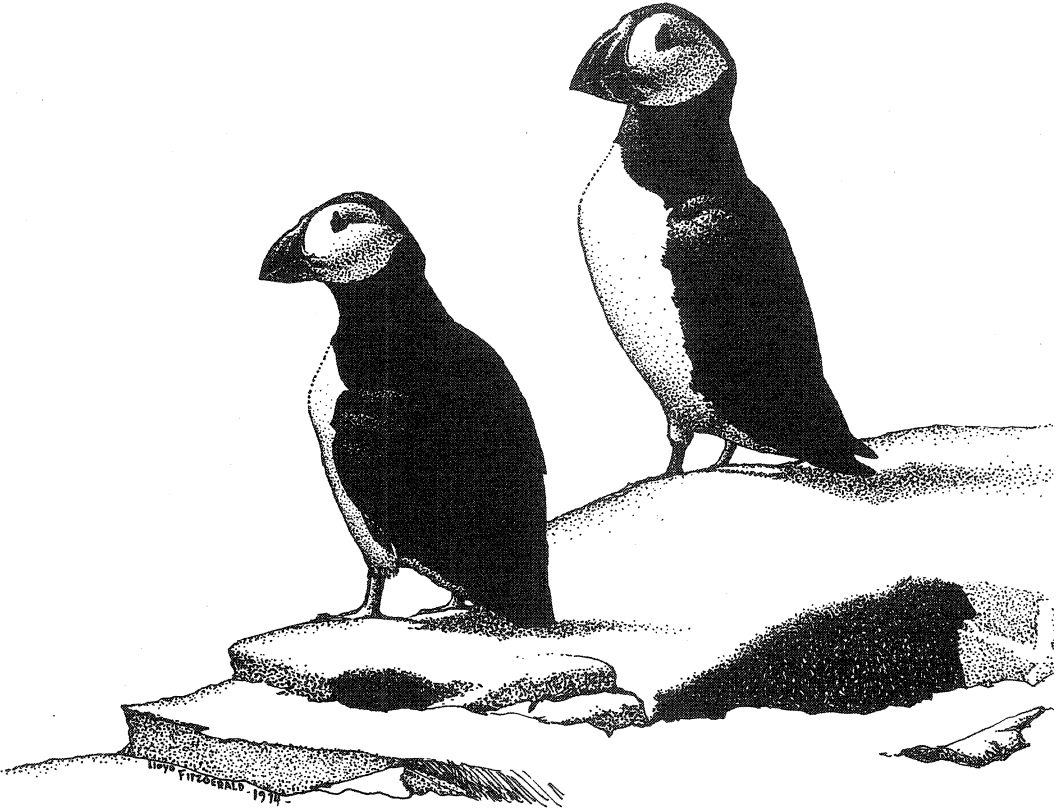


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newsletter

Volume 22 Number 3 1980

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Volume 22, Number 3

July, 1980

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INTRODUCTION TO BIRD REPORT
MARCH THROUGH MAY, 1980

From the standpoint of the Newsletter, the second quarter-century of the life of the Nova Scotia Bird Society is off to a good start. In 1960, we had perhaps five contributors; the list to-day is eighty, of which about twenty are contributors of ten years or more standing; twenty are of three to five years and the rest, quite new. This is most encouraging, as is the fact that the reports sent in are of high quality, which makes our credibility abroad much easier for the editors to maintain.

Even in the face of such integrity, possible sightings of a lot of different species have almost doubled during this time; the old checklist for Nova Scotia named 225 birds, the present one, nearly 400. True, some of these are still hypothetical, but this doesn't prevent them from being seen; hypothetical birds are the easiest of all to see, especially by beginners. Seriously, our field identifications of exotics are being confirmed steadily, one by one, mostly by photographs, sometimes on the evidence of multiple, and experienced, observers.

In the report to follow you will find some interesting exotics and a goodly number of natives. The birds are still coming in. The meteorological systems responsible for our weather this spring presented as usual, "fronts" which moved from west to east, south to north, or crossways between, and these systems kept nudging each other out of the way, to give a high degree of unpredictability. The birds arrived in the wind systems and then winged forward to make a landing while they could. Noticable times of arrival of our passerines were May 9, 12, 14, 19 and 23, and the variety of birds in each wave, interesting.

While the main concern of the Newsletter is to keep track of our native species, sightings of rarities are important; partly because they may indicate shifts in populations, but also for their intrinsic interest. Not all of us can go to Florida to see egrets, so are grateful if egrets come to us (this year it was Snowys, lots of them). So also we are grateful for the wonder of a Golden-crowned Sparrow, a Varied Thrush, a Yellow-headed Blackbird, a Summer Tanager - we have some of the two latter species to report to you this spring.

Not that we need colorful birds, ours are second to none in that respect (blow up a Redstart to the size of a Macaw and it would compare quite favorably). All of the warblers are worth seeing. In the July Newsletter (Vol. 21, No. 3, 1979) M.J. Harvey complains that in thirty years of "wandering over hill and dale", because of their size and habits, he has not seen a single warbler. This is tragic and I hope not general. (By the way, Dr. Harvey, you may still call it a "Myrtle" Warbler just so long as you pronounce the quotes.) I suggest he join a Seal Island party in May some year, and really have an opportunity to become acquainted with these numerous and very beautiful little birds. (See Seal Island reports to follow). He is right however, in saying they do not warble, or very few of them do; and many of the songs, because of individual variations are confusing, but this is, for some people, part of the game.

There was a good deal of individual variation in description of the weather this spring season too. Some called it a wet, dark, cold spring, while those who lived around the sunlit edges of the province, called it bright and mild. Everywhere, through April and May, it stayed cold at night, and this slowed up vegetation noticeably. Even now, June 2, some of the trees are far from fully leaved

out. However, the new leaves which have shaken out are lending their special spring effulgence to contrast with the dark green spruces, and every blossoming tree is trying to outdo the next; warm white of Indian Pear, frosty white of the wild black cherry and peppermint pink of wild apple. The roadside elderberry carried heavy blooms this spring; strawberry blossoms carpeted the ground, and for the first time in six years, some of the firs are bearing cones.

It is pretty; let's enjoy that, and hope it keeps its fruitful promise.

Sincere thanks to all of our contributors, without whose co-operation we would be unable to bring you the interesting report to follow.

CONTRIBUTORS: Jeanne Addelson, C.R.K. Allen, Douglas Amirault, Peter J. Austin-Smith, Eleanor Barrow, R.G.S. Bidwell, George R. Boyd, Patricia Caldwell, Curtis H. Chipman, R. D. Chiasson, Margaret A. Clark, J.S., J.L. and Lisè Cohrs, Eric H. Cooke, Jenny E. Costelo, Russel J. Crosby, Joan Czapalay and family, Robbie Denton, Ronnie E. Denton, Craig d'Entremont, Delisle V. d'Entremont, Gilbert d'Entremont, Kim d'Entremont, Raymond S. d'Entremont, Jerome d'Eon, Ted C. D'Eon, Con Desplanque, Gerald E. Dickie, Tom Elwood, Christopher Field, Stephen P. Flemming, Bernard L. Forsythe, Bill Freedman, Sylvia J. Fullerton, Anthony R. Glavin, Edgar and Vernita Hamilton, M. W. Hilton, Barbara Hinds, Terry Hyson, R. S. Johnson, Cherry, Keith N., Vernon, Vivian Keddy, B. Koon, F. L. Lavender, Richard Lemm, Olive MacDonald, Ruth MacDonald, Gerald MacDougal, Ian MacKay, Susan MacKay, Ian A. McLaren and James McLaren, Gordon MacLeod, L. P. Macpherson, Orville Mader, Steve Manuel, Reg J. Melanson, Sandra, Rainer F. and Jan Meyerowitz, Eric L. Mills, Jean and Bill Morse, Sandra C. Myers, Margaret A. Nickerson, Fred J. Payne, Peter Payzant, Art E. Patton, Don Pentz, George D. Perry, Roland Pothier, Ella E. Roland, Peter Romkey, Eric Ruff, Michael Rymer, Robin Rymer, Barry C. Sabean, B. J. and S. F. Smith, Francis L. Spalding and Edgar P. Spalding, Linda Steeves, Richard B. Stern, Mort Stuart, Wendie, Karl and Derek Tay, Stuart I. Tingley, Robert M. Turner, W. E. Whitehead, Stuart L. Whitman.

...and P.R. Dobson, Records Ed.

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, Pleasant Lake.
Shelburne Co.	Cape Sable Is., Lockeport, 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.	Three Fathom Harbour, Conrad's Beach, Lawrencetown, Cole Harbour, Mooseland.
Digby Co.	Brier Is., Smith's Cove.
Colchester Co.	Economy, Brule, Bass River.
Annapolis Co.	Wilmot, Round Hill, Paradise, Sandy Bottom Lake, West Springhill.
King's Co.	Wolfville, Greenfield, Black River Lake.

Cumberland Co.	Lusby Marsh, Upper Nappan.
APBS	Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary
CBHNP	Cape Breton Highlands National Park.
JLNWA	John Lusby National Wildlife Area

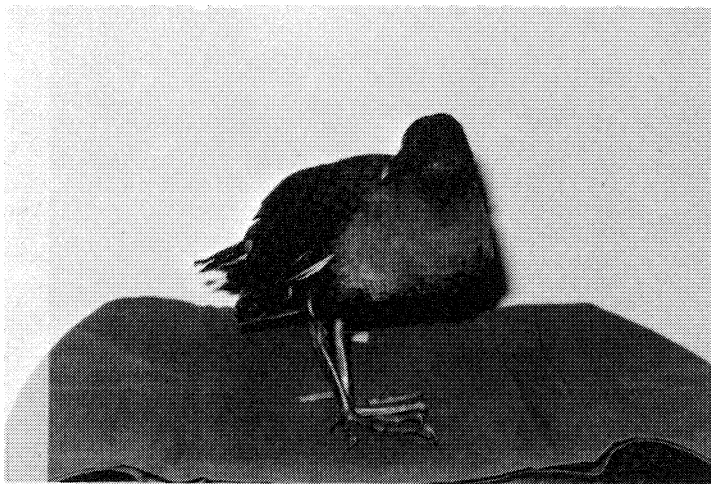
DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REPORTSNOVEMBER 20, 1980

Bird reports to the Records Editor -

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Photographs, sketches, articles and letters to the -

Editor in Chief, Newsletter,
Nova Scotia Bird Society,
c/o Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
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Dr. Ian D. McKay sent us this photograph of the immature Common Gallinule found near Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth on Dec. 19, 1979 and taken to him at the Dartmouth Veterinary Hospital (see NSBS Newsletter Vol. 22, No. 2, Pg. 92)

SPRING BIRD REPORTS - MARCH THROUGH MAY

LOONS AND GREBES

COMMON LOONS were on the move as early as March 15, when 20 were observed at Cole Harbor (IAM et al.). There were 10 at St. Margaret's Bay, March 22, some in breeding plumage (ELM); on April 4 and 5, over 150 were seen in the Green-Bay-Crescent-Beach-Cherry-Hill area, nearly all of which had moved on by the following day (JS&JLC). Numbers were still being seen in salt water as late as April 24, when there were 20+ at Hartlen Point (FLL).

Spring movement of RED-THROATED LOONS was well under way by the third week in March; Eric Mills reported "one or two in every cove from Croucher's Point to Peggy's Cove...about half in breeding plumage", March 22. The movement for this species is apparently a protracted one for Eric also had 15 at Pond Cove, Brier I., April 5, and Francis Spalding saw about 15 at Economy in early May.

RED-NECKED GREBES are wintering birds and a spring movement is therefore hard to spot. There were, however, 25+ at Green Bay, April 4-5, and only 2 or 3 there on the 6th (JL&JSC); 10, April 9, at Pennant Point (IAM) and 12 and 15 at Hartlen Point, April 16 and 24 respectively (FLL). The birds were reported as being in at least partial breeding plumage from early April.

HORNED GREBES, also common winter residents, may give little indication of their migratory movements, but this year they did with a vengeance. On April 4-6, there were only about 10 in Green-Bay-Crescent-Beach waters; on the 7th however, there were "hundreds" (JSC). Latest reported sighting for this species is of 8, May 4, at Broad Cove and Cherry Hill (IAM et al.).

First PIED-BILLED GREBE reported was seen at Lockeport, March 31 (GDP). First of the APBS population showed up April 7, and numbers increased thereafter to 20 on April 26 and May 3. Just 10 were seen there May 10 (CD, EPS&FS).

CRKA, ed.

FULMARS, SHEARWATERS, STORM-PETRELS

The tubenose records are few, but interesting. Raymond S. d'Entremont saw NORTHERN FULMARS in thousands on George's Bank on April 30, along with a WILSON'S STORM-PETREL, but the shearwaters had not yet arrived by then. On May 20, Sid Smith also saw thousands of Fulmars, this time off the mouth of Barrington Bay and on Baccaro Bank, off there. He also saw 10 SOOTY SHEARWATERS and 20+ LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS, up to 20 miles SE of Cape Sable. John Kearney saw a Fulmar c. 15 miles south of Seal Island on May 27, along with 35 Wilson's Storm Petrels.

GANNET, CORMORANTS

There was the usual passage of NORTHERN GANNETS along the Atlantic shore at the beginning of April. Daryl Amirault saw 25-30 near Seal Island on March 31. But Sid Smith had already seen 40+ on March 28, south of Cape Sable, and F.D. Lavender saw 30 off Hartlen Point on March 31. George Perry saw 50+ from West Head, Lockeport, on April 1, in only 30 minutes, and reckons that the daily total must have been in the hundreds. Sylvia Fullerton saw over a hundred, moving north, off Cherry Hill, on April 4, and Eric Cooke counted 12 in half an hour, flying east off Kingsburg Beach,

Lunenburg Co., the next day. Also on April 5, Eric Mills saw at least 300 groups of Gannets flying south all day, just the west side of Brier Island, apparently coming out of the Bay of Fundy; they were all adults. No Gannets breed in Fundy now, of course, but they used to do so until they were killed off in the 1880's, and they are now trying to re-establish themselves on at least two islands. Eric's observations show that Fundy is still very popular with Gannets in the spring and we hope that more and more of them will settle and re-establish their old colonies. We also hope that no trigger-happy cowboys will deter them.

Other sightings mark the Gannets' passage up the coast. An adult at Pennant Point on April 9, two at Hartlen Point on April 27, and six at Lawrencetown on April 26 -- all from James and Ian McLaren. Farther north, Rainer and Sandra Meyerowitz had them going past St. Esprit, C.B. in two big batches -- one about April 4, and the second on April 14.

The tail end of the migration stretched quite late into May. Sid Smith reports small numbers off Cape Sable and Baccaro up to May 20, at least. He doesn't say what age they were, but my guess is that these stragglers were subadult birds, maybe three years old or more -- which aren't yet ready to breed, but which were progressively farther north and closer to their colonies every summer as they grow older.

GREAT CORMORANTS came first as usual. The Meyerowitzes saw two or three dozen cormorants - presumably Greats - as early as February 10, at St. Esprit. Keith Keddy saw a couple of definite Greats on St. Margaret's Bay on March 3, and there were three there on March 24. However, most of the early records come from late March and early April; 15 under the bridge on Halifax Harbour on March 15, for example (James McLaren), 30 at Mahoney's Beach on March 21 (RDC,SPF), 2 at Economy on March 28 (FS) and 6 or 7 that day in Barrington Bay (SFS). Also the 5 birds which Clive MacDonald saw in Mira Bay on March 29. Eric Cooke saw 25-30 of them flying east on April 5, off Kingsburg Beach, Lunenburg Co., and saw enough white flank spots to confirm their identity. On the same day, Eric Mills saw 50 in breeding plumage on Brier Island: "no sign of Double-Crests yet".

The first DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS came from Economy, where Francis Spalding saw his first on April 4, and Middle West Pubnico, where Delisle. d'Entremont saw 19 on April 6. There were birds at Wine Harbour on April 14 (Gordon MacLeod), and the two at APBS on April 23, seem to have been the first arrivals there (Stuart Tingley).

RGBB, ed.

HERONS, EGRETS, BITTERNS, IBIS

A GREAT BLUE HERON seen at Melbourne on March 9, (MR) had probably wintered in the province. However, a bird appearing on Sable Island on March 10 (AAR) had obviously flown some distance. Such early migration is hazardous, for this bird died on March 25. The next, more sensible birds arrived near Argyle and at East River, Lun. Co., on March 30. One appeared at West Pubnico and 2 at Economy on April 3, and there were reports of single birds next day at Amherst (and nearby N.B.), Cherry Hill, and Riverport. An indication of arrival route is to be found in Eric Mills' observation of 5 birds arriving from the south, over the sea, at Brier Island, on April 5. By mid-month they were widely reported, including the first Cape Breton birds on April 14. The colony on Lawlor's Island, mouth of Halifax Harbour, was "active" on April 16 (FLI). They were, however,

still on the move in early May, as 1 turned up May 4-6 on Sable Island.

A GREEN HERON at Economy on May 16, was a first record for that locality (FS), and another appeared inland at Debert Wildlife Area on May 25 (RBS). Two on Seal Island, May 16-19, and a bird on Sable Island, on May 31, were routine for these islands. A CATTLE EGRET visited Windsor between April 29 and May 3 (PR), and another dropped in on the Meyerowitz's pasture near St. Esprit, C.B., on May 23; both birds were photographed. Our only COMMON EGRET this spring was a bird at Sable River on April 24 (RMT,CDP). SNOWY EGRETS, on the other hand, were well represented. The earliest was at Canning on March 30 (PJA-S). In the south, near Pubnico, there was 1 on April 30, and another on May 23 (DJd'E et al.), and in the north there was a bird at Lingan Bay on May 4 (CSM). In between, there could have been some overlap among sightings of 1 at Lower LaHave between April 20 and May 10 (EHC), 2 near Liverpool on May 3 (I&SMcK), and 2 at Crescent Beach on May 4 (EHC). As in last spring, the birds appeared in force around Three Fathom Harbour, Halifax Co., with 1 there on April 19 (IAM), 4 on the 26th (IAM,IMcK) and, according to local residents, up to 7 by the end of the month. Surely these will settle down some day and nest. (Rumor has it that a Little Egret occurred this spring near Rimouski. We should be ever vigilant!)

A single BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was at Lr. W. Pubnico on May 6. Another, seen from the boat carrying the NSBS party back from Seal Island, was flying south on May 20, and another was seen over Clark's Harbour on the same day. A YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON, a "striking bird in full adult plumage:", was observed near Lockport, over a three week period from April 17 (RMT,GDP). Another adult appeared on Sable Island on April 20, and was followed by an immature bird on May 1 (AAR). A very badly injured LEAST BITTERN brought to George Perry at Lockport on May 19, had to be dispatched. There are very few authenticated records for the province. Its larger relative, the AMERICAN BITTERN, was first reported at APBS on April 20, by CD (a day later than at Cape Jourimain, N.B., by SIT). They were well settled by May, with reports from seven localities. No GLOSSY IBIS was reported from Nova Scotia, but a bird was seen in nearby New Brunswick on April 17, by Gay Hansen (fide SIT).

IAM, ed.

GEESE AND DUCKS

We have come to expect almost anything of Dartmouth's Sullivan's Pond but 5 obviously wild CANADA GEESE, seen by James McLaren, swimming nervously around (that is, the geese were) in this fabulous puddle in the centre of the city, is about the limit...Just three reports give definite indication of spring movement of this species: in West Pubnico numbers increased from 100, Feb. 24, to 500 by March 21 (DJd'E); at Lusby the peak of 2500 was reached April 7, numbers dropping off thereafter to 300, May 3 (CD); at St. Esprit, considerable numbers went by, March 29, and the preceding night (RFM). There were 25 laggards at Port Joli, May 1 (RMT) and Con Desplanque saw one, "probably on a nest" at Lusby, May 22.

BRANT as usual slipped by practically unnoticed, but Eric Mills saw 280 at Freeport, Digby Co., April 4, and 450 the following day at Pond Cove, Brier I. There were 24 on April 26, at Ram I., Shelburne Co. (RMT), 3 at Lr. W. Pubnico, May 4, and a late flock of 40 in the Tusket Islands region, May 14 (NSBS party).

Three SNOW GEESE showed up at nearly opposite ends of the province; 2 were seen at Round Hill, March 28, "travelling along with

about 20 Canadas" (WEW); and 1, blue phase, was in Lingan Bay, April 24 (CSM).

Pairs of MALLARDS were seen at Mineville Road Pond and Salmon River near Dartmouth, March 30, and at Crescent Beach, April 5, (JL&JSC); also at Pond Cove, Brier I., April 5 by ELM. Numbers at the Lusby-APBS were low for that area, fluctuating between a high of 6 on April 26, and a single bird, May 22 (CD,FL&EPS). Another single bird was at Antigonish Landing April 12 (RDC,SPF).

Keith Keddy writes that BLACK DUCKS reached the interior - New Ross, Lunenburg Co., in this case - at the usual time, a pair being seen April 14, on a shallow stream near Lake Ramsey which was still frozen over. Spring is the time of dispersal for this species in Nova Scotia, which may account for the small numbers being reported in any one locality; 200+ at Lawrencetown, March 30 (JL&JSC), 100 at Cole Harbour, March 18, plus 250 at Debert, March 19 (SM,JM) and, highest number, 500 at Lusby, April 12 (CD)...Five broods consisting of 6-10 young in each, were seen on Russell Lake, May 10 (FLL); another brood of 7 was at West Pubnicc, May 18 (DJd'E) and a third reported at APBS, May 22 (CD).

The wintering GADWALL at Sullivan's Pond was last seen May 18. First spring arrivals were a pair at Port Philip, Cumberland Co. April 4 (SIT). Three showed up the following day at APBS, where they were later joined by a 4th and were seen "double-dating" during April and May (CD).

Earliest record of PINTAILS is of 2 seen on stubble near Debert, March 19 (JM). There were 8, five males and three females, at Lawrencetown Lake, March 30 (JL&JSC) and 50 near Amherst, March 31 (SIT). Highest count as usual was at Lusby, where they peaked at 200, April 12 having first been seen there April 4, when 5- appeared. There were still 100 present May 3, after which numbers dwindled to 12, May 22 (CD).

A male EUROPEAN WIGEON first seen at Lusby Marsh, May 8, was still there on May 22 (FLS,CD).

AMERICAN WIGEONS arrived at Lusby April 4, the 20 seen then, increasing to 40 by April 7, and numbers then fluctuated between 20 and 40 from early April to late May, during which time ten observations were made (CD). Besides these and the Sullivan's Pond bird, the only other observations are of one or more seen near Canning by the NSBS party, April 27, and 3 on April 18 at Upper Canard (BCS).

The COMMON TEAL at Sullivan's Pond had developed its specific badge, horizontal stripe over the wing, by Feb. 24 (KNK) and was last reported at the Pond, March 30 (IAM et al.). The Common Teal population at Lusby Marsh consisted of one bird from April 4, but doubled for one day, April 5, only. (CD,FLS&EPS).

The wintering flock of GREEN-WINGED TEAL at Sullivan's Pond had shrunk from about 8 to 2 by April 14 (KNK). First pair reported was at Barrington, April 27 (BJS). There were four pairs at Russell Lake May 10 and one pair at Frenchman Lake, May 13 (FLL). Ten Greenwings were seen at Lusby, April 4 and 50 at APBS on the same date. The Lusby population had a minor peak on April 12 when it rose to 100; then after dropping slightly it peaked again to 200, May 3, and fell off sharply to 4, May 10 (CD).

First sightings of BLUE-WINGED TEAL were in the Amherst area when a single (IAM) and two pairs (SIT) were seen on April 4. Five were recorded (first sighting) at APBS on April 4 and numbers peaked

there to 30, on May 3, dropping off to 6, May 10 (CD). Other sightings are of singles or pairs throughout May at West Pubnico (DJd'E et al.), Sheffield Mills (GRB,RJM) and Russell Lake (FLL).

Most SHOVELERS reported are from the head of Fundy and adjacent territory, but we do have one record for the Shouth Shore, a pair at Matthew's Lake, May 14, (RMT). There was a pair at Starr's Point, May 13 (BCS), another at Sackville, N. B., April 6, and 6 at JLNWA, April 11 (SIT), and still another pair shared a small rushy pond near Wallace with a pair of Blue-winged Teal (RBS). They were present at APBS and Lusby from April 12 to May 22, numbers varying between 6 and 8 and increasing to 14, May 10 (CD).

First WOOD DUCK reported was a male at Port Howe, April 4. Two were at Eddy Marsh, near Amherst, April 8, and 3 at APBS, May 22 (CD, SIT). Four were seen in the Tobecoatic Sanctuary, April 16 (GRB) and three males at Sable River, April 28 (RMT).

A pair of REDHEADS was with a flock of Greater Scaup at Port Philip, April 4, and two pairs were seen by members of the Chignecto Naturalists Club at nearby Wallace Bay, April 26 (SIT). Two were at APBS, April 18 and again on April 28 (CD,SIT).

RING-NECKED DUCKS checked in at APBS (2) and at their usual breeding pond at Teddville, Digby Neck (5), on April 4 (CD,FL&EPS, FLL). Other sightings were of one or more pairs mostly at points along the South Shore from April 12 to May 22. No broods reported to date. Largest number seen was 60, May 26 at APBS (CD).

Earliest sighting of GREATER SCAUP this spring in Northumberland Strait was about 9 at Northport, March 22. Only other report from this area is 80 at Port Philip, April 4 (SIT). In the Bay of Fundy 15 were seen March 30 and a single bird April 13 (EPS). A flock of 200 was at Glace Bay Sanctuary, March 29 (CSM) and 1200 at Bayport, April 4. The late-winter-early-spring build-up of these birds at Three Fathom Harbour never did take place this year and the only report we have from the region is of 40, in Cole Harbour, March 8, (SM,TE,JN). At Lr. Eel Brook (Salt Bay) the three dozen Scaup which showed up March 21, grew to about 200 overnight and dropped off to about 100 by March 23. Numbers continued to dwindle to "only a few" by March 30 and to 3 by April 15 (PRD). At neighbouring Pleasant Lake (Annis River estuary) they hung on a little longer: 20, April 2 to April 12 (MR).

Two probable LESSER SCAUP were seen April 12 at Lusby and 2, perhaps the same birds, were seen again on April 19 and May 10 (CD). Definite Lesser Scaups were seen April 11 at JLNWA, (a pair); and a single male at Sackville, N. B., April 9; also 4, APBS April 23; 3 Wallace Bay, April 26 (SIT). Pairs seen at APBS on April 7, and at Lusby, April 20, (FL&EPS) could be repeat sightings.

Only notable reports of COMMON GOLDENEYES are of the numbers seen in the Northumberland Strait: 295+ between Tidnish and Pugwash, March 22; 400 Tidnish, March 30, and 200, Port Philip, April 4 (SIT).

A BARROW'S GOLDENEYE carefully studied through 'scope at 30 metres was a "first" at Economy for Francis Spalding. Two males at Port Morien, March 29 (CSM) and one, April 1, 4 at APBS are the only other records for this period.

BUFFLEHEADS must have left early this year for numbers reported are low. There were 2-3 males and a female at Port Morien, March 29 (CSM); 8, at Kingsburg, April 12 (EHC); 17, Parrsboro, April 6, and 3 at Bayhead, Cumberland Co., April 26 (SIT); a pair on a freshwater

pond near Grand Desert, April 20, and another very late pair at Parrsboro, May 7 (FLS).

OLDSQUAW remained in good numbers until well into April; 17 at Port Morien and 15 at Louisbourg, March 29, are the most noted along that coast for the past eight years by Dr. Clive MacDonald. There were 50 at Cole Harbour on March 15 (IAM); about 50, March 24, at St. Margaret's Bay (KNK); 75, Barrington Bay and south of Cape Sable, March 26 (SFS); and at Green Bay, April 4-7, there were at least 100 in scattered flocks of a dozen or more (JL&JSC).

Two late HARLEQUIN DUCKS were among the many species seen at Seal I., May 16 (IAM,ELM et al.).

The 500 COMMON EIDERS in Barrington Bay on March 26, were wintering birds, according to Sid Smith, who also reports four migrating flocks west of Cape Sable totalling approximately 250 birds. Ian McLaren found about 290, including many pairs at Seal I., March 17-18, and a total of 1500, April 9, along the Eastern Shore, which is one of their breeding areas. The 500-600 he saw at Hartlen's Point, March 29, and the 400 there April 4 must have been migrants, as would probably be the 40 at Green Bay, April 4-7 (JL&JSC).

Observations of WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS still (vide April Newsletter) remain relatively low: 20, March 26, Barrington Bay and south of Cape Sable (SFS); 35, Mira, March 29 (CSM) and 35, Cole Harbour, March 15 (J&IAM).

SURF and BLACK SCOTERS were seen in good numbers, often mingled. At Green Bay, April 4-7, there were 100+ of the former and 150+ of the latter (JL&JSC). At Chester Basin, April 20, there were 15 Surfs and at Five Islands, May 25, there were two male Surfs with about 15 Black Scoters. The last named species is the most heavily reported this period. Two appeared in the fresh waters of the APBS April 12 (CD,SIT); there were 3 at Hartlen Point, April 13, and 125 at Broad Cove, May 4 (IAM), while 600+ scattered over Green Bay, May 6, appeared to be entirely of this species (JSC). Latest report is of one, a possible cripple, at Barrington, May 18 (BJS).

First HOODED MERGANSERS of the season were a pair at Round Hill in the same spot as last year, according to W. E. Whitehead. A pair was seen by members of the Chignecto Naturalists Club at Wallace Bay on their April 26 field day, and another pair was at Black River, Kings Co., May 18 (BLF).

The winter concentrations of COMMON MERGANSERS had largely broken up and dwindled by late March, the only numbers beyond a handful were: at least 150 in about fifteen flocks around the Lawrence-town circuit, March 3 (JL&JSC); 81+ between Tidnish and Pugwash, March 22, and 210 at Port Philip (mouth of River Philip, April 4 (SIT)).

There is apparently no real shortage of RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS which was indicated by the small numbers reported in our last issue. There were 100 at Port Morien, March 29 (CSM); 1400, carefully estimated, at the mouth of River Philip, Cumberland Co., April 4, (SIT); and at least two dozen in Eel Lake, March 28 (PRD). Smaller numbers, up to 20, were noted at a dozen other localities during late March and April.

DIURNAL RAPTORES

GOSHAWKS at Mahoney's Beach on April 5 (SDF,RDC) and at Hemeon Head on April 27 (DJY) were probably migrating. Others in May were probably settled. The Cohrs were shown a nest near Hopewell by Harry Brennan, and Bernard Forsythe reported 3 nests in Kings Co., with 3, 3, and 2 eggs. There were reports in March of obviously overwintered SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS from Bridgewater, Dartmouth, Eel Brook, New Ross and Paradise. Only 2 were feeder birds, though, perhaps because of mild, open weather (PRD). Birds seemed to be on the move between April 12-14, with sightings from 5 localities.

About 7 sightings of RED-TAILED HAWKS can be added to the 30 winter birds in the last Newsletter. One seemed to be nesting back of Argyle Head on May 3 (PRD), while there were at least 3 territories near Economy in May (FS). An early BROAD-WINGED HAWK was at Pleasant Lake on April 26 (MR), and we have sightings of a least 6 birds subsequently, including 1 "on summer territory" near Economy on May 16 (FS). The few winter sightings of ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS (5 in last Newsletter, 2 more in March) were augmented by probable migrants through the province - 1 near Lunenburg on April 19 (EHC), another on April 26, near Malagash (SIT), and several along the Wentworth-to-Amherst stretch of the Trans Canada in late April (RGSB). A light-phase bird on Seal Island on May 19, was certainly a transient.

A GOLDEN EAGLE was seen once again on Brier Island by Wick Lent on March 28 (report via ARG,RED). Another well-described immature bird was reported by D. and J. Young, visiting from New York, who saw it on April 29, cruising along the cliffs and dunes of Cadden Bay, Queens Co. We had reports of about 16 BALD EAGLES in March and fewer in April-May, as they withdrew to nest sites. R.G.S. Bidwell reports that at his eagle nest at Rivendale, "last year's young still visits in company with the male, though his regular residence is about 5 miles up-river" and also that "the male keeps bringing branches to improve the nest, even though the female has been sitting over two weeks".

Two OSPREYS seen by Lisé Cohrs near Lunenburg on March 21, were abnormally early (I suspect that some previous supposed sightings in winter were of hovering rough-legs over salt marshes). Otherwise they appeared first on April 4, at Cadden Bay (GDP), on April 5, at Lawrencetown Lake (RBS), and were widely reported by mid-April. A power outage in Antigonish in late April was probably caused by an Osprey attempting to nest on a power pole (GM). There is no doubt that this habit is annoying to humans and dangerous to Ospreys. Thus it is a pleasure to read reports by Curtis Chipman and Eric Cooke on the nest-relocation scheme outlined in the last Newsletter. According to Curtis, 5 new nesting poles are in use by Ospreys, and only 1 nest was replaced on a powerline pole. The Nova Scotia Power Corporation and the Department of Lands and Forests deserve full credit for this obviously promising solution to the Osprey problem.

A white-phase GYRFALCON, "very similar...to the bird present at the same location last spring", was being harassed by a Raven on March 29, near APBS (SIT). The Halifax MERLIN was last seen on March 21 (JM) and others made it through the winter at Bridgetown (fide TH) and near Antigonish (RDC,SPF). A total of 7 sightings from April and May could have included migrants; a bird flying west over Sable Island on June 3 had clearly not yet settled down. Most interesting is the report of Merlins nesting in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, where they were observed by a spellbound Erick Greene on several early May mornings. More on these in the next Newsletter. AMERICAN KESTRELS were little reported in winter (previous Newsletter) and we have only a single report from March, a female near Dartmouth

on the 2nd (ISM, JM, et al.). The next were seen in the first week of April at New Ros (KNK), and on April 6, at Economy (SIT). A noteworthy 25 or so were seen on April 7, along the road between Maitland and Cheverie (GED). Subsequently there were reports of about 16 in April and 20 in May.

GROUSE, PHEASANT

A RUFFED GROUSE feeding in the open on March 20, near Wedge Point (PRD) and singles through that month at New Ross (KNK) were our only reports from the end of winter. The first heard drumming were 2 birds at New Ross on April 6 (KNK), and these were followed by reports of at least 21 "pairs" of drumming males, including 7 "pairs" in the Dartmouth area (FLL). Michael Rymer found a nest with 11 eggs near Pleasant Lake on May 15. RING-NECKED PHEASANTS occurred in the Valley sites, but were also seen in the Yarmouth area, near the Lusby Marsh, Moose River Gold Mines, Cherry Hill, and Lower Lahave.

MARSH BIRDS

A SORA at APBS on May 21-22 (possibly heard a week earlier by CD) and another on Sable Island on May 31 (ELM) are our only reports of rails. The wintering AMERICAN COOT on Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, was last seen on April 14 (KNK). One returned to APBS on April 10 and a pair (?) was seen regularly there from April 23 (CD, SIT).

IAM, ed.

SHOREBIRDS

Early migrating shorebirds are best represented in the account that follows because our newsletter deadline artificially breaks the late spring migration into two parts. Late May-early June records will be completed in the next issue.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER were noted at Cherry Hill (1), on April 19, (SJF) in Yarmouth Co., May 6 and May 28 (John Kearney), and at Sable Island where there are a few breeders, May 29- June 6 (IAM, ELM). By contrast, the PIPING PLOVER, one of eastern North America's scarcest breeders (see Cairns and McLaren, 1980, American Birds, 34:206-208) was well documented, beginning with 13 at Cadden Bay, April 4 (GDP). Thereafter, there were 3-5 at Cherry Hill, April 6 (SJF, BH, JSC); 7 at Conrad's Beach, April 14 (3 pairs there by April 20-JSC, JLC); 18-20 at Cadden Bay, April 29 (DJ & JMY); 6-7 (no nests) at Cherry Hill, May 6 (JSC); and 1 at Seal Island briefly on May 17 (IAM, ELM et al.). In their careful and very worthwhile study in Antigonish and Pictou Counties, Roland Chaisson and Stephen Fleming reported 8 pairs on 4 beaches. Nests were established by May 17.

KILLDEER, as usual, entered the province from the north (see my account of the Willet for the reverse), arriving at Economy, March 29 (EPS), spreading into Antigonish Co., by April 3 (1 at North Grant, Spf), to Shelburne and Digby Counties by the 5th (RJC, ELM) and to Yarmouth Co., in numbers much later (2 at Chebogue Point, April 23, CRKA). Several other records from mid-April through late May were from the South Shore and southwestern Nova Scotia. A late wanderer arrived at Sable Island on June 3 (ELM, IAM).

Two GOLDEN PLOVER at Conrad's Beach April 6-9, were definitely the North American species (IAM); 4 at Brier Island on May 9 (RED) were reported without details. The Eurasian Golden Plover (larger and with whitish axillars) is to be expected in Nova Scotia in spring.

A few BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER showed up in April, the first at Kingsburg Beach (1-EHC) and at Cherry Hill (3-SJF) on April 19. A fine flock of 60 was at Matthews Lake on May 14 (RMT), 3-8 were at Seal Island May 16-18 (NSBS), 20 at Economy on May 23, and 24 at the John Lusby marsh on the 25th (SIT) 1-5 a day were at Sable Island May 30 - June 6 (IAM,ELM)

WOODCOCK were sparsely reported, beginning with one at Greenfield, King's Co., March 27 (BLF), followed by the first at Wine Harbour on March 29 (GM). By April 21, there was a nest at Hall's Harbour (MS). At the end of the month residents were in full song and display (noted especially by PRD at Eel Brook).

A very early COMMON SNIPE was at the John Lusby marsh on March 17 (SIT). Most spring arrivals were between April 3 and 11 in Valley and South Shore areas. At Amherst Point the species was regular after April 19 (CD).

WHIMBREL occurred three times: 2 at Cherry Hill, April 6 (SJF); 1 at Cadden Bay, April 29 (DJ&JMY); and 1 at Cherry Hill, May 6 (JSC).

A lone UPLAND SANDPIPER (no details) was reported at Brier Island, April 13 (RD)

SPOTTED SANDPIPERS appeared first in early May (4 at Falmouth, BCS; 1 at Hopewell, JSC, JLC on May 4) and then were sparsely reported throughout the province until they reached full numbers during the third week of the month.

The records of WILLETTS show a clear pattern of arrival from the southwest, spreading to northern Nova Scotia after 2½-3 weeks. 2 at Lockeport (RMT) and a pair at Barrington (BJS) on April 21, were the first arrivals. By May 4, there were 12 at Cherry Hill, 12 at Crescent Beach and 5 at the LaHave Islands (IAM); the next day Robert Turner recorded 150+ at Sable River. Farther north, 1 was at Antigonish Landing on May 10 (RDC,SPF), 2 at Economy on the 12th (FS), and the first ever at the John Lusby marsh on May 25. A migrant flock of 7 was conspicuous at Sable Island on May 30 (IAM, ELM).

Both Yellowlegs were well-reported, beginning with a GREATER YELLOWLEGS at Kelly's Cove on April 9 (John Kearney) and another at Port Joli on April 18 (GDP). After that, the species was recorded regularly throughout the mainland, maximum numbers being: 16 at E. Lawrencetown (Halifax Co.), April 26 (IAM); 4 at Economy, May 4 (EPS); 9 newly-arrived at Argyle River, May 5 (CRKA,PRD); and 15 at Economy May 10 (EPS). 8 or more were still present on Sable Island, May 30 - June 6 (IAM,ELM). The scarcer LESSER YELLOWLEGS appeared April 17 (2 at Lockeport, accompanying Dowitchers the next day GDP). The other records include: 4 at Amherst Point, April 20 and 26; 2 at the John Lusby marsh, May 3 and 10 (CD); one at Antigonish Landing, May 10 (RDC,SPF); and 1 at Pleasant Lake, Yarmouth Co., May 13 (MR).

RUDDY TURNSTONES were reported from Brier Island (1), May 9 (RED) Matthews Lake (1), May 4 (RMT) and Sable Island (%), June 2 (IAM,ELM).

The last PURPLE SANDPIPERS of winter lingered at Crescent Beach (17), April 7 (JSC,JLC) and Bear Cove, St. Mary's Bay, April 9 (CRKA), but the Fox Island (Hfx Co.) flock (small as it was this year) had disappeared by April 14 (KNK).

Breeding LEAST SANDPIPERS were abundant on Sable Island in early June, also, presumably at their scattered mainland sites. I received only five other reports: 2 at Matthews Lake, April 20, (GDP); 1 at

Brier Island, May 5 (John Kearney); 3 at Mahoney's Beach, May 10 (RDC, SPF); 11 at Economy, May 15 (FS), and 4 at Lower Three Fathom Harbour, May 24 (ELM).

Three DUNLIN appeared at Matthews Lake on April 20 (GDP).

A surprising number of spring SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were reported this year, including 2 at Lockport on April 18 (GDP,RMT), 6 at Cherry Hill and 1 at Lower LaHave on April 19; 23 at Matthews Lake on April 20, and 5 at Mavillette Beach, April 21 (John Kearney).

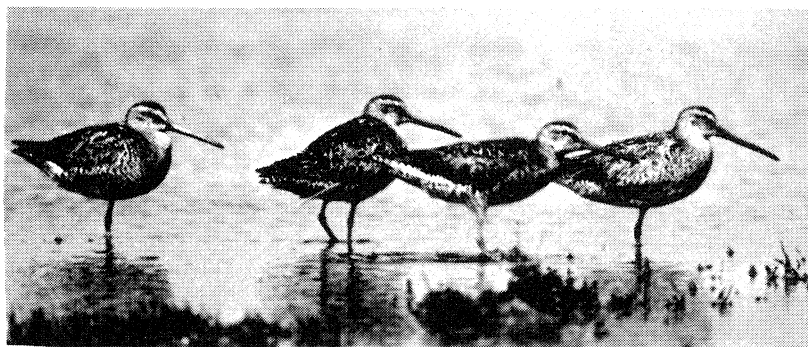
SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS were seen only at Sable Island (3) on May 31 (IAM,ELM)

A RUFF was reported without details from Brier Island, April 18-19 (RD). If substantiated, this is only the second spring record for the province.

SANDERLINGS were scarce. Three at Conrad's Beach on April 20, were in winter (basic) plumage. 10 seen briefly at West Spit, Sable Island on June 2, were certainly migrants.

Only RED PHALAROPES were seen this spring. Most were well offshore, apparently flocking and feeding near the shelf edge or in localized areas of high plancton production. On May 20, 1200 in two large flocks were 5 miles south of Cape Sable (SFS); a week later, not far away, approximately 15 miles south of Seal Island, John Kearney estimated 3000. Considerable numbers were present near Sable Island on May 31, and June 2; small groups totalling 300+ and 175 were in constant motion across and along both spits (IAM,ELM). The mystery of Northern Phalarope distribution remains unplumbed.

ELM, ed.



Short-billed Dowitchers

JAEGERS through AUKS

We have only two reports of jaegers - a LONG-TAILED JAEGER, 14 miles west of Seal Island on April 30 (Raymond S. d'Entremont) and an adult PARASITIC near Bon Portage I., on May 20 (Stuart Tingley)

The ICELAND GULL flock at the Sewer outlet at Point Pleasant Park numbered 40 on March 9-17, but had dwindled to 2 by April 19 (J&IAM). Others lingered later. The latest sightings were of 2 third-year birds of the Kumlien subspecies at Sullivan's Pond on April 29 (FLL), a bird--subspecies unknown, at Clark's Harbour on May 8 (SFS), and a 2nd year bird on Seal Island on May 17 (ELM&IAM). There is only one GLACULOUS GULL report--an immature bird at Port Philip on April 26.

There is nothing one can say about HERRING and BLACK-BACKED GULLS apart from noting their continued presence. However, we have 3 LESSER BLACK-BACK sightings. Stuart Tingley and Peter Vickery found the Digby bird back on its traditional site by December 2, and note that the bird must be in its 11th winter. but it may have found a mate because Eric Mills saw two birds there, both adults, on April 4. Meanwhile, the bird which wintered at the Volvo plant in Halifax Harbour left some time between April 13 and 19 (IAM).

RING-BILLED GULL numbers in the Eel Brook-Abram's River estuaries built up as usual at the end of March, and dwindled again at the beginning of May; by April 10, at least 100 were present (PRD). Stuart Tingley saw 100 adults at Port Philip on April 4. There were up to 5 birds on Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, from mid-April to late May (KNK,FLL). In addition there were 5 at Lusby on April 20 (CD) and 3 at Starr's Point on May 1 (BCS).

The only BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE reported was a subadult near Seal I., on May 20 (Stuart Tingley and party) There was a LAUGHING GULL on Seal Island on May 22- an adult in breeding plumage well seen by Eric Cooke. 6 BONAPARTE'S GULLS were seen at Eel Brook on March 28, and numbers had build up to at least 12 by April 2; they left later along with the Ring-billed Gull flock (PRD). The only other reported was an adult seen at Canal Street, Dartmouth on March 2, by IAM and party. At least 60 BLACK-HEADED GULLS spent March in the Dartmouth area; a bird with a completely black head was seen as early as March 9 (JS&JLC). An adult was still present on Albro Lake, Dartmouth, on May 16 (FLL). There were also small numbers through most of April at Antigonish town sewage plant--the maximum was 3 adults and 3 immatures on April 20 (RDC,SPF).

We have several interesting tern reports. There was a GULL-BILLED TERN at Pinkney's Point, Yarmouth Co. on May 28, and 2 CASPIAN TERNS at Mavillette Beach, Digby Co., on April 21 (John Kearney), and a LEAST TERN at Pond Cove, Brier Island, on May 9, (Robbie & Ronnie Denton), 2 BLACK TERNS at APBS on May 21 (CD) and 2-3 there on May 25 (SIT). The first "Comic" Tern report is from near Seal Island on May 3 (Daryl Amirault), the first definite COMMON TERNS were seen off Cape Sable Island on May 9 (SFS) and the first and only report of ARCTIC TERNS was of 8+ birds migrating past Seal I. on May 18 (ELM&IAM). There were 110 Commons at Lawrencetown on May 11, and 30 on May 12 (EG,J&IAM). However, the first big movement of terns did not reach East Chester until later; there were hundreds there on May 22, and rather fewer the next day (David N. Nettleship).

There was a COMMON MURRE on the North West Arm on March 16 (RBS) and at least two THICK-BILLED close inshore at Queensland on and around March 3 (KNK). Sid Smith saw 20 BLACK GUILLEMOTS, already in summer plumage, in Barrington Bay, on March 26. There were four,

mostly in summer plumage, at Peggy's Cove on March 24 (KNK) and a bird at Louisburg on March 29 (CSM), with scattered sightings subsequently, from around the province, as one would expect of this generally distributed species.

Finally, Dan Banks of Nova Scotia Lands and Forests, brings us up to date on the seabird population of Hertford and Siboux Islands. On June 15, 1979, he counted 88 PUFFINS, 69 RAZORBILLS, 158 Black Guillemots and 875 Great Cormorants there, and Great Black-backed Gulls were "very numerous". No Common Murres or Kittiwakes, it seems.

RGBB, ed.

DOVES, CUCKOO, OWLS

The bulk of the province's overwintering MOURNING DOVES, up to 15 birds, seemed to be living at President Clark's Halifax feeder, well into May. Two at Lr. W. Pubnico, March 14-28 (RsdE) and a pair at Tusket on March 29 (CRKA) appeared to be migrants, as were probably others at Amherst on April 5, Economy on the 6th, and Truro on the 7th, and at scattered localities subsequently. The season's only BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO was at Economy on May 31 (FS).

Among winter reports of owls, we have a belated from Sable Island, where 2 SNOWY OWLS were seen between Jan. 25 and Feb. 2 (AAR). We also received scattered reports of 2 GREAT-HORNED OWLS, 7 BARRED OWLS, 2 SHORT-EARED OWLS (1 near Truro on March 19 may have wintered), and 2 SAW-WHET OWLS (1 of which died in a sleet storm near Loch Lomond in late March). The Cohrs were lucky enough to be shown nests of Great-horned and 2 Barred Owls by Harry Brennan near Hopewell on May 4

The unmatched owling efforts of Bernard Forsythe deserve documenting in full. He writes that, in the Wolfville area this year,

"There has been an explosion in the Meadow Vole population here that has attracted many owls, especially Long-eared and Short-eared, to this area. I have been lucky enough to locate the following nests.

Great-horned Owl - 2 eggs on my artificial site, Greenfield Kings Co., on March 13; 2nd nest with 2 young in an old Redtail nest at Lumsdam, Kings Co., on April 6.

Barred Owl - 4 nests located, one on an old Goshawk nest, the other 3 in boxes that I put up.

Long-eared Owl - 7 nests located. By late May some of these nests had fledged young, others still held eggs.

1 nest on Wolfville Ridge

1 nest at Port Williams

2 nests on Canard Dyke

2 nests on Boot Island

1 nest on Oak Island, Avonport

One nest had 6 eggs, the others 5 eggs each. One of the Canard nests was on an artificial site I put up, the others were in old Crow nests.

Short-eared Owl - 4 nests located, all in unmowed hay fields on the Grand Pre Dyke. These nests held from 6 to 8 eggs each and by late May most of the young had wandered from the nests into the nearby grass.

Saw-whet Owl - One heard calling several times at Lumsdam and also one heard at Grand Pre. However, I could not find a nest."

Bernard L. Forsythe

NIGHTHAWK, SWIFT, HUMMINGBIRD, KINGFISHER

We received one report of a COMMON NIGHTHAWK heard in late April. I believe that most such reports are of singing Woodcock. I know of only 1 Nighthawk that has actually been seen at this season, that reported in the July 1978 Newsletter, and would appreciate if readers could tell me of others, including some that may have been reported earlier, without details. Otherwise, the earliest was a bird on Seal Island on May 16, and a few others followed by the end of the month. CHIMNEY SWIFTS seem gratifyingly common again. An abnormally early sighting was of 2 at Lr. W. Pubnico on April 12 (DJd'E), probably birds that "overshot" their intended destination and that perhaps had been well out to sea. Otherwise the first were 1 at Dartmouth on May 6 (FLL) and 15+ at Wolfville on the 9th. Subsequently they were reported from St. Croix, Hants Co., Mooseland Road, Hfx. Co. Paradise, Antigonish, Halifax, and Truro (where there were 100 on May 14) in numbers that suggest nesting colonies.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS appeared first at Paradise Lake, Yarmouth Co., on May 12 (Robin Rymer), at Eel Brook, Sable River, and the Tusket Islands on May 13, and subsequently in a number of localities.

BELTED KINGFISHERS at West River, Ant. Co., on March 29 (SFF) and at Antigonish and the Head of St. Margaret's Bay on April 3, were probably early migrants. The next sightings were from 6 localities between April 14-26, and they were widely reported thereafter.

WOODPECKERS

The earliest COMMON FLICKER was at Paradise on April 5 (BM), the next ones at Economy on the 9th and Halifax on the 12th. But, the big push into the province was between April 14-22, when a total of 22 birds were reported. There were reports of 1-2 PILEATED WOODPECKERS from 12 localities, including a pair nesting in the same tree as last year near Newtonville, Kings Co. (BLF).

First YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS were in S. W. Kings Co., on April 28 (IAM), and in Dartmouth and at Sunken Lake, Kings Co., on April 29. Ones and twos were widely reported later, but FS had a big day near Economy with 10 on May 12. About a dozen HAIRY WOODPECKERS and 23 DOWNY WOODPECKERS (plus "lots" at Rivendale) were reported during the period, often at feeders into May. BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOES WOODPECKERS are worth documenting in full. A belated report comes from St. Esprit, C.B., of a female on Nov. 28-30 (RM). Later there were: a bird at Amherst Head on March 2 (CD), a female at Lr. W. Pubnico on March 25 (RSd'E), a male and female at East Jordan, Shel. Co., on April 11 (RJC), and a bird at Ben Ebin, C.B., on April 29 (CSM). A pair was excavating in last year's tree near Mooseland Rd., on May 18 (KT), and another pair was found at a nest near River Lake, Hfx. Co., on May 19 by Gareth Harding.

IAM, ed.

FLYCATCHERS through SWALLOWS

KINGBIRDS followed their normal pattern, a few early arrivals, 2 at Round Hill, April 10 (WW), 4 at APBS April 16 (ST), followed by several in mid-May as far east as Dartmouth; 25+ at Seal Island had the place largely to themselves May 20-22 (NSBS). There are no May reports of the GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER this year, a deficiency usually made up for in June. 7 reports of the EASTERN PHOEBE range from April 14 in the S.W. at Port Joli (JA), to May 11 in Pt. Pleasant Park (IAM).

The YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER was on its summer grounds in late May, heard in Bass River the 29th (FS), at East Dalhousie on the 30th (ST). Of the other Empidonax species (easier to find, harder to identify) a very early bird singing, May 4 at Hopewell is reported as an ALDER (JSC), as is one (silent) at Economy, May 16 (FS), and another, again calling, in Yarmouth Co., May 21 (PD). The LEAST FLYCATCHER is first reported from New Ross, May 13 (KK) and Economy, May 16 (FS), neither noted as calling. Observers are urged to include audible as well as visual data in their reports. Both species were at Seal, May 17-18 (IAM et al.)

The EASTERN WOOD PEWEE made normal progress, from Yarmouth Co., May 12 (PD) to Halifax Co. (BS) and the Valley (BF) May 21-24, and Economy, May 26 (EPS). 4 OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS were on Seal I.. May 17 (NSBS), with reports from Shelburne (RC), Kings (BF), and Colchester (FS) Counties the fourth week in May.

HORNED LARKS passed through in March, as they always do, with 12 at Economy on the 28th (FS), 3 at Hartlen Pt., the 31st (FL).

That one swallow doesn't make a spring is a truth one is apt to ignore when the first appears. Early TREE SWALLOWS, an inappropriate two, at Petite Riviere, April 4, consoled JC for the fish that weren't biting. Thereafter, mostly in one's and two's, the species doubtless had a similar effect on a host of observers as far east as Halifax, but even the 65 at APBS on April 14 (ST) moved elsewhere in face of the dismal weather. By month's end, spring seemed less remote and a justifiably indignant "no Tree Swallows in New Waterford as yet" on May 24 (CMCD) comes as a surprise. Early BANK SWALLOWS were in the Valley (J&BM) and Antigonish Co. (SF) by April 20, becoming widespread by mid-May. ST reports c.3000 at APBS May 25.

The ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, a "Seal I. bird", was there May 17 (IAM).

The first BARN SWALLOW was in the SW April 12 (Dd'E), 2 were at APBS April 14, a record early date for the area (ST); by May 4, four were at Economy (EPS) with May 10, a date of many observations. Ten reports of CLIFF SWALLOW are encouraging: an early few in Yarmouth Co., April 21 (PD) with most other reports from the SW as well, but also Wine Harbour (GMCL), and a nest under repair for the third straight year at Bridgewater by May 14 (RMCD). The PURPLE MARTIN was in Yarmouth Co., by April 13 (Dd'E), at Brier, May 7 (RD), and home at Amherst by May 19, when colony numbers had reached 57 (CD).

CORVIDS

GRAY JAYS were duly noted (8 reports): at Port Joli, after a mid-March to mid-May absence, a trio of adults returned to the feeder with a trio of immatures some days out of the nest and feeding on their own - a "menage a trois" suggests JA. Nothing so scandalous in the BLUE JAY reports, most troops dispersing in early spring. RAVENS and CROWS remain with us: eight nests of the former were discovered by BF in the Wolfville area during March and April, one with 3 eggs on May 23 presumably a second attempt.

CHICKADEES through WRENS

Both chickadees are well reported, the BLACK-CAPPED making news with a rare appearance on Seal Island this May, where only the BOREAL is usual (NSBS). 17 WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES is an encouraging number, especially as it includes 7 pairs; only 14 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were reported. The BROWN CREEPER did not escape notice altogether: 2, April 14, in Shelburne Co. (RC), 2, April 19, at

Point Pleasant Park (IAM), and 1, May 18, on Seal (EPS).

An early WINTER WREN in Yarmouth Co., on April 18 (Dd'E), preceded reports for early May further east, for mid-May further north. A singing LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN at APBS, May 25 (ST) is very good news.

MIMIDS

5 MOCKINGBIRDS were reported, two from late winter on (EM,RT), three spring vagrants (FP,MR,MH), none east of Halifax. CATBIRDS were well reported in mid-May, moving northward, with more to come (c. 50 on Seal I. then). 5 BROWN THRASHERS, two successfully overwintering, at Halifax (EM) and Economy (FS), three in the SW in mid-May (MH,VH, IAM et. al.) are a good showing for the species.

ROBINS through KINGLETS

Aside from overwintering birds, ROBINS began to appear toward the end of March, with major incursions on and about April 7 and 14, the first wave including Cape Breton (CMcD). These were preceded by a remarkably early flock of 40-50 "new Robins" at Halifax, March 6 (JSC). A WOOD THRUSH singing and carefully observed at Waverley, May 29 (LS,PP) is noteworthy. A HERMIT THRUSH appeared very early at Kingsburg Beach, Lun. Co., April 4 (EC). April 21-26, saw more in Shelburne, Kings and Colchester Cos. (RC,BF,FH). The few reports of SWAINSON'S THRUSH, which is apt to arrive unobtrusively - one May 15, at Russell Lake (FL) - was highlighted by an estimated 85 at APBS May 25 (ST). A GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH was also there then, seen and singing, for the area's first record (ST). The few VEERY reports are from Albro Lake, May 16 (FL), New Ross, May 22 (KK), with several singing at Tusket (CA); there were also a few on Seal, May 18-20 (NSBS)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS are somewhat under-reported as one searches out new arrivals, but are called abundant at Shubie Park, May 11 (FL); there is no reason to suspect a shortage elsewhere. The first RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET was at APBS April 14, an "earliest yet" record there (ST). CD reports 20 from the same place, April 20, by which time one was in Economy (FH). By mid-May they were reported as common in many localities.

An early WATER PIPIT so far north, at Northport, April 26 (ST), and 2-3 on Seal I. in mid-May are the only reports received.

The BOHEMIAN WAXWING is also meagerly reported: a flock of 12-15 at Bible Hill, March 7 (ER), one at Northport, March 22 (ST), and an "extraordinary bird well-studied by the Purchases" (IAM) on Seal I. for a very rare spring record. BF reports an early CEDAR WAXWING from Wolfville, May 13. The species normally arrives too late for our deadline in many areas, but 20 were at Economy May 30 (EPS). There are no reports of either SHRIKE for the period.

The STARLING, its flocks dispersed, no longer monopolizes the birding scene as, at times, it seemed to, last winter.

FS,ed.

VIREOS

The SOLITARY VIREO was heard singing May 5 by RJC at East Jordan Shelburne Co.; this early bird followed by two reports May 10 (Tusket and Arisaig), three, May 11 (Pubnico, Shubie Park and Laurie Park), followed by eight reports adding up to 40+ Solitaries, very generally

distributed. This sounds like more than usual.

The RED-EYED VIREO was first noted May 17 at Seal I.: on the mainland, 1, May 21 (Yarmouth Co.) was followed by several heard May 22 (vicinities of New Ross and Waverley) and thereafter only five reports to the end of May - still a little early for the usually ample summer population.

Two strays in this group were picked up (i.e. seen) at Seal I., May 17: the PHILADELPHIA VIREO (1) by SIT et al., 2 more seen by Stuart, May 29 at East Dalhousie - a pair "obviously courting", and the WARBLING VIREO (1) by ELM, IAM et al..

WOOD WARBLERS

First dates of arrival for the PALM and the YELLOW-RUMPED(Myrtle) WARBLERS were April 21 (Shelburne Co., RJC) and April 14 (Halifax Co., FLL) respectively. Last year the date was April 22, for both of these early birds. Tufts gives earliest dates for the "Myrtle", April 18, average for 26 years, April 22; for the Palm, earliest April 13, average over 12 years, April 22. For the most part, our early arrival dates were a little late this year, but the classic averages probably stay the same, spring after spring; at least it looks like that from the above data.

The May warblers came in May 6 to May 19, with most species arriving between the 9th and 14th - sixteen out of the twenty species of May warblers during that week. An attempt was made to relate reports of early arrivals with port of preferred entry, but the evidence is too biased to be valid - of the forty-odd contributors, ten were from the Yarmouth-Pubnico region, eleven from Halifax-Dartmouth, four from the Valley and one or two from each of 12 other strategic areas. We have plenty of reports of all 22 species of our native warblers, first arrivals of the May group as follows: BLACK-AND-WHITE, May 9, one each at Yarmouth and Pubnico (PRD,RSd'E), Four each May 10, 11 and 12, very general in distribution; TENNESSEE, 2, May 14, Tusket Islands (BCS et al.); main arrival May 15-17; NASHVILLE, May 11 (FLL), main arrival May 17; PARULA, May 6 (JSC), main arrival May 11-12; YELLOW, May 11 (BCS), main arrival May 13-14; MAGNOLIA, May 10 (RJC), main arrival May 14; CAPE MAY, May 13 (FLS), only two reports, the other from Seal I., May 17 (IAMELM et al.); BLACK-THROATED BLUE, May 11 (JL&JSC), main arrival, May 14-16; YELLOW-RUMPED, April 20 (FLS), main arrival April 26; BLACK-THROATED GREEN, May 9 (RJC), main arrival May 11-12; BLACKBURNIAN, May 14, (BCS&party), main arrival May 15-17; CHESTNUT-SIDED, May 12 (FLL), main arrival, May 16-18; BAY-BREASTED, May 14, (BCS& party), main arrival, May 16, BLACKPOLL, May 12 (ER), main arrival May 15-16; PALM, April 21 (RSd'E) main arrival, April 25-May 2: OVENBIRD, May 11 (RJC:J,S&LC), main arrival, May 12; NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, May 10 (FLL), main arrival (only 3 reports) May 12-16; MOURNING, 4 reports: 1, heard May 19 (PRD) and 1, May 24 (BLF), 1 male APBS May 25 and 3 males East Dalhousie (SIT) May 30; COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, May 12 (RJC,PRD,FLL) May 14-16; WILSON'S, May 14 (FLL), main arrival, (only five reports, most birds seen May 24-5); CANADA, May 14 (BCS&party), main arrival May 23-25; AMERICAN REDSTART, May 12 (MAC), main arrival May 14-16...(A "freak" early date not reported above was April 26, "one Yellow Warbler well seen and heard by Steve Manuel in Halifax" fide James McLaren).

We have two unusual species to report for spring, 1980: on April 13, Anthony Glavin and Ronnie Denton were down Lighthouse Road on Brier I. and found a warbler which answered in every way, the description in Peterson of a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, but although they tried they were unable to get a picture of it. Eric Ruff also reported a Prothonotary seen on May 12 at Cranberry Head, Yarmouth Co..

This also was a sight record, but both were well described. The second bird - or birds - is the pair of PINE WARBLERS, male and female or imm.) at Ann Lee's feeder in Middle East Pubnico; present there regularly since early winter, still present (Mrs. Lee is not sure of the exact date) to the last of March. This is not such a rare bird, but is a very unusual record.

The dates for "main arrival" given above are based on the number of reports received of birds arriving simultaneously in various parts of the province, not on any actual count of birds. Actual counts of the warblers found on Seal I., May 16-17, probably give an idea of the relative abundance eventually of the different species in Nova Scotia for the season. Counts on Seal of 10 and above individuals are as follows: Black-and White 50, Parula 20, Yellow 75, Magnolia 120, Black-throated Green 30, Chestnut-sided 18, Blackpoll 70, Yellowthroat 20, Redstart 25, "Myrtle" 75. A comparison with the numbers found on the Tusket Islands, May 14-15 showed a close correspondence: in both places the Yellow and the Yellow-rumped Warblers were at the top of the lists, but on Seal the Magnolia topped all, was 4th in number at the Tusket. The Yellowthroat, Blackpoll and Black-throated Green were high on both lists.

There is no need to emphasize this, it is obvious now as you listen along the roadsides. "Suddenly," wrote Richard B. Stern on May 19, "the woods are full of warblers and birdsong." They have sorted themselves out and have chosen their territories, and it is now possible to count individual songs, and which do you hear the most? Well, it depends of course, where you are, but in town chances are it is the Yellow warbler, in most of our woods the Magnolia, the Black-throated Green and the ever-present Yellowthroat.

HOUSE SPARROW

The most interesting HOUSE SPARROW seen this season was probably the partial albino at a feeding tray in New Waterford, reported by Clive S. MacDonald. The only other reports we have are from Yarmouth (MWH) and Amherst (CD), both mentioning "small flocks, 10-20 regular, winter through spring".

ICTERIDS

BOBOLINKS seldom come singly, and the males come first - sure enough the season's first sighting was of three males on May 11 at Economy (EPS). Others followed, with new sightings every day up to May 20, distribution general.

As EASTERN MEADOWLARK was seen at Matthew's Lake April 20 (GDP), and again there on May 14 (RMT) - possibly, in fact probably, the same bird.

Another colorful BLACKBIRD, the YELLOW-HEADED, was seen this spring, an immature male, March 2 and 4 at Waverley (Gerald Mac Dougall); was photographed and the photo o.k'd by IAM. A second immature male was seen May 19 at Surette's Island, balancing on a fence wire at about seven metres, identified by CRKA.

Flocks of blackbirds were noted early in March at Bridgetown, "large, noisy" (TH, SLW) and at Noel, Hants Co. (LPM), the latter flock made up of 20 Cowbirds and 10 REDWINGED BLACKBIRDS (8 imm. males and 2 females). They stayed the afternoon of March 8 ("wet, snowing, 20 degrees F") at the Macpherson feeder. These may have been migrants but certainly the flock of 7 at Amherst March 26 (since then 10-20 regularly) were new birds, as birthing males showed up daily after that at Economy (FLS), Paradise (J&BM), New Ross (KNK), Antigonish (RDC,

SPF), Tusket and Yarmouth (CRKA, MWH); this being their usual mode of progression. Redwings were well reported this spring very generally.

An ORCHARD ORIOLE, an immature male, was among the migrants counted on the Tusket Islands May 15 by Barry Sabean and his party. It is curious that, not to be outdone, the Seal Island party (IAM, ELM et al.) also found an Orchard Oriole which was also a young male, on May 17 - Steve Manuel and Bill Freedman were the lucky finders.

The NORTHERN ORIOLE has been well reported, one very early sighting April 21, at Liverpool (RSJ) but most arriving in May - May 10, 1 (male) at Markland, Yarmouth Co. (MWH); 3, May 12 at West Pubnico (DJd'E), 1, May 13 at Eel Brook, May 14 at the Tusket Islands etc., with up to 20 present on Seal I. May 16-17. Twelve reports of the Northern Oriole were received, accounting for 35 individual birds. Females started appearing May 20.

There are no doubts about the RUSTY BALCKBIRDS' time and place of entry, much earlier than the Orioles and at the opposite end of the province. P.J. Austin-Smith counted 30+ at Port Williams, March 28; the next few were seen near Antigonish, Economy, and by March 30, in East Amherst and Halifax County. In all we had 14 reports of Rustys, enough flocks among the singles to make a count of 112. This is more than usual sighted at this time.

Thirty reports of the COMMON CRACKLE is more than usual also, but it is impossible to say how many birds were seen, as many reports just referred to "numbers". The earliest mention of probable migrants is of 12, March 6, at Amherst. Daily reports through March indicate a steady influx; C. S. MacDonald said by April they were in full force at New Waterford; F.L. Lavender reported nesting activity the first week of April. Flocks varied from 100 at Maitland, Hants Co., April 13 (CF) to 20 at Raynardton, Yarmouth Co., April 23, and 10+ at Wine Harbour and Mooseland Road May 18-19.

The BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD is with us in usual numbers, more than usual in New Waterford this spring, according to CSM, who says this observation is confirmed by Frank Robertson. Restless flocks settled briefly at feeders through March, leaving behind a few apparently mated pairs, to keep an eye on the small nest-building birds through April and May - a sinister occupation. "Ian and James McLaren witnessed a curious event on March 9 at a feeder on Ogilvie Street, Halifax. A male House Sparrow perched for about two minutes on a male Cowbird's back, pecking and picking at the Cowbird's nape. The Cowbird seemed paralyzed, with head akimbo and "glazed" eyes (nictitating membrane?) Finally the Cowbird nipped the sparrow, which hopped away, leaving the Cowbird to recover its composure, evidently none the worse...What did it all mean? (IAM).

It is difficult to feel much sympathy for cowbirds, they seem to be so well able to take care of themselves. There is an article in American Birds, January, 1980, page 15, entitled "Reproductive Success of the Brown-headed Cowbird: a prognosis based on Breeding Bird Census data;" sub-titled "Is there an optimal or 'normal' cowbird/host abundance ratio?". This article is well worth reading, and concludes by saying: In summary, it appears that, in most areas, the density of nesting Brown-headed Cowbirds is approximately 3/100 available host nests and that this ratio has remained constant over the last 40 years. The carrying capacity of Brown-headed Cowbirds in any one area is controlled and limited by the total number of available host nests. Thus, for the species as a whole, there is a self-regulating population control mechanism over a large area. It is likely that the total population of cow-birds will continue to increase as it is still expanding its range. However, with the exception of very spec-

ial cases such as Kirtland's Warbler, the cowbird should not be the primary agent of species extinction, although Elliott (op.cit.) has shown that it may have a very significant effect on species which are widely distributed. Bradley A. Lown, Department of Psychology, State University College at Buffalo, 1300 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, N. Y. 14222.

TANAGERS

Very welcome among the spring migrants are the few SCARLET and SUMMER TANAGERS which come our way. Six Scarlet Tanagers were on Seal I. the 17th of May, 5 males and 1 female. Only 2 or 3 were seen on the mainland, one in Sherbrooke, May 20, reported by Frank Jordan to Gordon MacLeod; and a male and "possible female around our house in Waverley May 28", reported by Peter Payzant and Linda Steeves. Two or 3 Summer Tanagers gave special pleasure to the beholders, some of whom think this the prettier of the two species: a first year male, May 17, at Seal I., seen by Ian McLaren, Eric Mills and the rest of their party; 1 or 2 on Berwick St., in Dartmouth, described as "beautiful and healthy, stayed one half hour eating" by Wendie Tay, seen also by Karl Tay, Sandra C. Myers and neighbors. The third Summer Tanager, a male, was at Sara MacClean's feeder in Glace Bay, seen their May 25 (and some days before and after) by many observers including Frank Robertson and C. S. MacDonald, who reported it.

FRINGILLIDS

Our tiny population of CARDINALS does not seem to have been augmented by migrants this spring; only 4 are reported - one on March 28, still at a feeder in Bridgetown (Marion Graves fide Terry Hyson), a male at the Hamiltons', Pubnico, which left there April 14, about a month after the female of the pair was killed by a car - (too bad, we cannot afford to lose any). A third Cardinal "spent a week or so at the feeder of Fulton Lisk at West Middle Sable", reported from there April 21 by GDP. The Cohrs female bird in Halifax was still around at deadline time, having been in residence since Nov. 15, 1979. There was a good migration of the ROSE-BREASTED GROSBK this spring; not only did it arrive on time and in good numbers, but endeared itself to many observers by settling at feeders for generous lengths of time and feeding quietly there just like any old finch or sparrow, no airs, in spite of its gorgeous raiment. The first to arrive showed at Port L'Hebert, April 17, 18, 19, reported by Jeanne Addelson as a "very tired, hungry bird"; dates following show an interesting geographic progression: Apr. 25, Sable River (RMT), also April 25, Liverpool (RSJ), then not until May 12 at Tusket Falls (Robin Rymer, who said it was the first one he had ever seen), May 13, 14, 15, at Eel Brook (PRD), May 15-18, 2 males at Pubnico (E&VH), May 14 at Mooseland Road (WT), May 16-17 at Antigonish (SPF, RDC), and up to 24 of these birds on Seal I. May 17 - plus a few more reports at this time and later from the Valley (J&BM) South Shore (DP) and from Halifax Co.

Our regular stray, the INDIGO BUNTING seems to have come along about the same time as the above grosbeak, April 15 through April 19, fourteen birds in all, two of them females. First to be seen was a male, at RJC's feeder in East Jordan, (one on the 16th at Sackville, N. B., not really admissible here, report sent by Stuart Tingley), the next two, April 26, one at Liverpool (RSJ), one on the Kearny Lake Road, Halifax Co. This latter one, which stayed around for days was identified by Margaret Clark - "a beautiful bird, put on the Rare Bird Alert and seen subsequently by many". The rest of these birds were found mostly in the Yarmouth-Pubnico area, with 4 on Seal, April 17, but WEW had 2, male and female, at Round Hill, May 7 and Don

Pentz, on the LaHave, May 6-16, possibly 2 birds. (One of the Yarmouth Indigo Buntings was at the Nickerson feeder in town and was observed there by members of the May 17 regional field trip - a nice bird to start the day).

One DICKCISSEL stayed over for our report period after spending the winter at SCM's feeder, New Waterford - an immature male, described by Dr. MacDonald as "the bird of the winter for me, stayed until the last week of April and developed full yellow plumage at the end".

The EVENING GROSBEAK left us in May fairly generally. Keith Keddy described its progress at his feeder in Hammond's Plains as "Becoming restless by March 24th; April anywhere from 2 to 17 of these birds at the feeder; May 3, last 2 seen there; May 8, 9, one last heard there". Large flocks (25-50) were seen at Antigonish and Amherst through March, by May only 2's and 3's left; but at Economy Francis Spalding found them "increasingly in evidence around town, this is definitely part of their summer range, now"/ There were stragglers, one at a garden in Truro May 25 (DW), and a male described by CSM "at Ben Eoin, singing on territory a repetitive call sounding much like you hear in your backyard, but very urgent and continuous; obviously trying to attract a mate. This was the first time I had heard this call. We were well back in the woods about 6 miles, fishing."

A few PURPLE FINCHES, mostly singles, drifted into feeding areas in March, seen at Bridgetown (Morses), New Ross (KNK) and Yarmouth (MWH) but their true return began in April when they were noted simultaneously (April 4) at Amherst (CD), Grand Pre (BLF) and Yarmouth Co. - only a few but followed very soon by more and more birds in more and more places until good-sized flocks were singing everywhere (May 2 in Cape Breton).

These stayed around until the end of May, but are now dispersing, heard oftener in woodland areas, less and less at feeders. It is best that the birds should fend for themselves in summer, but some of us are tempted to coax the Purple Finches to stay around, just for that heart-lifting song. And they are generous with it, they do not seem to count over the sunflower seeds.

Our resident birds, the PINE GROSBEAK and the PINE SISKIN have been reported as present as usual, the Pine Grosbeak in small numbers (not surprising at this time of year) and seen only in woody locales; the Pine Siskin, in good numbers - 47 of these birds in eight reports and from more open-country localities, very generally. Flocks were small: April 15-20, 4-6 at Liverpool (RSJ); April 26, 15 at New Waterford (CSM); May 11, 5 at Laurie Park, Halifax Co. (Cohrs) and May 23, 8-10 at Bible Hill, Truro (EER), were the largest mentioned.

The AMERICAN GOLDFINCH is with us all winter, but does also migrate north and south to some extent. Our reports show no particular increase in Goldfinch flocks at Yarmouth, Liverpool and New Ross, but larger differences to the north and east, e.g., at Antigonish during March RDC fed 4 Goldfinches, and on March 30 he and SPF found 30+ at the nearby Landing; at Amherst CD had one Goldfinch, March 18, 15 by May 18; at Truro "numerous" by May 25 in the garden (Whippies); and at Bible Hill ther "up to 10-12 and still coming May 23" (EER); at River Philip, 17 Goldfinches (EB), in Dartmouth, Crichton Park, 100+ by April 14 (FLL); on Mooseland Road a small flock Apr. 19, "very common" in May (WT), and at Wine Harbour 2, April 14, a flock of 17 by April 19 (GM).

The resident CROSSBILLS have both been reported but in very small numbers. There were 15 RED CROSSBILLS on Wolfville Ridge, April 1 (BLF), 1, April 25 and 10, May 31, at Second Peninsula, Lun. Co. (CHC). The only report of the WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL was of 3, seen May 16 at Frenchman Lanke, Halifax Co. by F. L. Lavender.

The RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE identified at his feeder in Dartmouth by Derek Tay last winter returned to visit twice this spring on April 2 and 12. The Tays feel certain it was the same one because of its behavior. One or more of these Towhees was seen at Seal I. May 17 by the NSBS party there at that time.

"IPSWICH" SPARROWS were seen in March, 2 on the 1st at Rainbow Haven (SJP&BH), 13 on the 31st at Eastern Passage Beach and Hartlen Point (FLL). A neat migration wave came April 4-20, reports of 34 of these sparrows seen in succession at Lawrencetown Beach, Cherry Hill Beach, Conrad's Beach, Cadden Bay, and Pleasant Lake marsh, Yarmouth Co. (RBS,GDP,JS&JLC, MR and H.Ross). The SAVANNAH SPARROW proper has been lightly reported; wintering birds seen on into March, but almost certain migrants from April 5 on, first seen on that date at Economy (EPS) followed by small numbers (1-4) seen at Hartlen Point (FLL), Conrad's Beach (JL&JSC), Mahoney's Beach (RDC&SPF) and Mount Denson (BCS). In May only a few more were noted. At present they seem to be scarce, but perhaps have not all arrived yet. Ian McLaren found an extraordinary bird at the far end of Cherry Hill beach on May 4, which was a male Savannah Sparrow with head, chest and flanks rich chestnut brown - like a Bay-breasted Warbler. IAM amused himself by challenging his young companions to identify the bird. None did. The bird was netted (under permit), photographed and released. It would be nice to see its offspring.

Two exceptionally early or over-wintering SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS were present March 1 at Rainbow Haven, according to Sylvia J. Fullerton and Barbara Hinds, two experienced birders; and 1, May 10 at Mahoney's Beach by Roland D. Chiasson who is rapidly becoming one. No others have shown up yet, which is of course expectable.

One only VESPER SPARROW is reported, "singing at Caribou I., Pictou Co. May 24" (RDC&SPF).

The DARK-EYED JUNCO remained abundant at out-of-town feeders in SW Nova Scotia all winter, moved up-province in March at Lower Debert Patricia Caldwell had 12 Juncos, March 12 as a first sighting of the season. These may have been newly arrived birds (from out-of-province but the main wave was reported from the Atlantic side where on March 29, Keith Keddy had a "wave" of spring migrants join his wintering flock of Juncos at Hammonds Plains, by April 2, ELM also noted "arrival of migrants (Juncos) at the Head of St. Margaret's Bay, and that same day at St. Esprit, Sandra Meyerowitz also recorded Juncos "first of season". Juncos are now abundant almost everywhere, perhaps the oftenest seen (and heard) of our small birds, very generally around the province.

The TREE SPARROW, with 1-2 common at feeders throughout the winter disappeared in April. Last dates seen were 4, April 3 at Round Hill (WEW), 5, April 7, at New Ross (Vivian Keddy) and (not our birds, but part of the same movement) 25+ at Cape Jourimain, N. B., April 12 (SIT).

Two scouts among the CHIPPING SPARROWS came here in April, 2 seen April 11, at Round Hill (WEW) and 1, April 27 at Middle West Pubnico (DJD'E). Then from May 3 (1 each at Paradise and Amherst, J&BM,CD) almost every day up to May 17, 1-4 Chippies were seen, reports coming from all over the province, the last two reports of 4 birds at St.

Croix, nesting (MAC) and 6 birds left at Seal I.

This group of Spizella sparrows was completed with the finding of a FIELD SPARROW, the little pink-billed one, April 23, at APBS "feeding on the ground with juncos" (SIT). (Juncos also have pink bills).

Our small splinter migration of the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW went through compactly May 14-17, and involved 15 birds. It was noted at Yarmouth and Pubnico on the 14th (3 at Pubnico, 2 at Yarmouth, the rest at the Tusket Islands (2), Lockeport (1), Second Peninsula (1) and finally Seal I. (6).

The WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, like the Junco, remained at feeders in SW Nova Scotia all winter and began singing - or trying to sing - the last of March. Numbers built up slowly in April until the bird became "common" in May, reported very generally over the whole province and heard once again on every field trip. Unless nesting nearby, it was no longer seen at feeders. Up to 30 were counted by NSBS members at Seal I. on the May 17 weekend.

Like the White-crowned, the FOX SPARROW made a neat and well-defined migration through the province this spring. The spearhead was the one seen March 25, at Middle West Pubnico by TCd'E, followed by a good group of 9, March 27, at Round Hill (WEW). On the 29th, one appeared at Port Joli (JUA) and 2, at Hammonds Plains (KNK). Margaret Clark caught sight of the next 3 on March 31 (and they stayed nearly a month at 12 Crest Road, Halifax). April 1 saw a Fox Sparrow at Wolfville Ridge and 5 at White Rock, Kings Co. (BLF), also 1, at Amherst (CD) and 1, at St. Esprit(SM); April 2, MR saw 1 at Pleasant Lake and RS d'E, 1 at Lower West Pubnico; "first week of April", 1 at Waverley (LS&PP); April 4, 2 at New Waterford (CSM) and April 5-7, 1 at Truro (EER). Two others later were: 1, seen April 27, Head of St. Margaret's Bay (ELM) and 1, May 4, at the LaHave Islands, singing - Ian McLaren wondered if it was "on territory". Here again the dates correspond with those given in Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia "late March to the latter part of April". Whatever the regulating agent is, birds seem to be able to carry on the pattern of their lives unchanged from year to year to year.

Eleven to 12 LINCOLN'S SPARROWS seen is better than average. These were seen April 27 to May 25 from Seal and Tusket Islands to Halifax, Amherst and Guysborough, in which last county, there are doubtless many more of these sparrows, so seldom seen and heard elsewhere.

The SWAMP SPARROW'S first arrival was in the second week of April, the 11th at East Jordan (RDC) and the 12th at West Pubnico (DJd'E), one bird each. No more were observed until 1, April 23 at APBS; 2, April 25, at New Ross and 2 (singing) April 27 in a small boggy pond in the Canning area. Thereafter half-a-dozen sightings were well scattered around the province, and six Swamps were still left on Seal I., May 17.

The SONG SPARROW, as usual the most reported in this group (28 reports of around 150 birds) is also as usual the most difficult to classify as resident or migrant - that is, individual Song Sparrows. So many winter here, and so many try to sing even in the latter part of February, that neither their presence here nor their song is a valid criterion to distinguish one from the other. Bright new plumage, bold behavior and sudden increase in numbers in several places at once are taken together as the safest guides. On the basis of these, our first N. S. wave of migrants this spring came in March

20-25, by which latter date they were "singing everywhere". We have lots of Song Sparrows this year, and they are still "singing everywhere".

Only one report of a LAPLAND LONGSPUR has been received: 1, April 5 on Mahoney's Beach, seen by RDC and SPF.

The SNOW BUNTING stayed on into March at New Waterford (20 there March 1, SCM) and at John Lusby Marsh, still 2 there March 28 (CD). Gordon MacLeod at Wine Harbour saw one flying April 7, and the very last one was one lone Bunting on Mahoney's Beach, seen there April 12, by Roland Chiasson and Stephen Flemming.

PRD, ed.

SEAL ISLAND FIRST ARRIVALS, 1980, FROM ALBAN RICHARD

Fox Sparrow	April 1-6 (2)
Dark-eyed Junco	April 1 (4)
Robin	March 25 - April 6 (6)
Redpoll	April 17-23 (2)
Barn Swallow	April 27 (1)
Hermit Thrush	April 21-25 (2)
<u>Summer Tanager</u>	May 6 - male found dead
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	May 6 - female found dead
Song Sparrow	April 1 (2)



Two Snowy Egrets at Brooklyn, Queen's Co., photographed by Ian McKay on May 2, 1980.

CENTERFOLD PHOTOGRAPHS

or

Idle thoughts About Common Birds

Ralph Connor

Great Blue Herons can be approached fairly well in Florida. I once spent two hours and three rolls of film on a Florida beach, photographing this heron and was able to approach to within twelve feet. In the Maritimes that distance is usually extended to 1200 feet. However, with some patient stalking, a few herons, very few, will permit an approach to within photographic range. In my opinion the most photogenic shots are of the bird wading, feeding and flying.

The circumferential elasticity of this heron's neck is remarkable. I once saw a heron stab a shad that looked to be two pounds, and once the squirming was over, proceeded to swallow the whole fish head first. The neck had to stretch to at least four inches in the longer dimension to swallow such a fish. After a brief rest, the heron continued feeding. All of this, of course, took place outside of photographic range.

Flight shots are difficult to achieve because the composition is difficult to capture. In the picture shown, had the exposure taken place when the wings were down, the bird would look ungainly; with the wings higher, the head would be out of view. If the camera is not swung at the same relative speed as the bird is flying, the image is blurred. Assigning probabilities to each of these variable indicates that the chance of getting a decent shot is very low; therein lies the challenge and the satisfaction.

The heron shown was photographed in Stanhope Bay, P.E.I. Driving along the bay, a distance of two miles, in early morning, I have counted, without the aid of binoculars, sixty to seventy herons. There is at least one large heronry in this area. I photographed from a tree platform in this heronry with a 640 mm lens, peeking out from a piece of camouflage net draped over myself. The best photographic potential presented itself when a Yellow Warbler lit on the upturned toe of my boot. At such range the best of photographic equipment is useless hardware. The Yellow Warbler in this circumstance is a safety hazard, because it is very difficult to keep from falling out of a tree platform when a warbler perches on your boot.

* * *

It was exactly twenty-four years ago that a friend of mine introduced me to crow shooting. With a borrowed twelve gauge double barreled shot gun, I set forth with my friend to a wooded section of a farm where we positioned ourselves to gain cover from the trees, but still had a clear overhead view. My friend was an expert crow caller who could mimic the distress call of the Common Crow. Within a minute he brought in hundreds of crows which continued to fly low circling around our position even after we had fired the first shots. I was so overwhelmed by this display that I missed every shot and, not until my third outing did I shoot a crow. This sort of activity was favourable to the farmers whose land we used because the crow preyed upon crops and fresh plantings. We knew not enough of crows habits to realize the benefits of their presence in farm areas. I have since lost track of my friend, but would speculate that he is now an avid bird watcher, whose calling skills for crows, ducks and geese have now been extended to include all manner of species.

The crow has always held a strong attraction for me. The obser-

vations of pet crows flying along beside a girl riding a bicycle and landing on her shoulder; pet crows that go on canoe trips with their owners; large flocks of crows migrating short distances along our coast in the fall, the large flocks that gather in the Lake Loon area; the crows that fly low through our trees in spring robbing nests; crows having their nests robbed--all of these and more hold a fascination for me.

Although most of us do not condone the persecution of crows, many of us fail to be excited by the constant year-round presence of this bird. Just think for a moment of spending a day, bird watching and never hearing or seeing a crow. I have presented here a portrait of a crow which restores some of the dignity lost through blasts of shot and common presence.

* * *

The Water Pipit is classified in my book as an IF bird - If I had the time and money, and IF I did, a trip to Baffin Island to photograph this bird on its breeding ground in alpine meadows would be well underway. Now this does not mean nest shots, but rather the normal day to day activity in that remarkably beautiful location. The location for the shot shown is certainly not drab, providing one might remove the sheep droppings and other litter around the beach at the west side village on Seal Island.

The color slide from which the black and white print was made is virtually worthless because it is so under exposed that the bird is barely discernable. However, examination with bright light and a 10x magnifier showed a reasonably sharp image, and enough of an image to make copying worthwhile. Apart from that, the main fault with the picture is the reflection near the bird's right leg which shows up as a white elliptically shaped mark. Such a white area exerts a strong attraction to the viewers eye and completely ruins the picture.

Comparison of this picture with field guide illustrations shows a smaller white throat patch, and only a hint of an eye stripe. Further, there is a definite eye ring which is not as emphatic in any illustrations I have seen. The legs are definitely dark brown. The time of year is October.

* * *

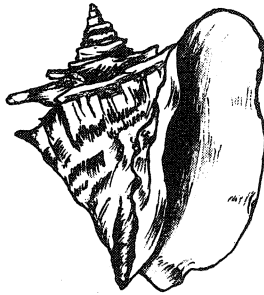
Opposite the photo of the Great Blue Heron is a gray scale. This scale is quite useful in estimating the desired exposure when photographing birds or anything else. The scale is numbered from 0 to 9. Each division represents a full F stop difference in exposure. Most light meters read as a normal value zone 5, which if reproduced correctly here, is middle gray. If you measured the light with an incident light meter, this is the tonal value you would get in a print. If you used a reflected light meter on green foliage, you would obtain the same value. This is useful, since one can, at this season, take a reading from green grass with a reflected light meter and know that the value obtained is the same as that with an incident light meter or the middle gray or neutral gray of zone V. This means that when photographing a white bird on black and white film, the white bird will appear gray, providing we have taken the light reading correctly and included only the light reflected from the bird and not from the surrounding area. If we want the white bird to appear lighter or darker than middle gray, the exposure can be changed accordingly.

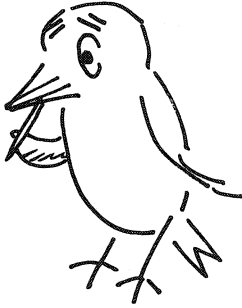
With color film a similar scale can be constructed or visualized for each color. For example, suppose we want the sky to appear dark

blue. The meter reads a zone V blue and the more we underexpose, the darker the blue of the sky becomes, until finally it registers black on the film. It is a worthwhile exercise to expose ten slides and construct a scale, or composite scale from several colors in a scene to aid in visualizing future exposures. I very seldom use the exposure indicated by my camera meter for other than a reference on which to base an increase or decrease in exposure. The exception to this is with heavy overcast or a foggy day, when the evenness of the light eliminates some of the problems encountered with a reflected light meter. For a camera with automatic exposure, it is only necessary to use the shutter manually or to change the ASA film dial.

Since most camera meters and hand held meters are battery operated and give erroneous readings when the batteries weaken, it is advisable to memorize the settings that come enclosed with each roll of film. Some thought about the subject you are photographing and the normal exposure expected for that subject is worthwhile and allows one to contend with a defective meter.

The main purpose for including the gray scale on these pages is to check the differences encountered between the original photos and the reproduction on these pages. However, the concept described above is very useful for visualizing the finished photo and the effect of exposure changes.





The following QUIZ, composed by Phyllis Dobson, appeared in the Newsletter thirteen years ago. Reprinted here, it will afford an opportunity for old-time readers to measure the improvement in their birding skill, and newer members to list their progress to date!

1. Which of these grebes is called "chicken-billed"?
 - (a) Horned
 - (b) Pied-billed
 - (c) Red-necked
 - (d) Western
2. Which of our visiting white herons has black legs and yellow feet?
 - (a) Little Blue
 - (b) Common Egret
 - (c) Snowy Egret
 - (d) Cattle Egret
3. The term "skunk head" is applied to the
 - (a) Oldsquaw
 - (b) Eider
 - (c) Bufflehead
 - (d) Surf Scoter
4. The best way to distinguish a Pigeon Hawk from a Sparrow Hawk is
 - (a) size
 - (b) color of legs
 - (c) color of back
 - (d) habitat
5. A shore bird which is close to extinction is the
 - (a) Buff-breasted Sandpiper
 - (b) Whimbrel
 - (c) Golden Plover
 - (d) Eskimo Curlew
6. A sandpiper which winters regularly in N. S. is the
 - (a) Spotted Sandpiper
 - (b) Dowitcher
 - (c) Purple Sandpiper
 - (d) Knot
7. A shore bird with an upturned bill is the
 - (a) Dowitcher
 - (b) Hudsonian Godwit
 - (c) Hudsonian Curlew
 - (d) Willet
8. The legs of Herring Gulls are
 - (a) flesh colored
 - (b) black
 - (c) yellow
 - (d) red
9. A tern which breeds in North America and winters in the Old World is the
 - (a) Roseate Tern
 - (b) Arctic Tern
 - (c) Common Tern
 - (d) Caspian Tern
10. Which of the following birds nest in an underground burrow?
 - (a) Cliff Swallow
 - (b) Ground Dove
 - (c) Kingfisher
 - (d) Chimney Swift
11. Which woodpecker can most accurately be termed a ground-feeding bird?
 - (a) Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
 - (b) Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker
 - (c) Downy Woodpecker
 - (d) Flicker
12. The Kingbird is most closely related to the
 - (a) Northern Shrike
 - (b) Catbird
 - (c) Olive-sided Flycatcher
 - (d) Red-eyed Vireo

13. "Quick, three beers" is a rough paraphrase of the song of the
 (a) Black-capped Chickadee (c) Olive-sided Flycatcher
 (b) Wood Pewee (d) Black-throated Green Warbler
14. Which of these swallows normally arrives first in the spring?
 (a) Barn (c) Tree
 (b) Bank (d) Cliff
15. The best place to look for Boreal Chickadees is
 (a) alder thickets (c) orchards
 (b) spruce woods (d) deciduous forest
16. Our second smallest bird (to the Hummingbird) is the
 (a) Winter Wren (c) Yellow-throat
 (b) Golden-crowned Kinglet (d) Red-breasted Nuthatch
17. A bird whose white outer tail feathers serve as a field mark is the
 (a) Kingbird (c) Water Pipit
 (b) Bobolink (d) Catbird
18. A bird whose only known breeding territory is in Nova Scotia is the
 (a) Boreal Chickadee (c) Ipswich Sparrow
 (b) Acadian Flycatcher (d) Puffin
19. Two birds whose songs resemble each other are
 (a) Hermit Thrush and Water Thrush
 (b) Nashville and Tennessee Warbler
 (c) Fox Sparrow and Sharp-tailed Sparrow
 (d) Swamp Sparrow and Song Sparrow
20. In choosing binoculars the best ocular-objective ratio is
 (a) 6x3 (c) 10x100
 (b) 8x40 (d) 7x14

ANSWERS ON PAGE 192

BALD EAGLES

The Wildlife Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests is continuing a program of monitoring seasonal movements of Bald Eagles. Eagles captured in winter as well as fledgling birds have been tagged and banded to permit identification at a distance.

It would be appreciated if anyone sighting an eagle would check for any tags and if a marked bird is observed, the following information should be recorded: date, place of observation, location of tag on bird, colour of tag, any code on tag, general description of plumage, observer's name and address.

Reports of sightings may be sent to: P. J. Austin-Smith, Wildlife Division, P. O. Box 516, Kentville, N. S., B4N 3X3, or contact any of the Lands and Forests subdivisions offices which are listed below:

Antigonish, Antigonish County (Bob Bancroft, Regional Biologist).

Baddeck, Victoria County (Dan Banks, Regional Biologist).

Truro, Col. Co., (Ross Hall, Regional Biologist).

Sydney, Cape Breton County (Dave Harris, Regional Biologist).

Waverley, Halifax County (Andy MacInnis, Regional Biologist).

Yarmouth, Yarmouth County (Paul Tufts, Regional Biologist).

IF FISHES FLY CAN BIRDS SWIM

Phyllis R. Dobson

When you consider the origin of birds from lobefishes which successfully outlived so many other early creatures by gaining the ability to live on land while retaining the power to live in water, it is surprising that birds did not strive harder to continue making the best of both worlds. As it happens evolutionary adjustments continue to divide land from water type birds ever more emphatically although this on-going process is faster for some species than for others.

Some of our birds have lost the physical equipment suitable for life in the water. To quote from The Birds, by the Heinroths, 1958, "When a land bird falls into the water it gets very frightened and threshes about in an attempt to escape. If it cannot get out at once, the feathers soon become sodden; the whole bird becomes water-logged as the space between the plumage and the skin becomes filled with water instead of air. The unfortunate creature gradually sinks lower, becomes stiff and cold, and eventually dies."

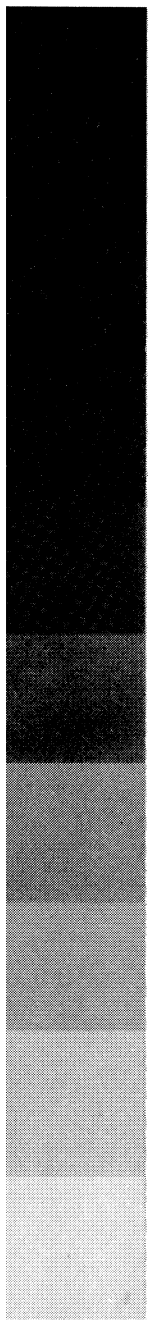
However, exceptions do occur. In the past few years we have received reports of land birds swimming, and it has seemed worthwhile to try to find an explanation for these occurrences - why they have not been noted more often or why they appeared at all. These are the stories:

Great Blue Heron. "In 1944 or 1945 on Lake Ontario at Grimsby, I saw a Great Blue Heron swimming. It landed on the water and swam like a Mute Swan, with curved neck, for several minutes - it was an unforgettable sight. I once read that there are ancient Egyptian representations of this behavior and some people doubted if it really happened. It does, I've seen it." (C.W. Helleiner).

Marsh Hawk. "We noticed a large male Marsh Hawk flapping and hovering over the marsh at Lower East Chezzetcook, September 20, 1979. Within a minute or two we saw another equally large hawk and a smaller one. All appeared to be gray males from a distance. Later on we saw these birds swimming in marshy pools, and found it hard to believe. They propelled themselves around somewhat jerkily and looked very much like gulls in the manner they sat on the water (lightly, tails high) and in general coloration. One bird rather clumsily dived into a pool from only a few feet up - head first, not feet first like an Osprey. We were astonished, and made absolutely sure of our observations by watching the birds take off again, display their rump-patch, hover and do all the things Marsh Hawks are supposed to do." (Keith and Vernon Keddy).

Osprey. "Early in the morning of August 8, 1965, we were driving along the shore of St. Patrick's Channel between Whycomagh and Baddeck and saw a bird perched in the branches of a dead tree, lying in the water. We stopped and got out to put the binoculars on it, and as we did two birds flew in and landed in the water beside the floating snag. These were a Great Black-backed Gull and an Osprey. They proceeded side by side, the gull gliding along with scarcely a ripple (as only gulls can do), dignified and erect, and the Osprey eagerly forging along beside it with tremendous effort and comotion. It was rowing with its wings, using both simultaneously so that it surged up and down almost as much as straight ahead. However it kept abreast of the gull for about fifty yards, when the unlikely pair took off and flew out of sight...Only, to our great delight, to return shortly to their original starting point and repeat the whole ludicrous performance. This they did three or four times, finally disappearing for good. The bird we had stopped to identify, turned out to be another Osprey, which, beyond a casual glance, had paid no









attention to the goings-on of its clownish relative." (M.W. Hilton, M.E. MacIntyre, S.C. Hilton, P.R. Dobson).

Brown-headed Cowbird. "In July, 1972, in Huntsville, Ontario, I was looking down on the Muskoka River from the bridge on the main street, and saw a Cowbird actually swim. It was fly-catching and the insect dropped into the river. The Cowbird settled on the water, picked up the insect and a few seconds later took off. It had its tail cocked, looking remarkably like a Dipper swimming. I suppose most songbirds have a swimming technique "hard-wired" (as the computer people put it) in their cerebellar circuits, and Dippers are the only ones that regularly use it. Along similar lines I have seen young Black Ducks (no longer downy, but still with the mother) diving in the manner of a Goldeneye or Scoter, so they obviously have that ability, but seldom make use of it." (C. W. Helleiner).

There is suprisingly little reference in the literature to this phenomenon of land birds swimming. There are, however, elaborate descriptions of the mechanisms whereby water birds can swim. Ducks, for example, are able to fold their wings into their plumage in such a way that, on or under the water, they remain dry. They float high as the space between plumage and skin is filled with air and their bones are hollow - consequently the specific gravity of the whole bird is low (A water-logged duck will still float, but almost submerged, specific gravity 0.96 for a Mallard). Ducks swim with their feet, as do gulls, equally high-riding, wings out of reach for use. Diving ducks have to keep their feet working to stay under water. Their leg-bones have become modified, lengthened and narrowed, and their muscles very strong.

Loons and Grebes also have powerful leg muscles strung on a shortened femur and long tibia. Like ducks they use their feet to swim - use them alternately. It is said the only aquatic bird to swim with both feet simultaneously is an enraged Mute Swan, its tremendous surges forward, water foaming at the breast, serving as a very efficient threat.

Cormorants propel themselves underwater with their feet and sometimes wings also, for speed, but they are not able to keep dry, so do not rest on the water, but emerge to light on some sort of perch to dry out and rest after fishing. Other pelagic birds use only their wings in diving, and one, the Penguin, has allowed its wings to turn into paddles. It has also given up hollow bones and floats so low it can use its wings (paddles) to swim on the surface of the water as well as superbly beneath it. (Most of this information has come from The Birds, Oskar and Katharina Heinroth, 1958).

Of the shorebirds, Phalaropes are deep-sea birds some of which winter afloat. Yellowlegs, especially Greater, frequently swim, if the wading gets too sticky. The downy young of many species will take refuge from possible danger by diving and swimming under water. In fact, it is probably true of shorebirds swimming, as the Duchess said to Alice "All of 'em can and most of 'em do", even if not often caught in the act.

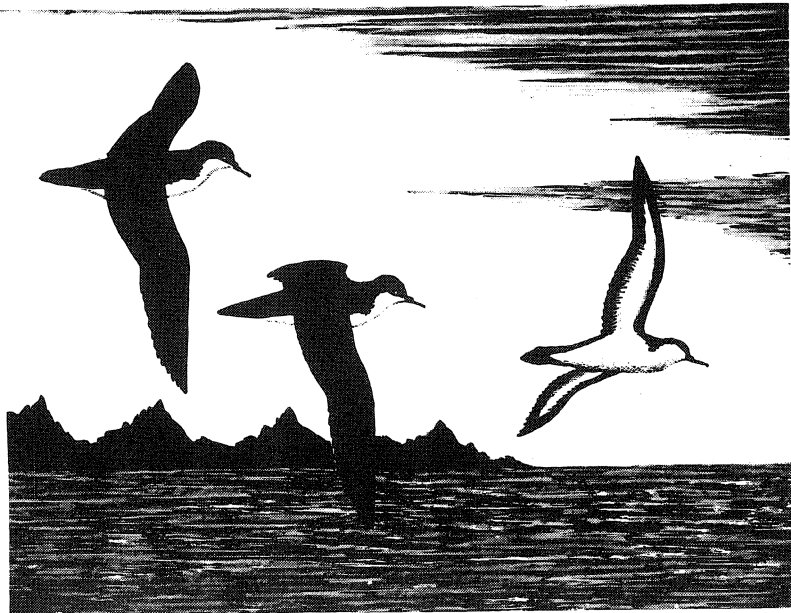
We have only one passerine bird which dives for its food, the Dipper or Water Ouzel. It feeds on underwater plants, small fish and insects. According to Bent's Life Histories (1964) it swims like a duck, using its feet as paddles, or flaps along the surface with the help of its wings and picks up floating insects. It also runs around on the bottom of rapid streams and swims or rather flies under-water in search of food. It has strong breast (wing) muscles and also strongly muscled long legs (for its size - thrush size) to hang on to slippery rocks. It has little scales for nose stoppers, dense plumage, feathers curled like a duck's for waterproofing, and a very

large oil sac at the base of its tail used when preening for further protection.

Above them are the characteristics necessary if you are a bird and wish to swim - on the surface, scarcely ones possessed by our four adventurous species. The best you can say for them is that none of them mind getting their feet wet; the heron and the Osprey live by fishing, ankle-deep or total immersion; the Marsh Hawk presumably favors damp ground and even the Cowbird, Bent says, prefers to roost through the night in "brushy swamps or cattail marshes".

Further investigation reveals that in one old classification, herons and hawks are put in the same Order as Cormorants; they share a number of primitive characteristics of their partially aquatic common ancestor, which could include ability to swim. (Birds and Their Attributes, Glover Morrill Allen, 1925). Both Marsh Hawks and Great Blue Herons have long legs and strong flexor muscles as found in swimming birds. In the case of the Osprey, it was using its wings when swimming, but the Osprey is a noted flyer and habitually rests on the wing, undoubtedly its more familiar source of motive power.

It seems most probable that the hawks were elaborating a bathing procedure; that is, the Marsh Hawks and the Osprey started by taking a bath, splashing the water about, ducking under it, became playful, and simply got carried away. In the case of the Osprey, the role the attendant Great Black-backed Gull remains a mystery. It was probably the reverse; the Osprey was attendant upon the gull and, like a mischievous child, refused to be shaken. The Cowbird was after a favorite goodie. The Great Blue Heron? Whatever the motive for drawing up his legs and going for a water-borne promenade, he and the others must have been able to tap that cerebellar circuit (as Chris surmised) where the ability to swim was "hard-wired", and make use of it for a little time, just for sheer, clear, having fun.



SPRING 1980

GARDEN BIRDS
(an anniversary year project)

- March 6: First Song - sparrow singing. Junco's and a flock of 40-50 new Robins, noisy and active, singing, gobbling and fighting.
- March 8: The Brown Creeper, finishing a meal at the suet log, flew to the ground to pick up the spilled pieces. He looked most peculiar - the exceptionally long tail trailing behind him in the snow. First time I've seen a creeper flat on the ground!
- March 10: Even the pigeons are getting into their spring thing - a four way pigeon fight today, quite vicious for a while.. Fortunately they didn't stay long - they can't eat sunflower seeds and I placed the small seed well underneath bushes where pigeons never seem to go.
- March 11: The male House Sparrows are looking very spruce with polished copper ear pieces, very white cheeks and black bibs. The resident flock has remained stable at about 30 which I hope will not proliferate to 60 or more by fall. They nest in the lamp standards on the street and seem to have up to three broods a year. They change partners too!
- March 14: The four Purple Finches which arrived on Feb. 17, only stayed around a few days. But today a new four-some arrived - one male and three females. Bitterly cold, with a strong gale blowing, all the birds were very hungry - nuthatches, chickadees, creepers, finches (purple and gold) grosbeaks, whitethroats -- the inescapable pigeons, starlings and English sparrows and, of course the towhee and cardinal.
- March 19: Out with the flu again -- or perhaps the sting in the tail of the first bout -- never have I appreciated the feeders more. Window bird-watching must be a life saver indeed to the incapacitated. The activity waxes and wanes, but the behavioral variations never cease to be fascinating - and no commercials.
- March 21: I notice that the cardinal enjoys nibbling at the forcythia buds.
- March 25: The Goldfinches continue to attend the "droll Yankee" feeder and some are almost in summer plumage now -- developing the little black faces!
- March 28: A Song Sparrow singing up and down the street today.
- March 30 Awoke at 6:30 to hear a Robin in full spring song. He kept it up for twenty minutes or so and then was replaced by the Song Sparrow. All this persuaded me to get up at 7:00 -- on a Sunday! -- to see what else might be about.
- April 1: A small wave of Juncos today - most active in bright "tuxedo" plumage. They seemed to be trilling from every tree early in the morning.

- April 3: The first Fox Sparrow came today, with half a dozen more Song Sparrows and a handful of new very red Robins
- April 4: A Song Sparrow was singing at 4:00 a.m.!!--in the dark!! soon followed by a mini dawn chorus of Robins, whitethroats and chickadees. Haven't yet heard a Fox Sparrow song this year.
- April 6: Hearing a most unusual "song" I grabbed the binoculars and discovered a chickadee displaying -- hopping around the bare branches of the maple tree on stiff legs, wings fluttering madly - all feathers vibrating. He uttered a long, high chattering song, lasting over a minute -- somewhat reminiscent of a purple finch song, but higher in tone. After a short rest he flew to a pine tree and started over again. He wasn't having much luck, no other chickadee was in sight as far as I could see.
- April 8: No sign of the Towhee for two weeks! Expect he has gone north? - or west.
- April 10: It seems to me that most of the early arrivals are not our summer residents, but birds on their way farther north. Little waves arrive, singing lustily, stay a day or two (presumably to stock up) and then are gone and silence reigns until the next flight. This would explain the "on and off" days of Robin, Whitethroat and Song Sparrow songs.
- April 11: Heard the first Flicker early this morning. The Gold finches are singing daily, as well as "zipping" constantly. The sole Fox Sparrow remains performing his backwards shuffle in the dead leaves at the bottom of the garden. I haven't heard him sing yet.
- April 16: The towhee is still around - today makes the five month "anniversary" for both cardinal and towhee. In the pale early morning sunshine, there arrived a late flock of Evening Grosbeaks, very yellow, and half a dozen noisy bright blue Bluejays. These made a spectacular contrast with the Cardinal which, 'tho a female, has become quite red, especially in the bill and tail. More reminiscent of a tropical rain forest than a sober Halifax garden.
- April 18: Cardinal sings her "whoop-whoop" song early a.m. (5:00!)
- April 19: A pair of Purple Finches ate their breakfast at the dining room window feeder. The male was quite tame, steadily breaking and eating sunflower seeds 6 inches on the other side of the window near where I was sitting. The female seemed much more restless, flicking about the tree branch attached to the feeder, raising and lowering her crest and giving the impression of great wariness. Both were very bright in plumage, the female particularly, looking like an miniature female Rose-breasted Grobeak, I scan every Purple Finch closely, hoping for a House Finch, but could not feel disappointment in the face of such brave colours and joie de vivre.

- April 25: Huge flocks of grosbeaks descending--have filled the window feeder(a hopper type which takes about a quart of seed) three times in two days. They must soon be off to their (so far) secret nesting areas. No one I know has ever heard the Evening Grosbeak sing, other than call, 'tho one authority at least states they have a "short warbling song".
- April 27: I have noticed that whereas the grosbeaks and Purple Finches will sit on the window feeder and enjoy their sunflower seeds, the B.C. Chickadees grab and fly to an adjacent tree. Perhaps this is because they take so long to get the seed open. In fact, according to some knowledgable treatise I read somewhere or other, the amount of energy expended by a chickadee to open a sunflower seed compared to the amount of sustenance received is below the accepted ratio; they must just like them so much it's worth the effort!
- May 4: With warmer(!) weather the garden birds have become thinner on the ground. In the last few days there has been the occasional brilliant Purple Finch contrasting with the equally brilliant Goldfinches. I hear rather than see the Robins and Flickers and the Blue Jays are fewer in number.
- May 9: At last --a warbler! A Myrtle (they may be Yellow-rumped on the official lists, but they'll always be Myrtles to me--it's not a question of bloodymindedness; merely aesthetics) Anyway, he sang up and down the street all day, giving all the family a spring feeling.
- May 12: Our local Chipping Sparrow began his incessant trilling today. For the past few years a pair of Chippies have nested nearby, bringing their somewhat confusing young to the garden in September. Twelve Blue Jays dashed about the garden--it's past time they were paired off and away to nest, but they seemed more interested in fighting off the Goldfinches at the feeder. Our big feeders are taken down now but I keep on a few small ones to tempt the spring migrants--in years past Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and White-crowned Sparrows have been spring visitors. I live in hope!
- May 14: A bitterly cold evening--only the hardy Robins sing as twilight approaches--presumably the Myrtle, Chipping Sparrow and (just here) Parula that were singing at noon are numbed by the cold!
- May 16: House (English) Sparrows eat forcythia petals--I had thought it was the bugs on the shrub that attracted them, but caught sight of a fat male H. Sparrow with yellow petals spilling from each side of his bill.
- June 10: On returning from a birding trip far away, I find that everything has burst into bloom and leaf and, as usual, when that happens the birds are not so visible. I'm told that the Cardinal is still around, her colouration clashing with the dark pink of the Japanese Almond blossom. Summer is almost upon us and time for feeder watching is more or less over until nesting is over and the autumn migration makes things exciting again.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

February 23 - Halifax County - Eastern Shore

Rained out

March 22 - Cape Breton - Glace Bay Area

Seven members of the Cape Breton branch of the NSBS took part in the first field day of 1980. The day began fine and even sunny, as we jogged along, first encountering a feeder in Donkin that was doing a brisk morning business. At Schooner Pond, one of our eider-finding places, the drift ice was in solid, so no birds. However, we did have a gruesome reminder of the Kurdistan disaster of a year ago. (It seems as if I'll never stop talking about the Kurdistan) There was a good deal of seaweed beached in the cove at Schooner Pond. Mixed in with the weed were balls of Kurdistan oil. These balls were absolutely cylindrical, about as big as large grapefruit, and almost as firm as a rubber eraser. There are hundreds there, perhaps thousands. For all I know they may be everywhere along the coast. Nothing would be easier than to pick up this oil in its present condition, but it will liquify when the sun gets stronger.

Morien Bay provided a nice selection of sea ducks and a quick glimpse of a large flock, fifty at least, of Dovekies in rapid flight, headed north.

At Morien Bar, there were a couple of hundred geese, just managing to find some grazing through leads in the ice. There were also Longspurs and Snow Buntings, predictably, in the marsh grass. Back at the Sanctuary were treasures; a beautiful Bufflehead drake in full dress with three females, Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, scaup and black duck. The steam from the heavy water plant was very heavy, which obscured our view, so we weren't able to see large numbers, although there are several hundred blacks there, wintering, and a day or two earlier, I saw an American Wigeon, and two mature Bald Eagles that were busy on the shore butchering what looked to me like a rabbit, though it could have been a cat. A Kingfisher flew over, and we had a glimpse of at least one Shoveller.

There was too much mushy snow in the woods to do much travelling, but at this time of year nearly all the treasures are visible along the shores in any case, and we had twenty-seven species--just; since we only found one Iceland Gull and the European Black-headed gulls donned their black heads about March 16 (the heads turn almost over night). So, they will soon leave us.

All in all, a very pleasant day, with sun, then a bit of drizzle, but not too cold, and a list that ranged from Great Cormorant to Snow Bunting.

Sara MacLean



April 27, 1980 - Wolfville Area

A few days earlier, the "leader" was informed that our meeting-place, the SAVE-EASY store, had changed its name to WADES several months before! (the "leader" had not noticed!). Therefore, I was worried about this being an ill omen, but somehow 24 stalwart birders managed to find one another; they and their two dogs formed a caravan of eight cars, and away we went.

The morning's conditions were considerably less than ideal, especially out on the Grand Pre dykelands which were our first target --but overcast skies plus steady drizzle and a cool breeze did not prevent us from seeing several Short-Eared owls (known to be breeding presumably in response to high densities of voles in our area) and a couple of beautiful cock pheasants. We all had a distant and uncomfortable look at Boot Island, known for nesting colonies of gulls, double-Crested Cormorants, and Great Blue Herons. Later, in a nearby salt-marsh, we saw a Greater Yellowlegs, and some were fortunate to see a mink running along a dyke (is it permissible to mention a non-bird here?). A low-built crow nest with six eggs of quite varied colours was another highlight.

The rain and wind pushed us on to the Canning area, where we visited a large pond first--there was a handful of ducks of four species (American Wigeon, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, and Ring-necked Duck), but a pleasant surprise was a flock of perhaps 150 Tree Swallows, alternating between aerial acrobatics over the water and resting on power lines. Then a small boggy pond produced a couple of singing Swamp Sparrows before we retired for lunch--Merritt and Wilma Gibson provided their home and a fire and delicious chowder, etc. for our rejuvenation.

In the afternoon we first visited Cyril Coldwell's farm at Gaspereau. There we saw his raven-trap and a few caged ravens--also in cages were Great Horned Owls, Bald Eagles, and a Turkey Vulture, all of these being rehabilitated from various injuries or ailments.

Finally Bernard Forsythe showed us first a raven nest, where we coincidentally had a good view of an early Osprey. Then he led us up to Lumsden Reservoir for a Great Horned Owl nest. While he showed us his climbing skill and unconcern for heights in getting to and banding the month-old nestlings, we were treated to quite a spectacle of about 15 crows mobbing one of the parent owls--they all went directly over our heads to provide a lasting visual and vocal memory. Near the nest-tree we also found regurgitated pellets containing hair, jaws, and other broken bones of snowshoe hares, one of the owls' favourite prey.

All in all, a fairly good day was had by most of us--one exception was the party who unfortunately became locked out of their car and had to miss the afternoon's events. My species-count for the day was 40 (plus the mink).

Our hearty thanks go out to the Gibsons and Cyril and Bernard, and we look forward to Bernard's nest-tour in June.

Jim Wolford

May 17 - 20, 1980 - Seal Island Trip

At 3:00 a.m. on May 17, under clear skies, twelve bird watchers gathered on the government wharf at Clark's Harbour to sail to Seal Island. The advantage of such an early departure is a full day on Seal, rather than the half day with a 7:30 departure. The first day

was perfect, with clear sunny skies and plenty of birds. Saturday evening, most of the birds departed. With a storm front approaching from Maine the same night, all northern flights were cancelled, so Sunday dawned foggy, rainy and birdless. Monday was foggy and fortunately with very little rain. The boat for the return trip did not sail that evening, so we spent another enjoyable evening on Seal. Tuesday, the fog vanished to reveal cloudy skies, but very few birds. We sailed for Clark's Harbour at 6 p.m.

The total number of species observed on the island during the four day period was 107. Most notable birds for the trip were a Bohemian Waxwing and five Lincoln's Sparrows. Although photographing can be good with only a few birds, I could find not one single co-operative bird. However, the Snowshoe Hares compensated with day activity under good lighting conditions.

Trip participants were: Jim Wolford, Stuart Tingley, Shirley Brothers, Francis and Edgar Spalding, Eric and Barbara Ruff, Greg Murphy, Judy Adams, Don and Joyce Purchase.

Ralph Connor

May 17, 1980 - Yarmouth, N. S.

The Yarmouth Field Day was blessed with fine weather, and got off to a good start with an Indigo Bunting, two White-crowned Sparrows a Downy Woodpecker and Purple and Goldfinches thrown in for good measure at Margaret Nickerson's feeders in town.

First out-of-town stop off, Route 103, produced a brief, but good view of a Broad-winged Hawk - one of three seen during the day - and several warbler species.

With 27 pairs of eyes most of the songsters were spotted and eventually seen by all members of the party. The "27 pairs of eyes" incidentally belonged to birders from Yarmouth town and county, from Pubnico, Barrington Passage and as far away as Dartmouth.

Ellenwood Park with its picnic tables and other facilities made an ideal lunch stop.

Highlights of the afternoon were a Bobolink and Swamp Sparrow sitting practically side by side in the same bush and trying to out-sing each other; this was at the Mocketts in Pleasant Valley, and the Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Common Snipe, and Least Sandpipers at Cranberry Head, the final stop.

Total species count for the day was 57.

C. R. K. Allen

May 17, 1980 - Cape Breton, South Head Area

The Cape Bretoners' field trip for mid-May usually provides us with the pleasure of seeing the first warblers, in good numbers, though not in great variety of species. May 17 this year was different. Part of the fun of this exercise is the chance of things being different. Warblers were few; one or two black and white adventurers, and a glimpse of a Palm Warbler.

However, through the constant fog that hung over us and no doubt had the warbler migration pinned to its western edge, other fascinating creatures appeared. Ducks at their most colourful were at the Sanctuary; a glorious pair of Pintail, Green-wing and Blue-wing Teal,

Blacks, Red-breasted Mergansers, and that American Wigeon that has hung around over there all winter. He seems happy and healthy. Must be simply a lonely bachelor.

Many, many Willetts were newly come, noisy and posing like big butterflies with their lovely wings held high.

As we kept on around the coast we encountered other travellers, in the form of a flock of Kestrels. This particular spot must be directly on their migration route, since they are predictable within a mile or two. Once the fog would clear and they could tower, St. Paul's Island would soon be in their view; the half-way place on the flight to Newfoundland. Kept down by the poor visibility, they were flying and perching happily enough, fourteen or more in a quarter of a mile.

A bittern, a hard bird to see, and harder to force to fly, rose unbidden from a marsh. They have a nest there every year. Crows were clamoring over a barren. Someone thought "owl", but the place was very open and some houses not far away, I thought "cat". Certainly they were tormenting some victim. They were torturing and killing a crow; beating it and pulling out its feathers. Has anyone a reason why?

Thirty-six species seems to me a poor result for a field trip, but if thirty-six species could penetrate the fog, perhaps it wasn't too shaming. After all, the idea of these trips is to see what is there, not to compete with anybody, and as always, we enjoyed the day.

Sara MacLean

May 25, 1980 - Shubenacadie Area of Hants County

On the sunny Sunday morning of May 25, eighteen bird watchers, having assembled in Shubenacadie, travelled seventeen miles through the woodland of central Nova Scotia. Frequent stops brought to light nothing unusual, but seventeen species of warblers were seen and heard! Besides these, fifty-three other varieties of birds were accounted for.

Lunch was eaten high on the picnic grounds overlooking the Shubenacadie Wild Life Park. After lunch, many of the group toured the park. The weather, as well as the camaraderie, helped to make the day a success.

Roselyn McPhee

May 28, 1980 - Early Morning Warbler Walk, Susie Lake.

Wednesday, May 28, seven eager birders met under the overpass at the intersection of the Kearny Lake Road and Bicentennial Highway, at 6 a.m. for the so-called "Early Morning Warbler Walk, Susie Lake." As is usual for these walks, the weather was cool and the skies overcast with light rain and drizzle.

After parking on Bicentennial Highway, we set off, walking along the winding woodroad and trails leading to the lake. As we entered the woods, we were greeted by warblers, finches and sparrows, singing from their well hidden perches. After a disappointing first hour, they responded to the call of the more experienced observers and our list of "birds seen" began to grow. We saw and heard fourteen Wood Warblers. Among the warblers seen were Black and White, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Ovenbird, Yellowthroat, Canada and American Redstart. Other species observed included Common Loon, Black Duck,

Common Merganser, Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls, Hairy Woodpecker, Tree Swallow, Blue Jay, Raven, Crow, Black-cap Chickadee, Grackle, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Junco and White-throated Sparrow.

Two and a half hours after we met, the skies brightened, we had a count of 29 birds seen and 8 other species heard but not seen before disbanding to allow some members to get off to work, while a few went home to a hearty breakfast.

Ed. Richard

May 31, 1980 - Hants County, President's Field Trip

As have so many Hants County Field Trips in the past, the day began with fog in Halifax, sunny skies in Ste. Croix, and a cloudy day at the end. About 24 birders gathered at the railway crossing in Mount Uniacke to be told by a puzzled truckdriver, with tongue in cheek, that he felt we could have picked a grassier place to have a picnic and then wanted to know what time the beer was to be served! Since neither was the case, and the call of the loon got to us, literally, we moved on.

The day produced 84 different species, and although the warblers were seen and heard sparsely, the Purple Finches were singing at every stop. Flycatchers were common and a Broad Winged Hawk soared obligingly and gracefully against the clear blue sky - the markings clearly evident.

The most productive stop occurred after lunch (which was at Smiley's Park picnic area). This was at and near the little bridge leading to the Harvey Farm. There on the road could be seen American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and two Indigo Buntings! One male was in beautiful colour and everyone in the group had an excellent opportunity to view it well. Warblers, Vireos, and Rose Breasted Grosbeaks were common. A Northern Waterthrush sang from the top of a tree, once again allowing everyone a good view.

By mid afternoon the skies clouded over. Our last stop added Killdeer, Willets, Greater Yellowlegs, and Bank Swallows flying in and out of their nests in the banks, to our list.

The usual stop at the Clark home in Ste. Croix provided a rural Saturday night supper of baked beans, brown bread, etc., before the birders left for home.

Margaret A. Clark



UP-COMING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday CAPE BRETON-MALAGAWATCH AREA.
July 5 Leader: Jeanne McNichol.
Time: 0800 hrs. Meet at Big
Harbour Island intersection.

Saturday COLCHESTER CO.-ECONOMY, BASS
July 12 RIVER. Leader: Frank Hennessey
Time: 0800 hrs. Meet at the
General Store, Bass River.

Sunday KINGS CO. BLOMIDON, CAPE SPLIT
July 20 Leader: Frank Himsl. Time:
0830 hrs. Meet at the parking
lot at the end of the road
past Scots Bay.

Sunday YARMOUTH CO. Shorebird migration. Leaders: C.R.K.Allen
August 10 and P. R. Dobson. Meet at the Arcadia Post Office, out-
side Yarmouth, at 0830 hrs.

CAPE BRETON - FORCHU, FULLER;S BRIDGE. Leader: Francis
MacKinnon. Time: 0800 hrs. Meet at Marion Bridge at
Mira River.

AUGUST 25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL - GRAND TOUR: Take in as little
17 - 23 or as much as you can. Everyone is responsible for his/
her own arrangements and/or reservations.

Sun. Aug. 17, Mary's Point, New Brunswick: Meet at the Bank of
Nova Scotia in Albert, N. B., on route 114, at 0900 hrs.
Leader: David Christie. Bring two lunches.

Mon., Aug. 18 - Fundy National Park, N. B.: Meet at the Assembly
Hall in the H.Q. area at the entrance to Fundy Nat. Park
(near Alma) at 0800 hrs. Leader: Hank Deichmann. Bring a
lunch.

Tues., Aug. 19 - Travel, etc.

Wed., Aug. 20 - Grand Manan Island, N. B.: Meet at the North Head
Post Office on Grand Manan at 0800 hrs. Leader: Brian
Dalzell. We recommend crossing from Black's Harbour on
the ferry the day before (19th). Ferry leaves 8 a.m.,
10 a.m., 2p.m., 4 p.m., and 6 p.m. Provincial campground
available 10 miles from North Head. There are several
hotels, etc., eg., Marathon Inn, North Head (Reservations
req'd), Surfside Motel, North Head. Bring a lunch.

Thurs., Aug. 21 - Travel, etc.

Fri., Aug. 22 - Acadia National Park, Maine, U. S. A.: Meet in the
parking lot of the Park Headquarters in Halls Cove (off
Rt. 3 about 1 mile north of Bar Harbour) at 0900 hrs.
Leader: Bill Townsend. Bring a lunch. Campground reser-
vations should be made immediately, if req'd. by writing
Campground Reservations, Acadia Nat. Park, Box 1, Bar
Harbour, Me., U. S. A. ME04609.

Sat., Aug. 23 - M.V. Bluenose to Yarmouth. Leaves Bar Harbour:
0800 hrs. Arrives Yarmouth: 1500 hrs. Price: Adults,
\$16.50 each plus \$38.50 for vehicle. Reserve 1-2 weeks

in advance. Phone: 1-800-565-9411, toll free.

* For more complete information on facilities, maps, etc., for New Brunswick, write Tourism New Brunswick, P. O. Box 12345, Fredericton, N. B. E3B 5C3. For Maine, write: Dept. of Commerce and Industry, State House, Augusta, Maine, U.S.A. 04330, or phone Don or Joyce Purchase at 434-5199.

* Reservations should be made as soon as possible.

August 30 DIGBY CO. - BRIER ISLAND. Leader: Ross Anderson. Meet
Sept. 1 at 0900 hrs. on Sat., Aug. 30, at Peajack Rd., at Cemetary for pelagic trip.

Sunday LUNENBURG CO. - PETITE RIVIERE, ETC., Leaders: Shirley
Sept. 7 Cohrs et al. Meet at Petite Riviere Post Office at 0830
Telescopes useful, as this is primarily a shorebird trip.

Saturday CAPE BRETON - CHETICAMP AREA. Leader: T.B.A. Time: 0800
Sept. 13 hrs. Meet at the Visitors' Centre, C.B. Highlands National Park entrance.

Saturday YARMOUTH CO. - TUSKET ISLANDS. Leader: C.R.K.Allen. Time:
Sept. 27 0830 hrs. Meet at the Tuna Wharf at Lower Wedgeport.

Saturday PICTOU CO.-MERIGOMISH ISLAND. Leaders: Fred and Marg.
October 4 Kenney. Time: 0900 hrs. Meet at Fletcher MacLean's
Irving Station at Sutherland River, immediately after
Pictou Rural High School, 5-6 miles past New Glasgow on
the Trans Canada, just before junction of 245. Bring a
lunch. The Kenneys have kindly offered refreshments after
the trip for all those who can stay.

If you have any queries, call Don or Joyce Purchase at 434-5199.

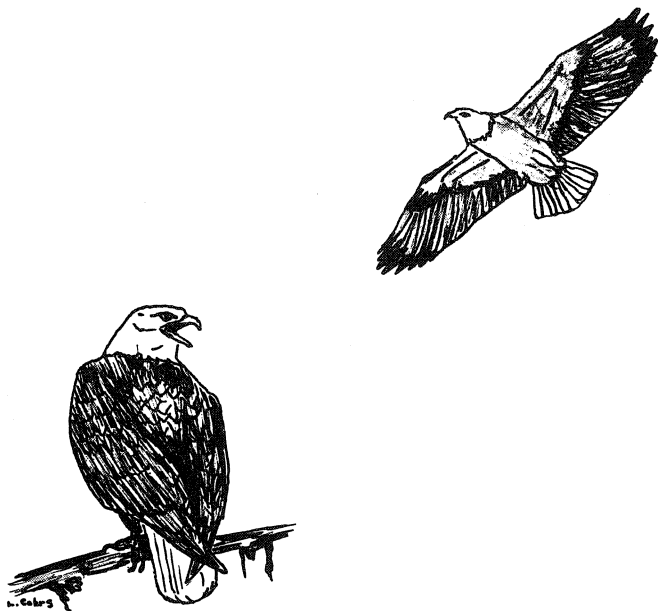


THE LIFE & TIMES OF THE RIVENDELL EAGLES

R.G.S. Bidwell

Early Days

From my study window I look across the deep valley riven through the rocks by the Wallace River and see the Rivendell Eagles sitting in an old pine tree high on the bluff. It is March, and they have been busy putting the finishing touches on their nest. Just now they are taking a work-break, sheltering under the cliff from a cold north-west wind that is bringing drizzle and sleet off the Northumberland Strait. The river is still frozen, and there has not been much to eat except the offal from a butcher shop along the coast. Soon, if the weather moderates and the river ice washes out, there will be plenty, and the two or three eggs will be laid in the nest.



Meanwhile, there is still lots of work to be done on the nest, which has been considerably enlarged since last year. The male has been collecting lumber all day. He works and pries at the branches he fancies until he manages to break them free, then carries them in his feet to the nest. He sometimes drops them. He landed one in the garden the other day that was over three feet long; quite a junk of wood. When he brings one to the nest, he and the female push it in place, trying it here and there and breaking off pieces as necessary, finally ramming it home with a powerful thrust of the beak. The female does most of the interior decorating, but the male is allowed to help with the rough work. Then the central cavity of the nest is lined with grass and last year's hay and a sprinkling of down they pull from their breasts. When all is ready, they sit side by side on the wide rim that surrounds the nest and pass the time calling raucously. The nest is in full view of our living-room window, and we can watch the whole process through a telescope. Like most devoted couples, they seem to squabble continuously over the fine details, but they agree pretty well on the main themes.

Our eagles are a comparatively young pair; probably only seven or eight years old. The nest site is high in the crotch of a huge old white pine down the river from their perch tree where I watched them earlier and has been occupied for quite a few years now. For several years an old pair lived there, raising one or two young each year, until one of the pair was shot by a hunter in 1975. This miserable person thought he was exercising his "freedom" by hunting and shooting whatever he wanted. He little realized that freedom - the eagle's freedom, our freedom, his own freedom - fell and diminished as the great bird crashed to the ground. Its mate flew back and forth about the nest for a few days, distraught by its irreparable loss, then flew away, never to return.

Next spring no eagles came, and the nest was deserted. Parts of it fell down, and we missed the high, imperious scream of hunting eagles and their chattering rage when we presumed to walk over the hill where the nest tree stands. Ospreys from up-river moved in on the fishing grounds, and we thought bitterly that the Eagles of Riverdell were gone forever.

About midsummer we became aware that a young eagle, just acquiring the gleaming white head and tail of his adult plumage, was visiting Rivendell more and more frequently. He often sat on the eagle tree across the river, and sometimes on the nest tree or the tall pines nearby. Then, late in summer, a strange eagle appeared. She must have seemed beautiful in his sight, and he said so, loudly and often. Their courtship was a chaotic affair. They seemed shy, and sat in trees on opposite sides of a big field shrieking at each other a quarter of a mile apart. He became so excited by this long-distance love-making that one could walk directly beneath his perch without disturbing him.

What a performance! He shrieked and stamped, no doubt to keep her attention, but she remained coy, coquettish, and distant. Finally, after a week of hectic long-distance calling, they seemed to get the details of their contract settled. The mating ritual was beautiful to see, and for days they soared and dipped over the farm or sat side-by-side on the eagle tree.

They came and went all fall, and in November began to rebuild the old nest. They put a lot of effort into this great work but they were woefully amateurish in their endeavor, and more sticks and branches ended up on the ground than in the nest. They left in December, but reappeared during a February thaw and redoubled their efforts at nest-building. By March they had a lop-sided little bundle of sticks jammed up in the nest tree, and began lining it with grass. But the nest(a shack among nests!) was inadequately secured and blew down in a late March blizzard.

Clearly providence had decreed that the young couple needed a long vacation, and 1977 was a carefree summer for them. Late that summer they left for a few weeks; perhaps to take a course in nest building. When they returned in October they quickly rebuilt their nest; small, as eagle nests go, but solid and well anchored. In 1978, they raised their first chick, and in the fall of that year they greatly enlarged the nest. Next March (1979 had a phenomenally early spring) they laid three eggs, but again raised only one chick. The eggs usually hatch in sequence, a few days to a week apart, and the first-born is rather apt to push the younger birds out of the nest. We looked for the corpses but found none. Perhaps a passing coon or fox took care of them.

The 1980 nesting season is now well advanced. By late March the egg or eggs are laid, and the female sits day after day on the nest,

stirring from time to time, but never leaving for long. The male alternately forages for food and keeps watch from the top of a nearby tree. Nothing much gets past the eye of an alert watch-eagle, and he rises in chattering fury if anyone dares to venture within even a quarter of a mile of his nest. Four-legged beasts do not disturb him, and we can ride up to the nest tree without fuss. But let two-legged beasts beware! The long vigil will continue until the eggs hatch in May, and the chick will not fly until mid-July. By then two or three young ospreys from up the river will have taken to the air, and the river valley is alive with great soaring raptors - a beautiful sight.

NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM DISPLAY - 1980

This year's bi-annual NSBS Display at the Nova Scotia Museum, from March 22 to May 4, was rated by some as the best ever. It included a great assortment of houses and feeders, mounted specimens, birders' "tools of the trade", the ever-popular bird carvings, a banding showcase, photographs and paintings, a slide show and a recording of Nova Scotian birds.

A show like this just didn't "happen", and lots of people have to be thanked. First and foremost, there was co-chairman Ed Richard, who not only did much of the real work while I was organizing things, but also was responsible for the house and feeder display which was the backbone of our show. The setting up was done March 18 - 21, and Ed and I spent much of those four days at the Museum. We met many of the Museum staff, and without exception they were warm, friendly people who went out of their way to be helpful. Special mention must go to Mr. Ed Longard, Chief Curator of Exhibits, and his capable staff. They spent four days lugging, hammering, sawing, directing, and you namit - Mr. Longard stayed until late in the evenings, and he certainly was not reluctant to pick up a hammer himself. Invaluable assistance was also given by Kathy Aldous from Visitor Services, taxidermist Lloyd Duncanson, Ed Claridge (who made the bird recording in New Ross), Bill Dingle (who printed nearly a hundred professional looking labels for us, many on short notice) and others, too numerous to mention. To those who loaned articles and/or helped to set up - thank you all! Last but not least, I must thank my wife, Gladys, who did not complain when I was absent from home those four days, despite the fact that she had just returned from the hospital with our new daughter.

I hope most of the Society members found the time to see the display. Let me say to you all, especially those of you who contributed directly...this is YOUR show - it took you all to make it possible, and if you haven't done so already, stand up and take a bow!

Keith Keddy
Display Chairman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor, NSBS Newsletter:

Bill and I took an "Air Canada Special" to Houston, Texas, in mid-February. From there we made our way to the Lower Rio Grande River Valley. Although the weather was not too cooperative, we were able to spend several days birding, and chalked up 137 species. Many of these were new to us.

We visited two refuges, Santa Ana and Atascosa, in the Valley and drive two hundred miles north to another, Aransas. The marshes of Aransas are the wintering grounds of whooping cranes. It is possible to see the cranes through a telescope as they feed one mile away, but to get a close-up, we took a boat trip on the waterway which traverses the marshes. We had excellent viewing of the whoopers from the boat, plus sightings of American oyster catchers, caracaras, and other gems. In addition, the captain of the boat, Captain Brownie Brown, is a colourful character, extremely knowledgeable about sea birds.

In Santa Ana, green jays and chahalacas were everywhere. We saw cinnamon teal on one pond and black throated grey warblers in the shrubbery. The Lichtensteins orioles and Kiskadee flycatchers were very colourful and the roadrunner a comical sight. The telephone wires were populated by kestrels and loggerhead shrikes. At Aransas, we were lucky enough to see a great horned owl and a pair of wood ibis. A pond ringed with night herons was one of the treats at Atascosca.

In between forays to the "big time", we had great fun examining the shore birds near our hotel; stilt sandpipers, dowitchers, long-billed curlews, whimbrels. We valued the chance to observe shore birds at close range. As a result, we'll be more competent as we walk the Nova Scotia beaches this summer.

We heartily recommend Texas for great birding and for friendly people.

Jean Morse,
Paradise.

Editor, NSBS Newsletter:

With two small children, plus a full-time job, my bird watching experiences are somewhat limited. However, birding from my living room has proved most fulfilling.

In the fall of 1978, Bill and I set up feeding stations on the balcony and in our backyard. Along with anticipated visitors, we were pleasantly surprised by a male Rufus-sided Towhee (Oct.24-Nov.1) and later a Dickcissel appeared with a flock of House Sparrows.

Another "lifer" arrived in our yard on November 11, 1979, when I identified a Brown Creeper inconspicuously circling up a spruce tree. One lone male Red-winged Blackbird fed at the feeders throughout November and December 1979. Another loner, a male White-throated Sparrow has been feeding here most days this winter (usually just before dusk).

Just when I thought I'd never tire of watching Chickadees, Blue Jays (occasional Gray Jay), Juncos, a pair of Hairy and a pair of Downy Woodpeckers and Evening Grosbeaks, what should arrive but four Red-breasted Nuthatches and a few days later a flock of seventeen

American Foldfinches? For the past two weeks these birds have joined in and fed here regularly.

As I write this letter, I can look out over the River Philip Valley to where an immature Bald Eagle is perching in full view. What more could I possibly ask?

Postscript: Monday morning, March 17, 7:00 a.m., Eastern Red-tailed Hawk hunting across the river.

Eleanor Barrow
River Philip, Cum. Co.

Editor, NSBS Newsletter:

In past years we've had 2-3 pairs of Sparrow Hawks on or close to the farm, which raised 2-5 young each. It was a lovely sight to see the young learning aerial acrobatics by playing "follow the leader" round the barn. They also play "dare the devil" (or its modern equivalent) with the eagles, teasing them at their nest, and playing tag with the crows, which would clearly like to catch them. However, we seldom, if ever saw Pigeon Hawks or Peregrines. Last year we saw no Sparrow Hawks, and none nested nearby. So far this year we have seen one. However, we have seen many Pigeon Hawks this year, and had 4 Peregrine sightings (one just south of Truro on the Trans Canada Highway, the other three close to Rivendell) Other hawks (Red-tails, Marsh Harriers, etc.) have appeared to be relatively constant. Maybe the Sparrow Hawks will return - I certainly hope so. Perhaps the Pigeon Hawks have replaced the Sparrow Hawks. We'll keep watching.

The swallows and warblers were way down last year, following the very deep frosts in the spring of 1978 that really hurt the small insectivorous birds. This year the resident swallows are way up (both barn and tree; bank swallows seem to have been unaffected). Later arriving insectivores (e.g. flycatchers) have also been unaffected.

Rivendell,
Wallace, N. S.

Editor, NSBS Newsletter:

THE BIRDS HAVE DISCOVERED NEW WATERFORD

A visitor to this bleak coal mining town would certainly agree that it does not provide the best habitat for bird life, and this has been my experience for the past eight years. However, 1979-80 proved to be full of excitement. I start feeding on October 1 and cease on June 1; this I consider a feeding season. A previous high was seven species, but this year we have had to date, 21 species. This far surpassed my list of 16 when I lived in Wolfville, but there I resided on the edge of town and I expected that many visitors.

I suppose the bird of the season would be the Dickcissel, for me a life bird, which came as an immature male in mid-March and departed the last week of April with full adult male plumage. There were several factors that contributed to this success. Finally we had enough snow not only to enjoy cross country skiing, but to drive the birds to our feeders. But the most important change I made was to keep open water all through the winter with a thermoelectric unit. Of course one should not dismiss the fact that maybe the birds found out how friendly we are here in Cape Breton!

The list included: English Sparrow, Starling, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Cowbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, Grackles, Rusty Blackbird, Evening Grosbeaks, Snow-buntings, Pine Siskins, American Goldfinches, Rock Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finches, Rusty-crowned Kinglet, Blue Jays, Fox Sparrow, Dickcissel, Sharp-shinned Hawk (feeding on the sparrows).

This list may appear quite anemic when compared to lister in the southern area of the province, however, I would be interested in hearing from other birders, particularly from Cape Breton.

*Clive S. Macdonald, M.D.,
337 Mahon Street,
New Waterford, N. S. B1H 3H6*

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

C. W. S. Shorebird Colour-marking

In 1980, the Canadian Wildlife Service will be continuing a large-scale shorebird banding and colour-marking project in James Bay. Since 1974, over 45,700 shore birds of 27 species have been captured and much information on migration and dispersal routes is being obtained. Observers are asked to look out for and report any colour-dyed or colour-banded shorebirds that they may see. Reports should include details of species, age (if possible), place, date, time, colour-marks and a note of the number of that species present. For colour-dyed birds please record the colour and area of the bird that was dyed. For colour-bands and standard metal leg bands, please record which leg the bands were on, whether they were above or below the 'knee', the colours involved, and the relative position of the bands if more than one was on a leg (e.g. lower right leg, blue over metal etc.) All reports will be acknowledged and should be sent to Dr. R. I. G. Morrison, Canadian Wildlife Service, 1725 Woodward Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3Z7.

International Shorebird Surveys, 1980-81

The International Shorebird Survey scheme is organised by the Canadian Wildlife Service and Manomet Bird Observatory to obtain information on shorebird migration and distribution for conservation and research purposes. The scheme was started in 1974, and is providing a continental picture of shorebird distribution through surveys carried out by volunteers in eastern Canada and the U.S.A., the Caribbean Islands and Central and South America. In 1980, we plan to continue and extend the scheme in as many areas as possible. Any observer who may be able to participate in regular survey counts of shorebirds during spring, autumn and winter periods is asked to contact one of the undersigned. Occasional counts from observers visiting shorebird areas on an irregular basis would also be most welcome.

For areas in Canada: Dr. R. I. G. Morrison, Canadian Wildlife Service, 1725 Woodward Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3Z7.

For areas in the U.S.A., Caribbean Islands, Central and South America: Brian A. Harrington, Manomet Bird Observatory, Manomet, Massachusetts 02345, U. S. A.

A HOUSE SPARROW DIE-OFF

A. J. Erskine

Birds are mortal too, and winter mortality should come as no surprise, considering that Canadian winters are often hard to take, even with the benefits of central heating. In round figures, for most populations of small song birds, roughly half the adults and three-quarters of the young-of-the-year alive at the end of one nesting season will have died before the start of the next summer. Summers-Smith (1963. The House Sparrow. Collins, London) found comparable figures for the subject of his monograph. The heaviest mortality of young birds is typically just after they first attain independence, but for adults winter should be the period of greatest stress. Summers-Smith (op.cit.) did not find winter mortality important for House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in England, but winters there are certainly less severe than in most of Canada.

Since I returned to Sackville, New Brunswick, in 1977, I have carried out systematic counts of birds wintering in a 50.5 ha area of the town (see Erskine, A.J., 1979. *Amer. Birds*, 33:52; for description and results from the first winter). The numbers of House Sparrows recorded on February and early March surveys were substantially lower each year than on the December and January surveys (see Table), and those decreases presumably reflect winter mortality. Even the lowest count through early January 1980, had never fallen below 85 birds, but the four subsequent counts showed only 10, 32, 38, and 32 sparrows. I made enquiries after the first low count, and in the next two weeks learned of at least four cases of dead or "sick" sparrows having been seen, both in my study area and beyond its limits. Unfortunately, no one saved any of the sparrow carcasses for post-mortem examination, so the cause of death remains unknown. Inasmuch as the temperatures this winter were close to normal levels, and in line with those of the two preceding winters, while snowfall was substantially less than normal this year, winter stress seems unlikely to have been the primary cause for the sparrow die-off.

On 16 February, I twice saw the unusual spectacle of a Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) actively pursuing small birds, once a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) and once a Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) with repeated swoops as of a raptor hunting prey. Those birds escaped without obvious difficulty, but the fact that the crow(s) attempted such pursuits - the like of which I cannot recall seeing by this species - suggested that they had recently encountered enough "sick" small birds to make it worth their effort to try to catch them. Crows of course, are opportunists as well as scavengers, quite capable of commuting to the town dump, 1 km to the southeast when they find slim pickings in the urban area. But if 80-100 sparrows died on the study area over the course of a month, this supplementary food source would be worth exploiting, even at the cost of an energy-demanding hunt.

The House Sparrow is hardly a rare or endangered species, even in our area after the die-off. A similar die-off, involving up to 90% of the House Sparrows in Charlottetown, P.E.I., in January 1979, proved to have been caused by a *Salmonella* infection (P.E.I. Fish & Wildlife Division, pers. comm. to A.D. Smith), as was the case with several Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) picked up in Halifax, in January 1980. We should be careful to document future die-offs as *Salmonella* can infect most bird species.

Table 1. Numbers of House Sparrows counted on winter surveys, Sackville, New Brunswick, 1977-80.

Month	No. of sparrows counted in		
	1977-78 ^{1/} Mean (range)	1978-79 ^{2/} Mean (range)	1979-80 ^{3/} Mean (range)
December	144 (130-157)	210	n.s.
January	164 (150-178)	171	116(85-147)
February	120 (118-122)	110	27(10-38)
March	n.s.	100	32

^{1/} 7 surveys, 19 December - 26 February

^{2/} 4 surveys, 18 December - 3 March

^{3/} 6 surveys, 1 January - 5 March

n.s. = no surveys



We are now about half way through our 25th Anniversary year. How are your plans going for making this year special for you, as a "birder"? As a society we have enjoyed three special lectures given by Eric Mills on "There's more to birding than meets the eye (the Secret Life of Nova Scotia's Birds)" by Ian McLaren on "The Pursuit of the rare, obscure and elusive"; and by Martin Edwards on "Birdwatching around the world". There will be

two more this fall to be held, as were the others, at 8:00 p.m., in the Nova Scotia Museum: October 8, Katharine McKeever on "Saving Owls", and November 12, C.R.K. Allen on "Birding - Feast or Famine". After the last talk there will be a special party (NSBS members only) saluting the founding members of our society (watch for fall flyer for more details).

As usual, we have lots of field trips planned, which are described elsewhere in this issue.

We hope to have Roger Pocklington give his bird identification course again this fall. However, in order to have the course given we must have a list of at least ten people by the end of July, who will definitely register. So, if you are interested, please contact Roger or any member of the executive now. Perhaps you know someone who would be interested in such a course? This could be your special birding activity for 1980.

We all wish you an excellent summer and fall of birding. See you in the field. Happy Anniversary to us all.

Roger's address: 19 Guy St., Dartmouth, N. S. B3A 2P4

Gillian Elliott
Co-ordinator
Anniversary Year Activities

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' - 1980

Being comparative newcomers to this side of the Atlantic, we just had to see the ultimate in the American way of life, so March Break this year saw Liz and I waiting at Halifax Airport, heading for California. To most people we talked to beforehand, California seemed to equal Disneyland, but my own ambition was to see a Condor or two!

The portents were good as we saw a flock of Snow Buntings following our taxi-ing aircraft. We had an overnight stop in Montreal, then took off in light sunshine for Los Angeles. We flew right across the States in light sunshine, looking down on a succession of prairies, foothills, Rocky Mountains and finally California itself. The appearance of small western vagrants in Nova Scotia seems even more impressive after that experience.

We had a lot to see in our mere eight days, so we picked up our rented car, negotiated our first freeway, and headed for our first view of the Pacific, with Western Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants and Western Gulls. Heading back into Hollywood, there were Mourning Doves amongst the more obvious attractions of that area.

Next morning we "did" the conducted tour of the Universal Film Studios, in my opinion a "must" for all visitors. It is set out in wooded parkland, with the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains in the background. The mockingbirds and lightly coloured Scrub Jays around the studios were very tame and easily photographed; and Red-tailed Hawks soared overhead. We saw a Brown Towhee skulking in a bush, and the first of several Red-shafted Flickers. Later that day, in the Santa Monica hills, we saw more Scrub Jays, Violet-green Swallows, a Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and a Rock Wren, and heard a lot of unidentified song. Malibou Beach, nearby, was still too cold for the surfers to be out, but not too cold for more Western Gulls, Willets, 6 Killdeer, one only Glaucous-winged Gull, and the first of many flocks of Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds were all over the state.

Our route took us inland again, via Disneyland and the San Bernardino mountains. I had always wanted to see a desert, preferably with vultures soaring overhead, so we took a detour northwards, and were rewarded with our first Turkey Vultures over the Mojave desert. Later, we saw so many we became quite blasé about them. We drove across the Tehachapi Mountains back to the coast at Morro Bay. A half-hour stop on the way revealed "kettles" of Turkey Vultures wheeling overhead, Kestrels another Rock Wren, Western Bluebird, Oregon Junco and White-crowned Sparrows. Morro Bay itself is apparently a well-known birding spot, with a Peregrine's eyrie (which we didn't see) We did see more Cormorants and Western Grebes, Greater Scaup, Surf Scoter, Common Egrets, Coot, Long-billed Curlew, more Willets, Marbled Godwits, 2 Black Phoebes, Some lightly coloured House Finches, and more Brewer's Blackbirds.

We then headed up the spectacular coastline to Monterey, and at San Simeon, sitting in the sunshine, having breakfast outdoors, below Hearst's Castle, saw the first of several Golden-crowned Sparrows, and a Black-crowned Night Heron. Further up the coast, against a background of cliffs and wild flowers everywhere, we saw White-throated Swifts, Pacific (Arctic) Loons, White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and by the roadside, a troop of California Quails. At Monterey itself, we saw Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, and Common Merganser, and a colony of sea-lions, and most remarkable, a sea otter, lying on its back and breaking shellfish against a stone held in its forepaws on its belly, in classic style.

Everybody said we should not miss Yosemite National Park, so we headed inland again, crossing the nearby lowlands of the San Joaquin Valley. The most interesting birds there were Common Egrets, a Western Meadowlark, 2 Cinnamon Teal and some Black-necked Stilts. Yosemite itself was extremely spectacular, but apart from Steller's Jays, ornithologically disappointing in March.

San Francisco is said to be everyone's favourite American city and we were not disappointed. Amongst its many attractions was a boat trip around the Bay, to see the Golden Gate and Alcatraz. We also saw White-winged Scoter, more grebes, the first Brandt's Cormorants and more sea-lions. We spent our last evening at a restaurant overlooking the Bay near the airport, seeing Scaup, Dowitches, Willets and some amazingly unidentified "peeps" below, and DC-10's and 707's above.

From the birds' point of view, mid-March in California was still winter, so we missed out on many species, including the warblers and hummingbirds. But the mountains were snow-covered and beautiful, Disneyland was worth seeing, we didn't see a Condor, I got 35 "lifers" and saw, probably an equal number of species I could not positively identify, and we can't wait for the next trip !

Richard Stern

REVIEW of

"A Preliminary Report on the Status of Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) on the Northeastern Mainland of Nova Scotia"

Roland Chiasson and Stephen Flemming have concluded a preliminary study on the occurrence of the piping plover in three geographical regions in northeast Nova Scotia: Northumberland Strait (Caribou Island, Pictou County, to Livingstone's Cove Antigonish County); St. George's Bay (Lakevale to Boucher Beach, Antigonish County) and Chedabucto Bay (Cape Argus to Hadley Beach, Guysborough County).

This work follows the surveys carried out by Gerald Dickie on the beaches from King's Head, Pictou County, eastward to Delorey's Island, Antigonish County; Winnie Cairns' studies incidental to her thesis on Breeding Biology of the Piping Plover in Southern Nova Scotia, and her 1978 studies on the status of the piping plover in Prince Edward Island. Chiasson and Flemming also refer to A Twenty Year Banding Study of the Piping Plover carried out by L. Wilcox on the southeastern coast of Long Island, New York.

The authors state that the piping plover is experiencing a population decline "which may be related to habitat deterioration and human disturbance". The total Canadian population is less than a thousand pairs, and in Nova Scotia "Fewer than 75 pairs may now exist!" For these reasons the authors have examined the suitability of our beaches (above named) for breeding habitat for piping plover; the number of birds currently making use of these beaches, and the factors causing disturbance of them.

Beach habitat descriptions were done for all study areas. The regions along Northumberland Strait were found to be most suitable for the nesting of piping plover, St. George's Bay next in suitability and Chedabucto Bay "generally inappropriate for nesting, with its rocky beaches except for a sandy one at King's Point."

From observations made during April through July, indications were that arrival of piping plover occurred the third week of April; pairing early May; nesting second week of May; hatching early June, and first migrants appeared the third week of July. Incidentally, the average distance between nests was observed to be 255 meters.

Although each area has been carefully described, Mahoney's Beach has received most attention, with field data accompanied by habitat maps (16) over a period April 16 to July 30. It is rated as "an example of excellent nesting habitat (the highest number of breeding pairs of any beach we surveyed) where productivity is nil due to human disturbance factors...vehicles and bathers regularly travel it, and motorcyclists have been observed driving repeatedly over the tern colony off the tip of the beach, destroying as many as twenty nests in one instance."

Bathers, dune buggies, four-wheel drives, proximity of camps, an adjacent airplane take-off have been listed as disturbing factors for piping plover nest success. Legislation exists for the protection of these beaches, but is unobserved and unenforced.

A table comparing the numbers of piping plover found in 1977, by Gerald Dickie on five of these beaches with the numbers found there by the authors in 1979, shows a decline of 50%. Natural predators (gulls, foxes etc.) may have been a contributing factor in this decline in numbers, with help from cats and dogs from nearby cottages. Cairns found that the most successful New Brunswick habitats were located on offshore islands or in isolated areas.

This treatise concludes with several management proposals and recommendations, all sensible, effective and quite acceptable:

- (1) Enforcement of regulations now in effect.
- (2) Nesting areas posted with explanatory signs.
- (3) Recreational development discouraged on known nesting beaches.
- (4) A media campaign in support of above.
- (5) Possible fencing off of nesting areas where land is privately owned, or is Crown Land.

Chiasson and Flemming should be commended for the very considerable time and effort expended on this, a truly scientific contribution to our knowledge of our Nova Scotia birds; and congratulated upon their excellent and workmanlike presentation of this knowledge.

This treatise now forms a part of the library of the Nova Scotia Bird Society. Feel free to consult it.

P.R.D.

THE CONSISTENT REMINDER
Winter 1980

Fulton L. Lavender

I should begin by saying that I am writing this article, mostly because I neglected to mail my bird reports within the allotted time period. (nobody is perfect) However, on a brighter side of the coin, my momentary lapse of memory allows for an interesting comparison of this winter's birding in Halifax-Dartmouth-Eastern Shore, with that conducted in other parts of the province this year.

Despite an annoying absence of rarities, bird populations in this reporter's region were for the most part normal for a Nova Scotia winter. Here then are the facts, like it or not, for the winter of 1980, in East-Central Halifax County:

Loons and Grebes

Common Loons were rarely seen inside Halifax Harbour, but more normal numbers like the 30+ at Cow Bay in early March and the 50+ between Lawrencetown Head and Conrad Island on February 9, give a better indication of this year's winter population.

Red-necked Grebes were thinly spread with only two sightings to report; one for Feb. 5, and the other March 25, at Hartlen Point. Horned Grebes were also difficult to spot, with only one sight record to mention; also at Harlen Point on March 25. All grebe sightings were of single birds.

Gannets and Cormorants

The Great **Cormorant** wintering population for Halifax Harbour, numbered approximately a dozen individuals as compared to about 25 birds for last year, but, sight records for open ocean, e.g., Hartlen Point, were more numerous than in the past few years.

The only Gannet report I have for this winter is of 3 birds moving N.E. off Hartlen Point on March 21.

Geese and Ducks

Apart from the major Cole Harbour-Lawrencetown flocks, the only urban record for Canada Geese this winter is of 3 birds seen by this reporter on January 16, in Military Island Cove, Dartmouth. The Black Duck population at Sullivan's Pond fluctuated between 400 and 500 birds from early January through to the end of February. Mallards were less numerous, with numbers ranging from 50 to 100 birds throughout the same time period. Of special note were the Green-winged Teal which also wintered at Sullivan's Pond. The largest group numbered ten individuals; six females and four males from the second week of January, through to the first of March. Two of these birds, a male and a female, turned out to be the European subspecies, *Anas crecca* or European Common Teal. Other waterfowl specialities attributed to Sullivan's Pond this year, were an overwintering male Gadwall and a female American Wigeon, which arrived on February 15, and which is still present at the time of writing (May). The Common Merganser contingent for this year was slightly better than normal with 13 birds at Lawrencetown River on February 9, three individuals at Military Island Cove on January 16, and a bright spring plumage male, which spent some time at Sullivan's Pond beginning on March 13. Red-breasted Mergansers were about normal in numbers, with 5 birds spending the winter at Bedford Basin. Other sight records consisted of ten to fifteen individuals fishing in the rough surf off of Hartlen

Point on a daily basis throughout the winter.

For us in this region, it was virtually a "Scaupless" winter. However, Common Goldeneyes were plentiful enough with a flock numbering 31 individuals at Bedford Basin in early January, and smaller groups of 20-25 birds located in areas ranging from Cow Bay to East Lawrencetown. Among the Common Goldeneyes at Bedford Basin, local birders discovered two of the much less common species, Barrow's Goldeneye. Both were males, one a first-year bird. Bufflehead were present in close to normal numbers, but only in their usual haunts, such as Three-Fathom Harbour and East Chezzetcook. A young male Ruddy Duck paid a two week visit to Dartmouth Cove from January 21 to February 6. Oldsquaw, our most reliable sea-duck, was plentiful to say the least, with flocks numbering from 15-20 birds a common sight at all locations along the Eastern Shore region.

Apparantly most of our Scoters spent the winter further out to sea than usual. As a result, the only sightings I have to report are of four White-winged Scoters and twelve Surf Scoters off Hartlen Point on March 21. I did better with Common Eiders, however, with a large raft of 1500+ birds present off of the Eastern tip of Devil's Island, also on March 21.

Diurnal Raptores

Red-Tailed Hawks put in appearances about a month apart, starting on January 8, with an adult soaring over Lake MicMac, another adult over Lawler Island on February 5, and a third adult bird at the Dartmouth Piggery (South) on March 19. The only Accipiters I saw this winter was an adult female Sharp-Shinned Hawk in Bedford on January 16, and an immature female at Graham's Grove (Lake Banook) on March 19.

Falcons were just as scarce with only the reliable Merlin serving notice of his presence. An adult male was sighted chasing starlings through Bedford on January 16, and an immature male hunting in Crichton Park, Dartmouth, on March 16.

Grouse to Gulls

The ever present Ruffed Grouse and the Sandpiper related Woodcock are the only game birds I have to report. Both were seen in mid-January at Albro Lake in Dartmouth.

The only marsh bird I recorded was the American Coot, which lasted the winter at Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, and which at last report, was still there on April 7.

Gulls and Auks

The only note of interest on Herring and Great Black-Back Gulls this winter in Halifax-Dartmouth is that they were present in slightly smaller groups, mainly due to the mild weather and a good feeding environment provided by the fishing boats of Eastern Passage.

Ring-Billed Gulls were in my estimate, more numerous than last year. About 30 individuals spent the winter at Sullivan's Pond and Dartmouth Cove combined, and a flock of some 25 birds was sighted on February 9 at Cole Harbour. The gull we most often associate with Nova Scotia winters, the Iceland Gull, compared favourably, population wise, to last year's statistics, with a flock of 25 at Oceanview Cove, Dartmouth, on January 25; 50 at Hartlen Point (all Kumlien's) on February 5, and 100+ in the same spot on March 21.

Bad weather on February 5, dumped two Thick-Billed Murres in the surf at Hartlen Point and on March 21, two Black Guillemots, one in spring plumage, were seen contentedly feeding in the cove at Hartlen Point.

The Lesser Black-Backed Gull seen by Eric Mills in December, returned to Sullivan's Pond on January 8, for a brief visit. Our two smallest wintering gulls, the Black-Headed and Bonaparte's, both inhabited Dartmouth Cove this year; the Bonaparte's for only a few days, beginning on January 21. This bird was an adult. The much more common Black-Headed Gull reached a peak of 35 individuals on January 25, and outside of Halifax-Dartmouth, 40 birds were seen at Cole Harbour on February 9. Two Glaucous Gulls spent the winter within the confines of Halifax Harbour; one first-year bird was sighted at the Mill Cove Pollution Control Plant near Bedford, and the other more conveniently located at Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth; also a first-year bird. Both first seen on January 16, with the latter still present to date.

Kingfisher to Robin

I have only one Belted Kingfisher to report, that, an adult male at the West Lawrencetown marsh on February 9.

I saw only Downy Woodpeckers all winter long. Four birds in all. Two individuals for Sullivan's Pond and two for Crichton Park. I missed out on Hairy Woodpeckers myself, but Ross Anderson states that he has had one at his feeder for most of the winter.

This was definitely the winter of the Blue Jay. My rough estimate of their winter numbers for Halifax-Dartmouth and Bedford combined would total about 1200-1300 individuals. Common Crows were about average in number with the Eastern Shore flocks making up the bulk of the total. Flocks of 20-25 birds were not at all uncommon.

Common Ravens were hard to find, but two scavenged the north end of Dartmouth all winter long and two did likewise at Hartlen Point.

Black-Capped Chickadees were abundant all winter long, with most feeders visited by 2-5 individuals, while deep woods produced groups of four and five on a regular basis.

Boreal Chickadees were either very scarce or very quiet. Only small flocks of about two or three seem to have been present amongst the stunted spruce trees that they inhabit so often along the Eastern Shore. The White-Breasted Nuthatch was recorded by me only twice apart from Halifax this winter. There was a male at Bedford on January 16, and a male and a female at Crichton Park on January 21.

A Mockingbird spent the winter at the corner of Lakeview Drive and Crichton Avenue, my only record for Dartmouth this year.

Robin through Starling

The only substantial number of Robins that were still present when our true winter months arrived, was a small bedraggled flock of about 15-20 birds feeding on rose hips along the railroad track embankment between Armdale and Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, in late January. A hermit Thrush put in an appearance on January 3, on Slater Street, Dartmouth. It was a good winter for Golden Crowned Kinglets with a few birds as urban as Albrow Lake, Dartmouth. Most woodland flocks, when they could be sounded out, numbered between four and six individuals.

Don't be fooled! Starlings seemed to be down in numbers this winter, but mild weather along with the existence of the landfill site at Mount Uniacke, may have just spread them out.

Warblers

Oddly enough, I didn't see a Myrtle Warbler this winter either in town or along the Eastern Shore region, but I did see an Orange-Crowned Warbler on January 3, at Dartmouth Cove and a Palm Warbler at Bedford Heights on January 16, both a carry over from our lavish fall, no doubt.

House Sparrow

A slight increase in the population I would say; up from 3000 to 3300 birds for Halifax-Dartmouth.

Icterids

One Eastern Meadowlark was recorded during my travels; that, on the lawn, at the Halifax County Rehabilitation Centre on Bissett Road near Cole Harbour.

Common Grackle numbers reached normal proportions after our Christmas Count near shutout, with 20 birds at Crichton Park on January 25, and a flock of about 35 on Victoria Road, Dartmouth in late February.

If anybody wonders if the Nova Scotia Brown-Headed Cowbird population is on the decline or upswing, he need wonder no longer. In mid to late January as many as 3000-3500 of these parasitic birds swept down the Eastern Shore to break up and settle into various locations throughout Halifax County. The largest single flock reported was of approximately 2000 individuals seen by Joyce Purchase at her home on Ross Road, Dartmouth.

Cardinal to Sparrows

A pair of Cardinals began the winter at Crichton Park, Dartmouth in December and one still remains as of this writing.

Evening Grosbeak numbers fluctuated dramatically due, no doubt, to the mildness of the winter. However, a close estimate would probably put the Halifax-Dartmouth winter population at between 200-250 birds. Goldfinches were more regular with 20 at Crichton Park on January 25 and 33 there on March 16. My lone Pine Siskin report comes from Crichton Park where one was seen on March 16. Purple Finches were just as scarce. The only one recorded was near Ross Anderson's home on March 16.

Sparrows to Snow Bunting

Dark-Eyed Juncos were very abundant this winter, mostly in the company of Black-Capped Chickadees. Flocks of four to six birds were not uncommon throughout the Eastern Shore region. Single Tree Sparrows were seen at Bedford on January 16, on Lakeview Drive, Dartmouth, January 25, and two birds along Bissett's Road, Cole Harbour, February 9.

White-Throated Sparrows were sparsely distributed but regular at well kept feeders. A small group of six spent the winter at Crichton Park, Ross Anderson had one at his feeder, on a regular basis, the Piggery yielded two on March 19, there were three at Hartlen Point on February 5, and two at the junction of Bissett's

Road and the Cole Harbour railroad track on February 9. I feel hardy Song Sparrows managed quite well this winter with 10 individuals at Hartlen Point on February 5, 5 at Cole Harbour, February 9, 2 at Crichton Park (singing) March 16, and 2 at the Piggery, March 19.

My only Swamp Sparrow sight record comes from Hartlen Point where one was seen in a mixed flock of Sparrows on February 5. At least three Savannah Sparrows survived the winter. They were recorded at Hartlen Point, February 5, Cole Harbour, February 9, and Eastern Passage Beach, March 21.

My sole Snow Bunting reports are for February, where one was seen at Hartlen Point on the fifth, and a nice flock of 32 at Cole Harbour along the railroad tracks February 9. Only twice did I happen upon Horned Larks; at Hartlen Point, February 5, and Cole Harbour, February 9.

Last, but not least, to complete my list for this winter, a flock of 7 Lapland Longspurs seen during a day's walk along the Cole Harbour railroad track, February 9.

So, there you have it; a relatively long, but informative account of how the mild winter of 1980 effected but one section of our province. Compare it to your own region or if you also live in the Halifax-Dartmouth area, compare your field notes with mine. You may learn something about the part of Nova Scotia you live in, yourself as a birder, or a little bit of both.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ, PAGE 163

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. (b) Pied-billed Grebe | 11. (d) Flicker |
| 2. (c) Snowy Egret | 12. (c) Olive-sided Flycatcher |
| 3. (d) Surf Scoter | 13. (c) Olive-sided Flycatcher |
| 4. (c) Color of back | 14. (c) Tree Swallow |
| 5. (d) Eskimo Curlew | 15. (b) Spruce woods |
| 6. (c) Purple Sandpiper | 16. (b) Golden-crowned Kinglet |
| 7. (b) Hudsonian Godwit | 17. (c) Water Pipit |
| 8. (a) Flesh-colored | 18. (c) Ipswich Sparrow |
| 9. (b) Arctic Tern | 19. (b) Nashville and Tennessee |
| 10. (c) Kingfisher | 20. (b) 8x40 |

BIRDS AND NOVA SCOTIA'S BUDWORM SPRAY

Tony Duke
 Biologist, Forest Resources
 Education, Dept. of Lands and Forests*

Nova Scotia's spruce budworm spray program is unique in eastern Canada. We are the only province to reject chemical spraying in favour of a bacterial spray to combat our foremost forest management problem. With this type of pioneer work, goes the responsibility of monitoring its effects on the environment. The Department of Lands and Forests, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Environment, is looking closely at the effects the spray program may have on other forest insects, aquatic insects, fish, clams and wildlife. To monitor any effects the 1979 spray program may have had on song-birds, Lands and Forests contracted Paul Germain of Avifauna Limited. Working with Paul were Frank Spalding from Economy, N. S., and Don Kimball from Fredericton, N. B. Both men have many years of bird-watching experience and can truly be called birdwatching experts.

Unlike many chemicals used in eastern North America which kill insects on contact, the bacteria (called Bacillus thuringiensis Kurstaki, or Btk for short) is sprayed on the leaves of the trees. When the larva eats these leaves the Btk attacks the stomach lining and the insect dies of blood poisoning. Since Btk affects only leaf eating butterflies and moths, it is harmless to the natural predators and parasites of the budworm. There are twenty-five subspecies of Bt but twenty-four of them have toxins that effect mammals and diptera (flies). Only B.T. kurstaki lacks these toxins. Also birds and mammals have strong stomach acids which kill the Btk bacteria and are thus unaffected by any ingested spray. Therefore, any effects on them would only be indirect. For example, a result of the loss of food (budworm larvae), harassment by the spray drift or by aircraft.

It is very difficult to compare population densities, of birds in sprayed and in similar unsprayed areas as Btk does not induce death. Instead, a behavioural method is used to examine sublethal effects. Paul Germain and his group compared the singing activity of male birds in sample blocks of sprayed and unsprayed areas.

Male birds set up territories which will provide adequate food for themselves, their mates and the young birds they will raise. They "defend" these territories by singing their songs which warn other birds to stay away. Each bird species has its own song and expert birdwatchers can identify birds without ever seeing them. It is generally assumed that any harmful affect of the spray will cause a change in the birds' singing behaviour. Other birds could remain silent, leave the area, become sick and possibly die. The sublethal effect, would reduce the chances of hearing the birds during a census.

On Crowdis Mountain in Victoria county, the Highland road passes through the center of one of the spray blocks. Here the "Breeding Bird Survey" technique was used to monitor singing birds. The observer drives for 0.5 km, stops the car and gets out to listen for 5 minutes for all birds calling. The location of each bird is marked on a map. He then drives to the next stop 0.5 km along the road and listens again. The birds from the previous stop cannot be heard because they are too far away so there is no overlap. Twelve stops were made in each of the sprayed and the unsprayed areas. All twenty-four stops were visited every morning between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.

*With reports by Paul Germain and Dr. Tom Smith

The twelve sprayed and unsprayed areas in Cumberland County had few roads so the monitoring was done on foot along a straight line through the forest, 350 metres long. To improve accuracy only twelve species of forest birds were monitored. These twelve have different feeding habits which would expose them to different amounts of spray. For example, kinglets feed at the tops of the trees, vireos, on the lower branches, juncos on the ground and in low shrubs. Six plots were surveyed each morning so each was surveyed every other day. As on Crowdis Mountain, the singing birds were marked on a map each day.

For both areas a total of 534 birds were recorded between May 28 and June 29. The results showed that bird abundance was the same in sprayed and unsprayed areas during the two weeks following the application of the insecticide. Singing activity throughout the post spray period was found to be normal everywhere. Where this activity decreased after the spray, a similar decrease was observed in the unsprayed areas. The male's singing activity normally decreases as the breeding season progresses.

Both Frank Spalding and Don Kimball who did the field work in Cumberland and Victoria Counties respectively, commented that the bird populations in the sprayed areas appeared remarkably healthy, judging by their territorial activity.

As a forest management strategy the Btk experiment was a success. The trees in the sprayed areas were protected and up to 97% of the budworms were killed.

Btk, when correctly applied is equal to the best chemical insecticides in existence. It is very narrow in its target, killing only the one form or a series of closely related forms. The spray has not been shown to adversely affect the ecosystem and the beneficial insects such as parasites and predators are usually unaffected. The disadvantages of Btk include its higher cost than chemicals and shorter life span on the foliage.

A 1980 spray program with Btk is already underway. Almost 27,500 hectares (68,750 acres) will be sprayed, 18,720 ha in Victoria and Inverness Counties and 8,770 ha in Cumberland and Colchester Counties. This is a short term forest management strategy that will allow protection of the trees until they can be harvested. It also allows time to initiate the Department's long term objectives of modifying the forests to the disadvantage of the budworm. Large stands of budworm prone spruce and fir of the same age will be interspersed with smaller areas of young and immature stands and a greater mixture of tree species and new varieties resistant to budworm will be planted.

For a free copy of the complete report by Avifauna Ltd., write to Dr. Tom Smith, P. O. Box 68, Truro, N. S. B2N 5B8

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