will be estimated from its fresh weight and other parameters. The same programme will be repeated in 1971 and 1972.

- Try to catch the color-dyed shorebirds, even if it's necessary to collect them.
- Note the band number, and report to us the locality, date, color of dye, and species.
- Weigh the bird (when possible).
- Report to us any sight records of color-dyed shorebirds (underparts YELLOW colored or GREEN colored).
- Inform us of any person interested in taking an active part in this program.
- Do not hesitate to communicate with us.

- Dr. Raymond McNeil

Department of Biological Sciences
University of Montreal
C.P. 6128, Montreal 101, Quebec

2. Sandpipers and Sanderlings at Long Point

During the autumn migration of 1970 it is planned to band and color-mark several hundred semipalmated sandpipers and sanderlings. Information on the movement of these sandpipers is essential to research presently underway on the energy requirements of their migration. It would be greatly appreciated if anyone sighting these birds would report their observations to Dr. A. Salvadori, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario.

The following information is desired:

Species:

Location: (including nearest city or town)

Dates:

Color: NOTE: birds will be colored on the breast or abdomen with a single color, either pink, orange, blue, green, yellow or purple.

Any information on what other birds are with the marked individuals would be useful.

3. East Coast Tern Watch

This summer volunteers from Nova Scotia to South Carolina will band young Common and Roseate Terns with a colored plastic band in addition to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service band. The plastic band will be placed on the leg opposite the aluminum. Each province and state will use a different color so that observers can recognize birds from different areas.

Through observations of these color banded birds we hope to gain information regarding the following questions. How far do birds banded from different areas along the coast as well as inland range from their breeding colonies during their post breeding dispersal? Do birds from different areas along the coast concentrate at particular places in the fall? How late are these species seen at different points along the coast?

The following people will participate in color banding this summer, using the listed colors: Nova Scotia - I.A. McLaren - yellow; Maine - Libby, Hatch, Gobeil - red and white horizontal stripe; Massachusetts - Howard - orange; Connecticut - Procter - green and white horizontal stripe; Lake Erie, New York - Clarke - light blue; Western Long Island, N.Y. - Heath, Gochfeld - royal blue; Eastern Long Island, N.Y. - Wilcox - black and white horizontal stripe; New Jersey - Savell - green; Maryland - Van Velzen - white; Virginia - Byrd - black; North Carolina - Davis, Sussel - green and brown horizontal stripe; Great Gull Island, N.Y. - Hays - color combinations using U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band and three color bands, two bands on each leg.

Please watch for color banded terns and send observations to the bander in your area or to: Miss Helen Hays, Great Gull Island Project, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th. Street, New York, N. Y. 10024.

We would also like to compile a list of places along the coast where concentrations of Common and/or Roseate Terns can be seen in late summer and early fall. If you know of any such places, send them to Miss H. Hays at the above address. Any information you can supply on color banded terns or concentration points along the coast would be of great help.

Notice to BIRD BANDERS

Dr. Eric Mills, President of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, has received a communication from the Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, asking for the help of any bird banders in Nova Scotia in tracing the spread of ticks, possible vectors for the causative organism of Rocky Mountain spotted fever (Rickettsia rickettsii).

Western Nova Scotia has a large and expanding population of dog ticks. So far these ticks have not been found to carry disease micro-organisms of public health importance. However, birds migrating from an infected area can carry ticks, including the dog tick (Dermacentor variabilis), which readily feeds on man. A study carried out near Ottawa in the summer of 1968 revealed that 8 out of 18 species of bird examined carried ticks; that 24 birds (individuals) among these species carried ticks; from the 24 tick pools tested, 9 were positive for rickettsiae. This could happen here.

Should any ticks be found on birds, they (the ticks) should be sent to the Canadian Communicable Disease Centre as soon as possible. Tick tubes, self-addressed mailing containers and necessary forms will be made available if bird-banders are interested in this project. If so, please notify Dr. Mills as above.

N.B. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is not confined to the Rocky Mountains, is in fact prevalent in eastern United States.

NOTES ON BIRD BEHAVIOUR

1. The John Higbys of Yarmouth had some difficulties with robins last year which insisted upon building a nest immediately over the back door. "The weather being quite dry at the time, there was apparently no mud available to bind the nest material so after a few days we had cleaned up approximately

half a bushel of straw, twigs, string, etc. from the floor. Finally wet weather arrived and a ring of nest material took shape. I carefully transferred this nest foundation to a nearby shelf which I installed at the same height and covered the ledge with a board as we didn't want the nest directly over our back door. After 13 or 14 approaches to the old nest site, the female robin finally spotted the new location and they continued building."

This was a successful venture, and the robins, probably the same pair, returned the next spring, starting to build, in the same place, on April 16. By the 27th, three eggs had been laid and the young were all out of the nest by May 23rd.

"On June 4th. another egg appeared in the nest, a second on the 6th. This same day the little girl next door brought me an egg she had found on the ground near her school. I put this one in the nest noting that its color was paler blue than the others. Another egg was laid on the 7th. and on the 10th. while mowing the lawn I found a robin's egg which the power mower had passed over without breaking. This one went into the nest also, making 5 eggs to care for.

Dutifully the parents raised the young birds but soon we noticed that there was something different about one of the nestlings. His mouth was larger and brighter yellow than the others and soon the feathers on the head appeared and were grayer than the others. Only then did we realize that it was a starling which had come from the pale colored egg. Having a larger and brighter colored mouth and being more aggressive, this one got more food and grew faster.

All the birds finally left the nest - the starling last. It is easy to understand why starling populations increase as I noted when the young ones were sitting on the edge of the nest, upon being startled, the robins tended to bolt and fly as best they could while the starling would shrink back and hide.

The last I saw of the starling, he was in a neighbor's yard hoping to be fed. I'm not sure whether the robins who had raised him would respond to his hunger call or not. Possibly some kindly starling fed him."

2. Foster parents figured in two other stories sent in by Gillian Rose (Mrs. James Rose) of Guilford, Connecticut, who wrote: "We saw our poor little Waterthrush which nests along the riverbank every year, with a Cowbird baby. It seemed quite unable to coax its adopted child near the water!...Between July 5 and 16 we saw every day a robin with a Catbird baby. The catbird was fully fledged but the robin obviously had raised or adopted it because it spent its time digging worms and grubs which it fed to the catbird, which followed it everywhere, screaming to be fed. On more than one occasion we saw it following the robin, running along the ground and then stopping with its head cocked on one side, then digging in the ground for a

grub as robins will do...have you ever seen anything like that?"

"In April, a neighbor's child found a duck egg out in the open lying on the path by the river. It sat around over the weekend and on Monday she took it to school where a friend asked to take it home and put it in her father's chicken incubator. Her parents assured her the egg would never hatch, but when she protested, they said she could put it in the incubator....30 days later when everyone but the children had forgotten it, the egg hatched - a little Mallard."

Mrs. Rose's story continued to describe the successful raising of the duckling, which was allowed perfect freedom, but remained inseparable from its child "parent" until the fall, when it answered the call of the wild and flew off with other migrating ducks. The child has been comforted with "2 large domestic African geese, which are now larger than she is but insist upon sitting in her lap."

The accompanying pictures (we regret that we cannot print them all) tell something of the story of a scarcely fledged robin adopted by the Rose family last spring. The family's experiences during the ensuing summer could be described as heart-warming, hilarious and hard work. The ending was sad, as the bird flew away to be seen no more. Mrs. Rose said "perhaps a cat got him, we shall never know, but he certainly would have died if we had not taken him in, and he lived the life of Riley for one summer.



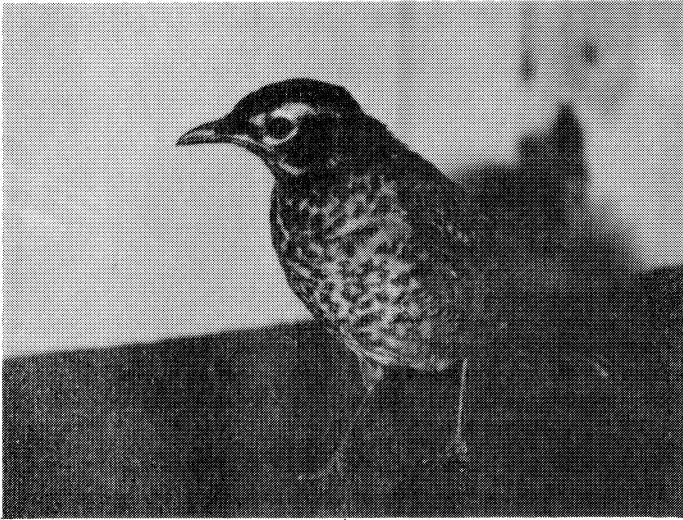
" - a ball of fluff, all down, scarcely able to stand,about a week and a half old."



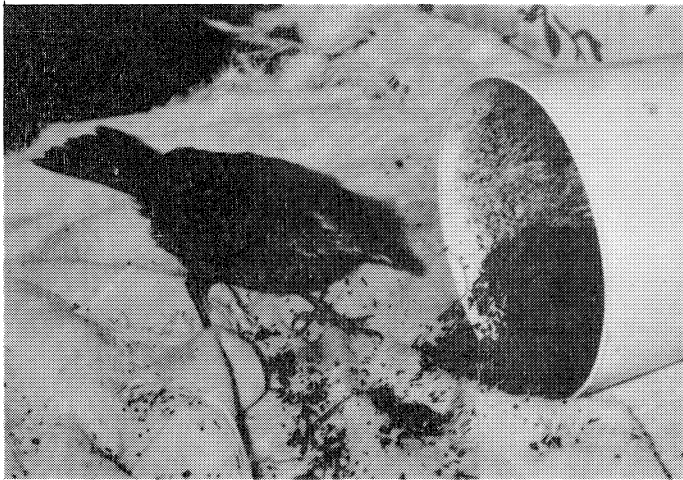
"For the next month Beth and her two brothers were kept busy digging worms in the manure pile...one day he ate 110 smallish worms, 55 pieces of hamburger and assorted fruit (strawberry, cherry, peach and soaked raisins)".



"From a shoe box he graduated to a carton, that is when Beth wasn't holding him. She would sit by the hour reading with him nestled in her hand."



"Before he could feed himself he had learned to fly...up into the trees. One day as we lunched at the picnic table he landed in the middle of a plate and literally danced up and down on a sandwich, asking to be fed...we had to interrupt our lunch to feed him muddy worms... after that he always got lunch first."



"He loved his towel with frayed edges and would pull at it endlessly as if at a worm...he especially liked it when I hung socks to dry over the shower curtain rail, they were wonderful to pick at."



"He got loose from his cage in the bathroom (placed there because of the cats)...I came in to find the place a shambles. He was sitting on top of the curtains, looking very smug. Half a box of Kleenex had been plucked out of the box, one at a time; all the tooth brushes and toothpaste had been pulled off the shelf into the sink. The socks hung up to dry were on the floor; the soap was full of little holes and his worm can had been tipped over so that the worms had escaped, crawling all over the place and earth from the can was scattered everywhere."

FIELD TRIPS

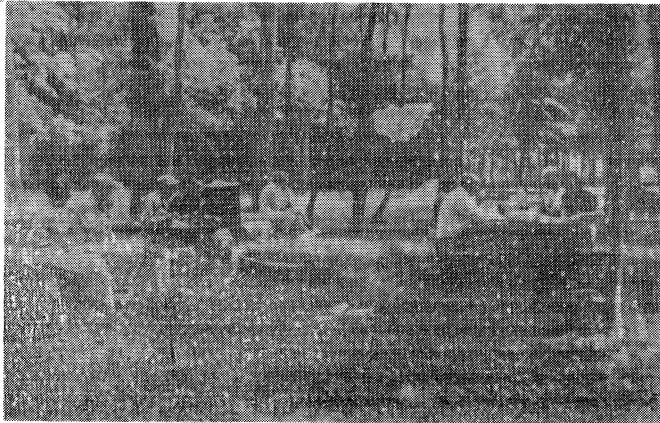
Hants County Field Day

C.R.K. Allen

Nearly cloudless skies, light westerly wind and 60° temperature provided ideal conditions for bird spotting on the 1970 Hants County Field Day. The list, however, was not exceptional - 65 species as compared with 70+ on a trip through the same territory several years ago when it rained unremittingly all day and birds were identified through the car windows with foggy binoculars.

About a dozen members and guests set out from Mount Uniacke at 8.00 a.m. and "did" the Hillsvale-Ashdale-Scotch Village area in the forenoon. Noon hour was spent at the little provincial park at Smiley's Intervale (as last year), where after lunch a few members of the party took a short nap, and most followed the suggestion by one of our woodland flycatchers (35th species on our list for the day) before reassembling for the afternoon's trek over the Kennetcook dykelands and the Mantua marshes.

The real highlight of the day was a Phoebe at its nest under a bridge crossing the Herbert River, but also a number of members had their first look at a Solitary Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Tennessee and Nashville Warblers. The party did a fair amount of tramping in the afternoon and even the die-hards were content to call it a day at 5.30 p.m.



Lunch at Smiley's, 1969

W. Neily

The President's Field Trip

Eric Mills

Saturday, June 13, NS-NB Border Area. The day was rainy, then clearing, and turned out to be a howling success, with lots of birds (63 species) and a medium-sized and very congenial group. The day started at 6.30 a.m. at Trout Lake, Jolicure, first with Ross Anderson, Betty Reid, Heinrich Harries, Eric Cooke and Wayne Neily. The Black Terns were very co-operative. We walked around the point at the north end of Trout Lake, and then at about 9.00 a.m. to the south end of the lake, where the Robertsons, Frank Himsl, Mrs. Somers and the Mortensons (of Buffalo, N.Y.) joined us. The rain stopped, and many birds were singing. The Bitterns pumped very well a few times; Short-eared Owls and two Harriers appeared and were well seen.

A male Blue-winged Teal made a spectacular landing in front of the group. Just before we left three Bitterns flew up from the marsh tightly grouped.

Back to the NS-NB border briefly, then on to Amherst Point, arriving about 11.00 a.m. The sun was coming out, likewise the mosquitos. There were Pied-billed Grebes with young on the closest pond, also Blue-winged Teal and a Widgeon which arrived with fanfare from somewhere out on the marsh. We chased Soras and snipe and almost everyone had success in seeing both. In the woods were many Redstarts singing, also Bay-breasts and a couple of Magnolias. Swainson's Thrushes darted up from the path and one or two sang. We found a Junco's nest, seen by everyone.

We finally beat a retreat (from the mosquitos) and headed for Blair Lake to see Wood Ducks. The access road had a long muddy stretch where the President's (my) valor was exceeded by his discretion and we backed out. The Mortensen's car got stuck, but a valiant effort by Cooke, Himsl and Mills had it out in a jiffy. We lunched on the east side of Blair Lake where 103 (count them!) Herring Gulls passed over as the beer and sandwiches were being processed, about 2.30 p.m. The party dispersed with much good-will an hour later.

REMINDER: Projected Field Trips remaining for this summer's season are:

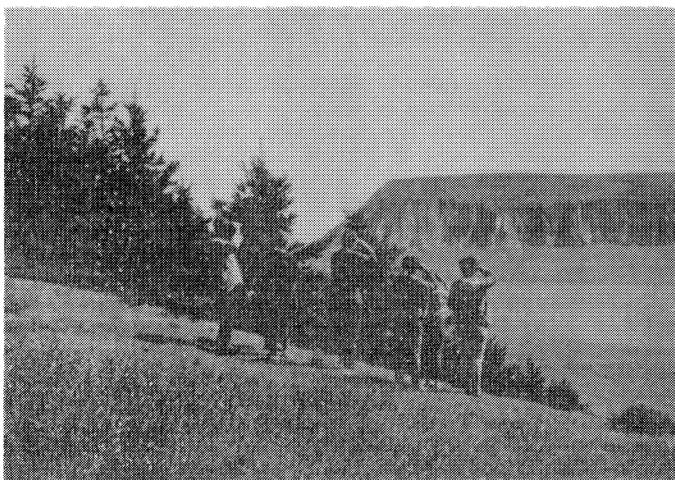
- August 8 - North Sydney Ferry Terminal at 9.00 a.m. for an overnight trip to Port aux Basques.
- August 22 - Point Michaud, Richmond Co., at 8.00 a.m.
- August 30 - Port Joli, Queens Co., at 8.30 a.m.

September 12 - Cape North (MacDonald's Store) at 8.00 a.m.

September 19 - Louisbourg, intersection Havenside Road, at
8.00 a.m.

REPORTS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER BY

OCTOBER 24, 1970



Cape Smoky

BE THERE ARY FOWL?

Betty June Smith

Again a spring miracle: handsome male eiders leading their plain housewife-brown females northward. Many folks of the hard old times lived to see the spring flocks' blessed return at least partly because they salted down rich sea duck meat the previous fall. I'm glad the eider supported our ancestors, but sorry those great uncountable flocks were drained. Though their sacrifice goes unsung, their impact endures, for gunners in small boats still lie off Cape Sable to intercept the remaining migrants in a wild display of sea- and marks- manship, and speak - only facetiously now - of "a barrel of breastmeats". In their endless gunning yarns they preserve turns of speech and an accent that came down from the 17th. century, north-east England, via the New England - Loyalist route. One bleak April morning a gunner in wave-camouflaged skiff crossed our bow; well-fed on Coke and chips, entertained nightly by TV's best, he is clearly a 20th. century product, yet this is the greeting he howls to Sid: "Be there ary fowl?"

"Fowl" suits the sturdy eider he pursues, but I could not greet our next spring bird, "Hello, fowl," without laughing. This tiny creature, the size and color of a good Laura Secord confection, was eyeing me from a niche in the rusty boilers left over from our steam engine days: the open ended tubes are perfect for a winter wren to hide-and-seeK among when nosey ladies with binoculars are about. He flew to the pasture and delayed fence building with his tight-wire acrobatics, for Sid and Dad, after casually admiring his quick turns, finally ceased work to find out how he managed them. Till dinnertime they watched, ever more closely, without seeing how the trick was done. Faster than the eye could follow, the wren turned back to front and back again.

Fortunately by afternoon W. Wren had gone. Fencing progressed while sparrows, swallows, kinglets, kingbirds and warblers called or fed along the posts and wires. The ground feeders flocked to seeds I place so that as I work, or we eat, in the kitchen, we can see what's going on under the branches of last year's Christmas fir, now propped against the clothesline post. Kept in the cool, damp Old Light, it is presentably green, smells delicious, and being the only tree in sight, is very attractive. Once we dragged home a fiercely prickly spruce that washed ashore. The sand and kelp came off as we jerked it along, and Locke and Beverley straightened its few plastic ornaments - one, a most suitable cardinal! Hardly had we set it up when the first Downy Woodpecker of the season was busy at the trunk.

Long before, the clothesline showed us the strategic advantage of its position, when, early in our birding days, we watched a "sparrow" alight on it, then fly down to feed below, thus displaying both upper and lower markings. Rather an odd-looking sparrow, we agreed, and unenthusiastically checked through Peterson. Finding no appropriate illustration ("Well,

can't we identify a sparrow?"), we watched it vigorously kicking up the grass. Its plain olive back ruled out sparrows and relations. Could this be a stray? Dr. Harrison Lewis, who had encouraged us to learn and enjoy the common birds, had predicted we would find accidental and rare species because of Cape Sable's extremely coastal situation.

The bird moved away, but, trying to remember what I had seen, I turned to Accidentals; on through Oceanics and Tropicals, skimming Europeans, to Westerns. Only another amateur can picture how I tried to match our bird with these strange species - though I'm proud to say that I seriously considered neither the Ancient Murrelet nor the Rufous Hummingbird! Finally, I read out, "Green-tailed Towhee, slightly larger than a House Sparrow". It all fitted; we sent bird specimen and our identification to Dr. Lewis, who warmly praised our sleuthing. We date our bird-watching from that small adventure, and keep an eye on the clothesline! One bright, breezy day a flash of blue appeared there. I shrieked to the others, forgetting Sid was resting with a strapped, strained foot. In their excitement the children came without returning him the crutches they had "borrowed", but somehow everyone got to the window to see the bluebird's marvelous colors and airy flight - though tiny Beverley saw only its breast as it went up and away, and insisted it was a Redbird.

Our next spring bird of note came nowhere near the house, but caught Dad's eye as we came home from the boat landings across the bleak hillside where it fed. It looked like a lapland longspur to me, and, once home, I refused to leave the lovely hearthside for a wild goose chase; but Dad crisscrossed the barren windy dunes, and though it could have hidden forever in the dead grass or against the pebbly sand, its instinct for flight was our bird's undoing, and Dad brought home a Chestnut-Collared Longspur. Though resembling a lapland, it was handsomely plumed for spring in its own pattern, and well east of its usual interior range.

So, one never knows when a puzzling alien may appear, and this incident from last week may illustrate how far I've come in the fifteen years since I struggled to identify a certain towhee.

As I knelt on the beach, completely involved in freeing Beverley's stuck coat zipper, than which nothing is more completely involving, I heard a tern fussing and glanced up to see a common tern chasing a strange, slightly larger, dark bird. Now in the few seconds I had before strong wind and its attacker's zeal swept it out of sight over the high beach, I observed its - the stranger's - size, build, tail, general colors and markings. Reciting them firmly as we went home, I took down Peterson's with the elan of those who keep their powder dry and then, in a little while, I took out Birds of North America (Robbins et al). Within a few minutes, between the two, I had found out many things - as, birds with that tail are not that color; if they are that color, they do not have that black band under the neck; if banded on neck, they do not have that tail, those wings - or, as I said, that color. Fortunately, as it had been a bit past,

I had not been able to see its head too well, and had no clues to worry about there, but even so, I was plenty badly lost with those I had collected.

With due respect I returned the books, made the familiar cryptic note in the record book - "1 unident." - and put it too behind the colored-water jug bookstop.

Perhaps I'm glad I failed to identify the dark and handsome stranger; he is one of several shapes that haunt us, reminding us how very little we know even of our own small world. Birdwatching has best rewarded us with an increased awareness of our surroundings, the beauty and mystery of sea and coast, the value of each plant and creature. We can begin to weigh the worth of the clean wind under the June sky, as it sweeps swallows over the rooftops and sends sea birds plunging and skimming along the old sea track. On such a morning Sid and I don't say, "Let's watch for gannets and fulmars." Instead we pinch our noses and yell, "Be there ary fowl?"

