

# *Nova Scotia Birds*

*July 1987*



NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS  
a publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society

---

Volume 29 Number 3

July 1987

---

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief	Shirley Cohrs
Records Editor	Bob Dickie
Photographic Editor	Ian McLaren
Christmas Counts	Mary and Ross Anderson
Seasonal Bird Reports	R.G.B. Brown J. Shirley Cohrs David Currie Ian McLaren Peter Payzant Francis Spalding
Cover: <i>Azor Vienneau</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Spring Bird Reports	4
Birding in Pictou County by Margaret Kenney	24
The Birds of the Bay of Pigs by George Perry	28
Seal Island-a Birder's Guide by Eric Mills	30
Field Trip Reports	35
Upcoming Field Trips	39
Profiles	41
So you want to buy a telescope-John Cohrs	43
Feeding winter birds...in July-Shirley Cohrs	48
Letters to the Editor	54

Use of photographs from NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS  
requires written permission from the photographer.

Cost of the publication of this periodical is partially born by  
the Nova Scotia Museum.

ISSN 0383-9567  
Second Class Mail  
Reg. No. 4628

## SPRING 1987

This winter was one of very big storms that dumped huge amounts of snow on the Maritime Provinces during February and March. Freezing rain accompanied those storms in March causing dreadful driving conditions and massive power outages.

Who will ever forget that ice? Certainly not the residents of the Halifax metro area who watched one of the world's great "ice free" ports come to a stand still because of the drift ice and certainly not the residents of Musquodoboit who stood on Martinique, the province's longest sand beach, and gazed in disbelief at ice that stretched to the horizon.

What does this do to birds? certainly not much to Warblers basking in the sun in Ecuador or Robins in Florida, but what about the Common Loons that winter just off our coast? Can they survive when their feeding grounds are buried under miles of ice? Recently the Max Planck Institute for Behavioral Psychology completed a ten year study of migratory song birds in Europe and found that seventy percent of the thirty seven species studied were showing significant reduction in numbers. It is thought that this is due to loss of nesting habitat in Europe and loss of forests to agriculture in the wintering grounds in Africa.

Could this happen here? Some birders have commented that it is already happening though, to my knowledge, there is no hard evidence to support this contention. We do, however get some scary reports of massive de-forestation in South America which could have far reaching effects on some of our migratory species.

But, for now, the Spring and the migrants have returned and all those bad things are behind us,

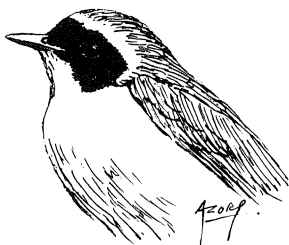
Again we are indebted to Keith Keddy for the weather reports and to each of the following birders for sending in the bird reports.

Charlie Allen(CRKA), Ann Almon(AA), Mike Almon(MA), Bruce Beaton(BB), Dana Bushell(DSB), Stephen Bushell(SSB), Evelyn Coates(EC), John Cohrs(JLC), Shirley Cohrs(JSC), G. Crowell(GC), Robbie Denton(RD), Coral D'Entremont(CD), Delisle D'Entremont(DJD), Raymond D'Entremont(RSD), Jerome D'Eon(JKD), Ted D'Eon(TCD), Bob Dickie(RBD), Helen Dickie(HD), Phyllis Dobson(PRD), Margaret Ellis(MEE), M. Ferguson(MF), Sylvia Fullerton(SJF), J. Gates(JG), Helen Hall(HJH), Hubert Hall(HEH), Carl Haycock(CH), Sharon Hawboldt(SCH), June Jarvis(JNJ), Sam Jarvis(SFJ), John Kearney(JK), Fulton Lavender(FLL), Doug Linzey(DL), Mac Lovett(ML), Viola Lovett(VL), Philip MacDonald(PM), Ian MacLaren(IAM), Bridget McKeogh(BHM), Sara MacLean(SM), Peter MacLeod(PM), Carol MacNeill(CM), Don MacNeill(DAM), Roslyn MacPhee(RM), Ronald McCormick(RMc), Bob McDonald(RSM), J. McNicol(JM), Eric Mills(ELM), Claude Mitchell(CCM), Iris Mitchell(IMM), Jean Morse(JMo), William Morse(WM), Sandra Myers(SMy), Chris Naugler(CTN), Linda Payzant, Peter Payzant(L&PP), Nancy Peters(NWP), Warren Peters(WJP), Arthur Porter(AP), Mary Pratt(MP), Lloyd Prosser(LP), Don Purchase(DP), Joyce Purchase(JP), Pam Rhyno(PR), Barb Ruff(BR), Eric Ruff(ER), Les Rutherford(LR), Beverly Sarty(BS), F. Shepherd(FS), Nellie Snyder(NS), Francis Spalding(FS), A. Spencer(AS), Richard Stern(RBS), Clarence Stevens(CSII), Derek Tay(DT), Karl Tay(KT), Wendy Tay(WT), Jim Taylor(JWT), Bill Thexton(BT), Brenda Thexton(BrT), Jean Timpa(JT), Miriam Toms(MT), Gerry Trueman(GWT), J.C. Tufts(JCT), Azor Veinneau(AJV), Sylvia Wamback(SW), Lou Wentzel(LW), Jim Wolford(JW), David Young(DY), Joan Young(JY).

## PLACE NAMES

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:

Guysborough Co. (Guys. Co.)	Hazel Hill
Halifax Co. (Hfx. Co.)	Harrietsfield, Cranberry Lake, Hammond's Plains, Drain Lake, Russel Lake, Hartlen's Point, Lewis Lake, Sullivan's Pond, Three Fathom Harbour, Martinique Beach, Conrad's Beach, Lawrencetown, Cole Harbour, Waverley, French Village
Lunenburg Co. (Lun. Co.)	Cherry Hill, Broad Cove, Petite Riviere, Crousetown, Green Bay
Queen's Co.	Port Joli
Shelburne Co. (Shel. Co.)	Matthew's Lake, Little Harbour, Cadden Bay, Cape Sable Island, The Hawk, Seal Island, Bon Portage Island
Yarmouth Co. (Yar. Co.)	Arcadia, Chegoggin, Sand Beach, Pinkney's Point, Tusket, Overton, Pleasant Valley, Pleasant Lake, Sunday Point, Eel Brook, Cape Forchu, Raynardton, Melbourne, Carleton
Digby Co.	Brier Island
Annapolis Co. (Anna. Co.)	Eleven Mile Lake, Annapolis Royal, Upper Granville, Paradise
Kings Co.	Grand Pré, Starr's Point, Canard Poultry Pond, Black River Lake, Wolfville
Hants Co.	Shubenacadie
Colchester Co. (Col. Co.)	Economy, Truro, Brookfield
Cumberland Co. Cumb. Co.)	Port Howe, Lusby Marsh, APBS (Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary), Linden
CBC	Christmas Bird Count



DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REPORTS

FOR

THE JANUARY ISSUE

NOVEMBER 25, 1987

Bird reports to the Records Editor--

Mr. Bob Dickie,  
43 Deepwood Crescent,  
Halifax, N.S. B3M 2Y5



Articles, sketches and letters to the Editor--

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

Photographs to--

Dr. I.A. McLaren,  
1755 Cambridge Street,  
Halifax, N.S. B3H 4A8

Members are urged to mail contributions DIRECTLY to the appropriate editor at their HOME ADDRESS - above. Much time is saved that way!

## BIRD REPORTS

LOONS & GREBES

Our only report of RED-THROATED LOON is of at least 4 birds near Boot Island (Kings Co.), where they were seen by RSM and others on an NSBS field trip, April 26.

COMMON LOONS were reported from many locations. Concentrations were noted from Lawrencetown to Halifax and at French Village on March 22, for a total of about 140 birds. They began coming inland with the thawing of lakes around April 2 (PRD,CRKA) and a pair on Carleton Lake, with downy young by May 23 (NSBS field trip).

As is typical of recent years, PIED-BILLED GREBES were lightly reported, with one at Whynacht's Cove, April 5-12 (AJV); another was at Salt Pond - Overton, on April 10 (HJH,HEH), and finally one at Port Howe, May 2 (JWT).

HORNED GREBES declined yet again compared to the previous year - is it just a scarcity of observers, or is something significant going on? The only concentrations were 10 at Hirtles Beach, Lun. Co., Feb. 26 (CTN), and 20 on March 22, French Village (AJV). There were two other reports of three birds.

RED-NECKED GREBES have also apparently declined, with only 7 reports of a total of 70 birds. NWP & WJP comment that they were "unusually scarce" around Canso this winter and spring. Concentrations were 32 in the Northwest Arm, Hfx., March 22 (IAM), 18 in Bedford Basin, April 4 (AM), 16, April 25 at Hartlen's Point (DAM,CDM) and 12 at Pinkney's Point, May 4 (CRKA, PRD). Compare these miserable figures to the hundreds reported in 1984 and 1985.

--LPMP, ed.

FULMARS TO CORMORANTS

Slim pickings for tubenoses, I'm afraid. On March 6, Raymond S. d'Entremont saw 300 NORTHERN FULMARS on George's Bank: "this is the largest number I've ever seen". It's certainly unusual to see so many so far south; on this side of the Atlantic. Fulmars are basically birds of the Labrador Current. He saw a very early SOOTY SHEARWATER on George's on March 29, and 2 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS on May 9. He says of the Wilson's: "I must have missed the early ones as I usually see them in April". Finally, he saw a single LEACH'S STORM-PETREL between Brown's Bank and Seal Island, May 12. Fulton Lavender notes that there were thousands of Leach's on May 16, in their colony on Bon Portage Island.

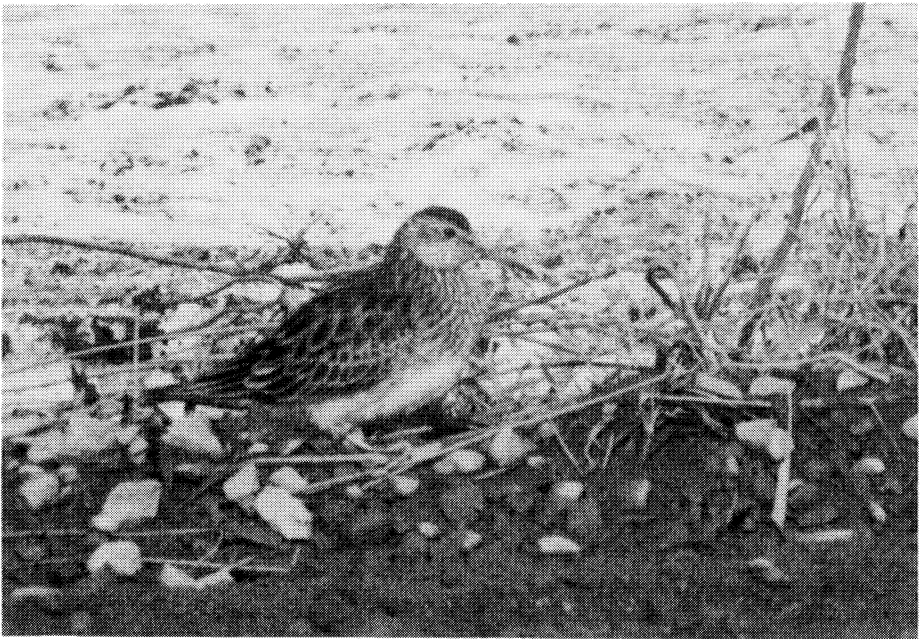
By contrast, the spring migration of NORTHERN GANNETS was well reported. Eric Ruff counted 63+ in 45 minutes on March 30, heading south past Cranberry Head, Yar. Co. Hubert Hall, next day, saw several off Cape Forchu Lighthouse, Yar. Co., also heading south. There were 12 off Chebucto Head, Apr. 14 (FLL,AJV), and 4 off Hartlen's Point on April 16 (JWT). David and Joan Young counted 40+, mostly adults, feeding in Little Harbour on April 28. They had been brought inshore by a strong easterly. The Ruffs saw several groups of 4-10, including a few immatures, off Brier Island on May 10, and there were at least 100 there, mainly immatures, on May 17 (ELM). On that date, Ian McLaren notes that a few Gannets were still going past Cape Sable light.

GREAT CORMORANTS over-winter with us, and there are scattered sightings throughout the period covered by this report. The two

birds that Shirley Cohrs saw at Green Bay on March 18, and the Thextons' couple at Harbourville on March 30, already had the white breeding patches on their flanks. Sara McLean reports single birds off North Sydney on March 28 and April 25. There was a single bird off Pubnico on March 29, and a couple on April 20 (DJD,RSD).

The first DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT report is of a single bird off Pubnico Point on March 12 (RSD). However, most migrants did not arrive until the second week in April. There were 2 birds on Eel Lake, Yar. Co., Apr. 3, and the birds were abundant on the Tusket estuary from mid-April onwards (PRD,CRKA). They were also common from the middle of April on, along the coast of Halifax County (SCM).

--RBBB, ed.



Don MacNeil's unbelievably early Pectoral Sandpiper is hereby rendered believable by his closeup.

## HERONS AND ALLIES

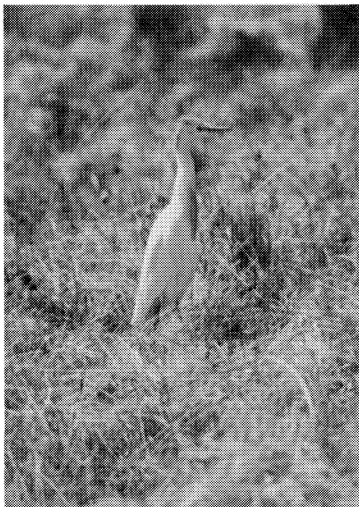
There are only 5 reports of AM. BITTERNS to date, the first almost exactly on average schedule, Apr. 19, at Kingston (FLL et al.). One of a presumed pair was strutting around displaying near Upper Stewiacke on May 9 (DAM).

Apart from an early bird at L.W. Pubnico, Mar. 8-19 (JD), the GREAT BLUE HERON vanguard seems to have been in late March--with individuals near Tusket and at Conrad's Beach ( 2 birds) on Mar. 28, Economy on Mar. 31, and Homeville, C.B. Co., in "late March". Although they were at their colonies in April, it is clear that some continue to arrive through spring. For example, PRD and CRKA counted 20 around Tusket on May 6, where "only singles were seen up to today", and 3 stopped briefly on Seal Island on May 29 (IAM).

A GREAT EGRET at Port Mouton for the Society's field trip on Apr. 11 was there until at least the 17th (D&JY). There were several SNOWY EGRETS: 1 at Sand Beach Marsh, Apr. 13-15 (sev. obs.), 2 at Lawrencetown Lake on May 17 (RBD), and 3 on Bon Portage Island (where they may yet breed) on May 16-17. An adult LITTLE BLUE HERON inland at Overton on Apr. 9 (H&HH) may not have been the same one seen at Sand Beach Apr. 20 - 22 (several observers). Another adult was on Seal Island, May 25 - 27 (IAM) and an immature at Lusby Marsh on May 18, was meticulously reported by Don Codling. A TRI-COLORED HERON at South Ohio, Yarmouth County, on April 9, said by locals to have been there for some time, was subsequently seen by many Yar. Co. observers. The same or another bird turned up with the Snowy Egret at Sand Beach on Apr. 13 (E&BR). An adult CATTLE EGRET on Brier Island from May 8, until at least the 18th, was reported by several observers and nicely photographed by RBS. Another was at L.W. Pubnico on May 18 (RSD et al.).

Our only GREEN-BACKED HERONS were 2 on Seal Is., May 25-31 (IAM); they seemed indifferent to one another's company. The first reported BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was on Cape Sable Island on May 3 (ELM,IAM), and there were ca. 10 on their breeding grounds on Bon Portage Is., May 16-17. One on Seal Is. in late May did not appear to have a companion. Oddly, there were no other reports.

--IAM, ed.



The Brier Island Cattle Egret,  
Photo--Richard Stern



## GEESE AND DUCKS

A single SNOW GOOSE, thought to be the "greater" subspecies Chen caerulescens atlantica, was seen on April 4 at John Lusby Marsh by FLL and MA. The inference is reasonable since this subspecies "nests in the high Arctic and winters largely in the middle Atlantic states", whereas the smaller nominate subspecies nests "in the southern and western Canadian Arctic" and migrates "through the continent's interior" (Birds of Nova Scotia).

BRANT seem to be somewhat down from a peak of recent years: a group of 35 seen on Brier Island on February 22 (JK), may have been overwintering. Migrants began to arrive in late March with 116 at Little Harbour (DY, JY). There were about 90 off Starr's Pt., Apr. 15 (JCT), 300 in early May at Brier Is. (BS), and 100+ in the marsh grass at Grand Pré, May 23 (RGT,BET).

There were 1000 CANADA GEESE at Melbourne, Mar. 1 (JK), and they were estimated at 2000-3000 at Cole Harbour in late March (D&JP,FLL,DM). The usual other large flocks were not reported, but there were hundreds at Pubnico Harbour, Eel Brook, Lower Canard, and John Lusby Marsh. ELM and AHM report a pair in a large marsh at Tiddville on Digby Neck on May 16, which is well within the range of breeding dates for this species in Nova Scotia. Finally, Zoe Lucas reports 6 on Sable Island on March 10.

A male WOOD DUCK was in Bedford Basin on March 27 (BS). RBD reports a pair at Drain Lake, May 3--"This species nested here last year and I suspect they will do so again this year". Singles were reported from APBS on May 3 (JWT and Brier Island, May 8 (RBS).

Our only "Eurasian" GREEN-WINGED TEAL was reported from Matthew's Lake on April 9 by DY. "Our" subspecies was reported in singles or doubles, from several locations, and there were 30+ near Wellington Dyke, March 30 (AJV,FLL,CSII).

A spectacular 5000+ BLACK DUCKS were at Martinique and Conrad's Beach on March 19 (FLL,PD), and there were about 300 at Eel Brook on March 14 (PRD,CRKA,JKD). No other large concentrations were reported but they were abundant nonetheless: "...a pair in almost every puddle in Dartmouth, Cole Harbour and Lawrencetown" (SMY); "...it's been some years since I've seen more mated pairs...Every pothole has its pair" (RSD).

There were 6 reports of MALLARDS, mostly in pairs, as early as March 18. JSC reports 35 individuals on that date at Petite Riviere Estuary, including a female apparently paired with a male Black Duck. A pair was nesting in Nellie Snyder's pond on May 24, and Ruth McDougall reports nesting Mallards on the LaHave River last year.

NORTHERN PINTAILS were still down from 1983-84: only about 90 birds in 8 reports, with the bulk of these being 60+ at Amherst on April 4 (FLL,MA).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL apparently returned a little late this year, with the first reported on April 23 at Sand Beach (AP,H&HH,LP). The 6 birds reported on that date had dwindled to 2 males by May 18 (PRD,CRKA). There were only 2 other reports: "several pairs" at Linden, May 2 (JWT) and one pair at Three Fathom Harbour on May 17 (RBD).

Five reports of 9 birds account for all of the NORTHERN SHOVELERS. The earliest was a male at John Lusby Marsh on April 5

(FLL,MA). Other reports were all from the Lusby--APBS area except for a pair at Canard Pond, King Co. on May 4 (JCT).

GADWALLS were almost non-existent. The Cohrs had 1 male on March 29 at Sullivan's Pond, and Jim Taylor reports 2 at Linden, Cumberland Co. "with 32 Brant, trying to look like they belonged with them" on May 2.

AMERICAN WIGEON concentrations were at Lusby Marsh (30+ on April 4-FLL,MA) and Debort (30 on May 1 - JWT,BWT,JCT). The remaining 5 reports were all of single birds or pairs.

RING-NECKED DUCKS were first spotted on March 22, in Waverley (AJV). The only large concentration was reported from Drain Lake in Halifax Co., where there were 50 on April 26 (GWT,JCT), and down to 42 or so on May 4 (Cohrs). RBD remarked that "There must be 15 or more pairs that nest on this lake each year. In general, the reports indicate lesser numbers than in previous years.

No large concentrations of GREATER SCAUP were reported. AJV had over 200 at Pictou on March 8, and there were 180+ at Crescent Beach on March 18 (JSC). A handful of other reports list small numbers. The migration was pretty well over when a single bird was seen at Ketch Harbour on April 14 (FLL,AJV).

COMMON EIDERS were also down again this year, with only one large raft reported: 500 at Harbourville, May 2, in a mixed flock with Surf Scoters (RGT,BET,JWW,MT). JWT reports numerous nests on Bon Portage Island, May 16; TCD had a nest with eggs on Inner Bald Tusket Island, May 25; and IAM observed an adult with one duckling on Seal Island, May 26.

Just one HARLEQUIN DUCK again this spring--a single immature male was at the Herring Cove sewer outfall on Feb. 28, seen by DM,FLL et al.

OLDSQUAWS were widely distributed in small numbers as usual, with reports of 30 or fewer birds from French Village, Cranberry Head, Canso Harbour, Lobster Bay, and Port Howe. Edward Keeble saw 4, mostly in summer plumage, at Heather Beach near Wolfville, May 17.

There are only 3 reports of BLACK SCOTER - JWT had one at APBS on May 3, there were 30 off Cherry Hill Beach on May 18 (L&PP), and Edward Keeble saw 17 at Kingsport on the same day. Could the APBS bird be the same lone individual reported from that site on May 6 last year?

SURF SCOTERS were poorly reported--only one large flock (200 at Harbourville on May 2 - RGT,BET,JWW,MT). There were other reports of 40, 27 and 21 birds.

The Ruffs undoubtedly caught part of the WHITE-WINGED SCOTER migration when they observed a mixed flock of these and Surf Scoters numbering 600-700 birds, about 90% White-winged, May 10 at Gilbert's Dove, Digby Co. RBS estimates 400 at a cove on the Bay of Fundy on March 28. Five other reports accounted for about 50 individuals.

There were 150 COMMON GOLDENEYE on March 18 at Crescent Beach (Cohrs), and 98 at the Pictou Causeway on March 23 (RGT,BET). The Purchases saw about 25 crowded by pack ice into the upper corner of Three Fathom Harbour on April 3.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE was reported from 4 locations. AJV saw 2 males at Pictou on March 8; there were 3 at Pugwash Harbour on March

6 (JWT,BT), 5 at Annapolis Royal on March 15 (RGT,BET & party) and a single male at the Canard pond, May 1 (JCT).

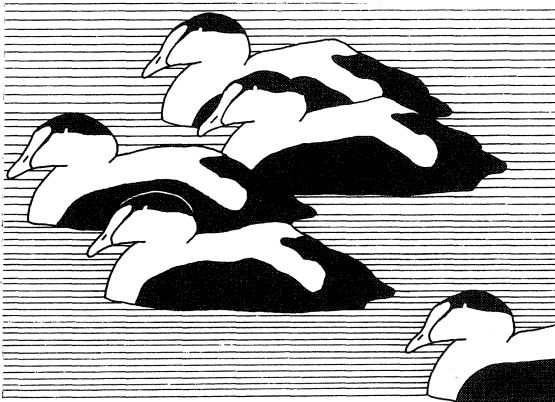
BUFFLEHEADS overwinter here in small numbers, so reports of birds at Eel Brook on March 1 (JKD) and 6 on March 14 (PRD,CRKA) are typical. However, once the migration is under way, we hear of 10+ at Salmon River Bridge on March 23 (NWP,JWP) and 12 at Three Fathom Harbour on April 25 (CDM,DAM). The latest report is of 4 at Gilbert's Cove, Digby Co., May 10 (ER,BR).

There was a male HOODED MERGANSER at Mill Cove, Bedford Basin on March 14 (L&PP), and 5 at West Dalhousie - Bridgetown, March 30 (FLL,CSII). A (presumably) single bird was at Debert on April 3 (JWT,BT).

COMMON MERGANSERS put in their first appearance at Eel Lake, Mar. 29. By April 4, there were 50 present, but only a single pair by April 15, and they had departed by April 20 (PRD,CRKA,JK). AJV observed a very satisfying 300 birds at the causeway at Pictou on March 8, and there were about 20 in the Mira area on March 14 (fide SM).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS were surprisingly scarce this spring, with only 5 reports of about 70 birds. Are they suffering from the "starling syndrome"--too common to be worth reporting? Or, are they really that much reduced from the approximately 1000 of just a few years ago? Only time, and your reports, will tell.

--LPMP, ed.



## DIURNAL RAPTORS

There were individual TURKEY VULTURES at Belleville, Yar. Co., on May 12 (JFK) and on Brier Is., on May 17-18 (sev. obs)--rather a poor showing. OSPREYS were a tad late. The first was at Head of St. Margaret's Bay on Apr. 11 (ELM), and there were reports from nearby locations next day. Other first reports were dated through April, eg., Apr. 25, near Mira, C.B. Co., and Apr. 26, near Canso. Yet, they were also widely observed on nests by mid-month. A BALD EAGLE eating a duck was observed by E & BR from the supermarket parking lot at the head of Bedford Basin on Mar. 15; they don't note if the victim was purchased locally. There were scattered breeding-season reports from around the province, including 3 ad. and 2 imm. in the sanctuary at Antigonish Landing (ELM) and an ad. on a nest at Little Dyke, Col. Co. (LR). A NORTHERN HARRIER seen on Sable Is. in late Feb. and on 8-9 Mar. (Z. Lucas) had presumably wintered locally. One at Paradise on Apr. 1 (J&BM) was probably our first migrant. The next was near Yarmouth on Apr. 12 (E & BR), and several were seen on Apr. 17-20.

We have the usual tag-end winter reports of SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS hanging around feeders, but no indication of possible first migrant arrivals. A late one stopped briefly on Seal Is. on May 26. A "probable" ad. female COOPER'S HAWK on Brier Is., on May 21, was reported by Edward F. Keeble, a visiting birder from England. This is the most identifiable state of this difficult species, but no details were provided. There were only 4 reports of N. GOSHAWKS, including one sitting tight on a nest near Kentville, from May 13 (RBS).

I certainly get the impression that BROAD-WINGED HAWKS are here in force (wrong term for this little buzzard?) this spring. The first was at E. Jordan, Shel. Co., Apr. 27 (DY). Then there are 9 reports of 11 birds seen May 1-5, and several more for later May. The several I saw on trips on highway 103 this spring all looked like yearlings. I wonder if we received a displaced bunch of errant migrants? A dozen birds on Brier Is. on May 18 (FLL et al.) are also noteworthy. RED-TAILED HAWKS were evidently as usual, with no reports that might indicate arrivals of migrants to augment or displace our wintering birds. We can add another 4 reports of wintering ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS, among which were at least 8 at Grand Pré (RBS). One stayed near Hazel Hill until at least May 15 (N&WP) and a late migrant was on Brier Is. on May 21 (E. Keeble).

An AM. KESTREL at Little Hbr. on Feb. 9 (D&JY) can be added to our small numbers that wintered this year. One at Paradise on Mar. 30 (JM) was probably our first migrant, and several more were reported by mid-month. A female on Seal Is. in late May was presumably still en route. One perched bird at Lawrencetown on May 2 was being persistently "dive-bombed" by a Tree Swallow (SMY); kestrels are usually treated with indifference. Our few reports of MERLINS include that of an evidently courting pair near Canso on May 10 (N&WP). Yet, a migrant f. was on Seal Is. on May 29. Our only PEREGRINE FALCON was an ad. at Cherry Hill on May 16 (SJF). A CYRFALCON around Grand Pré on Mar. 7-9, was seen by several observers and rated as "dark" or "grey"; a slide sent by RBS reveals an intermediate, grey-phase immature.

## GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

A covey of 9 GRAY PARTRIDGES at Starr's Pt., Kings Co. on Feb.

28, was larger than those reported in the last issue. There were no spring reports. Records of RING-NECKED PHEASANT are all for the Valley during March, apart from a female at Hartlen Pt. on Apr. 25 (C&DAM). Only one SPRUCE GROUSE was noted, a female at Athol on Apr. 5 (FLL). There were a few reports of RUFFED GROUSE, including several "drumming". JWT thought that drummers were "numerous" in Cumb. Co., this spring.

#### RALLIDS

One AM. COOT got safely through winter at Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth. We got no news of them from the border region. Sylvia Wambach of LaHave was surprised to find an early VIRGINIA RAIL poking around her rosebushes on Mar. 26 (well described to ELM,IAM). Presumably it was an abnormally early migrant rather than having spent this harsh winter nearby. We do get silly Soras in March from time to time, but this abnormal date is the earliest on record for the Virginia Rail. One responded to a tape at Hardwood Lands for the benefit of the N.S.B.S. field trippers on May 24. SORAS were back at Drain Lake by May 18 (RBD), and several were found during the Society's field trip at Hardwood Lands on May 24.

--IAM, ed.

#### SHOREBIRDS

Six early BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER were at Matthew's Lake, April 25 (DHY), but regular May migrants were fewer than normal, with 75 on Cape Sable, May 17, and 50 at Economy (low) on May 24 (FLS) being the only sizeable numbers reported. A rare spring occurrence of the LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER was noted at Broad Cove, April 25 (BH,SJF). Only 2 SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER were reported, Apr. 15, at L.W. Pubnico (JKD'E) and Three Fathom Harbour, May 8 (FLL). There were 2 pairs of PIPING PLOVERS at Cherry Hill as early as April 4 (SJF), but except for 15 at Cadden Bay, April 11 (NSBS field trip), this spring's reports reflect the observers' discouragement: "2 pairs only" at Cherry Hill (SJF), 4 at Sandy Bay, "usually 2-3 nests in this area" (DHY), 1 on Smithville Beach (Baccaro), "we saw two there last year" (H&HH), Clam Hbr. survey on May 18, "none seen" (SM), and of the 2 pairs still at Cherry Hill, May 18, "good luck to them" (L&PP), and the following note attests that someone is carefully recording the species' decline:

Note: On March 10 & 16, 1987, on Ft. Myers Beach in Florida, we saw a Piping Plover wearing six bands (3 on each leg) with one of those bands above the 'knee' joint. (One had to feel sorry for the bird walking around with so much extra adornment!). It was in the company of several other Piping Plovers, also Snowy & Wilson's Plovers--quite a sight.--J.C.T.

On a happier note, the KILLDEER, in evidence from Mar. 28 at L. W. Pubnico (DJd'E) and Paradise (J&WM), was, by the end of the reporting period, breeding successfully: a nest with 4 eggs at Cambridge (AJV), young chicks at Economy (FLS).

Bird of the season was an AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER discovered at Cherry Hill, May 16 (SJF,BH). Many observers had good looks at it through May 20, photographs were taken and the field marks of the race palliatus noted (ELM).

The first GREATER YELLOWLEGS was noted at Sand Beach Pond, April 27 (H&HH), and by May 2 there were 9 at Canard (GW&JCT). Reports of smaller numbers elsewhere suggest a normal migration throughout the

reporting period. The only LESSER YELLOWLEGS were at Conrad's Beach, May 2 (SM) and on Seal, May 4-6 (IAM,ELM). Also on Seal was a rare spring SOLITARY SANDPIPER (IAM). The first WILLET was noted at L. W. Pubnico, Apr. 29 (DJd'E), many more before mid-May. Neither so visible nor so audible, the SPOTTED SANDPIPER was not detected until May 11 at L. W. Pubnico (DJd'E). There are only three other reports; one's impression is that the species here is not doing as well as a few years ago. Two reports of migrant UPLAND SANDPIPERS come from Seal, May 4 (IAM,ELM) and Brier, May 17 (ELM). A lone WHIMBREL was seen in the Valley, near Windsor, May 11 (WM). The only migrant RUDDY TURNSTONE were 4 on Cape Sable, May 17 (IAM). In addition, a wintering individual was seen feeding "on a dead chicken someone had thrown on the ice", at Canso Hbr., Mar. 13 (N&WP).

Three RED KNOT were on Cape Sable, May 17 (IAM). A lone SANDERLING wintered at Crescent Beach: Feb 18, Mar. 19, Mar. 28-Apr. 12 (JSC,SJF,NS).

NOTE: The Semipalmated Sandpipers noted there Feb. 18 in the April issue of NSB should have been listed as SANDERLINGS.

The only possible migrants were 21 at Cadden Bay, Apr. 11 (NSBS field trip). Surprisingly, only 2 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS were noted in the reporting period, at Annapolis Royal, May 16 (ELM) with another 12 at Economy, May 31 (EPS). The first LEAST SANDPIPERS were 2 at Conrad's, May 8 (FLL,LW). Two males in territorial flight were at South Side Beach, Cape Sable, May 17 (IAM) and a flock of 20 was at Port Williams, May 23 (RBS). An errant PECTORAL SANDPIPER was in snowy Upper Stewiacke, March 22!(Photos-DAM). Another was at Cadden Bay, April 11 (NSBS field trip). Flocks of PURPLE SANDPIPER wintered at Pinkney's Point and Brier (JFK), and at Morien (NSBS field trip). There were still 29 at Economy, May 10 (FLS). DUNLIN made a better showing than the other regular migrants, with 21 at Matthew's Lake, Apr. 25 (DWY) and 20 on Cape Sable, May 17 (IAM).

A very early SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER was at Cadden Bay, April 11 (NSBS field trip), and there were 3 on Brier, May 29 (vide FLL). The first COMMON SNIPE was at L. W. Pubnico, Mar. 18 (DJd'E), the second at Bridgetown, Mar. 30 (AJV et al.). Thereafter, it was widely reported with a pair in courtship at South Ohio, Apr. 10 (H&HH, I&LP). An AMERICAN WOODCOCK attempting to overwinter survived until Feb. 12 at Dartmouth (IAM). The first migrant was at M. W. Pubnico, Mar. 11 (LD'E), the second at Yarmouth, Mar. 15 (MC). By Apr. 3 "many" were heard at night at Port Howe (JWT). A hen was on four eggs at Pembroke, May 16 (AJV et al.), another with three fledglings was found near Walton, May 24 (AJV).

This spring's migration had more than its share of rarities, but the commoner migrants were present in low numbers. Except for the Spotted Sandpiper, summer residents appeared in normal numbers and were well reported.

--FLS,ed.

## PHALAROPES TO AUKS

Raymond S. d'Entremont saw 12 RED-NECKED PHALAROPES on May 11, on George's Bank. The next day, sailing from Brown's Bank to Seal Island, he saw many flocks, all flying to the southwest.

He also saw a light-phase adult POMARINE JAEGER on George's Bank on May 7, and a PARASITIC there the next day. However, the first jaeger sighting was a Parasitic off Pubnico Point, Yar. Co., on April 18 (Daryl Amirault, via TCD). Hubert Hall saw a light-phase Parasitic off Cape St. Mary, Digby Co., May 5, and there was a light Pomarine off Brier Island in early May (Edward F. Keeble, via FLL). The only GREAT SKUA sighting was Hubert Hall's record from BLUENOSE, off Cape Forchu, on April 2.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED and HERRING GULLS will receive their usual short shrift from me. The Digby LESSER BLACK-BACK was still there on April 8 (RBS). ICELAND GULLS were still at Point Aconi on April 5 (SM), but the latest reports are of a single bird in Yarmouth Harbour on April 24 (RSD), and a first-year at Hartlen's Point the next day (DAM,CDM). GLAUCOUS GULLS lingered longer. There were single immature birds at Cape Sable Island on May 2 (ELM,AHM) and Shag Harbour on May 17 (FLL,RSM,JWT).

There were 15 RING-BILLED GULLS feeding at Eel Brook on the ebb-tide, on April 2; probably eating nine-spine sticklebacks (CRKA,PRD). Otherwise, all our records come from the Halifax-Dartmouth area: 161 birds at Morash Park on April 11 (JWT), and 70 at Sullivan's Pond on May 27 (FLL). There was an adult LAUGHING GULL out on Seal Island on May 4 (IAM,ELM). Carol d'Entremont (RBD) saw a FRANKLIN'S GULL on May 24, 10 miles south of Seal Island. As for BLACK-HEADED GULLS, there were 9 at Sullivan's Pond on Feb. 25 (CTN); 4 at Point Aconi on April 5, and 2 at Glace Bay on April 15 (SM), and 1 at Eel Lake on April 13 (CRKA,PRD,RSM).

Raymond S. d'Entremont provides our only BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE sighting: an immature bird off Pubnico Point on April 30.

The first terns--unidentified--were seen on May 4: one off Seal Island (Ron Kenny and sons), and several off Lobster Bay, Yar. Co., the same day (Blaise d'Entremont). The first COMMON TERNS were the couple seen off L. W. Pubnico on May 9 (DJD). The terns first arrived at their colony on Peter Island, Digby Co., May 9-10 and, by May 17, there were some 400 birds on or around the island--99% of them ARCTICS (ELM,RBS). Ian McLaren saw three ROSEATES in courtship flight on Cape Sable on May 17, and there was a bird at Brier Island on May 21.(FLL). Ted C. d'Eon saw 10-20 Roseates on Northern Twin Island, Lobster Bay, May 18.

There was a late DOVEKIE, swimming within a few metres of shore, at Cape Forchu on April 17 (JFK), and single RAZORBILLS off Eastern Passage on March 28 (FLL,DAM), and on George's Bank on April 10 (RSD). BLACK GUILLEMOTS were the only other alcids. Between 1-5 birds, in varying plumage, were regularly seen in Canso Harbour up to April 15 (NWP,WJP). There were also 4 birds, in breeding plumage, at Peggy's Cove on March 29 (AJV), and 1 off Brier Island on May 10 (E&BR). They seemed rather scarce around Seal Island on May 4-6 (IAM,ELM).

## DOVES, CUCKOOS

Up to 30 MOURNING DOVES got through winter at L.W. Pubnico (DJJ), and up to 18 at Ross Rd., Dartmouth (D&JP), but most reported them as fewer than usual. They began to move, probably locally, in March, and 1 at Eel Brook on Mar. 1 was said to be the first there since early winter (PRD). They appeared more widely in April, and one at Glace Bay on Apr. 12 (SM) may have been a true migrant.

Eric Mills' BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO on Brier Is., May 18, saves us from drawing a blank on this scarce species.

## OWLS

We have 6 reports of 11 or so GREAT HORNED OWLS for the breeding season, including a nest with 1 young on May 8, near Sheffield Mills (GWT). Seven scattered SNOWY OWLS can be added to the 10 reported in the last issue. One on Sable Is., subsisted on Am. Black Ducks, which were probably disabled by the hard weather (Z. Lucas). A late bird was at Scotsville, Inv. Co., Apr. 10 (fide JWT), but more startling was a bird seen by Rita McKenzie (convincing details to RBD) at the Oakville Golf & Country Club, near Halifax, June 1-3. She was able to approach it quite closely several times, and once observed that it was clutching a snake! We do get summer stragglers of this species from time to time, presumably immatures who prefer easy living after having fled the arctic in numbers. We have 8 reports of BARRED OWL, the first heard calling on Mar. 25. A pair had chosen a new nest box near Mahone Bay on Apr. 19 (NS).

SHORT-EARED OWLS were on Cape Sable Is. on Mar. 10 (JFK) and at Central Argyle on Mar. 14 (JKD). There was a little flurry of N.SAW WHET OWLS on Mar. 9-10, at W. Pubnico, Waverley and Sable Is., all 3 of which turned up dead days or weeks later; "as is their melancholy wont", to quote L&PP. Doubtless the deep snows were troublesome to them.

## GOATSUCKERS, SWIFT, HUMMINGBIRD, KINGFISHER

Single COMMON NIGHTHAWKS were very early at Glace Bay on Apr. 30, and again on May 9 (G. Crowell, fide SM; I assume they were seen as well as heard), at Eleven Mile Lake on May 17, and finally a group was seen on May 28. The usual pair of WHIP-POOR-WILLS was at Burnside, Dartmouth, May 29 (FLL et al.).

An early CHIMNEY SWIFT was on Seal Is. on May 4 (ELM,IAM). They were next reported on May 12-13 from 4 localities, but in no great numbers subsequently.

The first RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS were at Economy on May 13 (FLS) and at Wolfville next day (RGT,BET). There were several more reports by month's end.

A BELTED KINGFISHER at Bayport, Lun. Co., on Feb. 24 (CTN) was the latest report for winter. Individuals at Annapolis Royal on Mar. 28 (SCH) and at Eel Lake on Apr. 4 (PRD,CRKA) were doubtless arrivals. There were very few later reports; does this mean something? A nesting pair was found by RSD and his daughter Jacqueline while atlassing near Belleville on May 17.

## WOODPECKERS

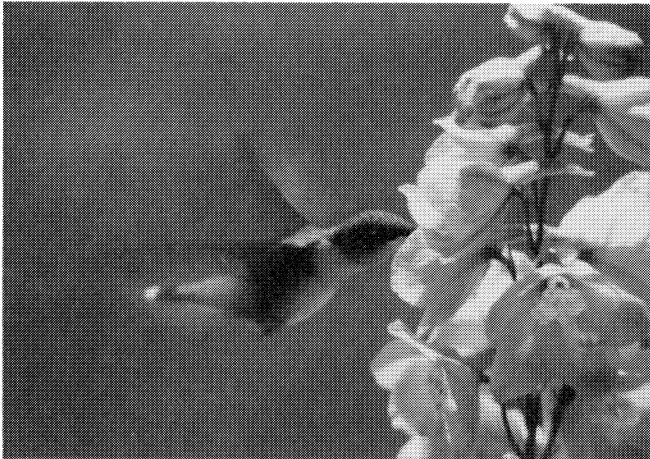
A female RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER at the Hamiltons' feeder in Pubnico on May 9 had evidently been savoured by many observers during the previous week (E&BR).

The first YELLOW BELLIED SAPSUCKERS were individuals on Apr. 26



in Dartmouth (JL & JSC) and at Paradise (J & WM). There were reports of 5 other individuals or pairs in May, and evidently they were common near Port Howe on May 2 (JWT). DOWNY WOODPECKERS were at feeders in fair numbers through winter and Halifax had drumming males all over the place as spring came in. There were as many reports of HAIRY WOODPECKERS; JWT thought them "rather numerous" around Dartmouth, but JCT had only one coming to her feeder in Wolfville, in contrast to the 8 Downies coming to visit RG and BET there. There were 4 reports of 8 BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS, including 4, possibly more, around Sandy Lake, Hfx. Co., on May 9 (SJV,FLL), and a female looking quite settled on Seal Is. in late May. Arrival time of N. FLICKERS is uncertain. One wintered at the Ruff's feeder in Yarmouth, last seen Apr. 9, and another got through in Glace Bay (SM). Perhaps birds at Central Argyle on Mar. 23 (Michael Clark) and at Crousetown on Mar. 27 (NS) had also wintered. Individuals around Wolfville and in Cumb. Co. on Apr. 3-5 are the best candidates as migrants. They were widespread by mid-April, with a dozen or so still on the move via Seal Is. in early May. We had 11 reports of 14 PILEATED WOODPECKERS, somewhat more than usual, although locally in Waverley L & PP thought them definitely on the decline, in contrast to flickers. Derek Tay watched one of these splendid creatures close at hand as it fed on the ground near the Tay cottage on Mooseland Rd., May 18.

--IAM, ed.



Jill Comolli sent this action shot of a female hummer, taken through her kitchen window, at Upper Kingsburg, Rose Bay, in summer '86.

FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

There were even fewer flycatchers reported this year than in 1986--the season being even more retarded this year. Our deadline of the 25th of the month is to facilitate production of the next issue on time, but also to accommodate the American Birds deadline. In the spring season this means that if the migration is behindhand, some birds do not arrive in time to be reported. This is an editorial problem I have not been able to solve up to now, but your ideas are invited. Anyway, the only OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER to come in time was one seen by Azor Vienneau on May 24, in Hants County. EASTERN WOOD PEWEES turned up at Cape Forchu, May 15, and Bon Portage, May 16 (JFK,FLL). Empidonax did better with single YELLOW-BELLIED May 24 and 28 (Cumb. & Hants Cos.), and a very early ALDER at Eel Brook, May 6 (average date of arrival May 20). Another Alder was singing May 24 in Hants Co. (AJV) and after that date the rest began to pile in. The earlier arriving LEASTS (average date, May 14) were more on time with the first at Eleven Mile Lake on May 10. From 16 - 25, four more were heard before the majority arrived later.

Our rapidly declining EASTERN PHOEBE was heard April 4 (early av. date, April 10) at Cape Forchu (JFK). No more were reported except for one on Seal, May 4. (ELM,IAM). The "usual" GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER turned up again at Powder Mill Park (near Waverly) on May 24 (L&PP). Twelve EASTERN KINGBIRDS came back with 5+ in the Canso Area on and after May 2 (JNJ,SKJ). From May 13 to 17, the rest arrived in Digby, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Annapolis, Kings and Queens Counties.

There were still 200 HORNED LARKS at Grand Pré on March 20, and three left, March 28 at Mathew's Lake. These were presumably the alpestris race which are our winter visitors (AJV,FLL,D&JY). From April 4 to May 2, Sylvia Fullerton observed a pale bird of the praticola (our breeding) race at Cherry Hill

SWALLOWS TO CORVIDS

Evelyn Coates sent in reports of PURPLE MARTINS in the Amherst Area. The Amos colony on Elmwood Drive was being well settled with the first martin arriving May 1. A second colony on Victoria Street was also thriving with the early arrival there being May 4. I hope reports on the Amherst colonies will continue to come in. Nothing has been heard of the colony at the Lands and Forests depot at Collingwood or the one at Oxford. Single birds on migration were at Overton, April 13 (ER) and Harrietsfield, May 4 (FLL)

The well reported TREE SWALLOWS were late this year with the early birds arriving April 11 at New Ross Road, Port Joli and Broad Cove (Tufts, EHC,SJF). The first large flocks were noted the next day at Pleasant Valley ("many"-Hales & Prossers) and Pleasant Lake (300+D&RSdE), ones and twos were seen thereafter until April 23, when Joyce and Don Purchase had a flock of 300 in their back yard in Dartmouth. From that date forward they were numerous in all their appropriate habitats. A late migration of 400+ were at Annapolis, May 16.

A single ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW appeared May 21 at Cranberry Lake (AJV). The first BANK SWALLOWS (2) were on Seal, May 4; there were 25 at Annapolis Royal on May 16th and on the 18th PRD & CKRA ran into the only sizable flock reported - 100 at least, at Sunday Point. An early CLIFF SWALLOW was at Drain Lake, May 3 and several were about the Digby ferry terminal May 7 (RBD, HH). A flock of 25+ were at

Annapolis Royal on the 16th. The earliest BARN SWALLOW was at Petite Riviere, April 18-20, hunting along the shore for kelp flies. Singles appeared after that on April 23 and 26, May 2,3, and 4, at Russell Lake, Canard Pond, Eel Brook, Canso and Harrietsfield and then they were "in" everywhere.

#### CORVIDS

Twenty-two GRAY JAYS were seen, from March 8 to May 17 in Yarmouth, Cumberland and Hants Counties and in Cape Breton. When reports come in, as they frequently do, of BLUEJAYS vanishing from feeders in February and March and appearing again at the end of April, one wonders whether they are the same birds. There ARE migratory movements of Bluejays and one lot may go (north?) to be replaced by others (from the south?). One definite movement occurred on May 17, when 11 arrived at Northern Point, Brier Is. (ELM). Sara MacLean, Glace Bay, writes of AMERICAN CROWS courting March 15, carrying twigs March 28 and 30, and nesting April 25. JWT notes crows nesting in Dartmouth, Upper Granville, Brookfield and Hammonds Plains Road, while the Peters and TCEs found a nest with 2 eggs on May 21 on Little Gooseberry Island (Yar. Co.). COMMON RAVENS nest earlier--Ted D'Eon followed a nest from start (Feb. 8) to finish, with 6 eggs (April 10) at L. W. Pubnico. He found another one "our" Outer Bald Island, containing one young on May 25--it was INSIDE an old house. Ravens were carrying food to young in Glace Bay on March 7 & 8 (SM).

#### CHICKADEES TO THRUSHES

There were two reports of evidence of BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE migration, both on May 17. On that date the Lovetts saw 10-12 at Pleasant Lake while Eric Mills watched 10 arrive at Northern Point on Brier Is. When a bird needs nesting materials, it gets them where it can. While Peter Payzant was standing quietly birding, a black-cap "landed on a tree branch near me, then flew down to the ground at my feet. From there it hopped onto my left foot and pecked at my sock which was accessible since I was wearing sandals. It then flew to my left foot, repeated the performance and departed. This sort of thing is good practice for not flinching in times of stress". BOREAL CHICKADEES were not much in evidence. Apart from a migratory movement, only 13 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were seen, all at feeders and NONE IN THE WOODS--this is low for this species, often a common woods bird. The movement noted was on Brier, May 17, when ELM found 10 together. On the other hand, and following the influx in the fall of 1986-87, the WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES numbers stayed high. There were 16 noted (10 in Spring of 1986), two by members who had never had them at feeders before (Purchases at Dartmouth and Stephen Bushell at Hazel Hill).

BROWN CREEPERS, low last winter (see April 1987 issue), fell off even more, only four being seen--1, March 10, Tusket, 2 (singing) near Bridgewater, April 23, and one, April 19, at French Village (CRKA, CTN,AJV). A single HOUSE WREN a "rufescent eastern race bird" was at Cape Sable, May 17 (IAM). WINTER WRENS appear to be doing better than they have for years. As well as the formal reports I have heard many people comment on their abundance. The first was heard April 15, next on the 17th (both Hfx. Co.) AJV & Payzants, and a pair were at Forchu on the 27th. In May they turned up in all the suitable venues provincewide.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS were so quiet they were scarcely noted: one singing April 19, at Eleven Mile Lake and one, May 3 at Hazel Hill (SCH,SSB). The eagerly awaited RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS were well

reported. Single birds were heard on April 22 in Spryfield, on April 2 at Halifax, Crousetown and Bridgewater, and on the 25th at Cape Forchu. On April 26 they were at Laurie Park, Hfx. Co., and several were near Canso. From then on they spread themselves about the province (No Gnatcatchers so far this spring).

#### THRUSHES

A male EASTERN BLUEBIRD was seen on Brier Is., May 19 by Edward Keeble-fide FLL. A TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE was "scrupulously described" to IAM by Zoe Lucas on Sable Is., March 19-22.

In the late season only one VEERY arrived in time to be included--May 10 at Port Howe (JWT). Similarly, a single SWAINSON'S THRUSH showed up in Spryfield, May 25 (FLL). The average arrival date for HERMIT THRUSHES is April 15, so they too were late this spring. First singles were at L. W. Pubnico, Argyle, Eleven Mile Lake and Carleton, on April 21, 23, 24 & 25. They "dribbled" in slowly from Yar. Co. to Canso, not arriving "everywhere" until late in May.

The AMERICAN ROBINS were almost on time, appearing in small numbers in Lun. Co. on March 24, and Wolfville Ridge and Economy on the 25th. The night of April 25-26 was "Robin night" and an influx arrived then, producing 100's in Economy, Kentville and Crowes Mills (Col. Co.) As this was did not reach Clementsport, Hartlan's Point, Dartmouth and Eel Brook until several days later (around April 30), it is logical to suppose that they arrived from New Brunswick, instead of the southwest end of the province.

#### CATBIRD TO STARLING

GRAY CATBIRDS were late--first three appearing on May 10 on Brier. Next was one at Mooseland, May 18. Then came five more: May 23 at Raynardton, the 24th at Spryfield, South Branch and (2) Kentville. (Ruffs, DAM, FLL., RBS). NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS were steady with seven reports from L.W. Pubnico, Seal, Brier, Cape Sable, Dartmouth, Halifax and Glace Bay. The Brier, Dartmouth and Glace Bay birds had overwintered. Four BROWN THRASHERS made the deadline--one at E. Petpeswick, Hfx. Co., had been there for months when last noted, April 25 (num. obs.). A pair on Brier, May 10 were observed by the Ruffs and the Stevens. Another was at Tusket, May 23, for the NSBS Field Trip. BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS lingered on into spring. In March, flocks of 50-90 were seen at Herring Cove, Mt. Uniacke, Clementsport, Fairview and Spryfield and on the 27th, the Dickies had 200+ at Chebucto Head. On April 6-8, 50-60 were at the Purchases in Cole Harbour, and on the 12th, a flock of 200 was around Sullivan's Pond. CEDAR WAXWINGS were much fewer, just beginning to arrive for the summer. The few reports are: 1 on Seal, May 4, one, Clementsport, May 13, and 3 in Halifax, May 26 (ELM, IAM, SCH, FLL). Several of the winter NORTHERN SHRIKES also hung about late. Ten birds were seen from February 28 to April 11, all in the western half of the province. News of nesting EUROPEAN STARLINGS came from L. W. Pubnico (May 1), and Glace Bay (April 3). Nancy Peters writes, "always too many".

## VIREOS AND WARBLERS

Four species of vireo were reported, these being of the more predictable species in Nova Scotia. The earliest SOLITARY VIREO was found singing in L. W. Pubnico on May 2 (RSD). Of the dozen reports of one to six individuals seen or heard, May 10 seemed to be the average arrival time. Seal Island was the resting place for the only WARBLING VIREO reported. This bird was discovered on May 26 by Ian McLaren. Three PHILADELPHIA VIREOS were located and all by the same party. The first was found on Bon Portage, May 16, and two were seen on Brier Is., near North Point, May 18 (RSM,FLL,JWT). An early RED-EYED VIREO was watched on May 9 by Mike Almon along the Frog Pond Nature Trail in Halifax. Oddly, just one other report was submitted of one seen May 24, in Spryfield. This is indicative of the slow northward migration this year and except for the blackbirds, the following report shows the same pattern of a week to ten days late in most cases.

All 22 species of our resident wood warblers made it north to be counted within this period. The only rarity was that of a single male GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER seen May 30 by Alan Milward in West Wentworth. A TENNESSEE WARBLER was seen May 10 in L. W. Pubnico, that being the earliest date, with the majority of reports showing considerable numbers May 24 and 25 in Halifax and Hants Counties. The first sightings of NASHVILLE WARBLERS were from May 8 to 17, all of single birds. May 10 seemed to be the 'big' day for warbler arrival with most species making just an appearance. Such was true with NORTHERN PARULA. On this date they were heard or seen first in Carleton, Yar. Co., Anna. Co. and Hfx. Co. YELLOW WARBLERS began arriving on May 4 when one was seen near Hall's Harbour (RBS). By May 16, they were widely spread and noted from Yar. To Cumb. Co. CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS were not only late but their numbers seemed to have dropped considerably from 1986. There were just four reports given from May 14 to 24 with the largest number, about 4, seen near Carleton-Raynardton on May 2 (NSBS). MAGNOLIA WARBLERS arrived on May 10 in Yar. Co., where JDE saw three in L.W. Pubnico. By mid-month, they could be found throughout and generally with more difficulty than past years. Just two reporters submitted sightings of CAPE MAY WARBLERS. So far, 12 birds were seen May 18 on Brier Is., and one other, May 19 in Spryfield (FLL,JWT). BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS, single birds were noted May 13, 14 and 18, in Yar. and Hfx. Counties. There were a few on territory near Kearny Lake, Hfx. Co., and in Waverley, May 16-17.

This is one of the very few years that the reports of YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS are without doubt all spring arrivals and not overwintering birds. The first Yellow-rumps to arrive were 15-20 in Kemptville (JD'E) and two at Mill Lake, near Hubbards (AJV) on April 25. By May 5, they had made the journey to most areas. The only warbler which showed any increase in numbers over last year was the BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER. They were first noted May 10 in L. W. Pubnico, Brier Is., Anna. Co., Bridgewater, Halifax and Hammond's Plains. Although most of the sightings were one or two birds, there were MANY seen during the field trip in the Carleton-Raynardton area, May 23 (NSBS). BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER was first to arrive in Kemptville, May 16 (JD'E) and single birds were noted, May 23 and 24, at Carleton, Hammond's Plains and at Hardwoodlands. PALM WARBLERS were well recorded, which is no doubt attributed to the fact that this bird is one of the earliest to arrive and thus attracts attention. The first were at Cape Forchu, and Lr. Eel Brook, April 17 (JFK,PRD). By the end of April they could be found singing in suitable boggy habitats throughout the province. There were six reports of seven BAY-BREASTED WARBLERS, with the first at Raynardton, May 9 (PRD). Others came from Argyle Head, Brier Is., Sandy Lake and Mooseland in the following 10 day. BLACKPOLL

WARBLERS were discovered first, May 13, in the Public Gardens, Halifax (AJV), one showed itself at Three Fathom Hbr, May 17 (RBD), but the Pazants had between 10-15 at Powder Mill Park, May 24. BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS were extremely well reported. This was the only species that was not late and not in lower numbers. The earliest was one seen on Seal Is., May (ELM,IAM). By May 10, they could be found most everywhere from Yarmouth to Cape Breton.

The AMERICAN REDSTART arrived on time, on or around May 11, when one was seen in Clementsport (SCH), and one at Lewis Lake, Hfx. Co. (AJV). Other notes were from May 13, 18 and 23, but numbers appear to be down! OVENBIRDS returned late, the earliest being May 10, at Port Howe, Cumb. Co. (JWT). Others were May 14, 17 and 23. By the third week of May these birds had settled in to their appropriate habitat, although as with many of these songsters, its familiar "teacher" was less frequently heard than it has been in previous years. NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH was reported just twice so far, one on May 11, in Harrietsfield and one on May 13, near Five Island Lake (AJV).

There was just one report of MOURNING WARBLER, that of a male singing on territory, May 30, near Stewiacke (FLL). COMMON YELLOWTHROAT was discovered on May 15, in Harrietsfield (FLL,LW). The report was closely followed by three birds at Cape Sable, and one at Eleven Mile Lake on May 17, one at Belleville, Yar. Co., May 18 (PRD,CRKA) and by May 2, there were several near Carleton (NSBS). WILSON'S WARBLERS were reported from Harrietsfield, May 15 (FLL,LW), APBS, May 16, and May 25, on Quinpool Rd., Halifax (IAM,JSC,CSII). A relatively early CANADA WARBLER was found near Uniacke on May 16 (AJV), others were May 23, Carleton (NSBS), May 24 and 25, which were more typical dates (RBD,FLL).

#### TANAGERS TO BUNTINGS

Two records of SUMMER TANAGER have been submitted. One was found by Jerome D'Eon in L. W. Pubnico on April 25, and exactly one month later, Ian McLaren discovered a female on Seal Is. There have been no reports of SCARLET TANAGER as yet. NORTHERN CARDINAL was recorded in March, April and May, all in the southern parts of the province. March 4, the wintering cardinal was still visiting the feeder in L. W. Pubnico (JD'E). A male was found at a feeder in Barrington, April 29 (Ronald McCormick) and the final report, more encouraging, was that of a male and female regularly visiting a feeder on Chestnut St., Yarmouth, until May 8. ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS were well reported, with a total of 21 individuals found. The first males showed up on May 9 at Pubnico (E & BR, K & DP) and one at Sandy Lake, Hfx. Co. (AJV,FLL). The main arrival dates were May 17 and 18. There were both males and females seen at this time on Brier Is., West Pubnico, Waverley, Lewis Lake, Crousetown and Pleasant Valley. Three BLUE GROSBEAKS were encountered this season; the first was a male at M. W. Pubnico, April 22 (TD'E), a female, May 4-6, Seal Is. (ELM,IAM) and a male, May 18, Brier Is. (FLL,JWT,RSM). The number of over-shooting INDIGO BUNTINGS were reduced to just three individuals this spring, after two successive years of dozens. These recorded are: a female, Seal Is., May 4-6 (IAM,ELM); a male, May 14, West Pubnico (RD'E); and a male May 26, Brier Is. (Edward Keebler). On May 24, Denise McCulloch of Halifax had what could only have been a bright male PAINTED BUNTING at her feeder near the North West Arm. This bird arrived with Goldfinches, stayed a short while, left and never returned.

## TREE SPARROW TO SNOW BUNTING

Although there were not large numbers of TREE SPARROWS at feeders through the winter, by the end of March, any that were in the area began to slip away. The latest report was of a flock of 10 at Glenwood, Yar. Co., April 18 (JD'E). May 9-10 were the days to find the first arriving CHIPPING SPARROWS. During these days they were found at Brier Is., Hazel Hill and Port Howe, Cumb. Co. The fifth spring record of CLAY-COLOURED SPARROW was one which was found at Pubnico Point on May 31 (JDE,RDE). Another uncommon visitor, the FIELD SPARROW, was found on Seal Is., May 25, 26, and in full song! (IAM). VESPER SPARROWS are back and on territory again this year in Anna. Co. There were three there singing, April 20 (PM,FLL,DAM) and on May 18 (FLL,RSM,JWT). The first SAVANNAH SPARROWS arrived April 18 at Martinique Beach (JWT), and by the first week of May they were in numbers, singing wherever suitable habitat was to be found. The BIG STORY is the number of "IPSWICH" SPARROWS found this spring. There were two at Kingsburg Beach, Mar. 29, 12 at Martinique Beach, April 4 (NSBS), up to 9 at Hartlen's Point, April 12, 2 at Petite Riviere, April 18, and 12 at Cherry Hill Beach.

FOX SPARROWS were extremely visible, with large numbers pouring into the province during the last week of March. I feel that these birds generally enter the province overland, not over water, if they can help it. This is evidenced by just three reports of this species from Yar. Co. The many reports from the central and northern parts of Nova Scotia, on the other hand, totalled hundreds, with everyone remarking on their presence. In Canso, the Jarvis' had up to 45 by April 6, in their back yard area. In Halifax, the area was filled with these songsters until April 10, when overnight, the woodlands were once again silent (JSC). SONG SPARROWS were reported from all areas and, aside from the few that overwintered, it appears they arrived on March 26. By the first of April, they were singing in numbers, giving us pleasant relief from that long arduous winter. The reclusive LINCOLN'S SPARROW has been seen just twice, once on Cape Sable, May 17 (IAM) and one near St. Margaret's Bay, May 21 (AJV). April 15-19 seemed to be the dates that SWAMP SPARROWS were first noted. However, there was a single bird seen in L. W. Pubnico on March 4, which was no doubt a survivor of the winter. WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS were much later than usual. We should expect to see and hear them by mid-April, but they kept us waiting almost two weeks. By May 10, they were on territory and in good numbers from all reporting areas. Although the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW is fairly uncommon in spring, there were eight reports of about 14 individuals. They are as follows: 1, May 6, Seal Is (ELM,IAM); 2, May 10, Brier Is. (RBS,E&BR); 2, May 11, Chegoggin (H&HH); 1, May 11, Wolfville (GMY); one each, May 14, Port Williams, May 16 Economy (FLS); 3-4, May 17-18, Westport (RSM); 1, May 24, Cambridge (AJV); and lastly, one of *z.i. gambelii*, the much more uncommon, westerly subspecies, found on Seal Is., May 25-29 by Ian McLaren. Numbers of DARK-EYED JUNCOS spent the winter in various locations and the first "trilling" heard was on March 1, Clementsport (SCH). The returning flocks of juncos became evident in late March, with hundreds seen along roadsides and gardens. The single report of LAPLAND LONGSPUR was of twelve, seen on March 7 at Grand Pré (JET,BET). SNOW BUNTINGS were quite evident until mid-March, especially in the Grand Pré area, where hundreds were found until Mar. 20 (AJV). The last date to be seen was Mar. 28, at Matthew's Lake, where 6 were seen (D&JY).

## BOBOLINK TO ORIOLES

Just a few days shy of a new early date, two BOBOLINKS were found in Carleton, April 11 (JD'E). The main migration however, occurred during May 10-12, when they were sighted in Yar. Co. (DJD), Amherst (JM) and Port Howe (JWT). There were more than a dozen reports of RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD; the earliest being March 24, in

Clementsport (SCH). Others followed quickly so that all other first sightings in all areas were by March 29. RUSTY BLACKBIRDS arrived with Redwings in late March. They were noted from Tusket to Mooseland to Debert, being somewhat more conspicuous than usual. On April 19, Jacqueline and Raymond D'Entremont encountered a male Rusty "singing to let the world know that this small swale was his", near Belleneck, Yar. Co. Les Rutherford counted at least 40 in Lr. Debert on April 27. COMMON GRACKLE arrived in small numbers about March 24. The flocks grew rapidly and nest building was well under way by the end of April. The Blackbirds, as a group, wintered well and many observers have noted a significant increase this year. BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS were slightly late, beginning to arrive at feeders by April 2 (JCT). Larger movements were seen by mid to late April, then the rapid dispersal occurred, as breeding and victimizing took place.

A single report of a first-year male ORCHARD ORIOLE was submitted by John Kearney. This bird was discovered in L. W. Pubnico on May 21. There were four records of 22 NORTHERN ORIOLES. The first was a male in L. W. Pubnico, May 10 (DA); one singing in Wolfville, May 11 (JET); 5 seen on Brier Is., May 17; then 15 were there on the 18th (ELM, FLL). Lastly, a male was found at Point Pleasant Park, May 13 (AJV, CSII).

#### FINCHES TO HOUSE SPARROW

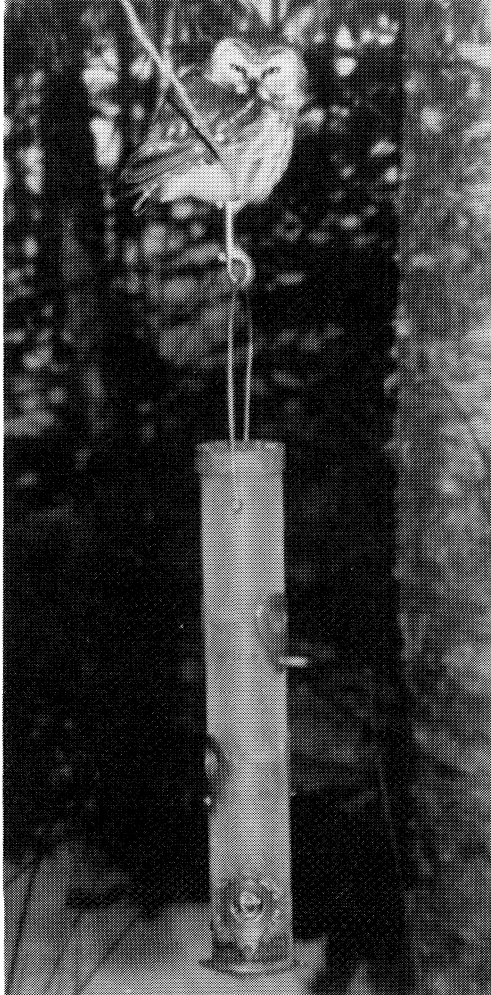
Record of PINE GROSBEAK were few and all were for the month of March. Five were seen in Durham, Pictou Co., Mar. 8 (AJV); 12 in L. W. Pubnico, Mar. 19 (RSD) and a number were found March 28 in the Glace Bay area (NSBS). With a winter practically void of PURPLE FINCHES, they were eagerly sought after in spring. They finally appeared in numbers by mid-April, but the earliest report was of three at a feeder in Clementsport (SCH). Just one report of crossbills this spring, that was of a male and three female RED CROSSBILLS which were seen Mar. 6, near Mahone Bay (N.S.). After a wonderful winter for COMMON REDPOLLS, with hundreds moving about through Mar., the last had left generally by April 5, with the exceptions of one or two left behind at feeders until April 25. PINE SISKINS on the other hand, remained very common at feeders through April and May. They are still regular visitors in small numbers at the time of writing. The highly mobile behavior of siskins was illustrated by reports of a bird with an all white head, found visiting feeders in Yarmouth, Tusket and as far away as West Pubnico (ER, CRKA). Beverley Sarty writes that, with 50 or more siskins crowding her feeder, they quickly learned to take advantage of her open hand and became quite tame at her home in Bedford. There were a few feeders attracting AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES this winter, the most being 35 at 300 Ross Rd., Dartmouth, until April (D&JP). Small groups of fresh spring males started appearing by mid-April and by mid-May, they were evenly dispersed throughout. An amazing record of at least one EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH was seen April 18-22 at S.W. Port Mouton. IAM reports that there were perhaps two there on April 19, and that one was photographed by him, April 21. These birds are possibly escapees, although they have been introduced to various parts of the U.S. and have actually become established near Long Island, New York.

Like so many other birds, EVENING GROSBEAKS were extremely scarce all winter and early spring. They finally showed up in very small groups of 4 to 6 at feeders, starting from late April, then building to 30 to 50 in some areas by mid-May.



HOUSE SPARROW continues flying a fine line of either population standstill or slight decline. There were just three reports (understandably) and two of those indicated fewer of these birds than normal. It would be interesting to keep closer tabs of the backyard populations over the next few years to really try to get a better picture of this situation. If they are decreasing or even staying constant, there must be an explanation.

--DAC,ed.



Do Saw Whet Owls eat sunflower seeds? Yes, but indirectly. No doubt this one sees mousy possibilities under the Payzant's feeder. It was around from March 11 to 19, and seen by several birders, but evidently did not survive thereafter.

## BIRDING IN PICTOU COUNTY

by Margaret Kenney

Pictou County is a small county, but we are fortunate to have many interesting birding areas. We have several rivers and lakes and really good shore-birding areas.

One nice area, good for birding in summer and in winter, is a loop off the Trans Canada Highway 104, easy to follow and not too hard to get back on the main highway a few km farther on. Travelling from Halifax to Sydney, take the West River Road to Pictou at Exit 20 in Central West River. This is a good area to see Bald Eagles at any time of year as there are two eagle nests along the river. About 6 km along on the left side of the road is an Osprey's nest. This nest is right beside the road and you come upon it suddenly, but you really can't miss it. The Ospreys have been nesting here beside the road on the edge of Stewart Munroe's driveway, on the top of a power line structure. This year the power line men built a platform on a pole nearby and every day during the nest-building time they came and dismantled the nest-building of the Osprey. Finally, the birds got the message! They built on the platform and at time of writing, the female bird is on her nest. This nest is a joy to see and watch.

Continuing along West River Road, through Lyon's Brook, to the Pictou Rotary, take the exit to Truro, New Glasgow, Cape Breton. You will see the Harvey A. Veniot Causeway and Scott Paper plant almost immediately. Here, on the left are our famous Double-crested Cormorants, nesting on the old pilings. I do not know how long they have been nesting here on the pilings. The causeway and Scott Paper were built about twenty years ago and they were well settled before that. We used to walk along the shore from Abercrombie to get a glimpse of them and we expected they would find a new home when all that sudden activity took place just beside them. They stayed, thrived and became famous!

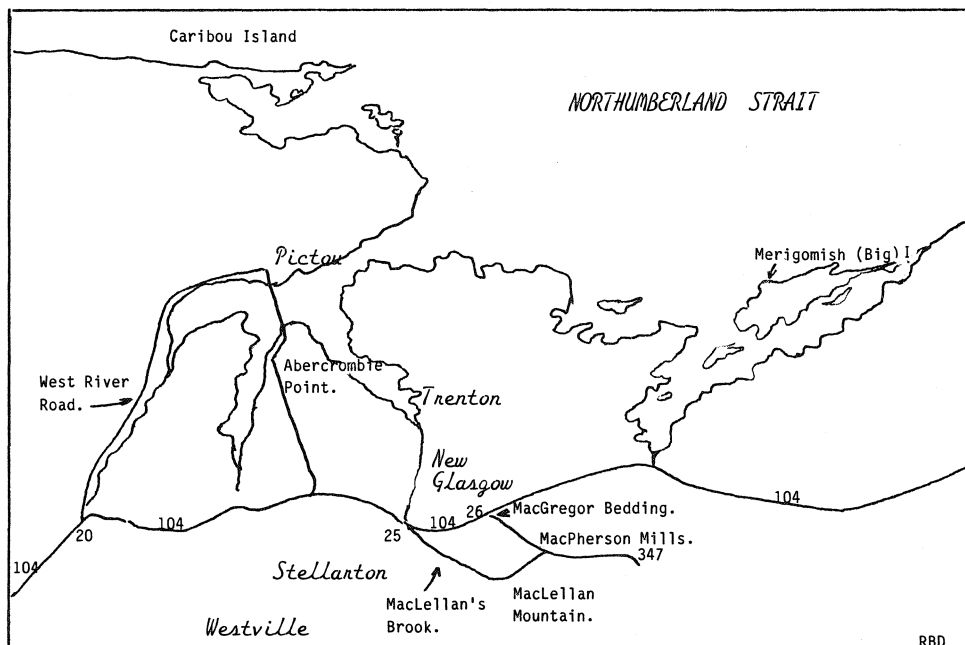
Two km past the cormorants, take Exit 2 to Granton, Trenton, New Glasgow, turn right off the exit to Abercrombie. This road soon follows along the East River. There are some picnic tables and a nature trail 2 km from the exit. Scott Paper people aren't sure how long they will maintain this area as they have had some vandalism here, but the tables will be there this summer. A bit farther on, some folks might be interested to note "Crombie" on a mail-box, this was the home of the late Frank Sobey, and is the home where he and Mrs. Sobey had their many beautiful paintings. Seven km from Exit 2, you will come to a road sign to Trenton, turn left and cross the bridge. At all times there are birds here, easy to see from the highway.

This same loop in winter offers excellent birding in two spots already mentioned. We visit often, as soon as most waters are frozen. There is always open water near the Scott Paper Plant at Abercrombie Point and near the Nova Scotia Power Corporation plant at Trenton Bridge; in both cases there is open water on both sides of the bridge. When the ice creeps in to make a smaller area it is sometimes so crowded it is mind-boggling to get the birds all sorted out and one feels that one has probably missed noting the odd stray.

At the Scott Paper area we have seen Black Duck, Mallard, Greater Scaup, Oldsquaw, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, the three mergansers, Ospreys, eagles, Great Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls and Bonaparte's Gulls.

At Trenton Bridge are all the above, plus Great Cormorant, Great

Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup, Ring-billed Gulls, Iceland Gulls, Glaucous Gulls and of course the crows. Our winter hawks all frequent the area from time to time. It is exciting to see a Sharp-shinned Hawk swooping in and scattering a flock of Redpolls into the safety of the alder bushes. In fact, one never knows what one might run into here. On January 30, of this year, Ethel Crathorne, Fred and I went birding. We arrived at Trenton Bridge about 9:00 a.m. About one hundred twenty-five Canada geese of two distinct sizes were snoozing on the water, and near the road, where we parked, another twenty-five or more were on the ice. Casting our eyes over the slumbering crowd, we suddenly saw a stranger swimming toward the shore, away from the ones on the water. We first noticed it because of its pure orange bill, which appeared large with a narrow amount of light or white at the base. We also



noticed that it was about the size of the larger Canada Geese with a brownish back and light front. It struggled out of the water onto the ice, found its way into the very middle of the group and immediately settled down with its bill hidden in its feathers. The group didn't take any notice whatsoever of this stranger in their midst. We know what we think--or guess--it was, an immature White-fronted Goose. We will never know for sure, as we certainly didn't have a chance to check it out again. We came back in an hour or so, and that segment of the flock had flown. We checked often for the remainder of the winter but never saw it again. It is experiences like this that make birding so exciting for us.

It is now easy to follow the road signs through Trenton and New Glasgow and get back on the 104. We are doing the Thorburn square for the Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas. The area is a new birding area for us and we have found some wonderful spots. Perhaps because we had time, since it was our first year of full retirement, we enjoyed this experience tremendously! We certainly widened our interest in habitat and breeding behavior of birds. If you have an hour, or even half an hour, when passing through, take Exit 26 to Thorburn and Sherbrooke, route 347, turn right and drive a short distance to a warning light, turn left onto the MacKay road, and go a very short distance and you will find yourself behind the MacGregor Bedding factory. There is a pond behind the factory, bird the area and take a walk, away from MacGregor Bedding, along the abandoned railway spur. There is a beaver dam here and the beavers are sometimes seen. Follow along through a wooded area, in less than a km along here last summer, we confirmed nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Northern Flickers, Eastern Kingbirds, Hermit Thrushes, Robins, Catbirds, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Song and White-throated Sparrows, Juncos and Red-winged Blackbirds. There were several others that possibly nested here too, and we will be looking for them this year, Snipe, Wood Peewee, Chimney Swift and several warblers among them. To get back to route 104, just continue along this dirt road, keep left, and you will be back on the highway in less than a km

A lovely day can be spent by taking this same Exit 26. Stay on route 347 until you reach MacPherson Mills road sign. In and around this rural village are good areas. A pretty spot, but not particularly noted for birds; great for a picnic in Parks Falls. You reach this by taking the Sutherland River Road, and come to a bridge in a few meters. Get out of your car at the bridge and the falls can be seen from the bridge, or better still, from one of the paths you will see there. A bit farther along, on route 347, to the left is the Grist Mill and Farm Homestead. This is a museum, privately owned, and is open in July and August. Phoebe's nest here, and Cliff Swallows gather their nesting material in the puddles nearby. There are picnic tables behind the museum, and paths to follow along the mill brook.

Almost opposite the MacPherson's Grist Mill road is the Fall Brook Road. From route 347, take the road to the right, and in front of the old school take the road that immediately goes left. This is a very narrow woods road, mixed woods, swamps, brook, and a few small cleared areas where you can tell by the old apple trees and stone fences, that pioneers once laboured here. In one km bear right to a narrower road, and this lovely area where you rarely see a soul, goes through the woods for 6 km. About a km before the end is another beaver pond. Birds are plentiful! We have confirmed nesting here of the Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Ruffed Grouse, both chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned kinglet, Solitary and Red-eyed Vireos, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Redstart, Northern Waterthrush and Rusty Blackbird, and probably several more.

The road terminates on another dirt road. Keep to the right and you will soon pass the Pictou County Snowmobile club, MacLellan's Mountain church and nearby cemetery, all places worthy of a stop and interesting places to roam around.

Then follow the road sign to New Glasgow--about 4 km from the church you will reach the pavement. If you continue along the pavement and turn left at the stop sign at the new bridge, you will soon be back to route 104.

However, there is another little side trip you should take. Immediately upon reaching the pavement turn left on a dirt road. This will take you along MacLellan's Brook. There are three wooden bridges on this road, and just after the third bridge is a lane to the left called Willard Fraser Road. Along this lane, in less than a km, you reach another wooden bridge. We turn here and go back to the pavement. Phoebe's nest under this bridge sometimes too, and your chances are good, as you come along this drive, to see many birds. As well as the Phoebe, there are Common Merganser, Black Duck, Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Kingfisher, Pileated Woodpecker, all of our flycatchers, swallows, Veery, Bobolink, Goldfinches, Purple Finches and other warblers and sparrows.

In the fall, birding in Pictou County is very rewarding along Caribou Island and Big Island. I refer you to the July 1985 issue of Nova Scotia Birds, pages 46-49. Ross Baker and Harry Brennan have described this area very well.

Of course, we all know we can't depend on finding a bird in a certain spot at a certain time, but I do hope that anyone who comes to Pictou County will have a good day and maybe even find a "lifer". If we can help in any way, call 923-2461.



A Northern Shrike, photographed  
Wolfville, Feb. 1987--Richard Stern

## THE BIRDS OF THE BAY OF PIGS

George D. Perry

Orlando Garrido had shared Cuba's finest birds with us for the past six days. Now, in an unforgettable finale, he pointed to an opening in the edge of the forest where he had just spotted a rare warbler (one N.S. record). I entered a few feet and sat on the sloping ground with several friends, including Rudy Haase of Chester. We were in the Sierra del Rosario, seventy miles west of Havana. Thirty feet away a teetering bird's snow-white eyebrow stripe signalled my first Louisiana Waterthrush. Then Orlando's bird moved into the binocular view occupied by the waterthrush--a Swainson's Warbler. After its identification in South Carolina in 1832, Swainson's dropped out of sight for almost forty years, a fair indication of its rarity. For the next fifteen minutes, it foraged among roots and leaves in full view a few feet away. Peterson's illustration diminishes the actual warmth and richness of the bird's olive-brown back, a quality accentuated by its clearly defined eyebrow stripe.

The female Hooded Warbler may have pleased me more than my jaded Point Pelee friends, although by now, the assembly, which included an Ovenbird and the endemic Yellow-headed Warbler, excited everyone. The arrival of Worm-eating and Kentucky Warblers minutes later, made us light-headed, and deeply content after a week full of comparable moments.

Our trip to Cuba was a direct result of the novelist Graeme Gibson's discovery of Orlando Garrido--and Cuba's sensational birds--several years ago. Since then, Gibson has organized two or three trips a year to Cuba, with each one led by Garrido. Our week had been special for Orlando Garrido, too. His Las Palomas (The Doves) had been published, confirming his reputation as Cuba's leading authority on birds. Most of our week was spent with this thoughtful guide in the Bay of Pigs region on the south coast, three hours by road from Havana. The beauty of the Bay of Pigs and the immense Zapata Swamp was important to both Orlando Garrido and Fidel Castro long before the American-sponsored invasion of 1961 imposed a better-known association (at least for Canadians). Fidel's vision for the miles of swamp and marshland included construction of canals and rice plantations. Crocodiles and canals crowded with waterbirds serve as a better testimony of his appreciation of this area than the apparently modest rice schemes. His knowledge of the swamp and the region's people mattered in 1961, aiding significantly to his impressive deployment of Cuban defence forces. The museum of the invasion at Playa Giron preserved the counterpoint--Cuba's unnatural history--to a marvellous week in a splendid natural setting.

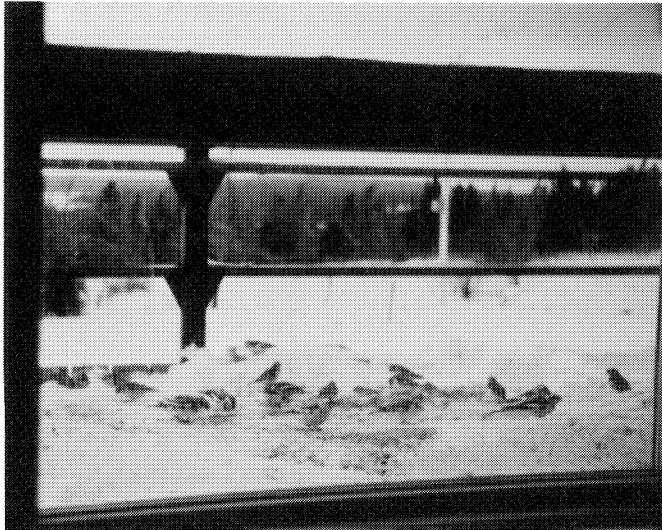
Earlier in the week, we had punted a half mile or so into the great swamp, before going "ashore" in knee-deep water and sloshing several hundred yards into the habitat of the Zapata Wren. After a wait of twenty or thirty minutes, the wren's first warble led us deeper in pursuit. James Bond's description in the Birds of the West Indies is accurate: "A loud, variable warbling, suggesting the song of a canary, but more tuneful". (Yes, it was Ian Flemming's friendship with this Bond of Philadelphia which suggested the more famous namesake.) But after an hour, no one had seen the wren. Finally, and almost alone, I got two quick but fine views of a large (6.25") wren skulking in bush, and later, on the ground at the edge of a thicket. For those of our party who had preferred to stay dry in a punt, the thrill of a crocodile close-at-hand in the wild was consolation. For me, the Zapata Wren, perhaps Cuba's third rarest bird, remained the bird of the week, changing forever the "Bay of

Pigs". The museum's maps of invasion routes and engagements are vivid in my mind, but a battlefield has properly lost its prominence.

In the last light of another day, we moved past the large smouldering mounds of the charcoal burners to the bank of a waterway. Immediately, the silhouettes of a dozen whistling West Indian Tree Ducks passed by in single file a few yards away. As Orlando pointed out once we were back on the mini-bus, a better look at a "night duck" is virtually impossible. The more accessible Fulvous Tree Duck had been seen and heard in the hundreds only an hour before.

I won't turn Cuba into a mere list, however much I am tempted, nor will I divulge our final count, but the prospective visitor may be attracted by this sampling: the Bee Hummingbird--the world's smallest bird--for which we searched successfully for several days; the Cuban Trogon, the national bird, happily observed each day; the noisy Giant Lizard Cuckoo, found almost everywhere; the delightful Cuban Tody in brilliant sunlight; the Key West and other quail doves, patiently sought out on and off woodland paths, sometimes without success; Wilson's Plover, the Black-necked Stilt, and many egrets; the Giant Kingbird (tyrannus cubensis) and the Cuban Solitaire about an hour before our warbler finale. But this isn't supposed to be a list. Anyway, we missed Bachman's Warbler, the Zapata Rail, and the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Fidel is said to be watching over more than Cuba's social and economic achievement. His personal interest helps to preserve the few surviving Ivory-billed woodpeckers at the eastern end of the island, in a double sense, a long journey from the beaches of the Bay of Pigs. One can only wish for a similar fate for Guatemala's resplendent Quetzal, threatened as it is by political crime.



Nancy and Warren Peters at Hazel Hill, Guys. Co., enjoyed a flock of 30-40 Snow Buntings visiting their feeder, March 8-20, especially during blizzards.

## SEAL ISLAND, NOVA SCOTIA - A BIRDER'S GUIDE

by Eric Mills

The Seal Islands (Seal, Noddy, Mud, Flat and Round) lie south of the Tusket group off the southwestern corner of the province where the Atlantic inflow enters the Bay of Fundy. Seal Island proper, only 3 km long and a km or less in width; is 20 statute miles (32 km) west of Cape Sable and 30 miles (48 km) SSE of Yarmouth. Despite its maximum elevation of only about 15 meters, the island is a haven for migrant and stray birds nearly unparalleled in the Atlantic Provinces. Rarities such as Pacific Loon, Wilson's Plover, Ruff, Franklin's Gull, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Say's Phoebe, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, Rock Wren, Townsend's Solitaire, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Cassin's Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow are only a few of the extralimital species seen on the island during the past twenty years.

Champlain and the chronicler Nicolas Denys noted the island, including its seals, in the 17th century, but it was uninhabited until 1823, when Mary Crowell Hichens, her husband Richard, the Edmund Crowells and John Nickerson moved there to rescue ship-wrecked sailors. The Hichens were responsible for the first government wharf, built in 1827, and for the establishment of a lighthouse which became active in November, 1831. The Crowell family and their relatives tended the light until recent times. Seal Island is now inhabited mainly by lightkeepers, lobster fishermen (from November through May), Irish Moss rakers (in summer), Mrs. Mary Nickerson (a descendant of Mary Crowell Hichens), and a large flock of sheep. Birders arrive in season, not necessarily in synchrony with migrants.

Access. Clark's Harbour, Shelburne County, is the traditional jumping off point for Seal Island. From Halifax, follow Route 103 about 240 km to Barrington Passage. Turn south about 20 km to Clark's Harbour. From Yarmouth, Route 103 leads south about 70 km to Barrington Passage. There is no regular boat service to Seal Island. Lobster fishermen will occasionally take passengers during the autumn and spring; at other times of the year, access may be difficult and expensive. It is probably best to contact members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society for help, or join one of the NSBS field trips (usually in September or October). Fishermen from Pubnico occasionally make the trip. The crossing takes 2 hours or more. It is often rough, cold and wet. At low water, you may have to go ashore in a skiff, which may be wet, strenuous, and at times dangerous.

Accommodation, equipment and supplies. A trip to the island should not be undertaken lightly. You must be completely self-sufficient, which means food, sleeping bags, a gas lamp, camp stove and fuel, warm waterproof clothing and good boots. Water is easily available on the island. There is no medical service. In emergencies, the lighthouse personnel can contact Clark's Harbour Coast Guard, which has a lifeboat but no aircraft. Accommodations must always be arranged well in advance. Some NSBS members maintain the North Home, which is primitive but cosy and can sleep 6-10, provided they are not squeamish. It boasts one of the most derelict and best-ventilated outhouses in Atlantic Canada. More comfortable accommodation (for parties of 6-8) is available at the East Side from Mrs. Mary Nickerson, who lives on the island from early spring until late autumn. Contact her well ahead at P.O. Box 336, Clark's Harbour, N.S. BOW 1P0, to reserve a cabin.

The seasons on Seal Island. Most birding trips to the island have been in May and from August through early November. Early spring, winter and summer are poorly known ornithologically. Birding



SEAL ISLAND

YARMOUTH COUNTY

NOVA SCOTIA

THE RACE

RACE POINT

THE NORTH END

HIGH BANK

DIVISION HEAD

DOUGALL'S POINT

OLD HOUSES POINT

NORTH HOME

GULL COLONY

CRANBERRY POND

CRANBERRY POND POINT

LIMB'S LIMB

CROWELL'S (WEST SIDE) COVE

BIG POND

CORK COVE POND

SCRATCH ALL POINT

WEST SIDE VILLAGE

SAND COVE

DUNES SANDY BEACH

THE DEVIL'S LIMB

BRIG POND

HICKENS (EAST SIDE) COVE

EAST SIDE VILLAGE

SALT WATER POND

WHALES BACK

GULCH POINT

GRASS POND

SHIP POND

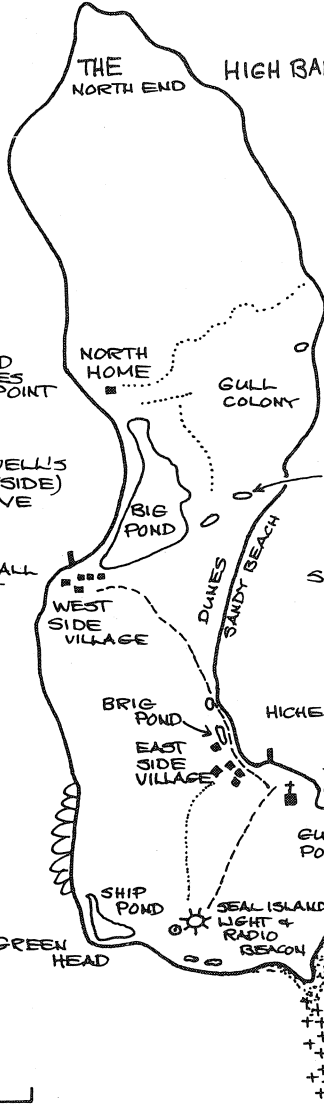
SEAL ISLAND LIGHT & RADIO BEACON

MOTHER OWENS POINT

GREEN HEAD

THE BAR

1 km



in mid to late April may be quite exciting, especially if southwesterly winds have brought early migrants or occasional southern vagrants. Early May, as in the rest of Nova Scotia, may be very quiet, as migrants trickle in against prevailing northerly winds. From mid-May onward, dramatic warbler and thrush arrivals may occur when west winds prevail. Late May and early June are good times to look for western vagrants amidst the late-returning migrants. The breeding species are poorly known (at least until atlassing is complete), but Herring and Black-backed Gulls occupy a large colony in mid-island, Blackpoll Warblers are common, a few other common woodland species probably nest, including Boreal Chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-throated Green Warblers, Yellow Warblers, a Magnolia or two and Redstarts. Leach's Petrels may nest successfully in the thick forest (they are often heard on foggy nights) and Gray-checked Thrushes, recorded as breeders in the 1950's, may still breed. One or two pairs of Black-crowned Night Herons may be present.

In mid August the warbler and flycatcher migration begins, peaking during September. By late September floods of warblers, sparrows and finches occur on the island every few days, most of them sheltering from patrolling sharp-shinned Hawks and Merlins. In late September and October Peregrines are common (up to 4 at a time), many of them of the arctic-breeding race tundrius. A Nova Scotian birder frequently recalls seeing a Gyrfalcon and a Yellow-throated Warbler in the some binocular field one day in early November, but finches and sparrows predominate then, especially after the passage of a cold front. November is probably the most interesting autumn period for western (and a few southern) vagrants.

Birding the island. Because it is so small, the entire island may be birded in a day or less. A good strategy is to work the south end in the morning and the north end after lunch. Some birders prefer to start in the north at dawn, especially in late summer and autumn, because the clearings near Race Point may be full of birds for an hour or two before they disperse or leave the island.

Beginning at the East side, going south, carefully examine the gardens behind Mary Nickerson's old house (still called "Mrs. Hamilton's House" by many) and the copse in front. Check lobster traps at the East Side, the clearing behind the church, and especially the tide-line and thickets around the Salt Water Pond. Follow the shore south and westward, checking thickets, trail and beach rocks for migrants. The iris bed just north of Mother Owens' Point and The Bar can produce surprises.

At the light check lawns, clearings and forest edges. You may return to the East Side by the road, take the wet path to the back of Mrs. Hamilton's house, or walk to the West Side (2 km) past ShipPond, staying close to the shore. This stretch may have Upland Sandpipers in May or August-September, and Golden Plovers in autumn. Check the open places and forest edges for vagrants.

The West Side Village is the best island hot-spot. Check the lobster traps, piles of debris, staging, and intertidal. In autumn the lobster traps can be a gold mine. Scope the pond for ducks, grebes and waders.

Do the North End according to weather, attempting to bird with sun or rain and wind behind you as long as possible. The beach flat (the "goose green") between the West Side and the North Home may be good for waders or passerines. Check the wood edges for migrants. A twisting, poorly-marked path from behind the North Home leads northeastward through thick forests (and the island's only hemlock

stand) to near Dougall's Point. Another path leads from south of the North Home to the gull colony, from thence to the east side of the Big Pond. Both are hard to bird.

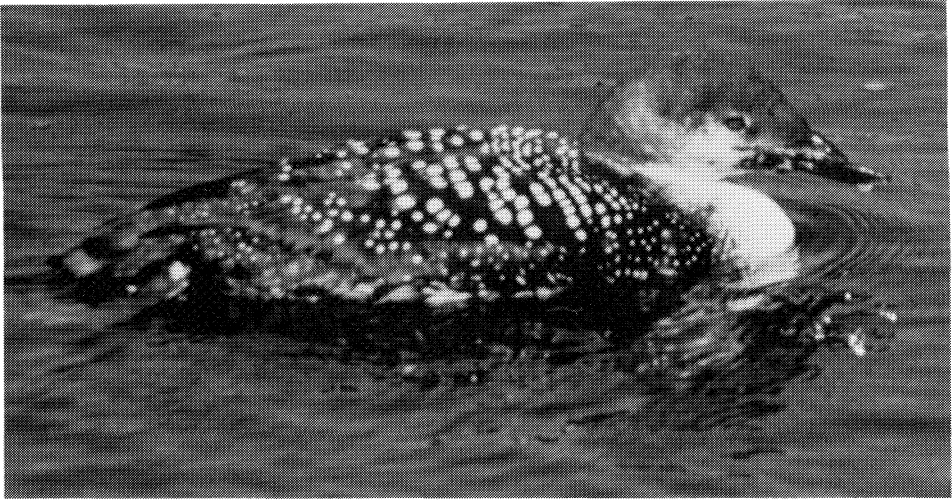
Going north from the North Home, watch the cliff edge, where exhausted migrants may be on the ground. Clearings with dead trees should be examined minutely. At the North End, carefully work the clearings and wooded patches looking for skulking vagrants. Seabirds occasionally pass by Race Point and eiders are abundant. Then follow the forest edge south, checking the beach rocks periodically for land birds. The Cranberry Pond area is worth careful attention, also the patches of woods and raspberry thickets close to the shore just south of the gull colony. Between the Big Pond and the sandy beach is a rich marshy area, well worth checking for rails and small herons. The south east side of the Big Pond is the only good wader habitat on the island, provided the water level is low. Return to the West Side or East Side Villages along the road, simultaneously watching the road, the forest edge, the Big Pond and the sky. Anything can happen!

Seabirds are few around Seal Island, with the exception of Common Eiders and Black Guillemots. In late autumn (October-November), early-morning passage of a cold front and rising NW winds may bring seabirds (gannets, shearwaters, kittiwakes, jaegers, a few skuas) close to the West Side. Race Point may be good for seawatching then. During southerly storms try whiling away the landbirdless hours seawatching from the south side of the island near Mother Owens' Point.

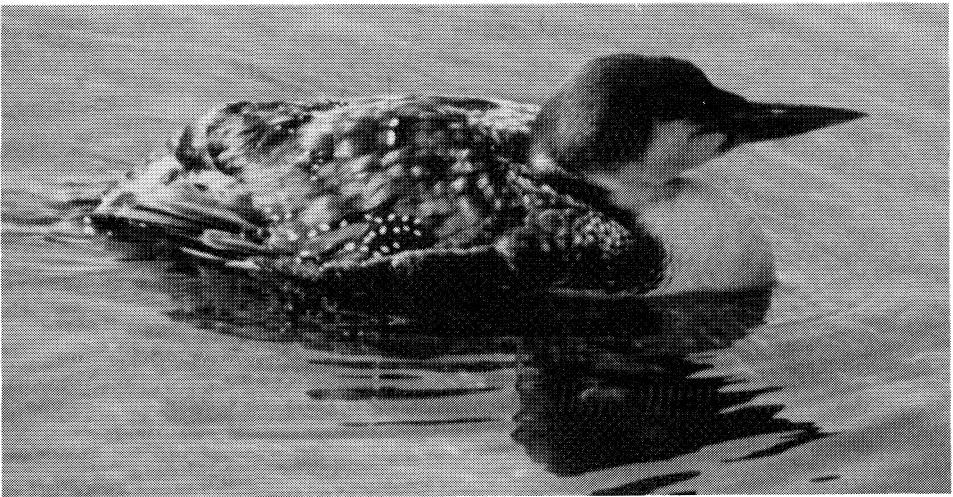
Birding on Seal Island is always a gamble. Long periods (a few days or a week) may pass with few birds, then the miracle occurs - the island is alive, or an unexpected vagrant appears out of nowhere. Three or four day trips may yeild 40 species - or 140, depending on one's luck. Take a good book and a healthy dose of optimism.

In summary and in general. Birding Seal Island is one of Nova Scotia's best experiences for the hard-core aficionado, or for the naturalist. The island's remoteness and the palpable feel of bird migration lend mystery and high expectation to every trip. However, the future of the island is uncertain; it is privately owned and could be sold at any time to a less sympathetic owner. Seal Island has the potential to be a fine bird observatory, in the European sense. Active and vocal birders should try to assure that this remote, lovely, and remarkable place is both respected and managed for its natural values.





Alan Covert asks some interesting questions about this Common Loon with the missing outer part of the upper bill, photographed by him at Eastern Passage on April 4. First its cause? It looks well "healed", so is probably either a birth defect or very early injury. Will it "regenerate"? Presumably not. The earlier issues of ornithological literature are full of notes on malformed bills of almost any species you can think of. The remarkable thing is that their possessors seem to get by, sometimes for years. The "normal" loon photographed by Ian McLaren at Three Fathom Hbr., on April 4, may not have been so. It was rather sluggish and tame, and may have been one of a number of distressed loons reported this spring.



FIELD TRIP REPORTSMarch 28 - Glace Bay Sanctuary

The Cape Breton members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society had our first field day on March 28.

All during the previous week I heard a good many comments by people who hadn't the slightest intention of coming along: "You don't ACTUALLY intend to have a field trip on Saturday, do you?" - "How could you possibly have a field trip this time of year?" - "It's too early...", and several other remarks, too, implying that we were all pretty foolish, and you-know-who the most foolish of all. Friday was an unpleasant day and all I could say was, "If it doesn't get any worse than this, yes, we'll go".

However, Saturday dawned a glorious day, and when we all assembled at Dearn's Corner, there was a very creditable turnout, for the last of March. We crawled along, searching all our familiar places. Well, not all. A good many of them were still banked high with snow. This trip always relies heavily on ducks and seabirds, especially when we can't get into the wood paths at all--there were still four feet of snow in there.

Our list ran from Loon to Song Sparrow with many interesting and beautiful things in between. The Red-breasted Mergansers were courting vigorously, a Crow flew overhead carrying a twig, another was attempting to fit a branch into the fork of a tree, so the future looks promising. As we sat on the wharf at Port Morien having our lunch, we were treated to a good view of a flock of Purple Sandpipers. There are places in Nova Scotia where Purple Sandpipers are an everyday occurrence, but Cape Breton isn't one of them, so we were pretty happy about this sighting.

As well as the delightful sunny, late winter day, and the birds and the ocean covered with drift ice, of course we were happy to renew our friendship with folk we hadn't seen all winter and to welcome warmly three new people to our group.

Sara MacLean

April 11 - Port Joli

The weather was sunny and warm on April 11, when 15 birders gathered at Port Joli for a field trip to Cadden Beach, one of the main nesting areas for Piping Plover in Nova Scotia. This beach and surrounding area have recently been incorporated into Kejimikujik National Park and we were pleased to have Peter Hope and Dan Rieve of the Park staff join us and outline some of their plans for the area. For instance, the nesting area of Piping Plovers will be closed and completely off limits to everyone during the nesting season from about late April to late July. It is hoped that by eliminating human disturbance, reproductive success will improve and the number of plover will gradually increase. Our trip was planned for before the plover were nesting to avoid any disturbance.

The total count for the day was 33 species including 15 Piping Plover. Also, a Common Egret was seen by several members on the way to and from the field trip area. Interesting birds, enthusiastic birders and a warm, sunny day made this a most enjoyable outing.

-Eric Cooke

April 26 - Kings County

This joint activity of the Nova Scotia Bird Society and the Blomidon Naturalists Society attracted about 40 people in 20 cars on this cool but sunny day.

In the Grand Pré area our caravan saw several Red-throated loons, two Harriers and 175 Brant. Then at the north edge of the Acadia campus we viewed an active Raven nest in a small clump of pines, where a few Goldfinches were foraging at the open pine cones.

We had our lunches at Canard Poultry Pond, where we saw a male Wood Duck, three American Wigeon, one Blue-winged Teal, 16 Ring-necked Ducks, several Green-winged Teal and Black Ducks, 25 Tree Swallows, one early Barn Swallow and a very beautiful Mourning Cloak butterfly basking on some willow catkins.

After lunch we caravanned to Canning, Porter's Point, the Canard Valley and Starr's Point. Birds noted included only about 25 Canada Geese, four Red-breasted Mergansers, one Mallard, three Kestrels and 20 more Tree Swallows.

At Hennigar's Market in Greenwich for ice cream cones, we viewed basking painted turtles and one Mourning Dove.

Finally, at Cyril Coldwell's farm at Gaspereau, the female Great Horned Owl was still on the nest platform in his front yard and in his orchard we spotted another Horned Owl trotting about on the ground--Cyril suspects that this released but crippled owl is this year's mate of the owl on the platform.

The species list for the day totalled 37.

- Jim Wolford

May 20 - Early Morning Warbler Walk, Prospect Road, Hfx. Co.

Do you know those awful signs that say: "I'd rather be birding?" Everyone out there, take note! It was one of those days when the platitude was 'The Truth'. Why, oh why, weren't you there? There were four of us to share the morning, and there should have been forty.

It sparkled in the morning frost, we could see our breath as we set off down the Old St. Margaret's Bay Road, under a Tree Swallow sitting immobile on a power line near his nesting box, waiting for his day to start. The trees and ditches were bustling with Robins, Song Sparrows, Whitethroats, Purple- and Goldfinches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Black-capped Chickadees, and what we had come out to see--Wood warblers, everywhere.

I'll digress for a moment: if you want to be sure you'll see some new migrants, watch the wind. Never mind the weather, just see if the wind has been in the south recently. This year has been a spectacular one for predicting arrivals, and the wind direction has been the key. The warblers have flooded in since last week, and...but I digress too much.

The frosty air didn't stop the Solitary Vireos; they were in full voice and then some, often getting well away from their usual measured "Cheeriee! Chirou!" and into some serious warbling. As usual on this walk, some late Evening Grosbeaks pealed their call as they flew over us. About time they were gone. We saw and listened

to stentorian Yellow-rumped, thunderous Parulae, carillion Hermit Thrushes as we strolled away from the traffic noise, following two sleepy but excited fishermen into the woods along the sun-washed path. We stopped to check out a high-pitched call (a Bay-breasted?), saw something move on an overhanging branch off to the side, put our glasses on it, and a Barred Owl materialized, dead still but watching us intently. He did this only long enough for all to see his sombre but effective colours, then dematerialized into the glade behind. Silently.

A Blackpoll Warbler paused only long enough to be identified, but a Bay-breasted stayed to give us a rare 20-second look. A Black and White Nuthatch his way round an Oak tree beside us, saying "ZeeZeeZeeZee"; Boreal Chickadees, all with bad colds, wheezed in the background as we came up on the "Blackburnian cove". No Blackburnian this year, but instead, Yellow-rumped and Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers were there, and an enthralling closeup of another even tamer Bay-breasted, in full spring plumage (no picture does it justice), sitting and preening in the bright sunshine on a green, green spruce tree, occasionally singing so we shouldn't forget his thin, clear voice.

Robins hopped on the path ahead; so did Whitethroats, territorial beyond reason, and Hermit Thrushes. We walked for a mile along that pleasant path, and there was always at least one pair ahead, hopping, daintily pecking the gravel and turning over the leaves. Several times they allowed us to walk to within five feet before flitting on, regarding us with large, dark eyes. They offer the observer the choice of a song or a look, and today was "look" day. None sang there.

Next, a fast-rising warble: a Palm? No, a Yellowthroat with a slightly different song. Where would he be going, with a song like that? Labrador? Very soon the Palm, too was beside us, low in a tree and wagging his tail, but with his buzzy song, like a Junco. Then a pack of Whitethroats, and among them, singing to the sky, his rufous crest blazing in the sun, a Swamp Sparrow. Another short walk, and our heads were brought up by some very sharp "chips", right beside us but in the shadow of a bosky glade. There, six feet from us in the undergrowth, was a pair of Ovenbirds, in perfect habitat. A little farther on, a Ruyg-crowned Kinglet fussed by through the birch trees, not really interested in stopping to see what it was that wanted to look more closely at him.

Our morning in the sun wound down then. We walked four miles in all, past alder catkins sweet and pollen-laden, gently burbling brooks, maples and birches in bloom, with bluets at our feet. The kamikazi flies were only rubbing their sleepy eyes when their daily bread tromped wearily away to a day's work, feeling like a million bucks.

Fred Dobson

#### May 23 - Paradise

Threats of showers did not deter 19 people who met at the home of Jean and Bill Morse in Paradise on May 23. In the morning we drove to two ponds in Upper Granville and later to Faith DeWolfe's private viewing station of Ducks Unlimited Marsh in Annapolis. We

flushed a Bittern at one of the ponds, but the Sora proved to be a tree frog and the resident Coot was wisely under cover. We returned to Paradise for lunch, and were greeted by the sun.

In the afternoon we explored the woodlands on foot and were rewarded by a variety of bird songs. As a finale we saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a noisy Sapsucker, a pair of Hummingbirds and a Catbird in the yard. Thanks to the brave souls who drove from Halifax and the South Shore, as well as Annapolis and other local points. Our total count was 66--not bad for such weather.

Jean Morse

#### May 31 - Shubenacadie

At 6 a.m. in pouring rain, eight good sports (avid birders) gathered in central Shubenacadie for a morning excursion on back roads lined with birds. Until the rain stopped, which it did at about 7:30, very few birds were either seen or heard. The rest of the expedition was spent looking and listening to such things as Mourning Warblers, Winter Wrens, Killdeer, the tiny woods birds like both kinds of Kinglets and Chickadees, a few Nuthatches, flycatchers, many warbler varieties, a Virginia Rail, Sora, three kinds of hawks, and six woodpecker species. A Lincoln Sparrow put in an appearance, as did both jays (Blue and Grey), a Veery, Canada Geese, and enough other species to make a total of 80. Once again nature provided the material to entertain humans on an interesting and companionable day.

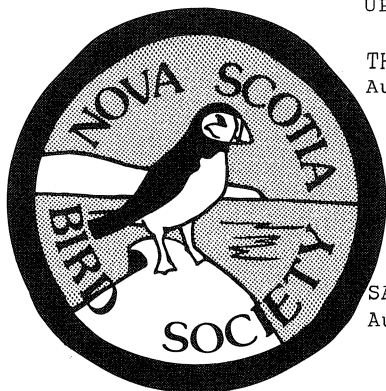
Roslyn MacPhee



One of the Iceland Gulls at Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, this winter, with immaculate wingtips and tiny bill, was almost certainly of the Greenland race-Photo-Ian McLaren



## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS



- THURSDAY August 6 Crescent and Cherry Hill Beaches focus on shorebirds. Leader: Shirley Cohrs (477-6036). Meet at 0900 hours at the entrance to Crescent Beach. Be prepared for a short easy walk at Crescent Beach in the morning and a fairly long rugged hike along Cherry Hill Beach in the afternoon.
- SATURDAY August 8 Yarmouth Area - shorebirds. Leader: Charles Allen (1-648-2752 or 648-2058). Meet at the C.P.R. station in Yarmouth at 0900 hours. Bring a lunch and footwear suitable for rocks and wet walking.
- SUNDAY August 9 Evangeline Beach (Grand Pré) - shorebirds in numbers. Leader: Jim Wolford (1-542-7650). Meet at 1300 hours in the parking lot of the Grand Pré Historic Site. Bring rubber boots. This will be a joint field trip with the Blomidon Natural History Society.
- SATURDAY August 15 Fuller's Bridge (Cape Breton) - shorebirds. Leader: Eldon Meikle. Meet at Marion Bridge at 0800 Hours.
- SUNDAY August 16 Pomquet (Antigonish Co.) - an early morning walk along the shoreline (fresh and salt water) for shorebirds and other migrants. Leaders: Bob Bancroft (386-2501) and Norman Seymour (863-6134). Meet at 0700 hours at the Provincial Building in Antigonish (for directions, see the June 21 field trip described in the April issue).
- SATURDAY August 22 Cadden Beach - our second trip here this year, likely with much improved weather conditions. The focus is on shorebirds, perhaps including lingering Piping Plover. Leaders: Eric Cooke (1-766-4457) and Peter Hope (1-242-2512). Meet at 0930 hours at Schnare's Grocery Store in Port Joli on Highway 103. Come prepared for a beach walk and a swim if you are so inclined.
- SATURDAY Sept. 5 to MONDAY Sept. 7 Seal Island - accomodation arrangements are essentially finalized for our Labour Day long week-end. The two-hour boat crossing however, is very much weather dependent, so Bon Portage Island will remain our alternate venue. Accomodation is limited on both islands so pre-registrat-ion (before Aug. 15) is necessary. The charge for the crossing will be \$25.00 per person. Meet at the wharf in Shag Harbour on Saturday at 0900 hours. Try to travel as lightly as possible; a bed roll and sleeping bag will be required. To register and for further information, contact Bob McDonald (443-5051).
- SATURDAY Sept. 12 Point Aconi (Cape Breton) - exploring a new birding area. Leader: Hedley Hopkins. Meet at Sydney River Woolco at 0800 hours.
- SUNDAY Sept. 13 Fall Round-Up - our third annual, contact co-ordinator Bill Caudle (465-3977) for an area to cover within the Dartmouth-Eastern Shore count circle. We will meet afterwards (1730 hours) at Shubie Park for a hot dog/hamburger

barbeque.

- SUNDAY Evangeline Beach (Grand Pré) - shorebird diversity.  
 Sept. 20 Leader: Jim Welford (1-542-7650). Meet at the Grand Pré Historic Site parking lot at 1130 hours. This is a joint field trip with the Blomidon Naturalists Society.
- SATURDAY Brier Island - the success of last year's Thanksgiving  
 Oct. 10 to long week-end trip (so eloquently reported by FLL in the  
 MONDAY January issue of Nova Scotia Birds) demands a return  
 Oct. 12 visit. The format will be similar-a pelagic trip for seabirds and whales, a hawk watch, owling and observation of passerine migration. Groups will meet each morning to exchange birding information and plan the day's events. There are now at least three bed and breakfast spots in Westport-the Brier House (now operated by Mrs. Claire Land; 1-839-2879), the Westport Inn and the Island Inn.
- SUNDAY PRESIDENT'S FIELD TRIP (Eastern Shore) - late shorebirds,  
 Nov. 1 lingering waterfowl and early winter arrivals. Leader: Bob Dickie (443-0993). Meet at the shopping centre at the end of Porter's Lake at 0900 hours. We will visit several locations from Martinique to Lawrencetown
- SATURDAY Sewer Stroll I - Leader: Bill Caudle (465-3977). This  
 Jan. 16 trip will begin at Herring Cove from where we will work our way into the city (with a side trip to the Volvo Plant), then around the Bedford Basin, several stops in Dartmouth before visiting Hartlen's Point in late afternoon.
- SATURDAY Annapolis County/Digby area-wintering waterfowl and gulls  
 Feb. 13 Leader: Peter Hope (1-242-2512). Meet in the parking lot of the church on the old Highway # 1 in the town of Annapolis Royal at 1000 hours. We will tour the ice-free areas at the Causeway, in Digby and in Bear River to view the abundant waterfowl at this time of year (possible Barrow's Goldeneye and Lesser Black-backed Gull).
- SUNDAY Sewer Stroll II- Leader: Bill Caudle (465-3977). This  
 Feb. 28 trip will begin in the sunshine at 0830 hours at Hartlen's Point and work in a counterclockwise direction through Eastern Passage, Dartmouth (including Sullivan's Pond), Bedford (Mill Cove) and Halifax (Volvo Plant) towards Herring Cove.

Any questions on mainland field trips can be addressed to current Field Trip Co-ordinators, Bob and Wendy McDonald (443-5051). Suggestions for future field trips should be made to incoming Co-ordinator Dave Currie (479-630).

## THE FIFTH IN A SERIES ABOUT MEMBERS.....

## PROFILES.....



## Meet Don Purchase:

When Helen and I first joined the Bird Society, we went on a field trip to New Ross. The co-ordinators of the trip greeted us warmly, introduced themselves as Don and Joyce Purchase, and then with the skill of real enthusiasts, proceeded to convert us into life-long birders.

Don Purchase was born in Halifax in 1927. He attended Richmond and Bloomfield Schools and entered Queen Elizabeth High School in the year that institution opened its doors for the first time. It was in this school that he met his future wife. Don went on to University but found that the "Scholarly life" was not for him, so he left Dalhousie and joined the Navy.

"I really enjoyed my navy years", Don said, "I met a lot of great people who are still close friends and, of course, I got to visit some very interesting places. I was in Egypt when King Farouk was overthrown and Joyce and I were married in a little rural church in Scotland."

Being in aviation electronics, Don was always posted to air squadrons so he spent many years on the aircraft carriers "Magnificent" and "Bonaventure". Promotions came quickly and within a few years he had achieved the rank of Chief Petty Officer. Eventually he was posted to National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa.

"To keep ourselves occupied on the weekends we went for a lot of drives out into the country. On one such trip we spotted thirty

species of birds we had never seen before. After that trip we were stuck on birding."

When they were transferred to Halifax, they joined the Nova Scotia Bird Society and started going out on the field trips. Eventually, Don and Joyce accepted the responsibility of co-ordinating the field trips for the Society as well as other duties and in 1981 were jointly given the Puffin of the Year, the honour awarded to members out of respect for their service to the Society.

Since retirement, the Purchases have taken several birding trips to England and Western Canada but, sadly, ill health has forced Don to give it up. For a man who so loved to roam the woods and beaches, it must have been a "bitter pill" to be forced to stop.

Characteristically positive in his outlook, Don pointed out to me that one can do some really great birding from the car.

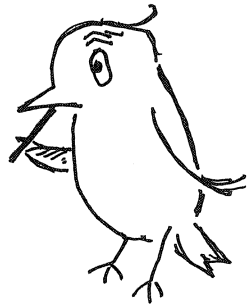
"Any regrets?"

"Only one, I wish I'd started birding a lot earlier in life."

Bob Dickie

#### BIRDING TRIVIA

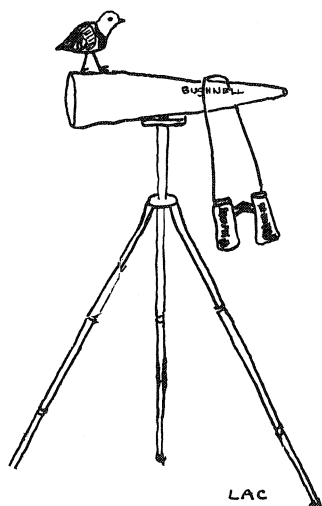
Answers on page 53



1. What is our largest Warbler?
2. Are European Starlings found in Alaska?
3. Who wrote "The Owl and the Pussycat"?
4. Which thrush, accidental in Nova Scotia, has a black breast band?
5. Which warbler sings "Oh see see Susee"?
6. Who was the first President of the Nova Scotia Bird Society?
7. Which family of birds' Latin name means "cave dwellers"?
8. Brewster's Warbler is a hybrid of which two other warblers?
9. Name the six species of wren to have occurred in Nova Scotia.
10. Which jaeger is the longest and has the broadest tail?

## SO YOU WANT TO BUY A TELESCOPE!

--John Cohrs



I hesitate to advise anyone contemplating the purchase of a telescope for birdwatching. Telescopes start out as inanimate objects and end up as very personal belongings. A second difficulty that arises is that many birders are either specialists or have other interests that might well influence their choice. Some telescopes can double as telephoto lenses; some as astronomical telescopes; some are suitable for small woods birds or hawks; others for ducks or shorebirds; and some are more useful in low light conditions than others. Of course, like cameras and binoculars you can gain one quality at the expense of another. If you want high power you can't see at dusk; if you want to focus close up, you may lose in depth of field, and so on.

Having stated that it is almost impossible to give a universal rule on what is the best telescope, let's have a look at what a telescope is and what it can do for a birdwatcher.

There are two types available insofar as optical systems are concerned. These are the refracting telescope and the reflector. The refractor in its simplified form consists of two lenses in a tube. You look through the small end (eye piece) and point the large end (objective) at the bird. Again, to oversimplify, for a given power or magnification, the bigger the objective lens, the more light the instrument gathers.

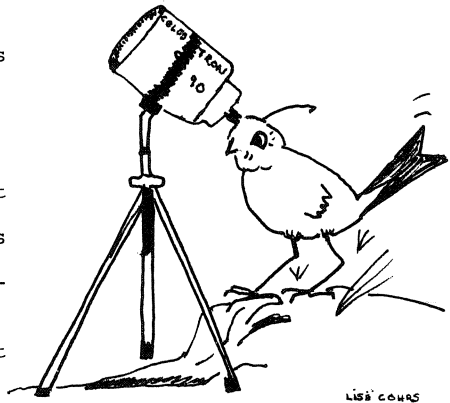
Commonly, objective lenses range from 26 millimetres (mm) to 80 or 90 mm, in the sizes of telescopes birders normally use. Double the diameter of the objective lens and the light-gathering properties increase fourfold. But in my experience, in general, so does the weight of the beast. The other end of the telescope, the eye piece, determines the degree of magnification. There is a formula --magnification equals the focal length of objective divided by focal length of the eye piece--but for the simpler souls, most manufacturers sell eye pieces marked 15X, 20X, 30X, etc., which neatly states the magnification when used as directed.--but here come the problems.

Firstly, the greater the magnification, the less the amount of light received by the eye. Secondly, the telescope doesn't magnify the bird only, but also the distortions due to heat shimmer of the atmosphere, the trembling of the hands if handheld, the shaking of the scope and tripod in the wind and any haze or precipitation. So higher powers may not be of much use if the "seeing" conditions are poor. Thirdly, the higher the power, given a particular telescope, the less the depth of field. Where at 15X you might focus sharply on one bird, another bird four feet in front of it and a third, four feet behind, at 60X you might well be looking at a very sharply focussed head of a duck that appears to be attached to a vaguely defined barrage balloon rather than a body. So don't go overboard for high power.

Most of the scopes you see on a field trip are refractors like the Bushnell Spacemaster, Greenkat or Swift. Almost all are prismatic like your binoculars, to increase the focal length without extending the physical length (who wants to carry a scope 3 ft long and weighing 18 pounds through the woods). The eyepiece arrangements should be one of three types. These are:

- 1) Interchangeable eyepieces, usually screwed in place but could be friction fit. The Bushnell is this type. Eyepieces with powers from 15X to 60X are available with some in wide angle type. To change powers remove one eyepiece and substitute another--a one-minute operation. If one power is all you need for a day's outing, this system provides the clearest image and a simple rugged system. A light weight adaptor is available to convert this type to a 750-3000 mm telephoto lens.
- 2) A "Zoom" eyepiece of variable power, usually 20X to 45X. This permits scanning at a low power with a wide field of view (to locate a bird) and then zooming to a higher power to examine it. This is my preference but of course you pay the price of decreased light, not as sharp an image, often a requirement to refocus, and a more delicate and complicated instrument.
- 3) A Turret eyepiece, comprising a mounting disc containing three to five eyepieces from 15X to 60X. The advantages are the same as the "Zoom" above. The disadvantages are that it is heavier, and extremely fragile and needs very careful handling.

The other common telescope is the reflector. Here the light enters the objective (big) end, usually 90 mm. in diameter or greater (up to 14 inches in a so-called portable instrument) is reflected from a curved mirror to another curved mirror and out the eyepiece either at the end or on the side. This system of reflected light back and forth has the effect of folding up what would normally be a very long telescope into something manageable. The Celestron 90, for example, has a 40" focal length folded into a tube about 12" long. So, instead of pointing a yardstick at a bird (and carrying it about) you can have a foot rule.



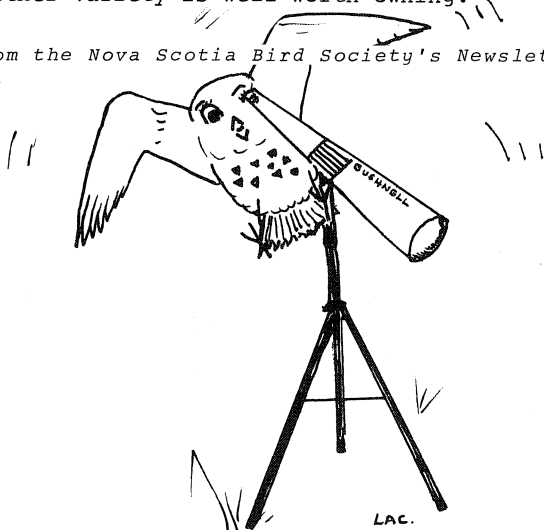
These telescopes are basically astronomical with a few optical boxes of tricks to invert the image so that the bird is not standing on its head and to reverse it right to left so you can read its license number (on the band). They provide a lot of objective lens in a light weight so they can be used in poor light. Eyepieces are not too expensive so that several powers are obtainable, but their best feature is that they are excellent telescopes for star watching, and they make acceptable telephoto lenses in the 1000 mm.- 2000 mm. range. So the birdwatcher/photographer has a versatile instrument. The drawback is cost - a 90 mm. or 3 in. unit can range from \$750.00 for a Celestron 90 to \$3600.00 for a Questar. Other disadvantages are that they are delicate, have a small depth of field and tend to be stiff focussing in cold weather.

How can all this be summed up for someone buying their first scope? Not easily, but here goes:

- 1) Don't go power crazy. Most of your scoping will be done at 20X. If you can splurge a bit, cover 15X (for dark days) and 40X. Very little use will be found for 60X.
- 2) Do buy a scope which accepts interchangeable eyepieces. A fixed scope at 20X costing several hundred dollars is not as good a buy as one which can be changed to 15X and 40X or "zoomed" by adding sixty dollar eyepieces.
- 3) If you are principally a birder with only a passing interest in astronomy and photography, a refractor is the best to buy - rugged, light weight and good looking. If you wish to take photographs occasionally for record purposes a model which can be fitted to a camera is desirable.
- 4) On the other hand, if you are interested in much photography or astronomy, it is worth considering a 3" or 5" reflector. The extra cost is not worth it for birding alone, but as a three-purpose instrument the reflector is a very good investment.
- 5) Get a good quality. There may be some inexpensive bargains on the market, but I haven't seen any. The cheap scopes either lack sharpness of image, depth of field, or bright image or are poorly designed with internal parts in easily broken plastic. A good Swift or Bushnell can stand a great deal of abuse. I don't recommend dropping them on rocky beaches, but I have done so with mine and it survived.
- 6) Make sure you have a sturdy tripod or monopod. Most people cannot handhold even a 15X scope without tremor and few can even use a gun stock to support a 20X.
- 7) Finally - try before you buy. Look through other people's scopes. Borrow one if you can and see that it does what you expect. Try them out in the store on bright and dark objects and see how closely they will focus.

Whatever type you favour, do go ahead and get a scope, it opens up much new and exciting birding. The relative merits and drawbacks of refractor versus reflector will never be completely resolved, but a good scope of either variety is well worth owning.

*Reprinted from the Nova Scotia Bird Society's Newsletter Vol. 21, No. 2, April 1979.*



YARMOUTH-PORTLAND-YARMOUTH, May 22, 23

Edward Keeble

I embarked on May 22, not knowing quite what to expect and found the crew all clambering over the other side having a lifeboat practice, leaving behind them a skeleton staff sporting white tuxedos and forcing Bloody Marys on all comers. It was going to be one of those trips. I had my photograph taken arm in arm with the giant white rabbit, disembracing myself in time to start seawatching as we cleared the harbour heads.

The outward journey had its moments, with a cracking pale phase Pomarine cruising languidly past and hundreds of Leach's Petrels arcing and shearing into a stiff westerly breeze, not to mention a biggish passerine which shot past in the other direction at deck level, looking horribly like a Towhee. You can't win 'em all. The return journey was something else. I awoke at 3:45 a.m. and stumbled to the outside door, opened it and promptly shut it again. There are times when the brain does not believe what the eyes are telling it. I had seen Yellowthroats--hundreds of Yellowthroats. I had seen them EVERYWHERE. I opened the door more gingerly this time, reached out and picked up the nearest unprotesting bundle of phosphorescence; it felt real enough and thus emboldened, I ventured onto the deck. Of a guesstimated five hundred birds actually on board--with arrivals and departures all the time, shapes flitting in and out of the lights, calls from everywhere--I figured that one in every twenty-five or so was either an American Redstart or a Magnolia Warbler. The rest were Yellowthroats.



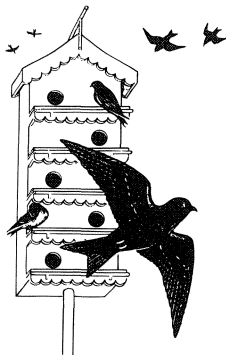
As the sky lightened both observer and observed seemed to come to their respective senses and I began to stalk furtively around the ship, ambushing the unwary. I identified my first Bay-breasted Warbler by lifting it off the passenger rail and holding it up to the relevant page of Peterson, ignoring for the instant the mindless chirpings of a Magnolia Warbler teetering precariously on my left shoulder. Other interlopers included an Ovenbird, which had taken up temporary residence in a lifeboat and a couple of Waterthrushes I found legging it along the bilges.

The birds left gradually as the sun rose and by 6:00 a.m. the ship was all but deserted. It all could have been a dream, were it



not for a single Yellowthroat armchair-hopping around the Columbus Lounge and a moribund Blackpoll Warbler on 'B' Deck. The show was over.

'Edward Keeble is a British birder who lives and birds in Greenwich, England. Ed.



### PURPLE MARTIN COLONY REGISTRY

The Colony Registry Program of the newly formed Purple Martin Conservation Association seeks the help of all persons in locating and registering Purple Martin colonies throughout all of North America in preparation for several projects designed to help this man-dependant species experiencing long-term declines within parts of its breeding range. If you know of someone who has a martin colony or is trying to attract one or if you are interested in starting a colony yourself, please write to the P.M.C.A. You can further assist by looking for martin houses or gourds in people yards during your travels. If you locate some please try to obtain the mailing addresses from either the street and house numbers, rural mailboxes phone books or by stopping to ask. Please send addresses to: The Purple Martin Conservation Association

P. O. Box 178,  
Edinboro, PA 16412, U.S.A.



### BIRD SOCIETY SLIDE COLLECTION

Bill Caudle is now the custodian and would welcome any good slides of birds in Nova Scotia.

Please send to:

W. G. Caudle  
1854 Shore Road  
Eastern Passage, N.S.  
B0J 1L0

Phone: 465-3977

FEEDING WINTER BIRDS... *in July????*

J. Shirley Cohrs

It may seem odd to be thinking about winter bird-feeding in mid-summer, but to establish an interesting feeding station for next winter, one should begin in September. As our next publication is in January (much too late), the time is now.

Many NSBS members are, I know, veteran providers with all sorts of good ideas and inventions to attract birds to their well established feeders. This article is not for them. We have quite a few new members this year and several have been asking for tips on winter feeding.

As I mentioned, feeding should begin in mid-September, when there are still lots of birds around. This is particularly important if a NEW feeding station is to be established. Many of the first birds to come will eat and then depart for the south, but WORD WILL HAVE GOT AROUND (really, it's true), that "here is a feeder", and you will have, with luck, a faithful few that will remain. Nothing attracts birds like other birds and this small clientele will bring in the winter species when they arrive.

I'm primarily concerned in this article with home-made feeders. Most inexpensive to make, and not difficult--the birds like these just as much as the most exotic, roofed, swinging, turning and hanging types one can buy.

Simplest of all is a lump of suet hung from a tree in the yard. Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches and Black-capped Chickadees all love suet. So do crows and starlings, who can decimate a "nice fat piece" of suet in a couple of days. To prevent this, or if your suet is in small pieces (large lumps are sometimes hard to fine), make a "bag" from hardware cloth (Fig. 1). Take a piece about 8 x 16 inches and place the suet on one side. Fold over the other side and turn in the ends with pliers. Add a bit of wire and hang it up. A Fat Log is most successful (Fig. 2). Take an ordinary fireplace log and drill holes  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 inch in diameter and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch deep. Render down some suet, mix it half and half with mixed bird seed, fill the holes with the mixture and hang it up. If you are feeling particularly affluent, you can use peanut butter instead. Birds that like suet LOVE peanut butter--it's the catnip of the bird world. However, do mix it with bird seed first--the thick cloggy texture of ice-cold peanut butter can cause birds to choke.

Some birds are fruit eaters, even when the fruit is frozen. Maybe you already have multiflora roses, barberry, mountain ash, etc., etc., in the garden. If you don't you can plant some for the future and in the meantime-try grapes. These need not be in superb condition. The half-gone kind obtained free or nearly so at the grocers are just fine (Fig. 3). Suspend two or three on a longish string from tree or clothesline and hope for Mockingbirds and Orioles. While these are not common, they are regular in early winter and love grapes (the small bunches and long strings are to discourage starlings, which can sit on large bunches and finish them in no time).

The standing feeder need only be a wooden tray, with edges to prevent seed from falling off, on top of a sturdy post (Fig. 4). I have one tray just outside a window with a tree branch for perching attached to it (Fig. 5). A tray feeder should be out in the open so that cats cannot sneak up on it but close enough to some trees or

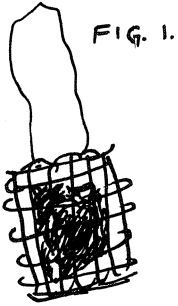


FIG. 1.

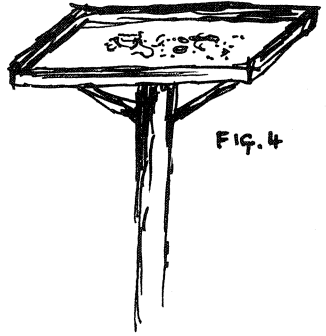


FIG. 4

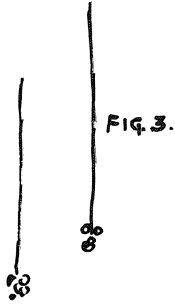


FIG. 3.

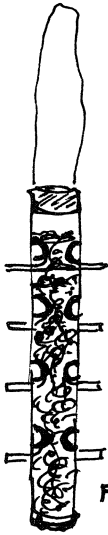


FIG. 7.

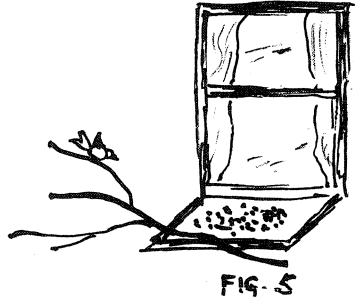


FIG. 5

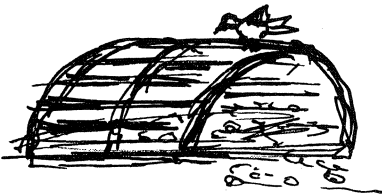


FIG. 6.



FIG 2

JSC.

bushes so that the birds can dive for cover from marauding hawks. (There are ways to "educate" neighbourhood cats at no harm to the cat, but I don't intend to go into that here).

I enjoy having a Lobster Pot Feeder (Fig. 6). For some reason, small birds enjoy feeding from inside the pot. Perhaps they feel secure and safe. They can hop in and out at will and no cats or hawks can get at them. Apart from anything else, it's a great conversation piece!

Once the feeder is in place, one must decide what feed to use. The main choices are chicken scratch, cracked corn, mixed wild bird seed and (the gourmet stuff) sunflower seed. By the way, it is much cheaper--less than half as much--to buy bird seed from seed companies--50 pound bags--than from the grocery store in tiny three to five pound lots. Avoid feeding table scraps and bread, as they tend to attract the less desirable birds as well as being an incipient rodent risk. Chicken scratch and cracked corn on and under the tray attracts Mourning Doves and Pheasants (even perhaps Grouse) if you live in the country. In town, however, they can be a disaster, producing a yard full of starlings and pigeons. Wild bird seed attracts most of our overwintering species--Tree Sparrow, Juncos, Song and White-throated Sparrow, Again though, such success is confined to out-of-town areas for the ubiquitous English Sparrows, Pigeons, Starlings and Cowbirds will, in the city, take over the garden, crowding out the other birds.

Sunflower seeds are the in-town answer--unfortunately they are not cheap. They will attract Blue-jays, chickadees, Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, Goldfinch, Redpolls, Purple Finches and so on. The bills of the "nuisance birds" are not suitable for opening sunflower seeds and so they can only feed on dropped bits here and there. Thus, the numbers are contolled.

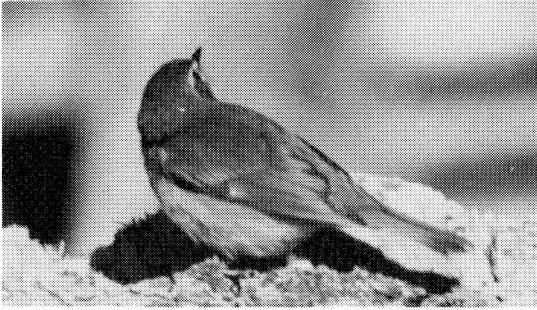
I live in town and feed only sunflower seed on my tray feeders. I use mixed seed to mix with the suet in the hanging feeders and in VERY frigid weather put small amounts well underneath a few bushes for any overwintering Song Sparrows or White-throats I might have.

Once having got going, you can branch out. Droll Yankee Feeders are not too expensive and are fun (Fig. 7). They consist of a clear plastic tube with holes and perches at which several birds may feed at once.

The assortment of "boughten" feeders is tremendous: thistle seed feeders for finches, hummingbird feeders (summer and fall only), window feeders, wire baskets for suet, enormous condominium feeders at over \$100. a go, etc., etc. There is even an electrical gadget for melting water in a bird bath. None is really necessary--in mid-winter the home-mades are just as adequate and usually better looking.

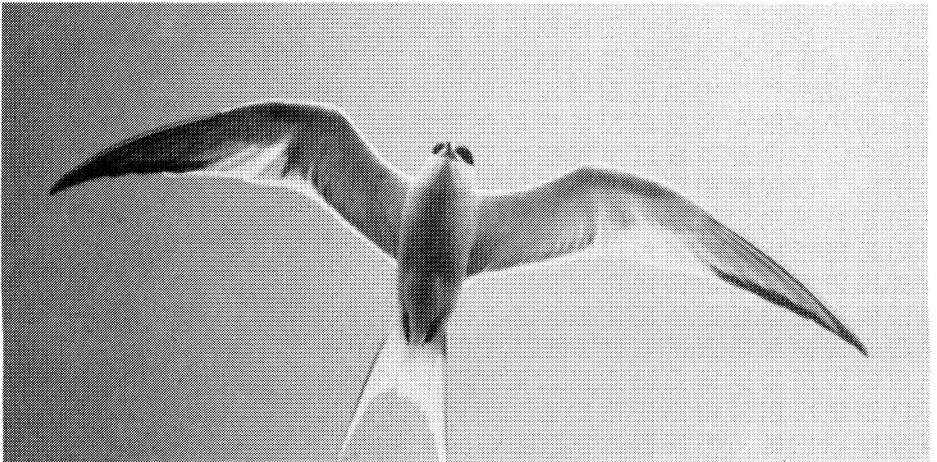
To conclude, I'd like to say two more things. One is that it is possible to construct a bird feeder from an old milk carton. Possibly the birds don't mind them, but I find them so aesthetically abhorant, like bits of dangling garbage, that I have included no plan for them here. The second is much more important. If you do start feeding and establish a band of "regulars", please don't stop providing until late March. Some of the birds coming may well have gone elsewhere had they not found you. In the cold winter months, they may be relying on a continued supply of food and may perish should it suddenly stop. Once feeding is undertaken, there is a responsibility involved, albeit, one that can be a joy to fulfil.

## MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPH



I had only one response to last month's mystery--from Judith Kennedy, who got it right. After speculating on the possibility of Yellow-breasted Chat, she noted the, admittedly obscure, whitish mark at the base of the primaries as a feature of the female Black-throated Blue Warbler. It is obscure on this one, probably because it is a first year bird--photographed on Seal Island one autumn. The warbler bill, very uniform shade of the upper parts and the eyeline markings are also useful clues.

This issue's bird is a tern, but which? Probably rather easy from standard field guides. However, good birders are now learning to distinguish terns from shape and manner of flight from distances of a kilometer or more. It can be done. There is an article in the current British Birds, co-authored by Ian Kirkham, who was coached in some measure by our Fulton Lavender, on identifying terns at a distance. Perhaps we should paraphrase it in a future issue of Nova Scotia Birds.



# DON'T FORGET

(AS ANNOUNCED IN THE APRIL ISSUE)



THE COVER CONTEST  
A COMPETITION FOR FUTURE COVER DESIGNS  
FOR NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS



FIRST PRIZE: GODFREY'S BIRDS OF CANADA

SECOND PRIZE: ONE YEAR -- FREE MEMBERSHIP IN THE  
NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

## JUDGES

Joyce Purchase  
Phyl Bryson  
Shirley Cohrs

## REQUIREMENTS:

- A sketch of a bird or birds
- Black and white (preferably ink)
- Size: to fit within our cover (5 x 7 inches)

## PLEASE SUBMIT TO THE EDITOR:

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

*All entries become the property of the Nova  
Scotia Bird Society.*

*There is no restriction on the number of entries  
for any one person*

*CLOSING DATE HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO  
AUGUST 15*

**NOTE:** We would also be pleased to have smaller sketches of birds (or bird related subjects) suitable for use as half or quarter page decorations. Please note that as the text of Nova Scotia Birds is reduced from legal size to 6 x 9 inches, when it is printed, the sketches should relate to the legal size page (8 1/2 x 14 inches). THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO THE COVER DESIGN as the cover is NOT reduced.

## XX INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS 1990

Preliminary Notice No. 1

The XX International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, from 2-9 December 1990. Professor Charles G. Sibley (USA) is President and Dr. Ben D. Bell (NZ) is Secretary-General. The anticipated Congress programme will include plenary lectures, symposia, contributed papers (spoken and posters), workshops, discussion groups and films. There will be a mid-Congress excursion day. Pre- and post-Congress excursions are planned to interesting ornithological sites in New Zealand and adjacent regions. Requests for the First Circular and suggestions regarding Congress organisation should be addressed to:

Dr. Ben D. Bell,  
Secretary-General,  
XX International Ornithological Congress,  
Department of Zoology,  
Victoria University of Wellington,  
Private Bag, Wellington,  
NEW ZEALAND.

## Answers to Birding Trivia

(from Page 42)

1. Yellow-breasted Chat
2. Yes
3. Edward Lear
4. Varied Thrush
5. Black-throated Green
6. Robie Tufts
7. Wrens (troglodytidae)
8. Blue-winged and Golden-winged
9. House Wren, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Rock Wren, Marsh Wren and Sedge Wren
10. Pomarine Jaeger

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor, NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS:

Following are notes on a bird I observed on May 11, 1987, near Bridgewater, Lun. Co., N.S., for about fifteen seconds at 7:30 a.m. The overall size and shape was that of a Tanager. The bird was observed in sunlight and was sitting about 25' up in an aspen, from about 75' through binoculars.

The following were noted:

- slightly small than a Robin
- bright yellow or orange-yellow breast
- heavy bill
- jet black tail and wings (I don't think it had wingbars)
- when it flew, it gave several rattle-like calls.

I compared my description with Peterson's illustration of an orange variant Scarlet Tanager. My bird was definitely brighter, yellower and had much darker wings.

Chris T. Naugler

Possibly a Black-headed Grosbeak? Opinions on the puzzle are solicited. Ed.

Editor, NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS:

It was interesting to read in the April issue the juxtaposed letters on the Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas from Wendy Tay and Peter Smith. Both seem to raise the issue of "quality control", although from different viewpoints.

Since I have been involved in reading hundreds of answers to the requests for information sent out to atlasers, I feel I can help clarify matters.

First of all, the 1034 requests for information sent to Wendy and to many of the mostly senior and competent birders in the Maritimes did not ask for any information on the identification of species; nobody doubts identifications of Common Loons or Yellow-rumped Warblers. Rather, they were automatically sent to every atlaser who reported certain combinations of breeding codes and species. The motivation was primarily to learn if certain codes were appropriate; only in a very few cases were to verify possible misinterpretation of behavior. For example, the use of the P code (for pair observed in suitable nesting habitat) was questioned for a wide variety of birds in which males and females do not differ much if at all in plumage. Most atlasers answered by giving behavioral or circumstantial evidence that made it quite clear that the twosome was indeed a pair; Wendy's loons would certainly qualify. I myself had to switch from P to H (species in suitable nesting habitat) for two rather cosy looking Eastern Kingbirds that I observed on a wire in one of my squares in mid-June; I had no real evidence except "feeling" that they were paired.

There was a gratifying response (82% to date) to the many requests sent out, and this has helped in preparing a booklet, to be sent to atlasers, in which problems with certain code combinations will be detailed. No doubt, however, some problems will continue to arise, and atlasers can expect to be questioned in future about



certain code combinations or rare species. We hope that this ongoing concern with the quality of data will help satisfy those, like Peter Smith, who quite correctly worry about the value of the data for future users.

I have no doubts about the value of this project. In fact, I think it is the most important organized activity of birders as birders (that is, in the spirit of Christmas Counts, roadside Breed-in Bird Surveys, etc., rather than as conservationists) that has ever been undertaken in the Maritimes. The Nova Scotia Bird Society is of course not directly responsible for this initiative (of the Maritimes Bird Atlas Trust), but I hope that its members can continue to give it the enthusiastic support that it needs and deserves.

-Ian McLaren



Spring is wood warblers for birders. A Yellow and a Palm Warbler photographed by Richard Stern on Brier Is., May 9.





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

1986-1987 Executive

President - Bob Dickie  
Vice-President - Richard Stern  
Past President - Bill Caudle  
Secretary - Don MacNeill  
Treasurer - Sandra Myers  
Membership Secretary - Joyce Purchase  
Editor - Shirley Cohrs  
Executive Member - Carin Somers  
Executive Member - Ken Gregoire  
Executive Member - Phyllis Bryson  
Solicitor - Leonard Kitz  
Auditor - Jim Morrow

Membership Fees

Life Membership	\$360.00
Single Membership	12.00
Family Membership	15.00
Institutional Membership	20.00

Note: Outside Canada please add \$1.00

NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS  
a publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society

---

Volume 29 Number 3

July 1987

---

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief	Shirley Cohrs
Records Editor	Bob Dickie
Photographic Editor	Ian McLaren
Christmas Counts	Mary and Ross Anderson
Seasonal Bird Reports	R.G.B. Brown J. Shirley Cohrs David Currie Ian McLaren Peter Payzant Francis Spalding
Cover: <i>Azor Vienneau</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Spring Bird Reports	4
Birding in Pictou County by Margaret Kenney	24
The Birds of the Bay of Pigs by George Perry	28
Seal Island-a Birder's Guide by Eric Mills	30
Field Trip Reports	35
Upcoming Field Trips	39
Profiles	41
So you want to buy a telescope-John Cohrs	43
Feeding winter birds...in July-Shirley Cohrs	48
Letters to the Editor	54

Use of photographs from NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS  
requires written permission from the photographer.

Cost of the publication of this periodical is partially born by  
the Nova Scotia Museum.

ISSN 0383-9567  
Second Class Mail  
Reg. No. 4628