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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Volume 20, Number 3

July, 1978

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NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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S P R I N G I N N O V A S C O T I A

APRIL and MAY, 1978

We had a short spring this year for a change, just April and May. March remained wintry until about the 30th; then temperatures rose throughout April, only the nights falling below freezing level. The sun came out to stay in May, which however developed its usual strong cold winds, and became too dry for comfort. (Wet or dry, we would be more comfortable if we would obey the old adage: "Don't cast a clout, Till May is out" - but we are always deceived by the bright sunshine and led to think it is warmer than it is). Fortunately rains came often enough to discourage forest fires, and to bring on plant growth by June, to almost unprecedented luxuriance. Every tree and shrub and plant which knew how, blossomed extravagantly, even the evergreens putting forth buds and cones from every available twig.

First "greening over" of the hardwoods was May 14-15 in southwest Nova Scotia, and this presented a problem to the bird-watchers. For some reason connected with their flight this year many of our migratory birds were late in coming. This, combined with heavy foliage made it a real problem to detect them, or distinguish one from another unless by classic song. All too many warblers vary their little warbles, and must be seen to be believed. This was a real challenge, and much-needed refresher course for many of us these last few weeks.

Mid-April brought us our first sense of coming spring: on April 14 at the Cohrs' in Halifax Juncos, Whitethroats, Fox and Song Sparrows were all singing at once in the garden at 6:30 a.m. Signs of spring differed around the province, where at Yarmouth half of the Evening Grosbeaks had green bills by March 23, and Song Sparrows were singing March 24, a fine day; at St. Esprit first birdsong was heard on April 12 three hours after the beginning of a blizzard. At Wilmot the chipmunk came out of hibernation March 27, at Bel Brook April 1. Tree Frogs were singing April 14, and Brown Frogs quacking like ducks April 18 in the rain pools along the roadsides of Highway 103.

The seasons overlapped on April 17 when Tree Swallows flew past, a Roughleg still soaring overhead.

Late arrival of the birds (individuals of most species arrived on time, but in small numbers) caused concern round about the province, which is probably allayed by now. Looking back over field trip lists winter and spring, a coastal area trip in SW Nova Scotia Feb. 10 and another March 17 netted about 20 species each; a coastal trip May 20 and an inland trip May 20 also one May 21 netted 24 species each; then on May 25, in 1.5 hours in an inland area roughly 15 Km in diameter 40 species were found with ease, and judging by the chorus of song, many species were present in good numbers of individuals. Nor is this a local situation. In Halifax County, during the morning of May 28, thirty-seven species were logged by the family in the F.W. Dobson back garden.

On Seal I. a big influx of birds occurred on May 20-21, noted there by Eric Mills and the Cohrs family; but evidently these did not become distributed about the mainland until about a week later.

It may be added that at the Amherst Point-Lusby Marsh area at the Border in the three week period May 4-22 Roger T. Burrows counted eighty species of bird.

Bird-watching is an occupation too subjective, too influenced by circumstance to use as a basis for statistics, but the above counts suggest that we need not - for another while at least - expect a Silent Spring.

Phyllis R. Dobson
Records Editor

LOONS AND GREBES

COMMON LOONS appeared on lakes very shortly after the ice had melted, in the case of Eel Lake, Yar. Co., the morning of March 30 - the ice having disappeared from this brackish water the day before. In other localities the inland movement took place in early to mid-April.

RED-NECKED GREBES were still about in early May, when two in breeding plumage were seen at Pinkney's Point on the 5th, and at Cape Sable, where Sid Smith reported up to 17 from late March to May 6. HORNED GREBES departed earlier, the latest sighting being 2, at Green Bay April 14, and possibly the same 2(?) "well into breeding plumage" at Cherry Hill April 16, reported by the Cohrs. PIED-BILLED GREBES were first seen April 22 at Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary (APBS), where Con Desplanque saw one on that date. He found another there April 30, up to 8, May 5 and 20 on May 8. Roger Burrows, visiting the same area during May reported numbers varying from single birds to a high of 12 and stated that a number were "singing".

CRKA Ed.

FULMARS, SHEARWATERS, STORM-PETRELS

NORTHERN FULMARS were extremely abundant on George's Bank on the week of April 3-10, when Raymond S. d'Entremont saw "thousands" of them. Eric Mills, on CSS "Dawson" from April 24-28, reported them from 5 miles off Sambro Head out to beyond the continental shelf 130 miles SE of Halifax, with the biggest concentrations on Emerald Bank and at the edge of the shelf. There are a few inshore records. Eric Cooke's party saw one on the way out to Seal I. on May 21 and the Cohrs saw 3 on the way back the same day; Tony Lock saw two light-phase birds off Pearl I. on May 18; Richard Elliott saw two birds between Louisbourg and Kennington Cove, C.B., on June 9.

SOOTY SHEARWATERS were first seen off Sable I. on May 25, and GREATERS on May 31; some 14,000 birds were estimated to have passed the island in the first week of June (Ian McLaren, Peter Vickery). But both species must have reached us earlier than that because the Smiths saw 10 Sooties and 50 Greaters within 45 minutes on the stormy morning of May 21, just half a mile off Cape Sable. On that same day there were at least 6 Sooties between Clark's Harbour and Seal I. (Eric Cooke et al.) The earliest record of all, though, was the Greater which Eric Mills saw 115 miles SE of Halifax on April 25 - a sighting so early that it cannot have been a breeding bird from the South Atlantic and may even have been one which stayed up here for the whole of our winter. Other records worth noting are single Sooties between Cape Perce and South Head, C.B., and between Black Rock and Port Nova I. on June 5 (Stephen R. Clayton), a Sooty off Louisbourg on June 8 and a Sooty and Greater between Louisbourg and Kennington Cove the next day (Richard Elliott).

LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS were heard around Cape Sable Light on the night of April 9 and a dead bird was found there the next day (Smiths). The birds were on their Pearl I. colony with eggs in the burrows on May 18 (Tony Lock). A. E. Nickerson saw small numbers c. June 6 between George's Bank and southern Nova Scotia, but the common storm-petrels on George's Bank itself were WILSON'S. Our only other Wilson's sighting was of a bird c. 180 miles SE of Halifax on April 26 (Eric Mills).

GANNETS, CORMORANTS

The first GANNET reports come from Cape Sable, where the Smiths saw a bird on March 15 and 2 on March 18, and several moving west, of all the perverse directions, on May 20. Raymond S. d'Entremont notes that there were 25-30 present at all times on George's Bank in the week April 3-10, and Bertin F. d'Eon estimated that 200-250 birds flew past Outer Bald Tusket I. on April 17. Eric Mills saw small numbers off Chebucto Head on April 25, and others all the way out to beyond the edge of the continental shelf, c. 130 miles SE of Halifax. The Cohrs saw about 4-6 per day, mostly subadults and immatures, from Seal I. May 13-21, and Tony Lock saw an immature off Pearl I. on May 18.

GREAT CORMORANT records are sparse. Linda Gray saw one (several) at Wynacht's Point, Tantallon, on March 26, and Layton Ferguson saw another at Homeville on April 16. Roger Burrows had up to 5 off Louisbourg from April 7 onwards. DOUBLE-CREATED CORMORANTS were of course commoner. Some early sightings were on March 21 at St. Esprit, C.B.; (Rainer Meyerowitz) and April 2 at APBS (Con Desplanque). Eric Holdway says that there were birds at the Pictou Harbour Causeway on April 3, and that they were building nests by April 10.

RGBB Ed.

HERONS, BITTERN, EGRETS, IBIS

GREAT BLUE HERONS arrived generally a few days later than last year's and showed a rapid, but surely stately, progression northeastward after the earliest sighting, on Cape Sable I. on March 25 (RG per SS). Several first sightings by observers in Yarmouth and Shelburne Counties occurred between March 28 and 31. One at Canning was also early on March 30 (Robert MacDonald), but they did not occur at Amherst (CD) or Pictou (EH) until April 9. Following one "earliest sighting for us" by MS on April 1 at Musquodoboit Harbour, singles occurred along the outer coast at Liverpool on April 3 (TW), St. Margaret's Bay on April 5 (ELM) and Lawrencetown on April 6 (IAM). On Cape Breton, the first were on April 9 at St. Esprit (S&JM) and April 12 near Sydney (LF).

Cyril Coldwell collected a LOUISIANA HERON at Westport, Digby Co., May 18th. In subadult plumage it showed no sign of plumes. This is the eighth record for the province. (See Newsletter, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 83-84.)

Among the other southerners, our only GREEN HERON was at Amherst Point on May 5 (Ducks Unlimited staff, fide RB); our only LITTLE BLUE HERON (imm.) was near Maccan in late April and early May (fide RB), and a lone CATTLE EGRET spent the third week of April feeding in a field near Digby (AR et mult.al.). SNOWY EGRETS occurred more widely. One at Cole Harbour on April 22 (EHC) may have been the same bird seen by several observers at Lawrencetown on April 30, but there were also 2 on Cape Sable I. on May 4 (RC), and individuals on Sable I. between May 11 and 16 (HR et al) and at Chezzetcook on May 20 (EHC). The only recorded BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON "fished at dawn and dusk at the bottom of the garden" of Rosemary Eaton at Cole Harbour from April 25 to 28.

The earliest AMERICAN BITTERN was one at Waterville on April 19 (GB, RM), but there are several reports, some of "singing" birds, in early May. They were evidently still on the move when one appeared on May 23 on Sable I. The season's only GLOSSY IBIS also appeared on Sable I. on May 5 and 6 (HR et al).

IAM Ed.

GEESE AND DUCKS

Wintering flocks of CANADA GEESE were on the move and new arrivals were increasing their numbers by mid-March. By the 12th the Cole Harbour flock had grown from 3000 to 5000 birds. Rainer Meyerowitz heard them passing over St. Esprit on the 21st and by the 22nd according to Robert Turner numbers in the Port LeHebert-Sable River region had shrunk from 3000 to 200. March 22 was moving day for the geese in two other areas: Francis Spalding saw the first small flocks on that date at Economy and the Cape Bretoners reported that at Port Morien there was an increase from 450 to about 1000 birds. At Lusby Marsh the goose population rose from 200 to 5000 birds between March 23 and April 3 and remained at about that number till April 22. Large numbers were also seen arriving at Masstown, Col. Co., by Leslie Blackburn. A few geese tarried at Port LeHebert until May 10, and Burrows heard them at Lusby Marsh as late as May 20. A pair at Middle Musquodoboit reported by Mabel Smythe were probably breeding birds, descendants of those originally liberated by the Department of Lands and Forests, such pairs having been seen in this same locality by other observers during the past 10 or 12 years.

The first spring flock of BRANT reported was 25 seen at Cape Sable by Norman Cunningham. On March 20 there were 350 at Pond Cove, Brier I. The main movement went through during April, although there were still 225 birds at Boot I., Kings Co. as late as May 5 (GRB).

This April saw the largest invasion of the province by SNOW GEESE ever recorded. They showed up at widely separated localities: one at Shubenacadie April 2 (Cohrs), 4 at Round Hill and 2 at Belleisle Marsh, Anna Co., April 4 and 7 (WEW), throughout April at Lusby Marsh where there were up to 6 on the 23rd (CD) and 7, April 23rd at Chebogue Point. Most startling was the report from the Meyerowitzes at St. Esprit who saw about 50 Snow Geese on April 4 and observed them subsequently on a number of occasions during April and May. They reported 300+ on May 2 and as late as May 23 saw 12 birds flying west.

MALLARDS were observed in pairs or as single birds along the South Shore from Martinique Sanctuary to Glenwood, Yar. Co. during April. There were also up to 8 at APBS during April and May. Roy Blackburn reports nesting BLACK DUCKS at Sydney Forks April 29, and an adult with a brood of 9 was seen by birders on the Hants Co. Field Trip May 27. Largest spring concentration was 1000-1500 between March 27 and April 15 at APBS and Lusby Marsh, observed by CD.

A few GADWALLS - up to 5, were seen by R.T. Burrows and Con Desplanque at APBS on five occasions between May 4 and April 20.

The only PINTAIL report of note is from Con Desplanque who observed 50 at APBS April 9, 300 there and at nearby Lusby Marsh April 13 and 200 May 8 at the former place.

On May 7 R.T. Burrows observed a male EUROPEAN WIGEON at Lusby accompanied by a bird which could well have been a female of the same species as "it had no white in the wing".

High count for the AMERICAN WIGEON goes as usual to APBS where there were 30 April 9 and 50 April 15 (CD). The only other reports for this species are of 1 or 2 birds at Martinique, Three Fathom Harbour and Canard.

The earliest GREEN-WINGED TEAL records are of 7 seen at Sheffield Mills, Kings Co. March 28 by Barry Sabeau, and 3 at Pubnico March 29 reported by E.E. Murphy. At Lusby 20 showed up April 9 and increased to 500 by April 23 (CD). There was also a BLUE-WINGED TEAL at Sheffield Mills March 28 (BCS) and a pair at Three Fathom Harbour April 8. These are the only recorded observations of this species except for the APBS-Lusby population which appeared there April 15 (10 birds) and peaked to 100 April 23 (CD&RTB).

At APBS-Lusby where anything can happen there were 20 SHOVELERS on May 8. Two days before, on the 6th there was a mere 10! The first sighting incidentally was a single bird of this species on April 9 (CD). A male at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. April 15 reported by Eric Mills was the only other Shoveler record.

WOOD DUCKS regaled the eyes of only three observers this spring: Nellie Snyder saw hers - a "lifer" for her - at Crousetown April 11; Ethel Crathorne reports one at Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth April 23-May 14, and R.T. Burrows flushed a female from wet woods at Amherst Point May 20.

Con Desplanque and Roland Chiasson report on the APBS REDHEADS: 4, April 30, and up to three pairs by May 22. April 8-10 seems to have been the arrival period for RING-NECKED DUCKS this year. Eric Cooke saw the first on the 8th of April at Seaforth, while Sylvia Fullerton had one, Con Desplanque 4, both sightings on the 9th of April and Barry Sabeau had one at Canard on the 10th. Roger Burrows reports the greatest concentration - 132 at APBS May 4.

The late winter congregation of about 1000 GREATER SCAUP at Salt Bay (Lr. Eel Brook, Yar. Co.) had dwindled to about half its size by April 4, and to 1/3 by the 15th. The last two birds were seen there April 23. They lingered a little later at APBS where Burrows saw a pair May 12. The only report on LESSER SCAUP is also from Burrows who saw a pair at Amherst Point several times May 5-20, and 5, as late as May 22.

Last reports of COMMON GOLDENEYE are mostly around mid-April (Cohrs, HH, RBF, SM) although one was still at APBS May 16 (CD). Roger Burrows' last spring record (and the only record) received for this species is of three BARROW'S GOLDENEYES at Louisbourg, March 26.

There were still 40 BUFFLEHEADS at Port Joli April 12 (RMT) and a lone bird at APBS May 5 (RTB). OLDSQUAWS must have headed north early as we have only two April sightings: 5, at St. Esprit April 2 (SM) and 25 at Allendale, Shel. Co. April 13 (RMT). HARLEQUINS stayed later; there were still 2, at Cherry Hill April 22 (SJF), and a single male at Jones Harbour May 18 (RMT).

The first COMMON EIDERS appeared March 12 at Lower Economy where there is now a population of about 100 (FH). The stable population at Cape Sable is about 50 and at Seal I. in the neighborhood of 700 (BJS & Cohrs). There were still plenty of SCOTERS in the area up to the end of May. Frank Hennessey reports that the WHITE-WINGED showed up first on March 23, and by May 27 all three species were present. A beautiful raft of 150+ BLACK SCOTERS had been present off Highland Village for at least two weeks before the 27th. Shirley Cohrs estimated about 1500 SURF SCOTERS on Green Bay May 5, a congregation which had practically disappeared by the 7th.

The first HOODED MERGANSERS were noted at Port LeHebert April 4 by Robert Turner. Several pairs were seen by Peter Hope in the Keji region where they have been known to breed. A female at Argyle River is the only other report (CRKA). The wintering flocks of COMMON MERGANSERS had begun to dwindle and break up by the middle of April and by now no doubt they are sorted out into pairs far up the headwaters. The only sizable numbers reported in early spring were 50-70, March 29 at Pubnico (EEM), 26, Pictou Harbour March 28 (EH), 25-30, at Eel Lake April 1 (CRKA) and 20, April 19 at Forchu, C.B. (HH). RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS remained near tide-water somewhat longer than the above species. There were about 60 actively displaying at Eel Brook April 1 (CRKA) and over 60 at Lawrencetown Lake April 30, with another 40+ at Cole Harbour the same day (Cohrs). There were still 24 at Cranberry Head April 23 and 12 at Salt Bay, May 7; while at Lusby Marsh Con Desplanque reports 100 on May 8.

CRKA Ed.

VULTURE, DIURNAL RAPTORS

The season's only TURKEY VULTURE was one on the Tantramar Marshes on May 16 (RB, no data given).

Only 2 GOSHAWKS were reported: at Round Hill on April 18 (WEW) and near Halifax on May 29 (BD et al). An overwintered SHARP-SHINNED HAWK made one last "cast" at PRD's feeder on April 23. One wishes that they would attend more to Starlings, like the one seen clutched by a Sharpshin in Dartmouth on April 26 (CBE). There were 8 other scattered records of individuals. That they were still moving when so surely, had begun nesting, is shown by a bird seen by the NSBS party on Sable I. on June 3. More exciting was an apparent adult COOPER'S HAWK. These are tricky birds, and most of our supposed records, I'll wager, were really large female sharpshins. However, in Boularderie Roberta Fraser observed close at hand an adult that had been stunned by a collision with a window, and noted the rounded tail (when closed) and blackish cap, two important field marks.

There were 8 reports of RED-TAILED HAWKS, slightly down from last year, but perhaps some observers failed to report theirs. The earliest BROAD-WINGED HAWK was seen on April 17 in Yarmouth Co. (CRKA) and 3 others were reported from late April and early May. Only 3 ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were reported this spring, the last near Nappan on May 12 (RB).

One does not know what to do with the usual flurry of records of BALD EAGLES (total of 17 ad., 6 imm. and ?? reported). Hopefully the marking program by the Department of Lands and Forests (see last issue of Newsletter) will give us a better picture.

The earliest, evidently migrant MARSH HAWK was at Lusby Marsh on April 4 (CD); 5 others were seen in scattered localities by mid-April and another dozen subsequently. The picture is about the same as last year's.

Our first OSPREY returned by April 10 to Wynacht's Point (D&LG), another was seen at Middle LaHave (where three nest on power poles, according to Olive Ritcey) on April 11, and we have 7 reports from the South and Eastern Shores between April 13 and 15. They appeared later on the Strait and in Cape Breton, where first reports were on April 20, 21 and 30. However, numbers of later dates were submitted as local first records. Perhaps individual Ospreys have quite precise routes and schedules. Suggestive of this is the appearance of a bird (the same?) on Sable I. on May 31 this year and on the same date in

the two previous years. It would be of interest to have records from people who can observe accurately the dates of returns to particular nest sites throughout the province. Among several notes on Osprey behaviour, perhaps the most interesting came from Peter Hope and Dave Harris. They saw one diving at limbs on a dead tree. One limb thus detached proved too heavy to carry. The bird then "attacked" a second limb, which did not break, and the bird rebounded startlingly.

We have 3 reports of PEREGRINE FALCONS: at Petite Riviere on April 15 (JS&JLC), on Sable I. on May 4 and 5 (HR), and on Seal I. on May 23 (NSBS party). The Sable bird may have been the one seen at times during winter by AR. Following a good number of winter reports, we hear of only 1 MERLIN in April and 3 in May, the latter certainly migrants. KESTRELS were as usual well reported. A bird of March 20 on Sable I. must have been an early migrant, but a remarkable 11 first sightings (19 individuals) on April 14-16 in various parts of the province imply some sort of peak of movement. Two of these birds were at a nestbox at Wilmot, the female sitting by mid-May (TH).

GROUSE AND PHEASANT

Our only reports of SPRUCE GROUSE were of a bird at Green Bay on April 15, the "first for years" seen there by the Cohrs, and a pair at Greenfield on May 9 (BLF). Some of our observers report RUFFED GROUSE as "common" and "as usual". A nest with 10 eggs was reported from APBS on May 10 (RB).

RING-NECKED PHEASANT were reported in the usual places (most mentioned in the last issue,) but one crowing male strutted through backyards in the south end of Halifax in late March and early April. This was cocky, since it is said that some residents in that part of town routinely eat pheasant-under-glass.



SORA, COOT

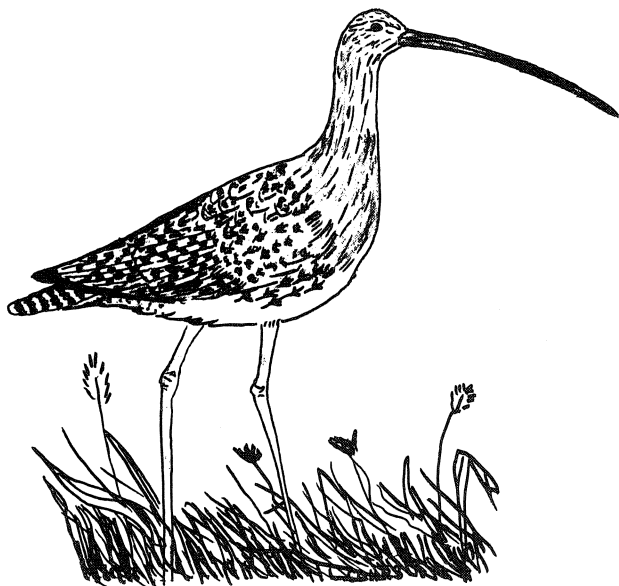
An early SORA was found dead on April 8 at Cape Sable by Beverly Smith, and one appeared at their nesting grounds in the APBS on May 13 (CD). Two AMERICAN COOTS were first seen at APBS on April 9 (CD) and only 1 or 2 were seen subsequently, a marked drop from last year.

SHOREBIRDS

Of the 31 species that have occurred at least once in spring migration during the past several years 23 were noted this spring, a somewhat better than average showing. None was found in large numbers and it would have been rather an uneventful migration but for the appearance, described below, of a species new to the list, one surely to be a candidate for bird of the year.

For the second year in a row the only mainland report of the SEMIPALMATED PLOVER comes from Matthews Lake, where one was seen May 13(GP). PIPING PLOVERS arrived rather early, with two at Conrad's Beach April 1 (EC). The only other reports come from Cherry Hill (JS&JC,SF) and Cape Sable (B&SS). KILLDEER, on the other hand, were widely reported, the first from Mt. Denson, Hants Co., on March 29 (BS) and at Louisbourg April 1(RB). Notwithstanding so early a Cape Breton report subsequent April and May reports are all from considerably further west. BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS were first noted in mid-April which is normal, 1-2 at Cherry Hill April 16 (S&LC,SF), but not until the third week in May were they present in quantity, 200+ at Cape Sable (SS), 81 at Chezzetcook (EC) May 23. The last were 6 at Economy May 28 (FS).

The WOODCOCK was very lightly reported, the first from Turtle Lake March 27 (T&NB) and Economy March 31 (FH). It had reached Glace Bay by April 15 (SM) and in Yarmouth Co. had reared almost fully feathered young by May 24 (JP). The COMMON SNIPE arrived well behind schedule. First noted at Paradise April 8 (J&BM), it was in Pictou Co. by April 26 (ECra) and "two weeks late" at Round Hill by the 30th (WEW). May reports from Cumberland Co. (RB), Colchester Co. (FS) and Yarmouth Co. (CRKA, MWH) round out the somewhat localized data.



EURASIAN CURLEW

For those of you who like to keep your checklist up to date it will be necessary to add the EURASIAN CURLEW to the hypothetical list. Shirley and Lisé Cohrs, at Cherry Hill on May 6, describe a curlew fully a third larger than a nearby Willet, with a bill almost half as long as its body. Its uniform head coloration and white rump,

seen under ideal viewing conditions are among the diagnostic marks noted in the Verification Form for Unusual Records. Perhaps the clincher, its classic two-syllabled call was heard. There are only two confirmed North American records for this species (N.Y., 1853, and Mass. 1977).

A WHIMBREL was also at Cherry Hill May 6 (EM,JC) and together with an earlier one at Cape Sable April 30 (SS) completes the curlew report for this spring.

There were two reports of the UPLAND SANDPIPER, both from Seal I., May 14 (J&SC) and May 19 (EM). Cape Sable saw the first reported SPOTTED SANDPIPER April 30 (SS); by May 13 it had reached Joggins, near Amherst (CD), and Glace Bay by the 24th (SM). More SOLITARY SANDPIPERS (8-9) were seen this spring than in the previous seven put together (3); all are May dates, from Amherst Point (RB), Cape Sable (SS), Seal I. 5-6 birds at mid-month (J&SC), and Sheffield Mills, Kings Co. (BS,JP).

A very early WILLET was at Broad Cove April 16 (SF). From the 21st, with two at Pubnico (EZ) reports increased, most from the southwest corner of the province but moving northeastward and becoming well distributed from Crescent Beach and Cherry Hill (J&SC) through Yarmouth Co. (CRKA,PD). Reports from elsewhere in the province are scanty, but they appear ready to spend a second successive summer at Economy, where there were six at month's end (FS).

The first GREATER YELLOWLEGS arrived on schedule at Lawrence-town April 22 (EC) and Cape Sable April 23 (SS) and reached Amherst by the 30th. The last was seen at Economy May 27 (FH).

After a three years' absence of reports (except from Sable I.) the LESSER YELLOWLEGS was seen again this spring at Antigonish, one May 6 and a remarkable six May 7 (RC). On the same day there was one at Crescent Beach (C&SC) and another at Seal I. May 13-14 (J&SC).

A RUDDY TURNSTONE at Louisbourg during the first half of April was presumably one of those noted in the winter report. Two were at Seal I. the third week in May (EM,C's). RED KNOTS, equally scarce in spring, occurred singly in spring plumage at Matthews Lake May 13 (GP) and Seal I. May 13-14 (J&SC). Two were at Chezzetcook May 20 (EC). There are only two reports of the PURPLE SANDPIPER, both from Conrad's Beach, 12 on April 9, 25 on April 30 (EC). A lone PECTORAL SANDPIPER was at Amherst Point May 20-23 (RB), as far east as it strays in spring.

LEAST SANDPIPERS, first seen in the southwest May 13, with ten at Matthews Lake (GP), and three at Seal I. (J&SC) were in the Valley May 15 (BS,JP) and at Amherst May 20 (RB). Ten were still present at Economy May 28 (FS). A single DUNLIN, very uncommon in spring, was at Cherry Hill April 16, still in winter plumage (JC). The SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER is thrice reported, one at Three Fathom Harbour April 30 (C's), a flock of 11 at Matthews Lake May 13 (GP), and 5 at Seal I. May 13-15 (C's). Dates and places for the SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER correspond exactly with those of the Least (which they outnumbered 2 or 3 to 1) except that none was seen in the Valley.

The only SANDERLINGS were two at Conrad's Beach April 1 (EC).

Not a single RED or NORTHERN PHALAROPE, occasionally seen in their thousands in spring, was noted this year. On the other hand, the even less reliable WILSON'S PHALAROPE put in an appearance, far off course, at Granville Centre, Anna. Co., where a female was seen in a farm pond on May 15 (JF,GW).

JAEGERS, GULLS, TERNS, AUKS

The first jaeger sightings were the two POMARINES which Eric Mills saw c. 180 miles SE of Halifax on April 26. The first Pomarine at Sable I. was on May 7, and the first PARASITIC was on May 20; later in the month there were 3 Pomarines and 17 Parasitics (IAM). A light-phase Pomarine was seen off Pearl I. on May 19 (Richard Elliott), and there were 2 Pomarines off Cape Breton (the actual cape, not the whole Island) on June 7 (S.R. Claydon). A probable LONG-TAILED JAEGER was seen from the Wood Island-Caribou ferry in Northumberland Strait on May 19 (John A. Wright).

Our most unusual gull sighting was the IVORY GULL which Wicker-son Lent saw at the Digby ferry terminal on April 15 (through Eric Mills). It had gone the next day, but had probably been around for several days previously. But, almost rivalling this, was the Sabine's Gull on Sable I. on May 26, and the LAUGHING GULL (along with a BLACK-HEADED GULL) there on May 30 (Harold Ross, Ian McLaren). 9 Black-headed Gulls were seen in the Glace Bay area on March 25 and by April 9 they had become vocal, according to Sara MacLean, who comments on their "ugly little voices". (I agree - it's even worse when you're in a colony of 10,000 of them.) There were 7 on April 15 at Louisbourg, but they had all gone (to Newfoundland to breed?) by May 9. The only mainland sightings are of single birds at Martinique and Conrad's Beaches - both adults - on April 1 (Eric Mills, Ian McLaren). On April 15 there were 9 BONAPARTE'S GULLS at Louisbourg and 25 at Framboise (RBL); at the opposite end of the province there was a bird at Eel River on May 3 and another at Lower West Pubnico on May 19 (CRKA, Jean Guy d'Entremont). Our only RING-BILLED GULL reports are of a single bird on Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, 5 at Martinique Beach and several around Lawrencetown on April 1 (Eric Mills, Ian McLaren), and 10 at Lusby on April 15 (Con Desplanque).

As Eric Mills puts it, our LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL was "napped at home in Digby" on April 14-16. Of the other large gulls, the Smiths report that a flock of 2000, mostly HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKS but including 6 ICELANDS and a GLAUCOUS, were feeding on "large red worms" on the flats on Cape Sable on April 8. Herring Gulls, Great Blackbacks, BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES and also terns were similarly feeding inshore off Sable I., in unusually large numbers, in late May on surface swarms of the amphipod shrimp Parathemisto gaudichaudi (IAM). The 40-odd Iceland Gulls at Sable I. in early May had dwindled to one or two in early June. There were 12 Iceland and a Glaucous in Halifax Harbour on April 25, and a lone Iceland well out to sea, c. 180 miles SE of Halifax, on April 26 (Eric Mills). The Iceland in Sydney harbour left around May 21 (Sara MacLean).

Kittiwakes may have been feeding on amphipods or something similar off Cape Sable; the Smiths saw a flock of 200+ "catching something small and reddish in waters close to shore" on April 5. Eric Mills found them rather sparse out at sea on April 24-28 - he only saw them in the fairly warm waters SW of Western Bank, about 100 miles SE of Halifax. Raymond S. d'Entremont saw 5-6 on George's Bank April 3-10, but the only other records are of 3 Kittiwakes off Glace Bay on March 25 (Sara MacLean) and a bird off Clark's Harbour on May 21 (Cohrs).

The first terns were seen on Sable I. on May 4, and COMMONS and ARCTICS were both identified there later; the first ROSEATE was seen on May 12, and the first Common to lay an egg did so on May 22 (IAM). But the first unidentified tern record was a bird west of Seal I. on April 21 (Robert J. d'Eon), and there were 50 over Soldier's Ledge, south of Yarmouth, on May 2 (Israel D. Pothier). There were about 40 Arctics on Pearl I. on May 18-19 (Tony Lock). Steve Claydon saw six adult and two subadult Roseates, along with a BLACK TERN, off Baleine Cove, C.B., on June 8. Single Black Terns were also seen at

Amherst Point on May 22 and Canard the next day (Roger Burrows, Barry C. Sabean). Finally, the Cohrs saw a CASPIAN TERN on the way back from Seal I. on May 21.

On May 18-19 there were about 5 PUFFINS, a RAZORBILL and some 230 BLACK GUILLEMOTS on Pearl I.; the Guillemots had not yet started to lay (Tony Lock). The Cohrs saw and heard 120+ Black Guillemots calling close inshore to Seal I. on May 14, and even more the next day. The Smiths saw an odd couple of them at Cape Sable on March 31 - one in summer and one in winter plumage. On April 24-28 Eric Mills noted that DOVEKIES and THICK-BILLED MURRES began to appear about 60 miles SE of Halifax on the northern edge of Emerald Bank; there were large numbers there, and also on Western Bank, c. 100 miles SE of Halifax.

RGBB Ed.

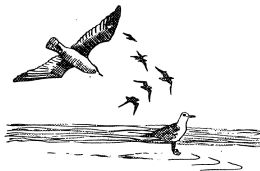
DOVE, CUCKOO, OWLS

As discussed in the last Newsletter, MOURNING DOVES are wintering in Nova Scotia in increasing numbers, but tend to disappear before spring. Thelma Hawkins writes that they fed a large flock at Wilmot during the worst of winter and that, true to form, the birds gradually thinned out. However, this year she observed much billing and cooing, and everything that follows, becoming very noticeable by late March. Two pairs continued to come to her feeder as pairs into May. So perhaps some birds that abandon our feeders in late winter have something other than food in mind. Other doves appeared during April in areas where they had not wintered. How many of these had wintered elsewhere in the province? A bird at Wedgeport on March 31 (IJP) had most likely made a landfall from the south.

Our only YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was photographed by Howard Ross on Sable I. on May 23, and our only BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO was seen on Seal I. on May 23 (NSBS party). Have none of the latter turned up in their nesting grounds?

Bernard Forsythe reports on the nesting sequence of a pair of GREAT HORNED OWLS at Greenfield, Kings Co. They were first calling at the nest site on January 15, produced an egg on February 28, and continued to incubate a single egg on March 12. He says that this is the first nest of the species in that area for years. Thelma Hawkins at Wilmot found adults tending a large, downy young off the nest on May 29. Our only other report is by the Cohrs, who used a tape to strike up a "three-way conversation" with 2 owls in the deep woods back of Green Bay on April 15.

Only one BARRED OWL was reported, but surely more must have been heard by country residents and visitors. SHORT-EARED OWLS on April 8 and 11 at Lusby Marsh (CD) and at Cape Sable on April 15 (Smiths) were doubtless migrants. Peter Hope heard the first singing SAW-WHET OWL in Keji on March 29, and we have no other reports.



NIGHTHAWK, HUMMINGBIRD, KINGFISHER

Eric Cooke's sighting of a seemingly weakish COMMON NIGHTHAWK at Lawrencetown on April 22 appears to be an all time provincial early record; a bird recorded as "heard" on April 20, 1976 (Newsletter, July 1976) was almost certainly a Woodcock. Three other reports were normal, from May 20 to 28. The first CHIMNEY SWIFTS were 2 at Sherbrooke Lake, Lunenburg Co., on May 12 (Peter Austin-Smith), but the median date of arrival for 7 other localities was May 18. The largest group reported was 8-10 at Yarmouth on May 16 (MWH), and they were seen only in ones and twos by PRD en route from Yarmouth to Halifax on May 30.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS showed a tight pattern of first arrivals throughout the province. The first was at Tusket on May 15 (CRKA) and the median for all 12 reports of first sightings was May 22. A male was "2 weeks earlier than last year" at St. Esprit, C.B. Rainer Meyerowitz caught and released this bird from his barn on May 23; oddly, another (or the same?) bird was found in the same fix last year.

KINGFISHERS at Wynacht's Point on March 28 and at Brooklyn on March 31 may have wintered locally, but birds arriving in "mid-April" at Louisbourg (RB), on April 14 at St. Margaret's Bay (ELM) and on April 15 on Sable I. (AAR) suggest that a broad "wave" of migrants entered the province then. This was followed by a second "wave" of 5 first arrivals between April 20 and 23. Phyllis Dobson was "almost attacked" by a presumably nesting pair on May 13 at Argyle Head. Two opinions on relative numbers, "down a bit" (R. Chiasson) and "more common" (Karl Tay) cancel one another; we could use more such opinions,

WOODPECKERS

COMMON FLICKERS on March 22 at Crescent Beach (Cohrs) and March 30 at Crousetown (NS) might have wintered in the province, but one at Lower Wedgeport on April 7 (IJP) had probably made a landfall there. Reports from Louisbourg (RB) and Pictou (EH) for April 9 suggest that the province was rapidly occupied by first arrivals. After mid-April, reports are numerous.

Our only reports of PILEATED WOODPECKERS were "a couple of May roadside sightings" near Economy (PS).

The first YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER on April 26 at Lower West Pubnico (DJD'E) was followed next day by a bird at Elgin, Pictou Co. (E. Crathorne). There were only 3 subsequent reports, which seems odd. We have only 2 spring reports of HAIRY WOODPECKERS. They seem pretty thin spread after the feeder season.

DOWNY WOODPECKERS were widely reported, often in pairs.

Our only BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS were a pair on May 5 along the Mooseland Road, Halifax County, reported by Karl Tay.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS

The earliest EASTERN KINGBIRD report is from Seal I. where there were four on May 13. Numbers there rose to 6 on May 14, dropped to 2 by 18th and rose to a second peak on 20-22nd when there were six (Cohrs). Elsewhere they were beginning to be noticed from May 20 (Digby Neck) onwards. Seen at Pubnico on 21st and Caledonia and APBS on 22nd they were fairly common in ones and twos thereafter (ELM, BS, PH, ELM).

A GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER stopped briefly on Seal I. May 13, and one was heard at Turtle Lake on 25th (C's, T&NB).

The first EASTERN PHOEBE, our earliest appearing flycatcher was not (for a change) on an offshore island but near Dorothea Drive in Dartmouth on April 30 (JC&JSC). Other Phoebes reported (all single birds) were as follows: May 11 Keji, May 14 Seal I., May 17 Paradise, May 22 Greenfield, May 25 Argyle Head (PH, Cohrs, J&BM, BLF, PRD).

Apart from a small flycatcher (sp) seen at Cape Sable on May 6 the three species of Empidonax flycatchers began to arrive at the end of the second week of May. The only two YELLOW-BELLIED reports are from widely separated spots - Seal I. May 15 and APBS May 20 (Cohrs, RC).

ALDER FLYCATCHERS were more heavily reported with one each at Sherbrooke Lake, Lunenburg Co., and Seal I. on May 13-16, respectively. By May 21 Thelma Hawkins heard them at Wilmot and they had come to Wolfville Ridge by 27th (BLF). From then on they were well established, especially in Yarmouth Co. The first LEAST FLYCATCHER occurred at Wilmot on May 14 and the early Yarmouth Co. bird was seen on 16th at Sand Point Road (PRD). Two appeared at Black River on 19th and by 24th they were "in" in their usual habitats.

May 19 was the arrival date of the first EASTERN WOOD PEWEE (Seal I.) and CRK Allen at Tusket saw the first mainland bird on 26th. On 24th one was at Pictou, one at Economy on 29th and by 30th they were "widely distributed" in Yarmouth Co. (EH, FS, PRD). There are five reports of OLIVESIDED FLYCATCHERS as follows: (each of a single bird) May 23 Seal I., 24th Argyle Head, 26th Black River, 27th NSBS f.t. and 28 Turtle Lake.

Lingering HORNED LARKS occurred at the John Lusby Marsh on April 8 (1) and 15th (2) seen by Con Desplanque.

As usual there were many TREE SWALLOW reports. Being the first of the swallows to arrive they are eagerly and anxiously awaited - thirty-four correspondents reported on Tree Swallows from all corners of the province. The earliest date was March 26 at Wilmot (Merrill Prime), after which there is an hiatus until April 14 when Eric Mills counted 50 on Long Island (Digby Neck). The following day a flock of 100 was at Barrington Passage. Four other waves were noted - a flock of 100 at Kentville April 24, 100+ outside Yarmouth town May 1, 170 on Seal I. May 13 & 14, dropping to none on 16th and increasing to 35+ on 20th (PAS, JP, JLC&JSC). Other first arrival dates in their areas are April 15 at W. Middle Sable, Pubnico and Lawrencetown (RMT, Dj'd'E, EHC), 16th at Argyle River and 17th at Cape Sable and Crousetown (CRKA, BJS, NS). From then on they were plentiful, investigating nest boxes, rejecting or showing interest. Marion Brown in West Springhill had 4 pairs nesting in houses by May 7.

BANK SWALLOWS must sneak in quietly, they are always here but never well reported. From May 13 to 22nd the population on Seal I. fluctuated widely from 6 on 13th to 14 on 15th, none on 16th, and 40+ by 22nd. There were 5 at Cape Sable on 14th and Francis Spalding at Economy writes of a "main wave" passing through on that day.

Arrival date in the Amherst area was May 18 and by 23rd they were at Paradise (RB,J&BM). First birds in Yarmouth Co. were seen by Marion Hilton May 30.

Whether there was more than one ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW on Seal I. this spring is a matter for conjecture. A Rough wing was seen there by different parties on May 15, 19 and 21st.

BARN SWALLOWS came in by way of Cape Sable (1 April 22, 2 on 27) and spread eastwards along the south and Fundy Shores. A pair reached Economy on 29th April and on the same date they reached Broad Cove (FS,SJF). PRD saw the first in Yarmouth Co. on May 2 and on 3rd she encountered several groups of 5-10 around the area. By May 7 they were seen at APBS and St. Esprit. The only evidence of any large migration was on May 13-14 when 150 were seen on Seal I. and 150 mixed swallows, mostly Barn, were on Cape Sable.

Reports of CLIFF SWALLOWS are fewer than usual. Four were at Upper Nappan and 3 at Cape Sable May 11. The Cape Sable flock grew to 8 the next day (Locke Smith). On May 20 there were six newly arrived on Seal I., 3 at Argyle Head on 25th and 6 around Yarmouth Co. May 30. (CRKA,MWH,PRD).

Betty-June Smith writes that no PURPLE MARTINS have been seen at Cape Sable this spring, but that one bird had been seen around The Hawk in late April. The Cohrs photographed a female martin at West Dublin, Lun. Co., on April 15. Most unusual in that area, it stayed around all day flycatching from the power lines. There were 10 martins at Upper Nappan May 12-20 and the van of the Amherst birds arrived there May 10 (RB,CD). On Seal I. there was one May 22, joined by 2 more on 23 (various NSBS).

CORVIDS THROUGH WRENS

GREY JAYS, seldom seen in spring when they depart to deep woods to nest were reported only from Yarmouth Co. with latest bird noted May 30. BLUE JAYS, also expected to leave feeding stations for nesting territories, did stay around irregularly at many places where the eating was good. The only evidence of any kind of movement came from Seal I. where numbers went from none to 6 between May 13-22nd.

150+ COMMON CROWS were counted by NSBS members in Cape Breton near Sydney March 25. During May two nests were noted there with sitting birds (HH). Nesting crows were noted also at Tusket (CRKA).

PRD writes that COMMON RAVENS are very abundant in her (Yarmouth Co.) area this spring: "Hundreds over the Abram's River Dump - form a great revolving chimney when the wind is right which lasts a whole day sometimes".

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, regular at feeders in April and early May began to leave mid-May. A few stayed around but the spring "Fee-bee" call was heard mostly along woods roads. There was an unusual sighting of 7 Blackcaps on Seal I. May 13 - they are almost never seen there. BOREAL CHICKADEES were reported lightly in ones and twos except from APBS where Con Desplanque found a regular 20+ up to press time (May 31). It is exciting to see that the come-back of the WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH last fall and winter (January issue, p. 16) continues. At least 13 were seen in this reporting period, a great improvement over this time last year when there were only two.

A migration of RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES took place on Seal I. in late May. There was 1 May 20, 4 on 21st and 20+ on 22nd (JLC,ELM).

Five BROWN CREEPERS were noticed: March 25 at Sydney, March 29 and 30 at Pictou, April 13 at Cape Sable, April 16 at Cape Forchu and May 20 (this one was singing!) at Seal I.

In the next issue of the Newsletter it will be seen whether or not the WINTER WREN population has recovered from the winter kill of 1976-77 which made their song so hard to find last summer. Up to now, the picture is encouraging, with reports from four counties. An early wren was heard by Frank Hennessey at Economy on April 22. Other first in area dates are May 4 at Lower W. Pubnico, May 11th Marshland, May 13 at Mooseland, and May 22 at Three Fathom Harbour (RSD'E,MWH,BCS,ECr4). A small wave went through Seal I. between May 13-21st: one May 13, 3 on 14th, 7 on 15th, up to 10 on 21st (Cohrs).

MIMIDS

The Tay MOCKINGBIRD (See May issue, p.72) stayed around until April 10, began to sing and then left. In another part of Dartmouth another mocker was about until the end of the month and then left. Marion Hilton's overwintering bird left after April 13. Where do they go? Over the past few years the number of mockingbird reports have increased and the behavior of the individual birds is similar - they stay in one area from fall to spring, disappear and then re-appear the following fall. Possibly they nest somewhere in the province, most likely away from populated areas. A nest was documented last summer in Tusket and the winter resident bird is again in the nesting area - awaiting a mate? Reports of mockingbirds came also from Brooklyn and Lawrencetown.

From the evidence received it would seem that the GREY CATBIRD arrived in the period from May 14 (Tusket) to 25th (Lower Economy) (CRKA, FH). Other sightings were: May 16 Glenwood, Yar. Co.; May 17 West Pubnico, May 20 Cape Sable and Seal I. (10 there), May 21st Paradise, May 22 APBS and May 24 Wilmot.

A single BROWN THRASHER skulked through the detritus behind the church on Seal I. on May 20 (Cohrs).

THRUSHES

AMERICAN ROBIN. "The Robin's Return" was well documented, as usual. There were dozens of reports, the sweepstakes being won by Jean and Bill Morse in Paradise who saw a bright spring male March 23. Other early Robins appeared March 24 (1) at Bel Brook, 25th (2) The Hawk, 26th (4) Woodville, Kings Co., 28th (2) Caledonia and 30th (1 each) at Brookside, Yarmouth Co. and West Springhill. First evidence of large numbers was at Lower Economy on March 24-28 when Frank Hennessey noted "hundreds". Next movement noticed was at Tusket March 30 - April 1 when CRK Allen saw a "good flight" going through. On the same date 50+ had arrived at Grand River, C.B. (George McKay) and by April 8 they were "common" at St. Esprit. These latter Cape Breton birds could well be from part of the first wave via Economy, but this flock was not seen anywhere else and must have skipped the Valley area altogether. On April 4th the Tays in Dartmouth witnessed a small wave of about 12 birds and on 10th Chris Elson saw "large flocks, some of the darker race" there. PRD noticed three small waves in Yarmouth Co. (after the initial one of March 30) on April 4, 11th, and 14th, while in Halifax Co. Eric Mills noted migrants passing over Schooner Cove, St. Margaret's Bay, on April 7 followed by a "massive arrival on 18th". Arrival date in Pictou was April 12 and in Amherst April 18 (EH, CD). Thereafter they appeared "common", "numerous" and "more than last year".

A very early HERMIT THRUSH sang at Port Joli April 8, heard by George Perry. On April 20 the early Cape Breton bird appeared in the Mira area. On 21st there were thrushes in the Wolfville Ridge and at Turtle Lake (BLF,T&NB). However, the main arrival dates fall between May 3 and 16th. No large numbers were encountered, the most being 3 in Central Yarmouth Co. May 4th(MAN). Other dates (single birds) are: May 3 Upper Nappan, 4th N. Alton, Kings Co.; 5th near Pubnico, 7th Glenwood and Dartmouth, 10th Wilmot, 13th Paradise and 14th Sydney Forks. (RB,PA-S,RSd'E,PRD,JP,TH,B&JM,RB).

Ethel Crathorne heard the first SWAINSON'S THRUSH on May 7 at Laurie Park, Hfx. Co. No more were reported until May 17 (Newtonville, Kings Co.) and May 22 (APBS)(BLF&RC). On May 29-30 "several" were reported around the Yarmouth area (fide PRD).

The latter half of May brought the VEERY - to Mooseland May 13, Wolfville 15th, Dartmouth 19th, Seal I. 20-22nd, Tusket 21 and the usual haunts thereafter (BCS,BLF,CBE,CRKA).

A female EASTERN BLUEBIRD was reported at Cherry Hill April 9 (SJF&BH).

KINGLET THROUGH SHRIKE.

It was pleasing to hear the RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET in the spring woods this year after the 1977 decimations. Kinglets were well reported with the first heard April 21 at Turtle Lake. Cape Sable had one on 24th and "many" were together near the shore at Economy May 1st. On May 2 the first songs were heard in Yarmouth Co. and by 6th there were Kinglets at Antigonish Harbour (RC). Halifax County early kinglets were at Laurie Park May 7; on 8th they were reported from APBS and on 12th from Pictou (EC,RB,EH). PRD feels that although there are twice as many as last year numbers are still below normal. Perhaps this is to be expected during the recovery period.

WATER PIPITS were thin on the ground this spring - there were only 4, possibly 5. They were: one, May 8 APBS, one May 11 Boularderie, one May 6 Cherry Hill, one May 15 Seal I., and 1 May 22 Seal I.(same one?)(CD,ELM,Cohrs).

The BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS, our winter waxwings, were late to depart, and were still around in late April. A large flock of 65+ was at Glace Bay March 27 (SMacL); a flock of 30+ in Halifax City April 3 and 6 (SJF), a flock (no number given) in Halifax Co. April 12 (fide FWD), 40-50 at Kentville April 14, 40 at Glace Bay May 16-19, and 24 at Sydney April 25.

The summer waxwings, the CEDAR WAXWINGS, were seen only once up to press time - 10 in Amherst town April 10 (CD).

Three NORTHERN SHRIKES were seen, all in early April, on 3rd, 4th and 8th, at Kentville, Upper Tantallon, Hfx Co., and Port Hebert (BCS,ELM,RT).

Chris Cohrs writes of a LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE on May 6 at Green Bay when he noted the difference in size and the shape of the facial mask.

JSC Ed.

VIREOS AND WARBLERS

Province-wide reports brought in only two VIREOS this spring, the SOLITARY and the RED-EYED. The Solitary was first heard on May 10 at Keji Park, by Peter Hope; the Red-eyed May 12 at Lr. W. Pubnico by Raymond d'Entremont; but until May 30 most vireos heard were still Solitaries. Like so many of our birds this spring the Red-eyed (the more abundant species) was slower than usual getting up strength.

Identification of WARBLERS this year presented a challenge. The trees leaved out rather early and the bulk of the warblers arrived rather late. By May 30 they could be heard in good numbers but not seen, and aberrant songsters necessitated some very active "birding".

The two April arrivals, the PALM and the YELLOW-RUMPED (Myrtle) were all right - although most records were in May they were relatively early in the month - (Yellowrumps were "singing all over" by May 14,) (PRD). The first PALM was noted on Cape Sable April 17 by Sid Smith; the first YELLOW-RUMPED at Crescent Beach April 9 by Sylvia Fullerton; and both of these warblers appear to be present in usual numbers.

We had twenty-three warbler species reported this spring, our twenty-two breeders and one exotic; 2 ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS found on Seal I. May 21 by Barbara Hinds, Eric Cooke and Sylvia Fullerton.

Following are the first arrival dates of our native May warblers: BLACK-AND-WHITE May 6 at Dartmouth by Christopher Elson; TENNESSEE May 22 at Amherst Point by Roger Burrows; NASHVILLE May 7 at Truro by Ella Roland; PARULA May 10 at Keji by Peter Hope; YELLOW (2) at Markland by Marion Hilton; MAGNOLIA May 14 at Wolfville Ridge by Bernard Forsythe; CAPE MAY May 10 at Paradise by Jean and Bill Morse; BLACK-THROATED BLUE May 14 at Wolfville Ridge by Bernard Forsythe; BLACK-THROATED GREEN May 12 at Eel Brook by Phyllis Dobson; BLACKBURNIAN May 14 Wolfville Ridge (2) by Bernard Forsythe; CHESTNUT-SIDED May 14 at Paradise by Jean and Bill Morse; BAY-BREASTED May 13 at Seal I. by J. & S. Cohrs; BLACKPOLL May 14 at Bana Head, C.B. by Dusty and Willard Digout; OVEN-BIRD May 12 at Wilmot by Thelma Hawkins; NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH May 22 at Amherst Point by Roger Burrows; MOURNING May 28 at Wolfville Ridge by Bernard Forsythe; COMMON YELLOWTHROAT May 12 at Cape Sable by Sid Smith; WILSON'S May 20 at Brier I. by Barry Sabeau; CANADA May 14 at Seal I. by J. and S. Cohrs; AMERICAN REDSTART May 5 at Mooseland, by Wendie Tay.

As a matter of curiosity these dates (above) were compared with those given for first arrival in Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia, 2nd. edition, and 4 co-incided exactly, 8 were earlier and 10 were later. These were early or late by a day to two weeks. Reports of warblers were received for almost every day throughout May, but clustered noticeably around the periods May 12-17 and May 20-24. Eric Mills and Shirley Cohrs noted a "large arrival" on Seal I. May 20-21, including 15 species of warbler. Also on May 20 Barry Sabeau at Brier I. saw his first Wilson's Warbler, and at Lower Economy Frank Hennessey noted 4 newly arrived warbler species, 3 more in the next two days. Blackpoll Warblers were noted as abundant at both Lr. Economy and Seal I., also earlier at Bana Head. The most numerous ones on Seal May 20 were Black-and-White (40+), Yellow (30), Magnolia (20+), Yellow-rumped (30+), (still coming in), and the Blackpolls (30+). This abundance reflected on the mainland generally in the next few days, joined lately by the Yellowthroats and Redstarts, and almost from the first, many, many Ovenbirds.

WEAVER FINCHES

Nothing special to note on the HOUSE SPARROW. If you are interested in the House Sparrow (and if you are not when you start you will be before you have finished) - read the article entitled "In Numbers too Great to Count" under "Profiles", page 40 in the New Yorker magazine for May 22, 1978. It is by Eugene Kinhead and is well worth reading on many counts.

BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES

The BOBOLINK arrived in mid-May, seen May 12 on the west side of the province at Mount Denson and Wolfville Ridge (BCS, BLF); May 13 on the east side at Pubnico (EEM) and Cape Sable (Locke Smith), and May 13 centrally at Keji (PH and Dave Harris). Edgar Spalding noted a main wave at Economy May 14. Fifteen other reports following this indicate a good population of Bobolinks, still spreading and well-distributed. Two EASTERN MEADOWLARKS were found, one at Matthew's Lake May 13 (GDP) and one at Brier I. May 20 (BCS).

As usual the REDWINGED BLACKBIRD was among our earliest spring birds, and as usual reversed the more popular route, arriving first at Truro (ER) and Amherst (CD) March 26 and 27. By March 30 they had reached Sydney (HH) and Pubnico (E&VH). There were twenty-eight reports of Redwings, in small flocks at first (3-6) then larger (5-20) in April. They were settled in and singing among the cattails in the swamps by April 16. The Tays of Mooseland wrote of them "common as usual by May".

George Perry saw an early NORTHERN ORIOLE (very dazzling for a "blackbird") May 1 at Lockeport, after which 25 were reported, between May 13-30. These birds were seen and/or heard at Antigonish (RC), Sable River (RMT), West Pubnico (DJD'E& TCD'E), Seal I. (Cohrs and ELM), Yarmouth town and county (MWH, LD, PRD), Brier I. (BCS) and Paradise (J&BM).

Like the Redwing, the RUSTY BLACKBIRD comes early and "in at the top", but unlike the Redwing it is unobtrusive and quiet, and seeks out lonely difficult habitat. Two Rustys slipped in early to appear, one March 30 at Clarence, Anna. Co. (J&BM), one March 31 at Turtle Lake near Keji (T&NB). On April 1, 20+ arrived at Sydney (HH) and during the rest of April half-a-dozen reports indicate wide distribution but possibly smaller than usual numbers, (so noted by the Mooseland Rd. dwellers, Karl and Wendie Tay and Sandra Myers).

A BREWER'S BLACKBIRD, May 14-20, on Seal I. was identified (all details given) by John and Shirley Cohrs. This unusual bird was joined by another of its kind, (both males), May 23-24, noted at that time by BH, EHC, SJF).

The COMMON GRACKLE came in at the same time as the Redwing, March 27, at Amherst. Con Desplanque saw only one on that date, but had 10-20 in the garden during April and May. Eric Holdway at Pictou had 9 on March 29, but 100+ by April 1 - "first migrants, mixed with Redwinged Blackbirds and Cowbirds". A dozen reports from April 7 to April 27 mention flock sizes from 2 to 40 (average 12) and cover the province. They were still coming in (?) by May 18, when 7 were seen on Cape Sable (BJS), and are called "relatively common" May 19-22 at Mooseland Rd.

Starting at the end of March and continuing throughout April the BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD was on the move. A count of one Cowbird in the Desplanque garden at Amherst March 27 had increased to 40-100 during April and May. On March 29 a flock of 25-30 came in at Cape Sable, 17 again on April 13 (SS). Seventeen also arrived at the Holdways' in Pictou on April 1; a "big flock" (20-30) landed at the PRD feeder at Eel Brook April 11, and a flock of 10, April 22, at Milton

noted by Terry Wentzell. Roland Chiasson at Antigonish had 15 on May 3; W. E. Whitehead at Round Hill, 11, on May 17. Sara MacLean received only five Cape Breton reports of Cowbirds March through May, of 1 to 25 birds apiece, but Joyce Purchase at Dartmouth wrote that "Cowbirds seem to be increasing as starlings decrease in our area".

TANAGERS

Four sightings of the SCARLET TANAGER this spring probably means four birds. We had birders in the field consistently throughout the season and a Tanager is visible even in a leafy tree and audible from quite a distance. The first one was reported to Sandra and Rainer Meyerowitz by the teacher of Framboise school, Richard Mueller, on April 16. At the other end of the province, and much later in the season, another, a bright male, was present at Lower West Pubnico from May 19 to 21, seen there by Flavien d'Entremont and many others. On May 22, Eric Mills saw a female Scarlet Tanager on Seal I., and the next day, May 23, a male was seen there by the NSBS party present (BH, EHC, SJF). Another such bird, a SUMMER TANAGER made it to Shelburne Co. this spring, but only just - it killed itself by flying into the side of a house, the home of Mrs. Peter Atkinson, on April 24th. This bird was sent in to the Nova Scotia Museum to confirm the identification, and for a study skin. It was indeed a very beautiful male Summer Tanager.

GROSBEAKS AND FINCHES

It is rumoured that a female Cardinal has been seen in the Valley by several people. We would be most grateful for some firm data on this. The only documented report of CARDINALS comes from Leta Delaney in Port Maitland, where one, a female, spent a week, the last week in May. One morning Leta heard a male Cardinal in full song and discovered two males, one in her garden, the other in a tree nearby. Unfortunately that is as far as the story goes - all three birds left next day. Perhaps six will come back in the fall.

In this group of species, the ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK is our only true native migrant. A very early date of arrival was April 22, when a male was seen at Rockingham, Hfx. Co., reported by the J.R. Jacksons, and on the same day a male was feeding on left over sunflower seed at St. Croix, reported by Margaret Clark. It was a bitterly cold day and the grosbeak stayed around huddled on a tree branch for the next five days - living on the seed - then disappeared, to return on June 3, seen and heard singing in a willow tree in the yard (MAC). Ten other reports, of 12 other Rose-breasteds have come in, dated from May 13 (Pubnico, EEM, E&VH) to May 30 (Carleton, Yar. Co., the Hoges, MWH, PRD). The other birds were at Sandy Bottom Lake (MCC), Seal I., (ELM) and Antigonish town (RDC); seven males and five females.

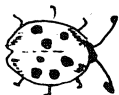
We had a rise in temperature around April 20-22, which may have had something to do with the appearance of two of our more-or-less regular exotics, the BLUE GROSBEAK and the INDIGO BUNTING. We had three of the former reported, the Grosbeak: one for several weeks starting April 22 at Lockeport, said by George Perry and Emmerson Fiske to be very tame - at a feeder. This was the only male. A female came to the Helpards' in Halifax May 3, and stayed at least long enough for the Cohrs family to watch it feeding on the ground with House Sparrows for about a half-an-hour, and confirm the identification. Another female visited at Sandy Bottom Lake all day May 5, feeding with finches, and gave plenty of time for a good study by Granville Nickerson and Margaret Cheesman. It is always a pleasure to watch these birds, they are notably relaxed and confiding. At least 16 INDIGO BUNTINGS were reported, three of them dead unfortunately. All

seem to have been males. There are three Cape Breton records, one of them the earliest in the province, April 20, seen at Donkey by Hedley Hopkins. A second was on May 8 at Glace Bay, by W. MacPherson. Ethelda Murphy found two, one on April 21 in a pasture at Pubnico, the other April 23 out on Frost I. off Argyle Sound, almost certainly a different bird. April 22 Alfred Jones and Terry Wentzell observed an Indigo Bunting at the Jones feeder in Milton; on April 21 and again on the 24th Joyce Purchase had bright male birds feeding with a flock of Juncos at Dartmouth; the Hamiltons saw a bird at Pubnico April 22, possibly the Murphy bird, and another was found dead May 7 at Middle West Pubnico by Douglas D'Eon; Willard Digout found another dead at Stirling, C.B., the last week of April, reported to Sandra Meyerowitz; two males were present at a feeder at Milton Highlands, Yar.Co., May 3-5 at Caroline and Christopher Allworths'. Eric Mullen picked up a dead one in Keji Park May 4; Margaret Nickerson had a bright male at her feeder in Yarmouth May 10; Leta Delaney had one at her feeder May 13-14 at Port Maitland, and the rest were seen at Seal I. May 20-21 by ELM and the Cohrs; and at Lockeport, "several in late April"(George Perry). The female Indigo Bunting is painfully inconspicuous, the male unmistakable, especially among a flock of Juncos. In the sun it is a brighter blue than shown on the Peterson Field Guide plate, whereas the Blue Grosbeak is duller. The latter is of course easily distinguishable by its size, bill shape and rusty wing-bars.

There is no definite date of arrival of the EVENING GROSBEEK last fall, nor of departure this spring - quite a few are still around. In Cape Breton (Glace Bay) Evening Grosbeaks were "invisible all winter, then a few turned up May 9, in breeding condition (green bills), still hanging around on May 26" according to Sara MacLean. At Antigonish Roland Chiasson says a small flock made an appearance May 14, the first since early winter. At Halifax, Chris Helleiner noted 7 (a flock of) flying over the south end of the city May 1 "the first seen here since early in the fall of 1977". At Wilmot, Thelma Hawkins saw two males May 7-8, but grosbeaks had been absent all winter. Most other people who have reported had a few grosbeaks around irregularly during the winter, and all remarked a build-up in April, still in evidence quite late in May, but very few to be seen by now, June 1. At Economy there are still many small flocks about, also at Bass River, May 30. Possibly these are stragglers on their way to New Brunswick (Better they should stay here). In justice it must be noted that in Yarmouth town and county, the Evening Grosbeaks were with us all winter and in fair numbers although the flocks were half the size of last year's.

There was consternation when the PURPLE FINCHES did not arrive as expected in February. There had been a handful about since mid-January, but this year we had to wait until April for our normal population, and then it built up slowly, a few at a time, all over the province, first males, then by May 1 a few females. Reports became daily in May, May 3, 7 Purple Finches, Eel Brook; May 4-6, 7, W. Springhill (MPSB); May 6, 1, Paradise (J&BN); May 7; 1m, 1f Sandy Bottom Lake; May 9, 2m Glace Bay, also May 9 1m Berwick (K&WT); May 13, 1m, Pictou (EH); May 17, 2 Round Hill (WEW); May 19, 1, Bana Head (D&WD), May 21 a pair, Mooseland Road and May 24, one female, Cape Sable. After that reports were of 5-10 birds, mostly females, and large numbers are reported from feeders in Cape Breton, plus a few on the mainland, e.g., "very numerous" at Marriott's Cove, (RDH), 20-25 at Eel Brook, and up to 52 at a feeder in Middle Musquodoboit. Not everyone is happy with this number. Mable B. Smythe has written about this Middle Musquodoboit situation: "Now for the Purple Finches: we have been invaded by them. There were none last Fall nor during the winter, but they came late in March, a battalion, and have stayed,--alas! Not only have they filled the feeders and as many as fifty-two on the ground underneath at one time, but they have stripped my fruit trees of every bud. We have seventeen apple and flowering crab trees, all large and in bearing, -

but not this year. The finches have stuffed themselves on the grain and then, in hordes, flown up to the trees just packed with buds, for a *bonne bouche*. We will not have one blossom, let alone any fruit. Even the wild cherries have not escaped, and the honeysuckles are bare. These gorgeous purple gormandisers are still here, I might add, so if Mrs. Dorothy Whipple of Truro would like to beautify her feeders with them, I am giving them away with a pound of tea!"



It is possible that the Purple Finches will soon meet their match - a rival has appeared upon the horizon. A little troupe of HOUSE FINCHES have finally reached our shores, the vanguard arriving on April 13 at Barrington Passage, April 15 in Yarmouth town. Subsequently more appeared in Yarmouth, and one, perhaps two in Pubnico. It is interesting that all these finches were identified independently by the finders, unknown to one another. We have been expecting the House Finch, but were nevertheless surprised when it came, and it could very easily have been overlooked among the Purple Finches, present by that time in good numbers. Those to whom credit is due for these careful and discerning identifications are: Beula Burman who had 1, male, April 13-22 at Barrington Passage (asked for assurance from Viola Sperka, familiar with House Finches, and later from Ian McLaren and Eric Mills of Halifax, who came down to make an official identification and obtain a photograph); Eric and Barbara Ruff of Yarmouth, April 15 had 1 male and 1 female, and later Dorothy B. Kirk of Yarmouth, 1 male and 2 females, (and P.R. Dobson, wise after the event, but delighted to have had an opportunity to see the newcomers); Ted D'Eon, Kim d'Entremont and Delisle d'Entremont of Pubnico, who saw and identified the bird(s) May 24, 25 and 27 at that place. Pictures were obtained of these last sightings. For further information see the NOTE in this issue by Eric Mills.

(The Pine Grosbeak, so abundant last fall, has retired to its fastnesses until its proper season rolls round again).

Large flocks of the COMMON REDPOLL accumulated during March and April; March 24, 97 at Rockingham (JRJ's); 40 at Petite Riviere the same day (Cohrs); 20, Apr. 1 at Homeville (MF); 60-80 Apr. 1-18 at Amherst (CD); 75 Mar. 29 at Truro, 45 there Apr. 8, 2 on Apr. 11 (JF); flock still at Brookside, Hfx. Co. Apr. 11 (FWD's); 25 (the winter flock) last seen at Wolfville Ridge Apr. 16 (BJF) and one last one Brier I. that same day (ELM); the last dates both at Amherst, 3 birds April 25 at the Desplanque's and 2, May 4 at Amherst Point (RTB).

The last big flock of the PINE SISKIN seen was the 80+ at Lockeport last November (RJC). During the spring season we have had a half-a-dozen reports of one to ten birds, seen here and there: 2, Pubnico (E&VH); 2-6, Paradise (J&BM); 2, Round Hill (WEW); 10, Antigonish (RDC); 1, Amherst Point (RTB) and 1, Glace Bay (AS). One nest at Marriott's Cove has been reported by Ruth Hebb, and we hope later to hear of its success. Young were present in early June. The Siskins are still in short supply.

The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH also has not returned to abundance, the winter scarcity continued through spring. We have only seven reports which, except for one pair of these finches, are all from the extremities of the province: Glace Bay, Amherst Point, Pictou, Pubnico and Yarmouth town and county. Numbers were in the 2's and 3's until April 1, when they rose to 12 at Glace Bay (SM), 10 at Yarmouth (MWH) and 12-14 at feeders in Yarmouth County (Eel Brook and Tusket). The Goldfinches burst into song at these feeders April 4, when the birds were partly in spring plumage, which was complete by May 1, May 9 at Glace Bay.

Two RED CROSSBILLS have been reported this spring, May 27 and 28 at Wolfville "feeding on the seeds of Pine cones (RWT)".

SPARROWS AND BUNTINGS

The lucky winners this year were Bernard Forsythe and Nellie Snyder: on May 25 they both saw a male RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE. Bernard's was at Greenwich, Kings Co., and it stayed there until May 27; Nellie however had a pair, male and female, at Crousetown.

The first SAVANNAH SPARROWS, 10-12, were seen at Cape Sable April 3 and 4, (S&BJS). Reports were slow coming in - April 16 at Grand Pre (BCS), April 19 at Wolfville Ridge (BLF), April 22 at Amherst (GD), April 23 at Lower Economy (FH) and April 20 at Sydney Forks (RBF). Many more came in May, with a big movement May 13-21, when the Cohrs on Seal I. found them "all over the island - counted 85 but believe many more". On April 16 the Smiths found an "Ipswich" Sparrow (SAVANNAH SPARROW, SABLE ISLAND RACE) on Cape Sable; another of these, returning home to Sable was seen April 30 at Three Fathom Harbour by the Cohrs.

(Arrival of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow has not yet been observed).

(An interesting note has been received from John A. Wright, now of Halifax, formerly of P.E.I. He had a Lark Sparrow winter at his feeder, Head of Montague, from November, 1977 until January 7, 1978. It could well have survived the winter, but was injured by a cat, and in spite of every effort made to save it, died on the above date. More details may be obtained upon enquiry.)

Cape Sable * was again the first landing place for our next species, the DARK-EYED JUNCO, on March 29-31, more on April 2 and on, until there were 20+ around the yard by April 15. On March 31, Juncos appeared at Sandy Bottom Lake and at Dartmouth (JP); on April 1 at Yarmouth and at Paradise; by April 4 "trilling madly" at Eel Brook; by April 3 at Round Hill; April 18 at both St. Esprit and Homeville, at which latter place the count was 30. Juncos rapidly became plentiful, many reports received from all over the province, for example "exploded everywhere" (MF from Cape Breton), "common along roads in small flocks" (EH from Pictou), "plentiful" (RDM at Marriott's Cove), "very common" (SCM at Mooseland Road), "to be seen everywhere by mid-May" (PRD at Yarmouth Co.).

* Apologies to Robert M. Turner, who reported two Juncos March 25 at Sable River "first to arrive at feeder this winter". Cape Sable was second this time.

TREE SPARROWS were still with us throughout March and April, with a tendency to attend feeders, staying several days. Most reports of last sightings were April 18 to 24, with the very last of all, odd enough at Yarmouth; 1, May 3-5 at 23 Baker Street (MWH).

A very early CHIPPING SPARROW was reported from Paradise for April 8 (J&BM), but all other reports were for May, from the 6th to the 24th, four of them on May 14: 1 each at Dartmouth (K&WT), Pictou (EH), Lr.W. Pubnico (Rsd'E), and 2 at West Springhill (MPSB). The Chipping Sparrow was about a week late, according to the classic record in Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia, and many of us were concerned that it was not going to arrive at all. For some reason much impatience was expressed this spring at the late and slow arrival of the birds, but they have all come, eventually, and from here, look to be present in usual numbers.

As can be expected the only FIELD SPARROW noted this spring was on Seal I., one seen there May 14 by the Cohrs; that or another there May 20, seen by Eric Mills.

The "splinter migration" of the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW extended from May 8 to May 22, and took a curious course. The first one, a male, was seen May 8 and 9 at the feeding station of the Holdways in Pictou. On May 10, one stayed all day at W. Springhill (MPSB), and 3 came to stay a week at Cape Sable (SS). The Cohrs saw 4, May 13 on Seal I.; one was at Lr.W.Pubnico May 20 (Djd'E) and that same day 4 were on Brier I. (BCS). Again on Seal Eric Mills found one on May 19, which count increased to 4, May 22.

The WHITE-THROATED SPARROW wintered in Nova Scotia, with 2-3 at most feeding stations - 12 at Ted D'Eon's in West Pubnico. This 12 had diminished to 6 by the end of January, but remained at that count until the 30th of March. (Whitethroats are hardy birds, one sang the morning of Feb. 4 as the sun came out, temperature -12°C, albeit a small quavering song, here at Eel Brook PRD). Our surest arrival date for migrants is April 13 when the vanguard reached Cape Sable, where numbers increased to 45 by May 4. Thereafter "a few have popped in and out, and the last song of this species was heard May 22"(SS). April birds showed up in Annapolis Co. and at Sydney Forks; early May at Economy and Antigonish; the winter flock at Mooseland Road "put on their beautiful mating colors and began to sing around mid-April - by mid-May they had left". Whitethroats do not appear to have wintered in the Valley, and up to the end of May were reported scarce there. From Halifax to Yarmouth along the South Shore they are reported as plentiful, but were late building up in number.

The FOX SPARROW migration touched our shores, forerunners here by April 2-3-4, the bulk passing through Louisbourg April 14-22, up to 130 per day according to Roger Burrows, and the last seen, 1, May 5 at Amherst Point (CD). From the Glace Bay area Sara MacLean had six reports, of 1-7 Fox Sparrows per flock, in early April. The first seen at St. Esprit were on April 2, two birds, no higher count later. First at Sable River, Cape Sable and Eel Brook were on April 3, only 4 altogether; (this is for the south shore and not counting the one wintering at Nellie Snyder's); at Keji Park 5 were observed April 17 (PH); at Halifax-Dartmouth between April 2 and 17 about 30 birds were counted (18 on April 11 at the Purchase feeder) and one in the county by H.P. Moffatt; in the Valley only 13 birds on six counts: at Truro, 2, April 13; at Pictou, 2, Apr. 13 and 17; and at Amherst 2-3 April 10-22, 1 on May 5. Fox Sparrows covered the province thinly - whence the huge Louisbourg flocks?

One only LINCOLN'S SPARROW has been reported, at Upper Nappan, May 3, by Roger Burrows.

Although there were three very early SWAMP SPARROWS reported, the bulk of the arrivals were over a week late, coming on and after May 3. The early ones were seen: 1, April 13 at Cape Sable (SS); 1, April 15 at Brier I. and 1, the same day at Lr.W.Pubnico (ELM,Djd'E). There were no other April reports.

A FEW SPRING ARRIVALS

Some of the birds we expect to see during spring migration and some of the birds we would like to see in spring are shown on the following pages. Some were photographed in the Exotic Isles of Nova Scotia - Sable and Seal. One was photographed in the Exotic Marsh of Nova Scotia - Lawrencetown, Halifax County. One was photographed in the Exotic Park in Nova Scotia - Kejimkujik. There are many Exotic's in Nova Scotia, each of us has many, that provide happy hours. One of my favorites is Dorothea Drive Marsh, an effluent disposal spot for a sewage plant. Many readers have photographed birds in their favorite exotic spots. Photographs of the birds are welcomed by the editors. Colour slides of birds are copied on black and white film from which enlargements are made for reproduction. Slides and negatives submitted will be returned.

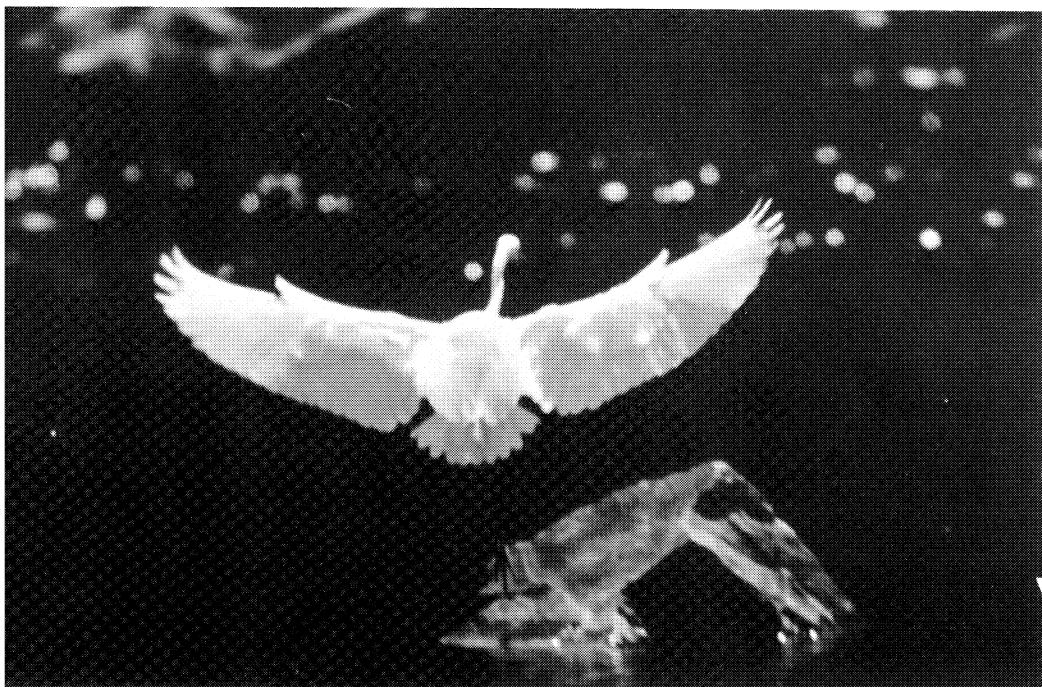
The Snowy Egret, yellow boots and all was photographed at Lawrencetown Marsh, May '78. It is interesting to note that the Glossy Ibis and Snowy Egret now nest in Maine. While driving south from Portland I nearly drove off the road when a Snowy Egret flew up from a ditch. The place was Scarboro Salt Marsh frequented by Snowy and Common Egrets and Glossy Ibis. Possibly Nova Scotia sightings are birds from Scarboro Marsh.

On a NSBS Field Trip to Kejimkujik National Park Peter Hope flushed a Chestnut-sided Warbler from the nest. In spite of the presence of a vast hoard of birders the female Chestnut stayed still enough and long enough to photograph. I felt a sense of great accomplishment until reading comments of Herbert K. Job, one of the fathers of bird photography: "... this is an extremely easy bird to photograph and one that will sit patiently while you focus, compose and expose". Considering the cumbersome equipment slow film and lenses of his day that is a heroic statement.

chestnut-sided warbler

connor





snowy egret

cohrs



ipswich sparrow

mclaren



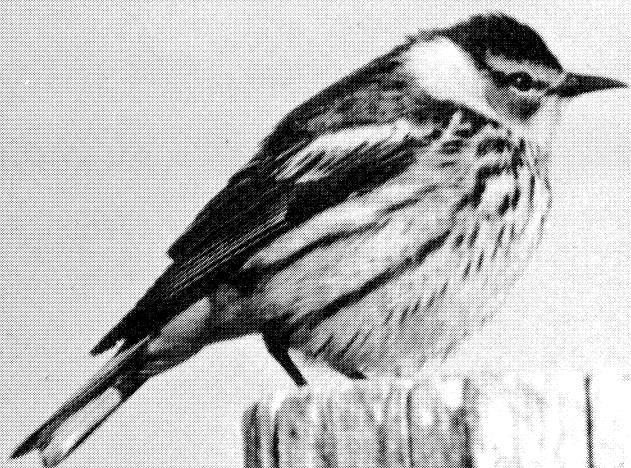
warblers:

ovenbird

cape may

blackpoll

mclaren





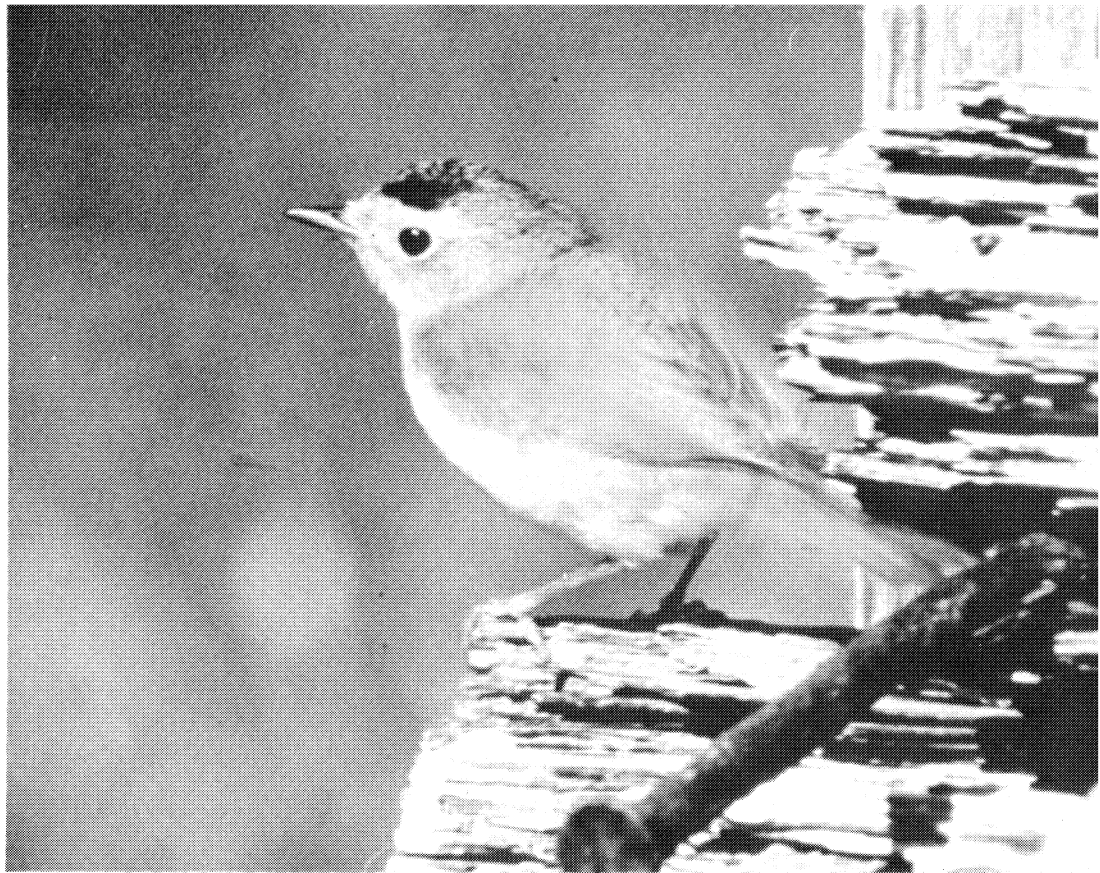
warblers :

magnolia

wilson's

black and white

mclaren





black-legged kittiwakes

sabine's gull

mclaren

The remaining photographs are all taken by the same person. Just to give you a clue let me say that the next bird is a McLaren Sparrow, or as some would say, an Ipswich Sparrow, photographed on Sable Island. The Ipswich is the expected bird on its main nesting territory but the Ovenbird can only be classified as the expected "unexpected" on Sable, and the same applies to the Cape May Warbler. The Blackpoll Warbler is more on course, resting on Seal Island before continuing north. The Magnolia Warbler on Seal Island appears to have deserted dense spruce and willow thickets for the lobster trap. Back to Sable for the next shot of a Wilson's Warbler. Note the blur of the wagging tail, and the man-made perch barely held together by a rusting nail. With no trees to creep around this Black-and-White Warbler had to choose an abandoned vehicle for a perch. The last picture shows a group of first year Black-legged Kittiwakes on the west end of Sable Island. In their midst, showing a sharp black stripe on the wing is a Sabine's Gull. This is the first Sabine's confirmed by photograph, or specimen, for Nova Scotia, June 1977.

The cover picture is of an Eastern Wood Pewee. This photograph illustrates three of the principal principles of photography:

- (a) take pictures in the rain;
- (b) take pictures with a 400 millimeter telephoto lens when there is only enough light for one fifteenth of a second exposure; and
- (c) pray real hard.

Ralph Connor

The SONG SPARROW disappeared completely during the winter of '77-'78, so that we felt free to greet the March birds as newcomers. Reports cluster around March 24 (and many in the week following) and April 7-14. On Good Friday, March 24, there were 4 birds in spring plumage singing along a five-mile stretch of road near Eel Brook. By April 4 they were calculated to be found every 100 yards along this road. Song Sparrows came in heavy flights and are referred to as "common", "numerous", "plentiful" in most places by the end of May. They were our most reported sparrow this spring.

On April 15, Eric Mills found one remaining LAPLAND LONGSPUR on Brier I., and one SNOW BUNTING. A few Snow Buntings were still seen around in March; 2, March 27 at Lusby Marsh (CD) and 1, March 24 at Cole Harbour which Rosemary Eaton said was acting as if it had a nest on Gooseberry I. Three reports in April were Lusby March again on April 8, one bird seen; April 9, one bird near Yarmouth (B&ER), and 5, April 9 (same day) at Cape Sable, seen feeding along the beach by Sid Smith. Last sighting of all was on April 30 at Three Fathom Harbour where the Cohrs saw one bunting "in complete black-and-white plumage - a vestige of buff around the head".

PRD ed.

Many thanks to the contributors to this report, listed as follows:

C.R.K. Allen, Christopher and Caroline Allworth, Daryl A. Amirault, Kirk Atkinson, Mrs. Peter Atkinson, P.J. Austin-Smith, Albert Bailey, Leslie F.S. Blackburn, Roy Blakeburn, Norman and Thelma Bowers, Roger T. Burrows, George R. Boyd, Marion P.S. Brown, Margaret C. Cheesman, Roland D. Chiasson, Margaret A. Clark, Evelyn E. Coates, A. and B. Coffill, J.L., J.S., C.J., and L.A. Cohrs, Eric H. Cooke, Otis Cossitt, Ethel Crathorne, Russell J. Crosby, Norman and Robert Cunningham, Celes Davar, Leta Delaney, Delisle J. d'Entremont, Flavian d'Entremont, Jean Guy d'Entremont, Raymond S. d'Entremont, Bertin F. D'Eon, Douglas D'Eon, Ted C. D'Eon, Robert J. D'Eon, Con Desplanque, Dusty and Willard Digout, F.W., E.E., A.R., B.J. Dobson and Phyllis R. Donson, Anthony P. Luke, Rosemary Eaton, Christopher B. Elson, Rachel Erskine, Allison, Layton and Mary Ferguson, Emerson Fiske, Bernard L. Forsythe, G. Fraser, J.R. Calder Fraser, Roberta B. Fraser, Sylvia J. Fullerton, Paul Gates, Dave and Linda Gray, Edgar and Vernita Hamilton, Dave Harris, Frank and Thelma Hawkins, Paul Healy, Barbara Hinds, Ruth D. Hebb, C.W. Helleiner, Frank Hennessey, M.W. Hilton, Eric Holdway, Peter Hope, Hedley Hopkins, Dr. and Mrs. J. R. Jackson, Wickerson Lent, Robert MacDonald, M.E. MacIntyre, George MacKay, Larry MacKenzie, Stephen MacKinney, Roy and David MacKinnon, Ian A. McLaren, Sara MacLean, Edith MacLeod, Olive and Gordon MacLeod, Jeanne McNichol, W. MacPherson, Elsie MacRury, Rainer, Sandra and Jan Meyerowitz, Eric L. Mills, William and Jean Morse, H.P. Moffatt, Richard Mueller, Ethelda E. Murphy, Sandra C. Myers, G.B. Nickerson, Fred J. Payne, George D. Perry, I.J. Pothier, Merrill Prime, D.W. and Joyce Purchase, Annie Raymond, Olive Ritcey, Ella Roland, Eric and Barbara Ruff, Barry C. Sabean, Tom Sheppard, Sidney, Betty June, Locke and Beverley Smith, Mabel B. Smythe, Nellie Snyder, Francis and Edgar P. Spalding, Anne and Arthur Spencer, Karl and Wendie Tay, Stuart I. Tingley, Robie W. Tufts, Robert M. Turner, Terry Wentzell, W.E. Whitehead, John A. Wright.

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Many of the birding areas in Nova Scotia "crop up" regularly in the reports. To prevent repetition of the locations of these areas in the body of the text we include this list for reference.

Yarmouth Co.	Pinkney's Point, Tusket, Cranberry Head, Eel Brook, Glenwood.
Shelburne Co.	Cape Sable Island, Lockeporte, Matthews Lake.
Queen's Co.	Port Joli, Port Hebert, Turtle Lake, Caledonia.
Lunenburg Co.	Cherry Hill, Broad Cove, Petite Riviere, Green Bay, Crousetown, Crescent Beach, Bayport.
Halifax Co.	Grand Desert, Three Fathom Harbour, Conrad's Beach, Lawrencetown, Cole Harbour, Mooseland.
Digby Co.	Brier Island, Smith's Cove.
Colchester Co.	Economy.
Annapolis Co.	Wilmot, Round Hill, Sandy Bottom Lake, West Springhill.
King's Co.	Wolfville, Greenfield, Black River.
Cumberland Co.	Lusby Marsh, Upper Nappan.
APBS	Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary.
CBHNP	Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REPORTS

Reports of fall migration for the January issue - November 30.

Please send reports of birds to the Records Editor -

Dr. P. R. Dobson,
RMB 170,
R.R. 1, Ste Anne du Ruisseau,
Nova Scotia. BOW 2X0

- - -

Any articles, letters to the Editor, photographs, etc., should be sent to the -

Editor in Chief, Newsletter,
Nova Scotia Bird Society,
c/o Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6

NOTES FROM SABLE ISLAND

Ian McLaren was offshore on Sable Island when the deadline date for this issue occurred. Under the circumstances, and bearing in mind the interest in Sable amongst our readers we are making an exception and printing the following:

AAR - Alban A. Richard
 HR - Howard Ross
 Otherwise - IM

- SOOTY SHEARWATER - first one 25 May
 GREATER SHEARWATER - 31 May
 CANADA GOOSE - March 1 - 14 (4) AAR
 BLACK DUCK - 11 nests, averaged 8.7 eggs/nest. First brood, 22 May
 PINTAILS - at least one nesting late May.
 GREEN-WINGED TEAL - one pair probably nesting
 WOOD DUCK - a pair on 23 May (HR)
 SEMIPALMATED PLOVER - arr. May 6 at least 4 pairs, evidently breeding last May.
 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER - May 11 (13) and small nos. to press time
 GREATER YELLOWLEGS - first seen April 28 (2) and still arrivals to press time.
 RED KNOT - A flock of ca. 100 reported on West Spit of Sable on Jan. 30 by W. Stobo. I.M. considers this a reliable record. Could they have been "European"?
 UPLAND SANDPIPER - May 5 (2) HR
 SOLITARY SANDPIPER - one on 28 April (AAR) - early
 LEAST SANDPIPER - arr. May 12 in small nos., until 18 May. Numbers nesting by end of May.
 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER - May 11 (1), 13-16 (2).
 SANDERLING - flocks up to 80 in May.
 BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER - one on dunes May 20 (IM). Nova Scotia's second spring (and Northeast?) record.
 ICELAND GULL - up to 40 on West Spit in early May. Still 1-2 imm. to date.
 PARASITIC outnumbered POMARINE JAEGER 17:3 among identified Jaegers. First Pomarine 7 May (HR). First Para 20 May.
 KITTIWAKES - Unusually large flocks along beaches of Sable I., along with large gulls and terns, all feeding on surface amphipod Parathemisto gaudichaudi.
 First TERNS exceptionally early on 4 May, ARCTICS only identified until 12 May. First ROSEATE on 12 May. First COMMON Tern eggs 22 May, also early.
 Ad. SABINE'S GULL among Kittiwakes approached closely by HR, photographed by IM for second confirmed N.S. record.
 BLACK HEADED GULL ad. 30 May
 LAUGHING GULL - ad. 30 May.
 First arrivals - E. KINGBIRD 10 May
 "TRAILL'S" FLYCATCHER - 30 May
 E. WOOD PEWEE - 30 May
 TREE SWALLOW - 4 May
 BARN SWALLOW - 1 May
 CLIFF SWALLOW - 24 May
 BANK SWALLOW - 20 May
 PURPLE MARTIN - April 12-14 (1) early AAR
 next not until April 25
 BLUE JAY - a migrant appeared on 31 May and photographed for first confirmed Sable occurrence.
 CATBIRD - May 11 (2)

First arrivals - ROBIN - first arrivals April 10
 HERMIT THRUSH - May 4
 VEERY - May 20 (1)
 SWAINSON'S THRUSH - 23 May
 GREY-CHEEKED THRUSH - 23 May
 RED-EYED VIREO - May 31
 BLACK & WHITE WARBLER - May 19
 PARULA WARBLER - May 25
 TENNESSEE WARBLER - 24 May
 YELLOW WARBLER - May 21
 MAGNOLIA WARBLER - May 25
 CAPE MAY WARBLER - 12 May
 "MYRTLE" WARBLER - May 1
 BLACKPOLL WARBLER - May 20 males first
 PALM WARBLER - May 7
 OVENBIRD - May 26
 N. WATERTHRUSH - May 20
 YELLOWTHROAT - May 22
 WILSON'S WARBLER - May 16
 CANADA WARBLER - May 26
 AMERICAN REDSTART - May 23

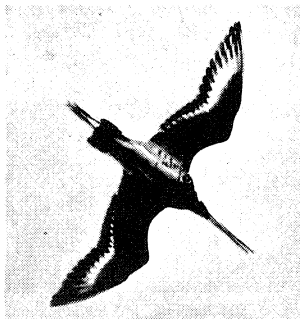
(On June 7 a corpse, some weeks old, of a WORM-EATING WARBLER found by I.M. huddled on the SE side of a small building on Sable I. Third confirmed provincial record.)

BOBOLINK - May 23
 "BALTIMORE" ORIOLE - May 11
 ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK - May 22
 INDIGO BUNTING - one fresh dead 25 April

"IPSWICH" SPARROW - I.M. et al made a census and estimated only about 1350 adults this year - about half the usual number. This is attributed to 2 successive harsh winters on U.S. mid-Atlantic coast. Nesting underway in late May will hopefully bring the population back to normal.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - scarce this spring on Sable I. First one May 24, and few after.

FOX SPARROW - 1st on April 11 (AAR)
 LINCOLN'S SPARROW - 1st on May 20.
 SWAMP SPARROW - 1st on May 24
 LAPLAND LONGSPUR - last seen (m) May 14.
 SNOW BUNTING - last seen May 5 (1).



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

April 22 - Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary

Those invited to lead field trips feel at times that they are in need of a crystal ball when setting the date of the event. It would be nice to know in advance what the weather would be and what birds will be around at what places. The date set for this spring trip was a bit too early to catch this year's peak of the spring migration, thanks to the late disappearance of ice from the lakes and ponds.

Nevertheless the 18 participants and thousands of Canada Geese enjoyed a beautiful day on the John Lusby Marsh. A few Snow Geese and hundreds of ducks were around as well, in company with Blue Herons.

A tour through the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary brought more observations of ducks, coots, grebes and cormorants. Furthermore a Rough-legged Hawk and a Kestrel were seen. A few species of song birds were added to the list of 32 species observed.

Con Desplanque

May 10, 17 and 24 - Early Morning Warbler Walks

Two walks were scheduled this year, at Suzie Lake on May 10 and Shubie Park on May 17. With the leader's usual luck, the first was rained out. The second fared little better, fog and drizzle being the order of the day, but nevertheless six intrepid souls squelched along the Canal, and did encounter a good selection of spring migrants, including a Spotted Sandpiper and a Solitary Vireo (heard, not seen) - 23 species in all.

Having had enough rain, and having heard an unguarded remark from Eric Cooke that "the Black-throated Blue was in his usual haunts (Suzie Lake) on Sunday the 14th", our indefatigable leader scheduled an unscheduled walk at Suzie Lake on Wednesday, May 24th, and was paid handsomely. Eleven of us turned up on the only cloudy morning of the week (the hex weakened somewhat) and saw or heard twelve of a (reasonably) possible eighteen wood warbler species. The Hermit Thrushes were in voice and in sight, and the best warblers were the Black-throated Blue, Canada, and Ovenbird (heard, not seen). We logged 31 species - 1½ hours.

F. Dobson

May 27 - President's Field Day - Hants County

Everything turned out fine for the President's Field Day! An eager group of observers (35) gathered at 8:00 a.m.; some on their first Hants Co. Field Trip; some who have never missed! They came from Yarmouth (Marion Hilton), the Halifax-Dartmouth area, and Truro (the Rolands). They began in the chilling fog at the Picnic Park in Mount Uniacke and ended in the hot sunshine at Ste. Croix. They drove and walked; then walked and drove over the back roads of Hillsvale, Rawdon, Brooklyn and other communities. And it wasn't easy to get 35 people to limit themselves to a timed stop, get back into their cars, then keep 15 cars together for the next good birding area!

"Puffy" was introduced at the lunch stop at Smiley's Picnic Park, and welcomed everyone before the count began. Seventy birds were sighted for the morning, including a Common Scoter on the lake at Uniacke House, spotted by the second youngest birder in the group, Richard Pocklington! The afternoon brought 10 more birds. The day included lots of Magnolias and American Redstarts; and four Marsh Hawks flying over the dykes, including a handsome male, a first for many observers. We were disappointed in not seeing a Bittern; that the Eastern Wood Pewee was not at the usual bridge, or that the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker did not provide the usual drumming for our lunch break. But the Snipe was nesting by the pond and the Bobolinks' chorus was heard throughout the day.

And while the birders relaxed in Clark's backyard, several Evening Grosbeaks flew over; two Gray Partridge were sighted, and a Bald Eagle flew up the river in the distance, obligingly bringing our total count to 83! One more than last year!

Now that's what I mean:
"Everything turned out fine on the President's Field Day!"

Margaret Clark.



UP-COMING FIELD TRIPS

- Saturday July 29 LUNENBURG COUNTY - Cherry Hill and Crescent Beach. Shore birds. The tides should let us do both beaches. Willets should be in good numbers, maybe some Piping Plovers. Bring your 'scope. Meet at the Post Office at Petite Riviere, at 8:30 a.m. Leaders: the Cohrs family.
- Saturday August 5 CAPE BRETON - Fuller's Bridge, Forchu. Meet at the crossroads at Marion Bridge at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Francis MacKinnon.
- Saturday Sept 2 BRIER ISLAND - Meet at the cemetery at Peajack Road at 8:00 a.m. Ross Anderson will arrange the boats. Various leaders.
- Saturday Sept 23 CAPE BRETON - Cheticamp Island and local area. Meet at Armbridge Cabins at the Highland National Park on the Cabot Trail, at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Jacques Pleau.
- Saturday Sept 30 NORTHUMBERLAND STRAIT - the shore from Tidnish to Tatamagouche. Waterfowl and shorebirds. Meet at the bridge over the Tidnish River near the turn-off to the P.E.I. ferry, at 10:00 a.m. - continuing to late afternoon. Bring a good lunch. Leader: Stuart Tingley

WHAT TO DO WITH THE BODY

(and how to do it)

The Nova Scotia Museum bird collection is small and still not fully representative. We need more specimens of the common species (at present our series of Ipswich sparrows is larger than our series of robins, house sparrows and many others). We are always happy to receive specimens of common species in good condition. If you send anything in to us, please enclose a sheet of paper inside the package with your name, address and phone number, and the following information on the specimen:

1. locality where found (be as precise as possible).
2. date bird killed, or date you found it if you don't know when it was killed.
3. how it died (window kill, road kill, cat kill, etc.) if known.
4. any information that may be relevant to the bird's occurrence in that spot, especially if it is an unusual record.

Be sure to address it to F. Scott, Science Section, Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, B3H 3A6. Any parcel which is not addressed to a particular person may never get to the intended recipient.

The bird's skin is the most important part of the specimen, and unfortunately it is also the first thing to thaw (and to decompose after death). Before you send anything in, test its freshness by sniffing and by pulling gently on a breast feather. Birds up to the size of a robin, when fresh, can be lifted by one feather on the breast, back or flank. If such a feather pulls out easily, without lifting the bird at all, it is not possible to make an acceptable study skin of it. If there is a strong odor of decay, there is no point of making the "feather test". For larger birds, one should be able to lift most of its weight by pulling on 2, 3 or 4 body feathers at once, depending on the size of the bird. Suitable birds should be frozen for shipping.

The larger the bird, the longer it will stay frozen, all other things being equal. When mailing frozen birds it is important to insulate them as well as you can. Newspaper is good for this but it should be used generously. An entire issue of the Chronicle Herald should be wrapped tightly around the plastic bag containing the bird, so that there is at least one inch of paper layers on all sides and ends. If it is very small (sparrow sized or less) double the amount of paper. It helps if you put all your insulating material in the freezer to pre-chill it before actually packing and shipping the specimen.

Fred Scott
Nova Scotia Museum



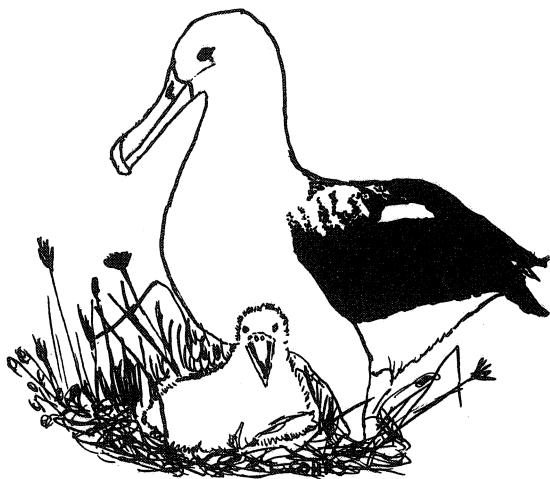
THE ROYAL ALBATROSS

On December 14, 1977, I visited the nesting place of the Royal Albatross. This is not as easy as you might think. In order to get to the sanctuary one must apply to the New Zealand Tourist Bureau in Dunedin, make an appointment, and pay a rather stiff fee. We were given an appointment for 2:15, and impressed with the necessity to be on time, since the birds are only viewed once a day by a party of twelve or so people.

The Albatross nesting site is at the end of an eighteen-mile peninsula which forms the eastern side of Otago harbour. The drive to the end of this point is through beautiful rugged country.

One goes into a sort of indoctrination centre where we saw slides and had a lecture on the life of the birds and the measures taken to protect them. Then we were led up a long steep path, partly stairway, at the top of which is an old gun-emplacement. It was from inside this shelter that we watched the birds.

There were three Albatrosses on their nests on a grassy slope of perhaps 12 or 15 acres. In order to make it easier for the birds to land and take off, runways had been cut in the long grass with a lawnmower.



ROYAL ALBATROSS

The Royal Albatross is a glorious bird, snowy white, with black wings that spread to 11 or 12 feet. The adults weigh about 20 pounds. The pairs nest only once every two years, and have one chick. Between hatching and feeding the chick takes a whole year to become independent. At that time the parents fly away, and soon afterwards the chick can fly, and leaves the nesting place to soar around the southern hemisphere for years, until it returns to land to nest at 9 or 10 years of age. They are thought never to come to land except for breeding, although some immature birds are seen soaring around the sanctuary.

At this rate one would expect the output of Royal Albatrosses to be rather small, but when I was there the bird they called Grandma was sitting on her egg quite near the viewing stand. Grandma is known to be fifty-seven years old.

We also saw the leg band of a bird that had been picked up dead by a fisherman; that bird was 63 years old at the time of death.

The Royal Albatrosses had nested in this area since 1920 or earlier, but until the end of the peninsula was fenced off and constantly guarded, few or no chicks were successfully raised, since the birds were at the mercy of dogs, vandals, and people who simply disturbed them from ignorance.

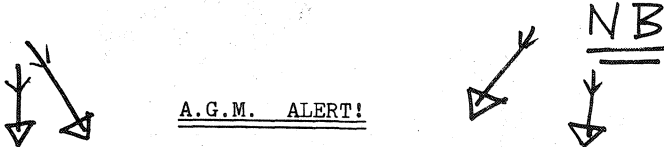
The birds change places at the nest every twenty-four hours, though there was one instance of a bird being away for nineteen days. The mate remained on the egg all that time without food or water.

This colony is the only nesting place of the Royal Albatross on a mainland site, all other nests are on off-shore islands.

There are only from four to ten pairs using the sanctuary at present, but it is intended to take in more land in hopes that larger numbers of the Royal Albatross may settle.

This is a good example of strict protection. The large city of Dunedin is not far away, but the people in charge seem very dedicated and disturbance is kept to a minimum, indeed the birds seem quite unaware of the small group that is allowed to see them each day.

Sara MacLean



A.G.M. ALERT!

Yes! That's right! Take note of the advance notice of the Annual General Meeting!

DATE: December 2, 1978.

This year your Executive is proposing something new and different for the AGM.

The day will begin with a morning Field Trip led by the Vice-President, Eric Cooke. We will then gather at the Lawrence-town Community Centre (Halifax Co.) for a hot lunch (maybe a fish chowder!), followed by the Annual Meeting and the Puffin of the Year Award.

Those who don't feel like going on the Field Trip or who want to do some Christmas shopping in the morning can join us for the lunch and meeting.

There will be a minimal charge for the catering services. Details to follow in the Fall Flyer and the Annual Notice. Mark the date on your calendar now!

A.G.M. - December 2/78.

Margaret A. Clark
President

HOUSE FINCH IN NOVA SCOTIA

Another New Bird for the List.

On April 13 Mrs. Beula Burman identified a male House Finch at her feeder in Barrington Passage, Shelburne Co. This bird came once or twice a day over the next couple of weeks but was elusive and flighty. When Ian McLaren and I visited Barrington Passage on April 22 Mrs. Burman discovered that the bird was being seen regularly at the feeder of Mr. and Mrs. Doug Hankinson where we finally caught up with it. It had arrived at the Hankinson feeder around April 8-10 and came to feed only when the Evening Grosbeaks arrived in numbers, several times a day. As of May 18 it was still present.

The bird we saw, a male, had a bright red forehead and crown, the pure red of the forehead giving a marked contrast with the streaked crown. Throat and breast were also bright red; the back was brown streaked, lacking red, contrasting with a bright red rump. The sides and belly were heavily streaked with brown, making the bird appear more heavily and darkly streaked than the example in Peterson's Western field guide. The brown wings had two narrow whitish wing bars. This record, confirmed by Ian McLaren's photograph, is the first for the province.

The history of the House Finch on the east coast of North America is an interesting one. Caged Californian House Finches were released by pet dealers near New York about 1941 and that year and in 1942 a few were seen in nearby areas. They nested in 1943 and during the next seven years spread east and west on Long Island, into Connecticut and New Jersey as well. By 1962 they had extended south to Baltimore and Washington, and during the past year or two they have reached northern Vermont, southeastern Quebec (one record) and southwestern Maine. With this kind of expansion going on we had been expecting to see House Finches sooner or later, but the range extension involved, from Portland, Maine, to southwestern Nova Scotia across water is a considerable one.

Eric L. Mills
24 May 1978

On April 15-16 at a feeder in Yarmouth town a pair of House Finches (a male and a female) were independently identified by Barbara and Eric Ruff. These birds stayed around for several weeks, trading back and forth between the Ruffs' and the Kirk feeder up the street. Here Dorothy Kirk, again independently, identified the finches, and later another female. P.R. Dobson saw the first pair and concurred without hesitation in the identification, after watching them for ten minutes or more at 10-12', in the same binocular field as a couple of Purple Finches... From West Pubnico we have word of still another female House Finch, first seen there May 24-25 and, again independently identified by Ted D'Eon and Kim d'Entremont. On May 27, Delisle d'Entremont saw another or the same bird, in the same place. Kim has slides of this bird, not developed at the time of writing.

P. R. Dobson
7 June, 1978.

RARE BIRDS

Sandra Meyerowitz has written to ask for a list of bird sightings which require a Rare Bird Form, i.e., what she calls "common rarities". As she realizes, uncommon rarities would mean a worldwide list, but we do have common ones, which we have called "regular rarities", and the Forms should be used for both types.

Even the regular ones would require an unwieldy list, but you have three sources available to you to discover these for yourself: The Birds of Nova Scotia, 2nd. Edition, by Robie W. Tufts; the Nova Scotia Bird Society Official Field Check List, and Nova Scotia Birds, an annotated list by L. B. Macpherson and C.R.K.Allen, this list is in the N.S. Tour Book, and also in the back of Where to Find the Birds in Nova Scotia (Allen and Dobson). This annotated list is particularly useful, but in any of these sources look for the symbols or words - T (transient), O (occasional), A (accidental) and H (hypothetical), or "1 (to ten) sightings".

Under T you will find Brant, Golden Plovers (most shorebirds), Jaegers, Western Kingbird, Water Pipit, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-crowned Sparrow, etc. These probably come every year.

Under O you find the unusual Herons (Little Blue, Snowy Egret, etc.), Snow Geese, Turkey Vulture, Gyrfalcon, Western Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, House Wren, Pine Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Lark Sparrow, for a few. These may come every year.

Under A are birds very seldom seen here and quite irregularly, e.g., the Brown Pelican, American Flamingo, Lapwing, Avocet, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Western Tanager, Chestnut-collared Longspur, etc. Their presence here is entirely accidental - apparently - and quite mysterious.

H birds are those whose presence is awaiting full confirmation, a diagnostic photograph or a study skin. They are so rare, unexpected, and difficult to accept that they have not achieved status, i.e., place on our list.

A glance at the check list will show that even since it was printed in 1975 there have been changes: H's have become A's; A's have become O's and so on; also numbers of sightings and range of species change continually.

This is partly due to increased reports from our growing number of "educated" birdwatchers. Use of the Rare Bird Forms is part of this education. Please feel free to use them - but do not send them in, unless they are O, A or H; keep them for your own reference, unless you are in serious difficulties with identification.

Phyllis R. Dobson
Records Editor.

Rare Bird Forms -

are available free to members.

Where to Find the Birds - costs \$3.00.

Please use Museum address for these.

Official Check List -

are available for 25¢, plus a stamped, self-addressed long envelope from -

Talbots Book Store,
Halifax Shopping Center,
Halifax, N. S.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor, NSBS Newsletter.

Who ever heard of a fully grown tame male Ruffed Grouse? Not I for sure, I have seen too many, from the young ones to the adults, leave the presence of HOMO SAPIENS and in a hurry.

But the photo enclosed shows a Male Ruffed Grouse who has been acting strangely for the last two years, in the backyard of George Pothier of Lower Wedgeport. As soon as George or his sons Tommy and Daniel start to saw or chop wood, out of the woods comes the grouse right to their feet or jumps on the saw bench. Absolutely no fear of humans, the Pothier family or strangers. Truly amazing. And not being fed, its companionship to humans is not for food.



Last summer, one fine day I was told that the grouse had entered a barn close by. Sure enough it was flying back and forth above the hay mow. I touched it with a long pole and it flew down to my feet. I picked it up, showed it to the lady of the house, (she said that the grouse was with her when she was weeding that morning). I let it go and it would hide in the tall grass. I would pick it up, it would just make a low growl not even pecking my hand as most birds do when handled. Finally I tossed it up in the air and away it went to the woods in back of George's home.

Telling Dr. Robie Tufts about this tame grouse a year ago this spring, he said that he had heard of this strange behaviour four or five times, but never anything like this one. He said just a freak of nature, something wrong with its head.

Last week Tommy told me that a pair of grouse were in his back yard, he had no way of telling if the tame one was one of the pair. Maybe with the coming of spring it has found a partner.

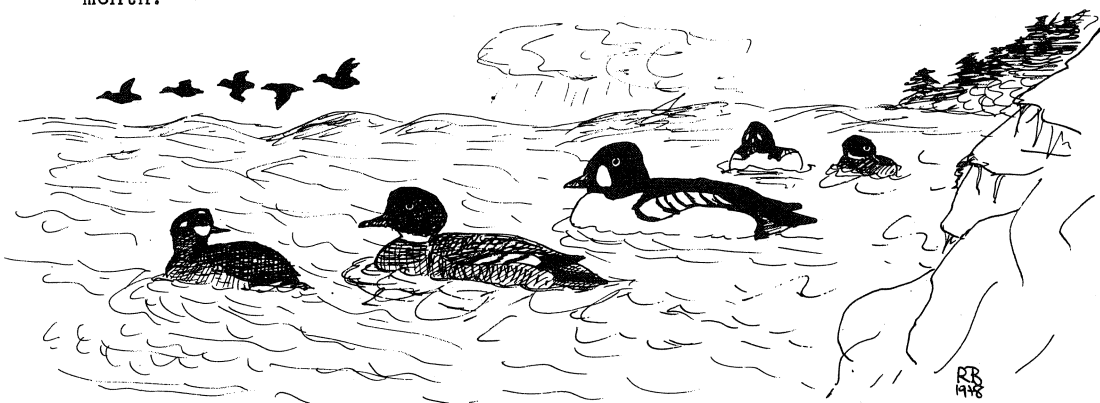
Israel J. Pothier
Lower Wedgeport

LOUISBOURG FULL CIRCLE.

Louisbourg's windswept location on a peninsula jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean may not appeal to any but the most hardy of breeding birds but it is a natural magnet to migrants and provides a chance to see several species blown off course.

Those who visit the historic site can spend a little additional time walking to Rochefort Point or Blackrock Point to search for ducks, gulls and shorebirds in fall. Later visitors to the area will find the site closed but all is not lost; the town itself occasionally yields surprises and the Cape Breton Branch of the NSBS is only too happy to suggest other localities. To assist those who want to add birdwatching to their activities at Louisbourg I have condensed my records for the November 1976 to December 1977 period. Anyone with the time should be able to add considerably to the numbers and species, since I had very limited time to do any birdwatching.

After an early Northern Mockingbird in November, a flock of Surf Scoters arrived and were joined later by the other two species, Horned Grebes and a few Greater Scaups in the Barachois Pond. Shorebirds were still around in small numbers and I recorded 8 species, including late Semipalmated Plovers and a Red Knot. Duck species later in the month included a Pintail and Common Eiders and the last of the Ringnecked Ducks. For a while Snow Buntings were by far the commonest of the songbirds but stormblown Palm Warblers, a Cape May Warbler and a Yellowbreasted Chat were welcome as were the first Red and Whitewinged Crossbills of the winter. My feeder was decidedly busy with Juncos and Fox Sparrows, Yellowrumped and Palm Warblers and a small flock of Evening Grosbeaks and a passing Sharpshinned Hawk was quick to take note. The resident Bald Eagles were becoming bolder and both Redtailed and Roughlegged Hawks passed through after mid month.



December was an excellent month for birds and I was rewarded with a Barrow's Goldeneye among the more urbane Commons, a drake European Wigeon in full plumage in the second week, a Harlequin duck at Kennington Cove and a Ruddy Duck with two Thickbilled Murres in Havenside Harbour. Add to these some lingering Common Loons, Double-crested Cormorants, Pintail, Semipalmated Plovers, Yellowbreasted Chat and Swamp Sparrows and the month was interesting enough. When the weather was too cold to venture out I had a feeder with good numbers of Blue Jays, Juncos, Whitethroated, Fox and Song Sparrows, a lone Robin and a Mourning Dove courtesy of Yvon LeBlanc and his wife who provided the initial food supply.

Things were very quiet in January, although duck numbers were high and included up to 5 Barrow's Goldeneyes and 21 Whitewinged Scoters. The wintering flock of Purple Sandpipers were joined by a Whiterumped Sandpiper and 2 Sanderlings in the third week and a few Goldfinches and Purple Finches joined the Evening Grosbeaks at my feeder.

February, although just as cold as the month before, was more productive and late in the month feeder activity hotted up with the large numbers of Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches having to contend first with Sharpshinned Hawks, then a Coopers Hawk and finally a Northern Shrike. The Purple Sandpiper flock reached a peak and other arrivals included a Glaucous Gull among the large wintering flock of Icelands, a Roughlegged Hawk, a Thickbilled Murre and a lost Horned Lark. The resident Bald Eagles ran into a food shortage when the harbour froze on the 16th but proved their adaptability by ganging up on a luckless cat which was divided up on the ice.

March saw the return of Tree Sparrows and Snow Buntings but further signs of spring had to await the arrival of a flock of Canada Geese, a plaintive Killdeer and a large party of American Goldfinches on the 20th. By the end of the month sparrow numbers were mounting at my feeder and so was the cost of stocking it, especially as the Evening Grosbeaks were now back in numbers.

The first day of April brought Robins and blackbirds but it was a week before the first Yellowrumped Warbler and Kestrel appeared. Both cormorant species, a Great Blue Heron, a Longeared Owl, Sharpshinned Hawks and a returning Roughleg all appeared by midmonth and by the third week Flickers, Redbreasted Nuthatches, Marsh Hawks, Common Snipes and Greater Yellowlegs were back.

The first big surprise of the spring was the invasion of downtown Louisbourg by a party of Glossy Ibises, which numbered at least three during the latter part of April and early May when I saw them. They were quite active and grew accustomed to dogs and small boys who took turns in chasing them over the swampy areas by the harbour. Other interesting arrivals were the only Redthroated Loon of the spring on the 14th when an American Coot also arrived, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Scarlet Tanager on the 25th and a Willet on the 29th.

My opportunities for birdwatching were severely curtailed during the summer but a Turkey Vulture on June 28th, an immature Blacklegged Kittiwake on July 7th and the August arrival of Whimbrels and Pectoral Sandpipers helped to keep me informed of what was going on in the area.

My second fall at Louisbourg opened with a flourish on August 18th, when the birds of prey included a Sharpshinned Hawk, an Osprey and a Peregrine which stayed around for a month and harassed the migrant shorebirds at Blackrock Point. Two Vester Sparrows, rather rare in Cape Breton, also appeared the same day with Horned Larks. Mid September brought in a Virginia Rail, a Northern Oriole, Northern Gannets, Golden Plovers and a possible Buffbreasted Sandpiper. Eastern Kingbirds appear rather uncommon in Cape Breton so one on the 23rd was very welcome but the flycatcher of the month award has to go to the Great Crested Flycatcher which was seen briefly on the 29th.



Water Pipits and Mourning Doves were well in evidence in early October and a few other passerines lingered on as waterbird numbers built up with a female Mallard the only surprise. The wintering longspurs and buntings appeared on cue but a late Chimney Swift and Magnolia Warbler were unexpected as was a Mockingbird which the Jacksons tried to maintain through the winter. The best passerine of the winter was the Western Kingbird which arrived early in November and stayed a week. I understand from Gwen Lunn that one had been present in the same area for several winters in the early seventies. The only surprise in December was the arrival of 4 very late Red Phalaropes and the almost total absence of birds at feeders and in the woods.

By the time you read this the spring will have come and gone and you will be enjoying the summer. That is unless the birds know something that we don't and we have a long winter.

Roger Burrows

A Manual for Saving Oiled Seabirds, 35 pp., has been written by the International Bird Rescue Center, Berkeley, California.

To obtain a copy write to -
 Distribution Services,
 American Petroleum Institute,
 2101 L St., N.W.,
 Washington, D.C. 20037

DIVING DUCKLINGS

How many birders know that very young Black Ducks will dive and swim underwater to escape from danger?

Usually if you slowly approach the shore of a pond, a mother Black Duck will swim away with her brood of ducklings trailing behind. Sometimes if you come upon a family of Black Ducks suddenly, the mother will dash away, beating her wings on the water and squawking loudly to make a commotion and draw attention away from the ducklings who meanwhile go skittering across the water to reach safety in weeds at the edge of the pond.

However, on rare occasions, if you suddenly startle the family while they are some distance from shore, the mother will cause the usual commotion to draw your attention but the young, instead of dashing to safety across the top of the water, will dive. The first few times I saw this, the ducklings failed to reappear so I couldn't understand whether they swam underwater to reach concealment at the shore or whether they drowned. Saturday, June 17th, was a very still morning with not a breath of wind to ruffle the surface of the pond when at last the mystery was solved.

I came suddenly on a mother with four young, at a guess about three or four weeks old. While she beat her wings on the water and called loudly to draw me away, the four ducklings started to skitter across the surface and then, as if on a signal, all dove together when about twenty feet from shore and heading across the pond away from me. Had the water surface not been glassy smooth, I'd have missed seeing a little ripple about thirty or forty feet from where they dove - then another ripple a little further away - and after a while another, each lasting only two or three seconds. Through binoculars, I could see the cause of the ripples - just the top of a head and tip of a bill breaking water for a moment and then disappearing again. The ducklings were "snorkelling" - swimming underwater and then coming to the surface for air but only breaking water enough to breathe for a few seconds, then going down again. Eventually I saw two surface on the far side of the pond at the edge of the reeds, perhaps 50 yards away. Presumably the other two swam underwater right into the reeds but they didn't show themselves.

It would be interesting to know if the young of other surface feeding ducks such as Mallards, Wigeon and Teal will dive in a similar manner. Have you seen them doing so?

Eric Cooke



MERLIN SURVEY IN QUEBEC AND MARITIMES

The Merlin or Pigeon Hawk (Falco columbarius), being a bird-eater like the Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus), is highly susceptible to environmental poisons, and research indicates that reproductive success is declining in many areas. At the 1977 Raptor Research Conference in Arizona, a concern for the plight of the Merlin led to a unanimous decision by more than two dozen participants in the Merlin workshop to conduct a North America-wide survey of this specie's populations. The object of this study is to determine the existing levels of Merlin numbers in 1978 and to hopefully monitor these populations over reasonable intervals.

I have been assigned to cover the Provinces of Quebec and the Maritimes and would be most grateful for records of spring sightings, pairs on territory, and nest success of the Merlin. I am not necessarily interested in obtaining the turn-over rate from eggs to young, as repeated visits to nests may result in disturbance and desertion. Similarly, detailed descriptions of nest locations are not necessary, but if you should decide to submit this information for future surveys, strict confidence will be maintained!

This effort to help the Merlin survive will be successful if and only if you assist us. Any assistance will be acknowledged. Please send information to: David M. Bird, Macdonald Raptor Research Centre, Macdonald College of McGill University, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec. HOA 1C0. (514)-457-9051.

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A CANVASBACK VISITS PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

On the morning of March 19, 1974, one male Canvasback (Aythya valisineria) duck was observed by the author on open water, west of the West River Causeway near Charlottetown, P.E.I. It was nearby, but not associating with, flocks of Canada Geese, Black Ducks, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Merganser and one Oldsquaw. On March 29, at 10:30, one male was again observed in a small inlet north of the causeway. Canada Geese and Black Ducks were feeding close by. On this date, slides were taken with a 500 mm telephoto lens and the Canvasback was observed by Daryl Guignon and biology students from the University of Prince Edward Island. On April 12, the site was revisited, but it was not observed.

Francis Bain (1891) in his book "Birds of Prince Edward Island" does not mention the presence of Canvasbacks. Blythe Hurst (1947) noted that Ludlow Jenkins reported two shot at Alexandria Bay, P.E.I., in 1910. However, this record was considered hypothetical by Godfrey (1954), and also was recorded as such in the 1974 edition of the P.E. I. Field Checklist of Birds. In 1957, the late Harvey Moore reported a Canvasback with other ducks on Black Pond (Bruce Pigot, Pers. Comm.).

Canvasbacks are primarily a western duck, breeding in the pot-holes and parklands of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and points north. They migrate on a southeast course through central Canada, with large concentrations stopping over on the Great Lakes before moving further south or southeast. On the Atlantic coast, Canvasbacks winter regularly from Vermont to Florida. Northward migration begins in early February and peak departure generally occurs during the third week of March (Bellrose, 1966). Godfrey (1966) reported Canvasbacks occurring casually in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Kathy Martin, Biology Dept., UPEI, Charlottetown, May 1, 1978.

RARE BIRD FOUND IN ONTARIO

One of the world's most critically endangered birds, the Kirtland's warbler, was resighted in Ontario last summer.

The sighting, in June and July, occurred in jack pine stands near Pembroke, Ontario, where a male Kirtland's warbler was photographed, mist-netted and banded. The bird was discovered and kept under observation by Dr. Paul Aird, Associate Professor, Faculty of Forestry and Landscape Architecture, University of Toronto.

For Dr. Aird, it marked the first success in a rather unusual detective story. For some time he has been convinced that breeding grounds of the warbler could exist in Canada. An analysis of early 1900 bird migration records, combined with soil and forest survey information led him to Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, where the most likely promising habitat was located. Excellent cooperation and support from the Department of National Defence made a thorough search possible. Under an informal agreement DND provided the search team with a truck and some helicopter support.

The search procedure comprised visiting potentially suitable areas, playing an amplified recording of the bird's song and listening for a response. The song is very characteristic and loud enough to be heard from one-quarter mile away.

On June 9, the bird was discovered singing in a young jack pine forest. Its behaviour and its habitat were studied closely for the next five weeks. It is believed that this bird was a resident and not an accidental visitor. This conviction is supported by two previous sightings of Kirtland's warblers on the Petawawa Base, one in 1916 and another in 1939. However, it is not known if the species is still breeding in the area since no eggs or young have been found.

The new sighting suggests the real possibility that this endangered species may be breeding beyond Michigan said Dr. Aird. Shortly after the discovery, the Ontario government added the warbler to the list of species protected under the province's Endangered Species Act, and announced that government biologists would try to determine whether a breeding population survives in any of Ontario's jack pine regions.

The present status of the species is shaky. A recent census shows that its population has fallen from about 1,000 birds in 1961 to an estimated 440 in 1977. The reasons for the warbler's decline are uncertain. Parasitism by cowbirds and death from storms during migration to and from its wintering grounds in the Bahamas are possible explanations. The most likely reason, however, is related to the specie's very specific habitat requirements. The birds will usually nest only in eight to 20 year old, even-aged, jack pine stands.

In the past, forest fires opened up large tracts suitable for jack pine regeneration, but with the gradual improvement in forest fire control techniques, the scope of forest fires was restricted, resulting in decreased availability of warbler habitat.

This problem has been alleviated in Michigan through the use of management techniques including controlled burns. New plantings of jack pine also help ensure that stands at the required stage of growth will be available to the warblers when other stands become too old.

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SUMMARY OF EXECUTIVE MEETINGS

The Executive of the Nova Scotia Bird Society held regular meetings for April and May.

A Guaranteed Investment Certificate has been purchased for one year's duration, at $8\frac{1}{4}\%$ interest per annum, from April 1, 1978.

The Federal Tax Rebate for last year's Newsletter has been received, in the amount of \$402.04.

The Membership-Secretary has reported 493 paid members as of May 15, 1978, including four life members. This is a great improvement over last year at this time, when paid members totalled 378.

The balance on hand as of May 15th is \$5302.29.

Mary Anderson
Secretary

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

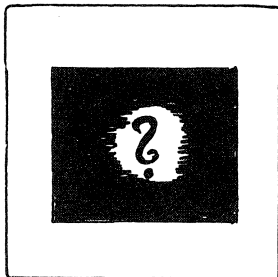
Marie C. Henry Memorial Fund

The Marie C. Henry Memorial Fund has been established and will be administered by the Nova Scotia Bird Society. The fund will be used to maintain and enhance islands near the mouth of the Tusket River in Wedgeport, N.S., where for ten years Marie and her family studied and banded terns, petrels and guillemots. Her deep and longstanding interest in these islands continued as it became more and more apparent that their sea bird populations were dwindling; it was her hope that the area could be preserved as a bird sanctuary.

Four of these islands are now in the possession of the Society; another one which supports a large breeding colony of Leach's petrels may be purchased, if funds are sufficient. Support may also be offered to students carrying on research in breeding bird colonies.

Should you wish to make a contribution to this fund, your cheque may be sent to the Treasurer of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6. The cheque should be made out to the "N.S. Bird Society Sanctuary and Trust Fund. In Memory of Marie Henry".

This notice is included in the Newsletter for the benefit of those friends of Marie Henry and/or the work she was doing who may wish to contribute to this fund.

SOCIETY SLIDE COLLECTION

Many thanks to those members who have sent in slides, either as gifts or for duplication. To have a representative collection many more are needed. Please see the list in the May issue of the Newsletter. If enough blanks are filled I shall have a new shorter list of "wanteds" in the next issue.

Lisè Cohrs



Of all the Naturalists' organizations affiliated with the Canadian Nature Federation (eighty-four of them) only four are devoted exclusively to birds.

The elite groups in alphabetical order are:

- Edmonton Bird Club
- Long Point Bird Observatory
- Nova Scotia Bird Society
- Province of Quebec Society for the
Protection of Birds.

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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