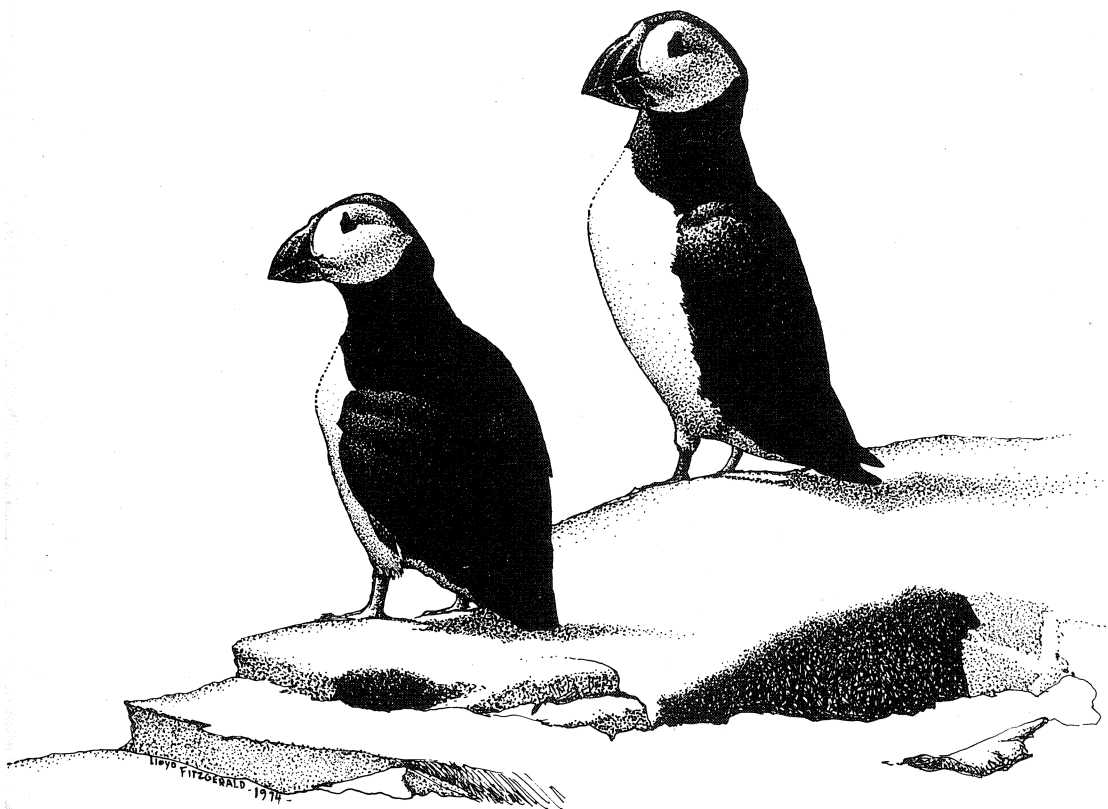


# NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

JULY 1975

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REPORTS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE NOVEMBER 30, 1975

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the Nova Scotia Museum.

## SPRING REPORT, 1975

## MARCH THROUGH JUNE

This year we scarcely had a spring, the transition period from winter to summer was indeed short. After the fierce and damaging storm of April 3-4, with snow and freezing rain and winds up to 60 mph, the month continued cold; in May, temperatures dropped to near zero (°C) nightly. Suddenly it was June, and high summer. In the incredibly short time the landscape greened over, shrubs and trees and fruiting vines burst into bloom - rhodora was succeeded by laurel, Indian Pear by wild apple, followed by hawthorn; strawberry blossoms by blueberry and then blackberry; and the wildflowers - clover, daisies buttercup and wild pea made a garden of the roadsides.

The ferns and foliage were lush - all shades of green - but soon turned dark, as did the pale new growing tips of the conifers which lengthened almost visibly day by day. The first hay crop was luxuriant.

Unfortunately the prospects for the next one are not good. May was a dry month, June has been dryer. The hay stubble crackles underfoot. Fern fronds are crisping to brown; fruit, set from the profusion of blossom is ripening too soon; garden soil is powdery and fires have sprung up in the woods, difficult to control against the strong drying winds. The lakes are low, the wells are lower. The fog rolls in and out, keeping us green coastwise, but still it does not rain.

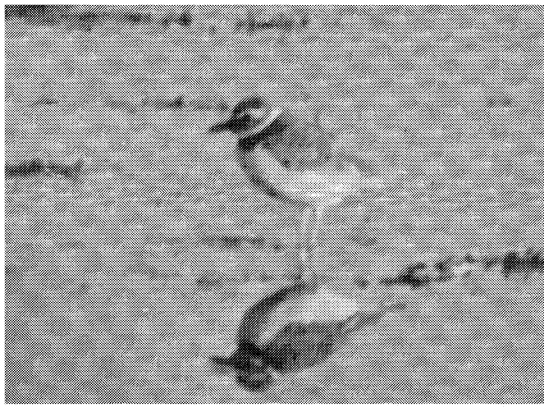
Meanwhile the birds have arrived, species by species, each at its appointed time; have established territories, found mates, built nests and already young birds have appeared, staggering about in the shrubbery and teetering on telephone wires. We have no expected species missing, and with the possible exception of Tree and Barn Swallows, no apparent shortage of individuals.

Our list of rarities grows apace. Again, it is difficult to decide whether this is due to a genuine change in bird distribution or to more and better reporters. As usual most of the rare species were found on the islands, but a good few on the mainland too. Seal I. led in number. Stuart Tingley and Bruce Mactavish spent from April 28 to May 27 there, joined for part of that time by Sylvia Fullerton, Barbara Hinds, Willett Mills and Eric Cooke, and this was the height of the migration period. The Sable I. census was carried out through May and June, and the observers there were Davis Finch, Edward Miller (student), James Miller and Alban Richard, with Ian McLaren during part of the time. Many of the regular rarities were seen on both islands, but there were some interesting differences.

The list is so impressive, it is given in full as follows:

GREEN HERON	2, one May 9, one May 16, Seal I. party 1, May 27-30, Sable I. party 1, June 7, Lawrencetown, Halifax Co., Eric Cooke 1, July 2, Homeville, Cape Breton, Sara MacLean, George Spencer
CATTLE EGRET	1, April 28, Sable River, G.D. Perry

- GREAT EGRET 1, April 6, Pinkney's Point, Scott and Van Killam  
1, June 26, Lockeport, G.D. Perry
- SNOWY EGRET 1, May 10, Sunday Point, Yarmouth, C.R.K. Allen  
2, June 6-7, Lawrencetown, Eric Cooke and Paul Brodie
- LOUISIANA HERON 1 May 18-19, Seal I. party
- BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON 1, May 27, Sable I., Davis W. Finch
- EASTERN GLOSSY IBIS 4, April 26-28, Wedge Point, J.I. Pothier, D. & M. Henry  
14, May 2, Starr's Point, King's Co., Peter Austin-Smith
- EUROPEAN WIGEON 1, April 23, Lusby March, Stuart Tingley
- COMMON TEAL 1, April 23, Amherst Point Sanctuary, Stuart Tingley
- WILSON'S PLOVER 1, May 17-19, Seal I. party
- RUFF (Reeve) 1, May 11, Seal I. party
- RUFF (male) 1, May 29-30, Sable I. party
- LITTLE GULL 2, June 10, Sable I. (both photographed)
- COMMON PUFFIN 3 nests found on Pearl I. by Eric Cooke June 22.  
(24 Puffins present on and around the island)
- CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW 1, May 15, Wedgeport. Found by William Boudreau, identified  
J.I. Pothier, many other observers.
- ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW 3, May 17, Seal I. party
- HOUSE WREN 1, May 10, and 2 May 13 at Seal I.  
1, singing, June 3, Port Maitland, Yarmouth Co., C.R.K. Allen
- SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN 2, May 24, Seal I. party  
2, June 27, Southeast St., Yarmouth, John Kearny and  
many others, photographed by Ian McLaren.
- WOOD THRUSH 1, May 10, Sable I. Alban Richard  
1, May 14, cemetery at Yarmouth, John Kearny.  
15-20 through May at Seal I.
- EASTERN BLUEBIRD 1, May 14, Economy, Francis Spalding
- GREENLAND WHEATEAR 1, May 26, Sable I., Davis Finch et al.
- BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER 1, photographed May 23, 2 seen May 25, Seal I.
- PHILADELPHIA VIREO 2, May 15, Seal I.  
2, May 27, and June 4, Sable I.
- WARBLING VIREO 1 singing, June 3, Yarmouth, John Kearny



This quartet of rarities was photographed by Stuart Tingley on Seal Island in spring. The Wilson's Plover on May 17 is one of our four occurrences since 1971. The Blue-grey Gnatcatcher has been quite regularly recorded, but has not hitherto been documented by specimen or photograph. This one was snapped on May 25. Although a marginal photograph (taken on May 10) the striking head stripes (and olive-grey back, buffy underparts on the slide) adequately signal the fourth Nova Scotian Worm-eating Warbler, and the first confirmed since 1902. Following upon last year's first sighting, Stuart's photograph (May 18) supplies our first confirmed record of the Clay-coloured Sparrow. Note the strongly underlined cheek patch and streaked crown.

- PROTHONOTARY WARBLER 1, June 1, at Louisbourg, Mrs. G. Jackson, reported to Frank Robertson.
- WORM-EATING WARBLER 1-2, May 10 and May 18-21, 'recognizably different' first one photographed, Seal I. party.
- BLUE-WINGED WARBLER 1 (male), May 15, Seal I. party
- ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER 1, May 3-4, Sydney Forks, Roy Blakeburn  
3 (probably), May 26-30, June 4, June 22, Sable I.
- HERMIT WARBLER 1-2, May 26-27, June 4, Sable I., D.W. Finch et al., photographed.
- CONNECTICUT WARBLER 1 (female), June 12, Sable I. party. Photographed.
- HOODED WARBLER 1 (female), April 28-May 3, Seal I., photographed.
- CARDINAL 1, April 28 (heard and seen by residents during April), Seal I. At least 4 remaining in Yarmouth Co. from previous 'invasion', one pair at Pubnico, one pair near Yarmouth town (E. Hamiltons and D. MacDonalds).
- DICKCISSEL 1, May 10, Sable I. party
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW 1, May 18-19, Seal I. party, photographed.

Besides these, there were reports of Brown Thrashers, Meadowlarks, Orchard Orioles, Tanagers, (both Scarlet and Summer), Indigo Buntings, Rufous-sided Towhees, (10-12 on Seal besides mainland sightings), Field Sparrows (probably 20+ different individuals) seen on Seal I., and White-crowned Sparrows, at least 10 on Seal, at least 16 on Sable, several on Cape Sable and at Yarmouth and Cape Breton. The White-crown migration went through from May 8-24.

All of this has made for some interesting and exciting birding during the migration period, March through June, 1975. The story of the arrival of our own summer residents is in the report to follow, and sounds satisfactory. So far the breeding season has been favorable, with plenty of insects about, and dry, warm weather.

To those of you who, unreminded, have sent in spring records (on time), most of them on "proper" slips, our grateful thanks. We apologize for the lateness of the Newsletter issues, and hope to do better as time goes on. The value of this report depends entirely upon the number, geographical range and accuracy of the records received from you.

PRD, editor.

CONTRIBUTORS and OBSERVERS, March-June, 1975

Those marked with an asterisk\* were members of the "Barry Sabean" group - observations in the Annapolis-Cornwallis Valley, Cumberland County, Halifax County and Tobacco Island: I. Abernethy, Jeanne Addelson (JA), C.R.K. Allen

(CRKA), Peter Austin-Smith\*, Ross Baker (RB), Dan Banks\*, Peter Barkhouse\*(PB), Roy Blakeburn (RBL), Sylvia Bower (SB), Paul Brodie, R.G.B. Brown (RGBB), Roger Burrows, T.H.R. Byrne, E. Chant, Curtis H. Chipman (CHC), Margaret A. Clark (MAC), Evelyn E. Coates (EEC), John, Shirley, Chris and Lise Cohrs (J&SC), (CJC&LAC), Eric H. Cooke (EHC), Gary Corbett (GC), Con Desplanque (CD), Gerald Dickie\*, Fred and Evelyn Dobson (FWD), P.R. Dobson (PRD), Tony Duke\*, Allison Ferguson (AF), Mrs. Clarence Ferguson, Layton Ferguson, Davis W. Finch (DWF), Mae Fullerton, Sylvia J. Fullerton (SJF), Mrs. John Fowns, C. Gardner, Marion Girols, Stephen Goudey (SG), Rene Haldane (RH), Mrs. Robert Harris, Thelma Hawkins (TH), David and Marie Henry (D&MH), Marion W. Hilton (MWH), Sylvia C. Hilton, Barbara Hinds (BH), Eric Holdway (EH), Adele Hurlburt (AH), Mrs. G. Jackson, Dr. and Mrs. J.R. Jackson, R.S. Johnson (RSJ), John Kearny (JK), Evangeline and Scott Killam (VK), Dorothy B. Kirk (DBK), Robert D. Lambertson (RDL), Madeline and Wickerson Lent (M&WL), Ruth E. MacCaul (REM), Helen J. McGloin, Ian MacGregor, Andrew MacInnis\*, Sara MacLean (SM), Ian A. McLaren (IAM), Gordon and Olive MacLeod (G&OM), Mrs. John Mackay, Steve MacKinney, Bruce Mactavish (BM), Elsie MacRury, Helen and Henry March (H&HM), Rainer, Sandra and Jan Meyerowitz (R,S&JM), James E. Miller, Edward H. Miller, W.J. Mills (WJM), Eric Mullen\*, Larry E. Neily, Mrs. Ada Nicholson, Margaret Nickerson (MN), Art Patton\*, Fred Payne\*, George D. Perry (GDP), J. Isreal Pothier (JIP), Myra M. Porter, Alban A. Richard, Evelyn M. Richardson (EMR), Olive Ritcey, Frank F. and Ada Robertson (FF&AR), Jack Russell (JR), Barry Sabeane\*, Sidney and Betty J. Smith (S&BJS), Francis and Edgar Spalding, (F&ES), Arthur Spencer, George Spencer (GS), Morton Stewart\*, R.F. Stoczek (RFS), Liz Sutcliffe, Jean M. Timpa, (JMT), Mrs. William Titus, Stuart Tingley (ST), Neil VanNostrand\*, Ralph S. Widrig (RSW), Charles Wood\*.

#### THE SPRING MIGRATION 1975

These reports, particularly the migration reports, bristle with dates. This makes for dull reading. If you have a map of the Maritime region, spread it out and follow the progress of the birds day by day. You may find it quite fascinating.

#### LOONS AND GREBES

No definite movement of COMMON LOONS in inshore waters was reported this spring, but good numbers of pairs were seen on lakes in the back country from late April on. They were calling on Eel Lake in Yarmouth Co. near midnight April 7, just two weeks after the ice went out of the lake.

Single RED-THROATED LOONS were seen at Cape Forchu March 16 (MWH&DBK), at Pinkney's Point April 4 (CRKA) and Argyle Sound (MWH et al.) in Yarmouth Co., and a series of sightings at Economy reported by FS are as follows: March 25-26 (1), April 3 (2-3), April 7 (5), April 9 (9) and April 12 (12-14) (FS).

The spring movement of RED-NECKED GREBES is usually well marked, as numbers are apt to congregate in the same places year after year in late March and early April. This year "the annual event - gathering of grebes off S. point, Cape Sable", began with 2, March 12, up to 10-12 by March 17 (SS). There were 35-40 sleeping in a loose raft off Pinkney's Pt. March 29, and 30 actively feeding in Argyle Sound April 2 (CRKA). At Port George, on the Fundy side, of the 23 Rednecks there on April 4, "roughly ½ of these birds were in winter plumage and ½ turning rusty red in front, none in full breeding plumage., this is the

largest concentration I've seen this or any other year" wrote Bob Lamberton. There were 10 daily at Brier I, from April 13 to April 18 when 20 were seen (ST) and "very many" in ones and twos scattered over Green Bay (Lun, Co.) in company with Horned Grebes on April 12 (J&SC). Last sighting was of a single at Cranberry Hd. April 29 (MWH).

There were 10-15 HORNED GREBES in the gathering of grebes at S. Point off Cape Sable March 17 as above. Last sightings elsewhere were: 1, March 28, (also a Red-neck), off Forchu, Richmond Co. (Ian MacGregor); 1, April 6, Argyle Sound (MWH); 8, April 15 at Second Peninsula (D&MN), and 1, May 3, at Lawrencetown, Halifax Co. (NSBS party).

PIED-BILLED GREBES were reported from Debert Sanctuary where there was one April 23 (BS et al.); 2, displaying at Amherst Pt. Sanctuary same date (ST) and one on salt water at Green Bay May 19 (Lise Cohrs).

#### FULMARS, SHEARWATERS, STORM-PETRELS

The first SHEARWATER of the season was a GREATER, off Glace Bay on May 22-23 (SMacL). But, as usual, SOOTY SHEARWATERS were the common species in May and June. Ray Thurber saw his first off Brier Island on May 23, and there were up to 200-300 by June 6 - with no sign yet of any Greaters. Bruce MacTavish and Stuart Tingley had a Sooty just east of Seal Island on May 27. Dick Brown hoped that the unusual abundance of capelin in St. George's Bay this spring might have unusual numbers of shearwaters feeding on them; but all he saw on June 24 was a single Sooty.

Our only STORM-PETREL records are of LEACH'S. Several were singing on foggy nights from May 8 onwards on Seal Island (BM, ST). It's good to know that the birds are still trying to breed at what was once one of their major colonies; let's hope the rats will give them a break.

#### GANNETS, CORMORANTS

The Lents had the first GANNETS, off Brier Island on March 21. There were 9 off Seal Island on May 9 and 25 on May 24 (BM, ST). Frank Robertson found a stranded adult at Lingan on April 14. He let it go a couple of days later and it sailed off over a cliff - but not before biting him severely. A back-handed tribute to a dedicated ornithologist.

CORMORANTS were seen as usual around the province. The Cape Breton Branch report GREATS from March 23 onwards, and Eric Cooke had 11, in V-formation, off Lawrencetown on April 5, Stuart Tingley saw 20 DOUBLE-CRESTED at Brier Island on April 18, and there were 7 near Argyle, Yarmouth Co., on April 27 (CRKA, PRD). Eric Holdway described the progress of a Double-crested colony at Pictou. There were 8 nests under construction on April 12, 94 occupied in May, 126 occupied on June 5, and 135 occupied on June 16.

#### HERONS THROUGH IBISES

A GREAT BLUE HERON in the Sydney area March 9 (JR) was a very early straggler or a winter survivor, although this latter seems unlikely so far north. On March 26 another or possibly the same bird was found at nearby New Waterford alive but in poor condition. It was released some weeks later in good condition. The first



definite spring arrivals were: 1, March 29-30 at Petite Riviere (FWD); 1, March 30, in bright spring plumage, at Eel Brook (PRD); 2, April 1 near Pubnico (CRKA) and on this same date the Henrys counted 14 in the Tusket estuary off Upper Wedgeport. A single bird showed up at Lockeport (GDP), 2, at Port Williams (BS et al.) and another single at Economy, far up near the head of the Bay of Fundy, all on April 3. Three more of these herons appeared at Economy on the 5th, 4-5 on the 14th and 6 on the 16th (FS).

GREEN HERONS have been seen at Seal I, where there was one May 9, and a different bird May 16 (NSBS party); at Sable I., 1 May 18-19 (DWF et al.); at Lawrencetown, Halifax Co. 1, June 7 (EHC) and at Homeville, C.B. 1, July 2 (SM & GS).

This spring's lone CATTLE EGRET was first seen April 28 at Sable River by G.D. Perry, who reports that it remained for about 11 days, feeding in a pasture-pond habitat and seemed to favor frogs as fodder.

The above observer also reports a GREAT EGRET at Lockeport June 26, seen under good conditions with binoculars at about 30 yards. Another of this species was at Pickney's Pt. near Melbourne Sanctuary April 6, observed and identified by Van and Scott Killam, viewing conditions excellent. This bird was seen again by many NSBS members on April 13.

SNOWY EGRETS were seen at Sunday Pt., Yarmouth (a single bird) on May 10 (CRKA) and in the Three-Fathom-Harbor-Lawrencetown area, where two birds were seen on June 6-7 (PB&EHC).

The Seal I. party scored one LOUISIANA HERON on May 18-19. The bird was photographed.

Only one BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON is reported, seen over the Western Light ponds at Sable I. at dusk, May 27. Davis Finch wrote: "This bird and I 'quoked' at each other for a long time as it circled over my head and nearly lit by me".

AMERICAN BITTERNs are well reported, singles being seen and heard from widely scattered points, from late April on, first from Economy April 29, from Kentville area April 30 and the same day in Yarmouth Co.

Spring invasions by GLOSSY IBIS are becoming regular annual events. This year there were 4 at Wedgeport, April 26-28 (probably longer) (JIP et al.) and (D&MH). On April 26-May 2 Peter Austin-Smith discovered 14 of these Ibises at Starr's Pt., King's Co., where the flock of 37 was found last May (1974).

#### SWANS GEESE DUCKS

Nova Scotia's first invasion of MUTE SWANS seems to have taken place this June. Early in the month, one appeared in Lake Milo on the edge of Yarmouth town, where it remained throughout the month, trading back and forth between the lake and Yarmouth Harbor, and was fed and photographed enthusiastically by the townsfolk. It disappeared one night, and almost at once a swan appeared in Pubnico Harbor, where it remained for some time. While it was still there, June 20, a swan was seen at Lockeport (GDP). Meanwhile, from June 6 (and before) there were two swans at Sidney River. Frank Robertson went to see

them, and wrote: "I had been alerted by several people that there were wild swans nesting there... they turned out to be Mute Swans... I was told that they have been coming there for years - which I cannot understand. They have never been able to get them to nest successfully in the park at Sydney... said none of theirs was missing this spring". How many birds were involved in this invasion is uncertain, but the source fairly certain. Both Halifax and Sydney parks departments found no swans missing, but 2 were reported to have escaped from the Wildlife Park at Shubenacadie. Still and all, those Sydney River swans should be looked into.

There were still large concentrations of CANADA GEESE in the province up to mid-April - 50, March 25 at Economy (FS), 2000+ the same day at John Lusby Marsh near Amherst (ST), 5000 at the Grand Pre April 6 (BS et al.) and an estimated 4000 at Glace Bay Sanctuary April 15 (AF). A few stragglers were still around during May: 25 at Glace Bay Sanctuary May 2 (RB1); 2-3 at Economy May 4 (FS); 3 at Seal I. May 10 and another which arrived May 20 and was still there when the NSBS party left on the 27th. The latest sighting was of a single bird, possibly a cripple, seen feeding along the shore at Port Joli June 7 (GDP).

BRANT moved into the Bay of Fundy shortly after the new year, around 30 seen off Sandy Cove, Digby Co. January 20, by George Boyd and Charlie Wood. The Lents noted about 40 on February 10 at Brier I., 20+ had moved within sight of Freeport by Feb. 23 (LEN&HJM), and down the coast at Cape Sable, 2 were sighted Feb. 20, 15 by the 26th (SS&BJS). Brant were present in large numbers through most of April. An estimated 2000 stayed at Argyle Sound for several weeks April 1 on (MH&PRD); 800 were seen daily at Brier April 13-19 (ST); 25 were at Chebogue Pt. April 4, and 19 at Evangeline Beach April 18. No doubt non-breeders had lingered near the last-mentioned area well into May as this is their custom.

An amazing sighting of 40 SNOW GEESE, June 20, was reported from St. Esprit, C.B. by Rainer Meyerowitz. Pairs of MALLARDS were seen in late March, one at Petpeswick March 29 by the Cohrs, who also saw a later pair at Green Bay, Lun. Co. May 2. Another pair was seen at Cole Harbor, Halifax Co., March 30 (EHC).

BLACK DUCKS were reported apparently paired by mid-March, but reports of broods are surprisingly few: one of 6 young at Morien Bar May 18 (SM), another of 12 at Port Joli May 24 (JA) and one at the same spot on June 21(GDP). A female with 11 quite small ducklings was seen at Lake Kegeshook, Yarmouth Co. May 27, and there are at least three broods coming along in June at Abram's River (CRKA). Eric Cooke found a very late nest, June 22 on Pearl I., a rather unusual choice of nesting site for this species as it lies 10 miles off the coast (of Lunenburg Co.) and has no fresh water.

A male EUROPEAN WIGEON seen April 23 at Lusby Marsh is, as far as we know, only the second spring sighting in N.S. of this wanderer. (ST).

AMERICAN WIGEON appeared at seven widely scattered points: 4, March 29 in Yarmouth Harbor (MWH et al.); 4, at Brier I. April 18, and 18 at Amherst Pt. April 23 (ST); a male, same date at Debert Sanctuary (BS); one at Lawrencetown, May 3 (NSBS); a pair at Economy May 7 (FS), and one at Glace Bay Sanctuary May 17 (NSBS).

A pair of PINTAIL was at Cranberry Hd, April 4 (MWH et al,) and 10 were seen at Amherst Pt, April 30 (BS et al,).

A COMMON (European) TEAL seen by Stuart Tingley at Amherst Pt, Sanctuary on April 23, the same day as he found the European Wigeon, is the fifth record of this species for Nova Scotia,

GREEN-WINGED TEAL appeared simultaneously March 28 at Framboise Cove where Ian MacGregor saw one, and at Lawrencetown marsh where there were 6 (EHC). There was one April 3 at Delleven, King's Co. (BS et al.) and 6 at Cranberry Hd. Yarmouth Co. April 4 (MWH). First Cape Breton record is of one April 9 at Homeville. Francis Spalding suggests that absence of these and the next species at the head of the Bay of Fundy during their regular arrival time in April was due to delayed thawing of ice on lakes and ponds. The first record of any number was approximately 100 seen at Amherst Pt. on April 23 (ST).

A male BLUE-WINGED TEAL seen at Lawrencetown March 6 (GHM) was certainly rushing the season, being over three weeks ahead of the next arrival which appeared at Glace Bay Sanctuary on March 31. There were only three other observations of this fairly common duck: 2, April 6 at Grand Pre (BS et al.); 1 May 3 Lawrencetown (NSBS party); 1, June 11 at Pictou (EH).

Two SHOVELERS at Amherst April 3 (BS et al.) are the only birds of this species reported for this spring.

WOOD DUCKS too are lightly reported: 1, April 30 in the NS-NB border area (BS), and 2, a pair, June 3 at Cochrane's Lake, C.B. (RH).

Four RING-NECKED DUCKS at Milton Ponds, Yarmouth, March 28 (LD/MWH) and 1, April 3 at Annapolis Causeway, another at Sheffield Mills, King's Co. (RDL&BS) were well ahead of their regular arrival time in mid-April. Most other sightings are of singles or pairs during late April and May. Twenty-five at Amherst Pt. April 23 may indicate peak time in the spring migration (ST) and 8 and 12 near Port Joli on June 15 and 19 respectively (JA) could well be holidaying drakes.

Small numbers of GREATER SCAUP were still at Pictou, Economy, Truro and Sluice Pt., Yarmouth Co. through April. (EH, FS, MWH) and a few late lingerers were seen - 5 (from the big March flock of 300-400) at Salt Bay, Argyle (CRKA) and a pair, May 25 at Cochrane's Lake, C.B. (SM).

Three spring sightings of COMMON GOLDENEYE were: a total of 130 at Cranberry Hd. and Pinkney's Pt. April 4 (MWH et al.); 6, April 13, Jones Harbor, Shel. Co. (GDP) and 20, May 4, Glace Bay Sanctuary (SM).

The little BUFFLEHEAD has a long way to travel to reach its western breeding grounds and leaves us early. Only a handful was left by April: 3, East Sable on the 5th (GDP), a pair at Parrsboro on the 11th (FS) and another pair at Sluice Pt. on the 20th (MWH).

Like the foregoing species OLDSQUAWS leave early, and for the same reason. Last sightings were of 75 at St. Esprit April 1 (R&SM), 12, April 13 at Yarmouth Harbor (MWH) and one laggard somewhere in Cape Breton waters May 2 (RB1).

Another dilatory migrant was the male HARLEQUIN DUCK still at Brier I., April 14-18 (ST),

On April 12, Eric Cooke observed a flight of COMMON EIDERS passing Wedge Island in the Lawrencetown area, in a steady stream of flocks numbering 10-100. He estimated 600 birds in 30 minutes. On April 13 Francis Spalding had his high count of 30 birds flying east at Economy and on the same date the Cohrs saw 800+ at Green Bay, Lun. Co. By May 3, this flock has swelled to 1200-1400 birds and according to the Cohrs their calls could be heard a mile away. Numbers then fell off until by the 18th just 45 were left. The Seal I. party reported Eiders averaging 150 a day during their stay (April 28-May 27), and found three nests, the first with 4 eggs on May 18. Last report is of 40 males well out at sea off Cape Breton (AF).

SCOTERS of all three species were seen in small numbers through April-June, but there were no "peaks" or any other particular sign of a spring movement.

One lone RUDDY DUCK, a female, was seen by Andrew MacInnis, Peter Barkhouse and Dan Banks at Upper Canard on April 25.

There have been three sightings of HOODED MERGANSERS: 2, at Rocky Run, Lawrencetown area March 29, one female at Susie Lake near Halifax April 30 (the Cohrs) and 2, May 15, Tremont (BS et al),

The following quotation is from Eric Cooke's notes: "On April 5 many COMMON MERGANSERS were at Lawrencetown but on the 6th all had gone. The weather had been bad for days, with an east wind, but overnight a front went through and apparently the mergansers left with the clearing weather." Also on the 6th about 40 birds of this species were at Eel Lake (MWH). Other reports of small numbers here and there are of no particular significance, but FS reported them in the river at Economy by April 19.

Good numbers of RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS were in Yarmouth and Pictou areas during April: a total of about 50 at Cranberry Hd. and Pinkney's Pt. on the 4th and about 75 at Eel Lake and Argyle Sound on the 6th (MWH et al.), and 23 in open water at the causeway fish ladder in Pictou, April 12 (EH). A male in full breeding regalia met an untimely end when he was shot by a poacher in Melbourne Sanctuary May 3 and left floating unretrieved by the gunner, who probably did not want to reveal his identity to witnesses with binoculars (CRKA et al.). Sara MacLean observed about 50 Redbreasts at Morien Bay May 18, flying as a homogeneous flock but pairing off as they settled on the water.

Seven species of duck were noted on Sable I. through May and June: a female Mallard on June 22; 9-10 broods of Black Duck, greatly harried by gulls, mainly Great Blackbacks; Green-winged Teal, 5 observations, no evidence of breeding; Blue-winged Teal, a male and 2 females, and a nest found May 21, the brood hatched June 21 was reduced to 5 ducklings by June 24 - a second breeding record for Sable I.; a drake Wood Duck present May 27-June 14; remains of a possible Canvasback should not perhaps be counted, but if verified as such would be a first island record; 40 Red-breasted Mergansers, may have been breeding but no nests found (DWF et al.).

## DIURNAL RAPTORS

Accipiter reports were predictably fewer than for the winter period, as the hawks dispersed in the woods and abandoned the feeders, GOSHAWKS were reported only twice and SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS by only six observers. Stuart Tingley and Bruce Mactavish reported only "two or three" sharpies on Seal I. where impressive flights were observed last fall. It is probable that any migratory movement of importance would have occurred in the latter part of April, perhaps before ST and BM began their work on Seal. But it seems even more probable that comparable conspicuous flights simply do not occur in spring.

Buteos as well were lightly reported. RED-TAILED HAWK reports came from only two observers - perhaps because we had learned to ignore them after the winter's bounty. As in 1974, the last ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were seen in the first week of May (two birds at Poplar Grove, Liz Sutcliffe per RGBB). The return of our scattered BROAD-WINGED HAWKS was documented only in Truro, where Ross Baker observed three individuals, May 18.

BALD EAGLE reports are heavily weighted in favor of Cape Breton Island, which may well be the eagles' most important stronghold in Atlantic Canada. The Cape Bretoners reported 32 of the 37 individuals. I'm sorry to say that so few observers bothered to specify "adult" or "immature" that it is impossible to arrive at a meaningful analysis of the ages of the birds reported. Thanks, nevertheless, to those who did specify age, and please don't be discouraged from doing so in the future. Several concentrations were reported - 9 individuals at Princeville, C.B. (Steve MacKinney *vide* Meyerowitz family) and 16 at Orangedale, C.B. (C. Gardner *vide* FR). Eric Holdway observed a pair at a nest near Pictou, April 27 through June 11.

Curiously, there are no MARSH HAWK reports for March, when pioneer males are to be expected. Two birds at Argyle, Yarmouth Co., April 1 (PRD) were the first seen, followed by a male at Bridgetown, April 10 (B. Sabean) and an individual at Brier Island April 13-18 (ST). A dozen reports for the latter part of April, and for May and June, document the return of this common resident. OSPREY reports begin curiously late as well, with the first individual recorded at Lockeport, April 14 (G.D. Perry) and the "first" for Yarmouth Co. the following day (PRD). Reports of nesting birds begin in the last week of April. A pair observed near Pictou by Eric Holdway were at the nest April 27 and had one young fully fledged June 3. Curtis Chipman reports three nests on hydro poles at Indian Path, Lunenburg Co., where only one nest had been seen in previous years.

There is a single PEREGRINE FALCON report for spring - May 17, Wine Harbour, G. MacLeod. This is the first spring sighting since 1973 (when an individual was seen at the same location, May 2, and another on Sable Island, May 12). It would be valuable to have more information on these few spring birds. Are they adults or immatures? The last nesting Peregrine Falcons in Nova Scotia would appear to have been extirpated by falconers many years ago, and there is no positive evidence for recent nesting in Newfoundland to the north-east. It seems likely therefore that any May birds in Nova Scotia are either non-breeding wanderers or migrants heading for Labrador, or even the Arctic islands.

It is impossible to separate migrants from wintering birds among the

MERLIN sightings for April, ST and BM saw their last on Seal Island May 9, suggesting that migratory movement may have ended at roughly that time. It is safe to assume that a few AMERICAN KESTRELS wintered as well, though "first" sightings are reported throughout April. A male reappeared at the site of Thelma Hawkins' nest box at Wilmot in the Annapolis Valley May 9 and had a mate May 12 - but the house was unavailable this year. Blown down in a winter storm, it was not replaced because a plague of local children reaching air-rifle age was considered too great a hazard to the nesting hawks. The first Cape Breton report is for April 21 (St. Esprit, Meyerowitz family), and migrants had stopped passing through Seal Island by May 10, after which date ST and BM recorded only one individual.

#### GROUSE AND MARSH BIRDS

Three SPRUCE GROUSE records range from the western extremity of the province to Cape Breton, as do nine RUFFED GROUSE reports. The earliest report of drumming Ruffed Grouse comes from Charlie Allen (Lake Kegeshook, Yarmouth Co., May 4) and a nest with 8 eggs was found at Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co., May 20 (D&M Henry). Several broods were reported in June.

With Stuart Tingley, our star marsh-bird observer, absent from the border marshes during most of the spring migration, we are left, alas, without a single marsh-bird report for the period.

#### SHOREBIRDS

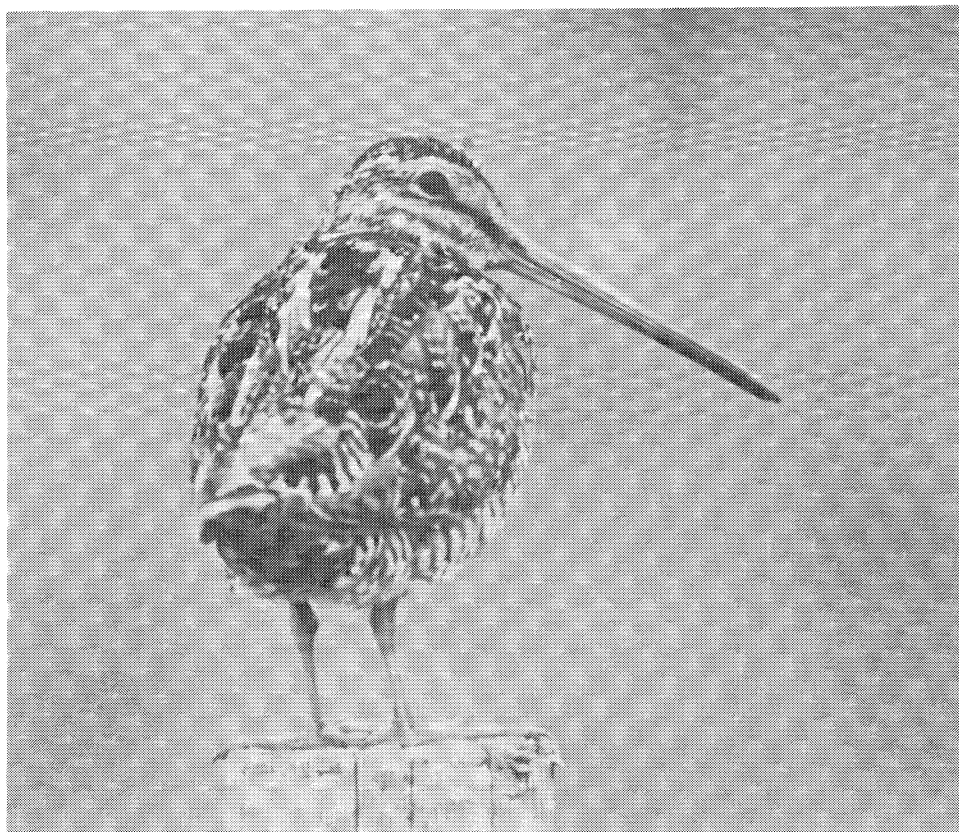
The first - and only - SEMIPALMATED PLOVER report for the spring is of one seen May 25 by the Seal I. party, who also saw and photographed a WILSON'S PLOVER which visited the island May 17-19.

A PIPING PLOVER at Sunday Pt., Yarmouth on April 4 was the first of its kind to be reported for the year (MWH). Others showed up about a week later at Cherry Hill, April 12 (J&SC) and at Lawrencetown, Halifax Co. April 13 (EHC). Piping Plover were nesting on Cape Sable May 7-8, and on June 12 Eric Cooke found two broods with their parents, one of 4 young at Lawrencetown and another of just 2 young at nearby Conrad's Beach. A third brood of 4 very young chicks was seen at Johnston's Pond near Lockeport on June 21 by RS Widrig who also saw another adult "tending" a spot nearby where there had been a nest last year.

KILLDEER reports continue to increase and show this bird to be quite impartial as to choice of locale as the sightings are quite evenly distributed from SW Nova Scotia, along the south and eastern shores, the Valley and Bay of Fundy region and Cape Breton. Earliest reports are of 1, March 18 at Wine Harbor (GM) and 1, March 29 at Cole Harbor, Halifax Co. "Full of spring elan, probably a migrant" (IAM). A pair with a day-old chick was seen in Yarmouth town May 20 (JC) and another was reported nesting at Lower Ohio, Shelburne Co. in June (SB).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, normally a common spring migrant, was recorded only four times this season: 1-2 dozen (hard to count in the rain) May 7-8 at Cape Sable; 3 at Seal I. May 14-20 and 2 at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg Co. May 19, 7, the same place May 21 (J&SC).

The AMERICAN WOODCOCK, one of our earliest arrivals, is also the most



This photo by Ralph Connor shows, admirably, the long bill of the Common Snipe.

heavily reported "shorebird" this spring. A sighting at Cape Sable February 27 (SS) must have been of an extraordinarily over-eager bird, or a wintering individual which had strayed there in a desperate search for sustenance. The 4 at Cole Harbor March 30, a month later, were undoubtedly migrants (EHC). A bird was noted at Wine Harbor April 1 (G&OM) and a pair was seen at Delap's Cove, Queen's Co, April 6 (REM). First definite record of a bird displaying was at Eel Lake on May 4 and for several evenings thereafter (PRD). All other reports are of singles or several birds during April and May.

COMMON SNIPE arrived neck-and-neck with the Woodcock this year, appearing at Petite Riviere March 29 and 30, and at Brookside, Halifax Co. March 31 (FWD). They were winnowing at Wilmot April 23 (TH), heard thereafter overhead in many places through May and June. They were "common and exceptionally tame around town this year" according to Francis Spalding of Economy.

The status of two WHIMBREL at Homeville, C.B. June 21 (GS) is a poser but to call them the far-flung van of the southward migration would be as good a guess as any.

A stray UPLAND SANDPIPER was seen by the NSBS Seal I. party at the West Village on May 24.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER first sightings at various points are: Seal I. April 28-29, Kejimukujik May 10-11 (THRB), Sheffield Mills, King's Co. May 12 (BS et al.), Lockeport May 14 (GDP), Truro May 18 (RB), Sand Lake, C.B. May 24 (SM), Pictou June 11 (EH). There were at least three nests at Petite Riviere this season (H&HM), and newly hatched young were seen near Yarmouth the end of June (CRKA).

WILLETS rival Woodcock in the number of reports this year. The first sighting was 5+ at Lockeport, on April 25 (GDP), followed by reports of single birds the following day at Sunday Pt. (MWH) and at Melbourne Sanctuary (JK&PRD). This species was well reported from SW Nova Scotia as far as Green Bay, Lun. Co. and from the Glace Bay area in Cape Breton, but there are only two sightings reported from elsewhere: 2, at Clifton, Col. Co. May 31 (RB) and 3, at Starr's Pt. May 11 (BS et al.). Nesting Willets were noted (2-3 pairs, and they leave you in no doubt as to their intentions) along with the Spotties at Petite Riviere, June 15 (H&HM,PRD).

A very early GREATER YELLOWLEGS was at Barrington April 13, seen by Bruce Mactavish nearly a fortnight ahead of the next arrival, which showed up at Economy on the 25th (FS). On the 26th there were 3, at Melbourne Sanctuary (JK&PRD) and on May 2 two birds were seen at Homeville, C.B. (SM). No Yellowlegs were seen at Economy after June 2 and the last at Glace Bay Sanctuary was one on June 6.

PURPLE SANDPIPERS were still around in early May. Last report for the Lawrencetown region is of 8, on Wedge Island April 5 (EHC), while at Brier I. none was reported after April 15-18 (ST). The Cohrs saw 50+ on May 2 at Crescent Beach "crawling all over the shore rocks". In 1974 they were still at Crescent Beach on May 4.

The Seal I. party had 2 LEAST SANDPIPERS on May 12 and 20 on the 17th. As the party had been on the island since April 28 the May 12 observation would



seem to be one of a definite arrival. Two pairs displaying near the West Village might indicate intention to breed and if so this would be the southern-most occurrence of breeding for this species in North America. The only other reported sighting of Least's is of a few at Economy May 3.

On May 11 at Seal I, a RUFF (Reeve) was seen briefly by members of the party there (ST et al.), and then left with several Greater Yellowlegs heading directly for Cape Sable to the eastward.

One SANDERLING at Seal on May 17, and one at Mavillette, Digby Co. June 25 are the only certain spring records of this species so far this year.

On May 17 one NORTHERN PHALAROPE was seen on Seal I. by members of the party there, and on the 19th a flock of 22 flew over the fog-shrouded island.

#### JAEGERS through AUKS

We have no reports of JAEGERS so far this spring.

The last GLAUCOUS GULL was seen at Glace Bay on March 30 (SMacL) and the last ICELAND at Seal Island on May 14 (BM,ST). But the last Cape Breton record of an Iceland Gull was on May 5 (SMacL). HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS were here in their usual numbers, and need no comment. Phyllis Dobson's usual flock of about 20 RING-BILLED GULLS had left Eel Brook, Yarmouth Co., by early May. Bruce Mactavish and Stuart Tingley saw an immature BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE off Seal Island on May 2, and an adult on May 18.

There were 1-2 BONAPARTE'S GULLS at Eel Brook on March 28-29 (CRKA). BLACK-HEADED GULLS, as usual, were the commoner species. There were regular April sightings of up to 7 in Yarmouth harbour, as well as 3-4 at Eel Brook on April 3 and 4 next day at Sunday Point, Yarmouth Co. (PRD, CRKA, MWH). At the other end of the province, there were 13 on April 7 and 20 on April 9 at Glace Bay (SMacL, BM, DWF). Sara MacLean says that the birds she saw there in late March were "nearly all in summer plumage". Surely they must be breeding somewhere on this side of the Atlantic?

The first TERNS appeared on May 10: a COMMON at Tusket River and a single bird, species unknown, at Argyle, Yarmouth Co. (D&MH, CRKA). Others, also unidentified, were seen on May 15 at Town Point, Chebogue, On May 17 at Port Joli, on May 18 at Moser River and on May 22 at Wine Harbour; there were 2 Commons in Glace Bay Sanctuary on May 22 (MWH, JA, BS, GMacL, SMacL). There were 125 ARCTICS on Seal Island on May 13 and 60 the next day, but the only definite sighting of a Common there was a single bird on May 26 (BM, ST).

Pearl Island, off St. Margaret's and Mahone Bays, is the nearest we have to a multi-species seabird colony along the South Shore. The scale is miniature, of course, but the breeding species include Leach's Storm-Petrels, two species of gull and tern, and two (probably three) auks. Eric Cooke was out there on June 25; he counted 24 PUFFINS (and found 3 nests) and 4 RAZORBILLS; he also estimated that there were 250-300 BLACK GUILLEMOTS in the area. (Both Puffin and Razorbill numbers are up on last year. The Razorbills are almost certainly breeding, but it's hard to locate the nests (RGBB)). The other auk records are from Seal Island; there were 6 Puffins, a Razorbill and 25 unidentified auks there on April 28, and a maximum count of 65 Black Guillemots on May 3 (BM,ST).

## DOYES THROUGH OWLS

Six MOURNING DOYE reports include two birds at Wilmot in the Annapolis Valley which Thelma Hawkins describes as "obviously a pair nesting near here". Since pairs are easily observed at feeders, and since the status of this fairly common resident as a breeding bird is unclear, it would be highly desirable to have complete reports on such pairs, including first date seen and latest date.

Only two BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS are reported: one on Seal Island, May 13 (ST,BM) and one at Lockeport (specimen) May 24 (G.D. Perry).

An exceptionally late SNOWY OWL report comes from the Glace Bay Sanctuary, May 26 (Mrs. Robert Harris per SM). Unfortunately, no details accompany the report, but the bird is described as "immature" (presumably, then, a dark bird with dark tips to many of the contour feathers - this plumage is said to be characteristic of young males and most, if not all, females). The same observer reports two Short-Eared Owls for the same place and date.

BARRED OWLS were "frequently heard" in Yarmouth Co. this spring (CRKA) and, presumably, in other parts of the province as well. The only SHORT-EARED OWL report for the period, aside from the birds at Glace Bay, mentioned above, was a single at nearby Morien Bar, April 9 (DWF, BM). And finally, after last winter's invasion, only a single SAW-WHET OWL was reported for spring, a bird observed by Gary Corbett at Caledonia (near Keji) "perched with a mouse in its talons" March 29.

## CAPRIMULGIDS THROUGH KINGFISHER

An injured CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW was found in Yarmouth Co., June 15, and brought by William Boudreau to J. Israel Pothier, who showed the bird to Charlie Allen and others and arranged for its transfer, still alive though apparently disabled, to the Nova Scotia Museum. This is one among very few records in recent years.

A single WHIP-POOR-WILL was heard "singing loud and clear" June 21-23 at Port Joli by Jeanne Addelson. The last week of May, as usual, produced the first COMMON NIGHTHAWK records. R. Blakeburn reports an individual May 24 at Sydney Forks, and Francis Spaulding heard his first for the year at Economy on May 28 (five days later than in 1974). Flocks of apparent migrants were recorded as late as June 16 (8+ over the Tigney River near Port Joli, Jeanne Addelson), and the first Yarmouth Co. report is curiously late (June 20, PRD).

The first CHIMNEY SWIFT of the year was seen at Truro, May 5 (Ross Baker) followed by one at Yarmouth, May 10 (MWH) and three at Wolfville, May 13 (B. Sabeau). As in past years, the migration-watchers on the offshore islands have recorded their first swifts several days after the arrival of pioneer individuals at mainland locations. This would suggest that the main flight comes overland, and the relatively early sightings at Truro in 1973 and 1975 reinforce this impression. ST and BM on Seal Island had three swifts May 13 and three May 25.

Pioneer RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS again reached the Annapolis Valley at the end of the second week of May: Thelma Hawkins had two males at Nictaux, May 13. The following day Olive Ritcie (per MWH) reported a single bird at Arcadia, Yarmouth Co., and between May 17 and May 25 firsts were reported for seventeen

localities throughout the province, including the first Cape Breton sightings at Boularderie and Marble Mt., May 18 (E, MacKenny and E, Chant per SM).

Two March BELTED KINGFISHER sightings might represent wintering birds, and the April records for "firsts" begin rather late (April 15 at Second Peninsula near Lunenburg; April 16 at Economy, FS). By the first week of May, Kingfishers were exploring nesting sites (May 2, near Argyle, Yarmouth Co., PRD), but it was on May 9 that ST and EM recorded their high of three individuals on Seal Island.

#### WOODPECKERS

A considerable number of COMMON FLICKERS (whether our own nesting birds or individuals trying to reach the Maine coast) would appear to fly directly across the Gulf of Maine in spring. They are sometimes seen with the other migrants that take refuge on the Gulf of Maine ferries, and ST and BM reported 10 to 40 individuals daily on Seal Island through May 11, with a drop to about 5 daily after that date. The Seal Island coverage did not begin early enough to record the first migrants, which arrive in the province early in April. Furthermore, a few individuals undoubtedly winter in Nova Scotia, particularly in the southwest corner, where GD Perry reported "several at West Sable this winter" - and some early sightings (ie. Pictou, April 3, EH) may represent wintering birds. The "first" for Yarmouth Co. is nearly two weeks later this year than last (April 13, Eel Brook, PRD), and an apparent wave was seen at Brier Island, April 18 (10 individuals, ST).

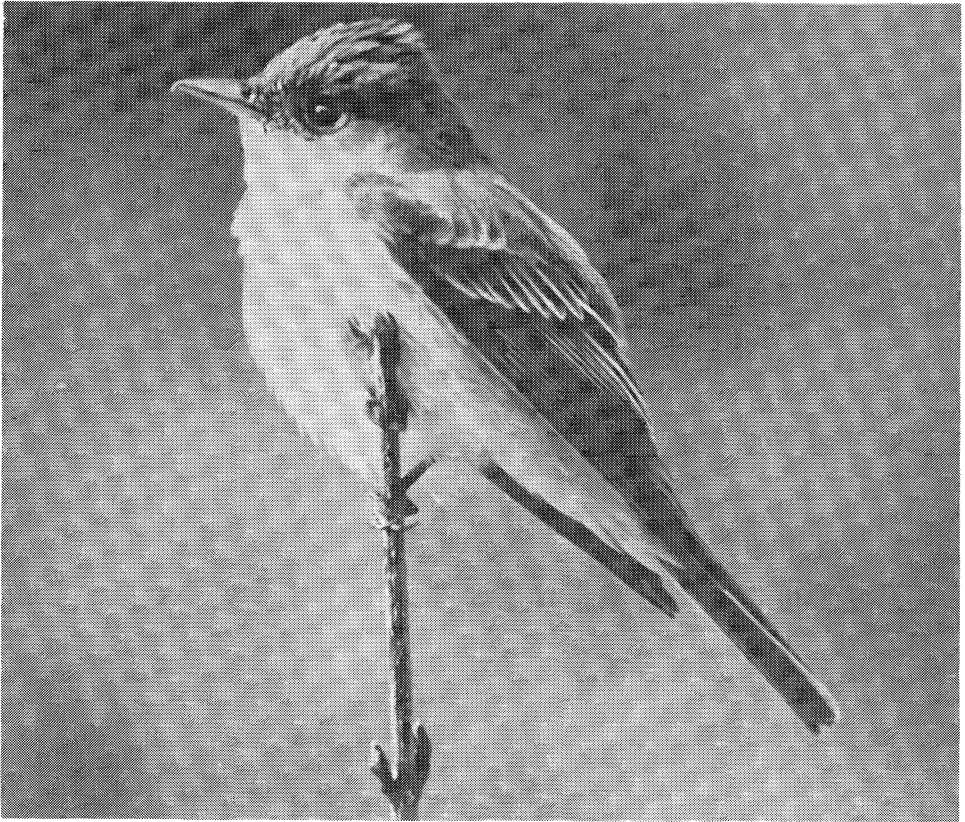
The resident PILEATED WOODPECKERS are reported only from Orangedale C.B. (C. Gardner per FR) in April, and Economy, May 16 (FS). Ross Baker in Truro again reports the first YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, April 14, followed by Stuart Tingley on Brier Island, April 15-18, and Jeanne Addelson at Port Joli, April 21. A half-dozen other reports range from April 30 through May, with a peak on Seal Island of twelve birds on May 9, with only "a few before and one after" (ST, BM). Phyllis Dobson observes that sapsuckers "were rarely seen last year, but seem to be back to normal."

Among the resident woodpeckers, we have eight records of HAIRY WOODPECKERS and six of DOWNY WOODPECKERS. These were mainly stragglers at feeders, such as those Thelma Hawkins at Wilmot observed as late as May 21: "the old, ragged suet still attracts them here daily". The less common BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER was seen April 18 at Truro (BM, DWF) and May 23 near Baddeck where Mrs. John Fownes reported an apparent nest in a light pole to Frank Robertson.

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS

First report of the EASTERN KINGBIRD comes from Seal I. on May 9. By May 18 they were "common" there and peaked at 20 birds May 22 (BM&ST). The next sighting was at Berwick, Kings Co. on May 15 (BS et al), then Yarmouth Co. on 17th (MWH) and Col. Co. on 21 (RHB). One had reached Wine Harbour by May 30 (GMacL) and the earliest report for Cape Breton is for June 5 (SMacL).

There were no reports of any WESTERN KINGBIRDS. However, the beautiful GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER was seen at Beaverbank June 15 (CWH) and at Upper Wedgeport June 29 (D&MH). There were also two other "probable" sightings in Cumb. and Yarmouth Counties.



Eastern Wood Pewee photographed in Kejimikujik  
National Park by Ralph Connor.

Following 1974's plethora of EASTERN PHOEBE reports (24 separate sightings) numbers have dropped considerably in 1975 - only 10 separate sightings and much later than usual in the main. First was at Brier I, April 16 (ST). One appeared in the park at Truro on April 19, (RHB) and one at Brookside, Halifax Co, on 25th (FWD). The only multiple sighting was at Seal I, where 8 were seen April 28. Other sightings of singles were: May 4 at Broad Cove (JLC), May 10 at Wilmot, Annapolis Co. (TH), May 10 at Markland, Yarmouth Co, (MWH), May 12 at Economy (FS), June 11 at Moser River, Halifax Co., (BS et al) and June 14 at Port Joli (JA).

EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHERS were seen in Yarmouth Co, at Markland on May 17 (1) and 21 (3-4). The earliest identified YELLOW-BELLIED were in Cape Breton: one May 16 at Sydney Forks and one on 18th at Schooner Rd. (SMAcL). One was seen on May 18 at Green Bay, Lunenburg Co. (J&SC) and Seal I, had one on 24th.

A paradoxical situation seems to exist regarding the ALDER FLYCATCHER this year. Very few reports have come in of this our usually most heavily reported flycatcher. Francis Spalding saw one May 17 (Economy) and Ross Baker saw one May 31 (Truro) and 2 were seen at Port Joli on 22nd (JA). Shirley Cohrs writes of hearing "only two all spring around Lunenburg Co. in places where they are usually common". On the other hand Phyllis Dobson writes that she finds them abundant in Yarmouth Co. and that they were "heard frequently in the June B.B.S. at Peggy's Cove, Beaverbank (Halifax Co.) and Larry's River (Guys. Co.)". Perhaps there are no flies in Lunenburg Co.!

LEAST FLYCATCHERS seem to be more in evidence. One appeared at Seal I. May 10 and by 15 one was "already singing" at Economy. May 17 was the first date in both Annapolis and Yarmouth counties. There were five around in Kentville May 19 (BS et al) and one in Truro on 25th (RSB). During June they appear to have had a good general distribution.

NSBS party on Seal I. saw the first EASTERN WOOD PEWEE May 13 and by 19th there were six seen. Then there is a gap until the end of the month when reports are of one at Economy on 28th (FS) at Meteghan on 29th and Truro on 31st. Eric Holdway reports one at Pictou June 8 & 11 and they were seen in Shelburne and Yarmouth counties on June 17 and 19 respectively. Earliest report from Cape Breton is June 25 (SMAcL).

The thirist-provoking call of the OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was first heard this year at Upper Wedgeport, Yarmouth Co. on May 19 (D&MH). There was one at Economy May 28 and at Sand Lake, C.B. May 31. June saw one in Truro on 3rd and Louis Head, Shelburne Co, on 15th (GDP).

A few HORNED LARKS were seen in April. Up to a dozen were at Economy during the first day of the month (FS), four at Lingan on April 4 (FR), and a flock of 13 at Cherry Hill on April 12 (Cohrs).

TREE SWALLOWS arrived around mid-April as usual, and in their usual good numbers. On April 15 early birds were at Economy and Quinan (Yarmouth Co.). April 18 saw one at Brier I, (Lent) and 5 at Bridgetown (BS et al). During the rest of April reports are all from the western end of the province, but by May 1 they had begun to move eastwards and were first seen on that date in Halifax (Brookside) and Shelburne (Port Joli) counties (FWD,JA). On May 2 they were reported in Queens (Liverpool) and Guys, Counties and by 4th were seen in

Lunenburg Co. (Petite Riviere),

The first Cape Breton sighting was at Homeville on May 9. They were seen first in Pictou Co. on May 11. There were many reports of successful nests as well as a few tragedies, healthy broods being raised in such disparate environments as Lower Eel Brook and the parking lot of a busy Halifax department store (PRD,WM).

BANK SWALLOWS were reported almost a month later than the Trees, the first report surprisingly coming from Cape Breton where Sara MacLeod saw the first at Homeville on May 11. There were "a few" at Economy on May 14 (FS) and they were heard in Wine Harbor on 19th. "Several" were seen in the valley on May 20 (RSB). The "usual numbers" were at Cranberry Head, Yarmouth Co. during June (MWH&SCH) while two waves occurred then in Pictou where Eric Holdway reports 150+ on 3rd and 80+ on 11th.

Three ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS were seen on Seal I, May 17 (NSBS).

An exceptionally early BARN SWALLOW occurred on April 10 at Pinckney's Pt., Yarmouth Co. (CRKA). He lacked company for a month when the next Yarmouth bird was sighted at Markland on May 10, since when Barn Swallows have been abundant in their usual haunts in that county (MWH). Other county "firsts" are as follows: Pictou May 3, Colechester and Richmond counties, C.B. May 10 and Guys. 19.

Evelyn Coates writes from Amherst of fifteen CLIFF SWALLOW nests at Cameron Settlement May 30, and from Eric Holdway at Pictou comes a report of a new colony established on the concrete walls of the fish ladder at Pictou Causeway. 20 nests were being built on June 5 and by June 16 there were 100+ birds with some nests occupied. Mr. Holdway's last record for a cliff swallow colony in his area is for 1959.

PURPLE MARTIN reports are disappointingly few. They arrived in the Amherst area May 5 and by June 11 there were 21 pair in 2 colonies plus a few isolated nests (EC). A few were seen at Oxford at the end of May and one was seen at Seal I, on three occasions, also during May. Two nests with sitting birds were observed in Pictou in early June but on 16th they were both empty and the birds not seen again (EH).

#### CORVIDS THROUGH WRENS

Our resident Corvidae are all present in the usual noisy numbers. A RAVEN'S nest was observed at Green Bay, Lunenburg Co. in May and two young were successfully hatched and fledged. (J&SC). Similarly the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE population has remained static, most birds retreating from feeders to nest in the woods in mid-April. No BOREAL reports have come in, but from observation they seem to be about in the expected numbers and locations.

Happily NUTHATCH numbers are "up" again following last spring's poor showing. Two WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were seen in Pictou in March and Stuart Tingley saw eight near Middleton April 12. NSBS field trip to Cape Forchu May 17 yielded two and several sightings of singles are well spread geographically. RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES have also become more abundant, especially in Yarmouth Co. (MWH) where CRK Allen saw 6+ at Argyle Head June 29,

There are 2 reports of the HOUSE WREN this year; one from Seal I, (one bird May 10-16 with 2 present on May 13) and one from Yarmouth Co, where CRKA saw one at Port Maitland June 3. It was singing!

There were plenty of WINTER WRENS about this spring tho' possibly not as many as last year when numbers were unusually high. Seal I. group report up to 10 April 28, NSBS party heard one at Lawrencetown, Halifax Co. May 3, and Yarmouth County's earliest was May 5 at Quinan Head (PRD). By mid-May they were singing in most of the western counties and moving eastwards tho' we have no report from Cape Breton.

Seal I. once again produced a SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN - in fact 2, on May 24. More surprisingly John Keanny found 2 singing at Southeast St. in Yarmouth town on July 3. These were subsequently seen and rejoiced in by other NSBS members.

#### MIMIDS

An overwintering MOCKINGBIRD stayed at Glace Bay until April 16 but was not seen thereafter (GS). A spring bird arrived in Yarmouth town April 12 and stayed around singing until May 13. One was at Granville Ferry May 31 and a third spring mocker sang at Three Fathom Harbour June 24. Back in Yarmouth Co. CRKA in Tusket has had 3 in constant attendance at his strawberry bed. Seal I. also reports one bird May 10-11.

The early GREY CATBIRDS made for Seal I, where the first was seen April 29. Not sighted again until May 9 they then began to build up reaching 50 May 18 and 55 on 21st. Stuart Tingley reports that they were the most conspicuous birds on the island between May 9-27th. First for the mainland was at Markland May 19 (MWH et al). They were seen in Annapolis, Shelburne and Kings counties on 18th, 19th and 20th (TH,GDP,RSB). Jeanne Addelson noted a wave of catbirds through Port Joli on May 26. Phyllis Dobson has a nesting pair at her home at Eel Lake, Yarmouth Co.

Gary Corbett of Vogler's Cove, Lunenburg Co. saw a BROWN THRASHER on March 28 - early? or late? Report from Seal I. is of a high of 7 May 9 but estimates that there were probably 20-30 individuals during the spring period, many of which were singing. Marion Hilton also saw a singing thrasher at Markland May 17.

#### ROBINS THROUGH KINGLETS

A study of the arrival reports of the ROBIN is interesting in that they indicate a first thin wave appearing along the length of the province rather than from west to east. The first few were seen March 23 at Brier I. (Lent) and in Halifax Co. (BS,FWD). On March 26 they were seen at St. Esprit C.B. (R,S&JM) and on 28th appeared in Yarmouth Co. and at Glace Bay. On the same date they were seen also in Annapolis Co. (RDL) and on 29th in Lunenburg Co. (Petite Riviere). Numbers picked up somewhat slowly - 9 at Eel Brook April 3, a dozen at Wilmot April 5. They sneaked in gradually this year with no evidence of any big waves. By April 12, 23 were seen at Pictou, "many more" at Wilmot on 16, "many" at Brookside (Halifax Co.) on 21st.(FWD). On 27 April 40 were seen at Pictou and from then on they were abundant from Yarmouth Co. to Cape Breton.

The "Seal Islanders" report 15-20 WOOD THRUSHES seen during their spring stay, the peak dates being May 9, 10 and 11 when 5 were seen each day. One other report of a wood thrush is from Yarmouth town where John Kearny saw one on May 14.

April 18 was the date when the first HERMIT THRUSHES were seen on Brier I. (ST). Ross Baker heard and saw one at Truro on April 29 and on 30th they appeared first in Yarmouth Co. Thereafter reports are widespread and in usual numbers. SWAINSON'S THRUSHES came first to Seal I. May 9 and rose to 4 birds on 25th (few for there!). Kings Co. had the first on the mainland at Coldbrook May 14 (BS et al). Other dates are: Col. Co. and Glace Bay 17th, Shel. Co. 18th, Yarmouth Co. 19. There is a nesting pair at Lower Eel Brook.

A single report came in of the GREY-CHEEKED THRUSH seen at Sable River, Shel. Co. (CDP) - a sad drop from the nine plus reports in 1974.

VEERY reports come from Seal I., Yarmouth, Shelburne and Lunenburg counties. May 15 saw one at Seal, 2 were at Tusket through June (CRKA) and several were heard and seen at Port Hebert June 15 (RSW). Two had settled in at Green Bay in late June and many (5+) were seen and heard singing at Broad Cove June 30 (J&SC).

Only three EASTERN BLUEBIRDS were noted. A female flew around the island (Seal) April 28 to May 10 and a male was seen on May 1 only. The other was at Economy May 14 (FS).

A most interesting sighting of a GREENLAND WHEATEAR was made by NSBS members on the May-June trip to Sable Island (DWF, IAM et al). This was the fourth Nova Scotia sighting, but the first in spring here - in fact amongst the first few in N. America in that season.

Another unusual report comes from Seal I. Stuart Tingley writes "BLUE-GREY GNATCATCHER - photographed. 1 on May 23 then no less than nine on May 25. Amazing!!! But true. Most were individuals scattered throughout the island. One male was heard to sing when he met a female feeding. None could be found the following day".

There are two reports of the seldom heard full song of the GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET. One was singing his heart out at Markland May 17 (MWH) and another intrigued some of the NSBS party on the Hants Co. trip May 31 (SC).

The RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET arrived at the end of April and its burbling resounded from treetops throughout the province by mid-May. Early arrivals were in Maitland, Annapolis Co. April 27, Tusket April 28 (CRKA) and Truro on 29th. Cape Breton welcomed their Ruby-crowns on May 11.

#### PIPITS THROUGH STARLING

A few single sightings of the WATER PIPIT were made on Seal I. May 9-27.

Small flocks of CEDAR WAXWINGS have been seen from May 16 to the end of June in Annapolis, Col., Hants, Pictou, Shel., and Yarmouth counties feeding off last year's "bugs".



A Red-Eyed Vireo on its nest - found by Harry Brennan  
and photographed by Ralph Connor in Pictou County.



Five shrikes have been observed this spring, Francis Spalding reports a NORTHERN SHRIKE at Economy April 9 and one was seen at Morien May 24 (GS). A migrant LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was at Brier I, April 15-18, and two were seen in Cape Breton - May 2 at Mira and May 18 at Sydney Forks (RB).

A migration of STARLING is suggested by a report of a flock of 1000+ swirling over the marsh opposite Melbourne Sanctuary April 10 (CRKA). Disturbing news was brought to CRK Allen (corroborated by photographs) of Starlings nesting in petrel burrows (with fledglings in the burrows) on Outer Bald and Tusket Islands.

#### VIREOS AND WARBLERS

No truly exotic species of VIREO was reported this spring. The SOLITARY arrived May 9, with distribution general by May 17; the RED-EYED arrived May 14, and was "common" by early June. Both of these birds could be heard singing well on into July. We often wished the red-eye would stop. Of the two rarer ones, the PHILADELPHIA was noted, 2, May 15-17 on Seal I., 2, May 27 on Sable I. - one of which (or another individual) stayed until June 4. Davis Finch wrote that these two birds seemed "remarkably tame". A WARBLING VIREO was heard by John Kearny June 3 in Yarmouth, singing all morning in the trees back of the Bishop's Palace.

We will be running out of exotic warblers someday soon, with 7 species reported this spring, along with our own 22 native breeders. One of the rarer ones, the WORM-EATING WARBLER is a second sighting for N.S.; another, the HERMIT WARBLER, is a first and most extraordinary sighting, since the bird properly belongs on the west coast of North America, with a predilection for tall coniferous forest. What was it doing on Sable I.? Davis Finch wrote: "A female was present 26-27 May, very closely observed and photographed (DWF, IAM, EHM, JEM). A gray back, extensively yellow face.... despite extensive coverage of the island it was not seen again until June 4, when it was present much of the day. Photographs taken May 26-27 and June 4 may show that the June 4 bird was another individual." To DWF it appeared to have more pronounced wing-bars.

The 5 other rare warblers have been listed in the Introduction to this report, and were the PROTHONOTARY, seen June 1 at Louisbourg by Mrs. George Jackson who called it "a neon sign in the gray of the day"; the BLUE-WINGED seen May 15 by Stuart Tingley and Bruce Mactavish at Seal I.; the ORANGE-CROWNED, seen May 3-4 and well described by Roy Blakeburn at Sydney Forks, also 3 of these May 26-30 at Sable I.; the CONNECTICUT, seen June 12 at Sable I. (This bird has been reported fairly often, but never "confirmed", it remains elusive. DWF almost got it in a mist-net this time, but it fluttered free. He succeeded in getting a few quick photographs, hopefully diagnostic). The last of these rare warblers, the HOODED, was seen April 28-May 3 at Seal I. and photographed by ST and BM, but it is of course long confirmed as a "regular stray" by photograph and by its frequent appearance at Cape Sable, where it has been most co-operative, visiting in the boiler house and even in the Smiths' living-room, quite of its own accord.

Three excellent studies this spring have given us some solid information about arrival and distribution of the warblers (and other migrants): the April-May studies on Seal I. by Stuart Tingley and Bruce Mactavish; the May-June

records from Sable I., sent by Davis Finch from his own observations plus those of Ian McLaren, his student Edward Miller, James Miller and Alban Richard; and the extensive March-through-May survey, mostly in the Cornwallis Valley, by the "Barry Sabean group", (names listed under Reporters). Added to our regular members' reports we have enough data to make a few positive statements.

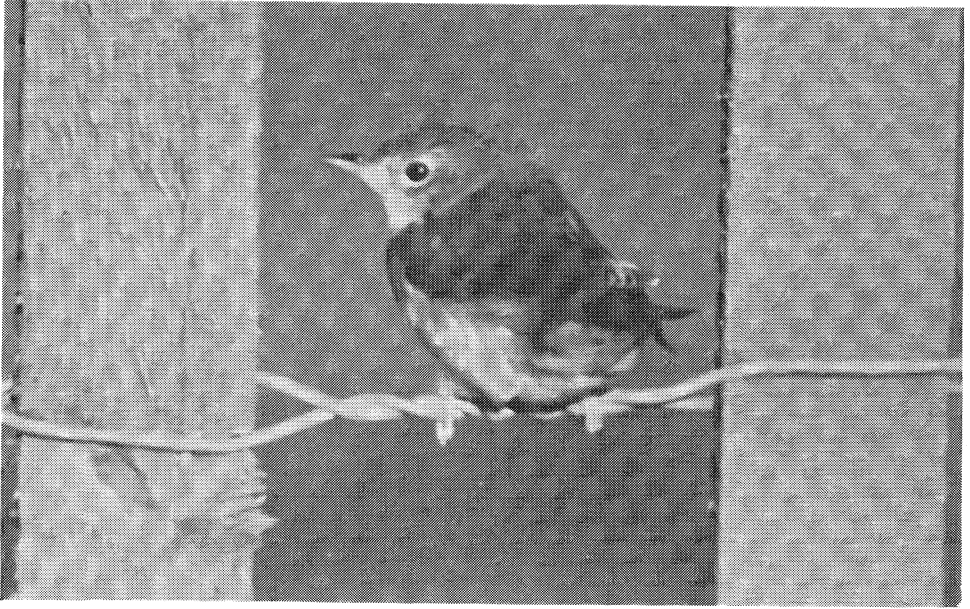
This year (and probably most years) first sightings of 90% of the warblers occur at Seal I. Sometimes simultaneously - but in 50% of the cases a day or two later - these birds appear in Yarmouth County, probably at Wedge Point or Markland, but also at Wilmot, Annapolis County and at Economy, head of the Bay of Fundy. One to two days later, these birds are noted at Truro and in Lunenburg County and Halifax County; sometimes noted simultaneously with these, but usually a day or so later on Sable I., and a week or ten days later at Pictou and in Cape Breton. It would be interesting to have a simultaneous spring census on Pearl I., an intermediate point on the Atlantic side. (Ian McLaren has called Pearl a possible "mini-Seal", accessible to birders and popular with many species of bird, including warblers.)

It would be more interesting to have watchers posted all up the shore of the Bay of Fundy. We have noticed for years the practically simultaneous sightings of many of our passerines up this shore, with consistent west to east progression continued thereafter, and this year's more comprehensive observations amply bear this out.

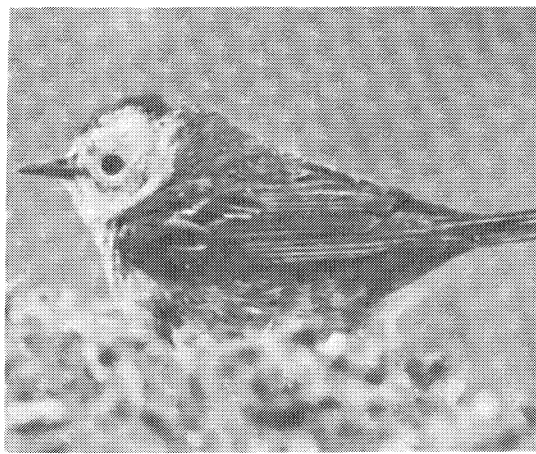
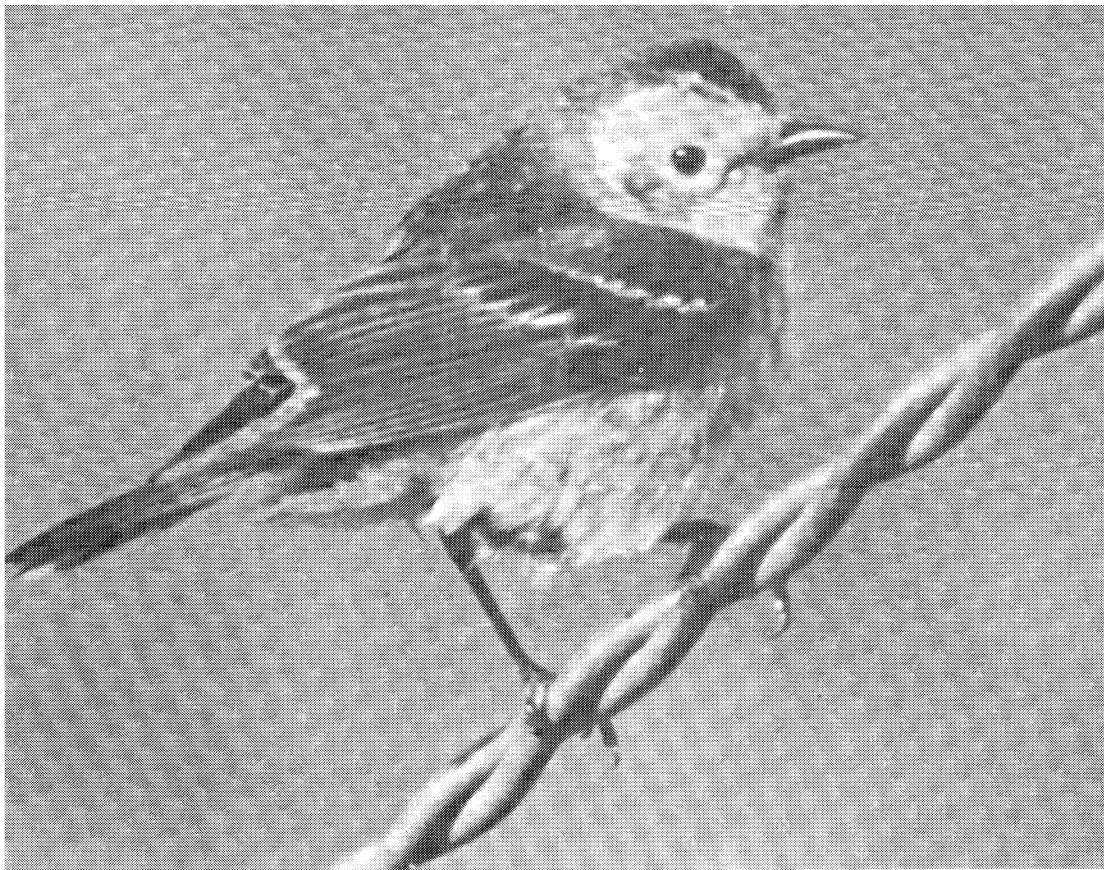
It should be pointed out that "arrival times" as used in this report rarely mark "waves". The wave is marked by the maximum number of a species (or many species) present on a given day, counted over a series of days; and this spring, these waves occurred at Seal I. on May 1, May 9 (the largest, including several species), May 17-18 and May 24 (ST). The actual number of individuals of each species involved varied greatly, and bore no apparent relationship to its usual summer density of population in the province according to the Breeding Bird Surveys. Not all of the birds on Seal I. are destined for Nova Scotia, neither, quite obviously, do all of our Nova Scotia birds arrive via Seal I.

The birds, of course, arrive in many waves over a long period of time. We cannot give all of the data we have on each of our 22 species of warbler, but we have it available for use, if anyone wants it. The 17 species of warbler seen first at Seal were: BLACK-AND-WHITE May 9 (simul. at Yar., CRKA); TENNESSEE, May 13; NORTHERN PARULA, May 1; YELLOW, May 10; CAPE MAY, May 8; BLACK-THROATED BLUE, May 10; YELLOW-RUMPED, May 1 (simul. at Yar., D&MH); BLACKBURNIAN, May 9; CHESTNUT-SIDED, May 15; BAY-BREASTED, May 17 (simul. at Yar. AH); BLACKPOLL, May 14; PALM, May 1; NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, May 9; COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, May 9; WILSON'S, May 16; CANADA, May 19 (simul. at Shel., GDP); AMERICAN REDSTART, May 14. The other 5 were seen as follows: NASHVILLE, Apr. 29, Wilmot (TH); MAGNOLIA, May 4 Sydney Forks (RB); BLACK-THROATED GREEN, May 11, Economy (FS); OVENBIRD, May 14 King's Co. (Barry Sabean group); MOURNING, May 30 Sable I. (DWF et al).

The Mourning Warbler, being a late arriver, may have been missed on Seal. It is not often encountered around the province, but is abundant (was this spring) in its preferred habitat. March and April sightings of Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers have not been given, because of the difficulty of distinguishing new arrivals from over-wintering flocks (frequently seen this year).



This portrait of a Connecticut Warbler on a snow fence on Sable Island on June 12 serves to remove this long-elusive species from the hypothetical list. In this black-and-white version of Davis Finch's slide, the large, pale beak and pale legs serve to distinguish it from the Nashville Warbler, superficially similar in some plumages. This is our only spring record and one of the very few from this season for the east coast.



Not just one, but two female Hermit Warblers appeared on Sable Island's first Canadian records. The portrait shows the bird of June 4, and the smaller pictures below show the more braided wingbars, greater extent of yellow above the beak, paler cheek, and straighter culmen of the bird of May 26-27 (on right). Although the black-and-white pictures from slides by Davis Finch do scant justice to this beautiful, yellow-faced, gray-backed sprite, they do show the great value of photographing rarities. Who would have believed two ?

## ICTERIDS

The arrival of the BOBOLINK is clearly marked by the observations of 2 at Seal I, May 13, 3 at Chebogue May 14 (AH), also that day 1 at Blue Mountain (BS et al.) and "first" at Economy (FS). On May 18 a flock of 10 arrived overnight at Petite Riviere (J&SC), on May 19 several at Brule (RB) and on May 20 11 at Sable I. - 10 males and one female. At Pictou the first Bobolink was seen May 27, and they became common in the meadows by June 11 (EH). G.D. Perry believes them to be nesting at Lockeport, as does G. Spencer at Homeville, C.B. where they were singing June 15.

The Bobolink sings as it flies, and the quality of the song is very pleasing, but another member of this family has an even sweeter song - the EASTERN MEADOWLARK. Three of us (MWH, AH, PRD) spent a half an hour on June 27 listening to a duet between two of these Meadowlarks as they balanced on low shrubs in a meadow on the outskirts of Yarmouth town. This is a swampy meadow, kept swampy by Broad Brook, which meanders through it; and the meadow is bisected by a rough road called Southeast Street. It is not a very attractive spot to look at, but seems to be desirable to the birds, and has become a "must" for birders in the region. This is where we found the Short-billed Marsh Wrens this spring (which Ian McLaren came down to photograph, and succeeded, after a long patient wait, in getting a "full-face" albeit only face and breast of one of these shy, tiny birds). Gallinules have been found here, and egrets; it is full of snipe and almost always there are Meadowlarks. We hope they are nesting there. Although spring sightings are rare, the Seal Islanders saw one on May 26, the only other report so far.

Surely our earliest overland spring arrival is the REDWINGED BLACKBIRD, which outdid itself this year by sending an advance guard of 6 (5 m. 1 f.) March 15 to Sydney Forks (Roy Blakeburn). Single bright males appeared the next week at Cole Harbor, Hfx. Co. (RE) and Armdale, Halifax (C&SC), and a small flock of 10 at St. Croix (MAC). Next week the big flocks came in at the NS-NB border: 40 at Lusby Marsh March 27 (CD) and 50 males at Amherst Sanctuary March 28 - "Chattering in the conifers, the marshes still thoroughly icebound" (IAM). Many reports since then indicate wide distribution and good numbers of Redwings, as yet very welcome here, (although they indeed are not the sweetest of singers!).

Two ORCHARD ORIOLES have been reported: 1, "in a willow tree" June 2 at Annapolis Royal (REM) and 1, female, photographed for a sixth record on Sable I. (DWF).

Nine sightings of the NORTHERN ORIOLE account for 19 of these birds, seen first on May 10 at Seal I., 6 of them there by May 18. The only other multiple number was 5, May 14 in Yarmouth, a pair still in the neighborhood of 23 Baker Street through June, singing and undoubtedly nesting as they have there for some years (MWH). Other May-June sightings were several in Halifax, reported by Willett Mills, and singles at Kentville (BS), Wilmot (TH) and Ohio, Shel. Co. (SB). A male and a female were present on Sable I. May 29-June 2 (DWF et al).

We have the RUSTY BLACKBIRD reported first from Sheffield Mills, King's Co. (BS et al.) on April 3, a week later at Economy (FS) and a week after that at Halfway River, Cumb. Co. (MF). Much later they were observed on Seal I., where they built up to 20 by May 10 and on Sable I., 20+ by May 18. They were heard fairly frequently throughout May in Yarmouth County, and appear to be

present in normal numbers in this region at any rate (CRKA),

Small patches of bare ground were appearing where the snow had melted, March 25 in Pictou, when Eric Holdway saw his first COMMON GRACKLES of the year. These were in the van of the flocks of 20 and 30 seen at Amherst (CD) and Economy (FS) March 27 and 29 respectively. The day after they arrived in Pictou (March 26) Barry Sabean's observers saw 15 Grackles at Port Williams. By early April they were building up in Shelburne Co. (GDP), Yarmouth Co. (MWH), Halifax Co. (FWD) and Cumberland Co. (MF). By May 17 there were 25 (max.) on Seal I. and by May 22-25, 8-10 on Sable I. In early May there were "large flocks" passing over the Glace Bay region (SM), but Gordon MacLeod wrote that they were very scarce, which was unusual, at Wine Harbor, in Guysborough Co.

#### TANAGERS

Since May 14, when the first one appeared (at Seal I.) we have had reports of about a dozen SCARLET TANAGERS. Seven of these were at Seal, the others at Markland, Yar. Co. (MN&VK), Kejimukujik (D&MH), Bridgetown (Marion Girols), Amherst (reported to WJM) and Lingan, where one was picked up dead, reported to FFR. About half of the birds at Seal I. were females, but the Scarlet Tanager as far as we know has not yet bred in Nova Scotia. A female SUMMER Tanager was seen and photographed May 18-20 on Seal I.; one also seen in Yarmouth town early in May by John Kearny.

#### GROSBEEKS FINCHES BUNTINGS

CARDINALS, resident now two years in SW Nova Scotia, put on spring plumage and burst into song around the first of April. Two were heard (one seen) at Pubnico, at the Edgar Hamilton's (where "Gorgeous" fed all winter), and the pair is still at the D.M. MacDonalds in Yarmouth. On Seal I. one was seen April 28, said by residents there to have been singing throughout that month.

The ROSE-BRETTED GROSBEEK first was seen at Seal on May 9, the peak of 20 occurred on May 18, on which date there were sightings at Upper Wedgeport (a pair, male and female seen by D&MH), at Black River, King's Co., 3 birds (BS et al.), and 1 at Port Joli (JA). On the 19th, G.D. Perry noted a pair at Sable River; sightings in Yarmouth were 2, May 20 (AH) and 4, May 21, a male and 3 females (MN); May 22 the first sighting was at Economy (FS); May 25, a pair at Wilmot (TH) and one male at New Waterford (F&AR), and at this time about 7 birds were at Sable I. Other sightings were May 30 at Truro (RB) and early June at Ohio, Shel. Co. (SB).

Our usual small migration of INDIGO BUNTINGS went through in May, and included at least 12 individuals, mostly males - only two females mentioned present towards the end of the month. The dates were May 9-25, the places, in order of time were Seal I., Arcadia, Yar. Co. (Olive Ritcey), Economy (EP Spalding), Wilmot (TH), Rockingham, Hfx. Co. (Dr. & Mrs. J.R. Jackson), Liverpool (Mrs. W. Titus) and Sable I. (EHM).

Only one DICKCISSEL has been seen this spring, 1 on May 10 at Sable (AAR).

The EVENING GROSBEEK dwindled in numbers through April and May, the last reported, 20 on Seal I, May 15.

The PURPLE FINCH lingered at active feeders well on into June, and many of us kept our feeders active for the pleasure of having them around, with their day-long serenades. They are now mostly dispersed into the woods, encountered, usually as singles, on any field trip.

The PINE GROSBEEK maintains its (rather moderate) numbers, one or two encountered in the woods only occasionally, but sometimes small flocks: e.g. 8, immatures or females, March 27 at Wilmot "in a pine tree just outside the window" (TH); 6, March 29 at Grand River, Rich. Co., seen by Steve MacKinney (reported to the Meyerowitz's) and 6, June 2 at Boularderie, noted by Elsie MacRury (per SM). The song of the Pine Grosbeak is all too seldom heard. A group of us at the Henrys on July 6 were favored with this song, which resembles that of the Purple Finch, but although rather short, is of purer, more ringing quality.

The PINE SISKIN continues rare. There were a few scattered sightings of one or two; the only significant numbers seen this spring were the 25-30 individuals present May-June at Sable I., plus the sizable flock of 150, April 9 (SE Cape Breton), found by Bruce Mactavish and Davis Finch.

The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH was abundant all winter and has continued so, seen and heard in town and country through April, May and June. The latter part of April, the Goldfinches changed plumage, looking pretty disreputable as they did so, but emerged "looking like flowers on the lawn" as Sara MacLean said, although by June they were more frequently encountered in the woodlands. Flocks numbered from 10-100 and distribution is general throughout the province.

The CROSSBILLS are seldom seen, although regular in Keji Park. The largest flock of the RED reported was the 25+ seen March 17 at Long Beach, C.B. (SM); small flocks of the WHITE-WINGED were seen in April in Yarmouth Co. (CRKA) and near Kentville (ST).

#### SPARROWS

Of the 19 species in this group (including regular strays) which might have been seen there during the spring migration, 14 were found, on Seal I. throughout this year's survey. The only native species missing were the "Ipswich" and the Fox, neither one really expectable. The list included several rare species, one of them very rare, the CLAY-COLORED SPARROW. There have been two previous sightings of this bird, both at Cape Sable. Stuart Tingley and Bruce Mactavish found their bird at the north tip of the island among a flock of Chipping Sparrows, and were able to obtain a photograph, which will, if satisfactory, be a first confirmed record for Nova Scotia.

Another stray, which has become a resident (although not known to breed here) was the RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE. Three of these were first seen at Seal I. May 9, 5 by May 10, and according to distribution etc. ST and BM estimated 12-15 present on the island. May 26-29 there was one of these Towhees at Wine Harbor (Gordon and Olive MacLeod), and 2, June 7-9 at Liverpool, identified by R.S. Johnson.

We do not have the report on the SAVANNAH SPARROW, SABLE ISLAND RACE (IPSWICH) yet. The first "regular" SAVANNAH SPARROW was seen April 21 at Wolfville (BS et al.), April 25 at Economy, April 26 at Pinkney's Point, April 29 at Wilmot. There were 60 on Seal I. when ST and BM arrived there April 28, 200



by May 9, by which time they were common on the mainland, (although the first report from Cape Breton was May 26, of a pair at Glace Bay Sanctuary).

The Savannah is about the first to arrive, the SHARP-TAILED SPARROW about the last. Although it is common now in the marshes, very few reports have come in. The earliest date of arrival given is May 24, one bird at Seal I.

First sighting of the VESPER SPARROW seems to have been May 7-8 on Cape Sable (BJS&PRD), where a few were among the many sparrows arriving in that very stormy weather. Never abundant, only a few were noted on Seal I. (about 5) during the survey period, and only one other report has been received, of 1, May 15, at Kentville, where it used to be common (BS et al).

The nearest we can come to an arrival time for the DARK-EYED JUNCO, at least some of them, is the last of April, when 30 were counted on Seal I., none left there after May 10. Juncos were so abundant during the winter along the Atlantic coast (up to a dozen regularly at many feeders) that their numbers appeared to diminish rather than increase in the spring, as they took to the woods to build their nests. They are still abundant here, appearing now along the roadsides, many immatures among them. Apparently the Junco is not a frequenter of Sable I. - only 4 individuals seen there May-June.

The TREE SPARROW, still numerous up to the last of March, generally disappeared the first week of April; the last couple of individuals seen stayed the first week of May at Wilmot (TH).

Two April reports of the CHIPPING SPARROW could be of new (non-wintering) birds: 1, singing April 7 at Fairview, Halifax (Roger Burrows) and 1, April 28 at Seal I. The maximum (of 25+) birds on Seal was reached May 9, and on May 10 the first were seen at Markland, Yar. Co. (MWH,AH,SG) and at Economy (F&ES). May 13, first arrivals at Truro were noted (RB), May 16 at Wilmot (TH) and on that same date at Sydney Forks (R Blakeburn); May 17 at Pictou, 9 birds (EH); and May 19 at Sable I. The Chipping Sparrows are nesting again at Ste. Croix, but not in the cedar tree (from which they were repeatedly blown), we are glad to hear, from Margaret Clark.

The FIELD SPARROW, which this year established a first wintering record at Eel Lake in Yarmouth Co. finally disappeared on April 24, along with the flock of Juncos. It is rarely seen at any time on the mainland, but is regular spring and fall at Seal I., where there were probably 20+ individuals this spring, according to ST and BM.

The WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW migration lasted from May 8, first seen on Seal, to June 3, last seen on Sable I. - about 30-40 birds altogether, on the islands and the mainland. Other reports came from Cape Sable, May 8 (BJS&SS&PRD); May 10, Lockeport (GDP) and Markland (MWH&AH&SG); May 11, Yarmouth (D&MH); May 15-24, Sydney Forks (RB1) and Homeville (GS); May 16-18, Wine Harbor (G&OM); and May 20, Louisbourg (Mrs. GJ).

According to the Breeding Bird Surveys, the WHITE-THROATED is our most abundant Sparrow, and the migration this spring was stupendous. Because so many winter here, we do not attempt to pin-point first arrivals, undoubtedly in April, as 50 were already on Seal I. April 28. The big wave came in May 7-9. On the 7th, rain accompanied by strong winds (prevailing NW but blowing from

other directions too) made the going tough for 100 lb. mortals, let alone those weighing several oz., but little brown sparrows kept popping over the high sheer pebbleridge at Cape Sable all day long; continuing the next day, when the rain had ceased, although the wind continued high. There were Vespers, Swamps, Whitecrowns and Songs, but mostly the Whitethroats, hundreds of them, soon populating the whole island. It was a sight to remember. On the 8th, there were 250 on Seal I. - 1100 on the 9th, and down to 200 the next day. On the 8th, two of the Whitethroats had reached St. Esprit in Cape Breton (S&RM), and by May 10 they were seen in many regions in numbers, heard everywhere in the woods shortly singing their (and our) national anthem. It is curious and perhaps interesting to note that the first "numbers" on Sable I. came May 18, and the maximum there was 50-60 individuals.

The FOX SPARROW migration touched us very lightly this spring, only about 40 individuals seen in the whole province. The first bright new one was at Brookside, Halifax Co. March 29-30, the second (2) at Petite Riviere April 4 (both FWD), then between April 7-18, they were seen at Economy (F&ES), Homeville (GS), Armdale (J&SC), Wine Harbor(G&OM), Port Joli (JA), Lockeport (GDP), Truro (RB), New Minas (BS et al.) and Brier I., where the only "concentration" occurred, 15 there on the 18th. On the BBS at Larry's River June 12, 4 singing Fox Sparrows were counted, and there were 2, also in song, at East Ironbound in June, heard by Ian McLaren, who suspects another nesting site there. Fox Sparrows were not seen at either Seal or Sable Islands at this time.

Six only reports of the LINCOLN'S SPARROW add up to a total of about 50 individuals seen and heard this spring - and 30 of them were on Sable I. for a change. The earliest date is May 13, at Wine Harbor (GM), the next, May 15 at Seal I., then May 18 at Truro (RB) and May 21 at Economy, where Francis Spalding had a nest with 4 eggs under observation. On the Larry's River BBS, 4 Lincoln's Sparrows were among the finest singers heard that day (June 12). These sparrows did not stay on Sable I. The last one was seen there June 13.

One of the (regrettably few) reports we have had from Brier I. this spring gives the date of arrival of the SWAMP SPARROW - April 13. Almost two weeks later the first ones were heard in Yarmouth Co. - 1, April 28 at Tusket; 3, April 29 at Quinan (CRKA). On the 29th also the first one was heard at Economy, and on May 2, at Upper Canard, King's Co. (BS et al.). May 9 gave the maximum count on Seal I. - about 30 birds. At Sable I. and at Sydney Forks in Cape Breton the first Swamp Sparrows seen were on May 20. The maximum on Sable was 18 individuals - a good year for this species, according to Davis Finch.

On the other hand, there was one only SONG SPARROW on Sable I. this spring, on June 2. They are always scarce there apparently, which is interesting, the Song Sparrow being our second most abundant sparrow on mainland Nova Scotia. Once again, it is impossible to give a definite arrival time for this species, since so many stay the winter, and start singing in February. They - the returning migrants - were already on Seal I. when Stuart Tingley and Bruce Mac-tavish arrived on April 28. There were 60 counted that day, down to 40 by May 9, which marks one wave, at any rate, even if a receding one. Song Sparrows were nesting, or starting to build, early in April, and are now busy with second broods.

So we reach the end of another spring migration, and say good-bye to the

last in this group - the SNOW BUNTINGS, They were numerous last winter, and stayed around many feeders late - for them - still abundant April 1; but left finally quite suddenly, The last was a "flock" at Morien Bar, in Cape Breton seen by I. Abernethy, on April the 6th,

PRD Ed.

#### BIRD SOCIETY NEWS

##### NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY - EXECUTIVE MEETING

A meeting of the Executive of the Nova Scotia Bird Society was held at the home of Mr. Eric Cooke on Thursday, May 8, 1975 at 7:30 p.m.

The following were in attendance:

Mr Robert Lamberton	Dr. Tony Lock
Miss Ethel Crathorne	Mr, Eric Cooke
Miss Hazel Carmichael	Mr. Ross Anderson
Dr. Richard Brown	Miss Margaret Clark

Dr. Tony Lock showed members a draft copy of the Osprey which will be used for Poster and brochure purposes.

The Executive was disappointed in the exhibit at the Museum. It was suggested that a committee begin planning, for next year's exhibit, earlier in the fall.

Discussion then centered on the Wreck Cove Project. The booklet published jointly by the N.S.B.S. and the Ecology Action Centre drew mostly favourable but some unfavourable comments. It was felt that the membership should be kept more fully informed of major projects undertaken by the Executive on behalf of the Society.

Miss Ethel Crathorne reported membership now included:

265 - Single  
85 - Family  
19 - Student

Mr. Eric Cooke reported he had been in attendance at a recent meeting of the Cape Breton Branch at Baddeck.

Mr. Cooke also reported that 15 acres of Conrad's Beach was up for sale. At one time the Provincial Government had considered taking over the whole beach. Since the Resources Council was submitting a letter to the Government urging it to purchase the property, Mr. Cooke felt that a supporting letter be sent to the Minister of Lands and Forest and other government officials from the Executive of the Bird Society. It was agreed that Mr. Cooke send the letter which he had already drafted.

#### A BITTERN NEST

Harry Brennan found a bittern nest in one of his favourite swamps in May. It is a freshwater march and the nest was near the middle of it. Part of the area is floating bog but the nest was on grassy, firm land hidden under bushy growth. On June 29th Harry took Ralph Connor on a tour around the marsh and showed him a number of nests, including that of the Red-Eyed Vireo (see this newsletter). There were four young bitterns, the adults were not seen on this visit. Ralph says the pin feathers were well developed, the general colouring was grayish, with the rather scatty-looking head fluff a creamy-tan. The eyes were golden (around the black pupil). Harry picked up one of the young birds so that they could get a good look at its long, sprawly legs and outsize, greenish feet. It looked startled but made no sound. Harry put his hand near the bird's head to try and make it open its mouth for a photo of its throat. The mouth opened wide but every time the young bird thrust its head forward Ralph lost the critical camera focus - even with a closed beak this is an expressive portrait of a young bittern.





Harry Brennan with young bittern.

The President reported on his meeting with Mr. Martin, Director of the Museum, concerning the request for more space especially, Any books, magazines, newsletters, etc. could be deposited in the Museum Library. This would provide greater access by members and the public and could be under the care of the Librarian - an N.S.B.S. collection within the Museum Library.

Meetings of the Bird Society would continue to be held at the Museum as the auditorium can be opened to provide a larger seating area. The Museum is centrally located and a good parking area is available.

It was moved that it be arranged for the Nova Scotia Bird Society to have a number listed separately in the Telephone Directory, under the number of the Museum, at a cost of approximately \$4.20 a year. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 10 p.m.

#### NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY - FINANCES - MAY 7, 1975

Nov. 1/74 On Hand		\$2,144.29
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#### RECEIPTS

Dues	\$1,976.00	
Publications	21.00	
Misc.	7.50	<u>\$2,004.50</u>
		\$4,148.79

#### EXPENDED

Newsletter Costs (2)	\$1,436.84	
Postage & Printing	258.25	
Affiliation dues	34.00	
C.B. Branch - share Dues	49.00	
Advance for Exhibit exps.	50.00	
Miscellaneous	55.22	<u>\$1,883.31</u>
May 7/75 On Hand		\$2,265.48

(Bill from Environmental Committee (\$120) not received.  
Vouchers for Exhibit expenses not yet received.)

#### FIELD CHECK LIST

As earlier announced, in the last Newsletter, a new field check list has been produced. It is termed "official" to distinguish it from the commercial version so scathingly reviewed by David Christie in our July 1974 issue. When the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism found itself unable to support publication Mr. Robert Talbot, a long time member of the Society, stepped in and generously offered to finance the publication of the list. He has given 1200 copies to the Society, to be distributed to members; others can be bought for 25¢ at his bookstore in the Halifax Shopping Centre. The list, complete at the time of printing,

will we hope serve to sharpen the observational and photographic skills of members and visitors to the Province; it should stimulate them to add to or upgrade the status of the species already on the list,

#### SPRING TRIP REPORTS

Shubenacadie Wildlife Park April 25:

Trip was attended by about fifteen people but unfortunately the rain started soon after people arrived and soon became too heavy to stand - so the trip was cut short,

Eric Cooke

Outing with Harry Brennan, May 18, 1975

On May 18th about fifteen members of the NSBS met at Harry Brennan's in Hopewell for a nesting expedition. First we went to a Pileated Woodpecker's nest; when Harry shook the tree it peered out at us but refused to budge. The next stop was at a marsh where we saw or heard bitterns, black ducks, sora rails, red-winged blackbirds, swallows, etc. Then we visited the hill where a Saw-whet Owl had a nest; the owl was looking at us, but his markings so blended with the birch bark that it took some time for all of us to find him; it later flew off to an adjacent tree so we had a good look at it. Later Harry took us to a spot where a pair of Goshawks had a nest; there was a lot of flying and calling, but they did not return to the nest while we were there. After a very pleasant walk along a wood road, we went to the Kenney's in Springville for a buffet supper which we all enjoyed.

E. Crathorne

Hants County Field Trip - May 31, 1975

Nineteen "birders" turned out for the annual Hants County Field Trip. Although the regular leader, C.R.K. Allen, was unable to lead the trip this year, his tips and directions were invaluable.

The cavalcade of cars left Mount Uniacke at 8:15 a.m. under overcast skies and a forecast of rain. The weather in the morning was not too uncomfortable, and only slight rain fell obligingly while driving from one stop to another. The morning was most profitable and despite the heavy foliage 74 species were sighted. During lunch stop at Smiley's Park, the weather permitted use of the picnic tables and Ross Anderson entertained us with tapes of bird songs. The Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker and American Bittern put in an appearance as they always do there.

The afternoon added only 2 other species to our list for the day. When we reached the gravel pit on the Kennetcook Dyke, the rain forced us to seek shelter in our cars. Several "local" cars, including an unmarked police car stopped to see if anything were wrong! The wrong done to us was by the birds, because we did not see a thing, not even a Yellowlegs!

The steady rain forced us to end the trip around 3 p.m., and most of the group were able to accept the invitation to the Clark home in Ste. Croix, for a

typical Saturday Night Country Supper of baked beans, scalloped potatoes, brown bread, rolls, etc.

There were noticeable changes in the environment in the Hants County Field Trip. Some fields that, last year, sheltered the Bobolinks, Red-Breasted Grosbeaks, and such were plowed this spring; other fields are showing signs of being developed into building lots; and more and more roads are being paved. However, the usual species were seen and heard; a robin's nest with two newly hatched young and two unhatched eggs was discovered so that the whole day can be considered a successful and worthwhile Field Trip.

Margaret A. Clark

Kejimikujik Park, June 7, 1975

June 7th was a fine day sandwiched in between downpours on the 6th and 8th. The last downpours for six weeks, I might add. Peter Hope and Simon Lunn led the trip. with 61 species being found. The locals always know the best spots for birding.

Shirley Brothers

Scatari Island, June 28th

On Saturday, four Halifax "birders" - Eric Cooke, Frank and Mary Himsl and Margaret Clark gathered at the wharf at Main à Dieu in anticipation of the Scatari Island Field Trip. Earlier in the year, Don Banks, Wildlife Biologist with the Department of Lands and Forest at Baddeck, had invited the N.S.B.S. to join them for one of their days of censusing the Willow Ptarmigan placed on Scatari in 1969.

Although the "mainlanders" expected to go across on Saturday the "islanders" understood it was to be Sunday! So we had an extra day. Thus some made like tourists and went to see Fortress Louisbourg and the Miners' Museum, while others were able to take the Bird Islands Boat Tour to see the vast colonies of gulls with chicks visible everywhere, and the far lesser numbers of Puffins, Razorbills, Great Cormorants, Black Guillemots and Common Murres. How long will it be before the gulls take over the Puffin area completely?

On Sunday, June 29, the same group turned up again at the Main à Dieu wharf joined by Diane Banks, wife of Dan, and David MacAulay. We were taken across by a local fisherman over rough seas and thickening fog but we reached Tin Cove safely to be greeted by Dan Banks and three other members of the Lands and Forest Dept. After a warming cup of tea, we headed by foot along the rocky cliffs of the shore to the barren lands of Scatari, led by "Boots" a "ptarmigan" dog and Dan. After considerable trudging over the barrens, Boots rewarded us by flushing a male willow ptarmigan, then Dan led us to the previously marked nesting area where we had a perfect view of the female and a nest of seven eggs!

We also spotted a Savannah Sparrow's nest with 5 eggs in it, and although bird life seemed scarce on the island, besides Herring and Great Black-Back Gulls, Terns, we identified a Common Eider, Junco, Chickadee, Hermit Thrush,



Myrtle Warbler, Fox Sparrow, Black Duck, American Redstart and Great Cormorants on the rocky coast, Oh yes! and some were fortunate to see an Arctic Hare!

The wind changed, the fog left, the sun shone so that after lunch, we relaxed on the grassy ledges of the shore while waiting for the boat to come and take us back to the mainland. Loaded down with 11 people, 2 dogs and a week's gear of the Department personnel our return crossing was over calm waters and under sunny skies.

Those of the Bird Society who were able to go on this trip are very grateful to Diane and Dan Banks and others of the Department of Lands and Forest for this memorable birding and boating experience!

Margaret A. Clark

#### HOW I BECAME INTERESTED IN BIRDS

by

W.E. Whitehead

In complying with a request to relate how I became interested in birds, I will begin by saying that I have been interested in all phases of animal life for as long as I can remember, although it was soon realized that my ambition would have to be reduced to a more manageable size.

I have been fortunate, at least from my standpoint, in having lived in the country, or very close to it, all my life. As a boy, home from school when asked to choose a holiday "treat", I would invariably settle for a day at the Zoo or the Museum of Natural History in London. I read everything on Nature that I could lay my hands on, sometimes to the exclusion of school assignments which had less appeal.

My interests gradually became focussed on birds; those around my parental home were always well cared for. I knew many of the English land birds and on my own "stamping ground" in the southeast corner of England, I was familiar with all of them and most of their nests. I well remember lying in bed listening to a nightingale singing a short distance from the house, being shown my first nightingale's nest, seeing a cuckoo's egg in a hedge sparrow's nest and watching a nesting barn owl through a peephole at the rear of a disused dovecote, to say nothing of being chased when I intruded on forbidden territory.

On coming to Nova Scotia I carried on from where I left off in England and became familiar with at least some of our birds. The same applies when I moved to the Province of Quebec and again when I returned to Nova Scotia 30 years later. For many years, while in Quebec, I was engaged in research on the ectoparasites of birds and mammals. The work involved the examination of numerous specimens and this gave me the idea of trying taxidermy as a hobby. It resulted in a fair degree of success.

My early enthusiasm, aided by help and encouragement from those with whom I associated, hastened the development of the sense of accurate observation and attention to detail which became imperative in subsequent fields of

endeavour. To those who are biologically inclined and who are undecided as to which outdoor activity to pursue, I would suggest birds. To paraphrase an old Sherwin-Williams slogan, "In city, town and hamlet you will find birds". Probably paint too. It may be only a sparrow chirping from a rooftop, or a gull meditating on the end of a wharf, but it is something, you have made a start. Dont be disappointed if you fail to see a rarity the first time out, the chances are you will not. As compared with birds, other classes of animals are more difficult to study. For one thing, they are fewer in numbers, with the exception of the Insecta which is the largest class. One distinct advantage with birds is that they can be studied during entire year.

In answer to the initial question, I have to attribute my interest to an early leaning towards ornithology, it established a groundwork, became keener and has provided pleasure and recreation over the years. This interest has been purely aesthetic, I have not undertaken any serious studies, although I do know a little about what makes a bird "tick". My choice of entomology as a vocation has fitted in well with ornithology. As mentioned above, some insects are in intimate association with birds, and it should be remembered that many birds are among man's best friends in the matter of insect control.

#### THE BALD EAGLE AND THE OTTER

by

A.G. MacDonald

(Chief Park Warden, Terra Nova National Park)

The large mature bald eagle hovered gently on silent wings in the lengthening shadows of the early afternoon sun, searching for a tasty morsel to subside the hunger pangs growing inside. Suddenly the giant bird spied an adult otter frolicking in the fresh snow on the frozen surface of the bird sanctuary and decided immediately that this would be his next meal.

Little did the eagle know at this point that the seemingly harmless, playful otter would turn out to be such a ferocious fighter, well capable of looking after itself in such a dangerous situation, or the eagle may have decided to look elsewhere for a more docile creature for its meal.

The eagle dove silently and swiftly to the frozen surface, and the otter, sensing at the last moment that he was in danger, rolled instinctively onto his back as the eagle drove its three-inch, steel-like talons into the soft fur of the otter's stomach.

A ferocious battle followed; the eagle tore at the otter with its powerful bill, and the otter fighting for its life, clamped its vice-like jaws on the wing of the eagle, breaking the wing. No one knows for certain how long this battle went on, but Wardens Joe Tucker and Lloyd Harris, while on a routine patrol of the Eastport Peninsula at 9 AM on December 24, 1974, noticed something dark on the surface of the ice about a quarter of a mile from the roadway.

As the ice surface was unsafe for either of the wardens, they returned later with a small aluminum boat which they half pushed, half paddled to the area where they found the bodies of the eagle and the otter, still locked in their final death hold.

The otter apparently died earlier in the night as its body was frozen stiff when found but the eagle with both wings broken, unable to fly if it could have broken loose from the otter, was not yet frozen and had probably succumbed within the hour.

Upon returning to Headquarters with these two fine specimens, the wardens learned that Peter Kelly, a constable with the Glovertown Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Horace Brown, General Works Manager of Terra Nova National Park, had seen the eagle floundering around on the ice at 2:30 pm the previous day but paid it little heed, as they both believed it simply feeding on a fish or small mammal.

This story is not intended to offend the weak of stomach or to enlarge on all the gory details of this encounter, but merely to point out to those of you who are not familiar with the true details of the fight for survival of these magnificent birds of prey.

The Northern Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus alascanus) ranging from slightly south of North Carolina to far Northern Alaska, and much larger than the Southern Bald Eagle was at one time almost as plentiful as the common crow. But due to the early Alaska bounty law in 1917, close to 50,000 of these birds met an untimely death. Many thousands were also slaughtered in both Canada and the United States of America as they were doing serious damage to salmon activities.

Populations of the eagle depleted so seriously that both Canada and the U.S.A. finally decided to include the eagle on the list of protected species and it is now unlawful to hunt or trap these birds. A later depletion of this fine bird led to a study which found that they, as well as osprey, hawks, falcons and many other species of birds, were highly susceptible to D.D.T. which was at that time being used in great quantities by all walks of life.

As a result of these tests, D.D.T. has been banned for use in Canada, but the prior use of this chemical still lingers in those great birds to such an extent that they are now on the endangered species list. Only by careful studies and experiments will these graceful birds survive the disastrous destruction levied by the so-called intelligent white man, that wrestled this bountiful land from the hands of the Indians only a few hundred years ago.

They have now virtually wiped out the wilderness areas where wildlife used to abound and replaced them with large masses of concrete jungle, and thousands of miles of ribbons of concrete criss-crossing all areas of the land to interlock these concrete jungles together into a mass which is called civilization.

In 1885, ten square miles around a hot spring in Banff, Alberta, then called Rocky Mountain Park was set aside as a National Park and dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, to be made use of so as to leave it unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Between then and 1972, twenty-eight National Parks, with a total land area of 50,060 square miles, have been created across Canada. between Pacific Rim on Vancouver Island on the west and Terra Nova in Newfoundland on the East, including Kluane in the Yukon and Baffin Island in the Northwest Territories,

The 153,1 square mile area of Terra Nova National Park, with its rugged deeply indented coastline and typical boreal forest of spruce and bogs, is an ideal habitat for all typical kinds of wildlife including the Northern Bald Eagle. In 1973, there were four active bald eagle nests within the Park and these numbers are believed to be increasing annually, leading us to believe that the dangerous level of D,D,T, carried by these birds is diminishing to an extent that they may yet survive.

Every effort will be made to have this particular eagle with its seven-foot wingspan, properly mounted and put on permanent display in the Interpretive Display building for the education and study of Park staff and the visiting public alike. It will join a recently mounted juvenile Black Bear as well as one of a Gannet (Morus bassanus), both of which met untimely deaths in the confines of the Park - the black bear when struck by a car on the highway and the gannet upon striking the frozen surface of a pond when diving for food.

In any event all mounted species will be a welcome addition to the Interpretive Display and can be viewed by all - official Park visitors and the public alike for many years to come.

#### WHY DOES "SPSHING" WORK?

by  
Dick Brown

Every immigrant has his own story about those first strange contacts with the friendly natives. My own is odder than most. I officially landed in Canada on September 8, 1965 and just 48 hours later found myself on Seal Island, in a party led by Lloyd Macpherson, Phyllis Dobson and Charlie Allen. I don't remember too much about it - cultural shock, ornithological trauma and jet-lag saw to that. But what sticks in my mind is the sight of Charlie Allen, stalking along one of the island trails, and making the "spshing" sound which we in England use to call the cat.

"It attracts birds", he said - and, so help me, so it did. It even worked when I "spshed" in an English accent. This was something quite new to me. In England I'd either clapped my hands or thrown a rock into the bushes, to persuade the birds to come out and show themselves. From then on I used this subtle North American discovery to good effect while I tried to figure out their bewildering array of warblers and vireos. But when I went back to England I found it hadn't the slightest effect. Why should it work in Canada but not in England? Why should so unbirdlike a noise work at all? I remained baffled.

Not any longer. The first serious study of "spshing" has just been published, by Neal G. Smith: "Spshing noise": biological significance of its attraction and nonattraction by birds. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S.A., vol. 72, pp 1411-1414; April 1975. Smith is based on the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in the Panama Canal Zone and has worked extensively on the mixed species flocks which many of our migrants join down there in winter. Such flocks also include one or more local species. The migrants are species such as the Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart and Red-eyed Vireo, all of which change their diets rather radically

in winter, from insects to fruit and nectar - presumably because insects are scarce at that time of year in Panama. By contrast, migrants such as Wilson's Warbler and the Northern Waterthrush, which don't change their diets, don't form mixed species flocks. Smith's suggestion is that the first group of migrants need "instruction" on where to find their new food, and so they join flocks of local fruit-eaters, such as the Plain-coloured Tanager (*Tanagra inornata*), in order to learn the ropes. To do this, of course, they must first find the tanagers, and the obvious technique to use in dense rain-forest is to listen for their calls which in fact sound very like "spshing". Smith played tape-recordings and showed that the fruit-eating migrants were strongly attracted both to "spshing" and to tanager calls. The two types of sound must share some common characteristics.

If that is why "spshing" works, why won't it work with European birds? Smith points out that the situation there is rather different. Most English warblers winter in Africa, and they arrive at a time when insects are abundant. They therefore do not switch to a fruit diet, nor do they form mixed species flocks with local birds. On Smith's hypothesis, they don't react to "spshing" because they have no need to react to the calls of a local, fruit-eating species. Other Eurasian migrants winter in India, and Smith did find some mixed flocks there. These migrants ignored his "spshing", but the reason was obvious. The local species to which they were attracted was the White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosa*, whose jingling calls are nothing like "spshing". An Indian ornithologist would presumably have to come up with some quite different sound in order to attract them.

I'll finish with a suggestion for further field-work: which Nova Scotian species are and are not attracted by "spshing"? Smith says that in Panama the Red-eyed and Philadelphia Vireos, Black-and-White, Tennessee, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted and Canada Warblers, the American Redstart, the Northern Oriole, Scarlet Tanager and Dickcissel (plus others which we see rarely, if at all) are all attracted. Mourning and Wilson's Warblers, the Northern Waterthrush and Rose-breasted Grosbeak are not. Can we add to these lists?

THE WOODPILE  
by  
Phyllis Dobson

The firewood, ordered in November, could not be cut until the end of the hunting season. When it arrived it was obviously straight out of the forest. Mostly birch and maple, the maple was covered with mosses and lichens, fresh and green. There were all shades of green, from the deep emerald of Pincushion Moss through the paler green of the Fern Moss, the green-gold of the Frogskin Lichen, to the silvery green-gray of Parmelia and Old Man's Beard. These are ancient primitive plants, which will survive almost anywhere, but will flourish only where the air is pure and damp, and the sunlight filtered.

Mosses may suggest the twilight of the deep woods, but the Lichens - those old stone-breakers (fortuitous union of sea and land) - give us a glimpse of the faraway dim dawn of creation.

The lichens are not one plant, but a happy association of two - an alga, which is a green, free-living plant, and a fungus, which is a parasite, dependent upon pre-formed food from other plants. The alga supplies the food, the fungus supplies a foothold and stores water which enables the alga to live on land. When a lichen dries it shrinks and turns gray; when moisture is restored, the lichen swells, the alga is exposed and the plant becomes lush and green again.

The firewood had to be stacked outdoors, close to the house, and as the winter progressed and each moist new layer was exposed, there was the live moss and the lichen, fresh and crisp and curling.

The front of the house is glassed in, shaded with quite an overhang from the roof; so, because the wood piled there was protected from most snow-storms, birdseed was scattered over it, and it became the favorite hunting ground for Juncos and other sparrows. The moss and lichen on the logs provided crevices to hold the seed, and also a firm grip for the birds' feet, in a high wind.

Juncos have peculiar feet, like most of these small ground-feeding birds - three long toes in front and one just as long in back, each well equipped with a curved claw, giving them a good base on which to balance, with a strong grasp, in spite of their tiny almost threadlike legs. They like to scratch for their food, and use both feet at once - an extraordinary motion, much like a mechanical toy. They have pink legs and black feet, and are, in their smoky black and soft white feathers, one of the smartest looking of our small birds.

There were up to two dozen of them around the house this winter, a perpetual joy to watch, especially in contrast with the sparkling white of a new snowfall.

Accompanying the Dark-eyed Juncos (to give them their specific name) there were from time to time Song Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, Tree Sparrows and a Field Sparrow. These are seed-eating birds, and it was interesting to see them choose each his own favorite type of seed. All have strong conical bills, but the Juncos and the Field Sparrow, having the smallest bills, chose millet by preference, the Song and Tree Sparrows tackled almost all types, and the Whitethroats sought out the oats, which they shelled by nibbling, just as a grosbeak will shell a sunflower seed. Cracked corn was good, if fine enough, but the larger bits were left for the Bluejays.

A word about the Field Sparrow. This bird is probably a stray in Nova Scotia. It was first reported here in 1902 by E. Chesley Allen, and Harrison Lewis once suggested that it might be nesting in Digby County; but no nest has yet been found. (How many of us realize that these two famous ornithologists, widely quoted throughout Canada and the United States were both of Yarmouth County origin?) The range of the Field Sparrow is from southern Maine west to Quebec and Ontario, south to the northern Gulf States where it usually winters. We see it most often in the fall during migration, in southwest Nova Scotia, especially on Seal Island - the outermost of the Tusket Islands - where a few are found regularly, both spring and fall.

It was a pleasant surprise to see it here, "on shore" in Yarmouth County, first on December 5 and practically every day thereafter up to the end of April. It most nearly resembles our Chipping Sparrow, which is a close relative, but the Field Sparrow has a more rusty color, a distinctive face pattern, and notably

pink legs and bill, the last, the characteristic field mark distinguishing it from any other of our small brown sparrows,

The Field Sparrow seemed to feel this distinction strongly, for it associated exclusively with the Juncos (which also have pink bills), appearing only when they appeared, and finally leaving with them when the flock dispersed in the spring.

The Field Sparrow liked the woodpile, and later on, Purple Finches found it convenient on wet days. Purple Finches are greedy birds and they came in great numbers, but were welcome to all they desired, for sometime in the middle of February they took to the treetops and began to sing their beautiful carolling warble. The Juncos sang even earlier, only a simple trill, but pleasant to hear in the depths of winter.

Long before we dare to think of spring coming there is a stir in the bird world. It happens every year. About mid-February the Goldfinches as well as the Purple Finches become more vocal; Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers make a last canvass of the bayberry bushes; wintering Robins come out of hiding; unusual birds show up at feeders - perhaps a Redwinged Blackbird, possibly a Dickcissel. And hawks become hungrier.

The commonest predator on small birds in these parts is the Sharp-shinned Hawk. There was only one here, and he took his toll, but the birds were always on the alert, to dive for the trees and safety at a moment's notice; soon returning to feed, aware of shelter within easy reach. Here again, the woodpile up against the house served a useful purpose. When the black shadow swooped down, the Chickadees melted into the forest, the Bluejays, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, Goldfinches and Juncos rose in a huge colorful swirl, a hundred strong, and the little brown sparrows "froze" in among the mossy logs.

There shall always be a woodpile, of logs straight out of the forest. It looks pretty, it affords good traction for birds' feet, keeps seed from blowing away, gives shelter from weather and hawks; and here, immediately outside of the patio windows, has brought the birds within a few feet for observation - an unending source of fascination and delight.





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

