

NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS



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N O V A S C O T I A B I R D S

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SPRING

March through May

1983

A windy March, a cold April and a wet May could describe any spring in Nova Scotia, but this year was windier, colder and wetter than most, and especially wetter. Our fears for forest fires, drying wells and failing water power--because of a relatively snowless winter--have been allayed, have been replaced by frustrations at being unable to plant the gardens or mow the lawns. However, considering the devastation heavy rains have caused in other parts of the continent we should curb our complaints and count ourselves lucky. Growth of vegetation has been retarded to some extent but is making progress, and the countryside is now looking its best: the trees lush and green, the shrubs full of blossom.

More to the purpose of this report, the lush green trees are full of birds, more birds than we have seen or heard for years. These are mostly our own native species, migrants returning to nest and breed; and by the sound, desirable territories are rapidly being defined--the woods are full of bird song, and every swallow house is taken.

Some few species remain scarce, in particular the Winter Wren, but another bird which has caused us anxiety of late, the Chimney Swift--although not well distributed--came in large numbers to Wolfville at any rate, where hundreds were counted, May 7, 8 and 22, "funneling" into chimneys at Acadia University.

The migrating birds, held up periodically by weather systems, came in distinct waves this spring, and the last and largest was witnessed by observers on Seal Island, May 26-27; the description of this really spectacular event we owe to Eric Mills, present on the island at that time, and is, as it should be, included here:

"Seal Island, Yarmouth County, May 22-27, 1983. Observers: Eric Mills, Ian McLaren, John Kearney. Most of this period was cold, wet and windy. In general, winds were easterly and birding was slow though varied. Many of the birds on the island disappeared entirely on May 25, after an easterly gale subsided. During the evening of that day, the wind changed to light NW and the sky cleared partially. At dawn on May 26, the wind was light NW and the birds were arriving on the island in numbers unprecedented in our experience. Fishermen working off the island reported birds still flying from the north towards the island at 0900 hours or later.

At the south end of the island (West Village and vicinity of the lighthouse) we found tens of thousands of migrants, mainly warblers and thrushes, so many that we birded continuously from before 0800 until 1500 in that region without time to go anywhere else. Thousands of birds in the deep woods eluded us. Every tree and bush appeared to be alive with birds. Every clearing was full of thrushes and they and the warblers spilled out into the dead trees in the grassy areas, or hopped on the ground. Late in the day, when we walked around the north end of the island it was still full of birds, many in areas that had been completely birdless the day before. On the following day, May 27, many birds remained, enough to make an exceptional day under normal circumstances. Hopping on the kelp-covered beach at the West Village on that morning were a male Scarlet Tanager, a female Orchard Oriole, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Baybreasted, Yellow, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped and Canada Warblers, and a couple of Water Pipits, along with occasional Alder Flycatchers, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and a Pewee or two. Other areas still had exceptional numbers of the previous day's migrants, though birds were leaving to the north, according to fisherman.

This remarkable arrival consisted mainly of common species of the Nova-Scotian-Atlantic-Provinces region. The highlights were: 3 Wood Ducks, 25 Eastern Kingbirds, 1 Great Crested Flycatcher, 35 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, 10 Traill's (prob. Alder) Flycatchers, 10 Least Flycatchers, 300+ Catbirds, 5 Gray-cheeked Thrushes, 30 Veerys, 400+ Swainson's Thrushes, 2 Solitary Vireos, 150 Red-eyed Vireos, 2 Philadelphia Vireos, a Warbling Vireo, 500 Black-and-White Warblers, 35 Tennessee, 7 Nashville, 20 Parula, 350 Yellow, 150 Magnolia, 15 Cape May, 12 Black-throated Blue, 200 Yellow-rumped (Myrtle), 40 Black-throated Green, 20 Blackburnian, 25 Chestnut-sided, 6 Bay-breasted, 400 Blackpoll Warblers, 15 Ovenbirds, 30 Northern Water-thrushes, 4 Mourning Warblers, 500 Common Yellowthroats, 150 Wilson's Warblers, 150 Canada Warblers, 75 Redstarts, 50 Bobolinks, 1 female Orchard Oriole, 10 Northern Orioles, 13 Scarlet Tanagers (mainly males) 60 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, 20 White-throated Sparrows, 3 White-crowned Sparrows, 50 Lincoln's Sparrows, 35 Swamp Sparrows. Especially for the warblers and thrushes the numbers are reasonable estimates of the birds seen and identified; these are only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of birds present all over the island"...ELM.

How fortunate that this marvellous occurrence, this birdwatchers' dream, happened when three of our most expert birdwatchers were at hand to witness it, and to describe it so vividly for the rest of us. However, the main report to follow will not be anti-climactic, it is full of interest, and encouragement for the future of our native birds, their friends and relations. Do read it.

-- Phyllis Dobson.

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 of references:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Yarmouth Co. (Yar. Co.) | Arcadia, Pinkney's Point, Tusket, Cranberry Head, Eel Brook, Chegoggin, Melbourne, Bartlett's Beach |
| Shelburne Co. (Shel. Co) | Cape Sable Is., Matthews Lake, Lower Ohio, The Hawk |
| Queen's Co. | Port Joli, Port Hebert, Caledonia, Cadden Bay, Summer-ville Beach |
| Lunenburg Co. (Lun. Co.) | Cherry Hill, Broad Cove, Petite Riviere, Green Bay, Crousetown, Crescent Beach, Bayport, Lower LaHave, Second Peninsula |
| Halifax Co. (Hfx. Co.) | Three Fathom Hbr., Conrad's Beach, Lawrencetown, Cole Hbr., Mooseland, Rocky Run, Conrad's Road, Queensland, Waverley, Martinique Beach, Hartlan's Point |
| Colchester Co. (Col. Co.) | Economy |
| Annapolis Co. (Anna. Co.) | Wilmot, Round Hill, Paradise, Sandy Bottom Lake |
| Kings Co. | Wolfville, Greenfield, Melanson, Canard, Lockhartville, Black River Lake, Gaspereau, Grand Pre |
| Cumberland Co. (Cumb. Co.) | Lusby Marsh |
| Hants Co. | Shubenacadie |

BIRD REPORTS

LOONS AND GREBES

COMMON LOONS began to appear in the lakes about the 3rd week in March but there were still large loose concentrations in coastal waters: 150 at Crescent-Beach-Green-Bay-Cherry Hill, Mar. 14-16 (SC), 60 at Conrad's Beach, Mar. 15, and 100+ Lawrencetown-Three-Fathom Hbr. Mar. 27 (FLL). Thirty-six were still there Apr. 1 (BDM&DM).

RED-THROATED LOONS were seen in fair numbers during March: 10-12 at Bartlett's Beach on the 6th, and 10 at Pinkney's Pt. on the 7th (CRKA); 16 at Bartlett's again on the 11th (MSC&JG), and 4 in breeding plumage, still there May 6 (CRKA).

First concentration of RED-NECKED GREBES noted was at Lr. West Pubnico, Feb. 28 (RSd'E). Other flocks of from 15-25 began to appear thereafter in the Lawrencetown area and at Crescent Beach, Pinkney's Pt and Cranberry Head. Birds in at least partial breeding plumage were seen as early as Mar 14; last reported sighting was May 5.

HORNED GREBE reports were few and were all of birds seen in waters between Hartlen Pt. and Seaforth, along the coast just east of Halifax: 6, Mar. 16, Hartlen Pt. (RBD), 5 Lawrencetown, Mar. 27 (FLL), 3 Conrad's Beach, Apr.1 (BDM&DM) and 30+, Seaforth, Apr. 21 (FLL).

PIED-BILLED GREBE reports are also scanty: 2, Apr. 22, and 2, May 7, APBS (CD), 5, same locality, Apr. 19 (FLL) and 1, Shubenacadie, May 8 (FC&RCM).

--C.R.K.A., ed.

FULMARS TO CORMORANTS

We have very few reports of 'tubenoses' so far this spring. Raymond S. d'Entremont saw three SOOTY SHEARWATERS on Georges Bank on Apr. 12. That's early--but not exceptionally so for the earlier of our two summer shearwaters to arrive. He notes that the GREATERS had not yet appeared. He also saw a WILLSON'S STORM-PETREL on the Bank the previous day, but 11th of April is rather early for that species to reach us and there's the possibility that it could have been a LEACH'S. Leach's were certainly off southern Nova Scotia in some numbers on Apr. 7; Sidney Smith saw over 75 from 'Coastguard 116', while he was on Patrol between Cape Sable and Seal Island.

Our most unusual 'Pelican' was just that, a BROWN PELICAN. Marc Poitvin saw it from 'Lady Hammond' on Brown's Bank, southwest of Cape Sable, February 15. It appeared to have an injured wing.

The most spectacular sign of spring in the waters off Nova Scotia is the return of the NORTHERN GANNETS, and we have many records to document it. The first arrivals were the 10 birds which Daryl Amiraault saw near Mud Island, south of the Tusquets, March 21. Les Rutherford saw 14 off Prospect, Hfx. Co., on March 27, and the migration was in full flood there on Apr. 12, when he counted over 230 of them going by in one hour. Fulton Lavender saw over 200 birds from Hartlen Point, also on Apr. 12. June Graves and Margaret Churchill counted 40 birds in only 15 minutes off Baccaro, on Apr. 4, and Sidney Smith saw at least 60, some 20 miles south-west of Cape Sable on Apr. 8, the first birds of the year in that area. There were at least 150 passing Cranberry Head, on the south shore of the lower Bay of Fundy, on Apr. 18, and smaller parties on subsequent days (CRKA, PRD). This is apparently a regular event at this time of year. Interestingly enough, the birds were all travelling SOUTH, and this means

they must have made a detour into the Bay on their way north up the Atlantic coast. There are no Gannet colonies in Fundy today--the ones on the Nova Scotian and New Brunswick Gannet Rocks were exterminated before 1880--but the past existence of these sites suggests that there must be good feeding for Gannets in the area in the spring. It may be that the migrants use it as a pit-stop on their way north. Flocks of up to a dozen at a time were passing Brier Island on Apr. 26 (RBS,RD), there were over 50 birds there on Apr. 29 (ELM), and smaller numbers were still going by on May 15-16 (RBS,JM,SM). Most of this Brier Island passage was of adult birds; they always arrive ahead of the subadults and first-winter birds.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS also come back in the spring, if not quite as spectacularly. The first arrivals were singletons at George's Island, in Halifax Harbour, on Mar. 28 (FLL), at Economy on Apr. 8 ('latest "first-arrival" date yet', according to Francis Spalding), and at Eel Lake, Yar. Co., the next day (CRKA). They had not yet reached Green Bay on Apr. 3 (Cohrs). The main migration was well under way in late Apr. and early May: 35+ off Cranberry Head, Yar. Co., on Apr. 21 (PRD et al.), 100+ flying east past Seal Island on Apr. 28 and 29 (ELM,IAM); a flock of 50+ flying northeast over Lawrencetown on May 6 (FLL, MA). The birds reached Cape Breton by May 23 when Hedley Hopkins saw 3 in Mira Bay.

GREAT CORMORANTS are partly resident with us, and the 4 which Richard Stern saw on Feb. 27, at Sandy Cove and Ketch Harbour, may have been among these. On the other hand, the flock of 12 which Francis Spalding saw in Minas Basin on Mar. 25, were certainly migrants, if very unusual ones in that area. "They flew tentatively, with much circling and backtracking, but eventually disappearing NNE (overland towards Northumberland Strait)". Greats had arrived at Cherry Hill and Mahone Bay by Mar. 14, when John Cohrs estimated about 60 along that stretch of coast. There were 42 at Conrad's Beach on Apr. 7 (RJ), and 7 the same day at Point Aconi, Cape Breton (HEH).

--RGG, ed.

HERONS AND ALLIES

At least 3 GREAT BLUE HERONS were present in late winter: in the Bridgewater to Lr. LaHave area, near Pubnico, and at Martinique Beach. One at Prospect on Mar. 19, was questionably migrant, but an inland bird at Shubenacadie on Mar. 31 (RCM), 2, at Lr. La Have on Apr. 3, and scattered groups of 2-5 in the next few days were doubtless arrivals. By Apr. 9 weekend, they were widely reported. A Pubnicos team (rep. by TCD'E) found ca. 100 nests in the colony on Channel Is., and 50-60 on Bonds Is., Argyle Co., most with 3 eggs on May 29. Many nest trees had evidently fallen on Bonds Is. since the last count 3 years ago.

The "southern" herons were so regularly seen and reported, that I cite observers only for first or unusual sightings. Single GREEN-BACKED HERONS (Sorry! New Name) were at Rocky Run on Apr. 24 (Cohrs), on Apr. 24 and 29 on Brier Is., May 1 at Lockeport, May 4 at Lr. La Have, and May 26 at Lr. W. Pubnico. As usual, Seal Is. did better, with 3+ a week-old corpse on May 12-16, 1 still there May 23-27. Our only LITTLE BLUE HERON was at Lr. W. Pubnico from the last week of Apr. to May 5 (DJd'E et al.).

CATTLE EGRETS were most immoderate this year, with up to 19 birds in a pattern suggesting the largest influx in early May with subsequent wandering. Earliest were 2 at Necum Teuch from mid-Apr. to past mid-May, and 1 near Kennetcook on Apr. 30. Two were at Port Joli on May, and 1 nearby on May 21, 8(!) appeared at Barss Corner, Lun. Co., on May 2, 3 at Grand Pre on May 4, and through the month, 1 at Sable River in early May, 1 at Wallace By, May 9-13, 1 at

E. Lawrencetown in late May, and 2 in C. B., sometime in May. As usual, some were associated with cattle, sheep, or horses.

The first GREAT EGRET was at Lr. La Have from Apr. 23 to May 11 (EHC). Others followed near Dartmouth on Apr. 24, Lawrencetown on Apr. 26, Comeau's Hill, Yar. Co., on Apr. 30, and on the same day at Petite Riviere, at Bible Hill on May 1, at Port Mouton in early May, and at Cherry Hill on May 5 and May 20. SNOWY EGRETS were more widespread. The earliest was at Pt. Edward, C. B., on Apr. 4 (fide HEH), 1 was at Crescent Beach, Apr. 16-17, 1 at Mira, C. B., on Apr. 24, at least 2 around the Pubnicos, Apr. 25 to May 12, 1 on Brier Is., Apr. 26-28, 1 at Chester Apr. 27, 4 at Sand Beach, Yar. Co., on Apr. 28 (1 to late May), 1 at Dartmouth, Apr. 29, 2 at Bunker's Is., Apr. 30, 3 at Cherry Hill on May 5, 3 at Port Mouton in early May, 2 near Sambro, May 6-8, 1 at Seal Hbr., Hfx. Co., on May 14, and 1 at W. Pubnico on May 25. They were still around into June at W. Lawrencetown, as in past years.

An immature and an adult BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON were on Brier Is., Apr. 28-30, and 2 adults (JDM) on Seal Is. on May 12-16, were reduced to 1 on May 25-27, although 1 could have been incubating, as they have nested on nearby Bon Portage Is. The first AMERICAN BITTERN was on schedule at Queensland on Apr. 22 (fide KNK), and 1 was "pumping" next day near Shubenacadie. Thereafter we have reports of ca. 7 birds from 6 localities--never a common species with us.

The first GLOSSY IBISES were individuals near Truro (SIT) and near Glace Bay (per FRF) on Apr. 23, an 1 next day at W. Lawrencetown "appeared newly arrived" (ELM). One at Canard, May 12-13, may have arrived later.

--IAM, ed.

SWANS, GEESE, DUCKS

A WHISTLING SWAN in flight over Seal Is., May 12, was reported by Steve Manuel, Ken Morgan and Mike Crowell.

The CANADA GOOSE population is about the same this year as in 1982, similar numbers appearing in flights and concentrations in the usual "staging" areas: 3500 Cole Hbr., Mar. 6; "hundreds" near Canning, Mar. 7; "large flocks" at Grand Pre, Mar. 10, and 4000+, Lawrencetown, Mar. 15. On the 19th there were 1000+ at Glace Bay, while at John Lusby Marsh, the numbers peaked to 4000 on that date, falling off to 600 on the 27th, but rising to 1000 on Apr. 30 (CD&RBS). There was also a flock of 5000 Canadas at Pt. Morien, Mar. 27. Numbers fell off sharply during April and a single at Cranberry Head, May 14 (MC) was the latest report except for a pair on nesting territory at Lusby Marsh.

All reports of BRANT (except for 7 at Wolfville, Apr. 22 (JWW) were from the western end of Digby Neck--Freeport to Brier Is. From Mar. 11 to May 15, a number of sightings were reported, of from 20 to 200 birds, most of them over 1000. The flight was apparently still in progress as late as mid-May, as 500 were seen there May 6-15 (RBS).

Two SNOW GEESE were in the Canard-Canning area from Mar. 18 to Apr. 10, keeping company with the Canadas, and were briefly joined by 2 others on Mar. 22 (JWW, RB, BLF, etc.). Two also appeared at Lusby Marsh, a considerable distance away, though still at the head of the Bay of Fundy, Apr. 12 (ST).

Reports of wild MALLARDS continue to increase. During this Report Period (Mar.-May), there were 15 sightings of at least 40 individuals,

most of them, understandably, males. One brood of 9 young was seen by Jim Woolford at Port Williams, May 24.

There is nothing special to report on BLACK DUCKS, numbers and distribution being about the same as in recent years. The first brood observed was one of 8 at Lr. La Have, May 8, under attack by a pair of Ravens. On the following day only 4 remained and next day just 2. On May 10, there was no sign of either adults or young (EHC). Other broods seen were: 6 at Port Williams, May 21, and one of 9 and another of 4 at Kejimikujik, May 23 (JWW,RSJ).

The only GADWALL sightings were at APBS: 11, Apr. 19 (FLL,DL,EW); 2, Apr. 3 (JWW).

NORTHERN PINTAILS were reported in small numbers from Conrad's Beach, Canard and Seal Is., with concentrations of 50-65 at APBS, Mar. 4 and 27, and again April 22.

A COMMON (EURASIAN) TEAL (male) showed up at West Lawrencetown Marsh in company with 2 Green-winged Teal, Apr. 10, and was joined by another male, April 14 (JL&JSC). Several GREEN-WINGED TEAL in the Halifax area, Feb. 23-Mar. 6 could be wintering birds or very early arrivals. The next sighting of 4, Apr. 10 at W. Lawrencetown, could well be spring birds. (RBD). The first record of BLUE-WINGED TEAL was a pair at APBS Apr. 3 (BDM,DM,EPS); they were common there by Apr. 30 (RBS).

A male EURASIAN WIGEON at Lusby Marsh, Apr. 3 (BDM) and 1, Apr. 19 at adjacent APBS (FLL,DL) were possibly the same bird. The earliest report of the AMERICAN WIGEON was a male at Sullivan's Pond, Mar. 8, (FLL) followed by a report of 11, Apr. 3, at APBS (BDM,DM,EPS); the high count at APBS was 35 on Apr. 19 (FLL,DL,EW).

The first NORTHERN SHOVELER seen was 1, Apr. 7, in the Lake Pockwock area (RJ). On Apr. 12, a pair appeared on a farm pond at Canard where it was joined by another pair, Apr. 16, and where a total of four pairs was seen, Apr. 24, by the NSBS Field Trippers (JWW). A pair plus a single was seen at Port Williams sewage ponds, May 17, and on the 24th there was a pair with a brood of 9 ducklings at the same spot (RBS).

Nellie Snyder had a male WOOD DUCK in her pond at Crousetown, Apr. 2, and again May 1. The only other reports are of a female at APBS, May 14; two males at Brier Is., on the same date and two males and a female at Seal Is., May 26-27.

A REDHEAD was seen by the Blomidon Natural History Society on their visit to APBS April 30.

RING-NECKED DUCKS were early this spring: 2, Mar. 16, in Rocky Lake; an unspecified number on a Cape Breton NSBS trip; and 4, Mar. 24 at APBS. A "high" of probably 100 was reported for the APBS Apr. 30 (RBS).

GREATER SCAUP were beginning to fade from the picture by early March, although there were 160 at Bayport on the 14th (JSC); a couple of dozen at Salt Bay, Apr. 7 (PRD), and 12, still at Pubnico, May 4 (EEM). LESSER SCAUP (no numbers!) were seen somewhere in Cape Breton Mar. 19 by the NSBS Field Party that day, and 14 were reported at Lingan Bay, May 9 (CSM).

COMMON GOLDENEYE numbers dwindled like those of the Greater Scaup through March; they were still "very common in the Crescent-Beach-Cherry-Hill area, Mar. 14-16" (JSC), and there were 200+ at Cole

Harbour-Lawrencetown, Mar. 16 (FLL). The last reports were of 2, Apr. 22 at APBS (CD), and a single, May 1, in the La Have (FLL).

The BUFFLEHEAD departure time-table was about the same as that of the foregoing species. A "large flock off Smith's Cove, Mar. 29" was reported by KR; and from then on small numbers (up to 5 or 6) throughout April, all having left by Apr. 30, except a female at Debert, May 21 (BED).

OLDSQUAWS were mostly long gone by the end of March. Eric Mills counted 135 along the shore of St. Margaret's Bay between the head of the bay and Hubbards, Mar. 6; and John Cohrs observed a flock of 35 "doing their thing" at Crescent Beach, Mar. 15. Only reports after that were 2, Apr. 1 at Hartlen Point (RBD), and 2 (late laggards) in breeding plumage at Cranberry Head, May 6 (ESC,JG).

What may prove to be another wintering area for HARLEQUIN DUCKS has been found by Margaret Churchill & Co. just north of Cranberry Head, Yar. Co.. Up to 11 birds--2 adult males, 2 immature males and 7 females or immatures were seen there repeatedly from March 16 to May 1, by a number of observers. A flock of 4, seen at Bartlett's Beach, a few miles north of this, on May 6, could have been members of the same flock, on the move. Only other report of the Harlequin is of a male at Conrad's Beach, March 13 (RBD).

COMMON EIDERS were seen in their hundreds and thousands, plus smaller numbers in widely scattered spots from March through May: 5000+, March 15 at Conrad's Beach (FLL); 1500+ March 17 at St. Mary's Bay (MEC); 1200 March 24 at Hartlen Point (FLL), and a flock of 200-500+ at Broad Cove, Cadden Beach and the open sea between Cape Sable and Seal Is., May 12-16 (JM,MC,KM, S Manuel).

As usual WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS were the most frequently reported and in greatest numbers of this group: 8 sightings with a total of about 420 birds, the highest count being 200+ at Hartlen Pt., Mar. 24 (FLL). There were seven sightings of SURF SCOTERS totalling 63 birds, 50 of these being at Port Joli, Apr. 10 (IAM,ELM). BLACK SCOTERS were reported five times for a total of about 300 birds of which nearly all were at Green Bay, Apr. 1-3, "three or four flocks of 25-50 plus a few pairs" (JSC).

A RUDDY DUCK at APBS, May 18 (CD), was the only record for this species.

Three HOODED MERGANSERS showed up in widely separated places: a female in Lawrencetown River, Mar. 15 (FLL); a male in adult plumage, well described, at MacDonald Cove, Ant. Co., Mar. 27 (HD), and another female, also well described, at Nine-mile River, Hants Co., Apr. 10 (RCM,FC).

There were 35 COMMON MERGANSERS at Port Philip, Mar. 3 (BED), and small groups were present on the La Have through February and March, up to the 31st (CN); at Eel Lake, 65 appeared Mar. 7, the first for the '83 season. Numbers there increased to over 100 during the next two weeks then began to fall off by the 21st of March. Last seen were 7, Apr. 9 (PRD,CRKA). There were 60 at Cole Hbr., Mar. 15 (FLL) and they were still numerous in the Lawrencetown area April 10 (RBD). By far the greatest number of RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS was seen in March--up to 350 in five reports; they were also said to be numerous in the Lawrencetown area, Apr. 10, and 30 were seen there April 27. Males were displaying actively in early March.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

TURKEY VULTURES were at Brier Is., where up to 3 were around May 6-15, and in the Argyll-Tusket area, where there was an immature on Apr. 25-26 (CRKA) and 2 birds on May 10 (PRD). Less routine was an adult near New Glasgow on May 24 (LAC). As RBS writes: "What about a N.S. nest"!

Our only NORTHERN GOSHAWKS were single birds near Vogler's Cove and Port Joli on Apr. 10, over open country near Canard on Apr. 22, and on the Hants Co. field trip on May 28. We have reports of 16+ SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS after Apr. 1, 8 of them on Seal Is., May 12-16, plus "small numbers" on Brier Is., May 6-15. About RED-TAILED HAWKS, RBS writes: "After the large numbers in the Canning-Port Williams area all winter, numbers dropped off by mid-March, and after that only 1-2 around". There were later reports from elsewhere of about 15 birds. Two nests with 2 and 3 (later 4) eggs on Apr. 1, were early records for BLF in Kings Co. Residents and migrants are generally hard to separate, but 1 on Seal Is. on May 12 must have been still on move. A RED-SHOULDERED HAWK was well seen by CRKA at Spring Haven, Yar. Co., on May 15 (details on file). We had good reports of BROAD-WINGED HAWKS, beginning with a "kettle" of 6 near Chester on May 1 (BED). Another good count was of 20+ on Brier Is., on May 19. There were Apr. reports of 2-3 ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS from APBS and from C.B., and a late bird was at Belleneck, Yar. co., on May 6 (PRD).

A census of BALD EAGLES by 11 observers in the Gaspereau-Canning area, produced 27 adults and 29 immature birds on Feb. 27 (JWW). They generally disappeared from that area by mid-Mar., although an adult was seen on Apr. 16. A good spring count was of 7 immatures at Mahoney's Beach, Ant. Co., on Apr. 25 (RDC,SPF), but otherwise there were only scattered reports of ca. 6 immature and 10 adult birds. They were noted as beginning to brood on Mar. 13, near Malagawatch (J. McNicol) and in mid-March at Wallace Bay (RGSB).

There were no reports of wintering NORTHERN HARRIERS after Mar. 7, suggesting that 1 at Lr. W. Pubnico on Apr. 2 was the first migrant (DJd'E). Singles at Canning on Apr. 4 and Surette's Is., Apr. 6 were also early. Thereafter there were reports of about 13 birds from 5 localities in Apr. and 10 from 6 places in May (plus "several" on Brier Is., May 6-15). The first OSPREY at E. Jordan on Apr. 5 (RJC) was quickly followed by others at Brier Is., on Apr. 6, and at Conrad's Beach and Indian Path, Lun. Co., on Apr. 7. Birds were on 4 of 10 nests in the last locality by Apr. 9 (EHC). Yet, a number of observers reported their first, from various localities, through Apr. Of interest are estimates of 13 on the Lawrencetown "circuit" on Apr. 24, reports of 7 nesting on poles near Indian Path (where artificial sites are being offered), of 3 eggs in a nest on Channel Is., Yar. Co., on May 29, and of a pair evidently resident on Seal Is. in May.

Four MERLINS in Apr. were presumably migrant, and among 6 reported for May, the 4 on Seal Is. on May 12 were certainly so. A little flurry of 4 AMERICAN KESTRELS in late March, the first at Dartmouth on Mar. 24 (FLL), were evidently migrant, as were 4 more before Apr. 10. A pair was copulating at Grand Pre on Apr. 13 (per JWW), so later reports of ca. 14 birds from 10 localities may have been of migrants (like 1 on Seal Is., Mar 23-26) or residents.

GROUSE AND ALLIES

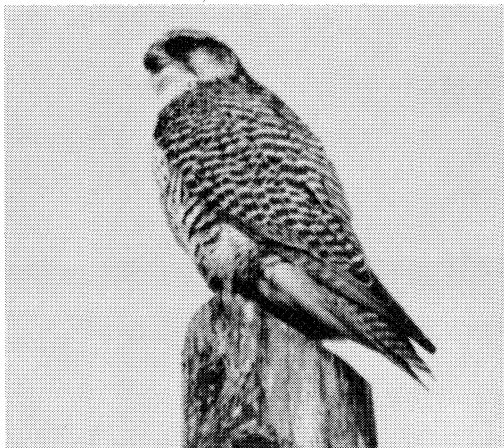
Two SPRUCE GROUSE were at Lr. Ohio on Apr. 28 (BED), 2 cocks were displaying to 2 hens next day at Black River, Kings Co. (JWW et al.), and a female was near Jordan Falls on May 16 (RJC). The Lr. Ohio birds were "lifers" for BED-- it is not surprising that even active observers seldom come across these quiet fowl. Yet, they are a bird sought by many birders visiting N. S. If anyone knows a sure-fire and accessible site for this summer, perhaps they should inform the rare-bird alert (Shirley Cohrs). We have reports of about 30 RUFFED GROUSE (plus some of "several") from 15 locales. It seems that JWW's perception that they "seem abundant this spring" may apply widely.

We have good reports of RING-NECKED PHEASANT. They rated as "common as usual" in Kings Co. (RBS), where JWW complains (?) of a cock crowing at 1 a.m. on Apr. 27, and BLF reports a nest with 10 eggs near Wolfville Ridge on May 16. Elsewhere, there were 3 around Paradise and 7-8 around Smith's Cove, 3 probable nestings near Lr. La Have, individuals near Bridgewater, Dartmouth, and Musquodoboit Hbr., and they were "frequently heard" in the Amherst area. While the GREY PARTRIDGE may be waning in Kings Co., with only 2 near Canard on May 22, it is trying hard in Economy, where 2 of the winter flock seemed paired on Mar. 21 and May 26 (FLS).

RALLIDS

What, no cranes? The first SORAS were 2 on May 7 at APBS (CD), where an estimated 10 were seen or heard on May 14 (FLL et al.). One at Shubenacadie on May 14 and less expected (FC,RCM). A COMMON MOORHEN (old name Common Gallinule) on Seal Is., on May 12-16 and another at APBS on May 21 were normal, but a beautiful PURPLE GALLINULE in a Wolfville tulip garden on May 4 was outlandish. As reported by JWW, the bird first seemed "in shock", but care at the Animal House pet shop and at Acadia University got it eating and apparently healthy for its release near Canard on May 11. The AM. COOT wintering at Sullivan's Pond left in the first week of Apr. (FLL). The first migrant was on Apr. 19, at APBS (FLL et al.), where there were up to 6 by Apr. 30, and 10 by May 7 (CD). There were no other reports.

--IAM, ed.



*Gyrfalcon, Grand Pre,
January 23, 1983,
Jim Wolford (Wolfville)*

SEE: STOP PRESS ITEM PAGE 53

SPRING SHOREBIRDS

The SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER arrived early with a total of perhaps 21 in the south-west, on April 17 (PRD,CRKA,JG,MEC). Two appeared to be thinking of nesting as early as Apr. 28 (CRKA). After this early influx, there are no reports until mid-May, when two were at Cadden Bay (RDC). On Seal there were 1-2 from May 23-27 (ELM et al.). The first PIPING PLOVER were singles at Conrad's Beach, Apr. 7 (RJ) and Cherry Hill, Apr. 9, numbers at the latter place, increasing to 7 by Apr. 23 (SJF), at the former to 5 by Apr. 21 (FLL). Elsewhere dates are for May: at Roseway, Matthew's Lake, Baccaro and Cole Hbr. Beaches (NSC, JG,EEM,RBD,RJC). Alas, RBD reports that the beach at Cole Hbr. is now being abused by every conceivable sort of wheeled vehicle and only one of last year's three or four pairs is still hanging on there. Early KILLDEER were at Rocky Run, Mar. 15 (FLL) and Three Fathom Hbr, Mar. 27 (WHD). There were 8 at Lockhartville, Apr. 8 (D&GL). BLF (of course) reports a nest with four eggs from Wolfville, May 11. There was a pair with one chick at Petite Riviere, May 21 (JSC). Two very early BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER were at Finger Beach, C.B., Apr. 12 (CSM) and 9, 6 of them in breeding plumage, at Cape Sable, Apr. 26 (BJS). Reports totalling 25 or so throughout May came from the Atlantic shore and Seal.

Three WOODCOCK at Shubenacadie, Mar. 31, are the only ones reported (FC&RCM); the species often escapes observation but usually with less success than this year. Less retiring, the COMMON SNIPES arrived pretty well on schedule, Apr. 9, at Shubenacadie (RCM) and at Lockhartville "just in time to add its winnowing to the chorus of the frog pond" (D&GL). Several reports came from the Valley in the following week (SB,JWW,J&B,M,LBM) and from Cape Breton at month's end (HEH,NSBS), where there had been one in early Apr. (JM).

A WHIMBREL made one of its infrequent spring appearances May 2, at Cherry Hill (RDC,SJF), so did the UPLAND SANDPIPER, at Seal, May 26 (fide EM).

The SPOTTED SANDPIPER was at Black River Lake, Kings Co., May 1 (BLF), at Cranberry Head, May 6 (RBS, SJF,BH), and pretty well distributed in the following weeks. The first WILLET sighting was Apr. 22, at Abrams River (RDC,PRD). Also in the SW were 9 Apr. 23 (EEM, DJd'E) and 100+ there by May 6 (MSC,EEM,JG). Four had reached the Halifax area by Apr. 27 (FLL); later elsewhere. At Cherry Hill there was a nest with two eggs May 16, four eggs May 20 (RDC); another at W. Pubnico had three eggs May 26 (Jd'E,EEM)--how quickly the season moves along. GREATER YELLOWLEGS passed through at their accustomed leisurely pace. The first ones were at Pubnico (EEM) and Lawrence-town (RBS) Apr. 23, rather sparsely reported thereafter until May 18, when there was still one at East Jordan (RJC); even later were 1-5 on Seal, May 23-28 (ELM et al.). The only LESSER YELLOWLEGS were singles at Brier, Apr. 28 (ELM,IAM), at APBS, May 1 (CD), and at Petite Riviere May 21, a rather late date (JSC).

Three RUDDY TURNSTONES at Baccaro, May 20, as was a RED KNOT (EEM, JG,MEC) Three of the latter, had touched down at Finger Lake, C.B. a month earlier, Apr. 17 (CSM). PURPLE SANDPIPERS were still around in mid-May in modest numbers, 4 at Three Fathom Hbr., May 14, 10 at Cape Split and 12 at Scots Bay, May 15 (BLF,RN).

Most remarkable is the report of two BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS from Summerville Beach on May 16: "observed under sunny conditions at about 3 feet away; black legs, bigger than a Piping Plover, no white rump, buffy across breast, wings beyond tail, pointed look" (RDC). As far as this editor knows, it is the first spring record for this at-no-time common traveler of the Mississippi flyway.

The relatively few reports of the LEAST SANDPIPER all fall between May 15 and May 25. The DUNLIN appears to have survived our mild winter; 5 at Martinique Beach, Feb. 23 (DL) and 4 at Cole Hbr., Mar. 6 (JSC) suggest as much. One in full breeding plumage was (still?) at Conrad's Beach, Apr. 21 (BW,DL), and one at Seal, May 23-28 (ELM et al.) A lone SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER was at Baccaro Beach, May 20 (JG et al.). The SANDERLING is represented by flocks of about 35 in Feb. at Martinique Beach (DL), in late Apr.- early May at Cape Sable (SFS) and at Cadden Bay (RDC). Only a single individual in March, at Conrad's Beach (FLL), suggests a mixture of over-winterers and migrants is involved in the reports.

Only a few RED PHALAROPES came to shore; one May 1 at Broad Cove (SJF,BH), one "grounded and oiled" at Seal, May 13-16 (MC et al.) and 10 there May 24 (ELM et al.) A male WILSON'S PHALAROPE was at Brier, May 18 (SIT), another of the species in basic plumage at Seal, May 27 (ELM et al.). RED-NECKED and RED PHALAROPES in small flocks, 7-8 to 15-20, passed 14 miles south of Brier, May 17-18 (RSD'E). One Northern was at Seal, May 24 (ELM et al.).

--F.S.,ed.

JAEGERs, GULLs, TERNS, AUKS

We have three reports of PARASITIC JAEGERs, all singletons, and the earliest is the oddest: the bird which Raymond d'Entremont saw from the Yarmouth Public Wharf on Apr. 18. As he says, "While I've seen my share of jaegers out at sea, this was the first one I've seen from the Wharf". They usually keep well clear of the land outside the breeding season, though Roland Chaisson and Stephen Flemming had a good view of a dark-phase bird at Cherry Hill Beach on Mar. 9. Finally, Eric Mills and Ian McLaren saw a bird south of Seal Is., on May 24.

Phyllis Dobson has taken me up on a suggestion I made some years back about counting gulls in winter. She also gives a very vivid picture of the early spring gull life in Yar. Co. "Thousands congregated off the K.C. Irving Wharf in Yar. Hbr., Apr. 8. The majority were HERRING by a long way, but some hundreds of GREAT BLACK-BACKED were among them, almost half of these immature (1st & 2nd year). Also, at least a dozen ICELAND and a few GLAUCCOUS GULLS. Ordinarily in the harbours only a few are seen, except late in the evening when certain roosts will be crowded--looking to be almost pure culture Herring. These groups can be found roosting in certain pastures at times also. When the fish boats are in here or in Pubnico and/or in between, thousands of gulls are present, as also at fish plants when they are in operation. The birds are in constant motion, impossible to count accurately--a kaleidoscope. Numbers vary day to day and season to season--how can you count them? They move around from place to place too. You ask the impossible, Dick, for accurate gull counts". Sorry, Phyllis: it seemed a good idea at the time.

Phyllis' comment formally read Great Black-backs and Herring Gulls into the record, and I think we'll leave them there, apart from congratulating the pair of Black-backs which had produced a clutch of 3 eggs at Black River Lake, Kings Co., by May 13 (BLF). The timing of the spring migration of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls is much more interesting. Only one of Phyllis Dobson's Icelands in Yar. Hbr., was still around on Apr. 21. The birds up in Cape Breton, around the Sydneys, seem to have left even earlier. Sara MacLean says that they had nearly all gone by Mar. 2, though there was a very late straggler on May 7. Clive Macdonald saw 15 at Lingan Beach on Apr. 17, and he notes that there were as many Iceland Gulls as Herrings this winter at Glace Bay wharf; he thinks they have definitely increased over the past 12 winters. The pattern at Point Pleasant Park sewer (what

charming places we ornithologists get into!) was for about 15 Icelands and 5 Glaucous all through Apr., dwindling to 5 of each on May 1 and 3 Iceland and 2 Glaucous on May 6, and to a single 2nd year Glaucous on May 23 (James McLaren, Steve Manuel). There were still 6 Glaucous at Lingan Beach, C.B., on Apr. 10 (CSM). On the Fundy side of the province, there was a 2nd year Glaucous among the Herring Gulls on the Grand Pre dykelands near Wolfville, as late as May 11 (JWW).

I'm sorry to say that, for the first time in I don't know how many winters, we have NO reports of LESSER BLACK-BACKS, from Digby, the Volvo Plant, or anywhere else. I can only hope that this reflects a change in the habits of our birdwatchers, and the not the birds.

Ed. Note: My last record of the Volvo bird is for Feb. 19--please write in any later sightings of that OR the Digby bird.

RING-BILLED GULLS were "numerous" in Halifax/Dartmouth at the end of Feb., and beginning of Mar., and at Chezzetcook on Apr. 10, but they were scarce in Dartmouth by May 21 (RBD). Phyllis Dobson had her usual flock of around 30 birds at Eel Lake, Yar. Co., in the first half of March, but they had dwindled to one or two stragglers by May. Clive Macdonald saw 50 at Lingan Beach on Apr. 17.

BLACK-HEADED and BONAPARTE'S GULLS occur in surprisingly few reports this winter. BLACK-HEADED, as usual, seem to have been the commoner. Phyllis Dobson had a mixed flock of 15-20 at Eel Brook, at the end of March--probably only one-third Bonaparte's--and that's unusual; the Black-headed were the first that Charlie Allen had seen there for several years. There was an adult and an immature bird still lingering on as late as Apr. 21. Sara MacLean says that the birds she saw around the Sydneys moulted very quickly into spring plumage; only one of the flock had a black head on Mar. 16, but almost all of them had turned by Mar. 22. They were calling vigorously by the first week of April, and they had all left by Apr. 23. Black-headed Gulls MUST be breeding over here somewhere (I say it every spring), in Cape Breton or Newfoundland. My European friends insist that our birds are migrants from Iceland or even farther east, but I refuse to believe it. Bonaparte's are definitely not, of course; they nest in bogs in the northern forests between northwestern Ontario and the Rockies, even though they winter along the Atlantic coast. Our latest record for this spring, an immature straggler, was the bird which Roland Chaisson and Stephen Flemming saw at Sandy Cove, Queen's Co., on May 14.

I've been deskbound, computer-confounded and telephone-tied all this spring instead of going to sea, so it's a pleasure to finish the gulls off with BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES - real deep-sea seabirds - even if I didn't see any myself. Raymond d'Entremont did, though, on one of his fishing trips about 14 miles south of Brier Island: an immature bird on May 13. Apart from that, there was a bird off Baccaro on Apr. 21 (JG,EEM,MEC), and one or two immatures off Seal Is., on most days from May 23-27 (ELM,IAM,JK).

The arrival of the terns is another sign of spring. Our first record is Phyllis Dobson's sighting of a couple of COMMON TERNS at Eel Lake on May 5-6. Terns appeared suddenly in the fog at Westport, Brier Is., on May 8; at least 100 of them ARCTIC TERNS certainly, but probably Commons as well (RBS). However, it's clear that the vanguard was farther north by then. There were two Commons on Little Albro Lake, Dartmouth, on May 8 as well, and 15-20 at Crab Is., Three Fathom Hbr., on May 14 (FLL et al.). There was a Common at Cadden Bay on May 10 (RDC and SPF), four at Seal Is., on 12-16 May (Jamie McLaren et al.), and one in St. Margaret's Bay on May 14 (Ed Garside). Chris Naugler saw his first Common of the year at Lunenburg on May 18. Ted

D'Eon and his party, surveying heron colonies on the Twin Is., in Middle West Pubnico at the end of May, found Commons, Arctics and a small number of ROSEATE TERNS breeding there. Commons were the dominant species.

The first BLACK TERN of the year was the bird which Fulton Lavender and his party saw at APBS on May 14. There were 12 at APBS on May 17 and 4 on May 21 (BED,CD). The only other record is Bernard Forsythe's: an adult in passage at Port Williams sewage ponds on May 23.

BLACK GUILLEMOTS may not be the commonest auks off Nova Scotia in spring, but they're the ones which are closest to shore and most likely to be reported. The records are spread around the southern end of the province, in ones and twos; their absence farther north undoubtedly reflects a scarcity of observers. On Brier Is. and in Hfx. Co., they seem to come into breeding plumage at some time between mid-Mar. and mid-Apr. (RBS,LR,FLL). James McLaren and his party estimated that about 150 birds were breeding on Seal Is., May 12-16.

Apart from these, we have only four other auk records. W. H. Owen found a DOVEKIE blown onto the Lawrencetown road on Dec. 4, and charitably returned it to the sea. There was a THICK-BILLED MURRE off Lawrencetown Head on 23 Feb., and 2 off Hartlen Point on Mar. 24 (FLL, David Lawley), and four birds in the middle of Bedford Basin on Mar. 11 (ELM). It makes for poor birding, though it probably also means that the birds themselves have had a satisfactory winter offshore, without the storms and the oil spills which bring them to our notice.

--R.G.B.B., ed.

DOVES, CUCKOOS

A ROCK DOVE was sitting on 2 eggs at Wolfville on Mar. 17 (JWW), and MOURNING DOVES seemed to be doing their bit. As usual, the latter flourished at the Pubnicos, with up to 8 coming to TCD'E's feeder and 11 to DJd'E's through May. One was "cooing" early at Shubenacadie on Mar. 31. I can't tell when first migrants arrived, but reports seemed more widespread after mid-Apr., and later migrants were on Brier Is., on Apr. 30 and Seal Is. on May 26. Territorial exclusiveness was being shown by a pair in Halifax in Apr. (MAC), another was carrying nesting material on May 3, near Clarence, Anna. Co. (BED), and a nest with broken eggs and scattered feathers was found by BLF on Wolfville Ridge on May 20. JWW feels they are "almost common" now around Wolfville in summer.

The first YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was on Brier Is., on Apr. 29 (ELM,IAM). Others of this regular "overshooter" were at Crystal Crescent Beach on May 6 (JFK), Lake Pockwock on May 7 (RJ), Wallace Bay on May 10 (RGSB), Seal Is., on May 12-16 (3 birds), and W. Pubnico on May 26. (JD'E). BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS belong here, but most probably arrive in late May and June. One was at Crescent Beach on May 7 (SJF), 2 at Seal Is. on May 12, and 1 was singing and flycatching (!) near Debert on May 21 (BED).

OWLS

A GREAT-HORNED OWL nest with 2 young on May 26 was found on an island near W. Pubnico on May 26 (JD'E&EM). Oddly, and I hope not ominously, we had only one other report--of a bird hooting near Shubenacadie. BLF had 7 pairs of BARRED OWLS using his Kings Co. nest boxes this spring, all with young by mid-May. Others reported what I take to be about 11-15 scattered pairs from Yar. Co. to C.B.

Of interest was a pair nesting in an unused Chimney near Hebron. The first SHORT-EARED OWL was at Lingan Beach on Apr. 12 (CSM), and at least 4 were at Grand Pre in mid-May. A previously unreported NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL was singing at Martinique Beach on Feb. 23 (FLL). There were no spring reports.

NIGHTHAWK, SWIFT, HUMMINGBIRD

It was undoubtedly an early year for COMMON NIGHTHAWKS, and submissions of sightings allow me to discount calling Am. Woodcocks. The first was seen and heard at Sandy Pt., Shel. Co., on Apr. 28, and the next at Yarmouth town on May 5, both by BED. There were 8 or 10 others before mid-May, but 2 dead ones on Seal Is., May 12-16, suggest that all this haste was risky. Indeed, only 3 more were reported before month's end.

CHIMNEY SWIFTS also seemed dangerously pushy, with 15 or 20 at Wolfville on Apr. 29, about 200 funneling into the big chimney at Acadia University at dusk on May 7, and 48 into a different chimney next evening (fide JWW). From various other localities there were 4 reports of 9 birds between May 2-6, and 8 reports of 30+ birds after mid-May. These are by far the best counts we've had of swifts in years. The wonderful sight of at least 382 entering the Acadia Chimney on May 22 (JWW) gives hope that they have not suffered from their early arrivals.

BELTEDKINGFISHER, contrary to so much else, seemed to come late this year. They are probably not night-flyers; might they follow water changes rather than weather? One at Cole Hbr., on Mar. 6, and another at Queensland on Mar. 11 had probably wintered, but 1 at Lr. W. Pubnico on Apr. 9 (DJd'E) was a plausible migrant. There were otherwise only 8 widespread sightings between Apr. 21-30, but by May they were well established and the usual evidence of nestings was reported.

WOODPECKERS

Although RBS reports NORTHERN FLICKERS "around Wolfville by mid-April", the earliest on a specified date were 2 at Lr. Argyle and 1 at Amherst on Apr. 22. By Apr. 30, there were reports of more than 45 birds from 18 localities, not including an "abundance" on Brier Is. on April 26 (RBS) and 40+ there 2 days later (ELM). There were 5 reports of nesting flickers, beginning May 2. We have records of 14 PILEATED WOODPECKERS from 12 localities, including a bird in Wolfville town on Apr. 22. This last observation may be part of the pattern of recovery of this species (from casual shooting?) in the province; in some parts of its range, it is a suburban bird. A very tame male RED-HEADED WOODPECKER wintered at Amherst from Nov. '82, said to be "almost begging" for bread, and dominating other birds at a feeder (CD). (See photograph in this issue) It was still present in mid-May. A male was on Brier Is., from ca. May 10 to May 20 (RBS,SIT). An early YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER was at Canning on Apr. 10 (M. Gibson). Five more were reported after Apr. 22 and 4 in May. About 12 HAIRY WOODPECKERS and 20 DOWNY WOODPECKERS were reported for Apr. - May, about par. A nest of a Downy was started at Hebron on May 3 (JG) and another on Wolfville Ridge had 1 egg on May 9 and 5 by May 17 (BLF). Our only BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER was a female at Lr. Eel Brook on Apr. 20 (CRKA).

--IAM, ed.

FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

EASTERN KINGBIRDS were well reported. Here first, is the "island" picture: 1, May 28 and 4 May 29 on Brier, 10 on Seal, May 12 and 24, and 20 there on the 26th. On the mainland, Curtis Chipman was most surprised to see a Kingbird at Second Peninsula on April 29 and even more unusual was one in Cape Breton at Salmon River on Apr. 30 (NSBS Party). By May 6 and 7, they had appeared at Baccaro and Cheggoggin and at Russell Lake. After that there is an hiatus until the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of May, when they were reported from Port Joli (1), Shubenacadie (1) and Salmon River area, Yar. Co. (6) (MEC,BED,DAC,RDC, NSBS,VR).

The Bidwell's GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER appeared on cue, May 11, immediately commenced its usual savage behavior and was duly dispatched (see letter to Editor). Dave Curry saw and heard one calling from May 21-23, at Waverley--this may have been the same bird seen by the Payzants on May 24. One arrived on Seal, May 26. EASTERN PHOEBES seem to be arriving later these days AND in fewer numbers. There were only 4 reports--two for late April (24th at Three Mile Plains, 28th, White Rock--and two for May--19th at Kentville and 21st at Sandy Bottom Lake). In other years they arrive around April 10, and are established, usually beneath their bridges by the end of the month. Last year 17 were reported--in 1974-24!

The only YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHERS seen were 1, May 14, Sydney(?) and 35 on Seal, May 26. Of the other empidonax commonly encountered here, there are two reports of ALDER and five of LEAST. There were 11 Alders at Mira, April 30 and 10 on Seal, May 26. Least were as follows: 2 on Brier, May 15 (more there by the 23rd) 1 at Sunken Lake, Kings Co., May 16, 4 on Seal, May 13-16, 1, Shubenacadie, May 23, and 10 on Seal, May 26.

The Payzants heard a very early EASTERN WOOD PEEWEE at Waverley on April 21, and again on May 1. On Seal, a wave of 20 came in on May 26. In some years OLIVE SIDED FLYCATCHERS have trouble getting here in time for our deadline but this time 14 made it on time. These were: 1, May 15, on Seal; 1 at Shubenacadie, May 23; another the same day at Black River Lake and 12 on Seal on that fantastic "deluge day", May 26.

HORNED LARKS faded quietly away to breed in the barrens as usual. Seven lingered, March 21, near New Waterford, eight at Economy, March 21, and 2 at Moriøn Bar, C. B., May 23 (SCM,FLS,HEH).

SWALLOWS

The TREE SWALLOW is our earliest swallow and as such is always well reported. Although they became widely distributed (AND reported), in their usual abundance by early May, they seemed late in getting started this spring. The first one was a Eel Lake, April 9. Then two appeared on the 18th or 19th, one at Broad Cove and one at Eel Brook. CRKA noted that 2 on April 21 and 6 on the 28th in central Yar. Co. were well behind schedule. Sightings were still in twos and threes until the end of the month when suddenly the "mob" arrived. Brian Dalzell counted 2500+, May 12 at APBS.

Robbie Denton spotted the earliest BANK SWALLOW on Brier, April 30. They were at Chebogue by May 5, and Mayflower, Digby Co., Russell Lake, Shubenacadie and Seal Is., by the 15th.

Like the Trees, the BARN SWALLOWS began slowly with the first two at Sluice Pt. (Shel. Co.), Apr. 17. There were 4 in Yarmouth town, the 24th and 10 on Brier the 25th (DJD'E, MWH,RD). By the 30th, they had been seen at Argyle Head, APBS and Lr. Sackville and reached

The Hawk by May 3. On May 6, CRKA wrote, "...an abundance now in Yar. Co. generally".

Early CLIFF SWALLOWS appeared on Brier, April 30, gradually coming in throughout May, by May 30 there were 20 at Pinkney's Pt.

After the total lack of news of any PURPLE MARTINS last fall, it was heartening to hear that there has been a full complement in the 16 apartments of the Rose Colony at Amherst since May 4. In the Amos Colony (which has 90 apartments) 30 birds had arrived by May 21. Con Desplanque writes that 38 nests were in the latter colony in 1982. Apart from the colonies there have been 25 other Martins seen, all save two (Spryfield and Mineville Road) were in the SW area.

CORVIDS

As usual GRAY JAYS began to be scarce in late March. Bob Dickie saw a late bird on May 8 at Mud Lake (a non breeder perhaps?). BLUE JAYS too became quieter as nesting approached and appeared more at wood edges than at feeders and in towns. COMMON RAVENS were observed carrying sticks March 6 at Glace Bay, and March 9 at Crousetown. Here is a note on Raven behavior from Hubert Bennett and Elizabeth Foy. "Only one of the two Ravens who adopted our Crow feeder has been visiting us this spring and we assumed the other was sitting eggs. On May 1, two Ravens appeared and one was making 'feed me' gestures. We thought that this must be a young bird and parent but don't know if adult Ravens ever display feeding behavior towards each other". Can anyone shed light on this? AMERICAN CROWS were nesting at Crousetown, March 15, and Glace Bay, April 7.

CHICKADEES TO THRUSHES

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES will come to feeders as long as food is provided and for those correspondants who kept the sunflower seeds coming, the chickadees remained regular and numerous. At Ste. Croix in May, a pair nested in a plastic feeder and in Yarmouth town, another pair took over a swallow house high in a barn. (MAC,MWH). BOREAL CHICKADEES were heard very little after April. The pair that spent the winter at the R.S. d'Entremont's suet log were last seen April 26. There were 25 on Seal, May 12-16, about usual for their nesting population.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES numbers dropped to four (11 in 1982)-- one each at Liverpool and Sandy Bottom Lake and a pair preparing to nest in a bird house in Paradise. (RSJ,MCC,J&BM) At least 25 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES have been about. Not many came to feeders this past winter but could and can be heard on any woods walk.

Chris Naugler saw a BROWN CREEPER near Bridgewater on April 22, the first he'd seen there since October. Two creeper nests were in Kings Co. in May, one at Newtonville, May 10 (5 eggs) and one at Black River, May 18 (7 eggs). Both nests were under the loose bark of long dead spruce stumps (BLF). Frances Cook and Roslyn McFee were privileged to hear the beautiful, but not often encountered, song of the Brown Creeper at Shubenacadie, May 21. The WINTER WREN count was only seven (11 in 1982): 1, April 23, Shubenacadie; 2, May 7, Cranberry Head; 3, Seal Is., May 12-16; one at APBS, May 14. A round dozen of NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS were around from Mar. 5 (Broad Cove) to May 28 (Yar. town) (SJF,MWH).

A VERY early GRAY CATBIRD was seen in mid-April, in Big Baddeck by Alastair Fraser, but no more appeared until May 5 and 6 at Chebogue and Lockport and May 12 (60) on Seal. By May 25, they were widely, though sparsely distributed. A bumper number of 300 hit Seal on May

26, and presumably proceeded to fill out our mainland population.

Two BROWN THRASHERS were resident at the Homeville feeder of Mary Ferguson in March, one was in Dartmouth, April 16, one on Brier, May 1, one at Chegoggin, May 6 and 3 on Seal, May 12-16.

THRUSHES

Eagerly looked for and heavily reported, the return of the AMERICAN ROBIN is as follows. A few early (suspicious as having overwintered) birds were here and there in early and mid-March, but the migrants came in during the last week of the month. On Mar. 22, they were "everywhere" at Moose River (15 miles from Economy) and on April 1, were all over Economy (FS). At Amherst, the migration hit on April 1, with more arriving daily thereafter. THE day in Yar. town was April 5, and by the 18th they were everywhere in Yar. Co. At Green Bay there was a deluge the night of April 2-3, with more pouring in on the 4th.

Eric Mills writes of the NORTHERN WHEATEAR on Seal, May 23-25. "It spent much of its time under spruce trees on the NW side of the island, occasionally venturing onto open bank edges or the rocky beach--decidedly un-wheatear-like behavior."

The islands were responsible for the only two WOOD THRUSHES--3 on Brier, May 15 and 1 on Seal, May 27 (JFK, BH). HERMIT THRUSHES were notable by their absence on Seal during "deluge day" (May 26) but were widely reported from elsewhere. The Earliest was heard by Sylvia Fullerton at Broad Cove, April 23. Other early dates were: April 25 (Brier), Apr. 26 (Hammond's Plains), Apr. 28 (Brier, Lr. Ohio and Waverley. After May 2-3, they were widely reported as being normally established in their appropriate areas. The first Cape Breton Hermit was May 10 at Sydney (OC).

Three SWAINSON'S THRUSHES were on Brier, April 25, 7 on Seal, May 15, 3 at Shubenacadie, May 20 and 400+ on Seal, May 26.

Two GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSHES were identified by Mills and McLaren on Brier on April 29. One more was on Seal, May 15-16 and 5 were there May 26. Stuart Tingley saw two more on Brier, May 19.

VEERYS began to move in on April 25, when there were 2 on Brier--these increased to 12 by the 28th. Between May 5 and 30, six Veerys were heard, almost all in the SW end of N.S. The May 26 "flood" brought 30 to Seal.

GNATCATCHER TO STARLING

Steve Manuel saw the only BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER this season--a female on Seal on May 16.

There were 100+ GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS in the Cole Hbr.-Lawrence-town area, March 15. Five were seen April 1 at Shubenacadie and on April 10, the Cohrs were serenaded throughout their picnic lunch at Chezzetcook by approximately 10 Golden-crowns singing their gentle spring song. BLF found a nest with 7 eggs and one hatched young on May 19 on Wolfville Ridge. RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS all arrived together on April 29 and 30, when they were reported from all points. One very early Ruby-crown sang at Broad Cove, April 9, but he was well ahead of the rest. KNK reported Ruby-crowns to be in very good numbers in the New Ross area by May 4-5 and PRD hears more in her area (Eel Brook) than she has heard for years.

WATER PIPITS hung around Hartlan's Point from Feb. to Apr. One was seen on the NSBS "Sewer Stroll", Feb. 27, 3 on March 7 and 2 on April 9 (FLL). All the others were seen on Seal: 1, May 15; 1, May 25-26; 2 on May 27.

JWW reports three BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS--one in Wolfville in mid-Feb. and 2 at Grand Pre, March 19. CEDAR WAXWINGS were scarce--10 on Wolfville Ridge, April 14, 2 in N. Yarmouth, April 24, 1, May 7 at John Lusby Marsh and 9 or 10 on May 11 at Tusket (BLF,MWH,CD,RER).

Here is the NORTHERN SHRIKE picture. One immature at Russell Lake, Feb. 20 (RBD), 1 adult, March 5 and 10 at Lr. La Have (EHC), 1 immature at Conrad's Beach, March 27 (FLL), 1 (no age) Conrad's Beach, April 1 (BM), 1 (no age), April 2, at Waverley (PP). A most unusual LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was identified by Margaret Cheeseman and party at Melbourne, May 7. Seen at 15 yards, the top of the head was quite dark and the bill all black.

EUROPEAN STARLING. A starling is a starling, is a starling...

--JSC, ed.

VIREOS

The two SOLITARY VIREOS seen May 1 at Shubenacadie, pre-dated the rest of the arrivals by nearly a fortnight; thereafter came reports, May 13 to 28, of good numbers of these birds--Jim Wolford called them "abundant, not just common, May 15 at Cape Split, around 20 seen there." The earlier arrivals appeared almost simultaneously up the Valley and as far as Economy; those after May 11, South Shore to Halifax (according to our reports), about 60 individuals altogether. RED-EYED VIREOS were first seen May 20 and after, so far, only three reports, all of them on the mainland (at Blomidon Prov. Park, Economy and Tusket, 1 each) May 20-26; on the 26th, the Red-eyed came in with the crowd at Seal Is., 150 strong, and doubtless are well distributed by now. Two WARBLING VIREOS reported were 1, May 19 at Brier Is., identified by Stuart Tingley; and 1, (maybe 2) May 25 and 26 at Seal Is., noted by E.L. Mills. Vireo reports came from FC,RCM,JWW,BFL,MCC,CRKA,FLL,FLS,RJC,MAC,JL&JSC,JG,BM,KM,JM,MC,SManuel,PRD,JD'E,RBS,ELM,IAM,JFK,SIT, and pretty well covered the region, except none from Cape Breton.



*Red-headed Woodpecker
Con Desplanque, Amherst*

WOOD WARBLERS

To quote Richard Stern from Brier Is.: "We spent a week on Brier Is., 6-15 May, and all week there was 1 Palm, 1 Parula and 2-3 Yellow-rumps! Until the 15th, when the trees at the west end of the island were alive with warblers: Black-and-White, Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Yellow-rumps, Black-throated Green, Redstarts, Yellow-throats, Chestnut-sided and Ovenbirds...". At this same time, May 15,16, a group of Dalhousie students (James McLaren, Mike Crowell, Ken Morgan and Steve Manuel) at Seal Is., counted numbers of twenty species of warbler, which, including the same species seen at Brier, were also the Nashville, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Palm, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's and Canada. Some of these had reached Cape Breton by May 23, where C.S. Macdonald that day saw the Yellow Warbler, Yellowthroat, Black-and-White, Parula, Yellow-rumped and Ovenbird "all in profusion", at Mira. Meanwhile, generally over the province warblers had been trickling in, rather slowly; the number of observations reported (not the number of warblers) and the first few dates seen are as follows: BLACK-AND-WHITE, (16), April 29-30; PROTHONOTARY, (1), Apr. 26 at Lockeport (RJC); WORM-EATING, 1, May 15-16 at Seal Is., (JM et al.); GOLDEN-WINGED, (1), May 26 at Seal Is., (BH,SJF); BLUE-WINGED, (1), May 13, Blomidon Park, (JWW); TENNESSEE, (3), May 7; ORANGE-CROWNED, (1 male), May 15 at Seal Is., (JM et al.); NASHVILLE, (7), May 6-8; NORTHERN PARULA, (14), May 6-7; YELLOW WARBLER, (6), May 9-14; MAGNOLIA, (9), May 11-15; YELLOW-RUMPED (MYRTLE), (29), a wintering warbler, the six reports all on Apr. 29-30 suggest by numbers seen and plumages that these were migrants newly arrived; thereafter, many reports were received up to the end of May; BLACK-THROATED GREEN, (16), May 6-7; BLACKBURNIAN (7), May 11-14; CHESTNUT-SIDED (6), May 11-14; BAY-BREASTED, (&), May 7-10; BLACKPOLL, (6), May 11-15, (May 1 at Glace Bay, SM); YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, (1), Apr. 30, Brier Is., (ELM,IAM); PINE, (1 female), March 31, stayed at Waverley until Apr. 7--maybe a wintering bird, (BDM);PALM, (13), all early, Apr. 26-27-28; OVENBIRD, (14), May 6-7; NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, (5), May 8-14; COMMON YELLOW-THROAT, (10), Apr. 25 to May 8-10; WILSON'S, (4), May 18-20; CANADA, (5), May 18-20; AMERICAN REDSTART, (12), April 30 (FLL) to May 6-7. Warbler reports were received from the contributors listed under Vireos plus: RSD'E, NS,DJd'E,RBD,CD,MWH,BDM,DM,RER,HEH,BJS,TM,JM,MP, RDC,LR,MG,EEM,MEC,RJC,DAC, and SM. Infact, just half of our reporting members.

From the above data it is obvious that by May 26, we had three species of Vireo and twenty-nine species of Wood Warbler present in the province, and on that day, May 26, the great wave of birds came in at Seal Is., as described in the Introduction, bringing with it the following practically incredible numbers of these birds, to swell the populations to generous proportions. Again, to quote from Eric Mills' report: (among the highlights were...) "12 Solitary Vireos, 150 Red-eyed Vireos, 2 Philadelphia Vireos, 1 Warbling Vireo, 500 Black-and-White Warblers, 35 Tennessee Warblers, 7 Nashville Warblers, 20 Northern Parulas, 350 Yellow Warblers, 150 Magnolias, 15 Cape May Warblers, 12 Black-throated Blue Warblers, 200 Yellowrumped Warblers, 40 Black-throated Green Warblers, 20 Blackburnians, 25 Chestnut-sided Warblers, 6 Bay-breasted Warblers, 400 Blackpoll Warblers, 15 Oven-birds, 30 Northern Waterthrushes, 4 Mourning Warblers, 500 Common Yellowthroats, 150 Wilson's Warblers, 150 Canadas and 75 Redstarts... Especially for the warblers and the thrushes the numbers are reasonable estimates of the birds seen and identified; these are only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of birds present all over the island."

HOUSE SPARROW

In the spring it is unexpected to hear a kind word spoken of the HOUSE SPARROW, but Sara MacLean found one when she wrote: "bold but pretty at this time of year". Most of us were busy trying to prevent them from keeping the Tree Swallows out of their houses. It was in this connection and others that MWH of Yarmouth wrote: "Began to make nuisances of themselves April 11, sometimes in groups of 11-12, sometimes only 1-2." On the whole, the House Sparrow appears to maintain its usual population, most in the towns, a few in the country.

ICTERIDS

BOBOLINKS were early this year, with one so far out in front at the feeder of Lynda Conrad (West Lawrencetown), April 20, that she called for help in confirmation, readily granted by JSC, who got a picture, and wrote that the bird was in partial plumage but unmistakably a male Bobolink. One other April sighting was on the 30th at Cadden Bay, where RDC saw one feeding on a mud-flat. Eighteen other reports, May 5-26, totalled approximately 250 birds, all males including the 50 at Seal Is., May 26; distribution now general.

One or two EASTERN MEADOWLARKS were seen at Eastern Passage and Hartlen Point early in March up to April 1--probably wintering birds (RBD, BC, FLL). Another of these rather rarely seen birds was near Bridgewater late in Feb. (not previously mentioned here) and reported to Nellie Snyder as a bird "with a beautiful yellow breast and the black V. It flicked its tail open and shut as it walked around on the lawn of the Dept. of Highways Offices..." by Graham Veinot and co-workers.

Another early arrival this year was the REDWINGED BLACKBIRD, with 1, Mar. 7 at Paradise (Eric Porter to Jean Morse); and 1, March 16 at Lr. W. Pubnico, noted at his feeder by DJd'E. Twenty-five other reports were from March 18 to May 6, by which time they were distributed generally throughout the province, and at least some of them were well established in their cattail swamps.

ORCHARD ORIOLES were seen in May, one female May 12-14, at Seal Is., photographed among the lobster pots by the "Dalhousie gang", who also saw an immature male there on May 16 "singing at the North End". The female Orchard Oriole or another like it was seen on Seal, May 26-27 by ELM et al. On Brier Is., two female Orchard Orioles were observed May 14 by RBS, who saw them in a hedge together with a Northern Oriole for a nice comparison, also by John Kearny, May 14, who noted one, or another female at Pond Cove (Brier Is.), May 15; later, May 18-19, Stu Tingley saw two female Orchards there. Again, we have two early arrivals (April), NORTHERN ORIOLES: 1, April 26 at Lr. La Have (EHC) and 1 (male) at Brier Is., Apr. 28 (ELM), who also observed 1 male and females Apr. 29, and 1 female, April 30 at Brier. At Seal Is., ELM et al. observed the Northern Oriole in late May, 10 there by May 26. In all, nineteen reports of this bird were received, mostly of singles but at Pubnico on May 26, 6 were seen "in and about the trees in the yard" by the Hamiltons (E&VH). One of the Seal birds was diagnosed as a Northern Oriole "Bullock's" type, by James McLaren and Mike Crowell who wrote: "This was an immature male, with black throat, yet light-colored head, dull orange underparts, light gray back, and black line in front of the eye".

Ten reports of the RUSTY BLACKBIRD range from "1, March 19, at Shubenacadie, among flocks of Redwings and Grackles" seen by Roslyn MacPhee, and "2, May 6, Maxwelton Woods in Digby Co.--getting to be a rare bird in these parts", seen by CRKA; twenty-three birds in all, mostly from the NW side of N.S., and none reported from Cape Breton.

Early March COMMON GRACKLES may have been wintering birds, but March 18 and 19, saw a small flock arriving at Shubenacadie (RCM), and arrivals at Hammonds Plains (KNK) and Economy, where there were 50+ by March 19, but "not settling in" (FLS) which were certainly new birds (spring migrants). There were about 50 in Waverley on April 1 (L&PP) and 145 at Sydney River, Apr. 13 (BED). Grackles were reported from Cape Breton earlier: March 23 at New Waterford (CSM); and "40+ daily" at Sydney, Mira, Point Edward and vicinity on recent trips by HEH. Thirty reports of this bird established it as well distributed about the province by Apr. 30, in usual numbers.

Reports of the BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD indicate a rather smaller population than usual: Con Desplanque at Amherst wrote "very few this year"; Jim Wolford from Wolfville, wrote, "my impression was that relatively few wintered in our area this year"; Don and Glenda Lockhart of Lockhartville wrote, "not many at our feeder through the winter"; and Chris Naugler "The only Cowbirds I have seen this year were about 12 (all males) on March 5 and 6, with 3 males and 3 females on April 28". This was near Bridgewater. Here at #170, R.R.1, Lr. Eel Brook, the usual 5-6 Cowbirds arrived in the garden, April 11, and after a bit 3 only settled in, one female, and two males which strutted and displayed about her continually; this sinister invasion happens every year just as the Juncos and Song Sparrows desert the feeder to start nesting activity; but I have to add that only once has a baby Cowbird been brought up out of the woods. By the way, has anyone ever found an answer to Robie Tufts' question: brought up by a sparrow or a warbler, how does it (the baby Cowbird) know it's a Cowbird?

TANAGERS

A record number, close to three dozen SCARLET TANAGERS have been recorded in Nova Scotia since the first of April, including one in Cape Breton the last of that month, which Elsie MacRury saw at Broughton. Most of them were found on Seal and Brier Is.'s, but there were singles at Argyle in April and May (WD'E, LM), in Halifax South, April 28-29 (JL&JSC, JM, S Manuel) and a male singing and flying about among the trees at Sandy Bottom Lake, seen by MCC who wrote "my first impression was that no bird could possibly be such a brilliant--almost luminous--red". Thirteen of these Tanagers were still at Seal Is., May 26, most of them males. Two SUMMER TANAGERS came our way also, one male, April 24, at Brier Is., identified by Robbie Denton; and one female "well scrutinized and photo'ed" by the Dalhousie gang, May 15-16 at Seal Is.

FRINGILLIDS

The NORTHERN CARDINAL lingers here and there: one seen at Smith's Cove, Apr. 4, by Mary Lou Raymond, and one, April 28 at the Allens' feeder in Tusket (MBA).

The ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK came this spring also in unprecedented numbers, noted at Brier and Seal Is.'s and at many feeders over the province, where it frequently stayed several days, even weeks. They arrived at both Halifax and Yarmouth on April 20 (JM, E&VH) and increased in the latter locality to 10 birds (6 males and 4 females) at least, noted by several observers, both in Pubnico and West Pubnico during the latter part of April. Three others were at feeders in Yarmouth Co., in April and May, a week or so at a time. Numbers on Brier Is., were highest on April 29, with 5 males and 9 females seen; at Seal, the 5 present May 5, rose in number to 60 during the May 26 invasion. Other April sightings were: 1, female, Apr. 26, at Russell Lake (FLL); 1 male, Apr. 26 at Maitland, Hants Co. (LBM); 1, Apr. 26 at Lr. Sackville, Hfx. Co. (HSB&EF); 2 males, "eating the buds of

sugar maple", Apr. 28, near Mahoney's Beach, Ant. Co. (RDC,SPF); 3, Apr. 28 at Sydney (OC,HEH), and 3, Apr. 30, at the feeder at Broad Cove (SJF,BH). May sightings are too numerous to record here but came from all over the province and probably were some of the 60 birds from Seal Is. Reporters were: RJC,CRKA,RBS,J&BM,MAN, the "Dalhousie gang",JFK,JWW,MBS,JD'E,EEM,NK, the NSBS Shubenacadie "day" group, and the Hants Co. May 28 trip.

Another unusually large invasion this spring was the 30+ BLUE GROSBEAKS, which have been reported Apr. 14 to May 22; the Apr. 14 bird was at Musquodoboit Hbr., at the Pat Horne feeder, identified by the Cohrs and Purchases; the 1, Apr. 21 was an immature male identified in Wolfville by Jim Wolford and Richard Stern; 1, female, Apr. 22, was identified and photo'ed by Ted D'Eon, Raymond d'Entremont and Delisle d'Entremont; another such male was seen at Cape Sable, Apr. 26 by Sid and Betty June Smith. On Apr. 28 we have 3: 1 male, in Halifax, at Walter Chute's feeder; 1 male, at Green Bay, reported to Evelyn Dobson, and 1, female, at Brier Is., noted Apr. 28 by Eric Mills, and joined by another female there Apr. 29. In May (from May 7 to 12) Sara MacLean, Hedley Hopkins and Otis Cossitt report two Blue Grosbeaks, one in the South Bar area, one in the Mira area. Also in Cape Breton, C.S. Macdonald identified one of these birds at Whitney Pier, May 10. Observations were made at Brier Is., May 1-18 by JM,MC, SManuel, KM and SIT of two of these grosbeaks; at Chester, May 22, one was identified by GDP, and at Seal Is., May 23-26, 2 females "same as the April birds", were seen again by ELM,IAM and JFK.

A real bonus was the number of INDIGO BUNTINGS which came our way this spring; 60+ reported, an unheard-of number for one season in Nova Scotia. The first one seen was at Chester, Apr. 12, unfortunately dead when received by George Perry, but later he had a live one at the feeder, and several others were reported from nearby Blandford. Most of these birds were seen at feeders where they stayed a day, or a week if you were lucky, and the majority were males, so there was no difficulty in identification. Distribution was provincewide. No special numbers were found on Brier or on Seal Is.'s during the periods of observation there (Apr. 28-30, May 12-16 and 23-28. Margaret Clark, who lives in Sherwood Park, Hfx. Co., had an Indigo Bunting (male) for a week, often singing! but the most interesting benefit derived from the visit of these little blue birds was enjoyed by Mrs. Mary Dauphinee at Second Peninsula, who had one stay long enough in her garden to make a design for hooking a wall hanging from it and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak which obliged by coming to strut on a branch just above the bunting. Curtis Chipman, who wrote in this story ends by saying "Mrs. D. has the hooking of both birds well in hand!" Other than those mentioned above, reporters of Indigo Buntings were: FLS,BH,JM,TCD'E,MBS,FLL,JG,E&VH,LBM,S&BJS,ELM,IAM,JFK,JL&JSC, JWW,MAN,RSJ,PRD,EHC,RS&Ed'E, CRKA,HEH,SM,RBS,SIT,L&FP and Betty Fraser of Liverpool.

Our EVENING GROSBEAKS left us the last of April, a few only staying on into May where feeders were still maintained. Flocks were large last winter, some numbering in the 80's; FLL calculated that about 1000 overwintered in the Dartmouth area, and BDM counted 600 Apr. 4, on two adjacent lawns in Wolfville. On Mar. 22, the grosbeaks' bills started to turn green (PRD), and as May progressed Glenda Lockhart noted "much courting going on now". You know, if those people who are frightened of spruce budworm had any sense, they would set up feeders for Evening Grosbeaks all through the forests in winter, and then leave them to it in the spring--it would cost a lot less than spraying from an airplane, and look, sound and smell much better, and, given time, be more efficient.

The PURPLE FINCH returned to us finally (where was it so long?) but rather late, first seen at Wolfville, Feb. 16; 12 in a flock there by the 18th, but did not settle in to stay (JWW). Other Feb. sightings were from Paradise, Feb. 28, up to 15 birds (J&BM); Feb. 28 also at Dartmouth, 80+ birds (FLL) and at Waverley at the end of Feb., "3, now up to 20" according to L&PP. The majority showed up in March, 2 to 3 birds at first, building up to 20 or so at some feeders, and leaving for the woods as soon as the sunflower seed gave out. In the Sydneys area OC and HEH estimated 30+ Purple Finches still around each day up to May 20. Some of us continue to feed these finches so they will continue singing in our trees; it does a lot for the quality of life.

One lone HOUSE FINCH has been seen, a female, at Jean Timpa's feeder in Wolfville, from Apr. 3 to 9, identified and reported by Jim Wolford, who saw it at close range, enough to note all diagnostic field marks.

The PINE GROSBEAK, a resident, has been reported half-a-dozen times, seen in its usual haunts. A male in bright plumage was noted March 6 at Lr. Eel Brook, and one was heard singing, Apr. 10 at Grand Desert, Halifax Co. (JS&JLC).

The COMMON REDPOLL, (a migrant in the other direction) and of which we had few during last winter, left us the end of February: 1 male, Feb. 24 at Windsor "the only one of the winter", noted by Roy John; 9, Feb. 28 at Lr. W. Pubnico "my second sighting of Common Redpolls this winter" (RSd'E); but one last report in March, when 10 were said to be at Lawrencetown, Anna. Co., reported to Jean Morse.

The PINE SISKIN, a resident, albeit a somewhat skittish one, has received ten reports totalling 50+ individuals, a few each at Hartlen Point, Musquodoboit Hbr., Crousetown, Hammonds Plains, Paradise, Lr. Sackville, Waverley, Lr. W. Pubnico and Shubenacadie; it seems to be widely if thinly spread around the province this season.

We had no shortage of the AMERICAN GOLDFINCH this year; also universally present Glace Bay to Yarmouth, New Ross to Crousetown, but in good numbers (hundreds)--in fact it was often the only small bird (flock of) encountered on a field trip well into spring. It came to the feeders at times but seemed well able to fend for itself about countryside during our (open) winter. It has now joined the warbler chorus, complicating the song pattern considerably with its somewhat guttural whistles, so very loud for such a very tiny bird.

Apparently only seven RED CROSSBILLS have been seen since Feb. 2, a male and a female, Apr. 9, "on Hwy. 14 about halfway between Windsor and Chester", as reported by RJ; 5, Apr. 10 at Greenfield, Kings Co., reported by BLF. The WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL received four reports, one of 5-6 birds at Ketch Hbr., Feb. 27 (FLL,RBD) which is really outside of our reporting period; then 7, Apr. 7 at Conrad's Beach (RJ); 6, Apr. 16 at Eastern Passage, Hfx. Co. (ELM,IAM), and 3 (one singing) seen near Greenfield by BLF, Merritt Gibson and JWW "in an area of heavy cone production by red spruces", Jim Wolford writes, but gives not date--presumably this spring.

The RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE (male) reported in our last issue is still present at Crichton Park, seen there Apr. 28, by Fulton Lavender.

This year especially, March sightings of the SAVANNAH SPARROW are suspect (as migrants, because of the open winter), but the 6, seen March 25 and 27 at Conrad's Beach, were described by Shirley Cohrs as "very bright plumage, fairly tame, kept together and seemed tired". Observers of these were the Cohrs and Purchases, and F.L.Lavender, who

noted an "IPSWICH" SPARROW as well, at Conrad's on the 27th (also 3, March 24 at Hartlen Point, 10 there Apr. 9). One other Savannah was noted at Smith's Cove, March 30, after an all-night snow (AKR). Oddly enough, almost the same number (20 each) of these Savannah races were observed in April, mostly singles, and shorewise, and widely distributed. The first Savannahs heard singing, in Yar. Co. were 2, Apr. 28 at Pinkney's Point. By May 21, there were still 2 "Ipswich" at Cole Hbr. (RBD); and numbers of Savannahs (nominate) had increased: 5, May 14-23 in the Glace Bay area (HEH); 50, May 15 at Brier Is. (JFK), and 20, Apr. 28 at APBS (CD). At Seal Is. 150+, May 12-16, had yet to "come ashore" and be distributed.

In keeping with our early arrival of migrant birds this year, 2 very early SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS are reported: 1, May 6 at Bartlett's Beach, Yar. Co., "heard singing and chased through the dune grass until a good view was obtained (PRD), and 1, May 16 at Cherry Hill (RDC&SPF). There are no other reports so far.

The VESPER SPARROW may have established a record, with one banded at Cyril Coldwell's feeder March 5--this may have been the one there Feb. 27, in which case doubtless was an over-wintering bird; as also was the case with another of this species seen Mar. 30 at Smith's Cove (AKR). Besides these two of shaky status, there were: 1, Apr. 28, at Brier Is. (IAM,ELM), and later again, one on May 15 at Broad Cove (SJF,BH,EHC); these last two certainly migrants.

The DARK-EYED JUNCO, undoubtedly migrates, but many remain with us all winter, and because they are "feeder birds" they are very visible and easily counted. They stayed in good numbers on mainland Nova Scotia throughout the winter but appear to have been sparse in Cape Breton. In the eighteen reports received there is no hint of a noticeable increase in numbers of Juncos this spring; and as Chris Naugler said, "The resident flock of 16-20 birds was regular up to mid-April, then suddenly disappeared with only singles usually seen" at Bridge-water. This was the rule for the most part; however, after this, Juncos were the most often encountered small bird along roadsides and wood edges. Margaret Cheesman of Sandy Bottom Lake found a Junco's nest May 6, "on the edge of some recently cleared land--nest placed in a small embankment left against some boulders, with over-hanging plant growth--nest contained on egg. By May 13, 4 eggs were in the nest, and by May 20, the young were hatched, the parent bird tending them despite our working close by in the garden".

The AMERICAN TREE SPARROW remained through March, generally around the province according to all reports received except one: 4-8 Tree Sparrows, Feb. 25 to Apr. 15, at Lr. W. Pubnico, at the feeder of the Delisle d'Entremonts; the last date seen.

The CHIPPING SPARROW's earliest arrival this year was at Wolfville May 5, when one was heard singing there by JWW. Half-a-dozen other reports are from May 8 - 16, and during that time (May 12-16) 50 were counted at Seal Is. (JM et al.) and they were called "common" on Brier Is., at this time by RBS. (Of the 20± mainland birds seen, over half were in the Valley).

A stray CLAY-COLORED SPARROW was at Seal Is., May 15-16, where Steve Manuel and James McLaren were able to identify it, and obtain a photograph.

The only FIELD SPARROWS seen this season were at Seal Is.: 2, May 16 (JM et al.) and 1, May 22, still there May 26 (ELM).

Fifteen to twenty WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS at least, came north by the N.S. route, April through May, 1983. It is interesting to trace

their rate of progress and direction of travel: first seen, Apr. 22, at Crichton Park, Dartmouth, by FLL; May 7, 1 each at Cranberry Head and Pubnico (MEC,JG,EEM); May 12-16, 6 at Seal Is., (JM et al.); May 14-17, 1, at Lr. Eel Brook (PRD); May 15, 1, at Cape Forchu (MAN); May 15,1, Brier Is.. (JFK,SIT); May 18-25, 1, at Economy (FLS); May 20, 1, New Waterford (CSM); May 22, 1, and May 26, 3 at Seal Is. (ELM,SJF, BH); May 22, 1, at Canning (Merriitt and Jamie Gibson, JWW). Males (adult) only were mentioned, bright plumage noted.

The WHITE-THROATED SPARROW remained scarce all winter but is definitely making a comeback. We have twenty-four reports from all over, and many mention an increase in numbers noticeable early May and on: KNK writes, "up from last spring, May 4-5 at New Ross"; PRD noted, "plentiful since May 7 in the Argyle Municipality area"; Don and Glenda Lockhart at Avonport, write, "White-throated Sparrows are much more audible than last year"; from JWW, "May 15, very abundant, in several large flocks, at Cape Split"; May 15 at Brier Is., from RBS, "huge numbers going through the bushes", and at Seal Is., May 12-16, 200 White-throats counted by the JM party, 20 left there May 26 (SIT et sl.). This is all very encouraging. One can still hear 3-4 White-throats singing on adjacent territories, all within earshot, frequently during any country walk--just like old times! (June 6, '83)

Seventeen reports of the FOX SPARROW add up to about 55 birds. This includes a few (probable) wintering birds, but multiple sightings began around March 25, after which these sparrows continued to trickle in; the first flock (10 birds) appearing April 3 at Crousetown (snow on the ground) where they stayed only one day (NS). On April 20 CSM had what he termed an invasion of 7 Fox Sparrows in his yard, and a few have stayed around elsewhere, e.g., 1, heard singing, of Rte. 3 at the Shel.-Yar. Co. border, on May 28 (RDC). Sightings were all over the province; did not indicate any special port of entry.

The LINCOLN'S SPARROW is reported May 14-26, only in three localities: 1, May 14 at Eastern Passage (FLL,DC,BM,MP); 2, May 15, at Brier Is. (JFK) and 50 (some singing) May 26 at Seal Is. (ELM,IAM, JFK).

Spring sightings of the SWAMP SPARROW start Apr. 12, and were as usual, mostly of 1 or 2 birds. The Apr. 12 bird was in the La Have area, seen by CN; just a week later 2-3 were heard singing in the "Dyke" swamp at Glenwood, Yar. Co. (CRKA); on Apr. 20, 1 was spotted by Delisle d'Entremont at Lr. W. Pubnico. From then on for several weeks, reports of Swamp Sparrows came in from all directions, with 8, May 12-16 at Brier Is.; 35, May 26 at Seal Is., still to be distributed.

Undoubtedly some of the March singing SONG SPARROWS were early migrants but there is no way of telling. Five reports coincide on Apr. 2, from Yarmouth and Halifax counties, the Bridgewater area, and Amherst; and from then on an increased number of these birds is mentioned: "30+ all on territory" at Eastern Passage, Apr. 12 (FLL); "12 by May 3, daily", in the Sydney area (HEH); "normal" May 4-4 at New Ross (KNK); "abundant everywhere, April and May" (RBS); 20 on Seal Is., May 12-16 (Dal.group); and at Lochartville, Song Sparrows had nested and three young fledglings had left the nest on May 25! (D&GL).

The SNOW BUNTING was flocking up to leave by late February, 200 were seen at Windsor, Feb. 24, 70+ at Hartlen Point, Feb. 27, and by March 3, 136 counted at Port Philip, Cumb. Co., by Brian Dalzell. There were 22 at Cherry Hill Beach, by March 9, and 11 there by March 15; (about these Mar. 15 birds, JSC wrote: "all in mixed plumage and one large (male?) bird, almost totally in breeding plumage--how

different they look!") By March 19, birds in Cape Breton were down to 2, but at Lr. W. Pubnico, on April 4, there were still 12 Snow Buntings; by Apr. 6, 9 of them there. We think we have plenty of these birds in winter but imagine this: "Must have been a lot of birds passing through this area in early March as I saw a flock of 650+ put up by a Northern Shrike from a well manured field near Souris, P.E.I., on March 2". This note from Brian Dalzell. The last sighting reported in Nova Scotia for 1983 goes to Ethelda Murphy, June Graves and Margaret Churchill, for 7 Snow Buntings seen Apr. 15 on Dan's Head. Congratulations!

For the information contained in the above report, we are indebted to the following members and friends of the Nova Scotia Bird Society:

Charles R.K. and M.B. Allen; Mike Almon; Daryl Amirault; Kirk Atkinson; H.F. Bennett; R.G.S. Bidwell; Sherman Bleakney; William (Bill) G. Caudle; Margaret C. Cheesman; Roland D. Chaisson; Curtis H. Chipman; Margaret E. Churchill, Laura Churchill; Margaret A. Clark; J. Shirley, John L. and Lisé Cohrs; Linda M. Conrad; Frances Cook' Eric H. Cooke; Otis Cossitt; Russell J. Crosby; George Crowell; Mike Crowell; David A. Currie; Brian E. Dalzell; Lucy Dash; Henrik Deichmann; Delisle d'Entremont; Raymond S. and Elizabeth d'Entremont; Robbie Denton; Jerome D'Eon; Con Desplanque; R. B. Dickie; Evelyn D. Dobson; P.R. Dobson; Allison Ferguson; Mary Ferguson; Stephen P. Flemming; Bernard L. Forsythe; Elizabeth Foy; Betty Fraser; R. B. Fraser; Sylvia J. Fullerton; J. Gates; Merritt Gibson; June Graves; Estelle Greene; Edgar and Vernita Hamilton; C. E. Helleiner; Frank Hennessey; Marion W. Hilton; S. C. Hilton; Barbara Hinds; Hedley E. Hopkins; Roy John; Ralph S. Johnson; John F. Kearney; Keith N. Keddy; Vernon Keddy, Nora Killem; Fulton L. Lavender; Dave Lawley; Don & Glenda Lockhart; Bob MacDonald; Clive S. Macdonald; Larry Mackenzie; Ian A. McLaren; James McLaren; Sara MacLean; J. McNicol; Roslyn C. MacPhee; L.B. Macpherson; A. MacRury, Elsie MacRury; David MacRury, Bruce D. Mactavish, Stephen Manuel; Ken Morgan, Jean and Bill Morse; Donna Milley; Eric L. Mills; Ethelda E. Murphy; Chris Naugler; Reg Newell; Gary and Dellas Nickerson; Margaret A. Nickerson; W. H. Owen; Mike Palminter; Linda and Peter Payzant; George D. Perry; Arthur Porter; Isreal and Emily Pothier; Don and Joyce Purchase; Annie K., Kelsy and Mary Lou Raymond; Mira Riner; Frank F. Robertson; Veralyn Rogers; Frank M. Rudolf; Les Rutherford; Robin E. Rymer; Bob Simmons; S. F. and B.J. Smith; Mabel B. Smythe; Nellie Snyder; F.S. and E.P. Spalding; Arthur Spencer; Richard B. Stern; Jim Taylor; Jean Timpa; Stuart I. Tingley; Elaine Wallace, James W. Wolford.

MANY THANKS!

PRD, Records Editor.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REPORTS

FALL FLYER - JULY 30

JANUARY ISSUE - NOVEMBER 26

Bird reports to the Records Editor--

Dr. P. R. Dobson,
RMB 170,
R. R. 1, Ste. Anne du Ruisseau,
Nova Scotia B0W 2X0

Photographs, sketches, articles and letters to the--

Editor-in-Chief, NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS,
Nova Scotia Bird Society,
c/o The Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6

Editor's Note: This reached us after the deadline for this issue, but such importance that we made an exception to our rules.

A NEW BIRD FOR NOVA SCOTIA

Sheila Connell

About 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 18, 1983, Don Lightbody, Ponderosa Drive, Lake Echo, saw a new bird among those on the ground beneath his feeder. He spent the next half hour taking photographs and searching in his PETERSON'S. Then he telephoned me to say that he thought he had an adult male BRAMBLING, based on a description and illustration under Accidentals. I drove over and, upon seeing the bird, agreed that they had a BRAMBLING.

We (Don, Kay and Dorothy Lightbody, and I) were able to observe the bird in late afternoon sunlight until about 8:30 p.m. During that time it remained within 10 metres of the back door where we were standing. The BRAMBLING fed on the ground among a small group of PURPLE FINCHES, PINE SISKINS and a JUNCO, or perched (somewhat separately) in the small tree above the feeder. Its manner all the while was subdued, timid even, and it was readily alarmed by Blue Jays and Grackles that came to the feeder. It left about 8:30 p.m., not to be seen again that evening, with the small finches, when a large group of Grackles arrived.

Although we were sure the bird was a BRAMBLING, we all agreed that the bird's overall appearance was tattered and worn, and that its colouring was duller than shown in my Birds of Britain and Europe. (Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom). Don had seen the BRAMBLING's wing pattern and white rump in flight.

The Lightbodys gave their permission to me to report their sighting to the RARE BIRD ALERT, so confident were we all that the bird would be back on the morrow. It wasn't. The photo taken by Don is included.



TO FISH OR TO SWISH?

C. R. K. Allen

Illustration by Nellie Adams

Everyone knows the old fable about the donkey that starved to death standing between two bales of hay, trying in vain to decide which one to eat.

This particular donkey suffers from a similar predicament: that of deciding which of two hobbies to pursue when both clamor simultaneously for attention.

I confess to being a hobby sort of person, and to have collected a number of these in my lifetime--most too dull or too disreputable to divulge--but there are two, birding and fishing, both near and dear to my heart, which, since they can be indulged in, in the same setting, often come in conflict; and when this happens it usually means a mystery bird still nameless or a fish going free, all because of divided attention at the critical moment.

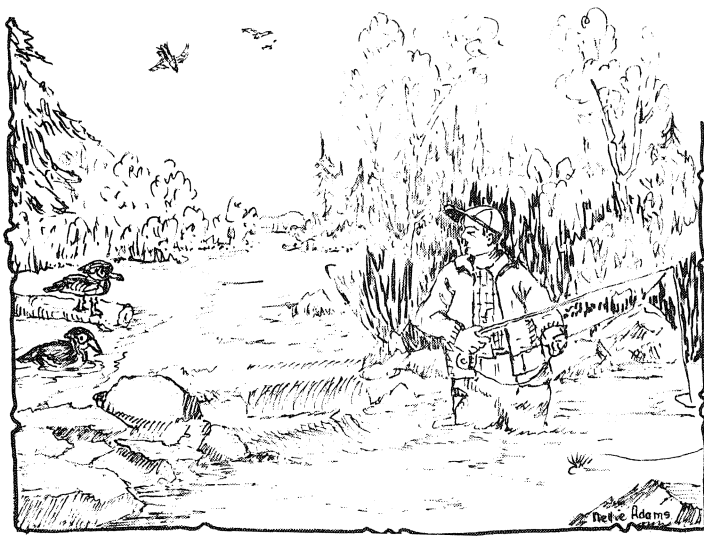
There was a morning in mid-May when, on the long trail from Ragged to Blueberry Lake, at the height of the Mayfly hatch, in perfect fishing weather, I was brought to a dead halt by a bevy of newly arrived warblers in full song, and resplendent in fresh breeding plumage: Black-and-Whites, Nashvilles, Parulas and a Wilson's. An hour slipped by as I revelled in reunion, relearning melodies half forgotten during the past months, trying once more to separate the songs of Redstart and Magnolia.

When the show was over and I finally arrived at the lake, conditions had changed: bright sun, brisk north wind, no flies on the water no trout rising. No regrets either!

Another day, also in May, but on the bank of a salmon pool, the water high but clearing after a freshet--ideal conditions; and there, out in the swirling tumult of the in-flow, a little bobbing ball of yellow down, a newly hatched duckling--Teal or Black, I couldn't tell--but plainly a stray separated from brood and parent, an utterly lonely, gallant tiny figure, swimming briskly about in its search, pathetically easy prey to the first predator that came along. While I spent futile minutes trying to rescue it to take home to the safety of our small domestic zoo, my partner rose, hooked, played and landed a plump silver grilse.

Then there was a pair of Wood Ducks, my first ever, floating on glassy ink-black water against a silver-gray background of flood-killed spruce trunks, incredibly, breathtakingly more beautiful than Landsdowne's or Fuertes' finest. A sixth sense made me glance back to where my dry-fly should be perched on the surface; it had disappeared, sucked under in a big swirl. I struck but too late; there was a solid pull, a wallowing slosh on the surface, and the Big One was gone--to join all the others of his kind in anglers' tales.

Sometimes however, honors went to the fishing. Back in the days when sea-trout of the "strawberry run" thronged the Ecum Secum, the best fishing time was just after sun-up, as the mist was lifting and the water was still cool. This was also the time when the birds were most active, bustling about hunting for food to fill ever-gaping young beaks. It seemed at times that they went out of their way to attract attention, singing at the tops of their voices, flying slowly back and forth across the pools, bathing in the shallows and even making passes at the angler's fly. However, when the trout were



really on the "take", no bird, no matter how exotic, could successfully obtrude. I have vague memories of birds, half seen, half heard" a soaring Broadwinged Hawk, winnowing Snipe, once a little white heron, unidentified as to species because I'd purposely left the binoculars behind. One morning when the trout demanded every moment of attention, there was a new and intriguing call, repeated again and again, almost --but not quite--irresistible. Though strongly tempted I held myself sternly to the pressing business at hand.

Years later and a thousand miles away, I was given a second chance, and this time free of other responsibilities. I followed the song to the singer and saw my first Towhee. Incidentally I caught thirteen trout that first day.

These are just examples of the times when the two hobbies get in each other's way. They don't occur frequently and are far from being major tragedies. They are merely an embarrassment of riches, exciting, amusing, a bit frustrating--little adventures to be recalled and relived in the lean days of winter.

For the most part, the fishing and birding go hand in hand--fin in wing, if you like--one enhancing and complementing the other. The fishing urge supplies the spur, the dream of secret lonely waters where trout are huge, numerous and crazy for the fly. It sends the angler trekking in to the back country, far beyond the whine of the power saw and the empty beer cans and crumpled tinsel of previous nature lovers, to the remote ponds and still waters, where the fresh tracks along the shore are only those of deer, fox, raccoon and bear.

As for the birding, its sounds and sights are of the true wilderness: the Swamp Sparrows' shrill pulsing bursts; the crisp commands of the Olive-sided Flycatcher on the gray dead rampike; the grunt of an amorous Spruce Grouse in early evening and the distant call of a Barred Owl at dusk. There will be freshly chiselled feeding slots of a Pileated Woodpecker, a grown family of Gray Jays methodically searching the spruces, ignoring the distraught scolding of a pair of Magnolia Warblers; and a Goshawk, glimpsed for a moment as it slips like a gray phantom through the old hardwoods.

Birding puts the frosting on the cake, the gilt on the lily, when fishing is brisk, but when rises are few and far between, it provides a second string to the bow and turns what might have been a blank day into one filled with lively happy memories.

FIELD TRIP REPORTSMarch 19 - Cape Breton Group-coastal route

The first field day for the Cape Breton group of The Nova Scotia Bird Society was named "Lingering Winter Birds", because that is just about what one expects to see in the middle of March. As for the day itself, we couldn't have found one more pleasant for the time of year. The back roads were beginning to break up a bit, which meant that we weren't able to reach some of the good places. However, the visibility was good and it was easy to see the things that were within our scope. As is usual for our coast-wise route, we saw a good many species of duck--10 in all, from Mallard to Red-breasted Merganser.

At Homeville we encountered one serious pair of Black Ducks, busily engaged in trudging all over the little marsh. Before that day was out I'm sure they would have found the perfect spot for the nest. The diving-ducks were doing as is their custom at this time of year--flying in flocks, but swimming in pairs. Goldfinches were by the hundreds in the alders, still in their winter colors.

We saw the odd Red-winged Blackbird or two, and a few Grackles, but these were the patrons of feeders hanging about all winter, not newcomers--not yet.

The only migrants that came to view were the geese, about a thousand in Morien Bar. These had come in only a day or two before we saw them on March 19. They are always so thrilling to see and hear.

It was a most enjoyable and successful day, with twenty-seven species discovered. At this time of year that isn't bad, because birdwatching is really scraping bottom by mid-March.

March 27 - Eastern Shore Safari

--Sara MacLean

March 27, 1983, turned out to be the sunniest day of the week (one might be forgiven for thinking it was the only fine day of the month) and twenty-four birders prepared to take full advantage.

We started at Sullivan's Pond, where the local "stars" all showed on cue: Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teal, American Coot, plus the usual resident assortment. Putting in a guest appearance were some of the season's first Grackles.

After an unproductive stop at the Dorothea Drive pond, we wended our way to Conrad's Beach, where everyone dispersed to investigate all the possibilities. Here we had the late winter sea ducks, the local Purple Sandpipers, Savannah and Ipswich Sparrows and a rare look at a Northern Shrike.

We were able to enjoy a tea, etc., break at MacDonald House through the kind co-operation of the MacDonald House Association, who opened the dining-room especially for us. The hill upon which it stands provides an excellent viewing area over the bay and we added a few species to the list. The sea seemed to be full of C. Loons and Red-necked Grebes.

After lunch at Three Fathom Harbour, a stop at the Willis' gave some new birders a good comparative look at Common and White-winged Scoters. The trip ended at the causeway, where those who didn't hurry away after the count were able to find a Glaucous and an Iceland Gull among the concentration of Black-backed and Herring Gulls.

We were delighted to have some of the Yarmouth members with us as well as some new members--it's always a privilege to show off the beauties of the Eastern Shore birding area, which is surely one of the most productive spots in the province, year'round. We counted 50 species, mostly late winter birds. However, we knew spring was on the way--not only the Robins, but the Red-winged Blackbirds were back.

-- Joyce Purchase

April 24 - Wolfville Area

Luck was with us weather-wise on this beautiful spring day; it was so nice that anything we happened to see was just a bonus! About 30 people (from the Blomidon Naturalists' Society as well as the Bird Society) formed a caravan of 10 cars and a motorcycle. Perhaps a good omen was a Sharp-shinned Hawk that we all viewed well before we even started.

Most of the morning was spent in going from pond to river to pond, looking mainly for waterfowl--seen were 4 pairs of Northern Shovelers, 2 pairs of Blue-winged Teal, plus Canada geese, Mallards, Black Ducks, Green-winged Teal, and Ring-necked Ducks. Others of note were 2 Greater Yellowlegs, 2 Tree Swallows, a Flicker, and 4 Kestrels (2 were seen mating by the front cars of the caravan).

We had a lunch-break in Canning, where the hospitality and chowder and assorted other goodies from Merritt and Wilma Gibson were enjoyed by all. One of our highlights came later in the Gibsons' enormous back yard, when we all wanted to see a promised Mockingbird--Fulton Lavender knew just where it was. So, while we all lined up along a fence to wait, he dashed around the brambles and nicely flushed the bird into view for the whole gang! (just like one of those Indian tiger-hunts).

Then we went to Cyril Coldwell's farm at Gaspereau. After we looked at his menagerie of caged birds (Ravens, Horned and Barred Owls, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, and Bald Eagles), he and Bernard Forsythe took us to two nest boxes of Barred Owls (containing one cold egg and 3 eggs, respectively--the latter attended by a female, and we all saw her well) and a nest of a Red-tailed Hawk. At the hawk nest we witnessed a weird spectacle: try to imagine Bernard at the top of a 35-foot spruce, under the hawk nest, hanging on to the tree with one hand, and with the other, trying to position a long-handled convex mirror so that the contents of the nest could be seen with binoculars from below! The verdict was that there was one egg and probably one very recently hatched youngster. (This year at least two pairs of Red-tails were unusually early, with eggs at the end of March.)

A few of us ended the day by going to Grand Pre and looking across "The Guzzle" to Boot Island, where we could see several Double-crested Cormorants in their nesting trees, and we also saw 5 Great Blue Herons plus hundreds of territorial gulls on the grassy parts of the island (Cyril predicts that the Black-backs are on eggs now but the Herring Gulls will not have laid theirs yet.)

--Jim Wolford

April 30 - Marion Bridge, Cape Breton

The Cape Breton group of the Nova Scotia Bird Society had its second field day on April 30. We went to what were new places for most of us, and enjoyed a most benign and windless, balmy spring day, a rarity in Cape Breton. We gathered at Marion Bridge, then continued on to Huntington, which is Bertha Hopkins ancestral home. A stroll through the garden and fields there, and we gathered in the seventeenth of our observers, Bertha's sister, Frances Hussey.

We wandered slowly along by the Salmon River that enters the Mira River, and detoured through the Two Rivers Park.

Birds seem to be early this spring. We saw Ruby-crowned Kinglets a Kingbird and Alder Flycatcher. I don't remember having come across these flycatchers in April in former years.

We kept along the lovely Mira River as far as Albert Bridge, which we crossed and returned by the highway on the Grand Mira side of the stream. One stop made us rich in hawks--four species-- and sparrows in the thickets by a lake. We saw a fair number of species, remembering that it is still April.

I was astonished at three species we didn't see: the Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle and Chickadee, three birds one would be almost certain to find in any stroll around Cape Breton. However, for some reason they hid from us that day. Even without these faithful friends it was a good day.

--Sara MacLean

May 18 - Morning Warbler Walk, Old St. Margaret's Bay Road

It was a cold morning; we all had to scrape the frost from our windshields, but clear for the first time in weeks (it seemed like months!). Four brave souls, including the leader, started birding the instant they arrived at the parking lot at the end of Route 333 (the Peggy's Cove Road). The bushes were hopping, and yielded, immediately, Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, Song Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Black-capped Chickadees, an Indigo Bunting and a (female) Northern Oriole.

We drove to the Old St. Margaret's Bay Road entrance at Goodwood, parked, and were surrounded by sound, partly from traffic. However, we also heard Purple Finches, White-throats, a Solitary Vireo, Robins, Starlings, Song Sparrows, Parula, Black-throated Green, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Raven and a Flicker. After a short walk through fields we entered a woodsy area, picking up Boreal Chickadees, a Ruffed Grouse drumming, and Magnolia Warblers--lots of them. A few Black and Whites appeared later on, and still later, in the same spot a single fully-plumaged male Blackburnian Warbler was shining like a sun from the midst of the fir trees. The morning was too cool for the Hermit Thrushes; they were there, we knew, but refused even a tinkle. Up the road and into a Tamarack bog, a single rabbit crossed and recrossed the road ahead of us in the sun, and a pocket of Palm Warblers, sounding for all the world like coarse Juncos, sang, wagged their tails and ate.

I had to leave at that point--the others had wisely taken the day off; I missed a full-plumaged Marsh Hawk pair and several Nashville Warblers; 27 species in all, including a Mourning Dove I saw on the way there.

It was a sparkling day. The sluggards missed it all. Awake! Arise; Spring has arrived!

--Fred Dobson

May 28 - Salmon River - Warbler Day.

May 28 was the date for the third field trip of the Cape Breton bird watchers. This is what we call Warbler Day and we look forward to it every year. It's exactly the proper date for Cape Breton; the warblers are pouring in, filling every alder thicket and grove of pin-cherry with tweets and chirps and little songs. The leaves are still small enough to see through and the flies haven't yet become so fierce as to be a menace.

The first two field days were ideal and we saw many surprising things, but May 28, we struck a day of brisk rain, with a good sharp east wind and mighty poor visibility. May 28 was our Warbler Day and we DID see a warbler--there was a Yellow Warbler in Joy Gates' garden first thing in the morning. All the little birds were wisely cuddled down out of sight, and stayed there.

Oh, we saw things, beginning with Double-crested Cormorant and ending with a Song Sparrow and thirty species in between. So, our field day wasn't a loss but the warblers will have to get along without us this year. Even soaking in the rain we enjoyed ourselves. Perhaps not as much as we should have done had everything gone perfectly, but we got pleasure from each other's company and it was nice to see the Willets displaying, the Green-winged Teal sailing across the water, as well as all the other hardy species that were able to face the storm.

So, our 'one-warbler' Warbler Day must go into history.

--Sara MacLean

May 28 - Hants Co. Field Trip

Traditionally, the Hants Co. Field Trip takes place the last Saturday in May, rain or shine, in fog or haze, and in the height of the black-fly season. Farmers, housewives, children and cows gaze in puzzlement as the motorcade passes by or lines up bumper to bumper at the side of a road to search for a particular species of bird that has ALWAYS been seen in a certain pond, marsh, meadow or bridge.

For the past nine years, on the average, 25 birders have identified 67 species. So it was that a small motorcade consisting of two cars and three people left the Mt. Uniacke railway crossing at 8:15 in drizzle and fog, determined to do the work of 20 birders!

With the optimism of John Cohrs that the sun would shine by 10 a.m., John, Shirley and I set out in different directions at each stop; removed one layer of rain apparel by 10 o'clock, ate our lunch in the Picnic Park at Smiley's Interval and accounted for 62 species, including a Common Tern. Ovenbirds were heard everywhere and we gloated over our ability to distinguish the song of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak from the Robin (at least until next spring)! Flycatchers were scarce as were hawks, but in the afternoon at the Bar S Campsite, we spotted the Goshawk that had been stealing the Doves in front of the owner's eyes.

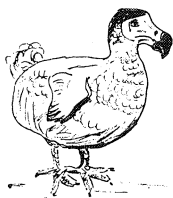
The Snipe was not seen at the usual pond but we had an excellent view of one perched on a post--so easy to compare its size and markings to a Woodcock.

No problems were encountered although John might not agree with this--since the friendly St. Bernard "puppy" that greeted us as we drew to a stop and practically dented Le Car with a wag of his tail, turned out to be a "bit reluctant" to let him off the property after a fruitless hunt for Wrens.

The field trip ended with sightings of Green-winged Teal, a Kingfisher, a Hummingbird and several Chimney Swifts--a grand total of 74 species! A gratifying Field Trip.

--Margaret A. Clark

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS



Saturday McNab's Island--summer residents.
July 23 Leader: Roger Pocklington. Meet at the Maritime Museum at 0900 hours.

Saturday Shore birds in the Yarmouth region
July 23 Leader: Charlie Allen. Meet at 0830 hours at the C.P.R. Station in Yarmouth.

Saturday Mary's Point-(New Brunswick)--
July 30 living carpet of Semi-palmated Sandpipers. Leader: David Christie
Meet at the Bank of Nova Scotia in Albert at 1330 hours (Route 114).

Saturday Crescent and Cherry Hill Beaches. Shore birds. Leader:
August 6 Shirley Cohrs. Meet at the Petite Riviere Post Office at 0930 hours. Scopes would be helpful.

Saturday Antigonish Wildlife Management Area and Mahoney's Beach.
August 27 Leader: Roland Chaisson. Meet at 0900 hours at the Antigonish Shopping Mall (turn left on the TCH on the way to Cape Breton--third exit into Antigonish.) Expect to see ducks, herons, ospreys, bald eagles, peeps, etc.

Sunday Evangeline Beach. Diversity of shore birds. Leader: Jim
Sept. 18 Wolford. Meet at the Grand Pre Historic Park at 1030 hours. This outing is in conjunction with a local nature club.

Saturday Cape Split. Leaders: Frank and Mary Himsl. Meet at 0900
Sept. 24 hours at the parking lot at the beginning of the hiking trail (at the end of the shore road beyond Scott's Bay). This is an 8 mile hike offering spectacular scenery.

CAPE BRETON OUTINGS

Saturday Fuller's Bridge. Shore birds. Leader: Eldon Meikle.
August 20 Meet at the north end of Marion Bridge at 0800 hours.

Saturday Ste. Anne's region. Leader: Eldon Meikle. Meet at the
Sept. 10 Englishtown intersection at the foot of Kelly's Mountain at 0900 hours.

JACK OF ALL TRADES

by

Dave Harris
Wildlife Biologist

Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests
Coxheath, N.S.

Fifty feet in the air, sitting amongst a mass of twigs and grasses, was the first time I questioned my sanity. Was this what I became a Biologist to do? An uninvited guest in the house of three cross young eagles, swaying in a 20 kilometer breeze wafting off the Bras d'Or Lakes. My last five summers have started with these thoughts as the Department of Lands and Forests has made a concerted effort to band Bald Eagles. To date over 350 have been banded.

Catching the bird in the nest, the bagged youngster is lowered to the ground where your banding partner, in my case, George Ball, bands the bird and takes the necessary measurements. In other Counties, other teams do the same job, Blaise Landry and John Mombourquette; Dan Banks (my counterpart in Cape Breton North), Buddy MacLeod and Merryl Bustin. At this time the person in the nest roots around for food remains. Steamy and/or crawling food remains are bagged and labelled for later identification. Thus, another biological study, the food habits of our eagles is carried out.

To get to this point, two helicopter flights have taken place. One to identify new nests and nesting activity around all the nests we know of. The second flight to determine whether this activity has come to fruition; young eagles. I don't take part in this activity. Oh, it's not that I don't get the opportunity, I feel there are people who are more competent to take on this activity than myself (It's hard to spot eagles when you have your head in a motion sickness bag all the time). Aircraft of any kind are not my strong suit. Aircraft time is expensive and this year we have not had the desired two flights. This is unfortunate, but in times of restraint, cuts take place.

It's hard to schedule work in the Spring. With nature being nature, everything starts happening as the temperature rises. Brood surveys on ducks; nest box checks (we, in co-operation with local Wildlife Groups, put up artificial nesting boxes for wood ducks, mergansers, hawks, owls, etc.). Boxes have to be serviced and results noted. Deer surveys, woodcock surveys, it would be nice to be able to split into four people for the Spring and Summer. Island surveys, the coast of Cape Breton is dotted with islands. Many of these have important nesting colonies. The Bird Society is well aware of Hertford and Ciboux. You purchased one and gave our Wildlife Division support in the purchase of the other. There are other islands to find with significant nesting colonies. Surveys of nesting success have to be undertaken. In addition to the Puffins, Auks and Kittiwakes of the Bird Islands, Kittiwakes, Eider, Petrels, Guillemonts and Cormorants, double crested and European, nest on our Islands. Monitoring and inventory work on these populations is work that must be done. When a disaster such as the Kurdistan Oil Spill occurs, the Canadian Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Service have to be made aware of what birds are where. If we don't have the information, clean-up priorities will ignore them. In the same way, shorebird concentration areas and migratory bird feeding marshes have to be located and quantified. Booms can then be placed across the inlets to these sensitive areas and damage to the birds and their habitat minimized.

An inventory of important inland wetlands and nesting colonies is another priority. Cutting operations and other industrial development is occurring. They have to be made aware of what areas to stay away from. Lands and Forests inventories are the baseline data that runs this decision-making process. Consultant Firms doing Impact Studies rely on us for the information they compile about proposed projects. Unfortunately areas change so this has to be ongoing and naturally enough, we are spread very thin in this inventory process. Funding for these endeavours is limited to missing. The general public, of which the Bird Society is a good example, gives us invaluable information on colonies and bird and mammal hotspots. The longer you are in an area as a Sub-Division Biologist, the better you know your area and the more complete your inventory. As a longtime citizen of an area, you can often make your local Biologist aware of areas you feel are significant. As Sub-Division Biologists, we are the local legs, eyes and ears of the Wildlife Division and through them, the Canadian Wildlife Service and other agencies. As individuals, giving your information to your local Biologist will supply more legs, eyes and ears to wildlife management.

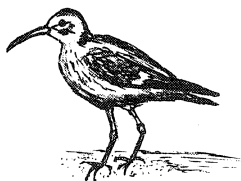
In other seasons there are other priorities and other projects, improving cutting methods for wildlife, working with Ducks Unlimited in developing areas for waterfowl and other water flora and fauna, lake and stream surveys for trout and salmon and other fish species, studies on improving streams for fish, releases to supplement local populations, studies on releases of new species to Nova Scotia (i.e. ptarmigan and arctic hare on Scatarie Island)...on and on. On the frontlines of Wildlife Management you have to be a generalist. As the saying goes, "Jack of all trades..."

BIRDING KNOWLEDGE

(Fourth in a series meant to upgrade readers' knowledge and appreciation of some of our commoner species.)

DUNLIN

Calidris alpina



The Dunlin is a small sandpiper measuring 6 3/4 to 8" long, including the 1-2" bill. In North America it winters along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and summers in Arctic Canada.

Feeding Habits. Runs about on mud flats and on beaches, probing with its relatively long blackish bill for sand fleas, marine worms, mollusks, crustaceans and insects.

Nest. It constructs a nest of grasses or leaves in a tundra hummock.

Eggs. May - June. 4 green to buff spotted with gray and rich browns.

Age. Finnish study reports 3.5 years. A banded bird reported alive at 14½ years in Sweden in 1969.

Flight Speed. Up to 110 m.p.h. (Timed on migration from an aeroplane in California, 1942)

Other Names. Black-bellied Sandpiper, Black-heart Plover, Ox-bird, Red-back, Crooked-bill Snipe.

BOOKREVIEW

GULLS: A GUIDE TO IDENTIFICATION, by Peter J. Grant.

Vermillion, South Dakota, Buteo Books, 1982. (Available from Nature Canada Book Shop for \$37.95)

This is a splendid book, falling half-way between a field guide and a post-field trip reference book. If you have ever had difficulty in sorting out Black-headed and Bonaparte's Gulls or Glaucous and Iceland Gulls this book is just what you need.

All plumages, from juvenile to adult, of the twenty-three species of gulls of Europe and Eastern North America are described in detail. I would like to have seen more details on Thayer's and Kumlien's Iceland Gulls but that is my only disappointment with this guide.

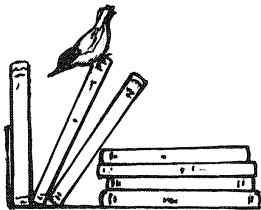
Gulls are arranged into five groups based on their similarities and this adds immensely to the usefulness of this book. Descriptions are accompanied by line drawings and 376 black and white photographs. Many of these photographs in themselves clearly show the subtle differences among similar species.

Another valuable contribution of this book, as the author points out in the Preface, is that it shows us how to observe all aspects of plumages of gulls and thus it can help us become more precise in our observations of other species of birds as well.

In short, this is a unique contribution to the birding literature and in spite of the price I recommend it highly.

Sylvia J. Fullerton.

ISLAND BIRD BOOKS



There has been some response to the Desert Island Books article in the April issue, with one economical member deciding on one book only. That single volume however, was the Encyclopaedia of North American Birds by John K. Terres, some eleven hundred pages of bird knowledge, guaranteed to inform and entertain for many hours and days.

Another quite different book was A Chorus of Birds by Utamaro, published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is a series of Japanese coloured woodblocks originally done in 1790, depicting thirty species of birds. The illustrations are interspersed with Kyoka, poems in a comic verse form. The pictures are folded within the book so that they form one long scroll.

These two books must be at almost opposite ends of the spectrum of bird literature. We would like to hear of more so please write with your suggestions and ideas:

Shirley Cohrs,
8 Rosemount Ave.,
Halifax, N.S. B3N 1X8

RAPTOR REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Editor's Note: This article speaks for itself. All I can add is a sincere thankYou to Elaine and Michael Kew. --JSC

My husband Michael and I have had an on-going interest in a rehabilitation centre for birds of prey. During the past few years we have made several contacts and acquired the necessary permits to house birds for the purpose of rehabilitation and release. However, it should also be noted that we have not refused ANY injured birds.

Our present home is located on Mason's Point at the Head of St. Margaret's Bay where numerous Osprey spend their summer cycle. Also, there are Bald Eagles who feed at the head waters adjacent to the Nova Scotia Power Corporation Sub-Station. The threat of an ocean oil spill is a certain worry and we are only beginning.

We have made various contacts with the Nova Scotia Bird Society, Nova Scotia Museum, our wildlife biologist at the Department of Lands and Forests, Cyril Coldwell (the 'Valley Bird Man') and Shirley Cohrs, who has given us much support and help. We have also been in contact with Kit Chubb, R.N., Director of Avian Care and Research Foundation, Veroná, Ontario, who has supplied us with valuable documents on every phase of bird rehabilitation.

Records are kept on each bird having individual files with remarks on how the bird was acquired, injury, surgery, method of transport, medication, observations noted and recorded, food intake, stages of recovery (removal of bandages, absence of medication), a photograph while at the centre and hopefully one on release.

Human contact is limited to feeding. The housing units (2) are located in a sheltered area for privacy. Observations can be made unnoticed by viewing through the garage window. If our cages are occupied and we have another bird coming, a new unit is built overnight.

To date we have housed the following birds:

Cedar Waxwing
 Young Robin
 Young Crow
 Merlin (Pigeon Hawk)
 Marsh Hawk
 Great Horned Owl

THE MARSH HAWK

Our more complicated and longest convalescing bird was the Marsh Hawk who remained at the centre for a total of 55 days. This bird was our first seriously injured, having a compound fracture with protruding bone and nerve end (not severed). Dr. Cameron of the Dartmouth Veterinary Hospital, performed the surgery which involved the implant of a pin to hold the humerus in place. A body bandage was applied restraining the injured wing. Added to these injuries was the high stress factor of the Marsh Hawk.

The condition of the hawk improved almost daily, becoming more active and aggressive when approached. At the end of two weeks we removed the bandages, freeing the flight feathers.

Six weeks later the hawk was transported to Dr. Cameron for x-ray and removal of pin. The operation was a success. Due to the hawks restrictive movements, we first fed her raw chicken which was injected with the antibiotic Penbritain for 4 days. Live mice replaced the



chicken. Before release she was eating 3 to 4 mice a day.

She remained with us another two weeks to assure strength, then a site was chosen, keeping in mind the flight pattern and sitings of Marsh Hawks in the area. She was banded by Ross Anderson on the evening of November 5, 1982, using #5 clasp, band no. 81516604. On November 6, the Marsh Hawk was transported to Chester Grant. The site for release was a partially open field with what appeared to be a small Christmas tree plantation. Close to the open field was a lake. Her exit from the box was so quick we barely caught a glimpse of her flight. Just that one moment! I really can't describe the feeling, knowing that this bird was well and free again.

--Elaine Kew

Note: At the time all this happened a Marsh Hawk was a Marsh Hawk; now it is called a Northern Harrier.

ANYONE WISHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COST OF THIS PROGRAMME SHOULD SEND DONATIONS TO:

The Sanctuary and Trust Fund,
Nova Scotia Bird Society,
c/o Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6

RECEIPTS WILL BE SENT FOR TAX PURPOSES



BIRD WATCHING IN COMFORT

John L. Cohrs

Whether you are an occasional birdwatcher, a regular, short trip birdwatcher, a long trip rarity seeker or a rabid "drop-me-on-the-rock-with-a-tin-of-cat-food-and-come-back-for-me-next-high-tide" zealot, a little planning and forethought can greatly increase your comfort.

Increased comfort involves increased weight to carry, either on your person or in your car or boat. Paradoxically, carrying increased weight certainly does not add to your comfort. Nevertheless, twenty years experience as an average birdwatcher, neither occasional nor zealot, enables me to pass on some tips to the interested new birdwatcher.

First of all, make sure you have a birdwatching comfort kit for your car. It need not live in the car, but can be packed in a cardboard box, old suitcase or carryall to be tossed in the car when the urge to forget it all and head for the woods or beaches becomes irresistible. I have observed that in the case of some enthusiasts the ENTIRE trunk and back seat of their cars contain a giant survival kit with footwear from chest waders to running shoes, cameras, telescopes, rain gear, snow gear, food for several days and a complete library. A more modest kit would consist of:

Some sort of rain gear. If you birdwatch you will eventually get wet. Rain gear ranges from complete yachting, heavy duty rain wear to light plastic packaged suits. I have even encountered birders who are content to carry a large size (for autumn leaves) trash bag. Tear a little hole to put your head through and you, your binoculars or camera and your field guide will remain dry. Looks ridiculous you say? It's better than a soaking from a summer thunderstorm.

A change of foot wear. I prefer a pair of dry socks and a light pair of running shoes because, just as you will encounter rain, so you will get wet feet. It is frustrating to hear a new bird just on the other side of a marshy spot or shallow stream which you are reluctant to pursue because the price will be cold, wet feet for the rest of the day. With the knowledge of dry foot wear back at the car, you can plunge boldly through, see the new life lister bird and complete your day in comfort. As a minimum, at least carry a pair of dry socks to change to. In a pinch I have seen a pair of dry socks used as gloves on an unseasonably cold breeding bird survey in June. (A tendency toward eccentricity certainly doesn't hurt your chances of being a comfortable birdwatcher)

Something waterproof to place between you and the wet ground, snow, rock, beach or even picnic bench when you wish to sit down either to watch birds or eat your lunch. Here again, this can range from a proper ground sheet, space blanket, tarpaulin, plastic sheeting or again, the many talented plastic trash bag. I prefer the 5 ply laminated space blanket with one side dark and the other aluminum foil. This can serve as rain shelter for squalls, ground sheet, wind break and extra warmth. It is surprisingly effective, even when used for sitting in a snow bank on a headland in a high wind. Sit on one edge, pull it up over the head and shoulders and watch the sea birds in comfort while all around you are shivering.

You should carry water in your car. That long, after lunch hike up Martinique beach on a blazing August day will leave you with a raging thirst no matter how much you drank at lunch time. A 40 ounce plastic vinegar jug is an excellent size of container. If you wish, take a 2 or 3 ounce plastic container of rum or scotch to take away

the water taste. If you don't like rum or scotch, or you wish to maintain your credibility for your reports of exotic birds, pack some orange or lemonade crystals.

Those are the basics for a survival kit, but if you still have room you should consider as well:

A means of heating water if the weather turns cold. This could be a small camping stove, a hot pot that plugs into the car's cigarette lighter, or most fun of all, a tin can stove. This is made of four nesting tin cans and consists of a 48 ounce juice tin to burn a few dry twigs in, a 28 ounce tomato tin to boil water, a 14 ounce vegetable tin and a 10 ounce soup tin as cups. You'll also need a small pair of pliers or vice-grips (about 4-6") to pick up the tin of boiling water to pour. Everything, including a few dry twigs or kindling, newspaper, matches, coffee or cocoa, coffee creamer and sugar nests inside the 48 ounce tin like those interminable Russian dolls. Fun to make, fun to use, and when dirty, just take them home and put them in the garbage--how to be comfortable cheaply!

Take a little extra food--whatever you like, granola, crackers and cheese, hard candies or even chocolate bars or sweet biscuits. Because, as well as getting wet feet, getting caught in the rain and getting thirsty, you will, at some time in your birding expeditions, get ravenously hungry, no matter how much food you pack. This article is, after all entitled "Bird Watching in Comfort".

Pack an extra sweater. You can always take clothes off to cool off, but if you haven't any to put on, you remain cold and uncomfortable. I have a venerable brown woollen sweater which looks as if it was turned in at the Salvation Army thrift shop by a denizen of New York's Bowery, after he felt ashamed to be seen in it. It only sees the light of day once or twice a year, but it serves the purpose.

Clothes. If you have children along or if you are accompanying a fanatical bird watcher, consider a complete change of clothing. While average bird watchers get wet feet, children and fanatics believe in total immersion.

Binoculars. Assuming that you have been birding long enough to have obtained a second pair of binoculars, carry the old ones, no matter how poor you think they are, in your survival kit. Nothing can spoil your day faster than to find your binoculars have taken a knock and the prism is out of line, or the damp has fogged up the inside. There you are, a hundred miles from home with every known species of shorebird out on the flats, *and you can't see them.* Even the binoculars you discarded a year ago are better than none at all.

Now you are completely kitted out for comfortable birdwatching, provided you stay within one hundred feet of your car, but how do you stay comfortable during the four hour walk to the end of Blomidon? Obviously you won't be comfortable with binoculars, field guide, and perhaps a telescope or camera and the ten pound comfort kit from the car. However, you still must have the material to keep you dry, warm, and comfortable. A simple basic comfort kit for hiking would consist of:

Rain gear. The small light weight packaged types will do if you expect rain. A large trash bag will serve as a 'sit-upon' or emergency rain gear if you are not expecting rain and wish to travel light.

Water - A ten or twelve ounce vinegar bottle is excellent. I may appear to be an advocate of vinegar bottles but I have found them to be light weight, nearly puncture proof, they have tight fitting

lids, they come in a variety of sizes, they are of useful shapes, and unlike bleach or shampoo bottles, the original flavour leaves the bottle with one or two rinsings. I have found the residual flavour of all brands of shampoo unpalatable.

Food. In addition to any lunch you might carry, which is basically to fuel the machine, you deserve a little treat when you get to the mid point of your walk. So, pack a box of raisins, cookies, hard candies or a candy bar to celebrate a good bird or a successful journey.

Your feet. If you develop blisters on your feet during a long hike, nothing short of being snatched back to your car by helicopter can assist your comfort. If you have a suitable dressing (a "moleskin" pad or bandaid) at least you can limit your discomfort. You should carry the necessities to deal with minor first aid problems, particularly blisters.

Insect repellent, sunburn prevention. During the warmer months both are required and year round a sunburn barrier cream or oil is often necessary to ensure comfort. While also needed for the car comfort kit, you venture on a long walk without them at your peril.

Plastic sheet. A desirable addition is a plastic sheet (light weight will do) six by eight feet or so. This, in fair weather, can replace rain gear and serve as a 'sit-upon' sheet. I can recall a typical Nova Scotia summer storm. Two of us were watching shore birds. Over a period of forty minutes, from sun to cloud, to torrential rain, to sun, we ate lunch and viewed the birds through a telescope under such a sheet and emerged comfortable and dry to continue our walk.

Emergency repairs. A person's emergency repair kit is a personal matter, but I would recommend several strong safety pins. Walking through bush and sliding down rocky slopes can damage clothing. Safety pins can help preserve your dignity, your peace of mind and your modesty. A ten foot length of stout cord is another must as an emergency shoe lace, belt or braces to free your hands for more important matters as you return to civilization.

The above, with a sharp pocket knife, stored in a war surplus haversack, a light back pack or, if like me, you favour a multi-pocket garment, stored in pockets, will keep you comfortable under most circumstances for a penalty of no more than two pounds weight. If you have other interests than bird watching, I suggest a spare film for camera fans. In accordance with Murphy's Law, if you enter the woods for four hours without a spare, your camera will have no more than two shots left on the roll and if you enter the woods with a camera with only two shots left, you will invariably see three or more birds to record. Also, never be without several plastic bags from grocery to sandwich size to carry Chanterelles, Boletes, Shaggy Manes, Blackberries, Raspberries, Strawberries and any other largesse offered with open hands by the Nova Scotia meadows and forests.

The final set of tips covers long trip birdwatching. Of course, if you are driving your own car you already have a comfort kit. However, if you are flying to the west coast or Florida and renting a car, a camper or housekeeping accommodation it is worth considering the following points:

Carry the walking comfort kit with you. Depending on the area, you may wish to modify the kit. I cannot really recommend using

a bright orange, oversize trash bag as rain gear near the wealthy resorts of Captiva or Sanibel Islands in Florida. I have a feeling that such garb would not be accepted with the same equanimity as on a logging road behind Trafalgar in Nova Scotia. Even eccentricity, commendable as it may be, must be tempered with judgement.

Spare binoculars. Either have a spare pair of binoculars with you or be prepared to buy new ones if something goes wrong. It is poor economics to invest the money in a trip to an exotic place and miss half the fun because of defective equipment.

Warm clothes. Make sure you have some warm clothes. Whatever the tourist bureaus say, it can get cold anywhere, and at one time or another it gets cold everywhere at 5:00 a.m. I can still see my wife listening to tales of usual May 24 heat waves in Saskatchewan, shivering in long johns, jeans, rain pants, sweaters, rain coat, woolly hat and gloves. I have a picture of that scene.

Hot water. Carry the materials for a hot cup of tea or coffee in your housekeeping unit or motel. A plug-in hot pot, tea and coffee, bread or crackers and cheese or jam can provide a pre-breakfast for early rising birdwatchers. Other than at Point Pelee, few restaurants start breakfast before 7:00 a.m., and even there, none before 6:00 a.m. A good regime is a bread, cheese and hardboiled egg breakfast at 4:45 a.m. (be adventurous, the Finns and Swedes all eat cheese for breakfast), an early lunch or bacon and egg breakfast at 10:30 or 11:00, tea at 3:00 p.m., an early dinner and early to bed.

Spices. If you are in a housekeeping unit, cottage or camper, take along a spice or condiment kit; six or eight of your favourite spices and herbs in 35 millimeter film cassettes will spice up your meals.

Knives. Finally, if you are going to be in housekeeping accomodation, take along one or two sharp knives. A paring knife and a strong knife are the best combination of utility and light weight. I don't know who supplies the original knives in housekeeping units but I do know that someone takes even these miserable specimens and carefully grinds the edge so that the back resembles the front. If you forget your own slicing knife and must slice a loaf of bread or a tomato, you will have far greater success using the edge or even the handle of a spoon than you can achieve with the knife that is supplied with the unit.

There you have the essence of twenty years of experience. Of course each comfort kit is highly personal. However, with these tips and by spending one quarter as much time planning for and arranging for your comfort as you do planning the route and the trip, you can be comfortable in your birdwatching. Remember that you won't be comfortable if you are cold, wet, foot blistered, fly bitten, sun-burned, hungry, thirsty or let down by defective equipment. If you guard against these you'll be comfortable 95% of the time. You ask me, "but what if I break a leg?". If you worry about that, you shouldn't be a birdwatcher. Have you thought of taking up downhill skiing?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

In May every year, I wait for the Bobilinks to return. This year to my surprise, one came to the feeder. I guess he wanted me to know he was back. Not too far from my house are some mowing fields; some are still mowed regularly every year while others are not. It is in these fields that they nest. I have seen their nests and both times it was raining; a female flew up right near a path and there on the ground lay her eggs in the tall grass.

There is an old cemetery in one of these fields and here I sit on the stone wall and listen to these joyful birds. The male sings his mating song on the wing most of the time. He is a beautiful black bird with a buffy cap and white wing stripes but in the fall when they visit our corn and oat patch he is a different bird, his colours have faded and run together and I don't hear any song but a harsh "pink". With the mowing fields disappearing, I'm wondering how long we will have these joyful birds with us.

--Ethelda Murphy

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

Northern Harriers breed extensively on the Tantramar Marsh, just north of Sackville, N.B. The area is of prime importance, since in 1980, it supported a density of 30 nests in 60 square km--one of the highest densities ever reported in North America. Of the 30 nests, 12 were involved in polygynous relationships; a mating system which is not uncommon in this raptor. The fledgeling success of those males involved in polygamy was interesting, since one male fledged an incredible 10 young (the average is 2-3) mainly due to his very high supply of voles (the harriers' principal food). However, polygamists are not always that successful. One male with 4 females (reported only once previously in North America) attempted 5 nests with his 4 females and managed to raise only 3 young!

In 1981 and 1982, the number of nesting harriers decreased dramatically in response to the shrinking vole population: 22 harriers nested in 1981 and only 12 nests were discovered in 1982. In mid-season 1982, the voles increased to very high numbers--too late for the harriers to respond to it, but promising that 1983 may be a very good year, perhaps better than 1980.

For all you fall migration hawk watchers: look out for harriers --you may be well rewarded in 1983!

Robert Simmonds

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

During the past dozen or so years I have had the privilege of spending at least a portion of the spring migration on Grand Manan Island, N.B., about 35 miles NW of Brier I., in the Bay of Fundy. This year was no exception and I was able to be there from April 19, through the 25th and greet a few of our summer residents as they returned or passed through from their wintering grounds to the south. I thought it might be interesting to compare these arrival dates with others that your members may have made at this time from the area between Brier I., and down along the SW shore to around Cape Sable I.

In previous years I have noticed a rough correlation (often to the day) along this broad front in first sightings and subsequent migratory waves, especially in the hawks and southern herons. Below is a short list of some first sightings and other notable arrivals made during the above noted period this spring.

Sooty Shearwater - an early bird seen Apr. 25, Grand Manan Channel.
 Great Egret - a single on Apr. 24.
 Snowy Egret - two birds together, also Apr. 24.
 Black-crowned Night Heron - 2 on Apr. 19, then 6 on Apr. 22.
 Tri-Colored Heron - 1 on April 23 and a pair April 24. (?Ed.)
 Brant - still passing through, 1250 on Apr. 19 most seen.
 Northern Goshawk - an adult flew in low off the ocean on Apr. 24.
 Merlin - 1 on Apr 19, and 3 in migration Apr. 22.
 Osprey - only birds noted were 4 on Apr. 21.
 Greater Yellowlegs - a single on Apr. 19 and at least 6 Apr. 23.
 Purple Sandpiper - 80+ on Apr. 23 were passing through or had not left.
 Mourning Dove - 5 on April 19, 16 the next day, then only singles.
 Tree Swallow - 7 on Apr. 19, 24 on Apr. 20, numerous thereafter.
 Barn Swallow - a single bird Apr. 23, was the only one noted.
 Cliff Swallow - one on April 25, arrived during a downpour.
 Purple Martin - a pair stayed most of the day April 22.
 Red-breasted Nuthatch - arrived in force Apr. 23, common after that.
 Winter Wren - 3 singing on territory Apr. 20, at least 7 by Apr. 24.
 American Robin - waves noticed on Apr. 20 (140), and Apr. 23 (250).
 Yellow-rumped Warbler - first arrivals seen on Apr. 21, about 15-20.
 Palm Warbler - 5 on Apr. 21, increasing to 25-30 by Apr. 24.
 Eastern Meadowlark - 1 singing Apr. 20, could not be found again.
 Chipping Sparrow - a lone bird on Apr. 23, was the only one seen.

Except for the shearwater all other sightings were made in and around Castalia Marsh which is located on the shore near the centre of the island.

Brian Dalzell, Moncton, N.B.

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

The end of the story...

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER AT RIVENDELL

The Last Installment

You may remember that the Great Crested Flycatcher which spent the past five summers in the Rivendell orchard was put on trial for his life last year for unspeakable crimes against his fellow birds, and was subsequently condemned to death by a jury of readers of this Journal. The bird returned early in May and immediately began to assert himself in his old way, beating up and severely damaging two Tree Swallows and a Song Sparrow during his first day at Rivendell. It was also his last day at Rivendell. The sentence has duly been carried out, and the bird will, as promised, be stuffed and mounted and put on display in the Nova Scotia Museum of Science later this summer.

I sincerely hope that I never see another of them!

R.G.S. Bidwell.

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

This is the season when enthusiastic and well-meaning bird lovers go around hopefully putting up birdhouses. They put them up here, there and everywhere, seldom considering the birds' tastes, requirements, or--most importantly--their safety.

A bird, say, a Tree Swallow, desperate for living accommodations because he has fallen in love and is expecting a family shortly, will overlook the matter of too cramped a nestinghouse, or too small an entrance hole, through which his unfortunate wife, about to produce an egg, will have a struggle to ease herself.

There is the matter of fresh air, too. A birdhouse ought to be properly ventilated, so that the mother bird will not become overheated at midday, sitting on her brood, or find herself in a draught. An excellent idea is to leave a little airspace where the roof fits onto the walls, an inch or so over her head as she sits on her mattress-like nest.

First and foremost, however, the birdhouse must be protected from attacks by marauding squirrels or cats. NEVER put up a birdhouse without insuring that squirrels, cats, Blue Jays and crows cannot get at it and rob it of its treasures. Make sure that a squirrel cannot leap to it from an adjacent tree or pole, and always --but ALWAYS ring the tree or pole with a deterrent a couple of feet below the little house.

An excellent deterrent can be made from a drip-tray sheet of aluminum, available, two in a package, from supermarkets or hardware stores. Cut them to fit, making sure that the strips are eight inches wide or more. Tack these strips in place. They should last for years. Each strip must completely ring the tree trunk or pole. No squirrel or cat should be able to scale it, once it has been applied.

Tree Swallows love a house on top of a slender pole 8'to 12'high. Place the pole in a garden with trees in fairly easy range, or with a house roof not too far away, so that when the babies fly, they will have a landing field nearby. If they have to land on the ground they become prey for cats.

If you own a cat it is kinder not to put up birdhouses in the area, or to feed the birds in winter. You'll be feeding them to the cats. Be sure that hedges or shrubs are handy for birds to take cover in, when hawks arrive on the scene.

Chickadees are very shy when they nest and prefer a house well weathered and unobtrusive, tucked away among bushes, and erected on a 10' to 12' pole. Again, be sure to ring the pole with aluminum sheeting for safety. Never neglect this precaution.

Try to involve others in conservation projects. Apply to the government to have favourite nestingplaces for seabirds on offshore island, or on beaches, protected by law during the nesting season. This only means denying them to the public till perhaps the middle of July, a small price to pay, surely, for the beauty and the joy that the presence of birds in the environment adds to our daily lives. It is, alas, a presence that is rapidly being eroded, as fewer and fewer birds return each year on migration. The least we can do is protect them while they are busy raising their offspring. This means not only guarding them from intrusion, but also from poisonous sprays and the thousand and one other hazards that seem to be a part of modern living for us all.

H. Shirley Fowke

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

On May 26, 1983, on Seal Island, I was privileged to see my first (Nova Scotia's second) "Audubon's" Warbler, the western race of the Yellow-rumped Warbler. I have now seen all four species or races of western Dendroica in N.S.*, three of them in spring. However, I don't write to boast; rather, the circumstances are worth detailing as a hint on the significance of slightly "off-routine" songs of familiar species.

I first heard this bird giving a song that was unlike those of the "Myrtles" we had been hearing. As you probably know, during migration (except sometimes on fine days when the "blood is up", the "Myrtle" generally sings a weaker, looser song. Some "Myrtles" had been singing their stronger territorial songs on the island, but this new song was more emphatic, almost Palm-Warbler like, with a distinctive middle crescendo and no terminal change in pitch. Yet, it did seem "Myrtle"-like. The bird was very active, moving back and forth beyond screens of trees, frustrating my attempt to see it for a couple of minutes. I was beginning to fantasize about some southern "exotic", so kept at it. Finally, I broke through to the edge of the island's main pond and was rewarded by a sight of the bird at 50-60 m in a tree along the shore. With 7x35 binoculars I was first struck by its large, white wing patches: hardly a "Myrtle" Warbler. Only after some seconds did I mentally focus on its glowing, yellow throat. It was identifiable as an undoubted male "Audubon's", even with the mere half minute it gave me before it flew toward the island's centre, where I could still hear its loud singing. Unfortunately, my companions were off in pursuit of Wheatear (which had been inadequately seen earlier) and the "Audubon's" could not be found half an hour later.

I paid special attention to "Myrtle" songs on subsequent days. Although I heard some that sometimes dropped the terminal change in pitch, none was so emphatic or cleanly articulated as that of my "Audubon's". Field guides generally describe the song in terms similar to those used for the "Myrtle" Warbler, or state that the two are similar in song. Both are usually said to have the same two-parted structure with a drop or rise in pitch at the end. Statements about differences between the songs of the two subspecies seem to trace to observations by Alexander Wetmore, in New Mexico (quoted in Bent's "Life Histories...") that "in a way it was similar to that of the Myrtle Warbler but was louder and more emphatic in its character."

In fact, as anyone who has listened to bird records knows, warbler songs vary a great deal regionally within species, and my "Audubon's" may not in any sense have been "typical". However, it was certainly different from the local Yellow-rumps. Anyone who hears a slightly "off" song of a familiar species should try to pin the singer down, although few may come up with such a distinctive race as a reward.

It is my opinion that 21st century birders will spend more time and have more fun pinning down the detailed origins of the individual birds that they see. I can just see them with their miniaturized electronic gadgetry, pressing the "song-match" button and saying in triumph: "By golly, Eric, that's a New Mexican 'Audubon's' dialect!"

--Ian McLaren

* Ed. note: For readers' interest these four are:

Dendroica auduboni (Audubon's Warbler)

Dendroica townsendi (Townsend's Warbler)

Dendroica nigrescens (Black-throated Grey Warbler)

Dendroica accidentalis (Hermit Warbler)

OSPREYS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Erick Greene

As part of my undergraduate thesis work at Dalhousie University, I conducted research on Ospreys in Nova Scotia during the summers of 1981 and 1982. The Nova Scotia Bird Society generously contributed funds which helped defray the research costs, and allowed me to present a paper at an international conference on Ospreys and Bald Eagles in Montreal. It is with great pleasure that I thank the NSBS. This article is a small token of my appreciation, and is a way of sharing with you information about this magnificent bird.

GENERAL BIOLOGY

Ospreys do not have any close taxonomic cousins. For this reason they are placed in their own family, Pandionidae. Ospreys are one of the most widely distributed raptors; they occur regularly on all continents except Antarctica.

Although they have been occasionally known to take small mammals and even warblers, Ospreys are fishing hawks par excellence. Their keen eyes are far more sensitive than ours, allowing them to detect fish from great heights. The pads of their feet are covered with hundreds of sharp spines, and the toes are equipped with one inch talons. Ospreys are opportunistic in their choice of fish species. Coastal Ospreys in Nova Scotia prey heavily upon Gaspereau, and to a lesser extent Smelt, during their spawning runs in the early summer. While these fish are spawning, Ospreys will fly considerable distances to reach the spawning rivers and lakes. The time spent travelling to and from the spawning grounds is compensated for by the short time needed to capture spawning fish, and the high caloric content of those fish. Spawning Gaspereau can occur in such high densities that Ospreys can sometimes capture two fish in a single dive--one in each foot! Later in the summer Ospreys switch to other fish such as Pollock and Winter Flounder.

Ospreys return to Nova Scotia from their wintering grounds in South America and the Caribbean by mid-April. They usually mate for life, and return to the same nesting area year after year. The courtship display performed upon return to the breeding grounds is an exciting aerial display. The male flies high over the bulky stick-nest with a fish in his talons, emitting high-pitched slurred whistles. He then performs a series of spectacular dives over the female on the nest. Eventually he flies down to the nest and presents the fish to the female. These displays culminate with mating on the nest.

There are chores to attend to before the Ospreys lay the eggs. The nest, which has usually taken a beating during winter storms, is in need of renovating. Branches, sticks and seaweed are brought in to refurbish the nest. A patriotic pair of Ospreys near Ostrea Lake lined their nest with a Canadian flag. A more practical pair I know of lined the nest with diapers.

In early May, the female lays up to four buffy brown eggs covered with cinnamon splotches. Unlike chickens and ducks, which do not start incubating their eggs until all are laid, raptors begin incubating as soon as the first egg is laid. As a result, the first egg has a head start over the second egg, which has a head start over the third egg, and so on. Hence, once the chicks hatch (about 32 days after egg-laying), there is a noticeable difference in size between the oldest and the youngest. This is thought to be an adaptation to unpredictable food resources. In years of plenty all the chicks get enough



*Female Osprey perches
near nest.*

*In late April, nesting
material is brought in
to refurbish the old
nest.*





A 25-day old Osprey chick calls to its parents.

fish to survive. During lean years, however, the oldest and strongest chick gets most of the food, and the others will probably starve. This may seem cruel, but it is nature's way of ensuring that at least one strong and healthy chick has a good chance of fledging, even in difficult years.

Osprey chicks grow quickly on a steady diet of fish. At birth, the chicks are covered with a fine grey down. Feathers begin pushing through the down when the young are about 28 days old. By 40 days of age, the Osprey chicks are fully feathered and closely resemble their parents, except for buffy feather edges and generally less worn plumage. At this stage, the chicks spend much time flapping and developing their flight muscles. By early August, the young make their first flights, although they often return to the nest.

The first task facing the young Ospreys is to learn the difficult skill of fishing. Those that don't, quickly perish. Fishing is learned by watching adults dive for fish, and by many trial and error dives. It is estimated that only about 60% of Ospreys that fledge survive the first year of life on their own.

With the onset of fall, Ospreys make their way south to their wintering grounds. The young birds tend to remain south for two years honing their fishing skills. Breeding starts between the ages of three and five years. Males tend to return very close to the area where they were born. Females, however, usually breed further from their area of birth. Ospreys are quite long lived: a ten-year old Osprey is not unusual, and a bird of twenty-five years has been recorded.



At dawn, a male Osprey brings a pollock to the female on the nest. Males usually eat the heads off before presenting fish to the females.

POPULATION DECLINE

We have not always been fortunate enough to have Ospreys so common along our coast. Twenty years ago, an Osprey in Nova Scotia was an unusual sight indeed. Ospreys, like many other predatory and fish-eating birds in North America (such as Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Pelicans), experienced drastic population declines in the late 1940's. A common symptom among these birds was that the eggshells became so thin that they broke under the weight of an incubating adult. The cause of this eggshell-thinning was contamination by a group of pesticides known as organochlorines (DDT is the most notorious). In healthy birds, an enzyme called carbonic anhydrase, takes calcium from the blood stream and deposits it on the developing egg, resulting in a normal, sturdy eggshell. In pesticide-contaminated birds, however, the pesticide molecules interfere with this enzyme so that little calcium is deposited on the egg. The result is an easily breakable egg. Many ornithologists in the 1960's feared that Ospreys in North America were on the road to extinction. The severity of the plight facing the Osprey is well illustrated by the decline of the Gardiner's Island Osprey colony. Gardiner's Island, off Long Island, New York, was among the most famous Osprey breeding areas in the

world. In 1945, Gardiner's Island supported over 300 pairs of Ospreys. Over 600 chicks were raised in the course of that summer. A mere 20 years later there were only 55 active nests remaining, and only 4 chicks were fledged from those nests.

Fortunately, we do not have to write an epitaph to the Osprey. When it was realized that DDT was implicated in eggshell thinning, its use was severely restricted in North America. Over the last decade DDT has dissipated from aquatic and estuarine ecosystems. As DDT levels in Ospreys diminished, they once again laid eggs with thicker shells. Reproductive success has improved, and slowly Ospreys are returning to their old haunts in former numbers.

OSPREY STATUS AROUND HALIFAX

Part of my research involved recensusing Ospreys to document their population status; this allows a general assessment of the health of the local population, and also enables future monitoring of population changes to be made. The censuses were conducted by fixed-wing aircraft, ground and boat searches, and with the help of numerous local fishermen, naturalists, and birders. The census results are indeed encouraging; the local Osprey population ranks among the densest in the world. Over 150 nests were found between Lunenburg and Jeddore Harbour. Since some areas received poor census coverage, and some nests are devilishly hard to find, this figure represents only a minimum estimate of the number of nests.

Active nests fledged an average 1.09 chicks per summer. This productivity is well above the minimum productivity required to maintain a stable Osprey population (0.8 young fledged per nest), and is comparable to Osprey productivities prior to the DDT era. In fact, this observed productivity suggests that the local Osprey population is growing at a respectable 5% per year.

Although Ospreys are strictly protected by law, they unfortunately still suffer human prosecution. I know of several nests near Halifax that had adults and/or chicks shot during the last couple of years. Usually, such incidents are not deliberate malicious actions, but rather the "play" of trigger-happy boys. As naturalists, we have the responsibility of educating the public whenever possible. In my experience, I have found that often all it takes to turn an indiscriminant youth with a gun into a rabid Osprey fan is a peek through a telescope. Some of my most devoted summer assistants were local boys who, once bitten by the Osprey bug, could not get enough.

We in Nova Scotia are fortunate that this spectacular bird is such a common denizen of our coasts and lakes. Many Nova Scotians take Ospreys for granted, without realizing that in many other places in the world Ospreys are very scarce. It helps to put this into perspective by considering that there are more Ospreys nesting on McNab's and Lawlor's Islands at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, than there are in the entire British Isles!

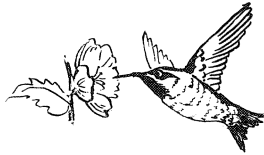


Stop Press

The AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER is no longer hypothetical in Nova Scotia. On April 28, Robert Turner observed one at Matthews Lake (ideal conditions, for half-an-hour at about 100 yards) and managed to secure a colour photo of it in flight. Taken from a considerable distance, it is nevertheless extremely clear and shows the striking black and white pattern and vividly red bill.

LES OISEAUX DE ST. PIERRE ET MIQUELON

Roger Etcheberry has sent us a copy of his new book on the birds of St. Pierre and Miquelon Islands. There is a complete list of the birds, each one annotated with its frequency and history. The book also includes an introduction, some maps and a good bibliography and excellent index. It is in French. Any member who would like to read it should contact the Editor (museum address).



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UPLAND SANDPIPER (Plover) NESTING

In August, 1970, my wife and I found Upland Sandpipers summering near Salisbury, New Brunswick (Moncton Area). The next year this species was confirmed breeding in the area by members of the Moncton Naturalists' Club. Subsequently this species has been confirmed as a breeder on Prince Edward Island. I'd be very interested in the discovery of breeding in Nova Scotia. Candidate areas in my opinion, would be in the Truro area, or maybe in the Valley. Apparently, the ideal habitat, is pasturage, or field that isn't too heavy with forage. I'd be very pleased to hear from anyone on this topic, and if desired, all communication could be treated in confidence. Anyone going to take up the challenge?

Henrik Deichmann,
c/o Terra Nova National Park,
Glovertown, NFLD.
AOG 2LO
[phone: (709) 533-2801 or 533-6799]
or in lieu of the above
Parks Canada Regional Office,
Halifax, N.S.
[phone: (902) 426-3432]

ANOTHER LESSON IN SKEPTICISM

or
 Saga of Wolfville's "Chimney-bird"
 by
 Jim Wolford

Here am I, one of Wolfville's "experienced birders", and I can't even tell a hawk (buteo) from a falcon! How I know this began on Sunday morning, January 23, at 9:15, when Merritt Gibson and Bill Thexton called on me and mumbled something about there being a gyrfalcon on the dykelands and a peregrine next door! (The gyr' turned out to be a beautifully marked light-gray-phase, but non-controversial, and this blurb concerns the other bird.)

Yes, sitting on a chimney perhaps a hundred meters from my door was a medium-sized raptor (Jean Timpa first noticed it and spread the word), and five of us stared at it from close range (but in poor light). The bird looked to me like a merlin (pigeon hawk) in immature or female plumage but was clearly too large. The prevailing opinion as the bird was perched was that, by elimination, it was perhaps a peregrine falcon. (But the face was generally dark and the "mustache" marks not prominent.) Therefore, when it finally did fly, we all noted that the wings were long and decided that yes, indeed, it was a falcon. I followed it around, from chimney to chimney and other exposed perches, watching it fly several more times, and never questioned that early diagnosis (falcon).

During later observations (Jan. 25-28) a few of us worked to eliminate the possibility of a grossly misplaced prairie falcon; but again, its status as a falcon was unquestioned (even though we knew that the head-shape and dark face and long bill and small eye all looked "weird", and the legs were colored yellow, unusual for an immature).

Subsequently I found a reference (by Beebe) that showed the northern race of the peregrine to have narrow mustache marks, and immature peregrines to have variably colored legs (including yellow)--these seemed to corroborate the possibility of our bird being a peregrine.

Next, on January 28, Bob Simmons and Phoebe Barnard reported seeing an immature broad-winged hawk on Main Street (Wolfville), on a chimney. I was "Very Skeptical" about that, especially when I investigated that area and found "our friend", the same "chimney-bird"! By now I had convinced myself that it was a falcon; therefore, Bob and Phoebe (both "experienced" on raptors) either had seen some other bird (unlikely) or had misdiagnosed it! (This time I didn't even stay there long enough to see the bird fly.)

The plot really thickened on February 3, when my pictures of our "mystery-falcon" arrived in the mail. I showed them around the Acadia biology department, and a lively discussion ensued. We all agreed that, when perched, it didn't "look" like a falcon, particularly the head. Then Cyril showed me Peterson's most recent painting of an immature broad-winged hawk, the head of which was a dead ringer for our bird. "Bah, humbug!", I thought, since I was afraid the bird would never be seen again and we'd never know its identity (as was the case in December, 1979, with "Bleakney's warbler"--pine vs. prairie).

Then, thanks to the alert and sharp eyes of Jean Timpa again, presumably the same bird was seen just west of Wolfville, still along Highway 1, on February 4. Bob and Phoebe and Reg Newell checked it out and were satisfied that it was a broad-wing. Then it only remained

The following pictures are all of PRESUMABLY the same bird--all taken in Wolfville or just west of Wolfville, Kings County.

"THE MYSTERY BIRD"



← Photo by Jim Wolford,
Wolfville, Jan. 23, '83.

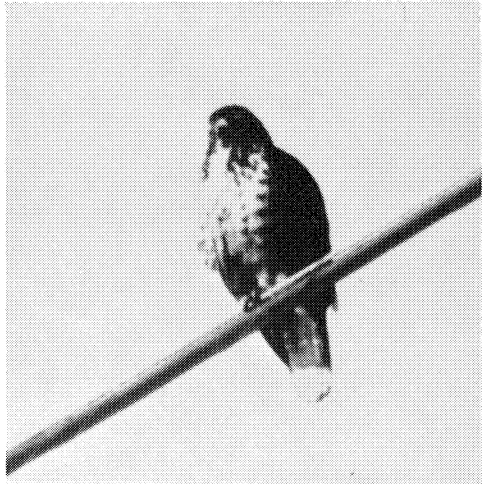


Photo by Sid Horton
Wolfville, N.S. →

← Photo by
Richard Stern, Wolfville

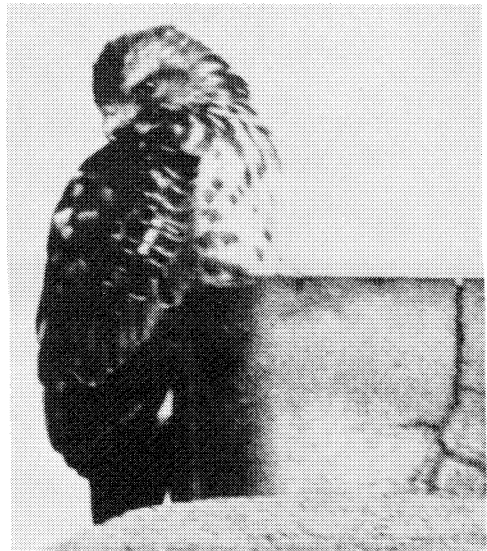


Photo by Donald (Buck) Longley
Wolfville, N.S. →

for me, who was still wondering about "falcon" vs. "buteo", to see it the next day--and yes, when I looked for broadness of the wings, it was immediately obvious that indeed, our bird was a small buteo (in other words, a hawk with the same proportions as a red-tailed hawk but decidedly smaller). Therefore, it MUST be a BROAD-WINGED HAWK.

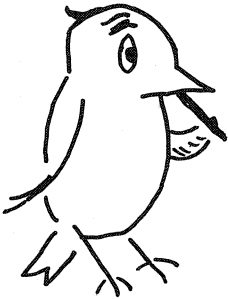
I've written this for several reasons, aside from the entertainment value. Birds of prey are notoriously difficult to identify, even to GROUP, and here is a case in point where we had much more than the usual fleeting glimpse. Also, WHAT WE SEE is very much influenced by WHAT WE ARE SEEKING, so that all of us should program ourselves with an alarm, on the hour, every hour, to ask, "What do I think I know?", or some such foolishness! Seriously, thanks to Jean's alertness, I've been severely embarrassed, and hopefully I'm a better and more "experienced" observer now. Having to "eat crow" occasionally is a sure-fire cure for anyone's complacency or pedantry!

I offer a public apology to Bob and Phoebe for my lack of objectivity. We all have a natural tendency to be more skeptical of others' reports than of our own senses, but perhaps this anecdote should make us wonder. Sight-records have to be treated with some degree of skepticism, but please do not misconstrue this article into a plea for bagging those rarities! (That's really a separate subject that perhaps deserves an article--who out there will write it?)

February 7, 1983

P.S. Tune in next week for what our broad-wing is thought to be then!

P.P.S. The recipe for "being objective" in thought is really not at all mysterious. Just keep repeating, at frequent intervals, "OK, but what if I'm wrong"..."



QUIZ

All answers are the names of birds.

1. Hobo who tells tales?
2. Pavarotti with jaundice?
3. Musical Scot on the beach with measles?
4. Baseball player from British Columbia?
5. Princess Margaret's old ring?
6. Fainting Queen?
7. Cyrano when depressed?
8. Invoice from Gillette?

Answers on Page 62

THE HALIFAX BIRD FEEDER SURVEY 1982-83

Leslie A. Rutherford

Editor's Note: Although this was mainly a Halifax area project, we are publishing the results in the hope that it will create interest for a province-wide survey in 1983-84.

The Halifax Bird Feeder Survey (HBFS) is a project to document population size changes in our common winter birds. There were 47 participants in the first season of the HBFS. Most of the participants were from the Halifax-Dartmouth area, but some feeders were monitored in the St. Margaret's Bay area, Waverley and Enfield.

The winter of 1982-83 was unusually mild. The lack of snow throughout most of the winter caused many HBFS participants to comment on the discouragingly low numbers and diversity of birds at their feeders.

Methods

The British Trust for Ornithology's "Garden Bird Feeding Survey" and the "Ontario Bird Feeder Survey" were used as models to determine the methods for the HBFS.

HBFS participants recorded the highest number of birds of each species at their feeder during a two day period. Only birds attracted to artificially provided food or water were counted. HBFS counts in 1982-83, were taken on two consecutive days in the periods Nov. 13-19, Nov. 27 - Dec. 3, Dec. 11 - 17, Dec. 25 - 31, Jan. 8 - 14, Jan. 8 - 14, Jan. 22 - 28, Feb. 5 - 11, Feb. 19 - 25, Mar. 5 - 11 and Mar. 19 - 25.

Two indices of bird abundance were calculated from the data recorded by HBFS participants. The first index is the percentage of feeders visited at least once by a species. This index shows which species are most common at feeders, although they may appear in low numbers. The second index is the average number of birds per feeder for the whole season. This index shows which species are most abundant in actual numbers, although most of the birds may concentrate at relatively few feeders. Both indices are calculated in order to detect population changes because widespread alteration in numbers of species might affect only one of the two measures.

Results

Table 1 shows the percentage of feeders visited at least once by a species for the most frequent 15 species in the HBFS. Blue Jays visited all feeders in the Survey and thus top the list. Evening Grosbeaks, Starlings and Black-capped Chickadees occurred at over 90% of the feeders in the HBFS.

Table 2 shows the most abundant 15 species according to the average number of birds per feeder. The most abundant species this season was the Evening Grosbeak, with 24.2 birds per feeder throughout the winter. Starlings and House Sparrows ranked second and third respectively, with 14.3 and 11.2 birds per feeder.

Figure 1 shows the seasonal distribution of birds at feeders for the following species: Evening Grosbeak (EGROSB), Blue Jay (BJAY), Starling (STARL), House Sparrow (HSPARW) and Black-capped Chickadee (BCCHICK).

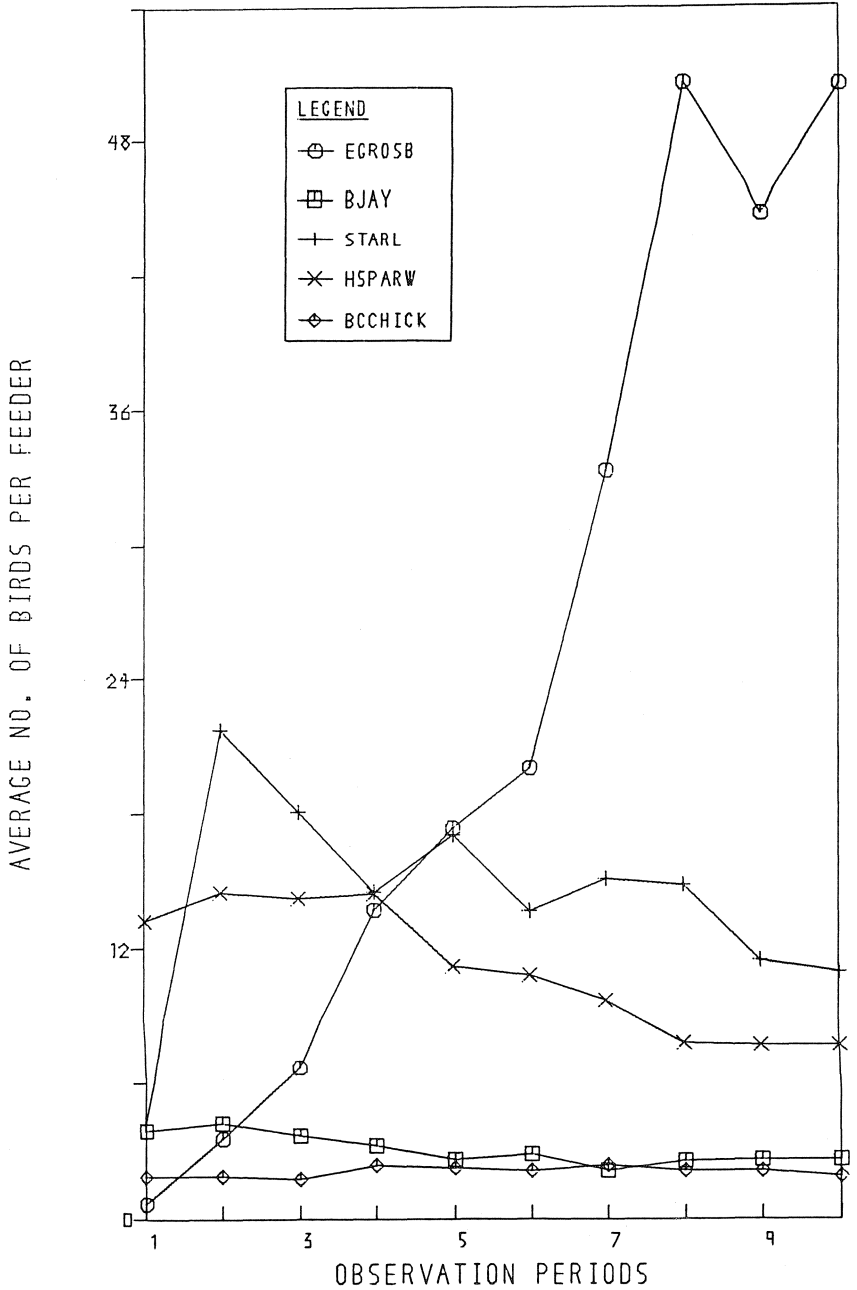
TABLE 1 - PERCENTAGE OF FEEDERS VISITED AT
LEAST ONCE BY A SPECIES

| <u>RANK</u> | <u>SPECIES</u> | <u>% FEEDERS VISITED</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Blue Jay | 100.0 |
| 2 | Evening Grosbeak | 93.2 |
| 3 | Starling | 93.2 |
| 4 | Black-capped Chickadee | 90.9 |
| 5 | Brown-headed Cowbird | 86.4 |
| 6 | House Sparrow | 81.8 |
| 7 | Northern Junco | 65.9 |
| 8 | American Goldfinch | 56.8 |
| 9 | Downy Woodpecker | 52.3 |
| 10 | Purple Finch | 50.0 |
| 11 | Hairy Woodpecker | 31.8 |
| 12 | Common Crow | 29.5 |
| 13 | Common Grackle | 25.0 |
| 14 | Song Sparrow | 22.7 |
| 15 | Rock Dove | 18.2 |

TABLE 2 - AVERAGE NUMBER OF BIRDS PER FEEDER

| <u>RANK</u> | <u>SPECIES</u> | <u>NO. BIRDS PER FEEDER</u> |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Evening Grosbeak | 24.2 |
| 2 | Starling | 14.3 |
| 3 | House Sparrow | 11.2 |
| 4 | Brown-headed Cowbird | 5.5 |
| 5 | Rock Dove | 3.4 |
| 6 | Blue Jay | 3.1 |
| 7 | Northern Junco | 2.5 |
| 8 | American Goldfinch | 1.7 |
| 9 | Purple Finch | 1.1 |
| 10 | Common Crow | 0.6 |
| 11 | Common Grackle | 0.6 |
| 12 | Mourning Dove | 0.4 |
| 13 | Downy Woodpecker | 0.4 |
| 14 | pine Siskin | 0.2 |
| 15 | Hairy Woodpecker | 0.2 |

FIGURE 1
SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BIRDS AT FEEDERS



Evening Grosbeaks increased steadily over the winter, from fewer than 1 bird per feeder from Nov. 13 - 19, to more than 50 birds per feeder from Mar. 19 - 25. Their numbers at feeders rapidly increased in observation periods 7 and 8 (mid-February) probably due to relatively deep snowfalls that occurred during this time.

Blue Jay numbers at feeders were quite constant over the winter at about 3 birds per feeder per observation period. Black-capped Chickadee numbers were also constant over the winter. Both species did not appear to be affected by weather during the winter to the same extent as many others.

Starling numbers peaked at 22 birds per feeder early in the season (Nov. 27 - Dec. 3). From that time on they decreased steadily to 11 birds per feeder from March 19 - 25.

House Sparrow numbers fluctuated from observation period to observation period. They ended up at about 8 birds per feeder from Mar. 19 - 25, slightly down from 13 birds per feeder from Nov. 13 - 19.

Since this was the first year for the HBFS, discussion about changes in feeder populations from one winter to another is not possible at this time. With the continuance of the HBFS, a discussion of population changes from year to year can be made in the future.

HBFS data, together with the results of the Christmas Bird Counts, will help us determine whether numbers of birds at feeders reflect their numbers in the wild.

From the comments of participants and the data we compiled this year, it seems that 1982-83, was the year of the Evening Grosbeak. They occurred in large numbers at most feeders, undoubtedly rapidly deleting seed stocks and causing many 'treks to restock the feeder.' Overall, the unusually mild winter and lack of snowfall probably decreased the numbers and diversity of birds at Halifax area feeders.

A total of 36 species were recorded during the HBFS in 1982-83. These were; Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Common Raven, Common Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Starling, Pine Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, House Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Oriole, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Northern Junco, Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, and Snow Bunting. In addition 3 species of raptors were recorded; Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Great Horned Owl. Four species of mammals were seen eating food put out for the birds.

Feeder Survey Comments

Many HBFS participants submitted very interesting and sometimes entertaining comments with their record sheets. Here are just a few.

"As well as stocking the feeders, we deliberately leave weeds at the back of the yard and do not remove the flower heads from our garden--lupin and bachelor button seeds seem to be very attractive."

"A pair of crows actually get chunks of suet off the hanging bag. The balance very precariously on the tree limbs with much falling off and flapping about--but do have some success."

"For the first time ever, Crows are at the suet sticks and appear to be eating seeds from the ground. They always have been

around, but never have been to the feeder before/"

"Hairy Woodpeckers seem to have discovered the threaded peanuts and are very excited chipping away at them and letting out pip pip pips almost at the same time. I opened up the ends of several nuts to let them see what was inside, before they got the idea."

"Neighbours dog ate a large home made suet ball in netting. No ill effects."

"Very much an Evening Grosbeak year--numbers consistently high from January to March."

"This was an unusual year for feeder birds. The year was uneventful, probably due to the lack of snow cover."

"The weather on our count days was unusually warm and this always seems to alter the feeding behaviour of the birds. They arrive later and in smaller numbers. Conversely, in cold and stormy weather, feeding is almost frantic at times--birds can be induced to take food from your hand in a matter of 10 minutes or so."

"I have never done this before, but I really enjoyed it (the feeder survey). It makes having a feeder more interesting and made me more aware of the birds."

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all those who participated in the HBFS. It's your copious record taking that makes this all possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Erica Dunn, Long Point Bird Observatory, Port Rowan, Ontario, and Mr. and Mrs. Willson, of the British Trust for Ornithology, for the information they provided to set up the HBFS. Thanks to Dr. Bill Freedman, Biology Department and Institute for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University, for reviewing this report.

PLANNING A TRIP?

We have a list of the bird clubs and societies in every Canadian province and territory, every State in the United States, the Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Trinidad and Tobago.

If you plan a trip to any of these areas, let us know and we'll send you the Club's name, address, contact persons, best birding areas and any other information we have.

Just call Bob Dickie at 443-0993 (h) or 426-6667 (w) or write to:

Robert B. Dickie,
43 Deepwood Crescent,
Halifax, Nova Scotia,
B3M 2Y5

DUCKS UNLIMITED WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD PROGRAM

...WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, MAY 5, 1983. Ducks Unlimited Canada announced today that the private, non-profit waterfowl conservation organization is sponsoring a national Wildlife Photography Award Program to increase the public's awareness of the importance of wetland habitat conservation by promoting Canadian wildlife photography.

Canadian amateur and professional photographers are invited to submit, on or before November 30, 1983, high-quality color transparencies under three categories: Waterfowl Species --photos in which waterfowl are the major element; Marshland Wildlife --depictions of the many other species that depend on marshlands; and Marshland Values -- photos that illustrate the roles marshlands play in maintaining the quality of our environment by providing recreational, social and economic benefits to communities and individuals who live around them.

Judges will select one photograph in each category for recognition as the Ducks Unlimited Canada Wildlife Photography Award Winner. Additional entries may also be selected for honorable mention. Distinctive certificates will be awarded to all selected entrants.

Photographs recognized as Wildlife Photography Award Winners will be reproduced as limited-edition prints numbered and identified with DU Canada's Corporate Seal. Six prints will be given to the winners and the balance, suitably framed and identified with the photographer's name, may be offered at future DU Canada Contributor Events to raise additional funds for DU habitat development programs.

Prints from slides receiving honorable mentions will be identified with the photographer's name and incorporated into display to be circulated across Canada. Selected photos may also be used in DU Canada publications and for associated DU Canada promotional purposes.

Because of DU Canada's non-profit nature, special certificates of achievement and prints are the only tangible prizes offered. However, photographers whose work is chosen will enjoy exposure to thousands of Ducks Unlimited Canada contributors and individuals who appreciate and support wildlife photography as a distinctive art form.

For award program rules and entry forms, photographers can write to DU Canada Wildlife Photography Awards, 1190 Waverley Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2E2, or visit their nearest Ducks Unlimited Canada Office.

?? ?

ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 56

1. Wandering Tattler
2. Yellow Warbler
3. Spotted Sandpiper
4. Western Flycatcher
5. Townsend's Solitaire
6. Royal Tern
7. Blue Grosbeak
8. Razorbill

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY,
c/o Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6

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