

*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 2

JULY, 1974

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REPORTS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE OCTOBER 1st.

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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER
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July 1974

SPRING MIGRATION 1974

Do you faithfully follow Rube Hornstein's weather report each evening? If so, you are aware of the parlous situation of Nova Scotia, subject to the whims of complicated and conflicting weather systems - a High bulging down from the Arctic vies with a Low pushing up from the south; either may move east or west, may diminish or increase, as yet apparently quite unpredictably.

How much these weather systems in Nova Scotia affect our migratory birds is problematical. Certainly, around the Gulf of Mexico, which must be crossed by myriads of migrants, the weather is crucial. Once on their way, they may tarry a bit here and there, but year by year seem to reach their nesting grounds at very nearly the same calendar date.

We had for the most part a mild early spring, followed by six weeks of cold and wet and boisterous high winds. The birds, species by species, arrived on time. This should be modified slightly -- there was an apparent lag in arrival time of some of the insectivorous birds. Nighthawks, Chimney Swifts, and Flycatchers seemed to be two weeks late. Perhaps they had come, but had no heart for singing, in the cold and wet and dearth of insects. Perhaps the earlier ones went to greener pastures. This is unlikely, as birds tend to return to a favoured spot year after year. We have to rely upon the evidence only, that their calls were almost un-noted in May and the first two weeks in June, but seem to be of normal occurrence now (June 25).

Nights stayed cold late into spring, and plant growth was greatly retarded. Trees were barely in blossom by May 24, and came into leaf a good two weeks later. Insects were slow in hatching out, and the blackflies never did get up much enthusiasm for biting, which was some recompense for the red noses, cold feet and fingers of early bird watchers.

A minor disaster for the birds was a freak snowfall on May 28 -- two inches of heavy wet snow, which mostly seems to have affected the Tree Swallows. Their nests were established, eggs were laid, and many parent birds were found dead after the snowfall, which must have cut off their near-at-hand food supply at a time when they would not range widely. Barn Swallows, not yet settled, were largely unaffected.

This year we have had an unusual number of reports of the Eastern Phoebe, the Winter Wren, the Gray Catbird, and the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The Osprey seems definitely to be coming back, possibly also the Eastern Bluebird; and a newcomer, the Wood Thrush, is increasing its range and number.

Among the usual visiting big waders - the Green Heron, the Little Blue Heron, the Great and the Snowy Egret, we had this year literally dozens of the Glossy Ibis, most sightings near Wolfville.

A few of our winter Cardinals are still with us; we are keeping an eye on them, hopeful of a breeding record.

Spring Specials (reports of regular strays) include several Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, many Indigo Buntings, and so many White-crowned Sparrows, including some singing, there may be a possibility of another new breeding bird in Nova Scotia.

Very special this spring are two exotics, found on Seal Island, the GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE and a CASSIN'S SPARROW. The latter bird, first tentatively called a Bachman's Sparrow, was well photographed, and according to Ian McLaren the photograph is readily identifiable as the Cassin's. Both of these birds have a normal range far to the southwest in the U.S.A.

Now (the end of June) summer has finally come, both by calendar and weather report. The woods are ringing with birdsong, the lakes spinning with downy ducklings. A good cone crop and a good berry crop are predicted, shrubs and vines are in blossom, and the bumble bees are busy. Barring accident, it should be a fine season for the birds. Good luck to them.

Good luck also to those of you who have so generously supplied us with reports of our returning migrants. May you continue to keep an eye on them, and send us the news again on

OCTOBER 1

the new deadline for the next *Newsletter*. Please make a note of it.

Contributors to the Spring Report are as follows: C.R.K. Allen, Ross R. Anderson, Ross Baker, Alan Baillie, Daniel Banks, Roberta Beecher, Pierre Béland, Evatt Bishop, R. Blakeburn, Sylvia Bower, R.G.B. Brown, Roger Burrows, Elizabeth Chant, John, Shirley and Chris Cohrs, Cyril Coldwell, Eric H. Cooke, Leta Delaney, Con Desplanque, Ben K. Doane, Fred and Evelyn Dobson, Rosemary Eaton, James and Gillian Elliott, Allison Ferguson, Clarence Ferguson, John Ferguson, Mary Ferguson, Davis W. Finch, Peter Frank, Gail Fuller, Sylvia J. Fullerton, George Griffin, Bessie Harris, Thelma and Frank Hawkins, C.W. Helleiner, David and Marie Henry, Marion W. Hilton, Barbara Hinds, Stanley Hinton, Eric Holdway, Peter Hope, Harry Hopkins, Adele Hurlburt, Joseph Johnson, John F. Kearney, Evangéline (Van) Killam, D.B. Kirk, Robert D. Lambertson, Madeleine and Wickerson Lent, Ian A. McLaren, Sara MacLean, Edith MacLeod, Gordon MacLeod, Jane McNamee, J. McNichol, E. MacRury, Bruce MacTavish, Rainer and Sandra Meyerowitz, Eric L. Mills, Willett J. Mills, H.P. Moffatt, Larry Neily, Margaret Nickerson, Eric Noller, Dorothy Rawlings, Annie Raymond, Frank Robertson, Barry Sabeau, Norman Seymour, Sidney, Betty June and Locke Smith, Nellie Snyder, Francis and Edgar Spalding, Arthur Spencer, George Spencer, Elizabeth Stubbart, Stuart Tingley, R.W. Tufts, W.E. Whitehead, and Ralph S. Widrig.

Many thanks from the rest of us. The editors wish to thank particularly those of you who sent in your reports on 'standard' size forms. For newcomers to our contributor's list, a standard form is a slip of paper, approximately 2x3 inches, with data presented as shown in the accompanying sample, drawn to size.

Robin
6

April 2, 1974

Stanley, Hants Co.

I.C. Wright

All bright males, noisy
and lively, undoubtedly
migrants.

LOONS AND GREBES

The first definite report of COMMON LOONS on fresh water is of a pair at Sand Lake, Cape Breton, May 13. A bird in 'winter plumage' seen by the Seal Island party, June 8-10, was probably an immature. Others reported on salt water around this date could be in the same category although no descriptions of plumage were given.

Reports of RED-THROATED LOONS are surprisingly scanty - two only, and both from the Bay of Fundy. They were first noted at Economy April 2 and the last record from there is June 4, never more than six or seven seen at any one time. The other report is of two in the Bay near Hampton, Annapolis Co., May 7.

RED-NECKED GREBES and HORNED GREBES are also very lightly reported. Stragglers of the former species were seen 'here and there' in the Green Bay (Lunenburg Co.) region up to May 20. The only other report is from the Yarmouth area where two were seen March 2, and thereafter singles up to April 21, with the exception of one sighting of 20, April 8, at Pinkney's Point. Eric Cooke saw many Horned Grebes in St. Margaret's Bay April 3, and in fact counted 74 off one mile of beach near Queensland. The only other record is of two at Conrad's Beach, April 13.

PIED-BILLED GREBES, our only breeder in this family, are the 'stars of the show' if number of reports is any indication. First sighting was of six on March 10 at Cape Sable. Greatest number of reports came from the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary (APBS) where eight were seen on April 12. Other sightings here during April were for the most part of one or two birds, with a maximum of six on April 25. At least 14 were seen here on May 4 and 10, May 29. Seven downy young were seen in this area June 7 and 8. Other sightings are of

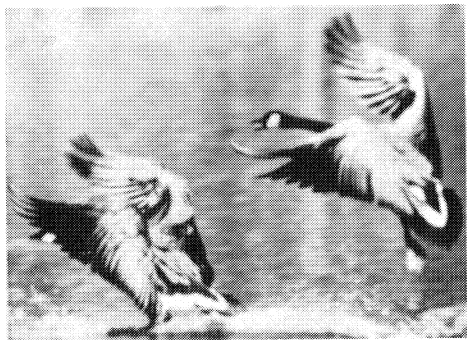
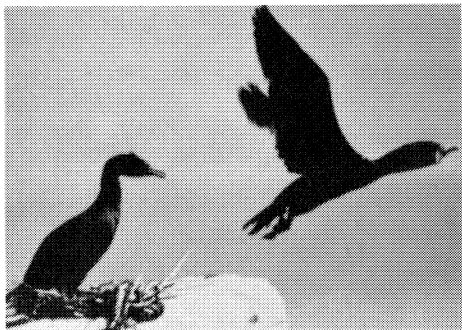
BIRDS IN FLIGHT



Mallard

It is hard to photograph a sitting bird - but how rare is the photographer who can record the beautiful wing movements of a bird in flight. These photos are by R.D. Connor of Dartmouth.

Double-crested Cormorants



Canada Geese

two at Crescent Beach April 13 (two near the ferry wharf at Cape Tormentine, N.B., May 12) and one at Port Maitland, Yarmouth Co., May 8.

FULMARS, SHEARWATERS, PETRELS

The only NORTHERN FULMAR was a bird seen on April 26 by the NSBS party (ELM, IAMcL, PB, BMacT) off Seal Island. The Seal Island party on June 8-10 saw a total of three SOOTY and one MANX SHEARWATERS and two to three WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS, and Davis Finch and Eric Mills had two MANX off Sable Island on May 28. The Brier Island field trip saw two to three Sooties and Wilson's on June 2. Sooties are always the first shearwaters to arrive off this coast; there have so far been no definite sightings of GREATERS.

A LEACH'S STORM-PETREL was found dead at Cape Sable light on April 14, and several more later on (S. Smith). John Kearney saw them swooping over a campfire on Mud Island on May 14, and NSBS parties heard a few singing on Seal Island on May 20 and June 9.

GANNETS, CORMORANTS

Large numbers of GANNETS were seen off Cape Sable on March 14, and "vast numbers passed this spring, until June 10, very late" (S. Smith). John Kearney saw a total of 13 birds between Mud Island and Cape Sable on May 15, and small numbers were seen off Seal Island on June 8-10 and off Brier Island on June 2 (NSBS field parties). Roger Burrows saw an adult and an immature flying about a mile out to sea from Portuguese Cove on May 2, and Clarence Ferguson found a dead bird at Homeville on May 30.

The only GREAT CORMORANT records are from Cape Breton, where Sara MacLean reports small numbers at various places, from March 30 onwards. DOUBLE-CRESTED were much commoner with records from all around the province, also beginning at the end of March. Ian McLaren saw large flights migrating past Seal Island on April 26. P. Hope, D. Cairns, and C. Martin saw a bird on the river at Jacques Landing, Kejimikujik Park, on May 8, about as far as you can get from the sea in Nova Scotia; of course, they nest extensively inland in Upper Canada.

HERONS, EGRETS, BITTERNS

First sightings for GREAT BLUE HERONS were quite early this year: one at Cherry Hill, Lunenburg Co., weekend of March 22-23, and one at Chegoggin, Yarmouth Co., March 26. First recorded arrivals in other places were: April 3, Annapolis; April 5, Economy; April 6, Windsor; April 10, Wine Harbour; and April 12, Big Beach, C.B. Rosemary Eaton has described the arrival of a huge flock (for herons) of 65 to 70 birds, which came slowly winging in and put down on Cole Harbour on April 26 "looking in the dim light as weird as some prehistoric creature, pterodactyls perhaps".

Two GREEN HERONS were seen in widely separated places on May 18. One was at Seal Island in the mouth of the Bay of Fundy and the other at the Amherst PBS, at the extreme head of the Bay. The Seal Island bird was still in residence



A flock of 15 Glossy Ibis photographed by R. Merrick. It is one of three flocks of about this size seen by him near Melanson, Kings Co., in mid-May.

June 8-9. Another (possibly another) Green Heron was at Sable Island June 10 (DWF). A LITTLE BLUE HERON, still showing traces of immature plumage, was seen May 18 in Cape Breton (place not given) by several members of the Cape Breton Branch of the NSBS. A CATTLE EGRET turned up near Port Maitland, Yarmouth Co., on May 8, the only record of this species so far this year. Three GREAT EGRETS reached Nova Scotia this spring: one April 13 at Shag Harbour; one May 1 at the Lusby Marsh, and one May 3 at Upper Canard. There were just twice as many SNOWY EGRETS but the sightings were all at about the same time: single birds were seen April 13 and 14 at Port Latour and Cape Sable Island (Shelburne Co.), two were at Homeville, C.B., May 1 and for several days thereafter; one was seen by the NSBS party on the May 4th outing at Petite Riviere and one at Lawrence-town, Halifax Co., on May 12.

A LOUISIANA HERON reported by E. and G. Crowell at Seal Island April 17-23 makes one more fabulous wanderer to visit this haven for storm-driven strays.

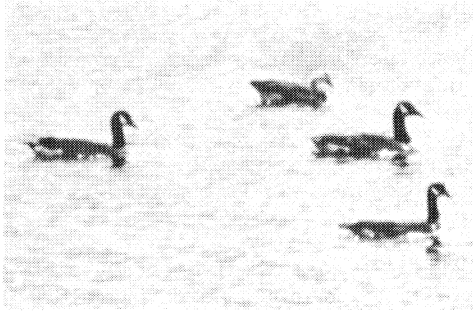
A BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON at Brier April 13 may be the same bird as the one seen there again on the 20th. Another was at Cape Sable May 24 and a night heron, probably of this species, is reported by C. Desplanque at the Amherst Pt Sanctuary June 8.

AMERICAN BITTERNs first made their appearance at Three-Fathom Harbour April 12, at Amherst Pt. April 28, Broad Cove (Lunenburg Co.) May 4, Economy May 10, Sunday Pt., Yarmouth Co., May 19, and Homeville, C.B., May 21. A total of 10 sightings, all of single birds, was reported.

The 'shower' of GLOSSY IBIS to descend on Nova Scotia this year is the heaviest we have ever had. The centre seemed to be in King's Co. where numbers ranging from single birds up to 37 were seen at Gaspereau, Starr's Pt., Grand Pré and Wolfville during the period April 7 to May 11. The maximum number (37) was reported by Cyril Coldwell as seen at Starr's Pt. May 6. Three flocks of about 15 each were seen at Melanson (Digby Co.) about mid-May, and reported by R. Merrick. Sightings in other areas are: five at Pond Cove, Brier Island, May 18; one at Sunday Pt. (Yarmouth Co.) April 26, and two same place June 2; one at Thomasville (Shelburne Co.) April 13, two at Jolicure, N.B. (near the N.S. border) May 12, these birds remaining in the area until the end of the month. Cape Breton claims a single bird, seen by G. Griffin at Glace Bay June 3

GEESE AND DUCKS

CANADA GEESSE were on the move by March 1st when a small flock first appeared at Economy near the head of the Bay of Fundy. These birds and some of the other early movers mentioned below could very well have come across the province from their wintering grounds along the Atlantic coast or from the Melburne Sanctuary near Yarmouth at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. There were four birds at the Grand Pré March 2 and 100 at Amherst Pt. March 6. Along the Atlantic coast "two skeins, one of 24 and one of 110" were seen in the Petite Riviere area March 16. They reached Cape Breton, where they were reported at Homeville, on March 18 (no numbers given). 'Peaks' reported are as follows: 3000 at Cole Harbour March 22; 1000+ at Amherst Pt. March 23, 1700 there March 26, 4000 mid-April. Numbers fell off quickly after the middle of April, and even earlier on their wintering grounds. There were only 15 birds left at the Port Joli and Port Hebert sanctuaries on March 20. Last report from Yarmout



One blue goose and six Canada geese (2 greater and 4 standard) arrived in a cove at the top end of Cole Harbour on April 29. From then on they were under the watchful eyes of the Glazebrook family who live on the cove. The geese spent part of their days in Evatt Bishop's field, which stretches down to the cove. Here they fed, grazing near a drainage ditch in the field, and slept. They would retreat to the water of the cove to rest and feed. Neither the traffic of the nearby highway nor people seemed to disturb them. The blue goose was just part of the little 'flock' - perhaps a dominant member but in no way an outsider. During their stay in the cove they became bold enough to graze on the Glazebrooks' lawn. On May 7 two dogs scared off the geese but on May 10 three geese returned to the cove - the blue and the two larger Canada geese - the four standards had left. These three fed in the field - resting elsewhere. Then another of the Canada geese left and finally near the beginning of June the blue goose and the remaining Canada also departed.

G.H. Elliott

is of six seen on March 16; five were at Cherry Hill (Lunenburg Co.) April 20; three at Cole Harbour May 12 and one at Glace Bay May 13. There were, however, 600 birds still at Amherst Pt. on May 3rd.

BRANT, for the most part, slipped by unnoticed this year. There were 20+ at Cape Sable April 11 and nine on April 21. At Brier Island an estimated 500 went by on April 20; and the only other record is of 15 birds probably of this species flying high over the Amherst sanctuary June 9.

The Smiths of Cape Sable, who are experienced and careful observers, claim a BLACK BRANT "well seen with binoculars in good light, in flight over sea", on March 12.

Stuart Tingley reports one adult SNOW GOOSE March 25, "cross phase", at the Lusby Marsh; also 11 April 16 in the same locality until at least April 18. (There were 13 at Shepody, N.B., close to the N.S. border, May 1st.) A very beautiful full-plumaged DARK PHASE (formerly Blue Goose) was seen and photographed at Cole Harbour early in May by Jim and Gillian Elliott.

Reports of MALLARDS increase each year. There was a male at Economy March 7 and a pair at East Berlin, Queens Co., March 21. There were two at Chebogue, Yarmouth Co., April 21, and two on the same date at Lusby Marsh, where five were seen April 28. Stuart Tingley reports seven pairs in various localities in the Border region seen from late March to early May. Two were seen at Green Bay, Lunenburg Co., this spring, two at Unknown Pond near Glace Bay, two at nearby Gardiner Mines June 10, and a pair in the bog opposite St. Joseph's Hospital in Glace Bay on the same date (EMaCL). First broods of downy young BLACK DUCKS were seen in the Yarmouth area on May 21, four days later than last year. Norman Seymour writes that wintering birds in the Antigonish area appear to be paired by April 4, at which time territorial behaviour began to occur. The only GADWALL report is of one seen in May at Antigonish, inside the Wildlife Management area (Pierre Béland).

Most PINTAILS reported were from the Border area where there were 50 April 12 and 13; at Lusby Marsh, 100, April 21, and still 15, June 9. Other reports are of one to several birds: five males and two females at Lawrencetown Halifax Co., March 22; a male at St. Peter's Channel, C.B., March 2; four males on the Grand Pré March 23, and four males at the Glen, Amherst, May 12. A male GREEN-WINGED TEAL (Eurasian subspecies) was seen at Amherst Pt. April 6 by Stuart Tingley. Two males of this species were later seen (Apr. 16) by other members of the Canadian Wildlife Service in the same locality, and one bird remained until April 30. Green-winged Teal of our own North American race were first reported at Lawrencetown, Halifax Co., on March 22. They showed up at the Lusby Marsh on March 26 when three were seen, and at Economy where there were four males and a female April 6. Along the Atlantic coast they were first reported at Conrad's Beach April 7, and at Homeville, C.B., April 30. At Amherst Pt. there were 100 birds on April 12, seen there again on April 28. The last report from this locality was of two birds on May 31. The first report of BLUE-WINGED TEAL is of a pair at Economy April 5. One was seen at Cranberry Head, Yarmouth Co., April 7, and a pair on the Grand Pré the same date. On April 12 there were 10 at Amherst Pt. and 50 April 13. First broods (of 8 and 3) were seen there on May 31, and a sitting bird (10 eggs) was found at Nyanza, Cape Breton, June 8.

First AMERICAN WIGEON for the season was seen at Lusby Marsh by Stuart Pingley on March 19. There was a pair at Economy April 5, and another pair at Three Fathom Harbour April 12. At Amherst Pt. Sanctuary the first record is of two birds April 12; on April 13 there were nine; and on April 21 and 28 there were 30 of this species. The 'regular' population for these birds in the Lusby Marsh (as reported on June 9) is 10.

A pair of SHOVELERS was at Scott's Pond, Upper Canard, King's Co., from April 11-30 (Barry Sabeau and John F. Kearny). There was also a male at Lusby Marsh May 12-14, and another 'not a repeat' at Amherst Pt. May 14.

All WOOD DUCK sightings this spring are from the Amherst area. There was one bird at Fillmore Lake, just over the Border, in New Brunswick, on March 3; two at Amherst Pt. April 14; three May 4 in the same locality; and several seen there from that date until about mid-June.

VULTURES, HAWKS, EAGLES

Eric Cooke sends the following account of the fate of the season's only TURKEY VULTURE:

"Seen at Brier Island, June 1, by Ross Anderson. On June 6, a Turkey Vulture was caught in a snare apparently set for crows by a farmer at Belliveau's Cove, just across St. Mary's Bay from Brier. Clement Belliveau, a woodcarver in the area who is very much interested in birds (he carves our annual Puffin-of-the-Year Award) heard about it and phoned one of our members. The bird had been killed in the snare. However, arrangements were made to have the specimen, which was in excellent condition, shipped to Halifax where it was turned over to the Nova Scotia Museum."

This incident is a reminder that measures taken to destroy the innocuous and unprotected crow are often destructive to other species.

GOSHAWK reports range from Halifax and Economy north and east to Cape Breton. Most interesting is a nest with adults in attendance seen May 12 at Hopewell, Pictou Co., by an NSBS party led by Harry Brennan. A scattering of SHARP-SHINNED HAWK reports for March through May indicate that these familiar marauders were dispersing in the woods, leaving spring migrants to visit feeders in peace.

Among the buteos, I have only three RED-TAILED HAWK reports, though this can hardly be representative of such a frequently encountered bird. The spring BROAD-WINGED HAWK migration must have passed largely unnoticed. There is a Cape Breton report for Mira, April 28 (A. Spencer), and Fred Dobson reports a series of sightings at Brookside, Halifax Co., April 28 to May 1. Roger Burrows reports a single Broad-winged Hawk for Kejimikujik National Park, May 6-9, and also sends a suggestively late report for the Chester area: May 27. ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS withdrew from the province in an orderly manner late in April, seen for the last time on the Grand Pré meadows April 21 (RDL), and in the border marshes April 27 (CD). The latest report comes from Eric Holdway at Pictou: two birds on May 2.

Twenty-nine BALD EAGLE reports, representing approximately 50 birds, are scattered from Yarmouth County to Cape Breton, with the Cape Bretoners, as usual, well represented. Of the 65% of the reports which designated 'adult' or 'immature', 46% (15 birds) were reported as immature. This is up considerably from 33% for the winter report period. It will be interesting to see if this statistic fluctuates in a predictable manner. The Meyerowitz family at St. Esprit send a saddening report of two eagles shot this spring near Irish Cove.

A few MARSH HAWKS undoubtedly wintered in the province. An immature was present throughout the winter on the Grand Pré meadows, and was joined by an adult male on March 16 (B. Sabeau, RDL), probably an early migrant. The next report comes from Amherst, March 27 (ST), followed by Cherry Hill, Lunenburg Co., March 29-30 (SF *et al.*), and Cape Sable, April 8 (SS). The first Cape Breton report comes from St. Esprit, April 18 (Meyerowitz family). Fifteen reports, scattered throughout the province, for the rest of April and May indicate that these familiar hawks had returned to their usual haunts. A particularly interesting report comes from Cole Harbour where, on April 14, an adult male was observed chasing 'Ipswich Sparrows'. As far as our only exclusive nesting (sub)species is concerned, this seems to be heaping injury on insult.

Nearly 30 reports of OSPREY represent approximately 60 individuals. The earliest report comes from Lawrencetown (Halifax Co.) on April 7 (E. Crathorne). This is a full two weeks later than last year's first report of these conspicuous birds. Shirley and John Cohrs fixed the arrival date of a familiar pair (which nests on a hydro pole near Indian Path, Lunenburg Co.) between April 13 and 19. There was a bird on this nest, apparently incubating, April 27, with the mate in attendance on a nearby tree. Norman Seymour located six nests this spring in the Antigonish area, and observed two additional pairs. Other reports include fragmentary nesting indications (birds carrying nesting material, or re-occupying old nest sites), and a few notable concentrations, such as six individuals at White's Lake, catching gaspereaux, on May 29 (FWD). The Smiths report an Osprey found shot at Cape Sable, May 25.

The Broad Cove GYRFALCON seen last February 9 (and reported in the April *Newsletter*) was the only definite sighting for the winter and spring in the province. Possible gyrs are reported for Round Hill, Annapolis Co. (March 14, WEW, but not seen by him) and Green Bay (April 19, S & C Cohrs). The only PEREGRINE FALCON reported was a dead bird (apparently not shot) picked up during the winter near Louisburg, Cape Breton, and reported by Frank Robertson in his column.

MERLINS are lightly reported, but a report from Round Hill, February 28 (WEW) suggests at least one wintering bird. Three reports for April and one for May include a Merlin on Seal Island seen by an NSBS party, April 26-28. The earliest AMERICAN KESTREL report comes from the Smiths on Cape Sable, on March 18. By April 5, Thelma Hawkins reported two from Wilmot, Annapolis Co.: "These are 'our' hawks again and very busy and conspicuous most days. Our bantar rooster is outraged each time one passes through the yard, although their nesting box is in a tree just beyond the henhouse." Fourteen other reports depict the spread of these small falcons through the province. April 8-10 they were first seen in the Parrsboro/Economy area (FS), and April 15 gives us the first Cape Breton sighting, at Sydney Forks (R. Blakeburn).

GROUSE AND MARSH BIRDS

The single report of SPRUCE GROUSE for the period is a roadkill in Guysborough Co. (G. MacLeod). The seven reports of the resident RUFFED GROUSE generally reflect chance sightings, telling little of the status of the birds. Several Ruffed Grouse were present at the Amherst Pt. Sanctuary in April (CD) and were first heard drumming there April 27 (ST). Six RING-NECKED PHEASANT reports are similarly inconclusive.

All of the season's reports of SORAS (as well as virtually all the other marsh-bird reports) come from the border region. At the Amherst Pt. Bird Sanctuary, two Soras were present May 4, and more than 10 by May 15 (ST). Con Desplanque notes 10 for the same location, May 26, and describes them as regular from that date on.

A spring PURPLE GALLINULE is an extremely rare record, particularly in view of the fact that it comes from Cape Breton. The following account is taken from a letter from Dan Banks, Wildlife Biologist with the Department of Lands and Forests at Baddeck, a copy of which was received by Roger Pocklington:

"We have in the department freezer here in Baddeck one Purple Gallinule. The bird was rescued (alive) from a cat in the town of Port Hawkesbury, Richmond County, on May 19, 1974 We picked the bird up the same day and it died two days later of unknown causes...."

Two COMMON GALLINULES returned to Amherst Pt. May 4 (ST, CD). One or two birds were seen regularly by Con Desplanque, in the sanctuary, in late May and early June, and he concluded that they were 'probably nesting'. The only other report comes from Yarmouth, of a bird seen by several observers, May 11-12 (CRKA, MWH, D & M Henry).

The AMERICAN COOTS returned to Amherst Point along with the Common Gallinules. Two sightings are reported: May 4, two birds (ST, CD) and a single bird May 6 (ST). Numbers fluctuated from 30 on April 13, 100 on April 21, 40 on April 28, 50 on May 3, 40 on May 26, to 20 on June 9. The peak number for Pictou was 120, where 24 had been noted earlier in the month (Apr. 6). There were still 20 birds in Melbourne Sanctuary on May 12.

SHOREBIRDS

There were no early reports of SEMIPALMATED PLOVER this year. The first is of a single bird at Pinckney's Point May 12, and another at Sunday Point May 19 (both Yarmouth Co.). There were 12 on the flats at Cape Sable June 12, and the Henrys report a pair with a flightless chick on the tarmac at Yarmouth airport on June 6.

A PIPING PLOVER, one of the earliest of the spring arrivals, first appeared this year at Cherry Hill, March 29. There were two at Cable Sable and three at Conrad's Beach on April 7, while the number in the latter locality had grown to five by April 12. They were reported nesting at Port Hebert May 6, and at Cape Sable June 2 where a young bird was seen. A nest with four eggs was

found June 9 at Conrad's Beach "same place as last year and six birds at Cherry Hill, June 15, behaved as though there was at least one nest in the vicinity.

KILLDEER, according to reports, continue to increase. Single birds were seen at Economy March 5 and 20, April 5 to 7, and from then on until the end of the month. Sightings of singles and up to four birds come from a number of localities in the southwestern half of the province during April and May, and two adults with four flightless young were seen at Amherst Point June 6.

First report of migrant BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER is of nine at Cape Sable April 14. All other sightings are during May and early June, the greatest number being 100 at Chezzetcook May 26, where there were just eight on June 8.

One RUDDY TURNSTONE appeared at Crescent Beach May 18 in company with Willets and a small flock of Least Sandpipers.

W.J. Mills is of the opinion that WOODCOCK on migration drop down wherever they happen to be when their fuel runs low, regardless of suitability of habitat. He has received, in the past, reports of a number of birds of this species which were found in bizarre places, the last one at the Rockingham Fire Station on March 14. Others appeared in more conventional habitats: at Round Hill March 26; Cole harbour April 1; and Wine Harbour April 3, where they were heard in their courtship performance. The Cohrs report that a marsh at Nyanza, C.B., on June 8-9 was "full of Woodcock soaring above their nests, and acting like stunt-flying airplanes, making hollow moaning sounds with their wings."

Earliest report of COMMON SNIPE is of one 'winnowing' at Amherst Point, April 6. A total of 14 sightings (from one to three birds) during the first half of April were all, apart from this, from Lunenburg and Kings Counties. Snipe were heard at Wine Harbour April 20 and were first noted in Cape Breton April 26, at Unknown Pond.

WHIMBREL usually give Nova Scotia the 'go by' on spring migration, but this year there are at least two records, possibly three: a probable at St. Esprit May 14, and several definitely there May 17; and one at Three Fathom Harbour May 26.

There was an UPLAND SANDPIPER at Karsdale, Annapolis Co., on April 29 (JJ), and on May 8 two birds were seen at Cape Sable, flying in from the south "about 100 feet up."

First SPOTTED SANDPIPER showed up at Cranberry Head, Yarmouth Co., May 8, where three were seen May 22 and one on June 2. There was one at Five Island Lake (Halifax Co.) May 12, and on May 17 they appeared at Green Bay, Lunenburg Co., Cape Sable, and Economy. The first Cape Breton reports are of two at Big Beach May 19, and three at Glace Bay May 20, where they were "common from then on" (SMacL).

SOLITARY SANDPIPERS are rare in spring. There was one on Mud Island May 14-15 (JFK), and at least one on Seal Island May 18-20 (NSBS party).

WILLETS reached southwestern Nova Scotia during the last days of April. They were at Green Bay and Petite-Riviere, Lunenburg Co., on the 28th, and at

Starr's Point, Kings Co., and Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co., on the 29th. There were 14 at Chebogue Point on April 30 and an unspecified number at Homeville, C.B., on May 1. A nest with four eggs was found June 3 at Gardiner Mines, C.B., by R. Beecher.

Early GREATER YELLOWLEGS were seen at Yarmouth April 1, and at Amherst Point and Lusby Marsh April 25; there was a lone bird at Kingston April 27. The first seen at Economy were three on May 7, and in Cape Breton three on April 28 at Homeville. Something like a 'peak' was noted at Amherst Point May 14; there were 25+ there, and 60+ the next day. Francis Spalding saw eight birds leaving Economy on May 12, calling, flying high and heading straight north. LESSER YELLOWLEGS were first seen April 27 when there were five at Three Fathom Harbour. Next report is of one with a party of Greater at Seaforth Passage on May 1. There were single birds at Green Bay and Port Hebert on May 3, and in the Yarmouth area on May 12, 14 and 19. At Economy there was a bird on May 13 and another (the same?) May 22.

PURPLE SANDPIPERS lingered well into May this year, although greatest numbers were seen in March and April. There were six at Cherry Hill on March 17 and a flock of 30+ on April 13 at nearby Crescent Beach, where there were still 25 on May 4. There were six at Cape Sable March 8, 50 at Long Island, Grand Pre, April 21, and a single bird at Economy April 23. Late records: three at Pictou May 19, 24 at Conrad's Beach on May 26, and two in breeding plumage on May 29 at Lockeport (RSW).

Just three PECTORAL SANDPIPERS were sighted this spring, two in the Yarmouth area April 17 and 21, and one at Cape Sable May 17.

Two WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, rare spring migrants, were seen at South Bar, Sydney Harbour, on March 23 (HH).

Small flocks of LEAST SANDPIPERS were seen at Port Hebert on May 16, at Economy between May 15 and 22, and at Crescent Beach May 18. Ian McLaren has found and photographed a nest of this species for the second year running at Conrad's Beach.

Four SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were at Town Marsh, Brier Island, on May 19 and a STILT SANDPIPER, another spring rarity, was seen by John Kearney and party on Mud Island during their May 14-15 trip. The Stilt, still in its winter plumage, was examined at close range and field marks carefully noted.

The only report of SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS is of two at Port Hebert May 16.

A HUDSONIAN GODWIT was seen and well described by Adele Hurlburt at Sunday Point June 2. Two SANDERLINGS at Cape Sable on April 14 are the only spring sightings of this species in 1974.

S. Smith reports a flight of 200 RED PHALAROPES heading east, south of Cape Sable, on May 25. About 12 birds were found dead after collisions with the light or with wires, during night migration. The only other reports of Red Phalaropes are of single birds at Mud Island May 14-15 (JFK) and Sable Island June 2 (DWF). The Smiths also saw a WILSON'S PHALAROPE at close range at Cape Sable on May 19, and one injured and several dead NORTHERNS (date not given).

Four female Northern's in spring plumage were seen and photographed at close range by the Cohrs near Bird Island, C.B., on June 8.

JAEGERS THROUGH AUKS

We have received no reports of JAEGERS this spring.

HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS were seen all around the province and need no comment. The June 8-10 Seal Island party was intrigued to see that, although the Blackbacks make up less than 10% of the breeding population, they outnumber Herrings in the flocks which loaf on the central pond. We guessed that these must be birds from some adjacent colony which lacks a fresh water swimming pool. GLAUCOUS GULLS were mostly gone by the end of March, but there was a late flock of seven at Louisburg April 13 (HH) and an injured bird on Sable Island on May 28 (DWF). ICELAND GULLS stayed longer; the Smiths' last Cape Sable sighting was May 23, the last at Glace Bay was May 24 (HH), and at Sable Island was June 8 (DWF); but the latest for the province was four birds at Seal Island June 8-10 (NSBS party). About a dozen RING-BILLED GULLS at Economy through most of April (FS), at least one bird at Victoria Beach, Annapolis Co., on April 30 (JJ), and a bird at Glace Bay on May 16 and for several days afterwards (SMacL).

There were several late reports of both BONAPARTE'S and BLACK-HEADED GULLS. Single Bonaparte's were seen at Seal Island on April 28 (IAMcL), Smith's Cove, Digby Co., on May 3 (AR), and in the Amherst Point area on May 3-4 (CD), and there were a couple at Brier Island on June 1-2 (RGG and JMcN). The usual flock of Black-headed hung around the Bedford Basin sewer outlet all through April, and there were still three there on May 5 (IAMcL), as well as assorted sightings from Yarmouth Co. up to Glace Bay. Charlie Allen has been plagued with doubts this spring about separating Bonaparte's and Black-headed (it's good to know that the experts have these problems, too), but he's sure that the two birds he saw at Sunday Point on April 26 were rather late Black-headed. The most unusual sighting is a bird on the Glace Bay dump on April 22 which had a yellow plastic marker around its neck (RB, EMacR). As Sara Maclean points out, this bird was probably colour-marked as part of a research project in Europe. We're forwarding the record to the British Trust for Ornithology, who keep records of colour-marking schemes. It would be interesting to know where our Black-headed Gulls come from.

The first tern sightings were two COMMON TERNS at Seal Island on April (IAMcL). They reached Tusket River, Upper Wedgeport, by May 9 (D and MH), Three Fathom Harbour by May 12 (EHC), Port Hebert by May 17 (RSW), and Morien Bar by May 19 (RB). Ian McLaren saw ARCTICS in Three Fathom Harbour on May 12. The NSBS field party went through the east end of Grand Passage, Brier Island, on June 2 and saw a colony of ca. 200 pairs of terns on the small lighthouse island mostly Commons, but with a few Arctics, too. We have no ROSEATE records so far. The only CASPIAN TERN is out of province - at St. Peter's Bay, P.E.I., on May 11 (RB). Davis Finch saw a BLACK TERN on Sable Island on June 10, and there were ca. three on Morien Sandbar, C.B., on June 16 (EMacL).

Auk records are sparse, as is to be expected at this time of year. Our only common breeding species is the BLACK GUILLEMOT: the Cohrs had "hundreds" nesting on Hertford and Ciboux Islands, C.B., on June 8; on the same weekend the NSBS Seal Island party thought that 50 pairs might be nesting on Seal Island.

The party also had a RAZORBILL. There were the usual Black Guillemots, and also at least one COMMON MURRE on June 2 on the Brier Island field trip. The only COMMON PUFFIN sightings come from the Cohrs, who saw them on their trip to Hertford and Ciboux Islands.

DOVES THROUGH OWLS

It is not possible to distinguish wintering MOURNING DOVES from possible new arrivals in the 16 reports from throughout the province. At Yarmouth, C.R.K. Allen writes that "at least two were still here", at the feeder, April 3. Willett Mills reports several birds at Halifax feeders in May, and the Cohrs report a pair of Mourning Doves at their feeder from May 22 to at least June 15. To the best of the editor's knowledge, there is still no confirmed nesting in the province of this fairly common resident.

The only BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO report comes from Wilmot, June 8 (TH). This species has been fairly common in the Valley in recent summers, and this lone sighting (in contrast to six in last July's *Newsletter*) is somewhat disturbing.

Six GREAT HORNED OWL reports indicate that our resident population made itself conspicuous from late March through May. The earliest report is Eric Cooke's from Cole Harbour, March 22 and 29. Clarence Ferguson watched a Great Horned Owl catch a mouse in the grass at Homeville, April 8, and on May 12, Harry Brennan showed an NSBS party a nest with two young in Pictou Co. Mr. Brennan also produced two nests of the commoner BARRED OWL. Joseph Johnson, one of the province's most enthusiastic owlers, noted 11 to 15 Barred Owls calling in a seven-square-mile area around Karsdale, Annapolis Co., during the last ten days of April, and estimated four to five mated pairs. Roger Burrows reports a pair of Barred Owls with two juvenals at Kejimikujik National Park, June 13. Mr. Burrows also reports the period's only LONG-EARED OWLS, also at Keji, heard May 8-9 and June 3, near Jeremy Bay. SHORT-EARED OWLS were present on the Grand Pre meadows all winter, and by late March had become aggressive toward Rough-legged Hawks, and toward each other. This behaviour, suggesting the beginning of territoriality and nesting activities, was observed March 24 and April 3 (RDL). The Grand Pre Short-ears were observed throughout April and as late as May 9 (JFK *et al.*), suggesting that nesting did occur. The only other report comes, not surprisingly, from the border marshes, where Con Desplanque had two Short-ears at Lusby, May 3.

Finally, the little SAW-WHET OWL is exceptionally well reported. In his column, Frank Robertson reported Saw-whets calling in Victoria Co., in April, and Fred Dobson heard one at Brookside, Halifax Co., May 6. At Keji, Roger Burrows had one calling May 7, and four individuals May 8-9. On a return visit to Keji, June 3, he heard three Saw-whets. These owls were heard nightly at Yarmouth during the first two weeks of June (CRKA), and Harry Brennan showed the NSBS party in Pictou Co. two nests on May 12.

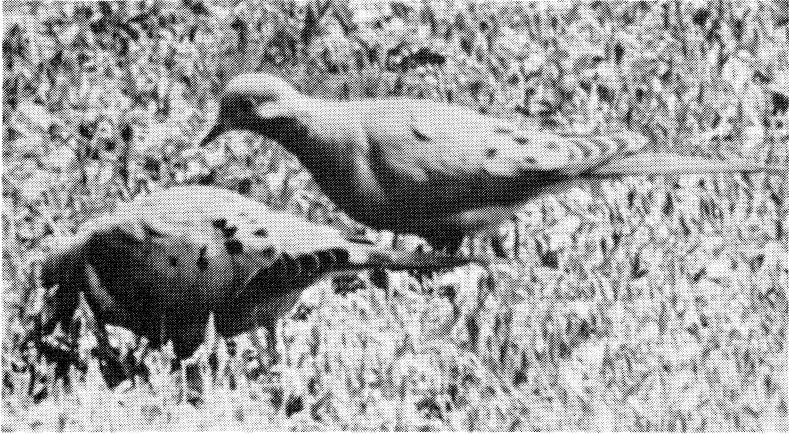


Photo: Shirley Cohrs.

A pair of Mourning Doves has haunted the Cohrs garden at Armdale since the birds were first seen on May 22nd. They would come regularly and feed on brown rice scattered on the ground. At present (July 8th) Shirley reports that only one dove is seen at a time so she hopes the birds are nesting. She comments on the delicate pink and purple iridescence of the doves' plumage - so much more subtle than that of the domestic pigeon. The doves perch in the trees and coo and coo melodiously. The Cohrs said they had seen one of this species several years ago but it only stayed around for a week.

There are many large old trees in the Cohrs' garden and half of the area has been deliberately left to grow wild in order to attract birds. Their garden was once part of an 100-acre zoological and botanical gardens established in 1847 by Andrew Downs. There was a woodland area and a stream, and the zoo contained birds and animals from various parts of the world. There was also a museum and an aquarium. The gardens closed in 1868. With such a head start (it was the first zoological gardens in America - north of Mexico) it is sad that this area was lost to the public. It is nice to know that the Cohrs are conserving their corner of it as a habitat for wild, free-flying birds.

GOATSUCKERS THROUGH KINGFISHER

This seems to have been an exceptionally hard spring for the nighthawks and swifts in the province. Major mortalities were reported, and torpid, dehydrated and dying swifts were observed in May in Wolfville and elsewhere. Phyllis Dobson writes: "Nighthawks, Chimney Swifts and Hummingbirds all seen singly (on excursions and BBS routes through June 16) but they seem late and rather few This is June 20, and no swift nor nighthawk over the garden as yet, and I always have them"

Taking the species in order, Willett Mills reports a single WHIP-POOR-WILL singing at Boulderwood "recorded each spring, for many, many years." Several early COMMON NIGHTHAWK reports from Cape Breton are of dubious value: nighthawks are known to be late migrants and are very commonly confused with the early Woodcock, whose *peent* calls are very similar to the nighthawk's calls. A report from Brier Island, May 19 (JFK), is probably the first authentic one. It is interesting that last year's earliest nighthawk report was for Brier as well, May 20. They had reached Economy by May 23 (FS) and Cape Breton by May 30 (Meyerowitz family). Several "late firsts" were reported, including June 7 for Yarmouth (CRKA).

CHIMNEY SWIFTS appeared simultaneously at Halifax (CWH) and Economy (FS) on May 15, and reached Guysborough Co. the next day (G. MacLeod). They were first noted in Yarmouth May 17 (12 to 14 birds, MWH) and at Port Hebert (RSW), and May 18 at Amherst Point (ST), followed by Cape Sable, May 19 (SS). This very abrupt, fast-moving wave is typical of the swifts, which arrive late, and *en masse*. Heavy mortalities such as those observed this year are related to this behaviour pattern, which renders a significant percentage of the total regional population vulnerable to cold weather in late May.

Sylvia Bower at Lower Ohio, Shelburne Co., had the first RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD of the year, May 14, along with W.E. Whitehead, who reported one from Round Hill, Annapolis Co., for the same day. It can hardly be coincidence that both these observers had hummingbirds on exactly the same date last year. By May 15, the Round Hill bird had been joined by another, and two appeared farther up the Valley at Wilmot (TH). By May 18, the wave had reached Economy (FS) and Halifax (CWH). First reports from Pictou are for May 27 (EH) and Cape Breton (North Sydney) May 31 (Emma Lewis, *vide* FR).

Phyllis Dobson finds BELTED KINGFISHERS "slightly more in evidence than usual" this spring. There is a break in the reports from March 16 to April 5, but it seems safe to assume that at least a few birds overwintered, especially in view of the many February reports (*cf.* April *Newsletter*). Kingfishers appeared in Guysborough Co. April 5 (G. MacLeod), in Yarmouth Co. April 6 (CRKA) and at Amherst Point the same day (ST). Twelve more reports for April and 16 for May reflect the gradual spread of the birds across the province.

WOODPECKERS

The first COMMON FLICKER migrants reached the southwest end of the province during the first week of April: Cape Sable April 2 (SS), Tusket April 6 (CRKA), Markland April 7 (MWH), and Yarmouth April 8 (MWH). On April 8,

this clearly defined wave reached Economy (FS) and had reached Guysborough Co. by April 15 (G. MacLeod). The earliest Cape Breton report is of two birds at Glace Bay, April 21.

Our resident PILEATED WOODPECKERS were well reported. Francis Spalding found them "not uncommon" around Economy in March, and a nest was seen by an NSBS party in Pictou Co., May 12. Four other sightings come from Keji (R. Burrows, R. Mexton) and one from Norman Seymour in Antigonish Co. Last winter's RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS gradually disappeared from feeders, but we have a single spring sighting: Brier Island cemetery, May 18 (JFK, GF). YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER reports are sparse, but the early migrants are quiet and easily missed. The Cohrs had one in Halifax, April 24, and the NSBS party at Seal Island observed one April 26.

The resident BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS were observed on four occasions. Two sightings come from Keji, May 5 and June 3 (R. Burrows), one from Cherry Hill, Lunenburg Co. (the Cohrs), and one from Antigonish Co. (NS). HAIRY WOODPECKERS and DOWNY WOODPECKERS were reported throughout. Eric Holdway sends the following from Pictou: Hairys visited residential areas there in March and April, disappearing April 21. Downies came earlier and stayed a little later (April 30) before leaving the feeders for their nesting areas.

FLYCATCHERS TO CORVIDS

The EASTERN KINGBIRD first was reported, as is so often the case, by the Smiths (SS) on Cape Sable, on April 18. One was reported at Brookside, Halifax Co. (FWD) on April 30, with subsequent single sighting on May 27; a pair was present on June 4. Kingbirds were first seen on May 15 at the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary (ST), on May 16 at Economy (FS), and on May 18-20 on Seal Island by an NSBS field party. On May 19, seven were seen at Port Hebert (RSW): an abundance for a "first sighting"! On the same day Kingbirds were seen at Chebogue, Yarmouth Co. (MWH, DK). Kingbirds were not seen early in the north of the province; first sightings of single birds were made in Antigonish Co. on June 3 (NS) and at No. 2 Dominion Colliery, Glace Bay, on June 9 (E. MacL).

Only one WESTERN KINGBIRD report came in this year, of a single bird at Petite Riviere, Lunenburg Co., by Chris Cohrs, who observed the bird on two successive days at close range with good visibility. "It couldn't have been anything else," he was quoted as saying.

Two reports, presumably of the same bird, were received for the GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, both by (RB) on June 11, at Kejimkujik. The first was "heard calling near the Fish Hatchery, in mature hardwoods (beech, maple, oak)" the second was seen and heard near the Amphitheatre in the Park.

The big news story of the Flycatchers this year belongs to the EASTERN PHOEBE. More reports came in than ever before, and what is perhaps more important, they ranged all over the southern half of the province, reaching as far north as Economy. Those interested should read Tufts (Birds of Nova Scotia) and then look up Bob Lamberton's rather prophetic article in the July 1973 *Newsletter*. Twenty-four separate sightings were reported this year, the first

being (it almost goes without saying) that of the Smiths (SS) of a single bird on Cape Sable on April 5, which really is extraordinarily early. RSW saw one at Lockeport on April 12, and MWH reports three on April 17 with singles seen on April 21 and April 29-30, at Yarmouth. TH reports seeing single birds on April 18 and 22 at Wilmot, Annapolis Co.: "Delighted to have them back again, and this one comes right into our back yard and feeds on insects right in sight of the kitchen." Walter Chute saw one bird on April 16 in the Marlborough Woods, Halifax, and J and SC saw what was probably the same bird in the same place at Petite Riviere on two successive weekends, April 20 and 27. Reports of sightings on April 27 and 28 come from Outram, on the North Mountain (RDL), the Gaspereau Valley (RDL), the Amherst Bird Sanctuary (ST), Port Joli. (Natalie Addelson), Second Peninsula, Lunenburg Co. (CHC). SB saw one at Middle Clyde, Shelburne Co., on May 8. The two sightings, never before so far north, from Economy, were from Francis Spalding on May 24 and June 2; RSW saw one on June 4 at Port Hebert, and one was present on June 12-15 at Brookside, Halifax Co. Keep 'em coming, gang!

An EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHER put in its first appearance on May 18 and 19 at Markland (MWH, DK, AH), 82 were seen 18-20 May at Seal Island (NSBS party) - obviously part of the same 'wave'. The first positive YELLOW-BELLIED was seen and heard "calling from a black spruce bog" in Keji at Joe's Brook (RB) on May 24; another was heard at Maitland Bridge on June 11. The only other report is from Francis Spalding in Economy who saw two to three on June 3, 4. The ALDER (Traill's) Flycatcher was seen more often; from May 17 on at Economy (FS) and on May 18 at MacNab's Island (NSBS). The beginning of June saw the bird generally distributed throughout the province. The LEAST Flycatcher was first seen on May 16 at the Amherst Point Sanctuary (but no more were seen until June 1 - ST). On May 17 one was seen at Economy (FS) and on May 19 the Smiths saw one at Cape Sable and MWH saw one at Markland, Yarmouth Co.; by June 11, SB reports a "nest with eggs, seven feet high in a spruce: fairly open woods, at the edge of an old logging road", at Upper Ohio, Shelburne Co.

The EASTERN WOOD PEWEE decided this year to join us on our field days; by far the majority of records for this species were from the NSBS field trips - Seal Island May 18-20 (2), Hants Co. May 25 (1), Brier Island June 1-2 (present), June 8-10, Seal Island (about 40). D and MH report one at Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co., on May 20, and Francis Spalding reported them at Economy from June 4 on.

The OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was first reported by D and MH on May 17, at Upper Wedgeport, with subsequent sightings on June 3, 5, and 12. Two were seen at Maccan on June 2 (CD), and two were at Port Hebert on June 2 (RSW). R. Beecher reports one in the "Sanctuary Area", Cape Breton, on June 7.

The HORNEED LARK, one of our winter flocking birds, seem generally to have disappeared by April. Some late records from Economy (FS) 40 during April, Lusby, Colchester Co. (CD), 150 April 12, and Morien Bar (NSBS field party) 24 on April 24.

An early BARN SWALLOW was spotted at Cole Harbour April 19. Forerunners were appearing around the province by the end of April; two on April 28 at Cape Sable (SS), one on April 29 Yarmouth Co. (MWH), and one on April 30 at Brookside, Halifax Co. (FWD). By mid-May sightings were province-wide with 200 at Seal Island May 18. These swallows did not appear to suffer so badly in the storm of May 28, although some reports of dead birds are recorded. A noticeable delay in

nesting is reported in some areas where nests were being constructed the last week of June.

Single reports of CLIFF SWALLOWS come from Cape Sable to Margaree Harbour, C.B. C. Desplanque records seeing a colony of more than 25 nests at a farm in Upper Nappa, Colchester Co.

A mild beginning to April brought the TREE SWALLOW back early this year. On April 7 four were seen at Kejimkujik (RH), one appeared at Cape Sable (SS), and one was seen at Pleasant Lake, Yarmouth Co. (D and MH). By the next day the numbers had swollen to 20, leading CRKA to pronounce Pleasant Lake the 'Capistrano of Nova Scotia'. By April 20, birds were appearing generally in Annapolis Co. and Halifax Co. Reports show swallows in great numbers as waves crossed the province. On April 28 (HPM) estimated 1000 birds catching Mayflies on Five Islands Lake, Halifax CO., (SB) reports 300 at Upper Ohio, Shelburne Co., May 17, and 200 were seen May 18 on Seal Island (PRD). The Tree Swallow appears to have fared badly in the snowstorm of May 28. Many were found dead following the storm and those remaining alive were disoriented and disappeared from their nesting sites, some not returning for a week or more. Breeding bird surveys show fewer than normal nesting sites, but on June 7 (JSC) report seeing thousands of Tree and Bank Swallows over the spit at Margaree Harbour, C.B.

Some interesting questions arise from the observations made of swallows during and after the May 28 snowstorm:

1. Were tree swallows affected most because they had established nests and were reluctant to leave them while barn swallows were not yet nesting and free to seek food and refuge elsewhere?
2. Because of their native habit of nesting in buildings or under roofs were the barn swallows able to seek more protection than the tree swallows which naturally nest out in the open?
3. Was the decrease in tree swallows noted in the Breeding Bird Surveys due to decidedly fewer swallows or to the birds being off in other areas (see Cohrs report from Margaree Harbour, C.B.)?
4. Will the delay in the start of nesting brought on by this single snowstorm affect the Barn Swallows' proclivity for trying for a second brood?

BANK SWALLOWS were first seen in Yarmouth Co. May 12 at Sunday Point (MWH), in Shelburne Co. at Mud Island May 14 (JFK), and at Cape Sable May 14 (SS). By May 18 Stuart Tingley reports seeing 20 at the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary. On that same weekend a party reports seeing 150, May 18, 100 May 19, and 25 May 20 on Seal Island (PRD). In Pictou Co. the first migrants were on one nest site by May 31 (EH).

Three ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS were seen May 12 over the Seal Pond at Shubenacadie. They appeared quite at home and were feeding with some Tree Swallows (FWD). There was at least one among the very large swallow flocks at Seal Island on May 18-20 (WSBS party). At Kejimkujik National Park, two were reported on June 6 (RB).

A female or immature PURPLE MARTIN was seen at Chebogue, Yarmouth Co.,

April 21 (MWH) while three males were on Seal Island April 26 (NSBS party). Later groups on Seal Island saw six on May 18 and a single bird June 9. The Rose Colony of Amherst has 12 nests in the 16 nesting boxes (CD). Some of these birds were reported to have died in the May 28 storm.

The four members of the Corvidae family which are resident in N.S. were reported common and boisterous in all areas of the province. Mrs. John MacKay writes from Boularderie, C.B., about the BLUE JAY "very bold and plentiful all winter and spring". A pair of RAVENS were seen rebuilding a nest on a pylon along the TransCanada Highway near Lusby on March 3 (CD). R. Beecher reports from Glace Bay, C.B., that by June 12 young crows were "out of the nest and creeping around in the brambles."

CHICKADEES TO SHRIKES

There were no reports to suggest any possible migration of the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE. They were present in small numbers distributed throughout the province.

Similarly, BOREAL CHICKADEES have been widely reported from Yarmouth to Cape Breton Counties, but in no numbers indicative of any migratory movements. Four were present at Port Hebert at the end of March (RSW), APBS had "regulars" in April and May, and there were three at Green Bay, Lunenburg Co., in April (J & SC). NSBS observers on the Hants Co. day trip on May 25 counted three, and the May 18-20 Seal Island trip netted six.

NUTHATCHES were very scarce this year. Shirley Cohrs writes "conspicuous by their absence. None of either species seen or heard anywhere." Thelma Hawkins tells of a single WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH April 10 at Wilmot which "was noticeable to us because we had none all winter. They used to be ever present with us and we miss seeing them." All reports are of one or two birds only: - one March 10 and April 3 at Pictou (EH), two April 8 at Port Maitland (MWH, DK, CRKA), one at Markland April 16 (MWH, DK), and one at Cape Sable April 22 (SS).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH reports are just as thin: - R.B. Blackeburn had one at his feeder in Sydney Forks from March 3 to May 13, one appeared at Louisburg March 20 (RB), and there were three March 25 at APBS (ST). Marion Hilton saw two at Markland on April 19 and again on 22nd (same birds?). Amherst Point yielded one bird April 20 and one on 27th (same one?)(CD). The only red-breast report from Shelburne Co. is of two at Lower Ohio on May 7 (SB). Even prolific Seal Island could only produce a single report of one bird on May 19 (NSBS).

An early-singing BROWN CREEPER was heard by Marion Hilton *et al.* on April 7 at Markland, Yarmouth Co. April 8 found one at Upper Wedgeport (D and MH), April 14 one at Green Bay (J and SC), and from 17th on several more in Yarmouth Co. where up to 15 were present on Seal Island April 26-29 (IAMacL).

Official arrival date for our migrant WINTER WREN is April 8 at Cape Sable (SS). From the subsequent reports it would seem to be a bonanza year. Five early birds were singing at APBS April 14 (ST), Cape Sable had two more on 16th as did Markland, Yarmouth Co. (MWH and DK). Eric Cooke heard eight April 20 on Brier Island, the same day that the first arrival (5) was marked at Port

Hebert (RSW). Numbers peaked at Seal Island April 26-29 where up to 90 were seen and heard (IAMcL *et al.*). Halifax Co. arrival date was April 27 at Brookside (FWD), and by May 4 they had reached Economy (FS) and Guysborough Co. (GMacL). Stuart Tingley writes that they are more common than usual in the border region this year. Five were heard on the Hants Co. day (May 25) and reports are numerous from all parts of the province for June (except for Cape Breton from which no reports of this species have been received).

A SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN highlighted birding on Seal Island May 20 and again (same one?) June 8-10 (Dick Brown *et al.*).

MOCKINGBIRDS are 'up' this year with at least 14 sighted including several pairs: March 4 (1) Yarmouth town (MWH), March 21 (2) Markland (MWH, DK, AH), (2) at Seal Island April 26-29, and (1) seen there May 18-20 (NSBS). Reports come also from Halifax Co. (WJM, SC), Port Hebert (RSW), Alma, Pictou Co (RB), and Portapique, Colchester Co. (FS). In Shelburne town during May a pair of mockingbirds were observed performing their mating ritual in the middle of a graveyard - perhaps more appropriate to mourning doves!

Four very early CATBIRDS are reported, three from Port Hebert April 17 (RSW) and one from Brier Island April 20 (EHC). Then something of an hiatus until May 15 when one appeared at Keji Park. Sightings (and/or hearings) came thick and fast thereafter with one in Yarmouth Co. on May 16 (MWH and DK), the first one at Cape Sable on 17th (Smiths) and Annapolis Co. (Round Hill) on 18th (WEH). On Seal Island May 18, 19 and 20 NSBS members were literally tripping over Catbirds present in numbers estimated at 200, 155+ and 150 on the three days. Perhaps they were all in one place at one time for in spite of such an aggregation they do not seem to be present in more than normal numbers elsewhere in the province since then. By June 10 only seven were left on Seal. Breeding bird surveys found five July 9 on Peggy's Cove Road and four at Beaverbank (both Halifax Co.).

Nineteen BROWN THRASHER reports have come in with the earliest coming as one would expect from the western end of the province. Ian McLaren on Seal Island April 26-29 found "up to 10". Betty June Smith had two on Cape Sable "around early May," and on May 16 one was seen in Yarmouth (MWH). May 18 found one reported from Brier Island (GF and JFK), and one from Markland (MWH *et al.*). Ralph Widrig in Shelburne Co. writes of seeing one at Port Hebert on May 19. The only other reports are for June in Halifax Co.: one at Peggy's Cove (CWH) and a pair at Conrad's Beach, both on 9th.

Reports of overwintering ROBINS come from Glace Bay (EMacL) and Cumberlar Co. (CD). Our first spring arrival report comes from Tusket where C.R.K. Allan saw a lone harbinger on March 17. A week later scattered sightings were reported from other parts of the province. Single birds were seen March 24 at Economy (FS), in Guysborough Co. on 25th (GMacL) and in Yarmouth Co. on 26th (MWH and AH). Five arrived in Halifax Co. in Brookside also on March 26 (FWD). In spite of unwelcoming weather the numbers piled up around March 28 when seven arrived in a snowstorm at Yarmouth (MWH) with the first big influx there the following day (CRKA). In Annapolis Co. the first waves of any number began on March 31 (TH) and April 1 (RL) increasing throughout the week until by April 4 there were large numbers in and around Wolfville (RWT) and the rest of the county (TH). Eric Holdway reports seven in Pictou on April 5 and on the same day the first report from Cape Breton comes from St. Esprit (R and SM). The "second deluge" hit

Tusket April 6 (CRKA) and 29 were seen at Chebogue and Pink Point on April 8 (MWH, DK, AH). This second migration arrived in Annapolis Co. April 9 (TH) and by 12th robins were 'everywhere' in Yarmouth and Cumberland Counties (MWH, DK, CD). They did not, however, become numerous in Pictou Co. until April 21 and reports from Cape Breton are of small groups only until May 26 when Edith MacLeod reports from Glace Bay that they were in full force. Reports of nests have been sparse. David and Marie Henry of Upper Wedgeport report two nesting pairs while Sylvia Bower writes from Shelburne Co. of an early nest (May 9) which was subsequently destroyed. She also mentions a nest in Shelburne town on May 19 with parents feeding the young and two nests at Upper Ohio on May 31, one with young birds.

THRUSHES

A new member has joined this group of magnificent songsters - the WOOD THRUSH. One of these birds was seen on Mud Island, May 15, by John Kearney and party; eight were discovered on Seal Island May 18-19 by the NSBS party there; one May 22 paused to have its picture taken in a garden in Halifax (Cohrs); one May 22 was heard singing at Markland, Yarmouth Co., by Pierre Allaire (a visiting Kentucky birder, very familiar with the song), and by D.B. Kirk. Since the morning of June 20, a Wood Thrush has been heard singing in the Marlborough Woods, Halifax, and also seen there by C.W. Helleiner, and others. The first HERMIT THRUSH was heard April 14 at Port Hebert (RSW), and reported very generally thereafter, reaching Glace Bay May 8 (EMacL). April 18 is our first date for the SWAINSON'S THRUSH, three singing at Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co. (D and MH). Although we have twice as many reports of the Hermit as of the Swainson's, fewer individuals have been noted. This could be because the peak of Hermits comes the last of April, whereas the peak of Swainson's is mid-May (May 31 this spring on Sable Island according to DWF), mentioned by several reporters as "all over the place" since then, and most reports falling in the week May 20-26. Careful observers have noted the GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH this spring, first seen May 9 at Caribou Island, Pictou Co., by Eric Holdway, two birds on that date, and three there May 31. Five came in at Cape Sable May 25 (SS) and one June 15 was seen and heard on Second Peninsula, Lunenburg Co., by C.H. Chipman. The VEERY has been seen and heard at Seal Island, two, May 19-20; at Musquodoboit Harbour, a pair, May 30-31 (James Sutton): at Wilmot, June 3, the first heard by Thelma Hawkins, who says "seem plentiful around here once they started to sing", and at Amherst, June 4 (CD); not as many Veerys as usual reported, but more widely distributed. It is a pleasure to report more EASTERN BLUEBIRDS than usual, a rare sight for most of us, particularly in their bright spring plumage. A male, April 27, at East Pleasant Cemetery, Amherst, allowed Roger Burrows to approach within 20 feet, as it flew about; at Seal Island, two Bluebirds were found on April 29, by Ian McLaren's party; up to six there May 18-20; and two May 14 were seen at Shelburne, by Sylvia Bower.

GNATCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

Nearly every year we have a visit from the tiny BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, this year there were three of them (really four, as one was photographed at Sackville, N.B., June 4, reported by Stuart Tingley). David and Marie Henry

saw the first one, a very early arrival, April 23, at Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co., and wrote: "we watched him with binoculars for about five minutes. He was travelling with ruby-crowned kinglets and they were moving fast. We are familiar with the gnatcatcher from watching migrants in Massachusetts and seeing the nesting birds in Virginia ... they usually appear (in the Boston area) with migrant warblers. A pleasure to find him in Wedgeport." On Mud Island, May 14-15, John Kearney *et al.* found a gnatcatcher, "very tame - photographed"; and on the afternoon of the 8th of June, at Kejimikujik Park, Roger Burrows saw a bird described as "grayish with a very long whitesided tail, calling with a 'zee' somewhat like a Parula warbler," which he believes to have been a gnatcatcher.

A possible wandering movement of GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS was suggested by a few reports in early April, when one was seen on Cape Sable (SS); one April 23 appeared in a city backyard, at the H.B. Moffatt's and 20-23 were counted at Markland, Yarmouth Co., the 17th of April, the usual count there being around six (MWH, DBK).

The RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET arrived in good numbers the third week of April first record of three, April 16 at Markland, Yarmouth Co. (MWH, DBK), second, one April 17 at Cape Sable (SS), thereafter "plentiful" very generally, with the first Cape Breton report of "many", May 11 (EMacL).

Two small waves of migration of the WATER PIPIT touched our shores in April and May; nine birds in April, scattered along the Atlantic side, from Brier Island to Crescent Beach, Lunenburg Co. (EHC, CRKA, Chris Cohrs); then 15+ May 8 at the Amherst Sanctuary (ST), three May 18 at Port Hebert (RSW), four at Seal Island May 18, dwindling to one by May 20 (NSBS), and three June 10 at Sable.

An unexpected sighting of several BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS, seen in her yard by Adele Hurlburt, June 6, in Yarmouth is our only spring record of these brilliant birds, which would be the only 1974 record so far, but for the single pair at Wolfville in February, reported by Oscar W. Morehouse (previously unreported in the *Newsletter*).

Small flocks of CEDAR WAXWINGS arrived almost simultaneously, June 6-8, in Yarmouth, Shelburne, Halifax Co., and at Economy (SB, CRKA, WJM, FS), although one flock preceded these, seen at Yarmouth June 2 by Loran Baker and Hazel Williamson. A few more flocks were noted on June 9 and 11, the largest, 16 bird in Halifax, eating last year's highbush cranberries, and crowding into the bird bath, five at a time, according to Willett Mills. The flock of eight at Upper Ohio, Shelburne Co., appeared to be in pairs, watched doing their "ritual of touching of beaks ... we counted 11 times in succession for one pair" wrote Sylvia Bower.

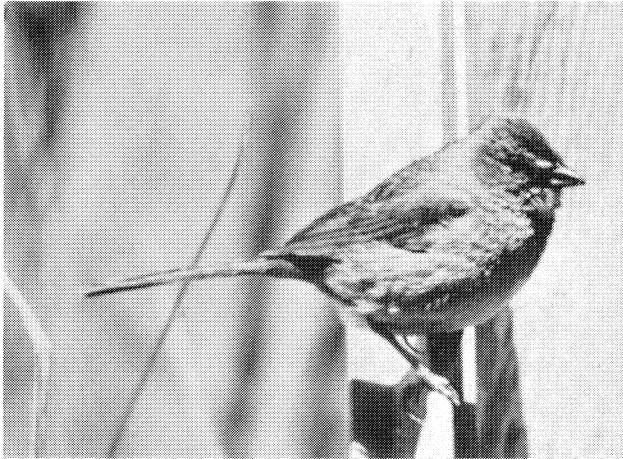
A few NORTHERN SHRIKES have been seen this spring - an immature April 13 at Maccan (ST); one April 7 at Boularderie (R. Beecher); one April 20 at Morien Bar (NSBS). Also in April, our migrant LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE arrived, two April 7 at Jordan Bay, Shelburne Co. (SB), and two April 21-26 at the Broad Brook meadow called 'Southeast Street' in Yarmouth (MWH, AH, DBK).

STARLINGS usually disperse to the country in spring and summer. Flocks were noted on the move in March, the largest, 400 in the flock, at Lusby Marsh



Photo: Ian McLaren.

A characteristically dull and bedraggled Pine Warbler. Note the plain back, large bill (it is a large warbler compared to some other plain-backed ones) and wingbars (normally two, but one worn off this bird). Photographed at Seal Island, April 27. One of the few Nova Scotian records.



Green-tailed Towhee. Third Nova Scotian record. Photographed by Davis Finch, Sable Island, June 10, 1974.

near Amherst (CD); also in Yarmouth Co. (CRKA); and at Wine Harbour, Guysborough Co., where Gordon MacLeod saw a gradual increase after April 1st, on which date E. Holdway remarked that their bills were beginning to turn yellow. Reports generally refer to Starlings as "abundant", "scores", or "innumerable" locally. One pair was feeding young by June 5, at Glace Bay (EMacL).

A notable spring rarity this year was the YELLOW-THROATED VIREO seen and heard singing May 29 at Susie Lake, Halifax Co., by Sylvia Fullerton, Barbara Hinds and Eric Cooke. May brought all of our Vireos, the SOLITARY first as usual, starting with May 14, simultaneous reports from Yarmouth, one at Salem (DBK, MWH) and one at Brookside, Halifax Co. (F and ED); heard May 15 at Amherst P.B.S. (ST); May 17 at Economy (FS), at Seal Island May 18, also on that date at Port Hebert, the peak there May 27 (RSW). First date for the RED-EYED VIREO was May 20, at Seal Island, heard next at Wilmot, May 26 (TH), May 31 at Pictou (EH), and on that date at Homeville, C.B. (GS); Economy June 2 (FS), and Antigonish Co. June 3 (Norman Seymour). Since then these vireos have been quite abundant, as usual, in appropriate territory, which includes towns and cities. One PHILADELPHIA VIREO was spotted by Roger Burrows and Gary Corbett, as it fed in some beeches and maples by the roadside in Kejimkujik Park, May 23; the bird and its song well described for the record.

WOOD WARBLERS

In spite of their name, these little birds do not have very melodious 'voices'. Each has, however, its own characteristic song, and one of the greatest joys of spring bird watching is to hear and identify these songs, one after another, as the warblers arrive, a few of them in April, most of them in May. This year we were able to see them as well as to hear them, since the trees were so slow coming into leaf. We are fortunate in Nova Scotia to have such a large breeding population of these birds, since they arrive in full spring plumage, each one a little jewel in the sunshine. The trouble is the sun does not always shine, and warblers are so small and so active, they are all too seldom seen to best advantage. This is the reason for the early morning warbler walks, planned as nearly as possible to coincide with migration waves, when the birds are still unsettled, may be found out in the open, and seem tame and unwary. This spring, on Seal Island, some of us saw a Bay-breasted Warbler alight on a big white boulder on the beach. On another boulder beside it sat a Scarlet Tanager, a bright male. Blown up to size with binoculars, the little Bay-breast was every bit as brilliant and striking a bird as the Tanager.

Several distinct waves of migration brought us an exceptional number of warblers this spring, 25 species of them, which is three more than we could expect. Six of these species were seen in April, including the first on the checklist, the BLACK-AND-WHITE, a very early individual of which appeared in a Halifax garden on April 2 (WJM). This one was way out in front, since the next seen was May 9, at Economy (FS). It is interesting to note, in going over the records, that the points of arrival of most of the warblers are the same, with almost simultaneous, sometimes simultaneous times of arrival. These points are Yarmouth Co. (often a day ahead of the rest) (MWH *et al.*, D and MH), Annapolis Co. (TH, WEW), Economy (FS), Amherst P.B.S. (ST, CD), and sometimes a day behind, Shelburne Co. (SB, S and BJS, RSW), and Lunenburg Co. (J and SC, F and ED). The big "waves" were on May 16 (by far the biggest), May 26 and June 2. The warblers appear to have been two to three days later noted in Pictou Co. (EH)

and Guysborough Co. (GMacL), and most of them up to a week later in Cape Breton (SMacL).

On May 18, at Markland, Yarmouth Co., one of our strays was observed and carefully identified by Marion Hilton and Marie Henry - the BLUE-WINGED WARBLER. The first TENNESSEES, five of them, were seen the same day (May 18) at APBS, one the next day at Markland. The Nashville was first seen May 15 at Economy and Wilmot; NORTHERN PARULA, May 9 at Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co.; YELLOW, May 15 at Yarmouth, Wilmot and Economy; MAGNOLIA, May 15 at Upper Wedgeport; CAPE MAY, May 21 at Wilmot; BLACK-THROATED BLUE, May 20 at East Jordan, Shelburne Co.; YELLOW-RUMPED, April 18 at Cape Sable (a few earlier may have been wintering birds, and the 65 on Seal Island April 26-29 the big peak); BLACK-THROATED GREEN, May 14 at Upper Wedgeport (but the majority of reports and numbers May 16-19); BLACKBURNIAN, May 17 (J and SC); CHESTNUT-SIDED, May 17 at Wilmot and Port Hebert; May 18 at Seal Island and APBS; BAY-BREASTED, May 24, Upper Wedgeport; BLACKPOLL, six, April 22 at Gardiner Mines, C.B., an exception to the rule, but mentioned by Sara MacLean as "our earliest warbler" - the sighting by Roberta Beecher; Blackpolls very numerous this year, particularly at APBS and at Seal Island, where Ben Doane estimated 100 at least in the wooded parts of the island; also quite a number lingered in and around Halifax through late May, singing and feeding in the shade trees, as they do, curiously enough, from time to time.

A few PINE WARBLERS, our second stray, have been reported: a "very drab female", April 26-29 on Seal Island (IMacL); a male, well described, May 31 in Halifax (J and SC), and two females, June 6 at Cape Sable (BJ, S and LS). PALM WARBLER, first seen April 7 at the West Cape, Cape Forchu, Yarmouth Co., noted as numerous this year at APBS, and up to 50 on Seal Island April 26-29; OVENBIRD, May 16, at Crousetown, Lunenburg Co.; NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, May 17 at Economy, APBS and May 18 on Seal Island; MOURNING, June 12 at Economy; COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, May 14 at Upper Wedgeport, many other places May 16; our third stray, the HOODED WARBLER, one, picked up, freshly dead, at Brier Island April 12, by Madeleine Lent; WILSON'S, two, April 26 at Green Bay, Lunenburg Co. (Chris Cohrs), but most May 16-18; CANADA, May 22 at Cape Sable and Economy mentioned as "thereafter good numbers or better than usual"; AMERICAN REDSTART, May 16 at Wilmot and at Economy.

The Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler was described as "incredibly abundant throughout May and early June" at Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary, by Stuart Tingley, and the American Redstart similarly described there; and it also in Cape Breton in early June, seen "everywhere" by the Cohrs. On three Breeding Bird Surveys in Halifax and Guysborough Counties in June, the Common Yellow-throat outnumbered any other warbler species two to one, with Magnolia, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, and Tennessee next in abundance. Except on one of the Halifax routes, Redstarts were low on the list in comparison.

Stop Press: A late report from Davis Finch on Sable Island mentions the "usual early June peak" of both the MOURNING and CANADA WARBLERS - six of each on June 10. A "regular" stray, the ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER, was also seen there: one on May 31 and another on June 10-11.

HOUSE SPARROW

The only unusual report on this species came from Con Desplanque at Amherst - "Flock of 30 regular welcome guests on feeder."

ICTERIDS

The arrival of the BOBLINK followed a slightly different pattern from warblers, the first one, an early scout, at Cape Sable, April 17 (with more later, five of which were still there June 15); then one May 14 at Mud Island (JFK *et al.*); one May 16 at Wine Harbour, Guysborough Co. (GMaL), eight May 17 at Port Hebert (RSW), three May 18 at Petite Riviere, Lunenburg Co., also six to seven that day at Overton, Yarmouth Co.; two May 19 at Spryfield, Halifax Co. (Roger Burrows), and 15-20 males the third week in May at Antigonish (Norman Seymour). Bobolinks reached Sydney Forks May 22 (and a small flock in early June at Homeville, RBL and CF) and Lusby Marsh at the Border May 26 (CD). The Bobolink steadily increases its range in Nova Scotia.

Four EASTERN MEADOWLARKS in April, two of them singing, suggests breeding birds, or birds intending to breed, but all were found outside of their usual territory, which is in Annapolis Co., according to Tufts. The Meadowlarks were seen at Economy on April 4, at Salem (Yarmouth), on April 8, at Cape Sable the same day, and at Brookside, Halifax, April 21-27; the ones at Yarmouth and Brookside singing, the former still singing May 19 at last report.

A record which missed the last *Newsletter* should be noted: a winter YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD which spent most of last February at Middleton. This bird, reported by Larry Neily, was identified as an immature male, first seen by Walter Ditmars, who noticed it at the Price's feeding station with a flock of Cowbirds. Many observers were able to have a good look at it, and Larry Neily photographed it.

Our earliest spring bird arrives via the isthmus, that is, the REDWINGED BLACKBIRD, first seen this year at Economy and Nappan March 6-7. Four came in at Cape Sable on March 8, there were 6-8 at Truro March 12 (Ross Baker), and a flock of 40 March 14 at Pictou. The first in Cape Breton were noted by the R. Blackeburns, eight, on March 27, after which reports indicate general distribution in good numbers. C.R.K. Allen remarked "a steady increase in this area over the last 6 years" in Yarmouth Co.

Three reports of the ORCHARD ORIOLE in May came from the southwest end of the province, one seen May 7, in her garden at Port Maitland, Yarmouth Co., by Leta Delaney; one female "caught in the barn, May 14, photographed, released and flew away" at Cape Sable (S and BJS) and one found at Mud Island May 19 by John Kearney and party.

During May, eight reports of the NORTHERN ORIOLE accounted for 62 birds. Fifty of these were on Seal Island May 18 (only eight there May 20), but a fair number has been reported since, with distribution general and the ones in Yarmouth at any rate settled in to nest. The early date was May 14, at Mud Island and at Upper Wedgeport, but the peak arrival seems to have been May 17-18, more generally.

The RUSTY BLACKBIRD was first heard on March 11, at Wilmot, "calling frequently throughout the day, very noticeable" (TH). Rustys were seen at Economy, three or four April 5; at Keji April 7; at APBS April 12 (three), and 40 there by April 28, and at Big Beach, C.B., also on April 12. By May they were generally on territory.

Close behind the Redwings came the COMMON GRACKLE, on March 7 at Economy, March 8 in the Border region, where the first few increased to 80 at Amherst by March 11. March 11 saw 43 at Pictou, March 12, 50 at Truro. They were in Yarmouth by March 22, Sydney by March 29, and April sightings indicate general distribution, with numbers increasing through May, when nesting activities began.

The BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD flocks began to thin out at feeders in February, but a few have stayed around, of the wintering birds. New flocks appeared at the Border in March, the 80 birds at Amherst in the Desplanque garden noted to be 90% male. At Pictou, in the flock of 40 there (EH) April 4, six were females. In Yarmouth, on May 12, MWH remarked "they seem to be moving about in pairs", and C. Desplanque wrote "June 9, I observed a female Cowbird gathering nesting material and flying away with it." It is good to hear they are developing a sense of responsibility.

TANAGERS AND FRINGILLIDS

A dozen or more SCARLET TANAGERS strayed to Nova Scotia this spring. Fifteen were reported, but some of them may have been sightings of the same bird. The first was a male, at Cape Sable May 8; then another at Markland (Yarmouth Co.) May 16; a male and a female at Seal Island May 18-20, also two at Amherst at the same time; a male at Catalone, Cape Breton, "well observed at 25 ft." by E. and F. Calder on May 22; a male at Economy May 23; a female at Upper Wedgeport May 31; a male at Upper Ohio May 31 (in the same place for five days, said Sylvia Bower); a male at Wolfville June 1, seen by Gail Fuller and John Kearney; one at Seal Island, maybe new, maybe left from the first two June 10, and one seen and heard singing at Keji by Roger Burrows, Peter Hope and Eric Noller, June 11. There were also at least three other sightings in the Sackville, N.B., area around May 18. This is a lot of tanagers for these parts. At Seal Island, there was a SUMMER TANAGER present at the same time as the Scarlet, on May 18-19, also a male in bright plumage, one on one side of the island, one on the other. It gave us a wonderful opportunity to compare the two birds, rarely seen by most of us.

Our wintering population of CARDINALS has diminished, but a fair number still remain in the Yarmouth area (late June): one pair in town, one bird at Markland, one at Gavelton and a pair on the Grove Road; the female at the Allen's feeder in Tusket was still there at last report; a female was found on Seal Island April 26-29, plus the remains of a predated male; a male at Round Hill was seen by WEW on May 8; and Shirley Cohrs wrote "a Cardinal appeared on April 8 in a Waegwoltic Ave. garden, which created chaos during a luncheon party where several members of the NSBS were present. This was a female, and it stayed around several days."

Twenty reports of the ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK, plus the extraordinary number seen at Seal Island in May tempts one to call this "the summer of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak", if it were not that it may also be called the summer of the Gray Catbird, or possibly the summer of the Winter Wren. There were 45 of these Grosbeaks counted on Seal on May 18, six left by May 20, and only one on June 9. At least 31 have been reported for the rest of the province, the first two on May 17, at Port Hebert and at Lower Ohio, the rest all in the next two weeks, spreading up to the Border and to Sydney on successive dates.

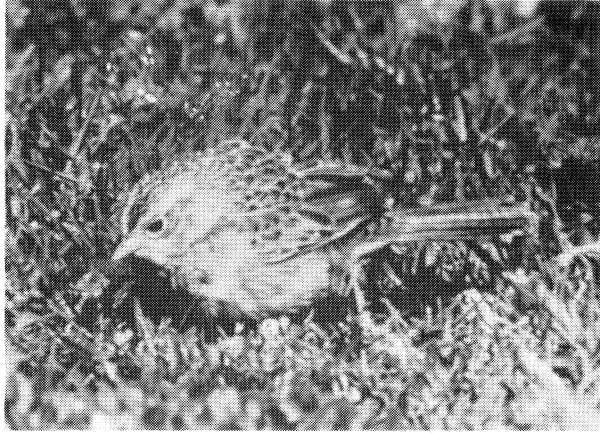
Fourteen reports of the INDIGO BUNTING, accounting for 20 birds, is high for this stray. Some of these were in "splotchy" plumage, but most were bright males, the first two seen on April 11, one at Leta Delaney's feeder in Yarmouth, the other at the F.W. Dobson's, Brookside, Halifax Co. Four came in at Cape Sable April 13, and one was at Timberlea, Halifax Co. (Margaret Sewell). The last seen was at Lockeport, June 6 (RSW). They were widely distributed, right up to Glace Bay, where Averill Shepherd saw a bright blue male, on May 16.

The EVENING GROSBEEK lingered at feeders this spring up to the end of May or until people got tired of feeding them. In the Halifax area, supply stores were sold out by then. The birds became restless early in April; wandering flocks reported at Glace Bay April 4, Pictou April 14, and at Brier Island, Madeleine Lent wrote "the Evening Grosbeaks have been more plentiful the past week (April 6-13) than at any time Wick ever remembers." On April 7, two came to Cape Sable, whence and whither is a query. Ian McLaren noted an increase from 10 to 50-75 birds at his feeder in early May, and at Economy a flock of 30 appeared on May 25, on which date Ralph Widrig reported the last pair left Lockeport. Scattered pairs are to be seen around the Yarmouth area, and one (pair) at Brookside, Halifax Co., June 6, suggest summering, hopefully nesting birds.

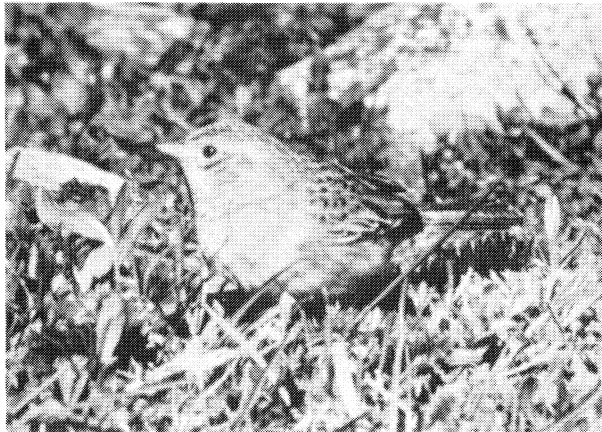
As in previous years, the PURPLE FINCH, almost unseen all winter, appeared in February, a few birds, slowly increasing in number up to early April, then diminishing in number (reported) to settle to the usual summer population. On February 15, the flock of five at the Willett Mills feeder in Halifax increased to 14. February 27 brought seven males and one female to the Desplanque feeder at Amherst, and the first two came to W.E. Whitehead's at Round Hill. Late March brought some to Cape Sable, Wilmot and Pictou, with another boost April 4, when they were reported at Wine Harbour, April 8 at Lower Ohio. They are said to be numerous in Yarmouth Co. now (the end of June), where they came to feeders February 22, also in Hants Co., 28 counted on the May 25 field trip, and large flocks in Cape Breton Co. May 26.

The PINE GROSBEEK and the PINE SISKIN were scarce during the winter, and are present but still seen in only small numbers in a few places this spring. The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH was reasonably plentiful throughout winter, flocks at feeders numbering 20-40 very generally, and has now dispersed to the countryside, put on bright plumage and began to sing in May. As for the CROSSBILLS, they are apparently confined to Kejimikujik Park, such few as linger here, where Roger Burrows reports four REDS and one WHITE-WINGED, seen and heard on June 11.

A very interesting sighting, made by Edgar Spalding at Economy, May 18, reads as follows: My first thought was an Oriole, but Orioles are more slender and they have a different shaped bill. The bird was in some small scraggly poplars and rose bushes near a field. The beak was like a Grosbeak's. The



Cassin's Sparrow. Photographed on Seal Island, May 20, by Sylvia Fullerton for a first satisfactorily confirmed Canadian record. Note the finely-streaked cap, the spots (rather than streaks) on the back, the crescentic spots on the upper tail coverts, and the barred middle tail feathers, and the general paleness - all satisfactory distinctions from the related Bachman's and Botteri's Sparrows.



breast was an orange-yellow. It was darker orange-yellow in some places and very light in others. It faded as it got down around the belly. The back was brownish with black streaks. The tail looked as though it had light outer tail feathers, maybe light yellow ones with black in between. It also had a yellowish rump. The wings had two wing-bars and a few spots of white. The head was black in front but faded slightly to gray on the back of the head. (Another Black-headed Grosbeak perhaps?)

SPARROWS

The May 18-20 NSBS trip to Seal Island was outstanding in many respects, but highlighted by two remarkable observations of birds, both belonging to this group: the GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE and the CASSIN'S SPARROW. These species both breed in the extreme southwest of the U.S.A. and are the rarest of rarities in Nova Scotia, and provide a second and a first record for the region. They were spotted by Barbara Hinds, Sylvia Fullerton and Bruce MacTavish, identified by Bruce. Both birds were photographed. The sparrow was first thought to be a Bachman's, but the photograph was identifiable as the Cassin's, a very pale sandy brown bird, but with sufficiently characteristic markings to be confirmed by comparison with skins in the American Museum of Natural History, courtesy of the Museum and Davis Finch. This bird was found on the beach beside the Light-house on Seal Island on May 18, and stayed around, very tame, for the three days of the trip, giving all of us a good opportunity to study it. The Towhee stayed only the first day (May 18), but is a striking bird (Betty June Smith to the contrary - see NSBS *Newsletter*: 12, 83, 1970 "Be There Any Fowl?) unlikely to be mistaken for any other kind. This was a second record for N.S., the first (referred to above) was at Cape Sable, May 14, 1955, and the skin is in the Nova Scotia Museum. An almost unbelievable third (although possibly the same bird) has come to us from Davis Finch, who found a Green-tailed Towhee on Sable Island, June 10-11.

The RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE was also present on Seal Island on the May 18-20 trip, but possibly the same two seen there April 27-29 by another party. Five more of these Towhees have been reported, two in Halifax (WJM, S and JC) in April; two, a female, April 22 and a male April 25, at Cape Sable, and one this spring at the N.S.-N.B. Border (ST).

An "IPSWICH" SPARROW was at Cape Sable April 14, no other reported except at Seal Island, where an extraordinary peak of 28 has been reported by Ian McLaren and his party, the Sparrows down to seven next day; and one late one, May 12, found by Ian at Conrad's Beach, Halifax Co. On Sable, the 'Ipswich' population is about 10% lower than the long-term average, about 2300 adults. However, Ian McLaren believes that because of the high numbers leaving last fall, overwinter survival was merely 15% - much lower than the usual 20-30%.

The first SAVANNAH SPARROW was seen at Melbourne Sanctuary, Yarmouth Co., April 6 (CRKA); reported April 20 from a number of places, and still coming in by May 18, when 150 were estimated on Seal Island, down to 20 by May 20. Only one SHARP-TAILED SPARROW had been seen in N.S. by June 9, when Con Desplanque spotted it in Lusby Marsh. (Roger Burrows found three in Fundy Park, N.B., May 30, perhaps they come in by the isthmus). Two only VESPER SPARROWS have been reported, observed at Crousetown, Lunenburg Co., April 30 by Nellie Snyder, and

at Cape Sable June 6 (BJ and SS). The CASSIN'S SPARROW, described above, was seen May 18-20 at Seal Island, a first record for Nova Scotia.

The DARK-EYED JUNCO arrived in a series of waves, the first, a small one, March 24-30, a flock at Tusket, two at Round Hill, 16 at Cape Sable. A large wave April 6-8 increased the numbers at Round Hill and brought "many" to Yarmouth, Annapolis, Shelburne, Halifax, and Guysborough Counties, and the Border region. In Pictou, Eric Holdway reported "first migrants April 10, main migrants, April 21, common now along roadsides in flocks of 5-20 birds". This third peak, April 20-21 was notable elsewhere, and "many" reached Cape Breton by May 1st.

Most of the TREE SPARROWS were gone by April, the latest date being May 12, near Amherst (RB); the two seen at Gardiner Mines in Cape Breton June 1 are probably there for the summer. The CHIPPING SPARROW was first noted simultaneously on May 9 at Yarmouth (MWH), Halifax (CWH), and Economy (FS), on May 10 at Wilmot (TH). By May 30, distribution was general. Up to 10 FIELD SPARROWS were on Seal Island April 26-29 - (but the earliest reported was May 10 one at Markland, Yarmouth Co. (MWH, DBK). One was reported at Cape Sable April 30, another June 10 there; 20 were at Seal May 18, two there May 20, and one May 19 at Brier Island suggests this time as a "peak" arrival date.

Another candidate for the Bird of the Year is the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW the extraordinary total of 83 individual birds having been seen in Nova Scotia this spring; starting with one April 30 at Cape Sable up to four May 31 at Homeville, C.B. (GS). However, 60 of these were counted at Seal Island May 18, and there were only 25 of these left there May 20, so possibly the ones seen on the mainland after that date came from Seal. This is only nine birds, the rest predated May 18. An interesting observation was that the Seal Island birds at any rate were singing. The 14 reports received were well distributed, and in most cases the birds stayed around for some days, a great pleasure to the observers.

Stop Press: A report from Davis Finch mentions 21 White-crowned on Sable Island May 31.)

It is always difficult to deduce the actual arrival dates of the WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, since so many winter here, but, leaving the earlier dates in doubt, the one which arrived at Cape Sable April 22 was almost certainly a migrant, and the majority called "firsts" came between that date and April 30. Whitethroats were the most abundant bird, and the best distributed of those counted on three recent Breeding Bird Surveys in Halifax and Guysborough Counties. Ten observers reported the FOX SPARROW this spring, 45 birds in all, a small invasion. The first was seen in Liverpool (S. Cohrs), but most of them came in after April 2, when the earliest arrived at Cape Sable. Distribution was wide and uniform, the largest number being the 11 seen at Sherbrooke (GMacL). On the Larry's River BBS, eight were heard singing, June 14, probably a breeding population. The first LINCOLN'S SPARROW was heard May 17 at Wine Harbour "in its usual place on the hill" according to Gordon MacLeod. Guysborough Co. is the home of Lincoln's Sparrows apparently, as 18 were counted on the Larry's River BBS; the only others seen or heard this spring were one May 19-20 at Seal Island two June 9 on the Peggy's Cove BBS, and an unspecified number "present on summer grounds" at Economy after June 12. Davis Finch thinks Sable Island is the best area for counting Lincoln's Sparrows - undoubtedly true owing to the type of

habitat. His peak count there was 21 birds on May 31. The two SWAMP SPARROWS at APBS, April 14, seem to be the first recorded. At Cape Sable, Betty June Smith wrote "unknown numbers and dates of arrival of Swamp Sparrows; several heard since mid-April ... may be nesting." Most of the reports received are for May and June, generally distributed in appropriate habitat. The first migrant SONG SPARROW was probably the one at Cape Sable March 8, where two more arrived within the week. Several small waves followed, favorite dates being April 5 and 9, and steadily increasing numbers after that, with a big wave the middle of May, bringing us up to our usual abundance.

A flock of LAPLAND LONGSPURS, 40+ was found at Morien Bar, March 17, by Roberta Beecher, and one lone one was left there April 20, along with 13 SNOW BUNTINGS, this being the latest date for both of these birds in N.S. this year, and an exceptionally late one. As we too often say, the wonder is they left at all, particularly heading north.

PRD Ed.

THE AMHERST POINT BIRD SANCTUARY

The Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary is less than four miles southwest of the centre of the Town of Amherst. The preservation of the area for a sanctuary has been the result of the action of a number of interested persons, who wanted its unique landscape conserved as a wildlife area, for which it is so admirably well suited.

The Amherst Branch of the Nova Scotia Fish and Game Protective Association, on initiative of Mr. W.A. Fox (charter member of the MSBS) and the Rev. Herman C. Olsen, pastor of the Amherst Point Baptist Church, organized a drive to collect on a petition many signatures and other forms of support from people near and far. The result was that the Sanctuary was established by a Federal Order-in-Council in October 1947, with the agreement of about 20 land owners in the area.

To make the future as a preserve even more secure, the Canadian Wildlife Service started in 1968 a program of purchasing the properties, and at present (1973) the objective of full ownership is almost reached.

The area covers nearly two square miles of land, located between the old Parrsboro Road leading from Amherst over Amherst Point to Nappan, the Smith Road and the CNR main line. In the northeast the area comes within a mile of the Trans Canada Highway.

The south boundary of the Amherst Marshes, on the Chignecto Isthmus, is formed by the Amherst Ridge, which rises to elevations of over 250 feet above Mean Sea Level near Warren and Truemanville. After shaping the course of the valleys of the Maccan River and the River Hebert, the west end of the ridge dips below the tides, after forming the silt bar known as Amherst Point. This point can be seen at the upper reach of the Cumberland Basin, where the Bay of Fundy tides reach some of their extremely large ranges. The result is that Amherst Point is bordered on three sides by tidal marshes of the Bay of Fundy type.

The area is in a migration route of the birds moving along the coastlines

of the Bay of Fundy and the New Brunswick coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is, however, not only the location of the Sanctuary in the local and regional geography that makes the area an attractive habitat for birdlife, for the geology of the underlying strata has provided an additional flavour to it by creating a Karst landscape.

About 300 million years ago, during a period of high temperatures, the area was in a basin, filled with sea water, but with little or no connection to the ocean. Through evaporation layers of anhydrite, gypsum, salt and limestone were formed in this Mississippian Windsor period. In the Amherst area deposits from this era can be found close to the surface along two lines. The most northerly line stretches from the Stony Creek gasfield near Moncton and the underground lake at Albert Mines, over the Rockport Peninsula, Amherst Point, Smith Road gypsum quarry and salt extraction plant, and the Limekiln Brook to the Pugwash salt mine. The more southerly line runs parallel to it from Spring Hill and Salt Springs over Oxford to the site of the former Malagash salt mine.

When water moves through bedrock, it will carry with it anything soluble it finds along its path. Limestone, gypsum and salt are evaporates and thus highly soluble. Water, groping its way through cracks and fissures in these materials, gradually removes more and more of it, resulting in the formation of large underground channels and eventually of caves. It often happens that such caves close below the surface of the land become so large that their roofs collapse and great conical holes are created. In some areas such as the Karst region in Yugoslavia, the surface of the ground is pitted with such sinkholes, which are separated by steep-walled ridges. Such 'sinks' can be found in the Bird Sanctuary, mostly along definite lines. The names of some of the lakes formed in the sinks are Charlie's Pond, the Glen, the Cove, the Frog Pond, the Musquash Pond, Halfmoon Lake and Layton's Lake. The first is named after Charlie Logan and the latter, sometimes called Harding Lake, after its former owners. Another series of sinks can be found along the Smith Road. At this point it might be of interest to point out the seemingly unrelated water surface levels in some of the lakes, some of which are almost touching each other. They must be fed by separate underground channels. One sinkhole filled with water along the Smith Road is located on top of a rise, high enough to be surrounded by an extensive area of lower elevations. The supply of water for this lake, which maintains a constant level, must be entering the ground on hills some miles away.

Humans were attracted to Amherst Point as well. The Micmacs that inhabited the region, no doubt, must have appreciated Amherst Point as good hunting grounds. European settlers utilized the marshes and partially cleared the upland for cropland, and built their farmsteads. The original site of the Amherst settlement was near the place where the Amherst Point Road crosses the Trans Canada Highway, and where still a cemetery dating back to 1760 can be found.

Others operated from the Point a ferry service across the Cumberland Basin to Minudie, the land of King Seaman, while others started a gypsum quarry operation in and near the Sanctuary. The railroad bed, along which the gypsum was carried to the plaster wharf at Cumberland Basin, still bisects the area and is part of the main trail used by visitors.

In earlier days, before the dykes were built around the Amherst Point marsh, sea water was able to cover the lower sections of the area during spring tides and to deposit sediments, called marsh mud. Some of the sinkholes were filled and covered, but their outlines can vaguely be detected on aerial photographs. One such marsh area was the Cove, where hay was cut before a dyke was built at its lower end, transforming it into a shallow fresh water pond. The pond is now often frequented by dabbling ducks such as Mallards, Teals, Pintails, Widgeons and Black Ducks, while the cattail covered margins are the habitat for Bitterns, Soras and Blackbirds.

The most recent human activity carried out in the area is the work of Ducks Unlimited. Dykes are built, transforming marshland and bogs into shallow lakes, with the intended purpose that more waterfowl will be induced to select the area as nesting grounds.

All these natural processes and human activities combined, resulted in the much varied landscape with its choice of salt and fresh water bodies, salt and fresh water marsh, bogs, swamps, lowland and upland forest, interspersed with cleared land, former farm yards with fruit trees and pastures. No wonder the birds are attracted to the area with this diversity of habitats not only during the nesting season, but during the spring and fall migrations as well. In spring, the surrounding marshes are the scheduled stopovers for thousands of migrating Canada Geese, and the lakes are often dotted with all kinds of other waterfowl such as ducks, grebes and rallidae. The forest-covered banks offer great opportunities to observe these summer residents or migrants at close range without disturbing them. And since hunting has been prohibited since 1947, these observations can even be made with safety during the hunting season. When visiting the area one never knows what surprises are in store in the way of out-of-the-ordinary observations, such as a Red-tailed Hawk in the spring, a Solitary Sandpiper in the summer, and a couple of Ruddy Ducks or European Widgeons in the fall, for transients often appear to prefer lingering and loafing in the area.

Mammals are represented by deer, foxes, squirrels, mice, voles and muskrats. The last species is trapped in large quantities, as can be judged by the amount of skinned carcasses left rotting every fall by the trappers near the entrance to the sanctuary. And the variety of landscapes should provide the botanist as well with an interesting field for investigations. The passage of Hurricane Edna in 1954 caused many trees to be uprooted in the climax forest areas.

During the winter the bird life in the area is at its lowest point during its annual cycle, but the area is then very suitable for such pastimes as skating and cross-country skiing.

The present and future generations are to be thankful for those who made the effort in the past to preserve this area from the fate that befell all too many other areas because of unplanned and unrestrained development without much regard for their unique qualities.

Prepared for the occasion of the first field trip, planned for April 28, 1973, by the newly formed CHIGNECTO NATURALIST CLUB.

--- C. Desplanque, P.Eng. ---
Maritime Resource Management Service

PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS

As a keen birder I decided it would be a good idea to have my own collection of bird photographs. Specifically, to have at least one representative of each bird on our Nova Scotia list.

Having taken 'snaps' of the point-and-click variety off and on for year it seemed relatively simple to 'snap' a few birds. It wasn't and it isn't.

They move - fast. They are small - some very small. They are usually a long way off (no matter how close they seem through the binoculars). The transformation of a beautiful solitary sandpiper which through the viewfinder looked large and clear, eyering and tail flashes and all, into a small insignificant brownish 'thing' with blurred head standing in the middle of masses of piggery was somewhat shattering.

On enquiring around I was informed that what I needed was a telephoto lens and since such lens are not attachable to point-and-click cameras I also needed a new and more sophisticated camera. These I acquired. Our box of assorted binoculars and telescopes in the back of the car now contained in addition a single lens reflex camera, three lens and two light meters and was now referred to somewhat pretentiously as 'the optics box'.

Thus equipped the fun began. Rolls and rolls of film later I offer this list (incomplete since I am sure there are many more into which I'm bound to fall sooner or later) of pitfalls for the neophyte:

1. A whole roll of exposed and potentially Nat. Geographic type film is lost by jamming the camera and tearing the film - "cameras are delicate instruments, not rusty gates".
2. A marvellous shot never taken because the safety lock was still on - "that was a dumb thing to do".
3. A great picture - but blurred. The bird moved - "you should have used a faster speed".
4. A great picture - but blurred. I moved - "don't wave the tele lens around like that".
5. A great picture - but too light - "don't always go by the light meter. There are extenuating circumstances".
6. A great picture - but too dark - "ditto".
7. Super picture - no movement, right light - but focus woolly - "Practice instantaneous focusing on a bird flying rapidly in and out of focus" (and up and down as well).
8. All set - but wrong lens on the camera - "for (expletive deleted)'s sake don't crosstread the mount".
9. Everything O.K. - but end of the film. - "no comment".

BINOCULARS

The following article is reprinted, by permission, from the January-February 1973 issue of "Birding". We hope it will be of interest both to people contemplating the increasingly serious capital outlay involved in buying a pair of binoculars, and those of us who never quite understood high school physics, but want to know more about the theory behind binoculars. All you ever wanted to know about binoculars - but were afraid to ask.

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF BINOCULARS

by Bob Entwistle

All of our specialties seem to develop secret languages. The computer people have developed their secret language to the point where they can print a whole page using only a few English words. But I have a cook book which starts off with three pages of definitions, so the technologists are not alone.

In sizing binoculars the optical industry seems to have reached some sort of secret language peak. They use three numbers but only print two of them on the binocular. The third mysterious number, which will turn out to be not very mysterious at all, is just as important as the other two.

So with a lot of plain English and just a little arithmetic, we will try to unravel what that 7x35 means to a practical birder and uncover the mystery of that third number. In doing so we will try to make sure that your next pair of binoculars, or your first pair, are exactly what you hoped they would be.

THE FIRST NUMBER

In thinking about this article I wondered what could be said that had not been said a million times over in similar articles. I mentioned that problem to my friend, Gottfried Rosehdahl, who is a Fellow of the Optical Society.

This led Gottfried, as questions like this do, to very carefully fill his pipe and light it. Then with a truly Wagnerian smoke ring he said, "Binoculars don't magnify things." Now we all know that the first number of the binocular descriptor, a 7x35 or a 6x30 for instance, means the power of the binocular or that it magnifies things 6 or 7 times.

"The binocular doesn't make the thrush look as big as a hawk, it makes it look like a close thrush," he added. And what appeared to be a piece of whimsey turned out to be a very precise definition of the first number.

In a 7x35 binocular it means that whatever you look at appears to be at a distance of $1/7$ of its actual distance. And because it appears closer, it appears larger, in fact seven times larger.

The binocular does magnify one thing to our disadvantage. We can't hold a pair of binoculars without our hand shaking a little. Unfortunately that small unsteadyness of your hand is magnified by the power of the binocular, or by 7 times in the example above. Therefore, the higher the power, the closer things appear to be, and the more unsteadyness of your hand is magnified.

Binoculars having a power of 6 or 7 are most commonly used for field work. Eight power binoculars present an uncomfortable unsteady image to most people and the common 10 power binoculars should only be used with a steady rest if you want to see any details at all.

Most people are as disturbed by the unsteady movement of the outside edge of the hole or field, as they are by the movement of the object. Experienced binocularists (please don't check your dictionary for that one) have apparently learned to follow the small movements of the object and have taught themselves to ignore the larger movements of the edge of the field.

THE SECOND NUMBER

The second number of the binocular descriptors is the diameter, in millimeters, of the front entrance pupil of the lens and refers to the light collecting ability of the lens. The larger it is, the more light collected.

THE THIRD NUMBER

Probably the most important number on the binocular descriptor is the third number and that number is never printed on the binocular at all. (If we keep things a little mysterious our jobs seem more important.) The third number is equal to the second number divided by the first number. For a 7x35 binocular the third number is $35 \div 7 = 5$. For a 6x30 binocular the third number is $30 \div 6 = 5$ and for a 7x50 binocular it is $50 \div 7 = 7.1$. Now you probably just did what we all do and skimmed over that arithmetic. Go back and get it firmly in mind because it is very important to the relative brightness of binoculars.

RELATIVE BRIGHTNESS

Most binoculars give the eye more light than it can use in full daylight and appear to have good images. At dawn or dusk, however, when the light is poor, the size of the third number is critical to a bright image.

That mysterious third number is simply the diameter of the exit pupil or the beam of light coming out of the binocular and into your eye. In bright sunlight the iris of your eye has a diameter of around 2 or 3 millimeters. Any third number of exit pupil diameter larger than 2 or 3 mm is larger than necessary and produces a good bright image.

At dawn or dusk the iris of your eye approaches 7 mm in diameter to compensate for the reduced light. If the exit pupil diameter of your binocular is smaller than 7 mm you may notice that the image in the binocular is somewhat dim.

For instance a pair of 7x35s would have an exit pupil diameter of $35 \div 7 = 5$ mm and would appear to have a good bright image in strong daylight. Under poor light conditions, however, you would probably notice that the binocular image is somewhat less bright since it is smaller than the enlarged iris of your eye.

Relative brightness is proportional to the area of the beam of light exiting from the binocular, or the simple square of the exit pupil diameter. Therefore a pair of 6x30s would have an exit pupil of $30 \div 6 = 5$ mm and a relative brightness of $5 \times 5 = 25$. A pair of 7x50s would have an exit pupil of $50 \div 7 = 7.1$ and a relative brightness of $7.1 \times 7.1 = 50$. Given two relative brightnesses of 25 and 50, one would appear twice as bright as the other in poor light. They would be equally bright in good light.

However, the eye's ability to see detail is not proportional to relative brightness as might be assumed. It is well recognized that as the light available to the eye falls off the amount of detail that the eye can see falls off very sharply. Therefore even small reductions in relative brightness can have a large effect on the ability to see detail.

Now we can take all of the common binocular sizes and list them by size and relative brightness.

<u>Binocular Size</u>	<u>Exit Pupil Diameter</u>	<u>Relative Brightness</u>
6x15	2.5 mm	6.25
8x30	3.75 mm	14.1
9x35	3.9 mm	15.2
6x24	4.9 mm	16.0
6x30	5.0 mm	25.0
7x35	5.0 mm	25.0
8x40	5.0 mm	25.0
10x50	5.0 mm	25.0
7x50	7.1 mm	50.5
8x56	7.0 mm	49.0

Binoculars with a relative brightness of 16 would be fine for strong daylight but their image would appear somewhat less bright and poorer in detail if there is even a dark cloud overhead. Relative brightnesses of 25 produce glasses of good daytime quality but which fall off in brightness and detail at dawn or dusk. The so-called night glasses, having a relative brightness of 50, give the average eye all it can see under all lighting conditions.

BINOCULAR WEIGHT

The lighter the binocular the easier they are to hold steady and the longer you can use them comfortably. The construction of the binoculars is very important to their weight. But the most important factor is the quantity of glass in the binoculars. Generally, the larger the entrance and exit pupils the more glass is required and the heavier the binoculars.

RECAPITULATION

We have discussed three basic characteristics of binoculars. These are the magnification, the relative brightness and the weight. These values are highly inter-related and tend to both add and detract from your comfort in using the binoculars.

The magnification makes things appear closer and easier to see but it also magnifies the unsteadiness of your hand. The heavier the binocular the harder it is to hold them steady. But the lighter the binocular the less light that is available under poor lighting conditions and much detail is lost.

For instance, a 6x30 binocular has the same relative brightness as a 7x35 binocular and gives a somewhat smaller image. But because the 6x30 has less glass, it is probably lighter and easier to hold steady. It is very possible that you can see more detail in 6x30s because you can hold its image steadier than the larger image of the 7x35 glasses.

Which binocular size is best for you under the conditions you want to use it is a very personal choice. Your best approach is to gain a good working knowledge of the three descriptors of the binocular and then try out the various sizes to see which of them is best suited to your needs.

TESTING BINOCULARS

These tests are relatively simple and practical. They might be the tests conducted by an optist for they probably tell more about a binocular than less practical measurement on an optical bench. Like everything else they require a little experience to use well so try them on a few different binoculars.

COLLIMATION: The two oculars must be aligned so that their optical axes are parallel or you will see two images or in cases of slight mis-alignment there might be just a vague but definite discomfort. To test for mis-alignment place the binoculars on a steady rest, such as an open book, so that you can look through each ocular separately. Select an object such as a telephone pole and move the binoculars so the pole is close to the edge of the field of one ocular. Then check the other ocular. If the telephone pole appears to be in the same position in both oculars your binoculars are aligned horizontally.

Now select an object near the bottom of the field and repeat the process. Lastly place the telephone pole in the center of the field and see if both images are straight up and down. If you can't be sure that you see mis-alignment, after very careful observation, your binoculars are probably well aligned.

OPTICAL QUALITY: Binoculars are all optically imperfect. Therefore, in order to determine optical quality you should gain some experience at judging various binoculars and then make decisions on quality only when testing binoculars side by side. There are three relatively simple tests.

OPTICAL DISTORTION: Use a good steady rest and look at a straight object like a telephone pole through one ocular. Move the image of the pole from the center to the edge and notice that toward the edge the pole appears slightly curved. This is distortion. It may be found in all binoculars but is probably not very noticeable in the highest quality glasses. In comparing one binocular with another, the pair with the lowest distortion is probably of better optical quality.

CHROMATISM: Use a good steady rest and look at a black telephone pole less than 50 feet away. The pole should be a nice new black one or any other sharp black edge. With the pole in the center of the field look carefully at the edge of the pole and try to see small colored fringes. The color might be red, green or blue or any color in between and might have the quality of a section of a rainbow. Now move the pole toward the edge of the field and see how much the color field increases.

In good glasses there will be no fringe in the center of the field and a very moderate fringe toward the edge. In poorer glasses the chromatic edge will exist in the center of the field or increase greatly toward the edge. In comparing glasses the smaller the color fringe toward the edge of the field, the better the optical quality.

COMA: If you looked at a star field, using a good steady rest, the central stars should be bright round points. Toward the edge of the field the stars in a poor pair of binoculars might become softer, less bright and might be longer than they are wide as if smeared outward. This condition may be found to some degree in all binoculars and is a good comparative measure of optical quality.

BIRD SEED IS BIG BUSINESS

Fred Payne has sent us a letter from Peter Cross, Regional Wildlife Biologist, Inland Fisheries and Game, Augusta, Maine, enclosing an account of a study undertaken by his department, designed to discover "the level of human interest in non-game birds, and the amount of use made of them in the form of observation and photography".

Among the means used for discovery was the determination of the amount of wild bird seed sold in Maine during 1972. Regional and national distributors of bird seed, as well as local feed, food, hardware and chain discount stores were approached, and "back-door" enquiries made; with the result that a surprising total of nearly six million pounds were ascertained to be sold, identifiable as wild bird seed, such as mixed seed, sunflower seed and thistle seed. It was estimated that this amount would represent a single train, almost one mile long - just filled with bird seed!

"On an average, respondents fed $124\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of seed to birds during 1972. If this figure is divided into six million pounds, we have a good idea of how many people in Maine feed birds: about 48,000." This worked out to about 30 per cent of the households in Maine. Peter Cross concluded: "Our study would seem to indicate that we are justified in including non-game wildlife in our long range planning project which, we hope, will assure that there are adequate populations of all wild species for future generations to enjoy."

BALD EAGLE, OSPREY, PEREGRINE FALCON SURVEY

R.F. Stoczek, Program Director, Fish and Wildlife Management, Maritime Forest Ranger School, R.R.#5, Fredericton, N.B., is the chief investigator in this project. He asks for our assistance:

"Naturalist clubs often take the lead in recording bird species and numbers during the year and hence can accumulate considerable data utilizing a varied membership. Because of this, the bald eagle, osprey and peregrine falcon observations of your club over the years would be extremely useful to our survey. Could you kindly bring this to the attention of your club at the next meeting with a request for information on (a) sight records, past and present (1974) with locations, dates, numbers, and (b) active nests - past and present (1974) with locations, dates, and of particular importance, the number of young per nest."

BOOKS WANTED

Tony Lock, Environmental Protection Service, P.O. Box 2406, Halifax, is looking for copies of R.S. Palmer's "Handbook of North American Birds, Vol. 1" and H.S. Peters and T.D. Burleigh's "The Birds of Newfoundland" for his private library. Does anyone know of any copies going begging?

THE FLAMINGO'S STORY

Chignecto Rose, as she/he was dubbed by the Chignecto Naturalists' Club, was discovered by the birdwatching community on November 9, 1973, when Al Smith was called about her by a Dorchester resident. Within a few days she was seen by many naturalists, usually at her favorite spot, the sewage lagoon pond, or out in the marsh at the edge of the river. A wary bird, she took flight readily when approached. Although magnificent in flight, she seemed very out of place when standing on the ice of the occasionally frozen pond. It was first believed she had appeared about November 5, but she was probably present from October 24. On November 15 she was captured and on the 17th was flown south to a game farm at Freeport, Bahamas.

The origin of Chignecto Rose is unknown. The odds seem against her having come naturally from the nearest Flamingo range, in the Bahamas, but perhaps some coastal storm could have brought her. The nearest sources of captive Flamingos are zoos in Quebec and southern New England.

--- David Christie ---

Mary Majka's Theory - Remember Those "Pink Flamingos"?

She finally got fed up! Standing all summer in somebody's front yard on one leg and being abused by dogs, and sometimes even little boys, was just too much! And besides, it was getting cold!

She took off and rejoiced in the splendid view below. The Memramcook River, muddy and full of delicious morsels, and then, the famous Dorchester Penitentiary! A symbol of freedom and defiance, she glided over the palisaded fortress and settled below in a sewage lagoon. Nonchalantly parading in front of the prison guards' homes, she was quickly spotted by the longing eyes of those who wished they too could fly, as well as by those who make sure jailbirds stay caged.

The alarm was sounded! Birdwatchers, binoculars, telescopes, cameras, and telephoto lenses went into action. A rare bird alert was in effect! Her shapely legs and gracious body awakened the interest of Al Smith. Overnight, he made her famous by deciding that her proper place was Miami Beach, where she could compete for a queen's title among the local beauties.

Her nightly hangout behind the jailhouse was discovered and five bold members of the Chignecto Naturalists' Club, armed with flashlights and net, silently approached in a little boat. Miss Rose was captured, gagged and bound. Her blood tested, she was ready for the trip. But alas, Canadian imports - save oil and electricity - are not welcome south of the border.

The rest is history now - the Kloud Kennel, the goodbyes from representatives of New Brunswick's naturalist clubs, the Air Canada "sun flight". At this writing, Chignecto Rose, the famous flamingo, strolls in the warm sunshine of the Bahamas Islands!

--- Mary Majka ---
from the N.B. Naturalist Vol. 4, 5-6, 1973

BOOK REVIEW

Recently advertised (*Time* Vol. 102, No. 23) as "one of the most beautiful, authoritative and practical volumes ever published about the bird population of the Atlantic Provinces" is the following book:

Birds of the Atlantic Provinces

By David A. Hancock and James Woodford; General Publishing Company Ltd., Don Mills, Ont., 1973. 68 pp., illus. in colour and B & W. Price: \$5.95.

That this book should be titled "Birds of the Atlantic Provinces" is a farce - it doesn't come close to giving an accurate impression of the region's birdlife and is peppered with errors. The volume is one of a series (the others cover Ontario-Quebec, the Prairie Provinces, and British Columbia), by David Hancock and James Woodford. Each book in the series is identical for the first 52 pages, with the remaining 16 pages being devoted to the particular region denoted by the title.

The portion of the book which is common to all four volumes presents

information on birds generally (distribution, flight, nests, migration, etc.), about bird groups (most of, but not all, the orders of Canadian birds), and about birdwatching (including photography and sound recording). The main defect of this part of the text is its brevity for the range of topics covered. Some statements give false impressions, such as the one dealing with cuckoos laying their eggs in other bird's nests. While true for the European bird, our Canadian cuckoos normally build their own nest and raise their own young.

Essentially, the book is a collection of bird photographs (50 in colour and 100+ in black and white). The works of several different photographers, presumably including the authors, they are generally good - some, in fact, are excellent. However, some of the black and white ones lack sufficient contrast. The layout is uninspired and the mixing of black and white and colour photos on the same page detracts from the book's general appearance, as well as reducing the impact of the black and white pictures. Two photos seem to be incorrectly identified - the Sanderlings are Surf-birds and the Orange-crowned Warbler looks much like a dull Yellowthroat.

The fourth part of the book, "Birding in the Atlantic Provinces" does not represent well our birdlife and contains many errors. Did you know that "the greatest feature influencing life in the Atlantic Provinces is ... The Grand Banks"?, that "through poor forestry and agriculture practices, much of the forest cover has been reduced to treeless heather bogs"?, that "the great shallows of the Bay of Fundy" are the feeding places of Golden Plover?, that each province's meadows of crowberries attract millions of shorebirds?, that Clapper Rails are found in the Tantramar Marsh, N.B.?, that Dovekies nest at Witless Bay, Nfld.?

Many things that should have been mentioned have not been, for instance the abundance and variety of warblers in Maritime forests, the Rock and Willow Ptarmigan of Newfoundland, the exciting array of stray migrants about the headlands and islands of Nova Scotia, the great flocks of shearwaters and phalaropes that occur off some areas of the coast.

The authors mention the site of a Nova Scotian eyrie of the endangered Peregrine Falcon. Considering the possibility of disturbance by falconers, such sites should not be publicized. In this case, it probable matters little since the species has not been found breeding in the Maritimes for years.

A map of the Atlantic Provinces includes Quebec's Magdalens, Anticosti and Gaspé, which is reasonable since their bird fauna relates closely to the remainder of the region. However, the only mention of those areas in the text is a sentence under the heading of New Brunswick stating that "the most famous seabird areas are the shores of Gaspé, Bonaventure Island, and the Bay of Fundy Islands." The map indicates the life zones of the region as arctic, boreal and Alleghenian, but the authors do not define what they mean by each one, and the way the zones are mapped does not coincide with any version I've seen previously

The book's most useless piece of information is the listing of the weather conditions on twenty-five 1972 Christmas Bird Counts.

"A Checklist of Birds of the Atlantic Provinces" concludes the book. It is a disaster! At least 20 species occurring annually in the region are omitted e.g. Black-bellied Plover, Red Phalarope, Hairy Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee,

Wood Thrush and Prairie Warbler. Several other species of infrequent occurrence are also omitted, including no less than six species of storm-blown terns, all of which are mentioned in Godfrey's "Birds of Canada", the taxonomy and nomenclature of which the authors say they have followed. Other equally rare species such as White-tailed Tropic-bird and Chuck-will's-widow have been included, as have Red-shafted Flicker, Snowy Plover, Louisiana Waterthrush and Western Meadowlark which to my knowledge have not been found here. There are also the listings "Brant (incl. Black Brant)", "Red-tailed Hawk (incl. Harlan's Hawk)", and "White-fronted Goose (incl. Blue Goose)". Neither the Black Brant nor Harlan's Hawk subspecies occur in the region and the third statement should have been "Snow Goose (incl. Blue Goose)". Beware of these checklists in separate form. The book tells us that they are available from Hancock House publishers in card form at 15 for \$2.00. They also offer three other Canadian regional lists and 21 American lists.

In summary, it is a pity that this book was ever published. The idea was good, but a great deal more thought and research should have been put into it.

from the N.B. Naturalist, Vol. 4, No. 5-6,
1973, courtesy of the author,
David S. Christie, Head, Natural Science
Dept., The New Brunswick Museum.

We concur with Dave Christie's assessment of this book and warn members against buying it or the so-called "checklist". Lists of birds found in Nova Scotia are available at 20 for \$1.00 from the Society. Checklists for the birds of Prince Edward Island may be obtained from the Parks and Resorts Branch, Prince Edward Island Department of the Environment and Tourism, P.O. Box 2000, Charlottetown, P.E.I. Checklists of the birds of the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick Border Region may be obtained from the Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, P.O. Box 1590, Sackville, N.B. EOA 3C0.

In contrast to the above, it is a pleasure to announce the publication of the 1970 revision of Robie Tufts' BIRDS OF NOVA SCOTIA, now obtainable at the Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, N.S.

REMAINING FIELD TRIPS FOR 1974

August 31-September 1 (Labour Day weekend)

President's Field Day - Brier Island. Meet at the graveyard, Peajack Road at 8.30 a.m. Advance reservations necessary for pelagic trips (anticipated cost \$5 per person), call or write Roger Pocklington, 106 Crichton Ave., Dartmouth, phone 469-3656 (note change from previous *Newsletter*).

October 5

MacNabs Island, Halifax Co. Contact Ross Anderson, 90 Victoria Rd., Dartmouth, phone 463-4188.

Reports of Field Trips 1974

May 4

Broad Cove, Lunenburg Co. Leaders: Sylvia Fullerton, John and Shirley Cohrs. The birding season opened at Broad Cove when 25 hardy adult souls and five even harder juveniles appeared on a rainy Saturday May morning. They traversed many muddy miles to see the returned avifauna, not the least of which was the American Bittern in classic posture, which our four-year old was first to spot. We covered Crescent Beach, Cherry Hill, Petite Riviere and Broad Cove, from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., with a break for coffee at the Fred Dobsons' cottage, and for lunch at the Cohrs'. We were rewarded with 61 species: Common and Red-throated Loon, Red-necked and Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret (a highlight of the day - literally: nothing else could have shone through the morning murk), Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Oldsquaw, Harlequin Duck, Common Eider, White-winged, Surf and Black Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Marsh Hawk, Osprey, American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasant, Piping Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, Purple Sandpiper, Great Blackbacked and Herring Gulls, Black Guillemot, Belted Kingfisher, Common Flicker, Horned Lark, Tree and Barn Swallow, Blue and Grey Jay, Common Raven, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Winter Wren, American Robin, Hermit Thrush, Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Starling, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warbler, House Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Savannah Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated, Song and Swamp Sparrow, and a Snow Bunting.

Our thanks to Sylvia Fullerton and John and Shirley Cohrs for a successful, interesting and very enjoyable trip.

--- Pat Pocklington ---

May 11

Old St. Margaret's Bay Road. Leader: Shirley Cohrs. Eight stalwart souls (including the leader and two blood relatives who couldn't refuse the offer she made) turned out in the rain (34°F) to observe spring warblers. There were three

After the first three hours the rain abated, binoculars became less foggy, and it was possible with stiffened fingers to focus on a few hardy birds. Thirty-two species were listed, including an albino junco ghosting about in the wet under a dark and sodden pine. Four Winter Wrens sang loudly, seemingly oblivious to the wintry conditions. Thrushes were represented by Robins, Hermits and two very tame Swainson' Names of the courageous expeditionaries are as follows: Ross Anderson, Shirley Brothers, Dick Brown, Eric Cooke, Frank Himsl, Chris Cohrs, John Cohrs, and Shirley Cohrs.

--- Shirley Cohrs ---

May 25

Hants Co. Leader: C.R.K. Allen. The annual Hants Co. Field Day got off to a rather slow start at 8.30 a.m., May 25th, from the usual meeting place at the site of the former Mount Uniacke CPR station. The beginning was slow because of the weather - temperatures in the high 30's or low 40's, with a heavy overcast and an occasional spatter of rain. There was not therefore the usual bird chorus and the birds themselves, during the first several hours, rather widely spaced. This was to some extent, however, offset by the fact that the cool spring had retarded development of foliage on trees and shrubs so that what birds there were could easily be seen.

The party followed the traditional route along the Rawdon Road, through Ashdale and Hillsvale, pausing at all the "hot spots" and taking time out for lunch at the Smiley's Interval provincial park.

After lunch, needing a refill of gasoline, the Leader turned over the wheel to another member of the group so they might precede him to the next stopping place. The cavalcade was thus led on an impromptu and unscheduled trip through the backroads of central Hants Co., before its serendipitous discovery of the next stop -- Kennetcook dyke.

The total species for the day was 66, rather low for this area, but what birds there were cooperated beautifully, allowing themselves to be studied and admired at leisure.

There were no unusual sightings - just the expectable birds for the time of year, including 18 species of warblers. However, several recent converts to birdwatching in the party made substantial additions to their lists, and for the oldtimers it was a delight to renew acquaintances (avian and human) under such easy viewing conditions.

At 4.00 p.m. another Hants Co. trip was over, and the party scattered on their various homeward courses, chilly but cheerful.

--- C.R.K. Allen ---

June 29-July 1

The Border Marshes. Hosts" Chignecto Naturalists Club. The Border area around Sackville, N.B., and Amherst, N.S., was recently the scene of one of the most enjoyable outings our members have ever experienced: the Chignecto Naturalists Club was host to a joint outing with the Nova Scotia Bird Society and members of the N.B. Federation of Naturalists. The program included:

A field trip to study various types of bogs and the interesting plantlife growing there - An evening walk around dyked marshland to listen to rails, bitterns and short-billed marsh wrens - A day of birding at Jolicure Wildlife Sanctuary and Cape Jourmain, during which Davis Finch came up with the weekend's rarities - a Ruff and a Little Gull - A social evening at the

home of Dr. H. Harries where we were served a delicious meal
- An outing to Amherst Bird Sanctuary for more birding and
plant identification.

All these activities were well organized and enthusiastically led by our friends from the Chignecto Naturalists Club with special thanks and credit due to President Con Desplanque, Dr. H. Harries, Al Smith, and Stuart Tingley.

Over 50 people took part in the weekend's activities. We all enjoyed the chance to see new areas, to learn something of the history of the Border region, to get a better understanding of life in the bogs and marshlands, and to learn the calls of rails and other marshbirds so seldom seen. Most of all, we enjoyed the opportunity of getting better acquainted with members of the Chignecto Naturalists Club and N.B. Federation of Naturalists. We should plan more joint outings of this nature to strengthen the bonds between our organizations.

Congratulations to the Chignecto Naturalists Club for the excellent job they did in organizing a weekend that was outstanding in every respect and enjoyed tremendously by all who took part!

--- Eric Cooke ---

(Editor's Note: I second Eric's motion of thanks. The border area was new to me, as to most NSBS members and that's a pity, because it's well worth a visit. I particularly recommend the impoundment marsh which the abortive P.E.I. causeway has created at Cape Jourmain; that's where we saw the Ruff and the Little Gull. (Drive towards the Cape Tormentine ferry terminal, turn off at Bayfield and go about a mile west on 955; then turn onto the abandoned gravel roadbed at the overpass, and drive out to the Cape.) I was also impressed by the Canadian Wildlife Service's impoundments in the Tintamarre National Wildlife area; we went out in the evening with the Chignecto Naturalists Club, who promised us Rails and delivered handsomely. Apart from these there were some other highlights: swarms of stoneflies landing all over my shirt and metamorphosing before my very eyes; a marshy field pulsating with firefly lights; an epic duel between tape-recorders when we were trying to get a Long-billed Marsh Wren to sing. An outstanding trip.

--- Dick Brown ---

July 13

Port Hebert, Shelburne Co. Leader: Ralph Widrig. A jewel of a day with azure sky and sparkling sea greeted 16 members as they assembled on the beach at Johnston Pond. Planned as more of a leisurely mid-summer outing that would take advantage of Nova Scotia wild flowers as

well as nesting birds, members were delighted at the immediate discovery of a nesting pair Piping Plovers, complete with clutch of three eggs. Close range photographs were taken under perfect conditions. A few minutes later a puzzling dead sea bird was found. Its identity as a Manx Shearwater was confirmed by Dick Brown and the specimen given to the Museum.

The group then proceeded to the leader's private wildlife sanctuary nearby and were welcomed by a pair of young 'charcoal' Canada Jays. Eight species of nesting warblers were observed carrying food to their young and an Oven Bird called in the distance as we stopped to admire a striking stand of wild orchids, arethusa and calopogon. Ripening bake-apples (cloudberry) were observed by some of the members for the first time, and all showed special interest in an unusually heavy crop of wild strawberries.

On a grassy knoll overlooking the sea a telescope was set up which soon disclosed six Black Guillemot, a flock of Eider ducks 'tending' over a reef, a fine Loon in full plumage, and both Double-crested and Great Cormorant perched on the slopes of Green Island where they nest together with a colony of Black Guillemot. As a muskrat basked in the sun on a small pond, a Winter Wren gave its beautiful and prolonged song while Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes sang in the forest beyond. One member pointed out that glasswort, that strange, fleshy seaside plant, was delicious as an hors d'oeuvre and was relished right on the spot. Chanterelle mushrooms were also enjoyed and bags of them harvested to take home.

The group then proceeded along a forest path to a fresh water lake, passing stands of fragrant twin-flower and rare one-flowered wintergreen that seemed to carpet the ground between the luxuriant growth of ferns. Thrushes sang constantly in the distance. At the lake shore the strange aquatic plants lobelia and pipewort were discovered, and young Richard showed boyish delight in pursuing polywogs. On the way back the wintergreen flavor of the snowberry was enjoyed by all, and a Solitary Vireo gave its penetrating song high in a spruce tree. At trail's end the party was again greeted by the scolding of a Canada Jay - or was he inviting us back? It was a perfect day, and one not soon to be forgotten.

Present were: Herbert and Jeanne Addelson, Peter and Margot Alexander, Shirley Brothers, John, Shirley and Chris Cohrs, Frank and Mary Himsel, Roger and Richard Pocklington, Susan Van Loon, and Ralph, Bonnie and Colin Widrig.

--- Ralph Widrig ---

BIRD SOCIETY NEWS

Executive Meetings

An executive meeting was held on April 22 at the residence of Ross Anderson. E. Cooke gave a summary of the Canadian Nature Federation conference in Moncton at which the NSBS was represented by E. Cooke, B. Lamberton and E. Reid.

It was announced that a grant of \$700 from the Nova Scotia Museum was received to help defray the cost of operation in the 1973 fiscal year.

The meeting approved a temporary brochure of the society to be made available to the public at the museum display. A more permanent version of the brochure may be designed for the society, ideas on this project are, of course, welcome.

P. Dobson spoke in support of the Ecology Action Centre and hopes to see strong articles on conservation in the *Newsletter*.

E. Cooke suggested the Society should press now for the continued abolition of road spraying.

Grant

A grant of \$1500 to assist in publication of the news letter was received in June from the N.S. Museum for which we are most grateful.

Protected Areas

Meeting at the Museum, R. Pocklington, I. McLaren and E. Cooke drew up a short list of areas in need of protection. The areas chosen were ones which would be of interest principally but not exclusively to birders. Some of these were then submitted to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for their support.

Slide Show

The last indoor meeting was held April 8 at the Bedford Institute. It was chaired by E. Cooke who in his opening remarks discussed the NSBS Scholarship and Trust Fund and in particular some coastal islands which are under its protection. One of the latest acquisitions was Outer Bald Island, one of three tusket islands sometimes known as the Principality of Outer Baldonia (it was so listed in the Washington Directory of Embassies). Mr. Cooke gave a very interesting and amusing talk about the more recent history of the island and how it came to be under the protection of the NSBS.

The next item was a selection of slides from the membership. The contributors all proved to be photographic artists as well as enthusiastic naturalists as exemplified by the spider webs, dewy and sunlit, delicate

The Nova Scotia Bird Society put on an exhibition at the Nova Scotia Museum in May which interested many visitors, including children.



"Tools of the Trade" included binoculars, a field guide, the new edition of Robie Tufts' "The Birds of Nova Scotia", and, naturally, a copy of the *Newsletter*.



flowers, a marvelous shot of a porcupine climbing a tree, a skunk, anthropomorphic owls, seabird colonies and very artistic shots of ducks on Dartmouth lakes. The contributors included H. Brennan, R. Connors, Shirley Cohrs and John Cohrs, Blair Stephens, Gertrude Stein and Carin Summers. This program proved to be a delightful end to indoor meetings and a stimulating beginning to spring birding, and could well become a regular feature of the 'indoor season'.

NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM EXHIBIT

The Museum exhibit was a resounding success. A fine, well rounded display gave good publicity for the Society which resulted in several new memberships.

A welcoming 7-foot owl, complete with binoculars, made by Glen Simpson announced the NSBS display which included contributions of beautiful artwork by Lloyd Fitzgerald, an informative set of paintings of warblers and a remarkable nest display by Roger Burrows. Tony Lock compiled and arranged a selection of original reproductions and a letter by the great American bird artist, James J. Audubon, which was written up in the local newspapers. The Canadian Nature Federation kindly provided photographic artwork as well as a supply of brochures. A demonstrative arrangement of TOOLS OF THE TRADE was prepared by Roger Pocklington who also loaned bird pictures from his private collection. Banding instruments and a pictorial procedure of catching and banding birds was made available from the Canadian Wildlife Service courtesy of Al Smith.

Members sent in photos of field trips which were used by E. Cooke and P. Pocklington to construct an interesting display. Jacques Sacket and Roger Pocklington contributed slides for a Wednesday evening slide show. It was good to see active participation of new members in the display.

PHYLLIS DOBSON - OUR RETIRING EDITOR

In his Presidential Address to the Nova Scotia Bird Society Annual Meeting, on October 20, 1961, the late Dr. Harrison F. Lewis included this prophetic paragraph:

"One of the common and effective means of spreading and strengthening interest in any subject is the issuing of special publications. I suggest that we should look forward to the time when this Society will publish its own magazine and that we should work consistently toward that accomplishment. Presumably it will be small at the start and will appear infrequently, perhaps once a year, but eventually it should be an attractive journal, well illustrated, containing suitable local articles, and publish four or six or more times a year."

One has only to read the Nova Scotia Bird Society Newsletter today to see how Phyllis Dobson, its Editor since 1961, has fulfilled these aims. Now, after 13 years, she is retiring. Charlie Allen writes:

"It was a red-letter day for the Nova Scotia Bird Society when in 1961, Phyllis Dobson agreed to become editor of the *Newsletter*. She accepted the assignment with considerable hesitation and misgiving; editing of any sort was unknown territory to her and she considered herself a rank amateur in the field of birdwatching.

"How groundless these fears were was soon apparent; the *Newsletter* rapidly metamorphosed from an issue of several mimeographed sheets stapled together to a properly bound booklet with an attractive layout. It contained drawings, photographs and a variety of items to meet the tastes of every kind of birdwatcher. Its triyearly issues are now eagerly awaited and studied with respect by serious birders and with keen enjoyment by the amateurs.

"There can be no doubt that the *Newsletter*, over the last 13 years, has been the strongest single force in holding the Bird Society together, in keeping it an active, vigorous organization and in attracting to its membership other organizations - some quite illustrious - and individuals from many parts of the world, far beyond the boundaries of Nova Scotia.

"The *Newsletter*, early, became for Phyllis a labour of love - but a labour nevertheless in the truest sense of the word. Her equipment for the task was, however, more than adequate: patience, capacity for long, gruelling hours of drudgery, impeccable taste and judgment and a gentle humour which brightened many a staid statistical record. One can add to this her knack of attracting, cultivating and keeping contributors of valuable and entertaining articles. There was also her talent for prodding dilatory contributors with such art and finesse that the victims actually thought they were being patted on the back!

"Phyllis Dobson has now left Halifax to take up her permanent home in her native county of Yarmouth and has relinquished most of her editorial jobs to a committee. She has, however, agreed to keep a few fingers on the wheel as Editor-in-Chief and it is probable therefore that the Nova Scotia Bird Society *Newsletter* will continue to hold its place among the top-ranking bulletins of its kind on this continent."

Some further comments by members

"No one," runs the old saying, "is indispensable," but initially it is taking some ten people - where it took one Phyllis - to compile this newsletter

"Phyllis is a quiet, sincere person - one of those rare souls who can always be relied on."

"On field trips Phyllis would introduce you to the music of birds - when you had only been using your eyes"

From a child: "Will you please tell me all about the birds?"

The Department of Tourism owes a debt to Phyllis who, year after year, has answered letters coming from many Canadian provinces and 22 American states. Requests came for information on bird and wildlife sanctuaries, for maps and bird checklists, on camping and canoeing areas and boats and ferries. Someone wanted to know where to photograph migratory and pelagic birds and there was a plea for someone willing to spend a couple of days in the field helping two ladies to find local bird species. A 50-caravan fleet of birdwatchers from Florida sought advice on good birding areas while a hiking club asked detailed advice on trails and guide books, if cooking pots were available for their members travelling light, and if there were good-size food stores for a group of fairly hearty eaters. Hundreds of such letters were answered courteously by Phyllis in her spare time. She has built up a fund of good will for the Society in distant places and introduced many tourists to Nova Scotian birders. The many queries on birds led Phyllis and Charlie Allen to compile an excellent booklet on "Where to Find the Birds in Nova Scotia" - which was an instant success and which should be kept continuously in print.

It seems somehow incongruous for someone as active as Phyllis to be "retiring". But we wish her a long and active retirement down in Yarmouth Co., and hope that she will frequently be back to see her many friends throughout the province.

--- Dick Brown ---

MEMBERSHIP and DUES

Single Membership	\$4.00
Family Membership (one mailing)	6.00
Student Membership (Bona-fide student registered for full time attendance at any institution of learning)	2.00

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

Application for Membership

I, hereby apply
for membership in the NOVA SCOTIA
(Single, Family, Student)
BIRD SOCIETY for the year 19.... and enclose \$.....
as annual membership dues.

Mailing Address

.....

.....

To:

The Treasurer,
Nova Scotia Bird Society,
c/o Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, Nova Scotia.

