

*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

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NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 15, Number 2

July, 1973

SPRING MIGRATION 1973

Weather conditions combined to confuse the issue for the spring migrants in 1973. Some came unexpectedly early, many of them so late that we feared they might not arrive at all. The month of March was the mildest since 1958, April weather was propitious, but May was cold and wet with the lowest number of sunny days on record. Plant growth and insect hatching were greatly retarded.

These latter conditions were reversed rapidly in June, which has given us real summer weather (and an outside crop of blackflies and mosquitos). One freak storm, June 17, with hurricane force winds and snow in some regions, wrought havoc among early nesting birds, as did, no doubt, several extensive forest fires June 10, in Nova Scotia.

There is abundant evidence that the migration pattern this spring was the same over a wide region. "Spring migrants slow in arriving" was the story from Massachusetts, Maine and New Brunswick; "The main warbler wave did not hit (P.E.I.) until May 30" writes Angus MacLean; "Poor flying conditions seem to have affected our earliest arrivals as much as they did Air Canada" Howard Clase said in the Newfoundland Osprey. In his letter of June 13 from Pictou, N.S., Eric Holdway wrote "spring was about two weeks later than average.....birds seem to be coming later and in less than usual numbers". Similar remarks were made about conditions in Cape Breton, by Ian MacGregor, and by Ian McLaren at Sable Island, who noted that warblers in general were very late there, most of them not arriving until June.

Indeed, the June 15 cut-off for migration records was too early this year, and where received, later records are included in this report. From March 15 on, small flocks (1-6) of Robins, Redwings and Grackles came in, and continued to do so up to mid-April, when more sizable numbers (10-30) appeared; but very few other especially early birds were sighted, and in most cases arrival has been a seepage rather than a flood such as we had last spring. Until the Breeding Bird Surveys are assessed, it will be impossible to tell if we have fewer birds than usual around, but recent field trips in Yarmouth County, the Annapolis Valley, Pictou County, Guysborough County and Cape Breton would indicate a normal density of most species, with the possible exception of Robins; and they are still coming in (June 30).

(1500) at Cole Hbr.; Mar. 18 (95) at Port Mouton (VK), a flock headed northerly over West Caledonia, and another over Lr. Ohio. On Mar. 19, Canadas were arriving at Morien Bay, 1,000+ there by Mar. 21; another movement indicated by reports Apr. 8 of 800 at the mouth of the Gaspereau River (ELM) and around 200 near Sherbrooke. Mid-April saw the end of extensive flights of geese, but one pair hung around Sable Island until mid-June. It was good to receive five reports of BRANT, a few (4) with the geese at Port Williams Apr. 8; 17, Apr. 7 at Amherst Pt.; 3 Apr. 27 near Port George, remaining several days; 18 at Bayhead (near Tatamagouche) Apr. 29 (RB); 200+ at Pond Cove, Brier Is. Apr. 15; 600 more at Freeport Apr. 16 and 150 near Wolfville May 13 (IM). Con Desplanque identified a SNOW GOOSE feeding with the Canadas Apr. 7 at Amherst Pt. and added "makes distant observation of 6 on Apr.1 plausible".

Of the 5 MALLARD reports (Port Williams, Lower Ohio, Cape Sable, Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., and Sydney Forks), 4 were of 2 birds each and the birds at Sydney Forks were 'nesting' on May 10. The single Lawrencetown bird reported on Apr. 7 had been around for 2 weeks.

Honeymooning BLACK DUCKS were making their appearance as early as the second week in March as soon as the ice had disappeared, and one precocious female was seen carrying nesting material as early as Mar. 17.

The first brood was seen near Yarmouth May 13 and several others reported from the same area on the 17th.; one of 10 ducklings May 22 at Lower Ohio.

Sightings of PINTAILS were all during April and were of singles, 2's and 3's (Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., Economy, Yarmouth area, Port Williams and Framboise, C.B.), except for the N.S.-N.B. border region where there were 70 Apr. 1 at Amherst Pt. and 30 Apr. 14 at Jolicure.

First report of GREEN-WINGED TEAL is of 5 at Lawrencetown Mar. 31. Fifteen appeared at Amherst on Apr. 1 and numbers built up to 100+ by the 18th of the month. On Apr. 7 there were 40 at the mouth of the Gaspereau River in Kings Co.

For some reason the BLUE-WINGED TEAL, usually a little scarcer than Green-wings, were more heavily reported this spring. Hot on the heels of their cousins, they first showed up on Apr. 3 at Amherst Pt. and from then on appeared in 2's and 3's from Yarmouth to Sydney.

AMERICAN WIDGEON are reported from just two areas, both near the head of the Bay of Fundy. There were about 6 pairs at Debert Sanctuary near Truro and in the Amherst area numbers fluctuated from 6 to 20+ during the period Apr. 18 when 10 were seen, to June 11 when a brood of 7 young was noted.

The only WOOD DUCK records are of 2 Apr. 17 at Lower Ohio; 1 May 19, Seal Island and of 3 at Sable Island June 12. The RING-NECKED DUCK which, like the Evening Grosbeak, invaded

Nova Scotia in recent times is well reported from both mainland N.S. and Cape Breton. There were 3 in the Causeway Road Pond near Seaforth, Hfx. Co., on Apr. 3 and 14 at Short Beach, Yar. Co. on the 9th; but Cape Breton sightings did not begin until May 5 when a pair was seen, suspected to be nesting near Sydney. Greatest numbers were in the Yarmouth area where 36 were seen Apr. 29 at Black Pt. and 20 May 7 at Short Beach and Cranberry Head.

The main body of GREATER SCAUP had passed through by the first of April, the last sighting of any numbers being 2 rafts totalling about 300 birds at Baysport, Lun. Co., Apr. 1. Stragglers remained until mid-April.

Departure dates for COMMON GOLDENEYE were somewhat later. There were 64 at Cranberry Head, Yar. Co., Apr. 4 and 16 were still there on the 18th. The latest sighting for the mainland was of 5 at Marshville, Col. Co., May 21 and for Cape Breton, May 27 (number of birds not specified).

BUFFLEHEADS lingered in the Yarmouth area until Apr. 21 and 2 were still at Bayhead, near Tatamagouche, Apr. 29. No reports from Cape Breton.

OLDSQUAW began apparently to drift north during March as numbers built up toward the end of the month and into April, tapering off after Apr. 15. There were still, however, fair numbers of laggards in early May; 35 were at Hunt's Pt., Queens Co., May 5 and 30 at Morien Bay, C.B., on the same date.

COMMON EIDERS were on the move from the middle of March to late May and were seen in large numbers in the Bay of Fundy and along the Atlantic Coast. Smallest numbers seen were at the two extremes of the province - Yarmouth and Cape Breton, the maximum numbers seen in these localities being 16 (Yarmouth, Apr. 14) and 3 (St. Peter's, May 26). At Green Bay, Lun. Co., a raft of 250+ had dwindled by May 18 and shrunk to one lone bird by June 2. None were there on June 8. Norman Smith, Warden at the Eastern Shore Sanctuary, reports that "there have been a greater amount of Eider ducks laying and hatching this year than last".

Three WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS distinguished themselves by showing up in - of all places - Kedge Park - separated by many miles of forest and farmland from their normal habitation, and constitute the first record of their species for the Park. The horde of their fellows, together with SURF and COMMON SCOTERS, must have slipped up along the coast unnoticed, as they were very lightly reported except off Cape Tormentine, N.B., where Bob Lamberton, on a crossing to P.E.I., saw "masses", but was unable to estimate percentages of the 3 species.

Eric Holdway reports 62 COMMON MERGANSERS, together with 600 RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS at Pictou on Apr. 9 and mentions that there was a run of smelt up the East River which flows into Pictou Harbour. Fifteen of the former species were seen at Morien Bay Mar. 25, the same number at Economy Apr. 9 and about 20 at Pinckney's Pt. near Yarmouth Mar. 25. Red-breasts were, as usual, more numerous and widely distributed; in addition to the 600 at

40 the next day, which was the first date noted in Cape Breton.

One RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, a bright male, has been seen this spring, June 19 on the Chebogue Road (MWH). Ross Baker has reported the first YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, noted Apr. 18 at Victoria Park, Truro; 3-4 more there in the next two weeks, and added that he had never seen them in the Park before. A small wave came in at Seal Is. Apr. 21, 6 birds, since then reported rather sparsely on the mainland only. Although not a migrant, mention should be made of the 3 BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS reported this spring, 1 May 2 at New Tusket in Yar. Co. (W&ML); 1 May 19 at Victoria Park, Truro (RB); and 1 June 4 in the Broughton area, Cape Breton (RB,FMaL). The Herbert Harris are delighted to have their Black-backed Three-toed nesting, only 100 yards from the house, at Lower Ohio (BH).

Most of the FLYCATCHERS have been well reported, though slow in coming. This was not true of the EASTERN KINGBIRD, a very early one present on Brier Is. Apr. 29 (W&ML), about 25 of them on the island by June 14. Waves came in at Seal Is. May 5-6, and May 19-21, distribution general and numbers good May 26 on, that being the first date for Cape Breton, in the St. Peter's area (KMacR et al).

This year we had another spring record of the WESTERN KINGBIRD, observed on May 22 at Seal Island by the party there. A GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, May 15 at Kejimkujik Park was joined by at least 3 others shortly afterwards, and Rick Howie and Davis Finch, who saw them, think they may be nesting there. Another Great Crested was observed at Sable Is. on June 11.

The EASTERN PHOEBE was first seen at Brier Is. Apr. 15 (ELM) and has been reported from there, Seal Is., Economy, Amherst, Bear River, Digby Co., Yarmouth County, Lr. Ohio, Shel. Co., and Wilmot, Anna. Co., at least 18 birds. The EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHERS were notably late this year, but an extraordinarily early one appeared on Apr. 26, at 23 Baker St., Yarmouth, and probably belonged to the first listed in this group, since MWH who described it said it had a distinctly yellow belly. Other YELLOW-BELLIED Flycatchers were reported from May 26 on, very few in early June, but Ian McLaren has written "a sharp peak of flycatchers at Sable Is. June 12 brought 16 Eastern Kingbirds, 34 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, 3 Traill's, 28 Wood Pewees, 2 Olive-sided and a late Phoebe". Recent field trips have produced normal numbers of reports of Yellow-bellies, also TRAILL'S and LEAST flycatchers, which were mentioned as scarce in earlier reports. The first date for the Traill's this year was May 26, Hants Co., but FS at Economy reports "nest nearly finished, June 3" - nice going. The earliest date for the Least was May 17, at Economy (on nest June 8), and on May 18, 10+ were heard at Bridgetown Reservoir. May 28 marked a possible second peak, when the woods at Kemptville, Yar. Co., in the vicinity of the Dept. of Lands and Forests installation "were full of che-bees (the first time that we saw and heard a lot of these birds)" (MWH,AH,DBK,VK). There are 1 April and only 4 May reports of the EASTERN WOOD PEWEE, the early one, Apr. 21 at Seal Is. Most reports are for the period June 2-10, and distribution is general (first in Cape Breton June 9).

The OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER has been heard in half-a-dozen widely scattered localities: 1 Apr. 30, Lr. Ohio, May 6 on the Hants Co. Field Trip; 1 June 3 at Economy (FS); 1 June 3 at Homeville, C.B. (NSBS party); 1 June 4 at Sherbrook (GM); 1 June 4 at Sherbrook Lake, Lun. Co. (DMacD); 1 June 6 at Port Hebert (RSW); 1 June 20 on the South Mountain back of Kingston (CRKA) and 2 June 23 on the Larry's River, Guys. Co. BBSurvey (CWH).

The TREE SWALLOW came early this year, the first one seen Apr. 8 at Port Mouton, Queen's Co., by Van Killam. Two on Apr. 10 at Pleasant Lake, Yar. Co. (CRKA) were followed by the main invasion Apr. 15-19, and another wave May 5-6, 10 on Seal Is. the 5th., 50 on the 6th. These swallows appeared at Amherst Pt. (20) Apr. 23, (80) Apr. 25 and in Cape Breton May 11. The first young were flying by the end of June at Brookside, Hfx. Co., the parent birds busy on a second brood (E&FW). The BANK SWALLOW was first seen at Economy Apr. 20, but not in numbers until May 9-16; another wave, again pinpointed at Seal Is., 50 May 19; 100 May 20; 50 May 21. At a well established colony of former years, a 15' sandy bank at Pictou, about 150 of these swallows were working on nest holes June 1. The Bank Swallow is first reported in Cape Breton June 5 at Homeville (GS). One ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW was identified May 21 on Seal Is. by the NSBS party there. A few BARN SWALLOWS came in April, 2 Apr. 21 at Seal Is.; 3 Apr. 21 at Paradise; 2 Apr. 23 at Amherst Pt. and 1 Apr. 27 at Reynardton, Yar. Co. The migration (or a part of it) is best illustrated by the Seal Is. records - 8 seen May 5, 30 May 6; then 30 May 19; 75 May 20 and 50 May 21. The first Cape Breton record is for May 13 at Baddeck (ImacG). Sandra Meyerowitz wrote from St. Esprit "for the past 6 years the average coming of the Barn Swallows has been on the 11th. of May. This year they came on the 30th. (though earlier just a few miles down the road) and the Bank Swallows have not arrived as of a.m. May 31 - perhaps they don't care for fog!" The CLIFF SWALLOW (first 1 May 6 at Seal Is.) has been noted in usual numbers at Amherst, Economy, Wine Harbor, several regions in the Annapolis Valley and similarly in Shelburne and Yarmouth Counties, colonies of 4-25 nests. The PURPLE MARTIN paused on Seal Is. - 1 May 5; 8 May 6 (disappeared overnight), again in Yarmouth Co. at Cranberry Head May 22, where 3 (2m,1f) were observed for 20-30 min. resting on a telephone wire among other swallows (MWH,DBK,AH), and 1 May 31-June 6 at Lr. Ohio - a "lifer" for Bessie Harris. At Amherst, 9 boxes are now occupied in the Rose Colony; 24 in the Tennant Colony (CD). Swallows were not noted on Sable Island until mid-May, Purple Martins until May 26.

On May 14, at Brier Island, an excellent sighting of a MAGPIE gives us a possible new record. The strange bird lingered on the island until May 18, when it was seen feeding on a dead cow. Wickerson and Madeline Lent made the first identification, and Wayne Neily obtained a photograph which we hope to publish in a future Newsletter.

Although well and generally reported, there is only one identification of a possible migration of the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE - 25 in one flock Apr. 15 at Brier Is. (ELM). There have been only 8 reports of the BOREAL CHICKADEE, still scarce;

Cornwallis River (ACH), Annapolis Royal (WEW), Brookside, Hfx. Co.(E&FD) and in Halifax (CWH & WJM). Several are nesting again in Yarmouth, one pair at Baker St., where the male gives much pleasure to the householder by its vigorous splashing in the bird-bath.

The Cape Breton field party at Little Hbr., Richmond Co., Mar. 13, found the first 2 RUSTY BLACKBIRDS of the year; the next 2 seen at Maitland, Hants Co., by L.B. Macpherson, Mar.25. Apr. 3 brought a big flock, 200-300 to Round Hill, Anna. Co. (WEW); 6 came in at Seal Is. Apr. 21 and by mid-May Rustys were reported generally on territory. Bessie Harris notes Rusty Blackbirds increased this spring at Lr. Ohio. The COMMON GRACKLE arrived even earlier, 50+ at Pictou Mar. 11 (EH); 25 at Amherst Mar. 16 (CD); 16 at Economy Mar. 17 (FS); 36 at Yarmouth Mar. 19 (MWH) and 75-100 at Waterville, Kings Co., Mar. 23 (ACH). At Tatamagouche, Don MacDougal counted around a hundred Grackles on Mar. 28, and wrote "watched a flock land in a large field, and walk gradually eastward, around buildings, trees, woods, etc.....walking cockily as Grackles do, to Pictou? Cape Breton? they seemed to have every intention of doing just that." Sara MacLean has written "Apr. 22-25, very large flocks - hundreds - of Grackles passing by", but, presumably, overhead. Large flocks have been reported in the Cornwallis Valley, but fewer in the Annapolis Valley and the SW end of the province. There seemed to be a movement of the BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD around mid-April, mentioned at Amherst, 100+ birds Apr. 8; at Pictou 46 Apr. 8 (few seen at either place on previous dates); 40 in the Yarmouth area Apr. 18; 50+ at Glace Bay Apr. 20; "many" in a large flock of Grackles, Starlings and Redwings at Lr. Truro Apr. 21. From Glace Bay SM wrote "wherever they go, they are gone by May 31"; from Pictou EH wrote "dispersed in woodlands by June 1st" and from Yarmouth MWH wrote "seen less frequently June 1st. and after".

We have 5 reports of the SCARLET TANAGER this spring and summer: 2, May 20 arrived with the many migrants at Seal Is.; 1 May 24 reported from South Bar, C.B. to Frank Robertson; 1 present at Keji in May, said by Rick Howie to be looking for a place to nest; and 1 June 20 which may have found a partner or still have been trying to attract one, for it was singing its clarion call from a big maple on top of the South Mountain, feeding between calls, and a glorious sight in its bright spring plumage in the full sunlight against a deep blue sky. Two SUMMER TANAGERS, females, were joined by an immature male, May 20-22 at Seal Is.

A female CARDINAL was observed Apr. 13-18 by Verona Moor, in her garden at Port Maitland, Yar. Co., and a male, Apr. 23 at the Kenneys at Pinkney's Pt. This bird was joined by a female Apr. 25, and hopes of a breeding pair were high, when the male was observed offering food to the female. Yarmouth bird watchers had a good look at this pair of brilliant birds, and were saddened and disappointed to hear that later a neighboring youth had shot the male bird.

Again this year the ROSE-BREADED GROSEBEAK has been seen frequently, at least 30 birds reported, the first May 12 at a feeder in Port Maitland, identified by Leta Delaney and several

of the Yarmouth birders. On the 13th. a male was found at Markland, and another at Wilmot, not difficult to find there, as it was feeding on grain on the ground in the backyard (TH). One associates the Rose-breasted Grosbeak with the top of a high tree, but another gave many of us a chance to admire it close at hand on the Hants Co. trip, where it was feeding among a large group of assorted finches and blackbirds in an oatfield which had remained for some reason unharvested. This was on May 26, but four sightings of this grosbeak on May 17 suggest this as a date of entry, seen then in the Valley, Halifax Co. and at Sable Is. Dates of first sightings in late May and early June place the bird in Pictou, Truro, Amherst, Economy, Bear River, Digby Co., and Lr. Ohio, Shel. Co., besides more in Halifax and Yarmouth Counties. We have two BLUE GROSBEAKS reported, 1 May 22 at Brier Is. (the Lents and Ross Anderson), and 1 May 28-29, a female at Liverpool, seen and well described by Vera Joudrey. Nearly a dozen reports of the INDIGO BUNTING start Apr. 11, 1 at the Eaton's at Cole Hbr.; 1 Apr. 18 (m) at Leta Delaney's in Port Maitland, 1 Apr. 20 at the Nickerson's in Yarmouth town. May reports start May 4, 1 at Tusket at the Hatfields for several days; 1 May 14 at the Desplanques in Amherst. (Elly Desplanque was so taken with the bright blue bird that she lured it into a cage - kept for crippled birds - but the Bunting is so tiny it easily slipped through the 1" mesh of the chicken wire.) There was 1 male Indigo Bunting May 20 and the next two weeks at Lr. Ohio (BH); 3 at Seal Is. May 20, another (m) May 22; a male at the Roy Blakeburns at Sydney Forks May 24, and 1 the first week in June at Lake Annis, Yar. Co., at Frances Goudey's feeder.

Ross Baker found the EVENING GROSBEAK scarce in the Truro area this year, as did W.E.Whitehead at Round Hill, Anna. Co. A pair, however, has remained at Round Hill since May 20, and can be seen every day. Other pairs are reported at Lr. Ohio May 25 (SB) and at Rockingham, Hfx. Co., where the male was observed feeding the female (BC). Evening Grosbeaks can now be counted on to add to the list on field trips in wooded country throughout the summer, and this year seem to be lingering very late at feeders: in Sydney Forks, 10 left late May from a flock of 50+ (RB); 12 up to May 30 at Pictou (EH); a dozen or more most of May at Economy (FS); 60 May 23 at Amherst at the Desplanques; 8 May 12 at Waterville, Kings Co. (ACH) and 144 along the Old French Road near St. Croix May 13 (MC). At Yarmouth the last one noted at feeders was 1 Apr. 20 (MWH). In Halifax city, 2 male and 2 female Evening Grosbeaks returned to Willett Mills feeder June 3-4. These birds are no longer leaving us during the summer.

The PURPLE FINCH, scarcely seen all winter, returned Apr. 11-18, seen in small flocks and singles quite generally that week, becoming more numerous and more widely distributed up to the end of that month. May 11-18 brought another incursion, with larger flocks, 40-60 birds, after which they could be seen and heard practically anywhere, but with a predilection for feeders, where they will stay as long as seed is provided; and many of us are only too glad to provide it, in return for that song. (Sightings of the Pine Grosbeak and the Pine Siskin have remained consistent throughout the winter and spring, Siskins still quite

abundant.) The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH remained fairly abundant all winter, and spring increases were not dramatic. Flocks increased from early April (23 Apr. 4 at Lr. Ohio, 25+ at Victoria Park, Truro, Apr. 8), and summer plumage was assumed by early to mid-May. By late May these finches were quite numerous and singing well. (Sightings of the Red Crossbill continue to increase, flocks of 5-30+ encountered almost anywhere. C.R.K. Allen had 4, Apr. 17 at his feeder, and remarked "first time I have heard of Crossbills attending a feeder". The White-winged Crossbill continues scarce, seen this spring only at three places: 25 Mar. 24 at Hubbards; 8 Apr. 21 at Seal Is.; 3 May 6 and 9 May 15 at Sydney.)

Sightings of the RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE were down to four this year, involving 4-5 birds, 1 Apr. 21 at the Light at Seal Is.; probably the same 1 May 5 on Seal, but 3 seen there May 19, 2 remaining until the 21st. at least. One other, a female, was seen on Sable Is. May 19. Very few IPSWICH SPARROWS made a landfall on our shores this spring, 3 Mar. 31 at Wedge Is. (EC); 3 Apr. 1 at Martinique Beach (DMacD) and 2 Apr. 8 at Lawrencetown (F&ED) are the only ones reported. At Sable Is., Ian McLaren reports "a slightly above-average population of some 2,800 birds on the island this spring". The SAVANNAH SPARROW was late, a few seen Apr. 18 and after, but two big peaks at Seal Is.: 80 there May 5, 75 on the 26th.; then 50+ May 19-21 were followed by appearance of normal numbers throughout the province. Two SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS were early, 1 May 19 at Seal and 1 May 26 at Amherst Pt.; and were followed by 6 at the latter locality June 11, an accustomed date of arrival. A VESPER SPARROW was seen on Brier Is. Apr. 20-22; 1 May 5 was near Brule, seen by Ross Baker, and 1 May 6 was seen and heard at Scott's Bay by Bob Lambertson, his first for N.S. One LARK SPARROW, May 5, was identified by the Lents, on Brier Is. SLATE-COLORED JUNCOS began to sing the last of March, but genuine migrants could be distinguished only after Apr. 4, when flocks of 25-30 birds at Round Hill, smaller flocks at Pictou, Wine Hbr., Cameron Settlement and Keji Park accumulated up to the end of the month, and the normal population of about 10 Juncos on Seal Is. jumped to 45 on the 21st. Again, it was rather a slow infiltration. (One OREGON JUNCO appears to have stayed the winter at Sable Is., reported several times by the local inhabitants.)

The last date for the TREE SPARROW is 1 May 14 at Amherst, not counting the 1 June 3 at Homeville, since Tree Sparrows can be found in Cape Breton all summer. The CHIPPING SPARROW is in good abundance this year, first reported Apr. 26, 1 at Amherst Pt., by May regular in that area, and generally by the end of the month. First seen on Seal Is. 6 May 19; 8 May 20 down to 1 May 21 represents the only "peak" shown this spring. Six Chippies were enjoying a reseeded area at St. Croix June 17, and 1 pair had nested there in the top of a pyramid cedar - a last year's location, only to have the nest blown down in the big storm that day. Margaret Clark, who reported the incident, found 2 broken and 2 unbroken eggs on the ground amid the debris, and said the same thing had happened to the nest in the cedar last year "wouldn't you think that pair would have learned a lesson?". We wonder what will happen next year. The FIELD SPARROW was

noted, 2 at Easter on Brier Is. (WPN) and at Seal Is.: 3 Apr. 20; 7 Apr. 21; 6 May 6; 5 May 19-20; and 2 May 21. A small and usual invasion of the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW brought 12 birds only this spring: 2 May 13 at Markland, Yar. Co. (MWH,DBK); 1 May 17 and 1 June 15 to Sable; 3 May 6 to Seal Is. 1 May 20 to Seal, 2 there May 21; 1 May 24 to E. Arlington, Anna. Co. (RL); 1 May 25-31 to Lr. Ohio, Shel. Co. (BH); and 1 May 26-27 to Glace Bay (E.Chant WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS were singing by April 16 at Wilmot, and may have been new migrants, as they began to be mentioned in many places in the next few days, the first 4 seen at Seal Apr. 20, 15 there Apr. 21. The big wave came early in May, 40 at Seal May 130 the next day (by count), and numerous reports generally at about that time, continuing into June. The FOX SPARROW migration this spring was small. Counting up the birds in the 20 reports received from all over the province (and they came from all over the province) a probable 50 birds were seen, many of them singles; from Mar. 20, the first seen at Cole Hbr., (most seen the next two weeks) to June 24, the last seen, at Larry's River. June birds, particularly in that territory, may be staying all summer - may perhaps be nesting. Most Fox Sparrows were gone by Apr. 15.

A number of us were fortunate enough to hear the song of the LINCOLN'S SPARROW in May and June. Two were seen at Brier Is. Apr. 22 (WPN et al); 1 May 5 at Seal; then 1 heard each at Wine Hbr. May 21; at Truro May 24; at Economy May 28; at Homeville June 3 and 10 on the Larry's River BBS (CWH,PRD). The first SWAMP SPARROW was at Brier Is. Apr. 15, then none noted until mid-May, seen at Yarmouth, Debert and (appropriately) Marshville, Pictou Co., reaching Cape Breton by June 3. A week later than last year, the SONG SPARROW became common, first reported as "abundant and singing Apr. 8 in the Valley-Port Williams area" (ELM); noted also on that date at Pictou and in Queen's Co. Over 25 at Brier Is. Apr. 15 and 35 at Seal Is. Apr. 20, 60 the following day; then 50 May 5, 70 May 6 at Seal Is.; 30 May 19-20, 50 May 21 at Seal give an indication of the times and extent of the progress of the spring migration. Earlier birds may have come in, but it is impossible to sort the numerous March reports into any sort of pattern, and they could well be all wintering Song Sparrows. Some, like the early Whitethroats, had weak, imperfect songs.

Angus MacLean, Park Naturalist at P.E.I., has kindly sent us an account of some of his observations, made in Nova Scotia this spring, one of which is of the LAPLAND LONGSPUR. To quote "On March 25, I birded in the Lawrencetown area and visited Wedge Island. There were only a few species around, the most interesting a solitary Lapland Longspur in changing plumage and most difficult to identify. The best field mark at that stage is a golden-brown stripe across the nape of the neck. Later on, April 8, I again visited Wedge Island and the same (obviously) Lapland Longspur was still there, then in full breeding plumage. It had likely wintered there".

Not surprisingly, the SNOW BUNTING left us early this year. The last large flocks reported are 50-60 Feb. 20 at Round Hill (WEW) and 40 Mar. 2 at E. Arlington (North Mountain) "seen in an area not frequented by them all winter - decidedly on the

rove" (RL). The last individuals noted (in fact the only other individuals noted) were 2 Mar. 3 at Morien (TM); 5 Mar. 16 at Amherst (CD); 4 Apr. 9 at Glace Bay (RB), 6 there and at Homeville Apr. 21 (NSBS party), and a very late one on Sable Is. May 11.

NEW NAMES FOR BIRDS

In accordance with our policy of following American Ornithologists Union (AOU) Check-list usage, the Nova Scotia Bird Society Newsletter will refer in future to the birds listed below by their new names, but will accompany these with the old familiar names, either in quotes or bracketed, for some time to come.

<u>Old Name</u> (AOU 1957)	<u>New Name</u> (AOU 1973)	<u>Comments</u>
Fulmar	Northern Fulmar	Distinction from Southern Hemisphere bird.
Leach's Petrel	Leach's Storm Petrel	Distinction from the large petrels, e.g. <u>Pterodroma</u> spp.
Wilson's Petrel	Wilson's Storm Petrel	Same as Leach's.
Common Egret ¹	Great Egret	More meaningful name in wide use elsewhere.
Wood Ibis	Wood Stork	Actually is a stork.
Blue Goose	Snow Goose (dark phase)	Now known to be a colour phase, rather than a species.
Common Teal ²	Green-winged Teal (Eurasian subspecies)	Same species as American green-wings.
Shoveler	Northern Shoveler	Distinction from other shovelers.
Common Scoter ³	Black Scoter	More meaningful name, in wide use elsewhere.
Pigeon Hawk	Merlin	Conform with international use. Already in use here.
Sparrow Hawk	American Kestrel	Same as Pigeon Hawk.
Upland Plover	Upland Sandpiper	To reflect true relationships, i.e. not a plover.
Knot	Red Knot	Distinction from other knots.

1. Known as American Egret before 1957 and in Peterson's Field Guide.
2. Formerly European Teal.
3. Formerly American Scoter.

<u>Old Name</u> <u>AOU 1957</u>	<u>New Name</u> <u>AOU 1973</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Yellow-shafted Flicker	Common Flicker	"Yellow-shafted", "Red-shafted" and "Gilded" Flickers considered to be same species.
Traill's Fly- catcher ⁴	Alder Flycatcher	Our "wee-be-o" song type. The Southern and Western "fitz-bev" species to be called Willow Flycatcher.
Catbird	Gray Catbird	Distinction from other catbirds
Parula Warbler	Northern Parula Warbler	As opposed to Tropical Parula (Olive-backed & Socorro).
Myrtle Warbler	Yellow-rumped Warbler	"Myrtle" and "Audubon's" as one species.
Yellowthroat	Common Yellowthroat	Distinction from other yellow throats.
Baltimore Oriole	Northern Oriole	"Baltimore" and "Bullock's" as one species.
Ipswich Sparrow	Savannah Sparrow (Sable I. race)	Considered to be subspecies of Savannah Sparrow.
Slate-colored Junco	Dark-eyed Junco	"Slate-colored", "White-winged" and "Oregon" as one.

4. Formerly Alder Flycatcher, and now back to it again!

THE PHOEBE

by Bob Lamberton

The flycatchers are a frustrating group of birds for any observer. Most of them are drab, inconspicuous little birds with few field-marks to reveal their identity. We have in Nova Scotia three representatives of the genus Empidonax which are so similar in appearance that even expert birders attempt to identify them only if they are giving their characteristic songs. The half-dozen other species of flycatchers which occur here are not as difficult as the "empies" but some are confusing, none the less.

The plainest of all this drab crew is the Phoebe, a bird which is usually identified by the field-marks it lacks, rather than those it possesses. The "empies" have both wing-bars and eye-ring. The Wood Pewee has wing-bars but no eye-ring. The Phoebe has none of these marks at all....a plain, sparrow-sized gray-brown bird with whitish underparts. Like other flycatchers,

tends to return repeatedly to a favorite perch, and darts out robotically to catch flying insects on the wing. Its "fee-bee" song is harsh and explosive....don't confuse it with the sweet, whistled two-note song of the Black-capped Chickadee. Resting on its perch, the Phoebe flicks its tail nervously and persistently, and this habit is extremely useful in identifying the bird. However, some perverse individuals refuse either to wag their tails or to sing, and one must sometimes watch them for a long time to be certain of their identity.

Myself, I've seen Phoebes in Nova Scotia only once, and had been inclined to take as gospel Robie Tufts' statement in The Birds of Nova Scotia that the bird is a "very rare summer visitor" in the Province. However, several reports I've received this spring and a survey of past issues of the Nova Scotia Bird Society Newsletter have made me revise my opinion. It seems the Phoebe is more common in western Nova Scotia than Tufts suspected. In the past two seasons, the Newsletter has reported about fifteen individuals each spring, with at least one definite breeding record.

Flying insects are not yet abundant at this season, and although the swallows have returned and the warblers have started to appear, the flycatchers as a group are not to be expected much before the middle of May. But it seems that the Phoebe is the pioneer of the family, moving north with the first flocks of insectivorous birds in April. In New England, where the Phoebe is a commoner bird, it is regarded with a particular affection, for it commonly nests on or near houses. I've seen several nests on ledges over seldom-used doorways. Plain though they are, it is always a joy to watch these energetic little creatures raising a brood in the dooryard.

Virtually all our other flycatchers winter in Central and South America, but the Phoebe retires only as far as the southern United States. In mild winters, it has been recorded as far north as southern Vermont and New Hampshire. As yet there is no positive record of this bird's presence in Nova Scotia in the winter (that is, no photograph or specimen) but there is one very convincing sight-record from a careful and experienced observer in Bridgetown.

- Bridgetown Monitor
May 2, 1973

P.S. This treatment of the flycatchers is a conservative one, based to a considerable extent on long years of belief in T. R. Peterson's statement that many of the species are almost identical". Some people feel he was excessively cautious, and Davis Finch in particular has convinced me that silent species can probably be identified in the field with considerable accuracy. Another footnote: the eye-ring character is at best a variable one, and difficult to use.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports of field trips received so far include three sponsored by the Cape Breton Branch of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, and all of the May trips of the mainland group.

Early Migrants - Waterfowl. April 21

George Spencer, Glace Bay, led a party of bird watchers on a most enjoyable tour of the fifteen mile circle which constitutes the Glace Bay area. The members, from Halifax, Baddeck, Sydney, Glace Bay and New Waterford, braved the frosty air and very high wind to begin their bird watching at the Heavy Water plant where a Bald Eagle waited for the group to arrive, giving the day a good start.

Following exploration of the Glace Bay Bird Sanctuary, the party moved to Glace Bay beach where a bitterly cold breeze and mountainous drift ice proved no deterrent to the enthusiasts. Along with the birds, a handsome muskrat displayed himself and was checked off as an unusual specimen.

On to the Morien Sandbar and further to Black Brook Cemetery, where the Mayflowers were preparing to spread their fragrance. The group stopped counting long enough to enjoy their lunch in one of the prettiest spots in Cape Breton, and to read the inscriptions on some of the ancient headstones.

After lunch we combed the South Head area, which is Mr. Spencer's home territory and which he knows "like the back of his hand". Due to his competent knowledge of birds and his amazingly keen eyesight, the group was enabled to spot several species which would have likely been missed. We walked for miles through fields and swamps and over the windy beach and shore areas, the brilliant sunshine counteracting slightly the cold high wind. Natural history data was also dispensed, fox burrows explored, quahog, whelk, moon and scallop shells gathered along with skate egg cases and driftwood, particularly for the benefit of the two Halifax visitors, Mrs. Karen Somers and her mother, Mrs. Helen Stein. A visit to Cape Breton's oldest church proved most interesting and a second lunch stop was enjoyed at the Spencer farm, where all enjoyed Mrs. Stein's delicious cookies.

The party was out from nine till three, the day was fine with brilliant sunshine, but a cold high wind. Five cars and nine members made the trip. In attendance were Wally MacKinnon, Archie Long, Mr. & Mrs. Hedley Hopkins, Betty Reid and Bill Dobbin, all of Sydney, Eric Cooke of Halifax, Karen Somers and Mrs. Stein of Halifax, George Shepherd and Edith MacLeod of Glace Bay and Francis MacKinnon of New Waterford. Last, but certainly not least, was Lloyd Stone of Baddeck, who, with a recently fractured hip, and a pair of crutches, kept up with the party the entire day and won the admiration of all for his constant cheer. Special interest was created by a pair of Spruce Grouse, which paraded slowly ahead of the group, the female with a decided limp. A pair of Green-winged Teal, three

awks and a Snow Bunting highlighted the trip, with 29 species sighted.

- Reported by Edith MacLeod

Spring Migration - Brier Island. May 20.

The May 20 Brier Island trip was organized and offered by the Cape Breton Branch, though roughly half the participants were mainlanders. I think the entire Society owes the Cape Bretoners a debt of gratitude for their planning and foresight. Many of us enjoyed the hospitality of the Andersons, who provided camping space and a focus-point for the week-end's activities. The chosen few who responded to the leader's call for a 5:00 a.m. start were rewarded with a few unique pleasures (the last of the Woodcock flights) and some stimulating frustrations (a Night Heron, unidentifiable in the half-light, leaving the marsh for his roost). But most of the birds, like most of the birders, left 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. the most reasonable time to put in an appearance. In the latter part of the morning, we met with an exciting wave of passerines on North Point, including 13 species of warblers and a Brown Thrasher. Several hundred Phalaropes were seen then as well at North Point and in Westport Harbor, but it was not until afternoon that they began to come in close enough to be identified definitely as Northern. Wick Lent informed us that they had just begun to arrive at Brier. After a late brunch, several parties branched out (with the help of veteran Brier Island birders Ross Anderson and Eric Cooke) to explore the other prime areas. The morning had been gray with patchy fog, but we had general clearing as the afternoon advanced. The final tally of 85 species included a Water Pipit in the town marsh, a Common Nighthawk and, perhaps most exciting of all, a Snowy Egret at Pond Cove.

- Reported by Bob Lamberton

Late Migrants. June 3.

An early morning (6:30) trip in the Homeville area June 3 brought a list of 27 species as follows: Purple Finches, Magnolia Warblers, Goldfinches, Least Sandpipers (3), Snipe, Lincoln Sparrows (3), Olive-sided Flycatcher, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, White-throated Sparrows, Yellow Warblers, Parula Warbler, Kingfishers, Wilson's Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Redwinged Blackbird, Gray Jay, Double-crested Cormorants, Starlings, Redstart (1), Bobolinks, Kingbird, Woodcock, Black-and-White Warbler, Blue Jays, Broad-winged Hawk and Black Ducks (11

Not all of us saw them all; I, for one, was half-an-hour late getting on the scene. We quit shortly after 9, on the road out to the old church, after a very nice morning.

- Reported by Frank Robertson

The three early morning "warbler walks" in the Halifax-Dartmouth region were rained out this year, and few people attended. These are the favorite trips of real bird addicts, and the most valuable for beginners, but the weather was truly discouraging.

Nevertheless, five of us met at the Kearney Lake Road at 6:30 of a cold drizzly May 16 morning, and spent 2 hours exploring the woods along by the lake, with rewarding results. We found 27 species of bird, including about a dozen Robins, many Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 8 different warblers - the most numerous being Myrtles and Black-and-Whites - and a good chorus of White-throats.

On May 23 at the Brookside Road, it was pouring steadily, but Fred Dobson and Frank Himsl came up with 28 species, which included 9 kinds of warblers - the most numerous being Parulas, Black-throated Greens, Ovenbirds and Redstarts. They also flushed a Ruffed Grouse, found an early lone Tree Swallow, heard 6 Hermit and 4 Swainson's Thrushes and an early Solitary Vireo. There were Purple Finches, Pine Grosbeaks and many White-throats again.

The last of the three early morning trips, May 30, was in new territory which proved very good - along the old Ship Canal from the Dartmouth Lakes. Fog hindered visibility to some extent, but it was a still, warm morning and the 7 observers managed to come up a notch to 29 species. A Flicker was new, also 3 Catbirds; many more Robins were around and we heard and/or saw 12 species of warbler, with many Chestnut-sided and Yellow-throats singing, plus 2 Canadas.

The all-day trip on May 26 (traditionally the last Saturday in May) was overcast but calm in the morning, windy in the afternoon and bitterly cold for the time of year (a dank 42°). This was uncomfortable, but served to keep the blackflies down. Sixteen of us met at 8:00 a.m. at Mount Uniacke and started as usual with a look at the small park beside Uniacke House, where we found our usual pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Thence on to the Rawdon Road turn-off and through many of the back roads which wind around Hants County until well on into the afternoon; stopping for lunch at Smiley's Intervale. It may be said that this was the first time on record when a bonfire on the shore (of the brimming Meander) was found necessary for warmth. However, it was an enjoyable trip; we found 69 species of birds, and many in good numbers - particularly Snipe (5+), Flickers (16), Blue Jays (15), Robins (45+), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (10), and representatives of all of the flycatchers, all of the swallows and 12 species of warblers - most numerous Magnolia (30), Chestnut-sided (30+) and Redstart (20). There were Bobolinks in their usual fields, a surprising 12 Evening Grosbeaks (in three groups), 40+ Purple Finches, 6 Siskins and very many Goldfinches, White-throats, and Song Sparrows. A flock of Red Crossbills was a treat, as were 2 Soras, heard only, unfortunately, but a first for some of us; and a real bonanza, a field full of birds, finches, blackbirds, and sparrows (mostly juncos), where the birds were harvesting a neglected oat patch. We stood a long time watching, scarcely needing our binoculars, and could hardly count the shifting throng

of birds, bright in spring plumage - the brightest of all a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, stuffing itself on the ground, along with the hoi-polloi, formal clothes among the tourists. We had hawks, gulls and shorebirds, and the only disappointment was the Brooklyn Pond, empty except for a few Black Ducks. We found Ring-necks in another place, but no teal to be seen anywhere. Margaret Clark, one of our new members, has kindly written "Warbler identification has been much more gratifying since the Hants County Field Trip, thanks to the helpful assistance received that day".

- Reported by the Editor for Eric Mills, Fred Dobson, Jim Elliott, C.R.K. Allen

CHIGNECTO NATURALIST CLUB

The newly formed Chignecto Naturalist Club draws its members from both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, at the border between the provinces. It is devoted to all phases of wildlife - birds, mammals, plants, shellfish, etc., in the interest of which the club holds meetings and carries out monthly field trips. The first trip was at the Amherst Point Sanctuary, April 28, 1973, led by Con Desplanque, who has been doing his best for some years to dissolve the map-drawn border-line at the isthmus (for the birds!). A. D. Smith, of the Canadian Wildlife Service at Sackville, N.B., is lending the Club advice and assistance, and Evelyn Coates describes the meetings as "very informal, not cluttered up with constitutions, etc., but given to lively discussions". The Nova Scotia Bird Society extends to the members of the Chignecto Naturalist Club its sincere congratulations and good wishes.

NOTICE - CANADIAN NATURE CONFERENCE

Members of the NSBS who wish to attend any of the sessions of the Canadian Nature Conference at Wolfville this summer should communicate their intentions immediately to Canadian Nature Federation Conference Office, Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia. If accommodation at Acadia University is desired, the cost is \$8.50 per day, inclusive of three meals.

If you have not received your program for these meetings, please ask for one, at the above address, or from the Secretary of the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

A SUMMARY OF SPRING MIGRATION ON
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

by A. Angus MacLean

Migration was most confusing on P.E.I. this spring (1973). Some species such as Grackle and Red-winged Blackbirds arrived on March 17-18, about ten days to two weeks early. Large flocks of Canada Geese were also seen on March 18. Other than that, most species were at least a week late and some were hardly noticed arriving. No Fox Sparrows were reported, an unusual event. Waterfowl numbers were definitely down, especially Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal. However, Pintails were unusually early, 27 (20 males) seen arriving at Brackley Marsh on April 7 - these normally arrive around the 1st. of May.

A heavy migration of Juncos, Robins and White-throate Sparrows was noted at Rustico Island on May 8. However, except for Myrtle Warblers, which arrived in force on May 10, the main warbler migration did not hit until May 30 when, again at Rustico Island, a small group of us recorded 82 species during the period 5:00-9:30 a.m. and again between 6:30-8:30 p.m. Nearly all the warbler species were recorded, including the rarer Wilson's (4-5) Blackburnian (3), Canada (2), Tennessee (3) and Chestnut-sided (1). Otherwise, the main sighting was a pair of Scarlet Tanagers which represented the fifth record for the Island. These are becoming regular in spring and perhaps breeding is in the offing.

A Ruff was noted at Covehead Marsh (P.E.I. National Park) on May 23, for the first provincial record, and was present until May 25. I saw it again near the same area on May 30. A Veery was found in our backyard at Dalvay by my wife Stella on May 25 and was later photographed by me. It was also around the lawns the following day. This was a first provincial record. Surprisingly a second Veery was seen on Rustico Island by Bruce MacLean on May 31. The bird was singing and was seen at close range. Neither appeared to be the darker-backed Newfoundland sub-species and thus were overshoots from Nova Scotia.

A pair of Gadwalls were observed at Brackley Marsh on May 31 by Bruce MacLean. These were seen at close range on the water and in flight.

The most unusual occurrence was during the evening of May 31 when I found a Wilson's Phalarope with a small flock of Greater Yellowlegs and one Lesser Yellowlegs (the latter the first this spring). It was observed for about ten minutes as it waded in deep water and fed off the surface. Then the flock flushed and were not seen again. Naturally it was the first provincial record for this species (the Wilson's Phalarope) and should be termed "accidental".

RANDOM NOTES ON ECOLOGY
(WE BRING OUR TROUBLES ON OURSELVES)

It requires expertize to manipulate the environment. A note in the Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly (Vol. 3, June, 1973) suggests this, "In 1874, 20 pairs of English Sparrows were imported to New Glasgow, Pictou County, to fight caterpillars." We still have caterpillars, and we soon had a great many English Sparrows. No doubt they are a working bird, and in the spring especially eat many insects which prey on ornamental trees and flowers. It is their other less desirable features which have made that early step in environmental control a matter of regret to many North Americans. At the present time, their numbers do not seem to be increasing, are perhaps diminishing, and they appear to have found their niche. For the most part they are now a nuisance only to people who wish to feed and encourage the presence of native birds in the vicinity; but they are still a menace to nesting Tree Swallows. At least this is true in towns and villages where people erect nest-boxes, possibly not now at large in the country.

English Sparrows may have met their match in the Brown-headed Cowbird, as free-loaders at feeders - (otherwise their activities do not seem to overlap). The Brown-headed Cowbird is a native North American bird which came to the U.S.A. from Mexico, following herds of cattle and horses, and the land cleared to support them. It arrived in Nova Scotia 10-15 years ago, of its own accord. The Cowbird is regarded with disgust because of its parasitic behavior - laying its eggs in other birds' nests, the young in the care of the foster parents.

Vireos, warblers and small sparrows (insectivorous birds), are most often victimized, evidently successfully from the Cowbird's point of view, judging by the size of the flocks in fall and winter. However, these unpopular birds also have their uses; Bent says that about 20% of their food consists of insects, which are either harmful or annoying, 16% consists of grain, half of which is probably waste, and more than 50% of seeds of noxious weeds. (Audubon mentioned another role for the Cowbird, perhaps not so important now-a-days, but written in his inimitable style, - "In spring, the cattle in many parts of the United States are much infested with intestinal worms, which they pass in great quantities, and on these the Cowbirds frequently make a delicious repast.").

Indirectly then, we introduced the Cowbird, by clearing land and raising cattle. The Cowbird may oust the English Sparrow if we continue to operate winter feeding stations. It does have uses. But it may also play a part which Audubon could not have known about. Cowbirds are also horse birds, and although never yet named directly as a vector of encephalitis, as have the Grackles in the bird-mosquito-mammal cycle of this disease, they could well be one.

We "disturb" our environment unthinkingly, and then attempt to set it right, also unthinkingly. Changing the habits and habitats of birds is dangerous enough, but even worse is the situation illustrated in the following note. It was quoted from Conservation News by the Federation of British Columbia Naturalist Newsletter, Vol. 11, June, 1973, and seems thought-provoking enough to repeat.

"In 1969 a Borneo village had huts, malaria mosquitos, cockroaches, caterpillars, geckos, rats and cats. Then WHO moved in to eliminate the mosquitos with DDT.

But the more resistant roaches usually survived and their DDT-laden bodies slowed down the geckos so much that the cats caught them. The cats died and in came the rats. The caterpillars, with no geckos to control them, then feasted on the roofs of the huts till many collapsed.

It's all true. They fixed things eventually by flying in more cats - but by then the mosquitos were back too."

RECYCLING

There is something practical some of us can do quite safely (any arguments?) for this often-mentioned and suffering environment. Quoting this time from Fine Print, the newsletter of the Ecology Action Centre, Halifax, May 25, 1972:

"About 200,000 tons of material were wasted in Halifax-Dartmouth last year - one ton for every resident.

Most of this material was turned into troublesome and unhealthy air pollution. The Halifax incinerator is one of the region's ten worst sources of air pollution. Residents in the city's north end have complained about dirt on their clothing and houses, caused by the incinerator, since it began operation in 1960.

The remainder of our trash was buried. The Halifax dump is a notoriously ugly scar on the shore of the Bedford Basin, as well as a major source of chemical and organic pollution in the Basin. The Dartmouth incinerator and the dump where its residue is buried are polluters as well, on a smaller scale.

These problems, similar to those found in cities across North America, can and must be eliminated. Instead they increase - in the ten years from 1960 to 1970, the volume of material incinerated in Halifax doubled.

Recycling can be a part of the solution. The Recycling Committee has called on the cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, and the County of Halifax, to:

- a) publicly support recycling,
- b) investigate the magnetic separation of tin cans for recycling. (The more materials reclaimed, the less waste and pollution there will be. Extensive recycling is not now possible in Halifax-Dartmouth because there are no nearby companies ready to use most of the available material. However, the Ecology Action Centre has uncovered a potential market for tin cans in Amherst. Magnetic separation is now successfully carried on in over 20 American cities.)
- c) insist on stationary containing post-consumer recycled waste paper. (This simple step will help create "markets" across Canada for waste paper.)

Recently, the Civic and Municipal Authorities have reassured the Committee of their support for the above suggestions.

"The Ecology Action Centre is collecting used books for resale. Books can be dropped off at the Recycling Depot on Cogswell St., at the Ecology Action Centre office in the basement of the Forrest Building at Dal, Room 8, or

in the Book Boxes located in the Student Union Buildings at Dal and St. Mary's. Donations of all kinds of books are appreciated."

Waste paper of all kinds, except waxed paper or waxed cartons, can be left at the collecting depot in the Trade Mart building, corner Cogswell and Brunswick Streets, Halifax, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Paper should be tied in bundles.

Yes, but what you lose on string you save on garbage bags.

MARITIME NEST RECORDS SCHEME

Thirteenth Annual Report - 1972 Season

SUMMARY: For 1972, the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme received 1,366 nest record cards for 110 species of birds from 55 co-operators. An additional 180 cards were submitted for earlier years. Since beginning in 1960, the scheme has assembled 14,954 cards (7,264 from New Brunswick, 6,307 from Nova Scotia, 1,383 from Prince Edward Island). These include 1,700 for Robin, 1,028 for Common Grackle, 1,085 for Barn Swallow, 624 for Starling, 619 for Red-winged Blackbird and over 200 each for ten other species (excluding waterfowl and grouse broods). Data for thirteen species were consulted by researchers during the year.

METHODS: For the benefit of readers not already familiar with the functioning of nest records schemes, a few sentences will suffice. The scheme's aim is to provide a permanent record of information on bird nesting in the Maritimes and to make it available to persons who wish to study various aspects of breeding biology. Volunteer co-operators record, on 4 x 6 printed cards, details of their observations of birds' nests and send the data to the scheme's office where the information, much of which otherwise might not be available, is kept on file for future research. (For further information on nest record schemes, see Erskine, 1971.)

During 1972 there were requests for information on thirteen species, plus examination of the files of all species for a forthcoming publication on the birds of the Fredericton-Woodstock region, N.B. The thirteen species on which data was specifically requested were Double-crested Cormorant, Common Eider, Osprey, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Black Guillemot, Razor-bill, Puffin, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Tree Swallow and Starling. Of these, only the Tree Swallow is being studied with a view to publishing the results of a detailed analysis of nesting data. The others were examined to assist planning of special studies.

The Maritimes Nest Records Scheme currently holds 14,954 cards of information on 177 species 7,264 on 155 species in New Brunswick, 6,307 on 154 species in Nova Scotia, and 1,383 on 71 species in Prince Edward Island.

Use of the Cards

The majority of observers have been using the cards quite well. The year 1972 witnessed an improvement in that respect over 1971, the first year that the current design was employed.

Use of the "comments" section of the card front is becoming more general. Observers who are not yet reporting information there should try to get into the habit. Comments such as "adult flushed", "young small and naked", "pin feathers opening", "no adults seen" or "young big enough to leave nest" are of great assistance to persons who borrow the cards for analysis.

Again, the "Outcome of Nest" section on the reverse side of the card was poorly utilized. Most observers did not bother to complete it at all and some others did not interpret it correctly. If used properly, this section can increase the value of each card since it is the observer, who is completely familiar with the nest concerned, who indicates the success or failure of the nest and not an analyst who must rely wholly on whatever data the observer saw fit to record.

With respect to "outcome of nest", for the purposes of the M.N.R.S., a nest is considered to have been successful, if at least one young has left safely. If there is no evidence of this, then either the nest must be a failure or the outcome must be unknown. A couple of points should be stressed:

(a) Some co-operators checked "parents carrying food" or "parents giving alarm calls near nest" as evidence for success, yet the notes recorded on the front of the card indicated that the young were still in the nest at the last visit. These items are to be checked when the nest is empty, as evidence that the young are hiding nearby and being cared for by the adults.

(b) "Nest empty" is only evidence for failure when it is found in that state too soon for the young to have fledged safely. For instance, a Robin nest empty five days after it contained eggs is evidence for failure. If it were empty two

weeks after a visit when there were eggs, the outcome would be unknown since the eggs could have hatched and the young fledged in that length of time.

At the beginning of each nesting season, it is advisable to re-read carefully "Instructions for Use of Nest Record Cards" which is attached as an appendix to this report. And, it is wise to keep in mind that the persons who will be using the cards have to visualize your observations from the details you record.

References

Erskine, Anthony J., 1971. Nest Record Card Programs in Canada. Can. Field-Nat. 85 (1):3-11. (A limited number of reprints of this article are available from the M.N.R.S. office.)

APPENDIX I

Instructions for Use of Nest Record Cards

Please record only what you observe and please do not fill in the unlabelled squares, which are for the coding of data for computer storage.

1. Use one card for each nest, but for colonies visited only once use one line for each nest or group of nests with similar contents and for nests parasitized by Cowbirds complete two cards, one for Cowbird and one for host species.
2. SPECIES: Be sure that the species is correctly identified ON or AT the nest. Use the full species name in Peterson's Field Guide or the A.O.U Checklist. (North American bird books published since 1958 use the most recent A.O.U. names). A.O.U. number can be included if it is known.
3. EGGS & YOUNG: Fill out cards for all nests of which the contents can be seen, felt, heard or otherwise inferred. Give evidence of inferred occupancy under comments (e.g. "young calling in nest"). Count eggs or young whenever possible. If number is not known positively use a check mark or phrase such as "at least two". The time of visit is particularly important during egg-laying, hatching and nest leaving periods.
4. RETURN VISITS: If possible, revisit all nests, but especially those found during construction; the latter are essential in assessment of nesting success. Many kinds of information can only be obtained from nests that are revisited. If more than 10 visits are made, enter the additional data on a second card, and attach the cards together. Please record all visits, including ones when the nest was empty.
5. OUTCOME OF NEST: Make sure that you fill in the appropriate spaces in the "Outcome of nest" questionnaire on the

back of the card. Adequate details permit easier and more effective analysis of nest record data.

6. COWBIRDS: Two cards should be submitted for each nest in which Cowbird eggs or young are found. Location, habitat, and nest description will be the same on both cards. One card gives data for the host species, and should have the "Cowbird use" space marked. The other card gives the Cowbird data. These cards should be cross-referenced and/or fastened together. Attention to this matter may save hours for your compiler, who must otherwise check each card for Cowbird records and fill in the extra cards himself. Indicate clearly the number of eggs and/or young of each species.

7. LOCATION: Give the location as precisely as possible, with direction and distance from nearest town and/or other major landmark. In remote areas, give latitude and longitude or UTM grid reference if possible, as many names (e.g. Mud Lake, Duck Creek) occur several times in each province. Please indicate county and province.

8. HABITAT: If possible, check one or more of the options given, and write in further details of the important features of the area around the nest. It will not be possible to check one of the options for all habitats, for example, bogs, rocky barrens, and coastal beaches.

9. NEST DESCRIPTION: Please note the difference between nest position and habitat. Habitat describes the vegetation type and landscape in the nest area. A spruce tree is not the habitat, but the nest site which should be stated, for example, as "excavated cavity in trunk of spruce" or "saddled on branch of spruce". Remember that persons making use of the cards have not seen the nest and must visualize what you observed from the details provided on the card. For bank or cliff nests, give height above cliff base and height of cliff.

10. ADDITIONAL DETAILS: Supplementary information can be included in the sections for comments at each visit or on the reverse side of the card. Try to get in the habit of noting such items as "adult on nest", "adult off", "eggs warm", "eggs cold", "young naked, eyes closed", "pinfeathers", "feathers opening", "large enough to leave nest", etc.

April 25, 1973

- David Christie, Co-ordinator,
Maritimes Nest Records Scheme,
New Brunswick Museum,
Saint John, N. B.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

We received our Newsletter last week here in Texas, where we have spent 5-6 weeks, including a motor trip to Mexico City.

On our way back to Florida (Seminole, near Sp. Peter's where we will be until mid-April) we stopped here at Goose Island State Park in the hope of seeing Whoopers.

Well, we sure did - we were over at the Arkansas Wildlife Refuge in the morning where we watched a handsome pair for some time. Spent all afternoon cruising Arkansas Bay and areas adjacent to the Refuge, and saw 18, including a couple of young ones - and in addition saw a great many birds of other species, some firsts for us.

We were close enough to some of the Whooping Cranes to take pictures - hope some will turn out well.

Goose Island is a lovely park, and the weather superb - 85° yesterday, 75° today, and sunny. The Whooping Cranes are handsome birds, graceful as swans and elegant as herons - with a distinctive look all their own. All of the ones today travelled in pairs. We got a real kick out of the Reddish Egret which hustled all over looking for food. It was the first time for us for the White Pelican - lots of Brown ones in Florida.

We expect to be in Seminole for a month (25' travel trailer) and return gradually to Tidnish by the first of May.

Don Ells
Arkansas Bay
Texas, U.S.A.
March 11, 1973

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

CSS Baffin: cruise from Bermuda to Halifax, April/73.

April 11: strong southwesterlies during the night brought in some stray landbirds:

41°02'N 61°36'W female Kestrel chases a Semipalmated Plover.
41°34'N 61°37'W 1 Great Blue Heron.
1 Female/subadult male Purple Martin; stays with the ship (and even tried to roost on the bridge radar set!) at least as far north as 42°41'N 62°28'W on April 12.

seabirds: a total of 5 Dovekies, c.10 Leach's Petrels,
1 Parasitic Jaeger, 2 Pomarine Jaegers, 1 Jaeger
sp. seen in this general area.

Perhaps the simplest way of describing where we were
is to say that we were in deep water about 180 miles SSW of Sable
Island.

April 12: about 60 miles SW of Sable Island, coming up the slope
onto the Continental Shelf and ending up on southern
Emerald Bank.

Dovekies common. Several Gannets seen early in the
day, and there were about 50 of them, together with
about 50 Fulmars and at least 1,000 gulls (ratio:
10 HG to 1 Great Blackback) around 3 Russian draggers
at 42°55'N, 62°25'W on the Emerald Bank. I also saw
a total of 1 Sooty Shearwater, 2 adult Kumlien's Gulls,
2 juvenile Kittiwakes, and 2 Skuas.

April 13: just outside Halifax Harbour. Several Gannets (total
c.5); also a winter-plumage Thick-billed Murre.

The real beauty was a Capped Petrel at c.38°N. But
by no stretch of the imagination can this be called a Nova
Scotian record.

R.G.B. Brown
Dartmouth, N. S.
May 1, 1973

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

For several years I have been fortunate enough to
receive a second-hand copy of the Society's Newsletter, which I
always enjoyed immensely. I now wonder why I did not become
a member of the group many years ago, for I have always been a
keen observer of birds and wildlife. I am very happy to now
become a member and would like to contribute a very small
measure of information to that great store from which you must
draw your regular reports.

Three years ago, I sold an interest in a camp about
thirteen miles east of the Sheet Harbour Road and constructed
a log lodge on an island in a lake about five miles east of
Mooseland. Since I spend a relatively great amount of time,
during all four seasons, in this general area, I am able to get
a feeling for populations using this section of the Province.
I will be releasing wood ducks and have already had water samples
made to determine the potential success of a wild rice planting
in the lake. At my home, my feeder stations attract about
twenty species each month and we are constant observers.

It is with hope that some of the information will be
of assistance that I offer the following random notes:

1. At our home feeders we have daily visits from the usual common varieties - juncos, robins, cowbirds, starlings, crows, woodpeckers, song sparrows, white-throats, black-capped chickadees, grackles, pine siskins (12-15), American goldfinches (6-12).....the changes during the month have been - a sharp reduction in the winter flock of 50-60 Evening Grosbeaks (now only 2-6); the Brown Thrasher, which was a daily visitor all winter, was last seen on May 6; the Purple Finches have increased to a daily visit of 45-50; occasional visits from barn swallows; black and white warblers; a female redstart, and red-breasted nuthatches.

Of interest to us was the fact that the Thrasher lost all but two feathers in his tail, I suspect through some untimely encounter with one of the neighbourhood marauding cats, but continued to visit and grew a replacement in five weeks.

2. On May 26th. we had two rather rare visitors for this site. At what first glance seemed to be a swallow appeared to be an Eastern Kingbird. It flitted from telephone wire to tree to wire and even alighted on the lawn for what must have been a very tasty tidbit.

3. The other visit was from an Indigo Bunting. It has stayed in the area and I expect to eventually get a good picture, if this weather improves - my first was taken through the fog and I expect nothing of value. This is a male, not yet fully attired in the normal resplendent aquamarine and showing a trace of brown in the breast, neck and back.

4. The Hummingbirds returned to sample our floral offering on May 29th.

The area in and around Mooseland offers an excellent opportunity to see a great variety of birds in only a short trip. I do some fishing, and make it a point to travel in some fairly remote spots in this section and thereby see the owls, hawks, etc., which like the solitude.

5. The ice left our lake on April 18th. and by the 21st. the two loons, which have nested here each year for the past three, had returned. They have had two young in each of the years. They have rarely, if ever, left the lake this year, but my attempts to locate the nest have so far been fruitless. At times last year, we had five loons come within thirty yards of the island to have a chat with our two black and white English Springer Spaniels. The loons delight in having the dogs swim out to within a few yards before slipping underwater - naturally to the utter consternation and frustration of my trained retrievers.

6. I have been somewhat surprised by the number of Scaup observed this year. I guess that one pair is nesting on a lake some five miles west of Mooseland, as they appear to be constant occupants of that water. I have seen others several miles on the east side of the Mooseland road. There were four in our lake and on the same day I saw what I took to be the same birds on a small pond about two miles away. This was rather unusual, in that it

was a group consisting of three drakes with a single hen. One of the drakes seemed to have some idea of possession, as he constantly maneuvered to hold a position between himself and rivals - or was it merely good friends?

7. Two Black Ducks are regulars on the lake, but I have come to no conclusion as to the possibility of a nest. I know that the duck box which I erected for them has gone empty - even though the rent is attractive.

8. The ospreys have been regular visitors and I fully expect them to provide us with that penetrating "cheep" which sounds like it was produced from the tops of the trees when, in actual fact, the birds are so high as to almost put them out of sight. We had five as regular visitors and they put on some dazzling soaring acts.

9. This has been a wonderful year for the flickers - for in each of the areas up to about seven miles in radius from Mooseland, there has been an almost unbelievable chatter in every direction as the territories are proclaimed.

10. This is also a good warbler area and you can identify most of the spring warblers on every trip. They are back in abundance.

11. This has been a poor year for me insofar as nest detections are concerned. I know of one black duck nest on Rum Lake, west of Mooseland. It has ten eggs, with one broken and discarded outside the nest (May 26th.). I have not told a neighbor that his ornamental evergreen holds a robins nest about fourteen feet from the ground.

12. Our lake is about two miles long and my regular evening travel has revealed that there are dozens of thrushes to provide that satisfying end-of-the-day serenade.

13. I suppose a tale of our lake would not be complete without mention of the herons which slip in to feed just before sunset and the call of the Barred Owls soon after the night makes its approach.

In truth, I must relate that this is not my best effort in reporting and I shall do a much better job in the future.

P.S. Have several times this spring seen a cock and a hen pheasant in the same field near Middle Musquodoboit - presumably a nesting pair. They have been in the same place for several years.

G. A. Francis
Rockingham, N.S.
May 31, 1973

CAPE SPLIT

by Bob Lamberton

The North Mountain is a nearly continuous ridge of basalt extending from Brier Island on the southwest to Cape Blomidon, overlooking the Minas Basin, on the northeast. Near Blomidon, the ridge swings back westward and tapers rapidly to a point at Cape Split, where it sinks reluctantly beneath the swirling waters of the Bay. This last narrow projection of the massive ancient lava flows is broken at its tip into a line of pinnacles hundreds of feet high, and, as the name suggests, split by a great fault which divides the point itself. It is more than possible that an early French name for the Cape, Cap Fendu, is the origin of the name of the Bay of Fundy.

I have visited this wildest and most magnificent part of the Bay several times in the past few years, and I visited it again last weekend. This was the first time I'd seen the Cape with no leaves on its trees, but it offers new and different wonders at every season. It is surprising to find this cool, damp, exposed tongue of land covered not by dwarfed spruce and fir, but by rich, open hardwood forest. If there were more of it, and if it were more accessible, this forest would surely have been reduced to stumps and brush, as so much of the hardwood forest of the Valley area has been. But it has been spared, and stands as a unique reminder of what much of Nova Scotia was doubtless like, many decades ago.

The understory of this hardwood forest is strikingly empty at this season. There are few bushes, and last year's rich growth of ferns and sedges lies rotting underfoot. The new shoots are just appearing, but this magical interim when abundant light filters through to the very floor of the forest has its own unique flora. The Spring Beauties carpet the woodland with pinkish white flowers, and here and there you can find other small and lovely spring flowers such as Dutchman's-breeches and Trillium. The woods are alive with song, particularly the coniferous patches where Winter Wrens and Hermit Thrushes fill the morning with their voices.

The Bay of Fundy seldom receives mention in the papers or the other media except in the context of some scheme for its exploitation - whether to produce tourist dollars, oil, or phantom kilowatts. Standing on the tip of Cape Split, after a hike of several hours, and looking out over the spectacular tide-rip between Scots Bay and Minas Channel, you have the feeling that some of the somber majesty of the Bay will surely survive, and remain long after petty self-seeking schemes like the Fundy Trail - and Fundy Power, for that matter - have been forgotten.

- By permission of the Author, and the Bridgetown
MONITOR, May 9, 1973.

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