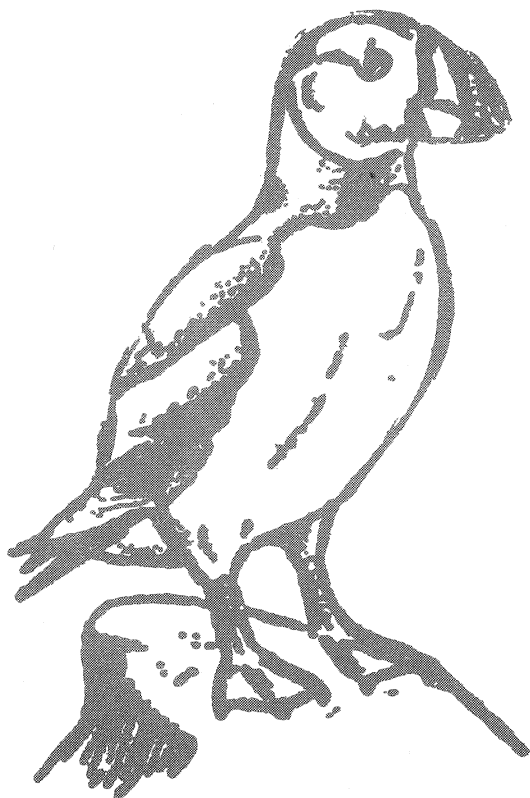


*Nova Scotia  
Bird Society*



*Newsletter*

Volume 12, Number 3

November, 1970

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 3

November, 1970

NEWS OF THE NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS

July 1 to November 1, 1970

High humidity with frequent and often heavy rainfall kept the lakes and streams at spring level, and swamp lands brimming, throughout summer and fall, 1970. Temperatures were moderate to high at times. Insects stayed plentiful long beyond their usual season. Sufficient sunshine ripened many small wild fruits - Shadbush, Pin, Choke and Rum cherries and the Withewood bore heavily; blueberries, blackberries and crowberries were average; native Rowans very light. White Spruce, always a good bearer, had an extra heavy cone crop this fall; Red Spruce bore scantily as usual; Tamaracks and Hemlocks were at least up to normal.

Gales were frequent, but did not reach hurricane force. It is probable that the weather systems responsible for the high winds brought us some of our rare bird sightings; for instance, the Northern Phalaropes and Least Terns in mid-August, and the great numbers of petrels early in October. This October weather system set some of the Chimney Swifts back on their heels.

Aaron Bagg has written "some reverse (southwest to northeast) migration may have occurred in the East during Sept. 26 and 27." This could account for a Common Gallinule sighted here at that time, and the truly extraordinary observation of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, in the Halifax area. Mr. Bagg went on to say "After a cold front passed on Sept. 27, a large number of birds hit the Empire State Building in New York the night of Sept. 27-28,.....at Athens, Georgia, observations using a portable ceilometer and a radar showed massive migration (100,000 birds per mile of front per hour) the night of Sept. 28-29.....Turning to October, a cold front passage on October 16 was followed by very large numbers of birds being banded on both Oct. 17 and 18 at Fire Island, Long Island, N. Y., and at Kiptopeke Beach, Virginia." At Mr. Bagg's request, a check through our report for these periods revealed possible migratory movements of ten species Sept. 26 to 29, six species for Oct. 16 to 18, on their way to join the throngs.

How do they find wing-room by the time they reach Florida?

We do not have enough reports of nesting success or failure for most of our breeding birds, to make any predictions; next year will have to tell the tale. Fall migration dates were usual, and reported numbers average. Word from the south of us suggests a diminished warbler migration, but our own records give no indication of this.

Hunters report the Black Duck population is up and Woodcock are lingering in numbers considerably later than usual. The same cannot be said of some of the passerines; although the main migration dates fall within the usual range, very few stragglers have lingered. The inlets are still full of Great Blue Herons, and quite a few shorebirds are around (we have 3 very late Lesser Yellowlegs), but except for a few Blue Jays and some anxious and hurrying Robins, the roadsides are empty of birds, and by now, November the 8th., the woods are silent.

On September 26, over 20 COMMON LOONS were fishing off Osborne Head and the Cow Bay area (Hfx. Co.). Holdway at Pictou noted 2's and 3's moving southward during October, and several pairs were seen in Green Bay, Lun. Co., on Oct. 10 to 17. On Oct. 10, 2, possibly 3, ARCTIC LOONS were also sighted in Green Bay and the Petite River estuary. The first report received, from Fred Dobson, reads as follows: "The bird was first sighted at noon on the 11th. of October, about 100 yards to seaward of the breakwater at the mouth of the Petite River. As it rounded the breakwater it became very active, spun around in circles, then swam slowly up the river, preening very energetically as it went. Since the tide was ebbing at the time, it was swimming in nearly fresh water. Periodically it swam rapidly forward, with outstretched bill just below the surface of the water, then resumed preening activity. It progressed upstream in this manner for about 300 yards, then rose and flew (in typical loon fashion) about 100 yards out into the bay, and repeated the procedure. The bird was quite tame, and about an hour later it came within 20 yards of the shore where we were standing and allowed itself to be observed at leisure by a group of 6 people, through a 25X telescope and with 8X binoculars. Two pairs of Common Loons in winter or transitional plumage, and one Red-throated Loon in breeding plumage were observed in Green Bay on the same day.

The bill was the principal diagnostic feature noted. It was symmetrical and roughly the same size relative to the head as that of the Red-throated Loon, but the lower mandible was not up-curved. The bill was about half as deep at the base as that of the Common Loon. The bird was about the size of the Red-throated Loon, the back of the head was dark gray, and the throat and belly were white. The back was basically black, and covered with speckles of white; no definite pattern could be discerned, but much more white was present on the back of this bird, presumably in transition between breeding and winter plumages, than could be seen on the back of a Red-throated Loon in breeding plumage seen earlier in the day.

The bird spent a considerable time preening its belly, performing the above-mentioned 'underwater peering', ruffling its feathers, and then flapping its wings and 'standing on its tail'. All this behavior was strikingly different from that of the other loons, which were fishing quietly and industriously."

Both Fred and Evelyn Dobson unhesitatingly pronounced this bird to be an Arctic Loon, as they are thoroughly familiar with the species on the west coast, in both winter and breeding plumage. Both of these people are competent observers, having among other things carried out the Nanaimo Christmas Count single- (or double-) handed on several occasions. The above report was submitted at the request of the Editor, since the Arctic Loon possesses only hypothetical status in Nova Scotia.

A week after receiving this report another was received from Shirley Cohrs, of a completely independent sighting of Arctic Loons in Green Bay: "We had a good opportunity of observing three types of loon together, at Green Bay, week-end of Oct. 10. The sea was dead calm and we could see a pair of Common - large and heavy, a pair of Red-throated - smaller, with thin upturned bills, and two small (same size as the Red-throated) loons with much darker plumage but with thin straight bills - presumably Pacific." Whether the Petite Riviere loon was one of these, or a third, is impossible to establish.

On Oct. 17, other members of the N.S. Bird Society found one of these Arctic Loons still cruising near the shore at Green Bay, again in company with Common and Red-throated Loons. Among the observers were C.R.K. Allen, Sylvia Fullerton, and the local game warden, Mr. John Sperry, who said he had noticed the bird "which looked different" around the inshore reefs, during the week. On this occasion, Oct. 17, it was fishing quietly with the rest.

Previous sight records of the Arctic Loon in and near Nova Scotia by members of the N.S.B.S. are of 1, Nov. 27, 1960, at Three-Fathom Harbor, Hfx. Co., by L. B. Macpherson and J. A. McCarter; 3, Oct. 6 and 8, 1962, at Wood's Island, P.E.I. by Eric Holdway; and 1, April 3, 1966 at Cow Bay, Hfx. Co. by John Comer and Molly Clayden.

An early RED-THROATED LOON was seen offshore on the west side of St. Margaret's Bay on Aug. 30 and 7 were close inshore at Conrad's Beach Oct. 25. The first - and, so far, only - RED-NECKED GREBES reported are one at Green Bay, Lun. Co. Oct. 10, and one at Pictou Oct. 18. A HORNED GREBE was also at Green Bay on Oct. 17. There is only one record of a PIED-BILLED GREBE during the breeding season - a single bird seen near Port Maitland, Yar. Co., on July 19. All other reports are of from 1 to 3 birds seen during September and October.

An unusually large number of tube-noses has been reported during the past summer and fall, including the confirmed records of CORY'S and MANX SHEARWATERS and EUROPEAN STORM PETREL

from fabulous Sable Island (see report to follow). Mills reports that there was a regular passage of SOOTY SHEARWATERS moving along the edge of an offshore fog bank at Brier Island on July 7 and 12 were reported by McKeating during the Ferry trip from Saint John to Digby on July 9. During this same trip, 40+ GREATER SHEARWATERS were observed, as well as 10 WILSON'S PETREL which were also seen during the N.S.B.S. field trip on the ferry run from North Sydney to Port Aux Basques on August 8. Over 36 petrels were seen during this trip and all that could be identified were Wilson's.

Vera Hebert, who made this same trip on Sept. 26, reports 100+ Greater Shearwaters, at least 1 FULMAR and 1 SKUA, all near St. Paul's Island on the outward trip. On the return journey, in the same area, she saw 200+ Greater Shearwaters, a LEACH'S PETREL, 15 GANNETS, 300 BLACK GUILLEMOTS and 7 KITTI-WAKES.

Anne Doull reports petrels as 'numerous' in Mahone Bay between Deep Cove and Chester on Oct. 4. There was a southerly wind of 30mph and there had been strong southerly winds during the preceding night. The species was not determined but, considering the date, they were probably Leach's. Five of this species were observed by the N.S.B.S. party during the crossing from Clark's Harbor to Seal Island on the morning of Oct. 3. These birds appeared to escort the boat for a short distance and behaved in classic fashion, tilting and fluttering like small dark nighthawks in the troughs of the waves. There were also two observations of Leach's Petrels by Holdway in the Pictou area: 2 on Sept. 2 and 1 on Oct. 7. The Cohrs reported numbers in the Petite Riviere area during the storm on Oct. 3.

Migrating gannets were reported from the Pictou area as follows: 3 on Oct. 5, 5 on Oct. 11 and 20, including some juveniles, on Oct. 18. The first migrants passed Cape Sable on Oct. 9. Three seen off Brier Island in July and August were obviously non-breeders.

GREAT CORMORANTS are scarce along the Atlantic coast of the province in summer, but 6 were observed in Mahone Bay on Sept. 26 (A. Doull). Holdway reports 1 on the Pictou side of Northumberland Strait, the first he has seen there for years although they are fairly common along the P.E.I. shore.

Cormorants were reported southbound at Cape Sable as early as Aug. 19 when nearly 100 went by.

The DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT colony on the pilings near the causeway in Pictou Harbor had 58 active nests, each with 2 to 4 young ready to leave, on July 10. A definite movement of this species was noted on Sept. 20 east of Halifax Harbor by Cooke who reported that individuals were scattered offshore on the 19th. but that the following day the only birds seen were 48 in a flock flying southwestward along the coast.

At least one CATTLE EGRET seems to show up somewhere

in Nova Scotia each year. This year it appeared at Second Peninsula in Lunenburg Co. and attended the local cows during the week of August 17 (Curtis Chipman).

Early fears of GREAT BLUE HERON scarcity were not borne out by later reports. Usual numbers - about 30 pairs - were reported from Pictou area by Holdway who also observed a bird which he suggests may have been a cross between the Great Blue and Great White Heron. It was a little larger than a Great Blue, had lighter gray wing coverts and yellow legs. Other reports from Glace Bay to Yarmouth indicate that herons had a good season as more than usual numbers have been seen through late summer and fall on the tidal flats and marshes.

Other large waders have also appeared in more than normal numbers. A COMMON EGRET was seen by a number of Society members at Fourchu, Cape Breton, during the latter part of August. A SNOWY EGRET was at Cape Sable Island on Sept. 6, and LITTLE BLUE HERONS are reported from Big Island, Aug. 20, Port Joli, Aug. 30, Pictou area Sept. 16, Ingonish, Sept. 25, and Centreville, Shel. Co., on Oct. 12, all being immature birds. A YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., July 12 and 13, well seen and identified at leisure by Barbara Hinds and Sylvia Fullerton, and later seen by the Cohrs family in the same place.

Marion Hilton reports from Yarmouth: "Yesterday, July 23, I had a phone call from a woman at South End who said she had what she thought must be a rare bird - it was about a foot long and had a sort of crest. I went down immediately and found she had a young Bittern. The crest was some straggly left-over juvenile feathers. She had it penned up in a right angle of her fence and tented in with a big sheet of plastic. It was hissing fiercely and after they let it go, it stalked off through the neighbors' gardens in high dudgeon."

There are 10 other Bittern reports, mostly of singles or couples, from widely scattered points, the latest being from the Cole Harbor - Lawrencetown area in Halifax Co. on Oct. 18. One LEAST BITTERN was seen by Eric Cooke in this area on Sept. 19. Eric writes that Common Bitterns were unusually plentiful on the week-end of the 19th., 6 being seen on that date at Three-Fathom Harbor, and 3 the following day at the same place.

This year the most reported straggler in the heron family has been the GLOSSY IBIS with 8 sightings of from 1 to 5 birds. The earliest was 5 birds seen on the Grand Pré last spring, which should have been included in our July issue. The observers, however, failed to report and news of the observation has just come to us second-hand. All other reports are for August and September: 2 at Lingan Bar, 1 at Louisbourg in early August, and another probable at Banner Cove on Aug. 23. A bird of this species was seen on Aug. 14 and 16 and again on Aug. 30 in the Lawrencetown (Hfx. Co.) area and one at Dan's Head, Cape Sable Island, on Sept. 20. Just how many different birds are involved in these 8 records is hard

to say.

One gets the impression from reports that geese and dabbling ducks are up in numbers this year. The first south-bound CANADA GEESE were seen by members of the N.S.B.S. on their Port Joli field day, Aug. 30, and local residents said that they were right on schedule, the last week in August being the normal time for the appearance of the first migrants. Geese are reported as "abundant" in the Pictou area where first migrants appeared on Sept. 16. Thirty-two were at Glace Bay on Sept. 9 and "hundreds" at Morien Bar (C.B.) on Sept. 23. The first fall sighting for the Cole Harbor area was Sept. 20 when 125 were seen. Between five and six hundred geese were at Melbourne, Yar. Co. on Oct. 3.

The one lone MALLARD reported could possibly have been a released or escaped bird from the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, which brings to mind a disturbing thought: the native and exotic ducks in the Park are producing some hybrids, and if any of these make their escape - an easy thing to do - they can well prove to be puzzlers for local birdwatchers.

Reports of BLACK DUCK broods have come in from Cape Breton and Central Nova Scotia, but are too few to indicate whether or not the breeding season was successful. A brood of downy young near Yarmouth in July indicates a second attempt. Adults in goodly numbers are reported from points all over the province, the largest flock being one of 2,000+ at Melbourne, Yar. Co., on Oct. 3. The most unusual duck report of the period was that of a pair of GADWALLS at Forchu, Cape Breton, seen and well described by members of the Cape Breton Branch.

If reports mean anything, both GREEN-WINGED and BLUE-WINGED TEAL had a successful season, possibly because the wet summer kept many small marshes in full operation. A flock of 900+ at Chebogue Pt. on Oct. 10 seemed to consist entirely of Green-Wings, although many Blue-Wings could have been present and undetected. "Hundreds" of Green-wings are reported from Morien Bar on Sept. 23 and smaller numbers from Brier Island, Crescent Beach and the Yarmouth and Halifax areas through September and early October. The two species were often mixed, but some unusually large flocks of pure Blue-wings were also reported: 20 at Seal Island Aug. 28, 60 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., Aug. 31, about 30 at Bartlett's Beach near Yarmouth Oct. 7, 150 on Sept. 3 at Morien Bar and 22 Sept. 16 at Pictou.

Vera Hebert reported 4 PINTAILS at Nyanza, C.B., on Oct. 7 and another was seen at Melbourne Oct. 10.

A flock of 26 RING-NECKED DUCKS was seen near Sandford, Yar. Co., on Sept. 26, by the Yarmouth contingent and 13 at Baddeck on Oct. 7; but, apart from this, reports on the normally common Ring-necks are very scanty.

A startling record is that of 7 adult GREATER SCAUP seen by Sara MacLean on July 19. The locality is not reported



but most of Sara's observations are made in the Glace Bay - Morien area. A lone AMERICAN GOLDENEYE was seen at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., on Oct. 17, a rather early record for the Atlantic coast, although flocks should have begun to appear along the Northumberland shore by that time.

From the Pictou area Holdway reports 4 OLDSQUAWS on Oct. 13 and 20 on the 17th. After the 18th., he reports numerous small flocks of from 5 to 25 birds of this species, temporary residents of Caribou Harbour, flying to Pictou Island at sunset daily. So far there have been no reports of Oldsquaws from anywhere else in the province.

COMMON EIDERS were on the move early, 25+ being seen at Brier Island on Aug. 30 and 40+ there on the following day. Numerous flocks were seen by the N.S.B.S. Seal Island party on their outbound voyage on Oct. 3 and during their stay on the island Oct. 3-5. A flock of 13 was seen at Pictou Oct. 19. Most of the October flocks contained a good proportion of males in partial eclipse plumage.

Scoters, too, were early on the southward course. The Smiths report small flocks going by southbound as early as Aug. 19 at Cape Sable. An earlier report of 6 WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS in eastern Halifax Co. on July 24 would certainly be of non-breeders. Small flocks of White-wings were passing through the Pictou area from Sept. 8 to 19, while the first report for the Halifax area was of 3 at Lawrencetown on Oct. 3. SURF SCOTERS were reported in flocks of 4 on Sept. 18, 8 on the 23rd., 47 on the 29th., 23 on Oct. 1st., and 7 on Oct. 10. A flock of 10 Surfs was at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., on Sept. 26 and the same number Oct. 3 in the lower LaHave river.

COMMON SCOTERS belied their name by being reported only twice: 2 Sept. 23 and 4 Oct. 4 at Pictou.

Several HOODED MERGANSERS were seen by reliable observers at Glace Bay Sanctuary on Sept. 23, and 1 at Melbourne on Oct. 10. Holdway reports no southward migration of Mergansers up to the end of the 3rd. week of October. On the other hand, Topples saw about 200 ducks "mostly mergansers" on Lake Loon in Dartmouth on Sept. 29. Other reports are of 6 COMMON MERGANSERS at Wallace on Aug. 6 and 6 of this species in St. Margarets Bay Oct. 13; also one record of an adult with 10 young on July 19 in the Glace Bay area.

Strange to say, there is but a single report of a single RED-BREASTED MERGANSER, seen by the Cohrs at Broad Cove, Aug. 19.

In the July 11 issue of the Sydney Post Record, Frank Robertson gives a vivid account of a TURKEY VULTURE perched on the carcass of a dog, seen near the Old Sydney Highway, reported to him by Fred Meery.

More GOSHAWK reports than usual have come in this fall - 6 in fact - totalling 12 individual birds. Two were

seen at different times, Sept. 26 and Oct. 10, in Yarmouth County. One of these, an immature bird, was watched as it dived repeatedly into a dense clump of spruce, harrying a number of starlings, robins and flickers which had taken shelter there. The hawk finally succeeded in driving a flicker into the open and there ensued a wild chase with the desperate flicker dodging and twisting this way and that but steadily losing ground. The final outcome of the chase could not be seen as both birds plunged into another thicket, but presumably the flicker was captured, as neither bird reappeared during a 10 minute watch.

The Gallaghers report 3 Goshawk sightings from Shelburne Co., 1 on June 29, 2 July 2, and 2 adults and 1 immature on July 4. The other 4 reports of this species are of one very noisy bird near Wallace July 25, one seen carrying prey, probably a yellowlegs, near Three-Fathom Harbor on Aug. 30, one in Baleine, C.B., Sept. 14 and one on Brier Island Oct. 9.

About 25 SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS are reported for the period, but 15 of these were seen at one place and on one date, Brier Island Oct. 9, reported by E. Mills. Four were near Bartlett's Beach at the Yarmouth County border on Sept. 26 and 5 or 6 were seen by the Seal Island party Oct. 3-5. Three of the Sharp-shins on Seal Island were observed carrying out the same tactics as those of the Goshawk described above. A large flock of 30-40 Blue Jays had come in over the water and pitched into a dense clump of spruce, when almost immediately the Sharp-shins, accompanied by at least one Pigeon Hawk (the action was so fast that number of participants was difficult to judge) appeared on the scene and began to harry the jays by diving repeatedly into the tangle. The jays, however, were far too wiley to be stampeded and simply sat tight and talked the situation over at the top of their voices. After about 10 minutes, the hawks gave up and disappeared, and groups of jays in 3's and 4's began to travel from clump to clump of stunted spruce in quick dashes, quite unlike their usual deliberate flight.

RED-TAILED HAWKS are probably far commoner than our reports indicate. These buteos seem to have a talent for avoiding publicity, and it has been our experience that they are most frequently seen "out of the corner of the eye", as it were, during dashes from town to town on serious business far removed from birdwatching and these just don't get written into the record. They have been reported for this period from Shelburne Co., where one was seen on June 2 and another, or the same, on June 26. Sara MacLean reports one on July 4 and several on Aug. 4 in Cape Breton. One was logged on the N.S.B.S. Field Day at Port Joli on Aug. 30, and one in Central Hants Co. on Sept. 12 (C.R.K. Allen). A BROAD-WINGED HAWK in Central Hants Co. on Sept. 12, 2 in Shelburne Co. on Sept. 6, and 2 at Brier Island on Oct. 9 are the only reports of this species, although the usual host of these birds must have passed down Digby Neck at some time during early fall. The only report so far of a ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK is of one at Money

Point, Cape Breton, on Sept. 12.

Most BALD EAGLE reports usually come from Cape Breton and this year is no exception. The mainland, however, has produced a little more competition this time with seven reports as compared with Cape Breton's nine. One was seen flying over Arcadia, Yar. Co., on July 2 and 2 were sighted July 24 along Halifax County's Eastern Shore. A lone bird was reported about 20 miles east of Truro on July 25 and another over Annapolis Basin on Aug. 31. On Sept. 7 Mills recorded one at Brier Island and the Eatons saw 2 Sept. 13 at Cape George. Holdway reports that he saw none in the Pictou area during the summer, although Anne Doull reports one at Big Island on Oct. 6. Among the Cape Breton reported sightings, Sara MacLean reports 2 at Morien Bay "standing in water up to their hocks.....perhaps bathing". She goes on to say "One of the loveliest sights I ever saw was an eagle bathing. Such rainbows as he threw up on the red leaves!"

Perhaps the eagle story of the year is one in the Cape Breton Post of Aug. 18. It tells how, acting on complaints from residents of the town of Dominion that a Bald Eagle was chasing dogs, cats and even baby carriages, the boys in blue met the emergency with serene courage, gunned down the invader and put his carcass on view at the town hall. The story concludes by stating that "his capture was something unusual for town police"!

MARSH HAWKS were reported 12 times, once from Cape Breton and the remainder from Central and South-western Nova Scotia. Most reports were of singles, but in September 3's and 4's were reported from Digby and Yarmouth Counties on some days as the birds concentrated somewhat in their southward movement.

The OSPREY situation is rather hazy. The only report of a nest is from the Cohrs' who say that this was torn down by vandals. The two birds remained in the vicinity until the end of August, but no fresh nest was discovered. Holdway for Pictou and Whitehead for Annapolis say that no Ospreys were seen in their areas during the summer. On the other hand, Gillian Rose reports 5 or 6 of this species in the Cole Harbor area on Aug. 26, and Ian MacLaren saw 36 birds in the Cow Bay - Grand Desert stretch of coastline on Aug. 20 - "apparently migrating". He adds that few were seen on Aug. 31 and none Sept. 13 in the same area. This, incidentally, includes Cole Harbor, where the birds were seen on Aug. 26. The Gallaghers write "In looking over our notes on the Osprey occurrences this past summer, we feel certain that there were 3 Osprey near Sherose Island, Barrington Bay; that there were 2 others at East Baccaro near Port Latour, and at least one (and probably two) at Islands Park, Shelburne Harbor; a total of 6 or 7 healthy looking Osprey in this Barrington to Shelburne area." Other observations of from 1 to 3 birds per day along the North Shore and in southwest Nova Scotia are of no statistical significance.

Although reported as extinct in northeastern North America, a few PEREGRINE FALCONS are still around, as one was seen at close range several times by the Seal Island party Oct. 3-5.

PIGEON HAWKS seldom appear in reports until September as they are uncommon breeders in Nova Scotia. The few which nest here probably keep well back in the conifers during the summer and only appear along the open coast when their broods are reared and migrating shore birds provide good hunting. The earliest report for this year is of 2 on Seal Island Sept. 4-7. Three other single birds were recorded at Sambro, Lawrencetown and Cape Sable during the month, several at Seal Island Oct. 3-5 and one somewhere in Cape Breton on Oct. 18. A few will undoubtedly linger through the winter and make life interesting for the Evening Grosbeaks and other feeding-station customers in our towns and cities.

Whitehead at Round Hill, Anna. Co., reports SPARROW HAWKS as "very scarce this year". Holdway found pairs established on 4 territories in the Pictou area. Other summer reports are of singles or 2 or 3 birds seen during a day's trip in various parts of mainland N.S., and are not of any significance. On Sept. 30 W. Mills reports "3 Sparrow Hawks at Conrad's Beach flying in a southwesterly direction at about 30 second intervals. I have seen Sparrow Hawks before at this time of year flying through this area along what may be a regular migration route." Sightings of from 4 to 6 or 7 per day were made during September and early October in the neighborhood of Yarmouth and on Brier Island.

The resident grouse and exotic partridge and pheasants have no place in a migration report and have, in fact, done little to deserve mention; one SPRUCE GROUSE was seen at Three-Fathom Harbor (Molly Clayden) and several observers plus local gunners report RUFFED GROUSE as scarce this year.

A VIRGINIA RAIL was picked up dead on Cape Sable on Sept. 28 and another healthy specimen seen there on Oct. 5. One at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. on Oct. 3, completes the list of sightings for this species. One SORA also at Lawrencetown on Oct. 4 is the only other rail record for this period (E.Cooke). The usual handful of COOTS failed to make their appearance this autumn but 3 COMMON GALLINULES were seen: 1 at Porters Lake, Hfx. Co., Sept. 26 and 2 at Brier Island Oct. 10.

The SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER is one of the few shore-birds that breed as far south as Nova Scotia and it is therefore a bit difficult to pinpoint the time when the first migrants from farther north appear. There was, however, in Yarmouth County a sharp increase in the numbers of these birds in mid-July. Throughout mainland Nova Scotia, these birds were abundant throughout August and most of September, beginning to dwindle towards the end of the latter month.

Shelburne County, with its snowy sand beaches, is

PIPING PLOVER country and the Gallaghers report the greatest numbers for the province: 1 June 17; 6 July 2; 1 Aug. 6 and 3 Aug. 9. The only other reports are from Lunenburg County where 1 was seen at Cherry Hill on June 21 and 1 at Crescent Beach on Sept. 6 by the Cohrs.

Terry Hyson of Bridgetown, Anna. Co., reports a KILLDEERS' nest found on May 23 situated between the sleepers of the railway track (outside the rails) close to the station. Despite trains, children and workmen, the parent birds succeeded in incubating, and two eggs hatched on June 10 and the remaining two the following day. One other probable nest is reported by the Smiths at Cape Sable; also one in Oxford (letter describing it to follow).

Other Killdeer records are of 4 at Glace Bay on Aug. 14; 4 on Sept. 5 and 9 on Sept. 17 in the same field in Yarmouth; 2 Sept. 16 and 5-6 Oct. 18 at Cape Sable.

GOLDEN PLOVER are quite well reported this year from Sept. 3 to Oct. 10. The 9 reports are distributed as follows: 1 from Pt. Michaud (a "flock"); 1 from Big Island, Pictou Co. (a single); 2 from East Amherst (3 on Sept. 3 and 50 on Sept. 12); 3 from Cape Sable (5 Sept. 24, 4 Oct. 3 and 10); 1 from Eastern Passage, Hfx. Co. (flock of 20 Sept. 27); and five reports from the Yarmouth area between Sept. 5 and Oct. 7, of from 1 to 5 birds.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER are well reported from northern Cape Breton to the southern tip of Yarmouth County and along all three coasts, from July 7 when 2 were seen near Yarmouth to the present (Nov. 3) when fair numbers are still present in the Halifax area. The largest numbers reported are of 200 on August 9 and 300 Sept. 1, both reports by Gallagher for Shelburne County.

Four early RUDDY TURNSTONES were seen by the Gallaghers at East Baccaro Beach on July 2. The peak for these birds, according to reports, must have been more of a plateau as maximum numbers were seen on Aug. 5 (50) at Evangeline Beach and on Sept. 4 (80) at Seal Island. The last reported sighting is of 4 on Oct. 18 at Cape Sable.

Summer WOODCOCK reports are, as usual, scanty. An adult with 3 chicks in Cape Breton June 7, one in Shelburne Co. June 20, and one at Cape Sable "flying along the crest of the beach through thick fog at dusk" on July 29. No other records of this species are to hand from bird watchers, but hunters of upland game birds report them present in good numbers, as many as a dozen to 15 being flushed sometimes from a single alder cover.

COMMON SNIPE are lightly reported - 6 sightings in all and all but one of single birds. The exception was at Sable River where on Oct. 18 8 birds of this species were observed feeding on a piece of sedgy ground which had been recently scythed. These birds later extended their foraging

to an adjacent lawn and frequented this rather unusual habitat in decreasing numbers for several days. This recalls a similar observation three years ago when a number of Common Snipe, varying between 12 and 17, were seen feeding on a well-kept lawn at Beaver River. The reason for the variable number is that these birds were continually "trading" back and forth between the lawn and an adjacent marshy pond. The nature of their food could not be determined.

If the large flocks of WHIMBREL paused as they used to on our crowberry-covered headlands to fortify themselves for their long over-sea flight, they did so unbeknownst to local birders. All of our reports are of from 1 to 6 birds - mostly the former number - and all but 1 are from the Atlantic coast. The earliest seen were 6 July 12 at Cape Sable and the latest reports 2 at East Baccaro on Sept. 24 where the natives called them Callews and said they were still common in fields near the shore - common enough, in fact, to provide sport and food for the local poachers. The one record from the North Shore is from Holdway at Pictou who says that they were once fairly common there, but are now scarce.

On Sept. 16 the Smiths at Cape Sable saw, not one, but 2 UPLAND PLOVER.

SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, which could well have pre-empted the title "solitary" from their relative, were, as usual, seen in singles or small handfuls throughout the summer and fall, from early June to mid-October.

A total of 31 SOLITARY SANDPIPERS was seen on Brier Island on six dates between Aug. 30 and Sept. 7. The numbers seen on these dates vary between 1 and 8. Six were seen on Aug. 30, 8 on Aug. 31 and again 8 on Sept. 3. Other sightings were 3 at Dartmouth Piggery Sept. 6, 1 at Cape Sable Sept. 16, a single at Mt. Pleasant, Lun. Co., Sept. 19, and still another, the latest record, at Bartlett's Beach near Port Maitland Oct. 7.

WILLETS were present in normal numbers throughout the province and apparently began to move in late July or early August as flocks of from 10 to 20 birds were recorded during that period. Annie Raymond reports that a flock of 78+ was at Smith's Cove on Aug. 18. The latest record is of 3 in the Lawrencetown area Sept. 20.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS came early and stayed late. The first northward migrant was seen at Pinckney's Pt. April 20 followed by 2 others during that month (see July Newsletter). At time of writing (Nov. 4) many are still around.

The first LESSER YELLOWLEGS reported is of 1 at Pictou Aug. 9. Apparently these birds gave that stretch of the north shore the "go-by" as only 3 were recorded from that date to October. Thirty of these birds were at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., on Aug. 8 and 40 in the same area Aug. 30 and 31. The largest number seen was a "compact flock" of 80 at Seal

Island Sept. 4 and the latest record is one at Conrads Beach Oct. 25.

Scattered KNOTS were seen at Crescent Beach, Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., and Shelburne Co. from July 23 (very early) to Oct. 10, but the only large number seen was two flocks of 101 and 18 at Brier Island, Sept. 7.

The first southbound PECTORAL SANDPIPER appeared at Cape Sable on Aug. 13. There are 2 other August sightings, one of a single bird at Port Joli on Aug. 30 and one of 2 birds at Brier Island on the same date. Singles were seen at Brier Island and central Hants Co. on Sept. 7 and 12 respectively. A single bird of this species was still at Conrads Beach on Oct. 25 and 2 even later on the outskirts of Dartmouth on Nov. 1.

The first WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER reported was picked out among the myriads of 'peep' at Evangeline Beach on Aug. 5. The greatest number seen was 100+ at Pt. Michaud Aug. 22 by members of the N.S.B.S. Cape Breton Branch. Other reports are scanty and of no significance, the latest being 4 seen at Conrads Beach on Oct. 25. A number will no doubt still be present well into November.

One BAIRD'S SANDPIPER was seen and well described by E. Mills at Pond Cove, Brier Island, Sept. 2.

LEAST SANDPIPERS were first reported from mainland N.S. on July 7 at Yarmouth. Numbers built up from then on to 200+ on Aug. 5 at Evangeline Beach, 100+ Sept. 1, 200 Sept. 3, and 150 Sept. 7 all at Brier Island. The latest report is of 3 at Pictou Oct. 2.

An early DUNLIN was seen at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co. on Sept. 5, and the unusually large number of 40+ in company with a flock of several hundred 'peep' at Cole Harbor on Sept. 27. There were 2 at Crescent Beach again on Oct. 3 and a final sighting of 12 at Pinckneys Pt., Yar. Co., on Oct. 10.

The first DOWITCHERS were, as usual, reported from near Yarmouth where 2 were seen in the neighborhood of Sandford on July 2. Why these early shorebirds should always appear first at their jumping-off place remains a mystery. The first for the summer at Cape Sable showed up on July 11. There was an estimated 2,300+ at Evangeline Beach on Aug. 5 and from there on the numbers tapered off to 2 at Green Bay, Lun.Co., on Oct. 17.

The largest number of STILT SANDPIPERS ever recorded for N. S. was seen at Three-Fathom Harbor on Aug. 14 when E. Cooke saw 15 feeding with Yellowlegs. They were subsequently seen by other observers in the same area between Aug. 20 and 31.

Several very early SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPERS appeared with the vanguard of the Dowitcher migration at Yarmouth on

July 4. By mid-July they were abundant along all three coasts, the greatest number reported being a very conservative estimate of 20,000 at Evangeline Beach on Aug. 5. Stragglers were still present as late as Oct. 25.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS are reported twice: a small flock of 5 or 6 at Starr's Rd. in Yarmouth where they have been seen before (M.W. Hilton) in company with Golden Plover on Sept. 5; one at Ingonish Pt. on the 15th. and 16th. of Sept. (W. Neily).

A group of 8 HUDSONIAN GODWITS towered over the teeming 'peep' at Evangeline Beach on Aug. 5. One was seen near Wedge Island on Aug. 20 and 3 at Big Island, Pictou Co., on Aug. 26.

A SANDERLING seen by the Gallaghers on June 17 was probably a non-breeder. They were reported as arriving at Cape Sable on July 12, while the first southward migrants were reported by the Gallaghers on Aug. 6 when 20 appeared, Shel. Co. They recorded 50 on Aug. 9, 35 on Sept. 13 and 50 again on Sept. 14. The first recorded for the Halifax area was 1 on Aug. 8 and by Sept. 27 there were 25+ in the same area. Two hundred were at Brier Island on Sept. 1, 100+ Sept. 2 and 200 on Sept. 7. The only other number that approaches these observations is the report of 73 seen during the Pt. Michaud Field Day Aug. 22.

No less than two AMERICAN AVOCETS showed up in N.S. during the season - one seen by E. Cooke on July 5 was subsequently photographed by I. MacLaren. The other was seen by the people at the lighthouse on Seal Island on Sept. 22 and 23.

RED PHALAROPES did not appear during the southward migration this year, but NORTHERNS were reported 6 times: 1, Aug. 15 at Lower LaHave and 1, same date, at Three-Fathom Harbor; 14 Aug. 4 at Pictou; 2 Aug. 13 at Grand Desert; 13 Sept. 12 at Louisbourg and 1 Sept. 19 same locality.

Two WILSON'S PHALAROPES were seen and studied for about 15 minutes at close range by E. Cooke on Aug. 22. A full description accompanied the record. Another record is of 1 at Louisbourg on Sept. 12. Again field marks were carefully noted.

The GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL did not increase its ratio of around 50 to 1,000 HERRING GULLS at Brier Island this season, the latter species maintaining its population. "About 2,000 young Herring Gulls on the land at Cape Sable Sept. 24 indicated a good 'hatch'", according to the Smiths. The RING-BILLED GULL is recorded first along the North Shore, in the Wallace area, 15+ seen there Aug. 6. By Aug. 14, a half-dozen were counted in the Chezsetcook area, Hfx. Co., seen there on subsequent occasions in smaller number up to Oct. 25. One was spotted at St. Mary's Bay, Digby Co., Oct. 13, by the F.W. Dobsons. One very early BLACK-HEADED GULL was around mid-August at Lingan Beach, Cape Breton



(O'Connell per W. Neily); and one other spent some time in a pond on Cape Sable, Oct. 26 (B.J. Smith). Very few BONAPARTE'S GULLS have been seen; 15, Sept. 12 at Dingwall, Cape Breton (N.S.B.S. party) and 1 only along the North Shore Aug. 6, 1 only at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., Aug. 30 (S. Cohrs). The KITTIWAKE is dependable off Brier Island in any season, though rarely sighted from shore elsewhere in N.S. Eric Mills saw "an enormous, long, twisting flock feeding along a tide line off the Western Light" Aug. 30, a thousand birds a conservative estimate. One was seen, in a flock of gulls, Oct. 10, at Petite Riviere, by Shirley Cohrs and family.

The TERN colony established for the first time in 1969 on Wedge Island, St. Margaret's Bay, is thriving, with some 300 pairs nesting there. About 70% are COMMON, 15% ROSEATE and 15% ARCTIC. Ian McLaren and party banded 146, mostly flying young and adults captured by hand at night on the beach, dazzled by flashlight. Most had fledged early in August, and some late hatching ones then died, apparently ill-fed. Colonies on Sable Island were unsuccessful this summer. One late record of a Common Tern comes from Eric Cooke: 1, Oct. 24 Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. The southerly gale of Aug. 13 brought a few LEAST TERNS to the area, one of which was collected at Grand Desert, Hfx. Co. On Aug. 15, 2 more were seen in the same vicinity (E. Cooke), and 2 more Aug. 26, at Big Island, Pictou Co. (A. Doull). (In the August report from Maine, U.S.A. 3 Least Terns are listed, seen at Scarboro, Aug. 27.)

The same gale may have brought in the BLACK TERNS, although one was seen earlier, July 27, out in St. Margaret's Bay (I. McLaren). Altogether 17 of these terns have been reported, between Aug. 15 and Sept. 7, from Point Michaud (Guys. Co.), along the Eastern Shore, and at Seal Island. The reporters were members of the N.S.B.S. field trip parties at Pt. Michaud and Seal Island, plus Eric Cooke, Bruce MacTavish, Mike McKie (per Eric Mills) and Betty Hughes, a distinguished visitor from Kingston, Ontario.

Two DOVEKIES were seen in Sydney Harbor, Oct. 18, following a heavy southerly gale. Weather, however, had nothing to do with the presence of 5, Oct. 31, on the beach at Sandy Cove, Hfx. Co., one the next day in a shallow inlet of St. Margaret's Bay near Tantallon, and 2 that day farther down the Bay near Hubbards. Last year, Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 1969, the Dovekies met with one of their recurring disasters, many of them washed up at the tide edge, very weak, apparently starved to death, along the shores. The numbers seen this year so far are much smaller, but the last 2 birds in St. Margaret's Bay were too weak to stir when approached, and the first one flew straight inland, on a suicide course.

Twenty-seven MOURNING DOVES observed between Sept. 1 and Oct. 31 is average, in 17 reports, distribution very general around the province, most reports (obviously) of 1 or 2 birds. The largest number was 5, at Milton Ponds shore near Yarmouth, Oct. 3. Four reports of the BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO is one more than last year for the same period of time. The Gallaghers

saw one in Shelburne County, 2 were seen in Yarmouth County and one picked up dead, Sept. 19, on the Sambro Road, Hfx. Co. This bird was freshly killed, and in perfect condition, and given to the N.S. Museum for a study skin. Two GREAT HORNED OWLS were seen, at opposite ends of the province, both in August, one at Lower Ohio, Shel. Co. "being ruthlessly attacked by a flock of angry small birds...finally retreated"; the other (seen by Vince and Alice Chisholm) at Pleasant Bay, Inverness Co.

NIGHTHAWKS started flocking early this year on July 17, a small "flight" of 15+ was noted at Sandford, Yar. Co., and two other small flocks, 11-12 birds, on July 19, on the other side of the county. July 30, from the airport into Halifax, the Gallaghers counted 135 and say "it was certainly our impression that these were flocking birds". W. E. Whitehead has written "The pre-migration flocks of Nighthawks were different this year for two reasons, that is as far as my observations go. In the first place, their activities started much earlier than usual and extended for nearly three weeks. Secondly, the numbers of birds were in excess of those I have previously seen. In past years, my records indicate that they were seen for perhaps two days, or evenings, during the last week of August, and then in relatively small numbers.

Summer records for Nighthawks in this area are practically nil. I attribute this to the fact that we do not have the upland barrens that occur farther up the Valley where the birds frequently nest."

Dr. Whitehead's letter was in answer to a query as to whether the numbers and dates of Nighthawks in his region were in any way unusual. He saw 10 to 70, Aug. 7, 70 to 100 Aug. 26, and 100+ Aug. 28. On Aug. 29, Mills saw 7 Nighthawks at Brier Island, and Sara MacLean reports "the Nighthawk flight left Cape Breton on August 26. They go by the tens of thousands on the 25th. and 26th. of August each year. Twice I've watched them crossing No. 4 Highway on Aug. 25 and estimated 10,000 birds in three hours, all flying south." Other small flocks were noticed during this week, Aug. 20 to 27, and again Sept. 5 to 7, along the Eastern Shore, at Mahone Bay, Shelburne and Yarmouth.

The latest CHIMNEY SWIFTS reported are around 25, seen by R.W. Tufts Sept. 22 at Wolfville, plus another 4, in the same place, Oct. 4, with the observation (by Dr. Tufts) "heavy southerly gales yesterday".

The RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD showed a definite "peak" Aug. 20, when 10 were seen (where 1 or 2 were expectable) in Shelburne Co. In the swamp back of the County Home, Halifax County, 5 were seen Aug. 13; 20 Aug. 20; 12 Sept. 2 and none Sept. 13. There were a few later reports from other places, the last being one, female or immature, seen in Victoria County, Cape Breton, Oct. 19 and 26 (Dorothea Cox).

The BELTED KINGFISHER has been well and widely

reported this season, 21 reports of over 50 birds, up to Oct. 10. Some of these are undoubtedly repeats, but the coverage was wide. Most have probably left by now, but no particulars of departure have come our way.

The YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER was not noted in as great abundance as it was the last two years, but was still our most obvious woodpecker. Increased numbers of probable migrants began to be noticeable early in September - 2 Sept. 2; 15+ Sept. 3, at Brier Island; "everywhere" Sept. 10 to 13 from Five Islands to Apple River and Joggins, Cumb. Co.; 12+ Sept. 12 on a Hants Co. trip; and "everywhere, not in great numbers, but one kept seeing them" Sept. 21, Yarmouth Co. There were still a few left on the trip to Seal Island Oct. 3-5. There seem to be only two reports of the PILEATED WOODPECKER this year, one in Yarmouth Co., the other in Cape Breton Co. There are also two reports of THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS, one in Cape Breton Co. Sept. 3 by Betty Reid, a BLACK-BACKED and the other of "a pair 10 feet from the cottage door (Green Bay, Lun. Co.) in a stand of pines, June 3. At first we thought they were Hairys, but they had a yellow patch and ladder backs, typical of the NORTHERN THREE-TOED".(Shirley Cohrs).

The Flycatchers, one of our most useful groups of birds, but not usually distinguished, provided the outstanding oddity of the season, a FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER. The story is that Ian McLaren saw it, late afternoon of Saturday, Sept. 26, at the Piggery, outside of Dartmouth. He was about to leave after half an hour's scrutiny of the place, when the strange bird caught his eye. After a good long look, he hurried back to town, enlisted Eric and Willett Mills, and hastened back to the Piggery, where the bird still remained to be examined at leisure, and photographed.

Eric Mills gives this description: "Head charcoal black, slightly crested, with a whitish (yellowish?) stripe down the centre. Back light gray, breast, belly and undertail coverts pure white, tail very long, slaty black, with white outer tail feathers, and deeply forked. The bird was magnificent and one of the finest sights I have seen. It sat in open view for a long time, flycatching among the many insects flying low over the shrubbery. An exceptional experience." This "Piggery" is not really a piggery, but the ground back of one. It lies on the left side of the Circumferential Highway, Dartmouth to Eastern Passage, just beyond the Cole Harbor Road intersection. The land slopes down from the barns, and has carried vast amounts of rich nutriment (washings from the troughs) into the gully at the bottom, where the trees have been so glutted they are dead or dying - and give wonderful visibility to perched birds. Beneath the trees is a rank growth of weeds and vines - nightshade, beggar's ticks, wild cucumber and jewelweed most dominant, interspersed with scummy pools. You can stay there for hours (if the wind is in the right direction) and eventually see almost any bird you wish to mention. The range of the Fork-tailed Flycatcher is from Argentina to Mexico.

There is only a handful of reports to the north of that, certainly none this far north before. Congratulations to Ian and the Piggery.

N.B. Word has just been received that the photograph taken by Eric Mills has been accepted at Ottawa - the Fork-tailed Flycatcher is now on the official list of the Birds of Nova Scotia!

The EASTERN KINGBIRD is to be depended on in fall migration, adhering faithfully to the Labor Day week-end. Of ten reports of migrants received (6 to 20 birds per report) seven were for Sept. 7, all for the period Sept. 5 to 12. One late bird was seen Oct. 2 at Gunning Cove, Shel. Co., extending "by about a week the known period of occurrence of this species in Nova Scotia" according to H.F. Lewis. Not to be outdone, two WESTERN KINGBIRDS joined the group, one Sept. 6 on Brier Island (Eric Mills), one Sept. 6-7 on Seal Island, identified by I. McLaren, Ben Doane and Roger Hughes.

We must here, with apologies to all, withdraw the Western Kingbird report - N.S.B.S. Newsletter 12:52 (July 1970) - at Cape Sable. The birds seen there on May 23 were Easterns, which brings us back to no spring reports of Westerns to date.

Three or more CRESTED FLYCATCHERS were seen; 1, June 28 at Brier Island (E. Mills' report was late) and 1, Sept. 1, also at Brier Island. At Pictou, Holdway observed one on July 17, one on the 19th. and one the 29th., "all on the same lookout perch". The Gallaghers again found a PHOEBE'S nest with 2 young this time, at Lake George in Shel. Co. The YELLOW-BELLIED, TRAILL'S, LEAST, WOOD PEWEE and OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER were all on their way in early September, all well reported. At Brier Island, Eric Mills noted on Aug. 30: "Many birds moving today, notably swallows, Empidonax flycatchers, shorebirds, Kittiwakes, Kingbirds, warblers and possibly Savannah Sparrows, which were very abundant elsewhere." On Aug. 31 he added "...Olive-sided is new today, Kingbirds seem much more restless." Sept. 2: "Listened after dark, skies cloudless, no wind. Very heavy migration in progress - thrushes, Empidonax flycatchers, bobolinks and warblers. Dozens of birds went over in a few minutes." Sept. 6: "Appears to be a continuing migration by night of small flycatchers including many Empidonaxes and Pewees", and on Sept. 7: "A very active day for land birds and shorebirds. Heavy migration during previous night. Wickerson Lent saw many birds attracted to the Western Light and this morning found several dead birds at the light - 2 Chestnut-sided, 1 Yellowthroat, 1 Bay-breasted and 1 Magnolia." It is obvious that even the relatively large concentrations of migrants we see at times in the fall are only a fraction of the actual number of birds passing by on their way south; not all breeders from Nova Scotia, of course. But accumulated observations do give a fair enough indication of times of departure, if not of numbers departing.

Two reports of the HORNED LARK are both for Oct. 10: 2 at Cape Sable; 6 at Brier Island. By Oct. 17, Horned Larks were in Halifax County, seen, 15 strong, at Lawrencetown, by Eric Cooke (who writes that he had already seen 5, Aug. 30, out at the Kelly Lake Airport).

TREE, BANK and BARN SWALLOWS in great numbers and the CLIFF SWALLOW in better than usual numbers have been around all summer, but departed quite promptly early in September. On Aug. 27, at Round Hill, Anna. Co., W.E. Whitehead saw Barn Swallows and Chimney Swifts criss-crossing the evening sky (300-400), estimated ratio of 1 swift to 5 swallows. The first three swallow species crowded into Brier Island and Seal Island Aug. 25 to Sept. 7, and Betty June Smith writes from Cape Sable: "Tree, Bank and Barn Swallows, 2,000+, circling over the Hawk, preparing to leave." Quite naturally, on the late August dates, Tree Swallows predominated, later in September Barn Swallows outnumbered them (on Seal Island) three to one. Nests of all four above-mentioned species were on the whole productive, Tree Swallows in boxes, Bank Swallows in disused quarries (sometimes) and some of the Barn Swallows at Cameron Settlement, where Evelyn Lowerison found 41 nests, 16 at Caledonia, Guys. Co. Four colonies of Cliff Swallows (Guys. Co.). two of them with 16 nests, is good news. Evelyn Lowerison sends news of the PURPLE MARTIN: "Good Martin News: I had 16 pairs nesting and they raised about 3 each. Mr. Sweetser, who has very modern boxes one can lower and look into, had his adults raise 44 young. A Mr. Kent (the former Percy Black Colony) believed there were 20 pairs there. In Oxford, Mr. Frank Black had 8-12 nesting pairs and all raised young, also Mrs. J. Higgins had 15 nesting pairs who also raised their young successfully. They told me that on Aug. 29, approximately 100 birds were perched on the wires opposite the Wildlife Office and they disappeared the next day. My Martins did not depart until Sept. 9. Also in Amherst a Mr. Rose had Martins who raised 13 young."

(Since we had not had news of the Oxford colonies for some time, enquiries were made, and Inez Finley has kindly brought us up to date. Her very interesting letter follows later in the Newsletter.)

BLUE JAYS came out in the open the latter part of August, and were "everywhere" in Central Hants Co. by Sept. 12, on which date C.R.K. Allen wrote "the Blue Jay movement is well under way. Every time I stopped they could be heard, and they were criss-crossing the road all day long." These jays are still abundant in town and country, but at least two definite flights are documented: one, the well-observed arrival of a close flock of 30 to 40 Oct. 4 at Seal Island (see previous description under Sharpshins, chasing the jays); and Eric Mills' note of Oct. 10 at Brier Island "30+ Blue Jays arrived, small flocks flying all day".

Eagles and Great Black-backed Gulls make a practice of robbing the Osprey of its catch, but Ian McLaren saw a COMMON RAVEN chase an unfortunate Osprey, and force it to

drop a fish (Sept. 2 at Cole Harbor). About twice as many Ravens were noted in August as in July, quite generally in the province.

The BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE started coming out of its woodland nesting retreats the latter part of August. This showed up plainly for both the BOREAL and the Black-cap, particularly the latter in the day-by-day records of the Gallaghers in Shelburne County. Evelyn Richardson noticed them coming to her feeder at Barrington in increasing numbers around Aug. 19. There was a definite movement the last week of September when 15+ Black-caps were counted (Sept. 27) near Cole Harbor instead of the usual 2 or 3; and in Yarmouth, Black-caps were noted as "frequent in the garden trees" in town Sept. 27 to Oct. 2. Although mentioned as scarce in places along the South Shore, reports from the Eastern Shore, Halifax, Hants and the Valley were of usual numbers. W.E. Whitehead of Round Hill, Anna. Co. wrote of watching a young bird being fed by an adult Aug. 4: "It was amusing to see an adult Black-cap pecking at and trying to lift a hawk moth caterpillar, 2-1/2" long. On subsequent examination, the caterpillar seemed to be quite unharmed."

A HOUSE WREN was seen Oct. 23 at Conrad's Beach by McLaren and Stobo. Three October observations of the WINTER WREN were all of single birds, widely separated, and do not suggest a migration.

Six MOCKINGBIRDS have been seen around this summer and fall: 1, Aug. 26 at Seal Island; 1, Sept. 6 at Cape John, Pictou Co. (reported to W.J. Mills by Don West); 1 adult feeding a young bird Sept. 23 at Clark's Harbor (reported to B. Coffill, who had noted a pair of Mockingbirds in the vicinity during the summer); 1, Oct. 9 in Yarmouth town; 1, Oct. 17 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. Counting the young bird, that makes seven individuals. The Mockingbird is known to nest in Nova Scotia, but a nest has been rarely seen, which makes this feeding record of particular interest. The young bird was obviously a fledgling, and stood with outstretched quivering wings and gaping beak in typical fashion to receive food from the parent. This was a good year for the CATBIRD, reported as frequently seen and heard throughout summer and fall, well distributed, and nesting in the usual places. The BROWN THRASHER was not seen in as great numbers as usual in expected places, notably Brier Island, Seal Island and Cape Sable. However, there were several on Seal Island Oct. 3-5, and for two of us it was something to remember to see 5 of these splendid big birds all together there in one tree, 2 on the ground beneath (S. Fullerton and P. Dobson).

ROBINS are determined nesters, sometimes raising three broods in a season, but the latest nest reported this summer, one at Glace Bay, met with disaster. The 4 eggs hatched on Aug. 16, only to provide a Sharpshin with one good meal. It is doubtful if this happened too often, either this year or last, both notable for abundance of robins. Reporters for the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia, for Hants County

and for the Wallace area on the North Shore used such expressions as "superabundant", "more than I can remember seeing ever before", "galore" during July, and in Yarmouth County, Aug. 21 to Sept. 8, C.R.K. Allen wrote "during this time robins could be counted by the hundreds all over the countryside, there must have been many thousands in the area." Very few of these seem to have left via Brier Island, although 25 came in there the night of Sept. 3. This early migration (from Yarmouth) was followed by several small "waves", documented by widely scattered observers: 1, Sept. 15-20; 1, Oct. 2-10; 1, Oct. 17-19 (at Wolfville, R.W. Tufts noted that of the several dozen robins which arrived Oct. 12-13, left Oct. 19 "all seemed to be *T.m. migratorius*"); and 1, Oct. 26-27. Robins are still on the move, as Rosemary Eaton has reported "30 around today (Oct. 30) eating crabapples", at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co.

The HERMIT THRUSH has been only moderately well reported, with highest numbers in Yarmouth County (maximum number of 10 per daily trip) and along the Eastern Shore (maximum number 12). A probable migration date is Oct. 19, when several were seen on Cape Sable by the Smiths. The SWAINSON'S THRUSH has received better mention, generally distributed, except none noted along the North Shore. On July 24, between Cole Harbor and Clam Bay, thence up the Musquodoboit River, C.R.K. Allen saw some dozens of these thrushes, and writes: "appeared to be a definite movement of this species. Except for robins, it was the commonest roadside bird today. The number (35) is a very conservative estimate. I did not start counting seriously until impressed by the numbers, and then guessed at those seen before." In the Round Hill-Annapolis area, W.E. Whitehead reported the Swainson's "the only local thrush this summer". The VEERY has been reported only in Yarmouth and Shelburne counties. H.F. Lewis quotes one of his correspondents as writing "at Granite Village (Shel. Co.) this fall there were many young Hermit Thrushes, Swainson's Thrushes and Veerys", but proportion of one to the others was not estimated.

Eric Mills again reports a BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER at Brier Island, in fact almost certainly 2 more. One was on his cottage roof (Pond Cove Road) June 28, another on Sept. 7 "well seen and watched for approximately 10 minutes at 30' distance. It was in a warbler flock and was calling regularly - a three-noted call with quality a little like a Boreal Chickadee". Sara MacLean of Glace Bay has reported another of this species "a very small bird, bluish-gray above, whitish below. Tail long, dark in the centre with light feathers at the sides. Took suet at the feeder." This was Oct. 18. Both KINGLETS have received attention, the GOLDEN-CROWNED scarcely seen until late August as usual, the RUBY-CROWNED flocking Sept. 27, still in migration by Oct. 10, noted in several places on that date, in particular 2 on Cape Sable (a very irregular habitat for forest birds).

The WATER PIPIT, which took little notice of us as a flyway in the spring, has as usual made up for it in the

fall, appearing first in numbers Sept. 26, at Yarmouth, where a flock of 20+ flew about "pipiting overhead" at Cranberry Head pond (M.W. Hilton et al); then 30+ noted Sept. 27, Chezzetcook Beach; small flocks at Cape Sable Oct. 5; 20 at Brier Island Oct. 10; 12+ near Halifax Oct. 17; "many" near Sydney Harbor Oct. 18; 30+ at Conrad's Beach Oct. 25, some on the Halifax Citadel that same day.

CEDAR WAXWINGS have been plentiful all summer, descending on the trees in flocks of 20 to 30 or more, June through September and generally distributed. Some were still around on Oct. 5, when R.W. Tufts observed "dozens" in the rowan trees at his home in Wolfville. We have a LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE seen by Eric Mills Aug. 30 and Sept. 3 at Brier Island, and a probable Northern, but not specified, seen at Brookside, Hfx. Co., Oct. 28 "chasing three scandalized robins" (E.Dobson).

Seal Island continues to provide extraordinary records, this year a YELLOW-THROATED VIREO, well seen, Sept. 5 by Ian McLaren. The SOLITARY VIREO stopped singing in early August, and although a few were seen after that date (the last time in our records Sept. 27, in Halifax Co.) it stole away unnoticed this fall. The RED-EYED VIREO, very common all summer, also left few clues to migration. One or two were seen on Brier Island during the period Sept. 1 to 7, when the warblers were going through, and one was found dead, Sept. 28, on Cape Sable. Two visiting PHILADELPHIA VIREOS have been reported, one "well seen, picking flies off beach pebbles, around 10' away" at Seal Island, Sept. 5 (Ian McLaren), and one in her garden at 23 Baker St., Yarmouth, Sept. 12, by M.W. Hilton (well acquainted with this species).

Warbler numbers were average this year, according to our records over the past few years, in spite of suggestions to the contrary. It is possible that distribution was uneven, but quite large concentrations of our regular breeders were noted at different times and places throughout the summer and fall. The almost day by day records of the Gallaghers in Shelburne and M. Hilton, A. Hurlbert and D. Kirk in Yarmouth Counties have been most helpful, as have the weekly Halifax-Hants records of C.R.K. Allen, and the excellent coverage now afforded by the Cape Breton Branch of the N.S.B.S. Extraordinary sightings multiply on Seal Island: a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, Aug. 26, identified by Ian McLaren; a BLUE-WINGED WARBLER, Aug. 26, I. McLaren; an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER Sept. 4 by Ben Doane; at least 3 PRAIRIE WARBLERS, Aug. 24-28, and at least 6 of these Sept. 4-7, by I. McLaren, Ben Doane, and R. Hughes (first specimen for N.S. taken Sept. 6); and 1 still at Seal Island Oct. 3-5. A CONNECTICUT WARBLER, "close study of 1 imm. with complete eye-ring", Sept. 7 by I. McLaren. Added to these we have several YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS: 2, Sept. 12, Cape Sable, the Smiths; 2, Sept. 5-6, Seal Island, McLaren and Doane; 1, Oct. 1, Seal Island, N.S.B.S. party; and 1, Oct. 11, Green Bay, Lun. Co., S. Cohrs; also an immature HOODED WARBLER, Sept. 12-13, Cape Sable, seen by the Smiths. At least 19 of our resident species of warblers, plus the Yellow-breasted Chat, paused on Brier Island during the



period Aug. 30 to Sept. 8, and the peak number of individuals of these was on Sept. 3. The ones in greatest number were the Yellow (30+), Cape May (30+), Myrtle (25+), Bay-breasted (15+), Blackpoll (10+), Yellowthroat (25+), and American Redstart (6). The Cape Mays had been 100 strong on Sept. 1. (They were counted as 65, Aug. 24-28, about 150 Sept. 4-7, on Seal Island.) Another distinct wave of warblers emerges from reports for Sept. 23 and the week following, noted in the Valley (W.E. Whitehead), Halifax County (F.W. Dobson), and Shelburne County (various correspondents to H.F. Lewis). Palm Warblers are noted in these places at this time, about the only one of our regular species not seen at Brier Island in early September. A very late date for an Ovenbird is Oct. 26, in Dartmouth, where one was caught by a cat, but released, uninjured (E. Crathorne). Myrtle Warblers are still around in considerable numbers, and no doubt some flocks will stay the winter.

The HOUSE SPARROW is noted to be diminished in numbers in Yarmouth (M. Hilton) and in Bridgetown, where Terry Hyson observed no interference with his swallow nesting box, for the first time on record.

BOBOLINKS were migrating via Brier Island Aug. 31 (2 seen), Sept. 1 (6), Sept. 3 (20+), but a fair number of immature birds was still to be seen in the fields Sept. 12 and later. Terry Hyson discovered a nest, containing 6 young, all lively but hungry, early this summer, in Bridgetown, and Sara MacLean mentions 6 pairs, with "flying young" July 24 near Glace Bay. Two MEADOWLARKS appeared on Cape Sable Oct. 19, and we have another more exotic Icterid to report, the YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD. Two immature males were identified on Seal Island, Sept. 4-5, by I. McLaren and Roger Hughes. On Sept. 18 and 19 "Viola Sperka had exceptionally good opportunities to observe two Yellow-headed Blackbirds on and near the driveway on her home property at Brass Hill, Barrington. They were in the company of a small flock of grackles, three cowbirds and two starlings. She parked her car near by and sat in it, observing and photographing them. Under these conditions, the birds paid little attention to her presence. The plumage details recorded indicate that both yellow-headed blackbirds were immature males." (Copied from Dr. H.F. Lewis' column in the Shelburne Coastguard. It does not have to be so, but these may have been the same birds.) The REDWINGED BLACKBIRD was preparing for departure mid-September, large flocks noted, especially at the Dartmouth "Piggery" during that time. An immature ORCHARD ORIOLE was found on Seal Island Aug. 27. Ian McLaren has observed "Among 6 or 7 Baltimores at Seal Island Aug. 24-27 was one female clearly well on the Bullock's side, almost like last year's specimen. Photos by McLaren will be sent to Ottawa. Of the up to 80 orioles seen Sept. 4-7, one or two were decidedly Bullock's-like, and several appeared 'tainted'. It would be interesting to know where these flights come from." The peak of the BALTIMORE ORIOLE migration at Brier Island was Sept. 3, 25 birds seen, 20 the day before. Two were seen in Shelburne Co. Sept. 3 (Gallaghers); one on Cape Sable Sept. 7 (Smiths); 2 at Centreville, Shel. Co., the

latter part of September (Viola Sperka); and 2 as late as Oct. 30 still at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. (the Eatons). Flocks of the RUSTY BLACKBIRD (up to 20 per flock) are reported from Halifax and Shelburne Counties for Sept. 27, but winged along without stopping; 3 only seen at Brier Island Oct. 3; 1, on Seal Island the same date. The COMMON GRACKLE moved out in small flocks late September through October, "regular on lawns up to Oct. 16" in Yarmouth County; "12-14 in garden at Halifax the week of Oct. 20"; and "numbers around Oct. 18-20" at Brookside, just outside of Halifax. On Oct. 26 W.E. Whitehead wrote from Annapolis Royal: "During the past few days flocks of Grackles and Rusty Blackbirds have been passing over. They seem to be smaller flocks this year; this may be because some birds have changed their route. Grackles were certainly not an economic factor in the immediate vicinity during the summer." The BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD was very abundant this season, and has shown no sign of leaving yet, according to our reports. The SCARLET TANAGER was noted at Brier Island Aug. 30 and 31, one immature bird; also 2 were seen at Seal Island Sept. 6, and one there Oct. 3, which could have been either a female or winter male, or for that matter immature, being dull green above, yellowish below, with black wings.

The ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK was noted frequently, in Yarmouth County particularly, this summer, but also seen in Pictou, Hants and Annapolis Counties. A very late bird was seen at York Redoubt, Hfx. Co., Oct. 31, by Allen. Two BLUE GROSBEAKS (no trace of blue, probably females) caused a certain amount of scurrying around until one of them came near enough for positive identification, on Seal Island, Oct. 3. Finally this one settled down to feeding near a vegetable patch, and everyone got a leisurely look at it. The same trip to Seal Island, Oct. 3-5, produced 2 INDIGO BUNTINGS, not quite so rare a stray, being in fact a New Brunswick Breeder. The DICKCISSEL was seen at Barrington, one on Aug. 24; another one Aug. 25 on Seal Island; another or the same Sept. 5 on Seal Island; and one near Ingonish Beach, Cape Breton, Oct. 12, all four sightings by I. McLaren. The EVENING GROSBEAK is still far from common in Nova Scotia in the summer, with the possible exception of northern Cape Breton, where Frank Robertson has reported them as seen often along the Old Sydney Highway. W.E. Whitehead saw 5 on Aug. 5, 3 of them young, near Round Hill, Annapolis Co., and says a pair spent the summer locally, seen at times feeding on Indian Pear (amelanchier fruit). One was seen July 25 in Central Hants (C.R.K. Allen); 10, Sept. 3 at Tatamagouche (Evelyn Lowerison), and 2, flying back and forth and calling loudly, along the Stillwater Siding Road, Sept. 27 (P.R. Dobson). Sara MacLean noted the first (12+) of the "winter flock" flying over Glace Bay Oct. 21; "some" were noticed Oct. 22 in Shelburne town (Shelburne Coastguard), and on Oct. 26, at 9:30 a.m. 34 Evening Grosbeaks descended on the trees at the Topples, Lake Loon, Dartmouth, looked things over, and took off for the woods again. Fair numbers of reports of the PURPLE FINCH have come in, of general distribution, June through September, although it must be added that regrettably by far the greatest numbers remained in the close vicinity of feeding stations throughout

the province. Around the middle of September, numbers of Purple Finches began to diminish, and none is reported since Oct. 6. PINE SISKINS locally, and AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES generally, have been reported in good numbers, the Goldfinches not as superabundant as they were last summer, but flocks of 30 to 60 usual. Numbers had noticeably diminished by late September, but the Topples had up to 100 around on Oct. 26, and a mixed flock of about 20 birds, siskins and goldfinches, was seen and heard Nov. 1, near Frost Fish Cove, Hfx. Co.

David Christie has kindly forwarded to us a report he received of a sighting of the EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH. James Wilson, an experienced observer, on a trip through Digby County, noticed the unusual looking bird perched on a telephone wire, and stopped to investigate. The bird flew down and joined a flock of American Goldfinches in a patch of thistles, and remained there, about 20 feet away, for a good 3-minute observation. Mr. Wilson had his Peterson with him, and was certain the bird must be an European Goldfinch, adult in full plumage, a very distinctively marked bird. If you will consult your Peterson, you will see that he notes under "Range" that small colonies of this bird are established on Long Island, N.Y. There is also the possibility that it may have been an escaped cage bird - in any case, a very interesting observation, in the wild. Date@ Sept. 11, 1970, 2.35 p.m.

The RED CROSSBILL is still rarely seen, evidently not building up to any extent in Nova Scotia, but a few reports keep coming in. Three were seen in Yarmouth Co. July 2 (C.R.K. Allen); 1 to 4 at different times throughout August, in Shel. Co., by the Gallaghers, who report the peak number of 15 for Sept. 5; 2, Sept. 12, at Cape North (N.S.B.S. Field Trip party) and 9, Sept. 12, at Stillwater Siding, Hfx. Co. This last mentioned place usually produces a few crossbills or finches or both. The birds spend a good deal of time "gravelling" along the railway track. The White-winged Crossbill has been reported only once, seen Oct. 7 at Gut St. Anne, Cape Breton, (number not given) by Vera Hebert, a distinguished visiting naturalist.

Two RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEES were present at Cape Sable Oct. 11-18, 1, Oct. 3-5 at Seal Island; and two LARK BUNTINGS at Seal Island Sept. 4-5. These latter were seen by Ben Doane, Roger Hughes and Ian McLaren, who described them as "moulting crazy-quilt males". Two IPSWICH SPARROWS stopped at Cape Sable Oct. 10, possibly leaving, possibly arriving, to join the group which reached a peak in Nova Scotia Oct. 22, when 22 were counted at Cow Bay, Eastern Passage and Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co. On Oct. 26 they were still as common at Conrad's Beach as on the previous date. (See McLaren's notes on Sable Island to follow). The SAVANNAH SPARROW was abundant all summer in expected habitat, still so in Pictou County on the coastal sand dunes (well into October), according to Holdway. Some started leaving much earlier, coming in at Brier Island Aug. 30 - Sept. 7. The SHARP-TAILED SPARROW was still on territory Sept. 19, but one at Cape Sable Oct. 3 was undoubtedly a migrant. Ten or more VESPER SPARROWS at Chegoggin, Yar. Co.

Sept. 26 were certainly on their way, not usually seen at all in this area. A few LARK SPARROWS wandered our way late August and early September: 1, Aug. 24 at Barrington (McLaren); 1, Aug. 25 in the Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. area (Mike McKie per Eric Mills); 2, Aug. 30, Port Joli, N.S.B.S. Field Trip; 1, imm., Sept. 1 and another Sept. 4, Brier Island (E. Mills); and 1, Sept. 6, Second Peninsula, Lun. Co. (Curtis Chipman). This was a banner year for the SLATE-COLORED JUNCO in Nova Scotia. Several nests were reported, and just for the record, Evelyn Lowerison has written: "the nest was in the outside of a wood pile, very exposed, I could watch the egg-laying process, dates as follows: June 10, 1 egg; June 11, 2 eggs; June 13, 3 eggs; and June 14, 4 eggs. She was still incubating June 25, but all were gone by July 11." Reported as "abundant" in many areas, it was interesting to compare the numbers seen on daily trips in Shel. County by the Gallaghers (the Junco seen on every trip) 4's and 5's, up to 12 a day in July, and 20's and 30's up to 125 in one day in August. Although Juncos were accumulating at Brier Island Aug. 30 (10) to Sept. 3 (40), a big movement was noted Sept. 28, particularly coastwise in Halifax County. The CHIPPING SPARROW, noted in usual numbers in expected habitat throughout the summer, showed up in unexpected habitat in September, seen with the migrating Vespers at Chegoggin, Yar. Co. on Sept. 6. Another flight is reported by R.W. Tufts for Oct. 5 at Wolfville and 6 Chippies were seen together in fields near Bartlett's Beach, Digby Co., Oct. 7. A transient WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW was observed on Sept. 19 at Sambro, Hfx. Co. (C.R.K. Allen). The WHITE-THROATED SPARROW reports are of normal numbers throughout the province and three distinct flights are indicated, Sept. 24 to 27, Oct. 6-7, and Oct. 17-19. Only 2 FOX SPARROWS returned via Nova Scotia this fall, both seen Oct. 1, at Cape Sable (B.J. Smith). The SWAMP SPARROW, more often heard than seen has nevertheless received usual mention - no large fall concentrations were noted as in some years, but they were more frequent than usual in the Chezzetcook area, Hfx. Co. area Sept. 26-27, along with White-throats and SONG SPARROWS. Fifty or more Song Sparrows were counted in the Cole Harbor area Sept. 26, and another "wave" was noticeable Oct. 17 in Lunenburg County where one of the number was singing repeatedly, an assured fully correct spring song.

The LAPLAND LONGSPUR has returned, oddly enough seen so far only at Brier Island, where Eric Mills counted 20 at Pond Cove on Oct. 10. On this date, Oct. 10, the first SNOW BUNTINGS came in at the other side, at Cape Sable, "summer's hottest day, we were on a picnic when we saw them" to quote Betty June Smith. On Oct. 17, Eric Cooke saw 5, still quite dark (summer plumage) at Chezzetcook Beach, 25 (Snow Buntings) at the same place Oct. 24.

SABLE ISLAND NOTES, SUMMER - AUTUMN, 1970

By Ian A. McLaren

Mrs. Androschuk (EA), Jean Burton (JBU), Tony Lock (AL), Wayne Stobo (WS), and Danny Welsh (DW) all observed through the summer season, Jean Burton until mid-September. Ian McLaren (IM) made a short visit in summer, and Dan Welsh and Jean Boulva were there between September 24 and October 2. As usual, the list was astonishingly large, but only the highlights are recorded here.

The most spectacular finds were pelagics. A small petrel blundered into a mist net set by JBU for his shorebird-marking program on the evening of August 10. Examination in the field convinced him that he had an European Storm Petrel, Hydrobates pelagicus. This has been confirmed, and the specimen is deposited in the National Museum of Canada. Contrary to published references, the species has not hitherto been satisfactorily recorded from North America, so we have another first for Sable Island (documented by R. McNeil and J. Burton, Auk, in press). Two other finds by AL, an inveterate beachcomber, were a fragment of a Manx Shearwater on June 23 with a band, placed upon the bird a year earlier on Skokholm, Wales, and the remains of a Cory's Shearwater, found and photographed by him a few days later. The first seems to be the first fully confirmed record for Nova Scotia, and the second the first "land" record for the province.

Another "regular" stray to Sable, the Little Blue Heron, was photographically documented by AL on August 23, and a Glossy Ibis seen by EA and others in mid-August. Other waterbirds of interest include a Laughing Gull seen in late June and early July by DW, and two or three Black Terns around the ponds in July and August.

The extensive shorebird banding by JBU produced much of interest that will be documented by him in due course. A specimen of the Western Sandpiper in early September if verified will stand as the province's first confirmed record. A Long-billed Dowitcher was identified by appearance and voice on October 2 by DW.

Cuckoos were well reported - Black-billed on July 19 (IM) and September 25 (JB, DW), Yellow-billed on August 11 (DW) and October 2 (JB, DW). The island's first Western Kingbird was chalked up by JB and DW on September 24-25, and a stray Great Crested Flycatcher by WS on September 4. A Brown Thrasher on September 24 (JB, DW) was photographed. The first Meadowlark in my records from Sable was seen September 28 by DW. Southern Warblers, all recorded before from the island, are nevertheless worth noting. These included a Prothonotary collected on August 10 (spotted by EA and DW) and another seen on October 2 (JB, DW), a Prairie on September 24 (JB, DW), a Hooded collected by JBU on August 7, and a Louisiana Water Thrush seen on August 6 (WS and 10 (DW)). A Lark Sparrow was seen by DW on September 24.

Finally, WS reports an extraordinarily successful year for the Ipswich Sparrows, some of which for the first time produced as many as four successful clutches.

## LINGAN BAR

By Frank Robertson

(from the Sydney Post, October 24, 1970)

Because it is within a few miles of where I live, I frequently visit the fishing settlement of Lingan, or the Lingan Bar, that curving mile and a quarter long bar of sand dunes and mud flats reaching out toward Lingan from the town of Dominion.

Up until sometime in the 1930's the bar and the settlement were connected by an iron bridge, spanning the narrow but swift channel which bleeds Bridgeport Basin, as the maps name it, known locally as Lingan Bay. At one time this was the only road from Dominion to New Waterford, but when the highway through Gardiner Mines and River Ryan was opened with a bridge across the top of the bay, this bridge was neglected and eventually allowed to become dangerous and was removed. All that remains of it now are three concrete abutments in the channel, being slowly eroded by the tide, ice and frost.

This was a loss to the people of Lingan and New Waterford who used to cross over the bridge to enjoy the swimming, clam digging or just scrambling over the sand dunes or sitting on one quietly and watching the long sweep of waves coming in to the shore. The inside part of the bar is a favorite resting and feeding place for shore birds, and people interested may find there a considerable variety, sometimes rare ones, particularly at low tide when the flats are exposed during the spring and late summer.

The same is true of the cove around which most of the houses in Lingan cluster. Across the road from them, when the tide is low, tall, stately herons stand motionless over their reflections in the shallow water, waiting for some small fish to swim below their long, rapier-like bill. Yellowlegs walk a straight line in the ankle deep water, plunging their bills in the mud at each step. Plovers and sandpipers wing across from point to point, flashing white wings and rumps, their shrill but pleasant cries carrying far along the shore.

Along the rickety wharves, jutting out from little fish houses built on the channel bank, blue, green, red and white fishing boats, powered with old car engines, rest, bow to stern. Out in the stream, a small sailboat swings with the

moving tide on an anchor cable. From a couple of the boats and unoccupied wharves, three or four men cast lines into the channel, fishing for smelt. Farther out in mid-stream, a small black head shows where a harbour seal, a regular visitor to the channel, and so well known by the local fishermen as to be almost a pet, swims and dives alternately, seeking the offal from the boats or fish coming in with the rising water.

A friend and I travelled those sandbars this morning. Before we had gone very far we came across the half-eaten carcass of a Great Blue Heron, shot and left there at the edge of the piled-up eel grass for the crows and ravens to take care of. Somewhere in the distance we heard the sound of a shotgun. The duck season was open; men had a lawful right to carry a gun. If what they shoot was not lawful, it does not matter as long as they are not caught doing it. They are called "sportsmen". No one needs to take pride in shooting a heron, a large bird that stands motionless for long periods and permits you to approach surprisingly close. Killing them is not sport. Besides being against the law, the killing of such a trusting, defenceless creature can only be classed as sadistic.

A few minutes later, through glasses, we watched two hunters with shotguns on the far shore of the bay. While we watched, one took aim at a bird close inshore, fired, and walked out to retrieve it. Bringing it ashore, he showed it to his companion, and then satisfied with his accomplishment, dropped it on the shore and walked away.

I thought about stories I had heard of herons being shot standing peacefully and picturesquely on the flats a few yards from the road separating the houses and the water. I remembered standing a year before on the headland overlooking the bar and watching a pay-loader rip up sand dunes, loading them into great trucks to fill construction needs. I remembered, also, one early Sunday morning, putting out a series of fires in the delicate Maram grass which holds the sand together, because someone had decided that it was a good place to burn some of their rubbish.

I began to wonder if anyone is aware of the potential of Lingan Cove and Lingan Bar. Someday both will be discovered by people from far places who appreciate how wonderful it is to sit on a rickety old wharf and cast a line into clean water, to lift their eyes and see a quiet bay in which are mirrored small white houses, a long line of Great Blue Herons, the head of a harbour seal swimming up channel; who knows what it is like to feel clean sand under your feet, to sit in peace and quiet on a high dune and listen to the whisper of small waves running up on sand, bordering the edge with a white lace of foam.

But will it be there then? Will some "sportsman" have proven his marksmanship on the small seal head sticking out of the water? Will the Herons be killed off one by one? Will the sand dunes be trucked away, and the storms, finding

the breach, rip across the bar and devastate the flats and marshes? Will it be too late, or will something be done to save it?

### Endangered Species

John C. Devlin, in the New York Times, September 27, 1970, says that the BLUEBIRD has recently been added to a list of 20 most endangered species of birds in New York State, owing to the incursion of Starlings, which take over its favored nesting sites in the holes of old trees. Mr. Devlin goes on to say:

"Also in trouble here is the purple martin, the nation's largest swallow which suffered a disastrous loss in a late and cold spring four years ago.....

Most of the other species on the list have become the victims of man and his pesticides, pollution, logging and bulldozing operations for business, industry and housing developments, and in the filling of wetlands.....

The list includes the bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, Ipswich sparrow, southeastern pine grosbeak.....

The species endangered in New York State and its adjacent waters compare with a total of 89 in the nation and 'at least 300 in the world.'.....(This includes mammals as well as birds.)

The National Audubon Society warmly endorsed the report. Robert C. Boardman, editor of the Audubon Leader, said:

"There has been a lot of concern lately about endangered species like the alligators and the leopards that are being killed to make shoes and coats. That's as it should be.

But right here in the New York area we are killing off wildlife in other ways - such as endangering the rare sturgeon of the Hudson River with our sewage and industrial pollution, killing the great ospreys of Long Island with the DDT we've poured into our environment, shooting hawks in the mistaken notion that they are harmful - which is more than an environmental mistake in New York State; it's against the law."

As one conservationist said, quoting Pogo, the comic-page character: "We have met the enemy and they is us."



## SEAL ISLAND BIRDS IN THE FALL

L.B. Macpherson

Since 1963 groups from the NSBS have made some 15 trips to Seal Island in the period late-August to the end of October. Space does not permit the tabulation of birds seen - the best that can be done is to note some highlights, trends and conditions. Details on any observation can be furnished on request. General descriptions of Seal Island, its geography and location, can be found in my previous report ( NSBS Newsletter, Volume 5, Number 3, 1963 ) and in J.S. Erskine's fine summary of his work on the plants of the Tusket Islands ( Proceedings of the N.S. Institute of Science, Volume 24, 1956-57 ).

It is enough to say, for the moment, that during the fall migration period birds are abundant on Seal Island, both as to species and total numbers. An unusual number of rarities have been recorded. It has not been uncommon to record over 100 species on a two day trip. One can give as examples 150 Baltimore Orioles at once; an estimate of many thousands of Palm Warblers; 5 Red-headed Woodpeckers in sight at one time. The total number of species we have identified in the fall on Seal Island in the past 8 years is 202.

It should be noted, from the few trips made in the spring, that there is a high concentration and variety at that time too. The little that is known about the breeding bird population in summer indicates a limited number of species. Nothing is known of the winter birds.

### The Uniqueness of Seal Island for Bird Study in the Fall

Three features stand out - the frequent abundance of birds, the rather regular occurrence of several species that are unusual in Nova Scotia at any time, and the opportunity to observe migration of the smaller land birds in progress. What follows discusses possible reasons for these features.

In the fall, in the Northern Hemisphere, migrating birds trend to the south. However, in eastern North America, it is apparent that there is an eastward movement too, which may even be north-eastward. This eastward movement can be deduced from the number of "western" species that appear in Nova Scotia in the fall. Remember, from our point of view, that species occurring as regular breeding birds in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario, as well as those from the prairie provinces, but not as regular breeding birds in Nova Scotia, are western birds for our purposes.

These species are less frequently noticed in their probably south-eastward passage across the other parts of Canada because they are on the move. All birds entering Nova Scotia in the fall have the direction of their travel modified by the seacoast and often are "caught" by the circumstances of the sea-surrounded shape of the Province. ( A proportion of these never do get out and become the regular rarities at our feeding stations in early winter. Presumably they have lost the physiological urge to migrate while delayed here by geography. ) Many of them however, trying to get south, end up in the natural "catching traps" of Seal Island and Brier Island.

Why some of these birds, before getting to Nova Scotia, migrate eastwards instead of more directly south is not known. In any event they, together with the more usual migrants, are frequently held up and concentrated by adverse weather systems, accounting for the great numbers often seen in the south-west end of the Province and particularly on Seal Island. Included among these birds, and more easily found in the limited area, are the rarities.

#### Regular "Western" Species

Above, it has been noted that there is a group of species, rarely or never nesting in Nova Scotia, that are common enough somewhere to the west of this Province, that nonetheless appear with surprising frequency in Nova Scotia in the fall, particularly on Seal Island. These are listed here now with, in brackets, the number of individuals seen per trip on which the species was present.

Red-headed Woodpecker ( 1, 5 ); Western Kingbird ( 1, 2 ); Great Crested Flycatcher ( 1, 1, 1, 1 ); Long-billed Marsh Wren ( 2, 1, 1, 2 ); Mockingbird ( 1, 6, 6, 1 ); Brown Thrasher ( 2, 35, 50, 6, 10, 12, 1 ); Prairie Warbler ( 3, 6, 3, 1, 2, 1 ); Yellow-breasted Chat ( 2, 2, 2, 1, 1 ); Baltimore Oriole ( 6, 7, 130, 50, 20, 6, 50, 30, 150, 8, 8, 1 ) ( the order of the numbers is from August to October, ignoring the year - the peaks were Sep. 4-7, 1970 and Oct. 1-3, 1967 ); Scarlet Tanager ( 2, 1, 2, 2, 2 ); Indigo Bunting ( 2, 2, 3 ); Dickcissel ( 1, 5, 1, 4, 5, 8, 2 ); Rufous-sided Towhee ( 1, 3, 5, 10, 1, 2 ); Grasshopper Sparrow ( 1, 1, 3, 1 ); Lark Sparrow ( 3, 2, 2, 5, 1 ); Field Sparrow ( 2, 1, 3, 4, 10, 6 ); White-crowned Sparrow ( 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 5, 5, 10, 3 ).

#### Rarities

Little Blue Heron, Common Egret, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Least Bittern, Cooper's Hawk, Common Gallinule, Baird's Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Ruff, Black Tern, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Say's Phoebe ( provincial first ), Short-billed Marsh Wren ( provincial first ), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Lark Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow, in the previous list, should also be noted as a provincial first record.

#### Abundance of Certain Species

On a number of occasions during the 15 trips to Seal Island discussed here rather large numbers of certain species have been seen - large numbers, that is, for Nova Scotia, in the experience of the observers; sometimes large in any North American terms. The numbers recorded are estimated peak numbers for one day of the dates mentioned. Sharp-shinned Hawk, 30 (3-5 Oct 70); Pigeon Hawk, 35 (5-7 Oct 68); Sparrow

Hawk, 70 (5-7 Oct 68); Lesser Yellowlegs, 80 (4-7 Sep 70); Baird's Sandpiper, 7 (9-11 Sep 67); Black-billed Cuckoo, 10 (24-26 Sep 66 and 4-5 Oct 64); Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 50 (6-9 Sep 68); Traill's-Least Flycatcher, 150 (4-7 Sep 70); Eastern Wood Pewee, 70 (6-8 Sep 69); Red-breasted Nuthatch, 200 (1-3 Oct 67); Brown Creeper, 100 (5-7 Oct 68); Winter Wren, 30 (6-8 Sep 69); Brown Thrasher, 50 (1-3 Oct 67); Golden-crowned Kinglet, 500 (5-7 Oct 68); Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 150 (5-7 Oct 68); Cape May Warbler, 150 (4-7 Sep 70); Palm Warbler, 1000+ (4-5 Oct 64); Wilson's Warbler, 30 (24-26 Sep 66); Baltimore Oriole, 150 (1-3 Oct 67); Rufous-sided Towhee, 15 (4-5 Oct 64); Slate-colored Junco, 1000+ (5-7 Oct 68).

#### Direct Observation of Migratory Movement on Seal Island

The most startling visual phenomenon on Seal Island in the fall is to see large numbers of birds, of several species, flying north, counter to our preconceived notions about the direction birds should take <sup>in the fall</sup> migratory journey.

However, the more usual picture is one of reasonable numbers of birds, a good selection of species, and not much apparent movement. Possibly there has been rain or fog, or it is quite overcast, warm, with winds from the sector NE through E to SW. Parties of observers on successive days will find a bird or flock in the same place. Certain species will predictably be found in a specific location time and time again as the watchers roam the island. As an example, on a trip this fall, a rather rare female Blue Grosbeak was seen at least six times in two days feeding beside the same small garden patch. If there are Brown Thrashers on the island, most will be found on the road from the East Landing to the lighthouse. Three Chipping Sparrows with an Indigo Bunting were repeatedly seen on the same grassy patch a few yards from a brush pile. The piles of lobster traps on the West Side will have a many times identified and counted selection of warblers. Altogether, a stable pattern of distribution and population.

Then, if the wind shifts around to the north-west, the skys clear, the temperature drops a bit, this stable picture can change dramatically in the course of a few hours. Land birds are in motion everywhere on the island and, except for the Pigeon Hawks and Sharp-shins trying to harvest the crop, the direction of movement is invariably northward. The number of species may change and increase; the total number of birds is dramatically greater than in the previous days. The questions to be answered are, why the dramatic increase and why are they flying to the north ?

Quite reasonable, though simplified, answers to these questions can be provided. First, one assumes a gradual buildup in SW Nova Scotia in the previous days. The birds have been prevented from continuing their southward journey by overcast and headwinds. Southerly movement, from this point must, of necessity, be over water and land birds prefer to have land in sight when they attempt a water crossing. So, a favorable wind develops, the visibility improves, they start out and see the Tusket Islands in the

distance. But the NW wind is blowing them off course to the SE. However, they keep their sight heading and, by a somewhat circular course make it to the outer boundary of the Tusket chain, namely, the south end of Seal Island.

On three occasions, in these particular weather conditions, we have seen the flocks and individuals coming in, over the sea, to land on the island or continue along the Tusket chain which they can see stretching to the northward. Sometimes they arrive exhausted, the latter part of the trip having been made directly into the wind, and they land in the first trees they come to. For the rest of the day we will see these birds working their way along the edge of the trees, out of the wind on the east side of the island, where they are very easily observed. This constitutes the very best of conditions, from the watcher's point of view. Also, for the first few hours of the new weather conditions, the air is filled with flock after flock of many species, streaming northward, against the wind, but following the land, the Tusket Islands, they now see ahead.

Presumably, on reaching the mainland again, they continue a more or less northwestward course to Digby Neck and Brier Island and eventually must make a westward crossing of the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, maybe still against the wind on a day they can get a visual bearing.

The fact that many birds have to take such a circuitous route in the fall is not too unexpected once a bird gets to Nova Scotia. It is, however, most suprising to find many of the species here at all. Certainly, in the wanderings of the latter in the fall there is an element of mystery, even if there is a certain logic in their travels while with us, so strongly modified as it is by the geography of our Province and by the reluctance of the birds to begin long journeys over the sea. To be convinced of the unexplained fall travel of those noted above as 'Regular "Western" Species', look up their breeding range maps in your field guide, or Godfrey's 'Birds of Canada', and try to explain why these species should not fly more or less directly south in the fall.

Participants : The following observers have been present on one or more of the 15 trips and have contributed to the information on which this report has been based. C.R.K.Allen, Ross Anderson, R.B.G.Brown, Eric Cooke, A.D.Dickson, B.K.Doane, Fred Dobson, Phyllis Dobson, Davis Finch, Sylvia Fullerton, C.W.Helleiner, Barbara Hinds, Roger Hughes, J.A.McCarter, L.B.Macpherson, Ian McLaren, Eric Mills, Willett J.Mills, T.F.T.Morland, Roger Pocklington, Bob Taylor, Dan Welch and Mac Whitelaw.

Reports for the next Newsletter due

MARCH 1, 1971.

## BIRD NOTES FROM BERMUDA

By Roger Pocklington

We now live some 750 miles south of Halifax, in Bermuda, or better, the Bermudas because there are five main islands and over a hundred smaller ones. They are all perched atop an ancient volcano which rises 16,000 feet from the surrounding sea-floor, and it's rather like being aboard a ship riding at anchor in mid-ocean. Although the islands are north of the Tropics, winter air temperatures seldom drop below 60°F for any length of time and frost is unknown. The marine fauna of Bermuda is a somewhat depauperate version of that of the West Indies, the coral reefs being about the most northerly in the world. Bermuda is not a low-lying coral atoll, however, but has hills of up to 250 feet formed of ancient sand dunes. Originally the islands were covered with native trees, principally the Bermuda cedar which was wiped out by a scale insect quite recently, and the Bermuda palmetto, also olivewood, buttonwood, hackberry and bay grape. The native trees have been largely replaced by introduced species such as casuarina, tamarisk, oleander, hibiscus, Chinese fan palm, screw palm, bougainvillea, etc.

If this list of tropical plants puts you in mind of such colorful tropical birds as parrots, trogons, hummingbirds, honeycreepers and todies, forget it. Except for the Kiskadee Pitangus sulphuratus, a big, noisy, brown and yellow fly-catcher deliberately introduced from Trinidad in 1956, the only truly tropical bird breeding in Bermuda is the appropriately named White-tailed Tropic-bird (Phaethon lepturus catesbyi). The absence of tropical land birds, both as residents and vagrants, is one of the first things a bird-watcher coming to Bermuda will notice. That tropical species can reach the islands is proven by the recent arrival of a Greater Flamingo (Phoenicopterus ruber) and earlier records of Brown Booby (Sula leucogaster), Magnificent Frigatebird (Fregata magnificens), White Ibis (Eudocimus albus), West Indian Tree Duck (Dendrocygna bicolor), Large-billed Tern (Phaetusa simplex), Sooty Tern (Sterna fuscata), Common Noddy (Anous stolidus), and Fork-tailed Flycatcher (Muscivora tyrannus). That tropical species can thrive here is shown by the success of the Ground Dove (Columbigallina passerina bahamensis), and the Kiskadee which remain all year round and the White-tailed Tropic-bird, which, however, leaves Bermuda during the winter. One reason why the islands have not been colonized by tropical species (though it should be noted that in the earliest accounts of bird life of Bermuda, boobies, frigatebirds and noddies can be recognized by description if not by name) is the prior presence of a small number of temperate species which presumably settled the island when the climate was colder than it is today, and now form the overwhelming majority of resident birds, other than recent introductions, to be seen in Bermuda. I refer in particular to the Catbird (Dumetella carolinensis), the Cardinal (Richmondia cardinalis), Eastern Bluebird (Sialia sialis), and White-eyed

Vireo (Vireo griseus bermudianus). These, until recently, comprised about 80% of the resident land birds. It is possible that the Cardinal and the Bluebird were themselves introduced at a very early stage of the colony's history but there is no firm documentation of this. The White-eyed Vireo has been reduced from one of the commonest resident Bermuda birds to a level at which fears have been expressed for its continued survival. This is due to the destruction of the cedar forest between 1944 and 1952 which removed its most favoured habitat. The Bluebird also has declined to a population estimated as 30% of its original level owing to competition with introduced species for nesting holes and, probably, increased mortality from the ingestion of pesticides. About 300 other temperate species have had the opportunity of establishing themselves either naturally, by being blown in by gales while migrating along the eastern seaboard of North America (e.g. Pied-billed Grebe (Podilymbus podiceps), Common Gallinule (Gallinula chloropus), American Coot (Fulica americana), Mourning Dove (Zenaidura macroura), Barn Owl (Tyto alba), Common Crow (Corvus brachyrhynchos), or through deliberate introduction (e.g. Rock Dove (Columba livia), Starling (Sturnus vulgaris), House Sparrow (Passer domesticus), Goldfinch (Carduelis carduelis), Canary (Serinus canarius), yet few have done so. The list of unsuccessful introductions includes Bob-White (Quail) (Colinus virginianus), which disappeared with the destruction of the cedar forest, Mockingbird (Mimus polyglottos), American Goldfinch (Spinus tristis), and Ring-necked Pheasant (Phasianus colchicus torquatus). The wild Canary, which is the true Azorean canary and not the cage variety, was always local and is now very scarce and I have yet to see one. Why so few vagrants and introductions have established successful breeding populations is attributed to the low "carrying capacity" of small islands. According to this idea the number of species composing a fauna is directly related to the size of the island, though the total population of a fauna is not dependent on the number of species composing it. The populations of the ten most common resident land birds in Bermuda are half-again as dense as in comparable continental habitats, which suggests that those present have occupied all the "niches" available, and that newcomers can only prosper at the expense of pre-existing species (e.g. House Sparrows and Starlings displacing Bluebirds). It has also been suggested that highly migratory species find it difficult to break their behaviour pattern and colonize. These interpretations may be true for the land birds but there is doubt about their applicability to the sea birds. The sea birds of Bermuda I will save for a later letter.

#### OFFICIAL DATES FOR CHRISTMAS COUNTS

December 22, 1970 to January 3, 1971  
(inclusive)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor  
NSBS Newsletter

You have probably had a report concerning the Cattle Egret that appeared in this area the week of August 17 and remained in the area for ten days. The reporter infers that the cattle were bothered by the birds' attention but it seemed to me they remained indifferent as the bird gracefully and adroitly picked flies from the face and head of the cow, while at rest, or from grass where the cattle were grazing.

On Sunday, Sept. 6, 4.45 P.M., Mrs. Chipman and I saw a Lark Sparrow on a lane between the Stephen's and Rhodenizer farms at the tip of this peninsula. Mrs. Chipman's attention was attracted to the bird as it flew in to land by the white on the tail feathers. We had lots of time to view it carefully and picked out the many distinguishing characteristics - light breast with spot at centre, black pyramids at sides of throat, white behind eye mask, etc., and then after approaching it very closely got it to fly to show us white at sides of tail again. When we returned home to consult Peterson, there was no question or problem about identification - a Lark Sparrow.

Each time we have taken up a new place of residence we have been concerned "Will it be a good place for birds?" We are not disappointed in Second Peninsula. We moved here after the middle of April and have been spending about four days a week here. So far we have seen at least 72 species. Some features of the Peninsula are unique. For instance, four swallows, Tree, Bank, Cliff and Barn, can all be seen on Randy Stevens property. We look forward to having the Society visit us and the area for a field day next summer if they care to do so.

Curtis Chipman  
Second Peninsula  
Lun. Co., N.S.  
Sept. 11, 1970

Editor  
NSBS Newsletter

The conjunction of a fine day with the availability of Charlie Allen (still in residence at Tusket) gave a group of Yarmouth County birders a memorable day exploring the Tusket River aboard the MIKE AND TODD. Her captain, Peter Boudreau, made sure that we had every opportunity of seeing whatever there was to see, both on water and on the various islands at which we tied up. He and his son patiently hauled the ladies up steep wharf ladders and guided their waving feet to the right rungs on the way down. As the sea was a bit too rough in the morning to attempt a dory landing on the outer

island to which we had hoped to go, we settled for islands with solid wharfs, and for Gulls, Terns, and Cormorants in place of Gannets and Shearwaters.

On Ellenwood Island our leader was temporarily distracted by finding the sheep pastures dotted with enormous specimens of *Agaricus Campestris*. After he and others had secured a good supply for supper and invented some way to carry their treasures, the bird population was checked. It was scanty, comprising mostly the expected species of Sparrows, a few Swallows and some shorebirds. The two Ruddy Turnstones on the beach near the dock were already in their sober winter dress. One Mourning Dove did a rapid fly past. John Sollows, who wandered to the farthest reaches, came up with a White-rumped Sandpiper.

By the time lunch, eaten on deck, had been disposed of, the sun was shining warmly, the water had turned a brilliant deep blue and was smoothing out. There was time to explore parts of three more islands: John's, Harry's and Turpentine. As we made our way ashore through tunnels of lobster traps piled on the wharves, swarms of savage mosquitoes did their best to repel the invasion, but with copious applications of 6-12 and well-aimed slaps we managed to hold our own. These islands were wooded, mostly with scrub evergreens and a few scraggly hardwoods. Near the shore were large patches of bramble, goldenrod and jewelweed over which Monarch and Red Admiral butterflies by the hundreds fluttered and Hummingbirds by the dozen zoomed. Overhead Swallows - Barn, Tree and Cliff - and a few Flycatchers were doing all they could about the mosquitoes. Warblers in various stages of dress and undress were dashing through the branches, but the Baltimore Orioles came right out to be admired. Lifers were provided for several in the party when Adele Hurlbert found us a Black-billed Cuckoo and Dot Kirk and company identified a duo of Philadelphia Vireos. Charlie Allen's Rose-breasted Grosbeak brought our count to 53.

Our boat returned us to the dock, a bit wind-burned, but full of fresh air, lovely views, and contentment. "When is the next trip?" was heard on all sides.

The party was composed of C.R.K. Allen, L. Davison, M. Ellenwood, Mr. & Mrs. M. Greaves, M. Hilton, A. Hurlbert, D. Kirk, O. Purdy, D. Rollins, J. Sollows, Mr. & Mrs. G. Sorensen.

Marion W. Hilton  
Yarmouth, N. S.  
August 21, 1970

Editor  
NSBS Newsletter

I have kept careful notes on my observations of a



nest of Killdeer I had the pleasure of watching this spring. They may not add any information to what is already on record, but here they are for what they are worth.

May 15 - (First) Saw a killdeer sitting on a barren ridge of ground near an old gravel pit about fifty yards from our back platform. When it was there all the next day, I concluded it must be sitting on a nest. My husband and I watched every day from then on with binoculars. The nest was never left for more than a few minutes at a time and then only occasionally.

May 17 - We visited the nest. The bird ran off when we were about twenty-five yards away. It let us get quite near and then called loudly and flew away. Even though we knew we were very near the nest, it was hard to find. If we had not watched every step we most certainly would have stepped on it, for when we finally found it in a shallow depression, with no nesting material at all, we could hardly believe that eggs and surroundings could blend so perfectly. There were four pointed (large) eggs about 1-1/2 inches long and about 1 inch in diameter at the widest part and all lying points in. In color they were gray-green, marked with brown, and matched exactly the color of the lichen-covered barren brown earth.

May 24 - While watching the brooding bird on the nest I saw the second bird alight near by and walk toward the nest. The brooding bird left the nest and flew off, and the mate got on the nest. I watched this exchange of birds quite a few times, during the incubation period. Some days the exchange took place every two or three hours and at other times it seemed that one bird stayed on the nest all day. (The incoming bird always called when some distance away, which made it easy to keep a check on them when I was outside of the house.)

May 30 - Visited the nest for the second time. The brooding bird left the nest as before, but ran about until we were quite near. It then flew over our heads calling loudly, dropped to the ground, and fluttered and flopped about, all the time trying to lead us away from the nest. Still only eggs in the nest but they all were turned little end down.

May 31 - Visited the nest again with the same performance. Also watched it again when a cat strolled by.

June 6 (Fourth visit) - Twenty-two days after discovering the nest, eggs incubated continuously, not hatched. (I was now sure that eggs would never hatch.)

June 7 and 8 - Cold rain. Bird still on nest.

June 9 - Chicks hatched and out of the nest. One of the adult birds still sitting on the nest. Chicks making short trips away from the nest.

June 10 - Counted four lively chicks running about the nest. Parent still on the nest. Chicks going longer

distances away, peeping like baby turkeys. They seemed to be picking their own food. We have never seen either parent feeding the young. Chicks look like chickadees. The two black bands across necks and breasts are quite noticeable. Both parents present most of the time. Near sundown we heard the parents making a fuss and used the binoculars. Saw a cat quite near the nest but not too interested in the birds. Young nowhere in sight.

June 11 - We could hear the chicks calling from the oat field near the nest. Parents in the same area. They visited the nesting sight several times.

June 12 - Still heard the birds in the area but did not see the young.

We live at the edge of town with an open field and gravel pit at the rear of the house. River Philip is in sight of the back door. There are plenty of trees and shrubs around the homes. There is a thick grove of chokecherries near by. All of these things help encourage bird visitors. Right now they are very plentiful. Among our most recent visitors (and within sight of yard) are a Baltimore Oriole; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; many Evening Grosbeaks, some of them young and still being fed chokecherries; Olive-backed Thrush; Redstarts; Black-and-White Warblers; Yellow Warblers; Yellowthroats; Catbird; Cedar Waxwing; Goldfinches; Purple Finches; Alder Flycatchers; Veery; Flickers; Hummingbirds; many Robins still with spotted breasts; Barn, Eave and Bank Swallows, though the Martins seem to have left. (They were here yesterday.) One Osprey, a flight of eight Nighthawks, one Chimney Swift, Whitethroated Sparrows, Song Sparrows, Chipping Sparrows. (All of these in the last two days.) Also a number of Warblers I haven't been able to identify for sure.

This season I have seen my first Mockingbird at gray dawn on May 29, also my first Ovenbird on June 1 when I found a dead one in a neighbor's yard.

Inez Finley  
Oxford, N. S.

August 3, 1970

P. S. Here are also a few observations on early fall migrations.

Aug. 6 - Bobolinks - They have been quite commonly seen and heard in an open weedy field at the back of the house since about May 20. Today I opened the back door quite suddenly and surprised a flock of 100 or more in the weeds and grass. Have seen only two birds since then.

Aug. 10 - Bank Swallows - (A very hot Sunday afternoon.) While on our way to Lake Killarney, we encountered a flock of over 1,000 birds at Mt. Pleasant. Many of them were sitting on the hot hard surface of the road. They flew up in front of the car and perched on the electric and telephone

wires. There were a number of dead birds on the highway (probably killed by cars). There are still a few Bank Swallows around Oxford. They nest in the banks of River Philip.

Aug. 23 - Purple Martins - Not one anywhere. They were here on the twenty-second.

Aug. 30 - Waves of Robins passing over in the early morning. Many of our locally-hatched robins are still being fed - breasts still spotted.

Editor  
NSBS Newsletter

In reply to your questions about Purple Martins, I have a few notes from my own records and have been talking in person and on the phone to anybody I thought might have some information.

There are only two colony houses (that I know of) in town that are being used by Martins. They are both on Main Street and just across the street from each other on the properties of Mrs. J. F. Higgins and Mr. & Mrs. Frank Black. Mrs. Higgins tells me that she estimates that fifteen pairs nested in her house this year. Mr. Black's house is smaller and he thinks there may have been ten pairs in their house. Both report that English Sparrows and Starlings nested in some of the compartments.

There seems to have been quite a large number of young raised successfully. On Aug. 22 they were gathering on the wires around the building of Lands and Forest Dept., Main Street and 125 birds were counted. They left the next day. Mrs. Higgins tells me that she observed a smaller flock of about 40 congregated on wires, roof tops, trees and T.V. antennae on Aug. 27. These were gone the next day.

Both Mrs. Higgins and I have noticed that the Martins are gathering nesting material for their second brood about July 1. Some of the young from the second brood were still being fed at the time of departure.

A few losses were reported. Mrs. Higgins discovered a cat on the roof of her Martin house one day trying to catch the birds as they came and went. On another occasion she found a young bird on the ground in the garden and placed it on a ledge where the parents might feed it. They tried to feed it and stayed on the ledge all night with it but it didn't survive. On another occasion I heard a great commotion among the Martins in the field back of our house (about four lots down Duke St. from Mrs. Higgins). The birds were yelling and diving toward the ground. I soon found that a Sparrow Hawk had killed one of their young. It flew off as I approached leaving the dead bird on the ground. They paid no attention to me when I picked up the dead bird. They dived at the hawk.

Whenever it lit they attacked. They kept it up until dark (about two hours). Next day the hawk was gone and things were quiet again.

I also noted this year that the first Martin scouts were noticed April 30. In about four days the main colony arrived (May 3).

We have lived in Oxford for seven years and the number of birds seems to stay about the same. I'm sure that there were more colony houses in town about ten or fifteen years ago. I know of two new houses ready for next year so perhaps we may have Martins around in larger numbers.

Inez Finley  
Oxford, N. S.  
October 24, 1970

Editor  
NSBS Newsletter

I realized the phrase "barrel of (eider) breastmeats" may have elicited a reaction in other readers similar to yours, and it does sound fabulous, so checked, and it's true - one reference is given by Mr. Dolph Cunningham of The Hawk. He is in his seventies, and recalls his grandfather telling him of thus preserving eider in his time.

The barrel for that purpose may have been the firkin; to fill even that would require a lot of ducks but tradition has it that there was no wasteful slaughter. "Those old timers never missed." Well. But they would shoot to kill clean - with muzzle loaders it was laborious and so would rowing after crippled ducks be, and cripples were collected; shooting cost, and each shot had to be made good in food. Modern practice is likely more wasteful.

And perhaps eider were not only salted but had a more exotic use, for Norman Cunningham gives us a line from a song composed locally on Howard Smith - the gunner of a more recent era - in which Mr. Smith recalls "They made mincemeat of seaducks breastmeat when I was very young..." (That is, about 1875.)

As late as the 1920's men openly (and at that time, perhaps legally?) peddled seaducks: 50¢ a pair for eider, 40¢ for scoter - picked. Having attempted picking these, I'd call that a bargain; the ducks are meaty and delicious.

And to return to Mr. Smith, Norman tells of going as a child to his home in midwinter; Howard had been picking a pile of ducks when Norman and his father arrived.

"Did that right in the kitchen, supposed to be into a box, but there were feathers everywhere. When we opened

the door, the draft rolled windrows of feathers swishhhh into every corner." Mr. Smith settled his callers comfortably by the woodstove and continued his picking, such a skill with him that the cement-bedded feathers and down rolled away like butter. Suddenly "Howard said something, and snatched off the stove cover and hauled out - a loon that he'd shoved in to singe...man, that was just as black and I can still see his legs and feet. The sinews all drew up in the heat and curled right up and in."

Mr. Smith swiftly dismembered his loon, cleaned it, put the pieces in a boiler and with the same small knife prepared vegetables. The turnip, fetched frozen from the porch, he easily dispatched, holding it on the chair seat, with hand and knee, and sawing it into appropriate slices. Then snip-snip, off with the peel and into the pot.

Now you know how to make loon stew!

Though I've never been treated to that, it's still enjoyed around, and so is heron, guillemot, auk, murre and cormorant.

I believe that next to seaducks, gulls have best served as life saving nourishment, for early castaways, and for recent dwellers of outer islands, especially communities suffering through the Depression.

Some years ago the men gathered in a Hawk Point store and fell to discussing gull cookery. The young black-backs are called "turkey gulls" but apparently the herring - "white" - gulls are not so tender. Reasonably good recipes for tenderizing these chewy critters gave way to those fancy ones calling for rocks, etc., until came the story that left the other men (and me) with nothing to add. A quiet gentleman in from Fish Island gathered up his few groceries, paused at the door and finally said in a slow sing-song,

"Ayuh, they'm tough. I shot one of them white gulls once. Cooked him three days....and let him go."

Betty June Smith  
Cape Sable Light  
October 5, 1970

