

*Nova Scotia
Birds*



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Cover: Alan Covert's delightful photograph of the Painted Bunting at the feeder of Ethel and Ray Helpard in Halifax on November 22, 1988. This was a first documented record for Nova Scotia and the second for Canada

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SPRING 1988

Bob Dickie
Records Editor

What can we say? February was February; some snow, some rain, some sun. Generally, in the Maritime Provinces, there were above average amounts of precipitation in that month. March was quite sunny and dry with several maritime centres reporting record low amounts of precipitation for the month. This period appears to have stimulated an early migration as a few species began to show up well ahead of schedule but March's relatively gentle weather was followed by a cold, wet, stormy April that set many rainfall records. Migrants moving northward during March's balmy days must surely have had a rude shock with the onset of the rainy and cold weather of April.

Everything is late, a fact that is born out by the low counts of most migrants. One good thing about having lots of rain...there aren't any forest fires.

I want to thank Keith Keddy for sending along the weather reports and again to thank him for taking on the job as editor for vireos and warblers for Nova Scotia Birds. Also I wish to thank all of the following for sending in the reports.

Charlie Allen (CRKA), Mike Almon (MA), Daryl Amirault (DA), Ron Arsenault (RA), Don Banks (DB), Judith Beaton (JEB), Sherman Blakeney (SB), Calvin Brennan (CB), Phyllis Bryson (PB), Betty Bushell (BMB), Lee Bushell (LB), Stephen Bushell (SB), Cyril Coldwell (CC), John Cohrs (JLC), Lisè Cohrs (LC), Shirley Cohrs (JSC), G. Crowell (GC), Marilyn Daniels (MD), Joanna Dennis (JD), Les Dennis (LD), Carl D'Entremont (CD), Delisle D'Entremont (DJD), Lisette D'Entremont (LD), Raymond D'Entremont (RSD), Jerome D'Eon (JKD), Ted D'Eon (TD), Bob Dickie (RBD), Helen Dickie (HD), Mark Elderkin (MFE), Margaret Ellis (MEE), Chris Field (CF), Bernard Forsythe (BLF), George Forsythe (GF), Sylvia Fullerton (SJF), Jay Gates (JG), Merritt Gibson (MG), Helen Hall (HJH), Hubert Hall (HGH), Tim Hall (TH), Sharon Hawboldt (SH), Phyllis Hemeon (PH), Ward Hemeon (SWH), June Jarvis (JNJ), Sam Jarvis (SJ), Fulton Lavender (FLL), Donna Lavers (DL), G. Turner (GL), Ruth MacDougall (RM), Gordon MacLean (GM), Don MacNeill (DAM), Jack MacNeill (JMac), Bob McDonald (RM), Bridget McKeough (BMM), Ian McLaren (IAM), J. McNichol (JMc), Burnie Moore (BM), Eric Munty (EM), Ethelda Murphy (EM), Linda & Peter Payzant (L&PP), G. Peach (GP), Nancy Peters (NWP), Warren Peters (WJP), Terry Power (TP), Don Purchase (DP), Joyce Purchase (JP), Frank Robertson (FR), Barbara Ruff (BR), Eric Ruff (ER), Tim Sabin (TS), Beverly Sarty (BS), P.C. Smith (PCS), Sidney Smith (SS), Francis Spalding (FS), Beverly Shanks (BSH), Richard Stern (RBS), Jim Taylor (JWT), Jean Timpa (JET), Miriam Toms (MT), G.W. Tufts (GWT), Judy Tufts (JT), Azor Veinneau (AJV), Suzanne Wetmore (SW), Jim Wolford (JWW), Paul Yates (PY), Dave Young (DY), Joan Young (JY).



Ross Hall.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REPORTS

FOR
THE JANUARY ISSUE
NOVEMBER 15

(NOT THE USUAL 25th)

Bird Reports to the RECORDS EDITOR

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

Yarmouth Co. (Yar. Co.)	Arcadia, Pinkney's Point, Tusket, Cranberry Head, Eel Brook, Chegoggin, Melbourne, Overton, all the Pubnicos, Forest Glen, Abram's River, Salt Pond, Sand Beach
Shelburne Co. (Shel. Co.)	Cape Sable Is., Cape Sable, Matthews Lake, Lower Ohio, The Hawk, Seal Is., Sand Hills
Queen's Co.	Port Joli, Port Hebert, Little Harbour
Lunenburg Co. (Lun. Co.)	Cherry Hill, Broad Cove, Petite Riviere, Green Bay, Crousetown, Crescent Beach
Halifax Co. (Hfx. Co.)	Three Fathom Hbr., Conrad's Beach, Lawrencetown, Cole Hbr., Mooseland, Rocky Run, Conrad's Road, Martinique Beach, Hartlen's Point, Oakfield Park, Laurie Park, Powder Mill Park, Chezzetcook, Spryfield, Tantallon
Colchester Co. (Col. Co.)	Economy, Glenholme, Denmark
Annapolis Co. (Anna. Co.)	Wilmot, Round Hill, Paradise, Sandy Bottom Lake, Annapolis Royal, Clementsport, Eleven Mile Lake
Kings Co.	Wolfville, Greenfield, Canard, Black River Lake, Gaspereau, Grand Pré, White Rock, Starr's Pt., Lumsden Reservoir
Cumberland Co. (Cumb. Co.)	Lusby Marsh, APBS*, Lorneville, Lindon, Streets Ridge
Hants Co.	Shubenacadie, St. Croix, Cheverie, Noel Shore
Digby Co.	Brier Island
Guysborough Co.	Hazel Hill, Lincolnville
Cape Breton (Guys. Co.)	Big Pond

*APBS-Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary
CBC-Christmas Bird Count

BIRD REPORTS

LOONS AND GREBES

RED-THROATED LOONS showed up in three reports, with 8 birds off Pinkney's Point on March 18 (PRD,CRKA), up to 6 at Economy on March 30 (FS), and 1 at Seaforth on May 7 (Blake Maybank).

The largest concentration of COMMON LOONS was at Three Fathom Harbour, where the Purchases saw about 55 on March 13. The first report of loons on inland water was of two birds on Lake William, near Waverley, on April 8 (L&PP), where they were heard calling at night. Other fresh-water reports were of couples on Sandy Lake, near Bedford, on April 13 (BS), Powder Mill Lake on the 23rd (L&PP), and Great Pubnico Lake on April 27 and May 7 (LTD).

There were no reports of PIED-BILLED GREBE from APBS for the second year in a row, probably due to a lack of birders being in the right place at the right time. The two reports we do have both come via JWW: 1 at Lumsden Reservoir (BLF,MFE) on April 2, and another at Hopewell on May 22 (Calvin Brennan).

HORNED GREBES began passing through in early March, when PRD and CRKA saw 2 in a group of about 14 mixed grebe species, on March 2 off Pinkney's Point. The South Shore was definitely the area to see this species. The Cohrs' and Purchases reported 60-80 at Cape LaHave Island on March 14, 45+ near Queensland on April 10, and 40+ at Green Bay and Crescent Beach on April 22.

RED-NECKED GREBES seem to have picked up from last year, with 13 reports of about 250 individuals. The first reports are from mid March, with 16 at Baccaro (Sidney Smith) and 10 at Crescent Beach (Cohrs'). An assembly of 125 off Pinkney's Point on April 1 was reported by DJD'E and RSD'E. When PRD and CRKA saw these birds two days later, the count was down to about 50. The Cohrs' saw about 45 at Crescent Beach on April 23.

--LPMP, ed.



Horned Grebes can sometimes be quite tame, like this one paddling among the moored boats at Mill Cove, Hfx. Co., in March. By spring the winter plumage of these birds can be quite grey, unlike their spanking black-and-white appearance at the beginning of winter. Photo-Don Keith

FULMARS TO CORMORANTS

Hubert Hall saw single NORTHERN FULMARS from Bluenose off Yarmouth on Feb. 21 and April 3, and another ca. 20 miles off Liverpool on May 15. Carl d'Entremont saw 3 off the Mud Islands, Yar. Co., on April 5, and Daryl Amirault saw 3 more, in the same area, on May 13. I counted at least 14 from Dawson, heading from Dartmouth to Georges Bank, on April 7, and at least 40 next day, on the Bank itself. Four of the latter were dark-phase birds. Eric Levy saw a SOOTY SHEARWATER over Georges on April 8, but we were too early for GREATERS. However, Raymond S. d'Entremont reports a Greater Shearwater from Georges on May 14 ("I thought that the shearwaters were late this spring, and by May 18 were still very scarce"), as well as a single Sooty there on April 30 ("this was the only one seen in 4 days on the Bank.") Ian McLaren, Eric Mills and Fulton Lavender saw one of each species off Brier Island on May 29th. Meanwhile Raymond, on his trips out to Georges, saw a single WILSON'S STORM-PETREL on May 1, and a LEACH'S on May 10. I saw neither species on Georges on April 7-8: again, it was too early. The only other reports are Hubert Hall's couple of Leach's off Lunenburg on May 18, and 3 more from Bluenose, 40 miles WNW of Yarmouth, on May 18.

NORTHERN GANNETS are our most spectacular seabird migrants. They beat their way north, along the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, en route to Bonaventure, Cape St. Mary's and the rest of their colonies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Newfoundland. The first reports this spring--his first sightings for the year--come from Hubert Hall on Bluenose: a couple ca. 3 miles off Yarmouth Light on March 20, followed by singletons in the same area on March 22 and 24. He also saw 4 birds ca. 19 miles west of Cape Forchu, Yarmouth Co., on April 3, flying NE towards land; "this is unusual as most Gannets at this time are flying southward along the coast off Yarmouth". Perhaps they're trying to re-establish their old colony on Gannet Rock, N.S., extinct these 100 years? They seem to have arrived in force on the Atlantic side in late March and early April. The drift-ice closed the entrance to Louisbourg Harbour on March 28-29, and trapped several shoals of herring inside. Calvin Dawe reports that hundreds of Gannets were diving on them. On April 1, Daryl Amirault saw 30-40 in Lobster Bay, Yar. Co. Fulton Lavender, Bob Dickie and Marion Allen saw 3 off Three Fathom Harbour on April 1, but "100 passing every half hour" on April 6. I saw 4 adults SE of Halifax Harbour on April 17, and at least 16 on Georges Bank next day. All my birds were adults.

Our first GREAT CORMORANT is the bird that Shirley Cohrs saw off Crescent Beach on March 12. She saw another at Green Bay on March 31, and as many as 17 flying over Broad Cove the next day. The white breeding patches were very evident on the Broad Cove birds, as they were on Hubert Hall's 3 birds off Yarmouth Harbour on March 24, and the 21-22 that Eric and Barbara Ruff saw over Beaver River, Yar. Co., on April 17. The other records are Francis Spalding's bird, heading NE over Economy, on March 25, and Paul Yates' sighting at Windsor on May 5, along with 20+ DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS.

There seems nothing unusual about the Double-crests, though Sidney Smith's count of 45 or so in Port La Tour Harbour on March 13, is rather large for so early in the year. Phyllis Dobson and Charlie Allen saw a couple on the Tusket River, on Mar. 29, and found them "common by mid-April". Warren and Nancy Peters saw a "V" of 23 birds flying over Little Dover on April 2, and at first mistook them for Canada Geese--but "no honking!". The biggest total is the 900+ birds at the colony at the causeway in Pictou Harbour, on May 2 (Azor Vienneau).

HERONS AND ALLIES

A belated account of a winter AMERICAN BITTERN comes via RBS, who reports that an emaciated bird found by Carl Haycock on Brier Is., Feb. 2 died next day. Our first spring sightings were late on May 1: individuals at Church Pt., Digby Co. (SCB), and at APBS (N.S.B.S. outing). Only 3 more were reported later in May. Seven GREAT BLUE HERONS at L. W. Pubnico on Mar. 17 (DJD'E) were early arrivals, the next being a single bird near Canard on Mar. 25 (JT). By Apr. 2, birds were at nest sites in Yarmouth Hbr. and at Boot Is., and 1 reached C.B. Co. on Apr. 3. There is no doubt that this species comes across water from the U.S. coast, as shown by one that landed on the M.V. Bluenose, 10 miles off Yarmouth in thick fog at 6 a.m., and hitched a ride into the harbour (HH).

There were single SNOWY EGRETS on Bon Portage Is., on Apr. 21 (PM,RBS), at Crescent Beach on Apr. 24 (Cohrs), on Sand Beach, on May 14 (ER), and at Cherry Hill on May 18-21 (sev. obs.). An adult LITTLE BLUE HERON appeared at W. Lawrencetown Marsh on May 5 (JWJ), and a different one at Chezzetcook on May 7 (BM), both seen subsequently by many others. A CATTLE EGRET at Port Williams on May 17 (fide JWW) was less off track than one that landed on an oil rig south of Sable Is. on May 20 (fide RBD). A single GREEN-BACKED HERON on Cape Sable was somewhat early on Apr. 26 (SS). The resident BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS were back on Bon Portage Is., and 3 more were on Cape Sable Is., on Apr. 21 (RBS).

--IAM, ed.

GEESE AND DUCKS

Two SNOW GEESE make the pages this time: Tim Curnew (fide JWW) saw one with several Canadas east of Port Williams on March 27, and several observers reported another at APBS in mid-April. This last was thought to have departed for good at 12:10 on April 17, when Blake Maybank saw it flying off.

The BRANT migration stretched from Feb. 27 (80 at Cape Sable: FLL,DM) to at least May 22 (9 at Brier Is.: Blake Maybank). Hundreds were reported at Brier Is. and Linden and 1000+ at Cape Sable on Apr. 30 (DJD'E,RSD'E, who add: "A couple of old gunners who talked to us claimed that two days before the number was much greater").

The Purchases chronicle the CANADA GOOSE population along the Eastern Shore between Cole Harbour and Grand Desert: about 7000 on March 13, 5000 on March 18, and 3500 on March 25. There were other reports of flocks of several hundred from various locations.

Two spectacular partial albinos at Starr's Point in late March were reported by many. JWW sent the following description: "...often close to road and unafraid of cars (but definitely wild, not tame)--one bird has a striking creamy white body, wings and tail. The back and neck are sort of light brown, with the usual white cheek-patch obvious--the eye is dark, the bill feet are sort of medium grey, lighter than those of normal birds, and the leading edges of the wings show some light brown feathers. The second partial albino was always near the creamy white bird (mate or sibling or both?). Where normal birds are dark grey to grey, this bird is light grey, and that gradually lightens to white at the wing-tips. The tail is whitish, the neck and bill etc., are normal looking, and the flight feathers are mostly white."

John Terres, in Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds, mentions only two reports of albinism in this species. He says that of 30,000 birds banded at Pasadena over a ten-year period, only 17, or about half of 1%, showed albinism in any degree.

Pairs of WOOD DUCKS were reported from Sheffield Mills (April 3, Mike Brylinsky), Quinan (April 17, RSD'E), Forest Glen, (Onil D'Entremont), and the Tobeatic Wildlife Management Area (April 16, Reg Melanson fide JWW) which had 2 active nests in boxes, both with 11 eggs.

The three GREEN-WINGED TEAL seen in the Chezzetcook and Three Fathom Harbour area on March 18 by the Purchases may well have been overwintering, but reports came in steadily from March 27 on, so they may have been the vanguard of the migration. There were 23 in the Canning/Canard area on April 3 (JWW), and 11 on April 16 at Conrad's Beach and Lawrencetown Lake (FLL). Other reports were of smaller numbers from various locations.

No one sent in reports of large groups of BLACK DUCKS this spring, although Blake Maybank saw about 240 at Grand Desert on April 15. RSD'E believes that "there are even more mated pairs of BLDU than last year" at Lr. W. Pubnico, where he saw a female with 10 newly hatched ducklings on May 6. Brad Sweet (fide JWW) saw a Red-tailed Hawk grab and then drop a duckling out of a brood of seven at New Minas on May 15. JWW reports that he saw only 5 ducklings there the next day. L&PP report a new resident flock apparently starting in Lake William, Waverley.

MALLARDS were also generally ignored, with only two reports: Ruth MacDougall says they are "showing up regularly" at Dayspring, and SM had 1 at Alder Pond on April 3.

NORTHERN PINTAIL, on the other hand, elicited much more enthusiasm, with 6 reports of about 60 individuals. Even so, this represents a continuation of the slow decline in spring counts noted since the high numbers of 1983 and 1984. As usual, APBS had the lion's share: 40 on April 2 (FLL, BM, RA). The Purchases noted a round dozen at Conrad's Beach and West Chezzetcook on March 13, H&HH saw a male and female at Salt Pond, Overton on March 14; George Forsythe (fide JWW) had 3 males at Grand Pré on March 19, and RSD'E saw a "pair" at Argyle on April 17.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL returned on the same date as last year: April 23, 2 were in a pond on the Sunday Point Road (H&HH), and a single male was at Sheffield Mills (JWW). There were 8-10 in the West Lawrencetown Marsh on May 5, and pairs were seen in mid-May at Home Pond, Canso (JNJ,SFJ): West Pubnico (DJD'E); and Upper Granville (WM, JM).

Our only report of NORTHERN SHOVELLER (NOSH in banding and Atlas parlance) comes from Amherst Marsh, where JWT saw a single bird on May 23. This is sadly down from the dozen or so regularly reported in recent spring accounts. There was likewise only a single report of GADWALL--two birds at APBS on April 2 (FLL, RA, BM).

AMERICAN WIGEON were on the very edge of not showing up in these reports at all this spring, with only two pairs reported: April 30 at the Port Williams Sewage Ponds (JWW), and May 15 at Upper Granville (Morses). In all likelihood, bad weather proved discouraging to birders and was at least partly responsible for these low counts.

Our first RING-NECKED DUCKS showed up at Rocky Lake in Bedford

on March 18 (L&PP), where there were nine birds by March 27. There were 10 at Drain Lake on April 23 (JWW), which is low for this species. JSC noted that there were none at Plublicover Lake, on May 12, "where 6-8 pairs have nested for at least 15 years". Other records of twos and threes came from Dartmouth, Canard, Economy, Church Point, Port Williams and Bridgetown.

The earliest (and largest) group of GREATER SCAUP reported was the 200-300 birds at Salt Bay, (PRD,CRKA) on Feb. 20. There were 50-60 at West Pubnico on March 1 (DJD'E), six at Pictou Harbour on May 2 (AJV), and four at Pugwash on May 7 (Blake Maybank). The only LESSER SCAUP report was of two in a pond at Three Fathom Harbour on May 1 (IAM).

Sidney Smith reports that a flock of 500 COMMON EIDER at Barrington Bay/Baccaro on March 13 had increased to about 625 by April 26. The Cohrs' report "hundreds" in flocks of 50 to 60 at Green Bay on April 23. No one saw large numbers of OLDSQUAW either: SS had 7 at Baccaro on March 13, and 17 off Pinkney's Point on March 17 (PRD, CRKA) remained until early April. There were 35 at Economy on March 18 (FS), and on April 24 there were 6 at New Waterford (JM) and 40+ at Crescent Beach (Cohrs').

There were only two reports of BLACK SCOTER: 120-200 at Green Bay on March 12 (JSC), and 2 with a flock of Eider at Brier Island on April 18 (H&HH). The earliest SURF SCOTER was the lone male at Port George on Feb. 24 (RBS). Small numbers were reported until May, when there were hundreds--90% males-- at Lorneville, on the 9th (Cohrs'), and 105 at Scots Bay on the 15th (BLF,JWW et al.). Late wintering WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS were seen off Port Lorne and Port George by RBS on Feb. 24 and March 1. Barb Ruff had over 100 at Gilbert's Cove on April 30, and there were 6 late travellers at South Bar, Cape Breton on May 21 (JM).

COMMON GOLDENEYE were well reported this spring: 13 reports of almost 400 individuals. There were groups of 10 to 50 at Annapolis Royal, Brier Is., Bedford Basin, Waverley, Cole Harbour, and Sydney Harbour between Feb. 24 and March 27. Several observers reported a flock of about 250 at Wallace on April 2 (FLL,BM,RA).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE is becoming dependable in Spring reports and probably no longer merits an underline. There were 2 at Annapolis Royal on Feb. 24 (RBS), 2 more ("very orange bills") at Rocky Lake in Bedford on March 8 (L&PP), and 4 at Northport on March 16 (FLL, Les and Joanne Dennis).

Eight pairs of BUFFLEHEADS wintered at Economy (FS), and were present until at least May 12, although FS feels that the later birds might have been transients. There were repeated observations of this species at Annapolis Royal, Digby Harbour and Salmon River Bridge, ending with a single individual at Annapolis Royal on May 21 (JWW).

A single male HOODED MERGANSER was in Mill Cove, Bedford Basin again this year, off and on for a week or more in late February (BS). Others were at West Chezzetcook (3 on March 13, D&JP) and the Lumsden reservoir (1 male on April 2, BLF,MFE). There were two active nests in boxes on March 26 in the Tobetic Wildlife Management Area (11 eggs in each) and 13! adults (Reg Melanson fideJWW).

The spring assembly of COMMON MERGANSERS at Eel Lake, is chronicled by PRD and CRKA as follows: March 13, about 50; March 24, 35; March 25, about 100; down to 13 on April 3, and by April 15, none. There were five other reports, of 12 or fewer birds each.

PFD-BREASTED MERGANSERS began to gather in Eel Brook on March 13, and had built up to 40 by March 25 (PRD, CRKA). Several remained until mid-April. JWW saw two males courting a female near Canning on April 3, and SS had 13 Cape Sable on March 26.

Our only RUDDY DUCK was reported from Cape Breton on April 30 (SM), but no location or number of individuals was available.

--LPMP, ed.



These two partial Albino Canada Geese were around Starr's Point with 40-200 normal birds, from mid-March to mid-April. Jim Wolford who snapped them, wonders if they were mates or siblings or both, as they were always in close proximity to one another.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

The BLACK VULTURE captured near Baddeck last October, after being kept at Shubenacadie Wildlife Park all winter and spending a week more in Cyril Coldwell's care at Gaspereau, was being prepared for release in May. (So don't "tick" one without care!) A TURKEY VULTURE report from last summer seems worth adding: Susanne Wetmore from Vermont saw one near Digby on Aug. 1, 1987. This year, our only report to date was of 1 on Brier Is., Apr. 29-30 (FLL et al.).

The first OSPREY was on the record early date of Mar. 31, at Annapolis Royal (Peter Comeau, Diane Amirault, fide JWW), the next appearing barely within precedence on Apr. 6 at Argyle (DJdE). Others were widely reported by Apr. 14-15. The Kings Co. BALD EAGLE count of Feb. 21 (see last issue) was boosted even higher by an estimated 33 ad. and 23 imm. during the raptor count on Feb. 28 (JWW). Note especially the high proportion of adults. They were refurbishing or sitting on nests in late March in C.B. Co. (SM), but we received almost no spring news from elsewhere. Seven reports of N. HARRIER in Feb.-Mar. were presumably of birds that made it through winter; a dead imm. at Pubnico on Apr. 7, may have been one that didn't. A pair at Hazel Hill on Apr. 16 (NWP,WJP) are safely classed as arrivals, and a female was nest building at Pubnico Pt. on May 6.

We have a few reports of SHARP-SHINNED HAWK in spring, but no hints of first arrivals. Four late migrants were on Brier Is., May 29. There were 5 spring sightings of N. GOSHAWK, one using last year's successful nest at Kentville on May 1 (RBS).

An early BROAD-WINGED HAWK was at Salt Pond Is., Apr. 15 (HH). The next was not until May 14 at Blomidon P.P. (JWW). An ad. and imm. at Brier Is. on May 29 show that migration was still under way. The Wolfville region raptor count on Feb. 28 produced 58 RED-TAILED HAWKS on Feb. 28 (fide JWW). A count of 10 on the same day along Hwy 103 between Halifax and Yarmouth (HH), might otherwise have been impressive! There was a handful of other reports, including one of a mating pair near Lincolnville, on Apr. 9. There were still 14 ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS at Minudie on Mar. 14, beating out the Wolfville region's count of 4 on Feb. 28. Two stragglers were near Argyle on Apr. 21 (DdE et al.). and 1 at Grand Pré on May 23 (FLL et al.) was very late.

I am told that the latest sighting of our shared EURASIAN KESTREL was across the border in N.B. in mid-Mar., but have no details. An AMERICAN KESTREL at Bass R. on Apr. 6 (W&PH) and another at Bridgetown on Apr. 10 were perhaps migrant arrivals and there were several late-April records. A pair was settling in an old flicker's nest near Chevarie on May 8 (KC). A MERLIN was said to be "on territory" near Amherst on Apr. 2, but another on Cape Sable on Apr. 26 (SS) were clearly a migrant, and our 4 other reports date after that time. No large falcons were reported.

Here's a plug for a new book on Hawks in Flight by Pete Dunne et al. (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1988. \$26.95 for non-members at Nature Canada Bookshop). It is a must for anyone serious about identifying these sometimes tricky birds. If you haven't already bought the Peterson guide to hawks, buy this one instead. It is designed to be absorbed before you set out, not for fleeting use on the spot. You'll learn much about "holistic" identification.

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

Our only spring report of GREY PARTRIDGE was a faintly extralimital one in Blomidon P.P. on May 14 (T.Power). RING-NECKED PHEASANTS were under-reported. One "crowing" at Wolfville on Mar. 30 was a more reliable sign of spring than the first robin. The small population at Hartlen Pt. seems to be building, with at least 4 fem. in mid-May (JWT). A "hooting" male SPRUCE GROUSE in Spryfield on Feb. 26 (FLL) was a case of hormones overcoming (bird) brains. More sensible were a displaying male RUFFED GROUSE at Overton on Apr. 8 (H&HH) and several "drummers" heard in Apr.-May. Numbers were thought to be "normal" by CRKA & PRD in Yar. Co.

RALLIDS AND CRANE

A SORA answered a tape at Clementsvale on Apr. 26 (SCH), and there were many at APBS in late May. A male "kerweeing" Dorothea Drive, Dartmouth, in late May be worth following up by metro birders who wish to peek at this shy bird. AM. COOTS at Sand Beach on Apr. 23 (HH) and at Starr's Pt., on May 5 (CF), were the only ones reported. Curiously, none were seen around Amherst on (a rather windy) May 30 by 4 keen seekers.

It is an evolving world when reports of SANDHILL CRANES equalled those of the rallids combined. The wintering Yarmouth bird was seen until about Apr. 15 (CRKA). One seen briefly but well at Grand Pré on May 12 (PSC, JWW, MT) might conservatively have been taken as the same one noted at Wallace Bay two days later (JWT), except that the latter was said by locals to have been around for a week at least.

--IAN, ed.

SPRING SHOREBIRDS

Despite this spring's poor weather, rarities rewarded the faithful. A male NORTHERN LAPWING in breeding plumage was at "The Tin Pot" near Yarmouth, Apr. 8 (JWT et al.). Lapwings have now appeared nine times in N.S., but all the others were winter vagrants.

Late April saw 17 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS on Cape Sable (SS) and but two farther north-east (SJF, JSC). There was one at Economy May 16 (FS) and a maximum of 18 at Cherry Hill, May 22 (SJF)--numbers well below those usually reported. The PIPING PLOVER was first seen at Cherry Hill, Apr. 2, where at least 3 individuals are in residence (SJF). The same odd numbers are reported from Barrington (SS) and Baccaro (H&HH), with pairs at Conrad's (MT, JWW) and Crescent, where chances of successful nesting are rated as nil (JSC). KILLDEER are back in normal numbers; the earliest was one at Broad Cove, Mar. 5 (G&HF, BS), and by the end of the reporting period there was a nest with four eggs at Middleton (JM).

For the second May in a row an AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER has appeared in N.S., this one on May 7 on the outer islands around Three Fathom Hbr. (H&TH). It is only the fourth record since 1907.

Six GREATER YELLOWLEGS were noted Apr. 23-24; by May 10 there were 75+ along the North Shore from APBS to Brule, (JSC). A SOLITARY SANDPIPER, rare in spring, was at The Hawk, May 21 (FLL, DM et al.). Early WILLETS were at Wolfville, Apr. 14 (PCS fide JWW)

and Abram's River, Apr. 20 (PRD,CRKA). By May 7, there were 85 around the Lawrencetown circuit (JSC), suggesting there will be no shortage of them around the province this summer. There are only four reports of the SPOTTED SANDPIPER, two pairs and two singles all in mid-May. An UPLAND SANDPIPER was at Little Hbr., May 7 (DY). WHIMBRELS, unusual in spring, made usually early appearances at Cherry Hill, Apr. 15 (SJF) and Cape Sable, Apr. 26 (SS). A RUDDY TURNSTONE, Apr. 26, at Cape Sable (SS) and a few on Brier, May 22 (RBS) are the only reports of the species.

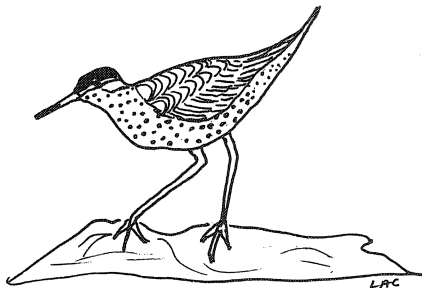
Two RED KNOTS overwintered at Crescent, kept track of by a number of observers and still in basic plumage Apr. 24 (JSC); perhaps they transformed themselves into the two in breeding plumage at Cherry Hill, May 17 (SJF) and May 19 (JSC). About 35 SANDERLINGS appear to have wintered on Cape Sable; by Apr. 26, two there were in breeding plumage (FLL,DM,SS). One other was on Brier, May 21 (RBS). The only reports of the LEAST SANDPIPER are 5 at Economy, May 16 (FS) and 1 at Cherry Hill, May 19 (JSC). Nova Scotia's second spring record of BAIRD'S SANDPIPER comes from Sand Hills. RSd'E and daughter Jacqueline on May 23, noted the salient fieldmarks and heard its call twice. There may have been a second individual present, seen briefly by Jacqueline. Flocks of PURPLE SANDPIPERS numbered about 30 at Port George (an unusual spot for them according to RBS), 75 at Pinkney's Pt. (ER,TC) and 103 at Crescent (JSC); 23 were still at Little Hbr., May 5 (D&JY). Four wintering DUNLIN were at The Hawk, Feb. 27 (FLL, DM), one was still there Apr. 26 (SS). Rounding out the rarities, Nova Scotia's third spring BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER was at Annapolis Royal, May 21 (JWW,MT,B&BT).

An early COMMON SNIPE was at Hartlen's Pt., Mar. 26 (FLL). By Apr. 11, two were at Big Pond (JM) and before month's end it was widely reported. An AMERICAN WOODCOCK found only frozen ground at the Cohrs' in Green Bay on Mar. 15, but three more arrived before the end of the month. By Apr. 15, there was a nest with eggs in Yarmouth (fide JWW), while at Clementsvale nuptial flights were occurring, the male singing from the ground (SCH).

To sum up, some of the more regular species were present in low numbers (Black-bellied Plover, Least Sandpiper) or missing altogether (Semipalmated Plover & Sandpiper), while the number of rarities was well above normal.

CORRECTION: Comment in the preceding issue of NSB to the effect that Lesser Yellowlegs had occurred in Feb.-Mar. of 1979 was mistaken; there have never been later winter records of the species.

--FS, ed.



PHALAROPES TO AUKS

Ian McLaren et al. saw both RED and NORTHERN PHALAROPES off Brier Island in the last week in April. Raymond S. d'Entremont saw 25 Reds on Georges Bank on May 17. The pickings for jaegers and skuas were equally slim. Carl J. d'Entremont had a good view of a LONG-TAILED JAEGER in Pubnico Harbour, on March 28. That's all.

HERRING and GREAT BLACKBACKS were their usual selves. There was a yearling GLAUCOUS GULL at Canard Poultry Pond on April 24 (the Forsyths, Miriam Tams and JWW and Sidney Smith saw another, age unknown, at Cape Sable on April 26.) Fulton Lavender et. al. saw a first-winter bird in Cole Harbour on May 2. ICELAND GULLS of various kinds were fairly common, as usual. I saw an adult KUMLIEN'S on Georges Bank, on April 8. Sara MacLean reports an Iceland in Glace Bay on March 26, and another on May 2 - "a late date, but not a record". The Ruffs saw 9 in Abbott's Harbour, Pubnico, on March 15, and single Icelands in Yarmouth Harbour on March 13 and April 24; Hubert Hall, off the harbour entrance in Bluenose on March 24, saw several adults and subadults there.

Our first BLACK-HEADED GULLS were the couple that Sara MacLean saw at Glace Bay on March 2. There were several there on March 26, with their heads beginning to turn brown. The first ones on the mainland were the couple that Raymond and Delisle d'Entremont saw on Eel Lake, on March 11. One was in spring and the other still in winter plumage. After that, the Purchases saw 7 (3 with dark heads) at Conrad's Beach on March 18, Jack MacLeod had 12 at Edmondsville, C.B., on April 24: "my best sighting to date". We have only two BONAPARTE'S GULL sightings to match these: Richard Stern's bird at Brier Island, along with Black-headed, on March 5, and the one the d'Entremonts saw at Eel Lake on March 11. Both of them were in spring plumage.

There are two sightings of RING-BILLED GULLS. Phyllis Dobson and Charlie Allen found the usual flock--40+ birds--at Eel Brook on March 26, and Jim Wolford saw 25 adults at Starr's Point on April 16. Helen and Hubert Hall saw a BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE, from BLUENOSE, on April 3; it was about 9 miles west of Yarmouth. I saw a summer and a winter adult, a subadult and 2 juveniles, on Georges Bank on April 8. The other sightings are Raymond S. d'Entremont's bird on Georges, on May 11, and Fulton Lavender et al.'s subadult at Lower Shag Harbour on May 20.

The first startling tern is the Halls' CASPIAN at Overton on April 23 and 26, feeding on a goldfish pond ("rich diet!"). The other is the LEAST TERN that Ian McLaren et al. reported from Eastern Passage on May 1. Ian says that the first ARCTIC TERNS arrived off Brier Island on May 9-10, more or less as usual. Apart from these, there was Sara MacLean's COMMON TERN in Cape Breton on April 30, Jack MacLeod's 24 at Point Edward on May 15, and Don Purchase's bird in West Marsh, Lawrencetown, May 25. He also saw 25 Arctics on the same day on Lawrencetown Lake.

Finally, there are the Auks. Richard Stern saw a THICK-BILLED MURRE off Port George on March 1. I had a good view of a pair of COMMONS on Georges Bank on April 8: one almost in summer plumage, the other half-and-half. There was no sign of any DOVEKIES. I didn't see any RAZORBILLS either--but Raymond S. d'Entremont saw several there, between May 10-18. Sidney Smith saw 23 BLACK GUILLEMOTS off West Baccaro on March 13, and the Halls saw 4 off Brier Island on April 18-2 in summer plumage, and 2 in winter. Hubert, on Bluenose, also saw our only ATLANTIC PUFFIN; it was 17 miles west of Yarmouth, April 5.

DOVES, CUCKOO.

Let's ignore ROCK DOVES this time, although there was one report of them. Large numbers of MOURNING DOVES remained at feeders until late Mar. and early Apr. (up to 70 at L.W. Pubnico; DJdE), and some were still being fed through May. Ted D'Eon heard them "cooing" first on Apr. 1, and others were heard in mid-May. A bird at Hazel Hill from May 14 (WJP,NWP) could have been a migrant arrival. Our only cuckoo was an evidently unwell YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO at Hazel Hill on May 8 (LS&BMB).

OWLS

An early nest of GREAT HORNED OWL with 3 eggs was found near Melanson on Feb. 26 by Lloyd Duncanson. Jim Wolford reports on Cyril Coldwell's semi-wild female, nesting with her wild mate on Cyril's front yard nest platform. She had 2 chicks this year, hatched before Apr. 15 and fledged on May 16 and 20. In previous years she was unsuccessful in hatching any eggs. This year's 2 chicks were probably from 2 eggs added to her 3 and fostered by her. Her schedule was about 10 days earlier this year than last, which may reflect growing experience and competence. Maybe she'll hatch her own next time. A nesting pair at Cheverie, fledged young on May 8 (KC), while at Green Bay, 3 were off by May 14 (JSC). There were 4 other reports of hooting birds. It's hard to be exact, but I reckon that at least 8 additional SNOWY OWLS can be added to the accounting of this winter's unprecedented invasion. Probably few make it back north, and dead individuals were found at Cherry Hill, on Brier Is., and in Yar. Co. The latest was at Grand Pré on May 5 (BLF).

According to JWW, the Forsythe-Elderkin team had found at least 10 active nests of BARRED OWLS in boxes around Wolfville by May 22, most earlier than in other recent years. Another chose an unusual open nest (old crow's?) in Kentville (RBS). However, most odd was the nesting fully documented in Barbara Hind's new birdwatching column in the Halifax Herald's Saturday supplement. This foolish bird chose to nest on a steep bank next to a Lun. Co. lakeside cottage, where it was discovered when the house was opened in early May. Understandably, the three eggs were missing a week later. I made a casual search and turned up a reference to nests in hollows (perhaps dug by the birds) in the ground, but none so exposed as this one. Our only reported LONG-EARED OWLS were 2 on Bon Portage Is., May 20 (FLL et al.). A SHORT-EARED OWL at Cherry Hill on Apr. 22 (SJF), was probably not settled. Another seen from time to time at Grand Pré was defending its area in early May (JWW).

A BOREAL OWL in C.B. Co. in late March was reported without details by SM. The earliest "tooting" SAW-WHET OWL was heard at Lumsden Reservoir, by JBF, who later shared it with others. There were no other reports, although they are doubtless widespread as usual.

GOATSUCKER, SWIFT, HUMMINGBIRD, KINGFISHER

The only reported COMMON NIGHTHAWK was heard near Economy on May 28 (FLL et al.), but others may have been cut off by our reporting deadline. Please send spring records of this bird for inclusion in the next issue. A WHIP-POOR-WILL was calling at Waverley on May 23 (L&PP). A CHIMNEY SWIFT at Broad Cove on Apr. 29, was at the early limit for "normal" records. At least 23 were

at Wolfville on May 9, and 220 there on May 21 entered the Front St. chimney between 9:05 and 9:15 p.m. (JWW). Hundreds funneled into the Legion Social Centre at Annapolis Royal on May 13 (SCH). There was a flurry of reports for May 14-17 from less blessed places. The first RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD was seen May 14 at Eleven Mile Lake, (SCH) and several more arrived in the next few days.

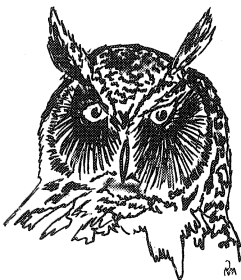
A BELTED KINGFISHER at Glenholme, Mar. 10 (FSS) might have wintered in the province, but another near Bedford on Mar. 31 (Bev. Sarty) was about right for a first migrant. However, others were not reported until Apr. 8 and in dribs and drabs thereafter.

WOODPECKERS

The male RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER at the Neil's feeder at Noel Shore (see last issue) was there until at least Mar. 3 (fide JWW). The earliest YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER appeared at Advocate on Apr. 15 (M. Elderkin), and another was near Yarmouth next day (HH). Among the few others reported were what appeared to be 3 males courting a single female on May 15 at Eleven Mile L. (SCH). Some DOWNY WOODPECKERS abandoned suet feeders in April, but others, perhaps nesting nearby, continued to come through May. The same was true of HAIRY WOODPECKERS. The only reported nest of either was found by JWT at Streets Ridge, May 21. The only report of BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER was of one on the Mersey Rd at Tantallon May 5 (AJV).

Probably YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKERS on Mar. 6 at Barrington (SS) and Mar. 12 at Yarmouth (H&HH) had wintered. However, others in these localities from Mar. 19 may well have arrived from afar. Up-province, the first in Lun. Co., was on Apr. 1 and in Hfx. Co. was on Mar. 27, but they were more widely reported after mid-month. A bird was on its nest at Streets Ridge on May 21 (JWT). There were 8 reports of 11 PILEATED WOODPECKERS, including one excavating near Denmark, May 10 (JSC).

IAN, ed.



FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

Because of the delayed return of many species this year there were no reports of OLIVE-SIDED, YELLOW-BELLIED or ALDER FLYCATCHERS or WOOD PEEWEES before our deadline of May 25th. (Reassuringly they DID come back after then and records will be included in the next issue). Earliest LEAST FLYCATCHERS were at Eleven Mile Lake on May 14 and at White Rock and St. Croix on 15 (SCH,BLS,GS). There were "sprinklings" from then on with a migration of 25+ going through Oakfield Park on May 25 (Cohrs). An extremely early EASTERN PHOEBE was seen at Pubnico Pt., March 29th by Raymond D'Entremont. On April 2, still early (average arrival date is mid-Apr.) the Peters had one at Hazel Hill. By the end of the month they had reached Big Pond and on May 22, the usual nesting was taking place at the washroom of a local campsite near Kentville (J. MacN, RBS). A GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER hung about in Powder Mill Park from May 15 to the 23rd (not there on 25th) and another was seen on Brier, May 22. A very early (by about a month) EASTERN KINGBIRD was reported from Economy on April 1--this supercedes the previous earliest date of Apr. 3 (FS). More normally time--oriented Kingbirds were seen in mid-May and afterwards at Canso, Wolfville and Upper Granville.

Thirty HORNED LARKS were still at L.W. Pubnico, Mar. 1 (DJd'E) on Mar. 14 at Cherry Hill Beach. JSC observed an extremely LARGE, PALE lark with sand coloured back, white and black face and breast--no yellow or buff at all. This was presumably of the enthymia race. It stayed until Apr. 1. The "prairie race" of Horned Lake (alpestris) was at Conrad's Beach on Apr. 1 (RBD,FLL). This race, although paler than our more usual yellow and black faced praticola is smaller than the latter, not larger. The last noted lark was at Cape Sable, Apr. 26 (SS).

SWALLOW TO THRUSHES

Sidney Smith observed a PURPLE MARTIN on APRIL 3 in Yar. Co. Single birds were sighted in April and May, but the first report of the arrival of the Oxford and Amherst Colonies is from JWT, who noted them "going strong" by May 23. (See a complete nesting report of Martins for 1987 elsewhere in this issue).

TREE SWALLOWS were VERY late in arriving. They DID appear as usual in small numbers in early April but this was not followed by the main migration. CRKA & PRD sent in an unsettling report of 70+ on April 6 at Pleasant Lake which "disappeared" after the snowstorm that night--none being seen there again until early May. Only four were reported from Hfx. Co. on May 13 and ONE near Bridgewater on the 14th (Purchases, SJF). No large numbers appeared until May 22 and even then they did not seem "as usual". BANK SWALLOWS normally reappear during the first week in May, but only two reports came in--10 near Canning, May 14 and two at Cherry Hill, May 19 (JWW,JSC). CLIFF SWALLOWS were first seen at Maitland on Apr. 30 (10), and at APBS, May 1 (1). Then there were no more until May 15, when they arrived back at Annapolis Royal. They were nest-building at Conn Mills (Cumb. C0) by 21st (KLC,SCH,JMacN,JWT). The prize for the earliest BARN SWALLOW goes to Hubert Hall, who found one at Overton on April 15. They came in quickly after that in small numbers at first, but by mid-May, seemed to be up to the normal population. There were few reports of GRAY JAYS who are busy nesting in early spring but BLUE JAYS stayed around. According to Jim Wolford, they were sparse in the valley area at feeders but seemed plentiful in the woods. Others in other areas--CRKA in Yar.

Bev. Sarty in Bedford, Lisette d'Entremont in W. Pubnico and the Peters' in Canso, found they had lots of Bluejays around, right up to our deadline date. AMERICAN CROWS and COMMON RAVENS seem all present and correct with crows proliferating in suburban areas.

Soon after their spring "fee bee" calls were heard most BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES departed from feeders to nest in the more wooded areas. Very few BOREAL CHICKADEES were noted, most seen rather than heard.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES continued to be at an almost all-time low (see April, 1988 issue). Only eleven were reported except for a little group of four together at Laurie Park, April 14 (J. Purchase). The WHITE-BREASTEDS were even lower, only FIVE about although two of them appeared to be nesting on the Acadia Campus May 18-25. There were three BROWN CREEPERS in Green Bay March 12 and one was singing there March 31 (Cohrs). Other creepers were at Overton, March 24, Barrington, March 26 and near Hammond's Plains on May 15 (HH,SS,AJV).

WINTER WRENS arrived at Tantallon and Annapolis Royal, April 26 and Long Lake Park, Apr. 27 (AJV,EM). By the end of May they seemed to be burbling in all the right places.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS started singing March 17 at Pubnico Point. On Apr. 14, they were singing at Laurie Park and Clementsport and by May 9 there was a chorus at John Lusby Marsh (Purchases, SCH, Cohrs). A male RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET sporting his red crown had reached Markland in Apr. 15 (HH). The main migration hit on May 23-25--reported from many areas.

THRUSHES

The average arrival date for VEERYS is May 14--and there were no early birds this year. In fact, only three were reported in toto, two on the 17th (Clementsport and Paradise) and one at Avonport on the 18th. Only two SWAINSON'S THRUSHES were heard--May 10th at Tantallon, and 20th at Conquerall Bank (AJV,Cohrs). These two species are either very late in arriving or extremely low in numbers. Reports on the status of these two species during the summer are invited. HERMIT THRUSHES were late in arriving not becoming established in good numbers until mid-May, about a month behind schedule (average arrival date in Apr. 15).

There were no reports of any large inward migration of AMERICAN ROBINS. They came, and seem to be numerous everywhere, but their arrival was so slow and in such small flocks that very few people bothered to report them. Usually there are dozens of reports of "the Robin's Return". Perhaps they did not attract much notice this spring because so many overwintered and people were used to seeing them around. Their quiet infiltration began in Yar. Co., March 14, and spread eastwards during the next two weeks, reaching Cape Breton by March 26 and Canso, Apr. 2. (why Canso AFTER Cape Breton?)

CATBIRD TO STARLING

Canso hosted the first GRAY CATBIRD On Apr. 22, followed closely by Homeville, C.B. on the 28th (Peters, Sara MacLean). There were four seen in May, three in the Valley and one at West Lawrencetown (JWW), Morses, Purchases).

Thirteen NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS were noted between Feb. 25 and May 25--from widely spread areas. A BROWN THRASHER on Apr. 2 at Glenwood was probably an overwintering bird. A thrasher was seen in Yarmouth town, Apr. 24, and one sang on Brier Is., Apr. 30-May 1. One other was at L. W. Pubnico on May 17.

The status of the EUROPEAN STARLING seems to depend on where one lives. CRKA feels that they are definitely down in the Tusket/Eel Brook area, while in Cape Breton Sara MacLean writes that an unusually large number of starlings survived the winter. It seems that many other reporters prefer to ignore them altogether!

JSC, ed.

N.B. In the 1987 spring report, there were 4 not 300 Tree Swallows in the Purchase's yard--too bad; it would have been quite a sight.



No one sent a picture of the Wolfville Loggerhead Shrike, so Jim Wolford's nice portrait of a Northern, in a Wolfville orchard, will have to do.

Many thanks to Con Deplangue and Evelyn Coates for this complete picture of Purple Martins last year:

PURPLE MARTINS IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY 1987

	# Houses	# Nest Holes	Occup.	# Young
AMOS, Russell B, 39 Elmwood Drive Amherst, N.S 667-2538	3	64	30	4
DesBARRES, Charles A. East Amherst, N.S. 667-3283	3	24	21	60
ELIOTT, Ron A. 227 East Victoria St. Amherst, N.S. 667-8283	1	16	0	
NacDOUGALL, Roderick L. 206 East Victoria Amherst, N.S. 667-8234	7	120	12	few
ROSE, C. Austen 34 Harding Ave. Amherst, N.S. 667-8993	1	16	4	
N.S. Dep. Lands & Forests Brian Brown-Chief Ranger Oxford, N.S. 447-2115	8	160		80+
BEATTIE, Joseph H. Collingwood, N.S. 686-3381	No martins this year due to House Sparrows			
WALSH, M.G. (Skip) Collingwood, N.S. 686-3354	2	20	20	many
WOLFE, Ralph A. Upper Nappan, N.S. 667-7110	1	20	House set up some years ago. No success yet.	

VIREOS AND WARBLERS

The most interesting vireo statistic was a male WHITE-EYED VIREO, seen on Brier Is., May 29 (IAM et al.). Only our third spring record; this species has been regular in autumn in recent years. Our resident SOLITARY VIREO was noted by six reporters, for a total of about 10 individuals. The earliest report was of one singing on May 4 at Clementsport (SH), with the average arrival date being about May 11. No WARBLING VIREOS were reported, but a single PHILADELPHIA VIREO on Brier Is., May 29 failed to elude IAM et al. No reports of early RED-EYED VIREOS were received and indeed, the mid-May deadline is a little tight for this later arriving resident. They did not go unreported, however, as JWW received news of 3 individuals--2 near Hopewell, May 22 and 1 in Blomidon Park, May 23.

The warbler migration was unremarkable--more or less on schedule, with no rarities, and just 21 of the 22 resident species being reported. Numbers seemed low in some cases, but coverage was wanting--for instance, not a single report was received from Cape Breton.

The first two TENNESSEE WARBLERS were noted on May 19 at Sandy Lake, Bedford (BS), with just a few additional birds arriving in time to be counted. Though an early NASHVILLE WARBLER was observed, Apr. 30 at Sable River (PRD, CRKA), no more were reported for nearly two weeks. Then, a number of observers in Hfx. and Lun. Cos. indicated an influx, peaking around May 15. PRD and CRKA nabbed the early bird once again as they listed a NORTHERN PARULA at Eel Brook on May 7. May 15, though, seemed once again to be the date most actually arrived in Mainland N.S. It should be noted that this was a Sunday and a lovely day for birding, with the previous few days having been overcast and foggy at many localities. The YELLOW WARBLER was first noted in the Valley--May 13 at Wolfville (fideJWW) and May 14 at Clementsport (SH). Reports were 1's and 2's except for JWW's observation of May 20--"now suddenly lots singing everywhere in Wolfville". The CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER was observed first at Paradise, May 8 (J&WM), with 5 subsequent reports of 8 individuals from Yarmouth to Halifax by May 16. Though our six reports of the MAGNOLIA WARBLER covered only Hfx. and Lun. Cos., and the Valley, all but one was in the May 14-16 time period. The exception was a single on May 5 in Bedford (BS). Five or 6 were summoned up in one day (May 15) near Five Island Lake (AJV). The CAPE MAY WARBLER was covered well, with six reports of 10 individuals. Reports began in the Valley (May 13-15), extending to Pictou and Guysborough Cos., by May 22. The popular BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER arrived right on schedule, reported first from Powder Mill Park, Hfx Co., on May 14 (FLL), and observed there later by several others. All except two of the dozen or so birds were sighted in Hfx. Co--singles were noted near Hopewell, May 22 and in Blomidon Park, May 23.

The early returning YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER predictably was heavily reported. As this species is a permanent resident, spring arrivals were a little difficult to sort out. Overwintering "myrtles" included 40+ at Lr. Eel Brook, Feb. 26 (PRD, CRKA) and 70+ on Cape Sable Is., Feb. 27 (FLL, DAM). I would guess that Sidney Smith's Shel. Co. reports of 25 on Mar. 6 and 42, Mar. 13, were winter birds as well. April 3 may have marked the beginning of migration, when RSD judged a loudly singing individual at Quinan, to be a spring bird. April records were mostly Yar. Co. birds, but a few reached at least to the Valley and Hfx. Co. before month's end. By May 5, they were "common" in Yar. Co., and shortly thereafter were observed in good numbers farther east. JWW wrote of 20 seen on

the Cape Split trail May 7, and the Cohrs' ran into a close flock of 100+ at Halfway River, Cumb. Co., on May 9. Yellow-rumps were seen gathering nesting material at Eleven Mile Lake on May 14 (SH).

The first BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS were noted at Clementsport on May 6 (SH). Reports received were all from western N.S., but at least a few had reached Hfx. Co. by May 9 (AJV, FLL). The BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER arrived May 14 in Anna. Co., and by May 22 seemed to be back in its usual spruce treetops across the province. Eleven reports of PALM WARBLER were received, amounting to 32 or more individuals. The first report of a single male came from Overton, Apr. 15 (HJH, HGH). Six had reached Herring Cove by Apr. 26 (FLL), and 10 or more were reported from Tantallon, May 5 (AJV). Four or more made it to Canso by May 6 (BMM, NWP).

Only two reports of the BAY-BREASTED WARBLER were received--1 at Laurie Park, May 16 (FLL) and 6 males at Lr. Rocky Lake, Guys. Co, May 22 (AJV and Fred Scott). One BLACKPOLL WARBLER was noted at Powder Mill Park, May 15 (CF), with 2 there the following day. Reports of five later birds included a male near Hopewell, May 22 (NSBS). A very early BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER was seen near Annapolis on Apr. 26 (vide JWW). One was noted at Powder Mill Park, May 1 (JSC), and records came in thick and fast after May 5. However, no reports came from east of the Halifax area!

As was the case last year, AMERICAN REDSTART numbers seemed low. Only 4 reports of 7 or 8 individuals were received, the earliest date being May 15 in Lun., Anna., Kings and Hfx. Cos. OVENBIRD numbers seemed normal and though they were a bit late arriving, seemed to become established abruptly. May 13 was the first date at Long Lake Park, Hfx. Co. An unspecified number were noted at Port Howe, Cumb. Co., May 14 by JWT, who remarked, "none the day before". At Clementsport on May 18, SH thought "the woodlot seemed to be full of them". It was good to hear of 6 NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH--an early one, May 8 on Hwy 103, Exit 3 (ATV), 5, May 15 in the White Rock-Black River area (GF), 1, May 18, near Dartmouth (D&JP) and 1 at St. Croix (BSH-date unspecified). Nary a MOURNING WARBLER was reported.

Three COMMON YELLOWTHROATS were found at Long Lake Park on May 13. Indications are that numbers built up rather slowly, with reports of only a few singles thereafter, except for 2 or 3 at Paradise, May 21 (NSBS). The only WILSON'S WARBLER seen was part of a mixed flock migrating through Upper Granville on May 15 (J&WM). FLL and SH each dug up a CANADA WARBLER right on schedule on May 19--at Spryfield, and Hillsburn, Anna. Co. respectively. One was listed at Paradise, May 21 (NSBS). Subsequent reports were of single birds in Pictou Co., May 22 and Hfx. Co, May 25.

--KNK, ed.

TANAGERS TO INDIGO BUNTING

Not one but TWO occurrences of SUMMER TANAGERS were recorded. A bright male arrived at Melbourne, Yar. Co., on March 27, identified by Joan Newell. This bird was seen by many observers until at least May 1. The other was also a male first reported by D & J Young on April 9 near Little Hbr., Shel. Co. This bird as well was last seen on May 1. SCARLET TANAGERS occurred at Brier Is., where two males were sighted on May 22 & 24 (RBS); a male was singing near Kearney Lake, Hfx. Co., May 29 (Cohrs, Duncans) and a male was still on Brier Is. on May 29 (IAM,ELM,FLL,BM). There were just two records submitted of NORTHERN CARDINAL during this period. A very lovely male was frequenting the feeders of Diane Lowe of Lakeville, for most of the winter, staying on there until April 17 (fide RBS). The other was another male seen April 17 on Brier Is. and without doubt a different bird (RBS).

ROSE-THROATED GROSBEAKS were well reported this season with sightings from virtually all parts of the province. The general arrival date was on or about April 20 in northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton and during the first and second weeks of May in the central and southern areas of the province. Excellent details were provided by Dr. P. Smith of an adult female BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK which arrived on Bon Portage Is., May 22. This is the 10th record for the province. April 20 was the date BLUE GROSBEAKS were moving through. Although there were fewer than in recent years a pocket of five males and about 10 females arrived in Hazel Hill during the night of April 19 (W&NP). Other sightings were of a single male at Pubnico Point on April 20 and a female during late April at Louisbourg, C.B. (G. Lunn). INDIGO BUNTINGS began to arrive in numbers on April 19. They were reported from Yarmouth to Cape Breton. As with the Blue Grosbeaks which were caught in the storm of April 20, these little birds seemed to drop "en masse" in the Hazel Hill, Canso area. Nancy and Warren Peters along with Sam and June Jarvis found 31 of these birds that day and they believe that there could well have been hundreds. People in the area found many more for days afterwards. The Jarvis' had several gain access to their larder through a slightly opened window. As Mrs. Jarvis remarks, "Imagine our consternation to find our shelves stocked with Indigo Buntings", it was truly a once in a lifetime occurrence. By May, other sightings came from Brier Is., Broad Cove, Glace Bay and L.W. Pubnico.



CTN

DICKCISSEL TO SNOW BUNTING

There were just two records for DICKCISELS this period; one on Feb. 27, an adult male was found at Pubnico Head (FLL,DAM, et al.); a female was seen by Bev Sarty at Sandy Lake, Bedford, May 23. A male RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE which had been present on Brier Is., during Christmas was still present by March and occasionally singing until April 17 (RBS). A subsequent visit there on May 22 failed to locate this bird so it may have given up and looked for a mate elsewhere.

During March as spring approaches, TREE SPARROWS begin to disappear as quickly as they had arrived. The last remnants were 10 March 10 at Lewis Lake (AJV); 19 during March and just one left by April 4 in Dartmouth (D&JP) and two singing at Eel Brook, Mar. 25 (PRD,CRKA). CHIPPING SPARROWS were back and singing at Wolfville on April 29 (JWW). Others reported were one at Big Pond, C.B., May 8 (JM); Upper Granville, May 15 (J&B Morse) and in the Halifax-Dartmouth area, May 16 & 17 (D&JP,AJV). The only VESPER SPARROW was one spotted in its regular haunt, Wilmot, on Apr. 30 (JWT,DAM,FLL). Twenty or more SAVANNAH SPARROWS were found on April 26 at Cape Sable by Sidney Smith, and "firsts" for the season were seen on May 1 at East Lawrencetown (H&HH); May 4 in Hazel Hill (W&NP); and May 11 in Bridgewater, seen by Ruth MacDougall. "Ipswich" Sparrows were found in groups, the largest being 25 at Cherry Hill, which began arriving there on April 1, dwindling to just 10 on May 8 (SJF,Cohrs). Other encounters were 6 on April 1 at Conrad's Beach (RBD,FLL); 2, March 30 at Cape Sable Is (D&RSD); and two in Windsor, May 9 (Paul Yates).

The earliest FOX SPARROWS came on March 21, when the Purchases in Dartmouth had two arrive in the garden. A definite movement took place during the evenings of March 30 and April 1, when many observers reported single birds and groups of up to 10 from Chebogue Pt. to Big Pond. Others were singing daily at Lewis Lake and Prospect up to May 25. Migrating SONG SPARROWS arrived in earnest between March 23-25, throughout the province. These harbingers of warmer weather and longer days were well established by the first week of April. LINCOLN'S SPARROW was just reported twice thus far. One was a report of 12 or more birds found in an area called Lr. Rocky Lake in Guys. Co., during May 20-22 (AJV,Fred Scott). The other was of one found singing on May 27 near Kearney Lake (Cohrs, Duncans, DAC).

SWAMP SPARROWS were scarcely evident judging by the very few reports. The first was a single bird at L.W. Pubnico, Mar. 31, then no others were recorded again until Apr. 23, when FLL&MA found one at Bull Rush Lake near Tangier. Newly arriving WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS were seen in various locales by the last week of April, however, in very low numbers. The largest number seen was only 4 at Sandy Lake, Bedford. A single WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW was seen by Merritt Gibson at his feeder, Apr. 15. Usually we have a few of these birds enter the province during spring. However, as with so many of our passerines, the numbers of migrants have declined.

DARK-EYED JUNCOS were very evident throughout the winter especially where feeding stations were maintained. Large numbers were reported until late April, typically 20-35 at many locations. in Bass River, the Hemeon's had 85 on Apr. 22, declining daily to 3 by Apr. 29. With these numbers came some surprises, one, an "Oregon Junco", one of the subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco which was found in

Little Hbr., May 7 (D&JY). Another subspecies was the even more rare hyemalis mearnsi or Pink-sided Junco which was found and photographed by Jeanne Addleson at her feeder in Port Joli during March. This race breeds from southwestern Saskatchewan and southward into the Western United States. It has only once before been identified in Nova Scotia.

LAPLAND LONGSPURS were reported from two locations. There were 8 at Minudie on Apr. 2 (FLL,RA,BM); and the one found at Cherry Hill Beach on Apr. 15 was in full breeding plumage (SJF). SNOW BUNTINGS not only flocked in numbers at their usual spots on fields, beaches and along roadsides, but occasionally flurried to feeders. Lisette d'Entremont said that for the first time she had from 5 to 20 of these birds almost regularly at her feeder in W. Pubnico during the winter and early spring. There were fair numbers found at Grand Pré, Mar. 12 of about 100 and by the end of March, there were still a few left on Cape Breton (SM). The only April report came from the Port Williams area where Sherman Williams had seen two of which one was singing there on April 4.

BOBOLINK TO ORIOLES

The first BOBOLINK of the season was one which arrived at Port Williams on May 11 (LC). The bulk of these migrants were sighted from May 12-15 in most parts of the mainland and by May 20 they had been recorded as far North as Big Pond (JM). Although RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS were seen in small numbers flocking with groups of cowbirds during Jan. and Feb., the migrating flocks began arriving exactly on time by Mar. 21. Sightings of single males were first made in central Nova Scotia prior to the end of March. During the first few days of April, they reached L.W. Pubnico and the North eastern parts of Nova Scotia (LD,WJP,NWP). RUSTY BLACKBIRDS arrived earlier in March, with one seen on March 13 at Gaspereau (CKC) and another singing near Black River Lake (BLF). By the first week of April areas of Green Bay, Timberlea and Debert hosted males establishing territories. The earliest arriving flock of COMMON GRACKLES were 30 seen on Mar. 6 in Spryfield (FLL,MA). More typical, early sightings were on March 20-21. BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS were reported to be significantly lower in number than other years (a blessing for our warblers). Typical were 2 on Feb. 27, Lewis Lake (AJV); a few at Paradise on Apr. 1 (J&BM) and two at Stewiacke, May 1 (PB).

An immature ORCHARD ORIOLE was seen on Brier Is., May 21 (RBS et al.) and another a female was there on May 29 (IAM,ELM,FLL,BM). On May 13 the first NORTHERN ORIOLE was heard singing in Wolfville (JWW). One was found in L. W. Pubnico on May 14 (JD'E); a female at Green Bay on May 15 (Cohrs & DAC) and a singing male at Economy on May 18 (FS).

FINCHES TO HOUSE SPARROW

Relatively few sightings of the rather elusive PINE GROSBEEK were mailed in. The only sightings were 10 at Kidston Lake, Spryfield on Feb. 26 (FLL); two near Five Island Lake, May 8 (AJV,AC) and a pair found near Hopewell (JWW). Eric and Barbara Ruff accounted for the only HOUSE FINCHES this season. A male had arrived at their feeder in Yarmouth on March 14. On April 24, two females and a male escort accompanied Purple Finches to their yard. Small flocks of PURPLE FINCHES began to show in the Halifax area by mid-Jan. (JP), then a month later, more were reported in most other areas coming to feeders in groups of 2-12. By March, larger flocks of up to 40 were observed. Singing males were to be heard during the second week of April and on into May.

RED CROSSBILLS were sighted--however, in very low numbers. With the exception of 12-15 seen in pine trees near Wolfville, Mar. 20, the other 4 reports were of 1-3 birds in Halifax, May 11 and 15 (FLL) at Clementsport in April 28 (SH); and at Economy (FS). After the huge numbers of WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS which were found in the province last year, they have returned to more normal numbers. Sightings of from 3 to 25 per flock were noted from the southern most points to the northernmost and for each month from Feb. to May.

COMMON REDPOLLS were practically non-existent during the winter. On March 2, the Purchases in Dartmouth had just one and Merritt Gibson had 25 in Canning on the same day. Two more showed up at the Hemeon's in Bass River on Mar. 5, one was found at Sandy Lake, Bedford (BS), and the largest group of 30 was found at Lakeville on Mar. 13 (JWW). It was certainly a good year for PINE SISKINS though. They began arriving by late Feb., reaching a peak by mid-March and gradually diminishing by late April. By May, there were still small groups visiting feeders and present along woodland trails. The Hemeon's counted 100 to 150 from Feb. 22 to Feb. 29, then up to 175 in March and dropping to 6-8 by the end of April.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES were regular visitors at most feeders during Feb. and Mar. There were reports of 5-20 per flock from Yarmouth to Cape Breton in April and well into May EVENING GROSBEAKS were very irregular at feeders during Feb.-Mar. They practically disappeared in April but by May the more northerly parts of the province, Cumb. Co., Guys. and Cape Breton had a few to report.

The Ruff's in Yarmouth voiced an opinion shared by many that HOUSE SPARROWS were less noticeable than usual. Of the four reports received, three indicated far fewer birds and the fourth suggested they were only to be found in their usual spots.

--DAC, ed.



OBITUARY

LLOYD MACPHERSON

His many birding friends will be sad to hear of the death of Lloyd Macpherson, a founding member and Past President of our Society.

It was Lloyd who decided that a bird society should have a journal so that members could communicate and share their experiences. So, he started the "Newsletter", which over the years has become Nova Scotia Birds.

Lloyd was an enthusiastic birder who took part in our first field trip and many more thereafter. He was one of the group who first "discovered" Seal Island as a bird "Nirvana". For some years he compiled the province-wide Christmas Counts, as well as participating in many.

If one looks through the pages of Tuft's Birds of Nova Scotia, the name L. B. Macpherson occurs again and again in first or rare sightings, but he always had time for beginners and the patience to point out the most simple field marks--perhaps that is a suitable way to remember him.

--JSC

UP-COMING FIELD TRIPS



Tuesday
July 26

CRESCENT & CHERRY HILL BEACHES--focus on shore birds. Leaders: John and Shirley Cohrs (477-6036) Meet at the entrance to Crescent Beach at 0830 hours. Be prepared for a short easy walk at Crescent in the morning and a fairly long more rugged hike along Cherryhill Beach in the afternoon.

Saturday
July 30

ENGLISHTOWN AREA (C.B.) Meet at the Sydney River Woolco Dept. Store parking lot at 0800 hours. Leader: Sara MacLean.

Saturday
Aug. 27 FULLERS BRIDGE (C.B.) --Shorebirds. Meet at the Morrison Road intersection at 0800 hrs. Leader: Eldon Meikle.

Saturday
Sept. 3 to
Monday
Sept. 7 SEAL ISLAND--arrangements are nearly completed for the Labour Day week-end. The two hour boat crossing is very much dependent on the weather so Bon Portage Island will be the alternative venue. Pre-registration no later than August 20 is necessary to ensure accommodation. There will be a charge for the crossing. Meet at the wharf in Shag Harbour on Saturday at 0900 hrs. Try to travel as lightly as possible; a bed roll and sleeping bag will be required. To register and for more details contact David Currie at 1-876-8745.

Saturday
Sept. 17 LOUISBOURG AREA (C.B.)--Meet at Marion Bridge at 0800 hrs. Leader: Bertha Hopkins.

Sunday
Sept. 25 EVANGELINE SHORE--(Grand Pré) shorebirds. Leader: Jim Wolford (1-542-7650) Meet at the Grand Pré historic site parking lot at 1300 hrs. This is a joint field trip with Blomidon Naturalists Society.

Saturday
Oct. 30 EASTERN SHORE--late shorebirds, lingering water fowl and early winter arrivals. Leader: Bob Dickie (443-0993) Meet at the shopping centre at the end of Porter's Lake at 0900 hrs. We will visit several locations from Martinique to Lawrencetown.

1989

While we are delighted that our field trips are popular, there were some problems in 1988. Many trips were over subscribed, resulting in disappointment for participants who were unable to see all the birds. There were unwieldy numbers of cars on narrow roads and people became lost. To ensure that everyone enjoys the trips, numbers may be restricted in some cases. From now on, members are asked to pre-register for all trips. Leader's telephone numbers are included in the schedule.--DAC

Sunday SEWER STROLL I--Leader: Bill Caudle (465-3977). This
Jan. 15 trip begins at 0830 hrs. at Hartlen's Point and works in a counter clockwise direction through Eastern Passage, Dartmouth (including Sullivan's Pond), Bedford and Halifax towards Herring Cove.

Saturday SEWER STROLL II--Leader: Bill Caudle (465-3977). This
Feb. 25 trip will begin at Herring Cove from where we will work our way into the city, then around Bedford Basin and several stops in Dartmouth before ending at Hartlen's Point. Meet at 0830 hrs. in the Spryfield Town Centre parking lot (Zeller's).

Please direct any questions or suggestions regarding field trips to Dave Currie, Greenwood Heights, Box 369, R. R. 1 Armdale, N.S. B3L 4J1 or phone 1-876-8745



Cape Breton birdwatchers at Wadden's Cove during the March 26 Field Trip. From the left: Otis Cossitt, Hedley Hopkins, Wally MacKinnon, and the Andrew Gingalls.
Photo-Edith MacLeod

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

March 26 - Cape Breton

The Cape Breton people from the Nova Scotia Bird Society call the first field day of the season "Lingering Winter Birds". This year, that is exactly what it was. For some unfathomable reason, our winter birds vanished last fall, and all winter long a goldfinch or a Downy Woodpecker was something to be remarked upon. Some of us took in our feeders because they weren't being used, and the seeds were simply going bad in them.

So, the birds we saw on March 26 were the hardy survivors of the winter, and none the less appreciated for that. Twenty-one species, every one of which had been here all along, except perhaps the Canada Geese, and I don't think they had been very far away.

However, the Red-breasted Mergansers had heads glowing a lovely rich green, although they don't seem to be paired yet. One flock we saw was entirely bright males, a whole flotilla swimming and diving in unison.

The eagle that passed over our heads was clutching a big bunch of grass. You know what that means--his nesting preparations are just about finished, he is adding the soft filling to the nest.

The woods were still deep in snow, but our area doesn't rely too heavily on woodland travel anyway. We have the Glace Bay Sanctuary and the shore line, the Glace Bay Harbour Area rich in gull species, near enough to be viewed close up.

Ten observers turned out for the day, which isn't too bad for the early date. We enjoyed seeing our avian friends, and also being in each other's company, as we always do.

--Sara MacLean

May 18 - Prospect Road Early morning Warbler Walk

This day dawned foggy, soft and calm, and turned out to be just right for seeing warblers. We got going at 6:30, down the woods road with mud underfoot (hardly enough for rubber boots, but we had them anyway). Passing the few houses near the road as we hastened to leave the noise of the traffic behind, we heard a Northern Parula sing: propitious beginning. The Tree Swallows were already setting up housekeeping in the boxes provided by the occupants of the houses, and gurgled contentedly from their perches as the Barn Swallows swept by in magnificent motion. Robins were everywhere on the gardens and lawns. As were Song Sparrows and Whitethroats in the woods beyond. Soon we had collected our first Solitary Vireo, along with a Black-throated Green and lots of Yellow-rumped Warblers. We heard a woodpecker (Downy?) tapping nearby. Once fully in the woods and out of the traffic noise, we realized the warblers were singing all around us, that we had not missed the dawn sun time. A high-pitched tinkling announced the Golden-crowned Kinglet, and a bit further an even high-pitched note told us we had our first really good warbler--a Bay-breasted, which to our great joy came over to see us, and befriended us for the next hundred meters or so. When you hear them normally, it is nothing but a barely audible sibilant, from a treetop off in the fog, quickly followed by silence. Not this guy; he insisted on singing right in

our ears, and he was LOUD. he also wanted to show off his clothes, and we were most appreciative. He did most of his showing off in the same tree with a Black-throated Green and several Yellow-rumps. We also got excellent looks at a Solitary Vireo.

Then we were on to Big Indian Lake, to look for Loons. There were stops for Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees, to hear a Winter Wren tinkling in the distance (we heard more than one during the morning) and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the foreground, and there was an unknown warbler song. Was it the Blackburnian we normally see at the turn down to the lake? It went farther in so we went on, hoping it might turn back for us to see on the way back. It didn't make us wait: it WAS a Blackburnian, a male that decided, like the Bay-breasted, that we were worthy of his attentions. He sat on a branch before us, not 10 meters away, and poured out his song, surprisingly complex and nothing like the version on my tape, at least. The path to the lake yielded an Ovenbird, calling as ever for "teacherteacher", a Pine Siskin and some White-winged Crossbills in passage overhead, a Ruffed Grouse drumming, and a Hermit Thrush calling with his exquisite bells from a hidden perch nearby. The lake itself yielded no Loon: nothing but a few gulls circling in the fog

That ended the walk for some of us, but the rest pressed on back up the hill, and on to the Tamarack bog beyond. We hoped to see a Swamp Sparrow and a Palm Warbler there; what we found were a Magnolia as well as a Palm, some Whitethroats on their territories, and lots of spring peepers.

The return walk gave us excellent looks at two Hermit Thrushes and the Downy Woodpecker, as we trudged unwillingly back to the real world. Or did we leave that behind?

--Fred Dobson

May 21--Paradise Field Trip

May 21, 1988, dawned cloudy but clear--a miracle after wet trips in 1986 and 1987 and occasioning the remark: "we can eat OUTSIDE". We had 29 participants and walked 1 ½ miles up the South Mountain in the morning. The leafy cover made it difficult to see the birds producing lots of calls. We spent many minutes at the foot of trees until we were able to glimpse the elusive songsters, usually warblers.

In the afternoon we were able to get into the enclosure surrounding the Bridgetown sewage ponds, thanks to cooperative officials. There were 6 duck species in the pond. Six young Black Ducks added a happy note, especially for our two youngest birders. Two other ponds were not as prolific, although we glimpsed one of the four resident Bitterns. As an extra bonus, those travelling east toward home saw an Eastern Kingbird. That brought our total to 62 species. All in all, we had a happy time, and we thank all the enthusiastic folk who braved the ticks and who came to Paradise to join us.

--Jean & Bill Morse.

May 28--Warbler Day in Cape Breton

The last Saturday in May--May 28, is always Warbler Day in Cape Breton. There are a couple of unfailingly good places, but the membership professed to be bored with them last fall when we were choosing our itinerary. "Let's go to Brown's Lake, it's a long while since we were there." So Brown's Lake it was on the 28th.

I consider Brown's Lake to be an ugly spot. An undistinguished body of water, with characterless shores. However, there are some pools along the verge where the Green-winged Teal and Black Ducks nest, and some ugly, but productive, alder swamps. Last time we were in there, one of the group heard a voice he couldn't identify. He called me to come and listen to this bird singing and trilling. A toad. I don't think he would have believed me, except that we were able to find the toad.

On one side of Brown's Lake are long-neglected old hayfields. Swallows swoop over them and there are Bobolinks in the grass and there is sometimes a Marsh Hawk.

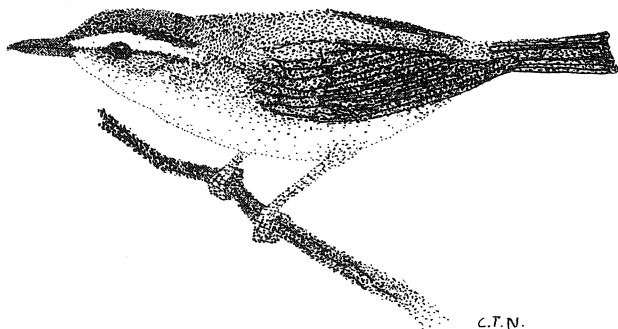
Let me tell you--we didn't get to Brown's Lake. Since we were there before, something desperate has happened to the road. There were big holes full of water, no cars could get in and it is a bit too far to walk from the highway. So, we went over to Langan and enjoyed the activity in Langan Basin but the nearest thing we saw to a warbler was a few Willets--but they are nice too.

One of our other good haunts has been turned into a coal dump, from a warbler wood to truckloads of coal thundering past. We sat on the cliff and watched the lobster boats hauling traps, with an Osprey supervising overhead and the Bank Swallows wheeling below us, going into their holes in the cliff.

Finally we reached Petrie's Ledges--no warblers there, either. Many, many goldfinches were busy on the thickets, an eagle crossing the harbour.

We got home to find that Edie MacLeod had had a Magnolia Warbler in her garden whilst she was gone and someone else had a Yellow Warbler. So, that's our Warbler Day--two warblers.--but a nice day, good companions, interesting things to see. Perhaps the warblers will be in the right place--or the observers will be--another time.

Sara MacLean



C.F.N.

SEEING THINGS

by Wynne Thomas

One day in the late 1930s, as war clouds gathered over Europe, Sir Neville Chamberlain, then Britain's chancellor of the exchequer and soon to become its first wartime prime minister, was moved to write a letter to the editor of The Times on a matter of some moment.

"It may be of interest to record," wrote the chancellor, "that whilst walking through St. James's Park today, I noticed a grey wagtail. Perhaps the occurrence of this bird in the heart of London has been recorded before, but I have not myself previously noted it in the park....For the purpose of removing doubt, as we say in the House of Commons, I should perhaps add that I mean a grey wagtail and not a pied."

Present day bird-watchers will understand and commend the chancellor's fine sense of priorities. What, after all, do grave matters of state signify when compared with the opportunity of being the first to record the appearance of species in a new habitat?

As a young schoolboy I was bitten early by the birding bug. The first bird ever consciously identified--apart, that is, from robins, thrushes, sparrows and the like, which everyone seems to be born knowing--was a European bullfinch. A striking rose-red bird with black cap, wings and tail, it was sitting on a shrub in the garden of our home in the Welsh hills. Even today, dismayingly close to half a century later, I can still clearly recall the visceral thrill I experienced from that sudden expansion of my visual knowledge. It was not that I hadn't seen a bullfinch before--in our area it was what modern birding guides would describe as "abundant"--but what made the difference was that, for the first time, I knew it to be a bullfinch. And, knowing it for what it was, I was really SEEING it for the first time.

Bird-watching then was harder work than it is today. Books on the subject were scarce (the invaluable field guide had not been invented) and binoculars, today regarded as essential, were both unaffordable and, in wartime Britain, unavailable. My equipment consisted of an ancient hand-held telescope that I bought at an auction (for the bankbreaking sum of 10 shillings) and a copy of T. A. Coward's Birds of the British Isles and their Eggs. This, while a work of considerable literary and artistic merit, was a far cry in terms of practical usefulness from the excellently illustrated publications on the market today.

Still, with the relentless enthusiasm of youth, I persevered and, with telescope to eye, a Nelson among naturalists, achieved a passing measure of proficiency. Like many country boys, I was also an avid egg collector. For several years my collection, housed in three neatly labeled chocolate boxes, was my most cherished possession, but over time, nudged perhaps by early stirrings of an environmental conscience, I grew disenchanted with egg-collecting (as I did with another boyhood pastime--fishing) and eventually exchanged my collection for a model airplane.

When I first started watching birds, it did not take me long to discover that they could not be studied to the best advantage in isolation. Every species has its favorite habitat, its preferred

roosting spot. Some European woodpeckers, I learned, are partial to hornbeam trees. But this item of information was of little use to one who couldn't tell a hornbeam from a hacksaw. Slowly, to improve my knowledge of habitats, I began to identify trees and, in the process, to really notice them for the first time, to appreciate their beauty, to recognize them for the gravity-defying miracles that they really are. Came the time, many years and a continent later, when my total ignorance of wild flowers seemed mildly inexcusable. They provided a new interest and their identification an absorbing occupation. (Like trees, flowers have the inestimable advantage of birds of not disappearing at the critical moment). And so on to the fungi. And grasses, and rocks, and butterflies, and fossils (a lifetime study in themselves), and insects, and mollusks.

Not to mention clouds. I have been a cloud-watcher for nearly as long as I have been a bird-watcher and a fascinating pastime it is (as Shakespeare recognized). Apart from the aesthetic pleasures to be derived from observing an ever-changing cloudscape, a knowledge of clouds and what they portend is practical and useful. When a layer of high cirrus begins to spread across the western sky, to be followed by gradually thickening and lowering layers of altostratus and stratocumulus, those classic indicators of an approaching warm front, I do not need a weatherman to advise me to carry a raincoat. When a towering cumulonimbus spreads its anvil of ice crystals across the horizon I am already prepared for the inevitable thunderstorm. Among some of my friends I enjoy a reputation for being a good weather forecaster. It is an art they could acquire for themselves in a month of cloud-watching.

I doubt whether I would have taken an interest in any of these facets of nature had it not been for my early interest in birds. It was, I am sure, one of those inexplicable enthusiasms of childhood, and my interest could just as easily have been piqued by any of a dozen other pursuits. But birds it happened to be, and they were to provide me with a passport to a lifetime of fascination with nature in general.

When my interest was first aroused, bird-watchers were regarded as a mildly eccentric but harmless minority and viewed by the rest of the world with a mixture of perplexity and amused tolerance. Bird-watching was essentially an upper-or upper-middle class activity, typically practiced by the landed gentry, the clergy, schoolmasters, politicians and statesmen. True to the tradition, the Right Honorable Malcolm MacDonald, Britain's wartime high commissioner in Canada, found the time from his pressing official duties to write a delightful book on the birds he observed at Earnscliffe, his Ottawa residence.

How different the scene is today. From being the preserve of a small and privileged minority, bird-watching has grown in recent decades to become the all-consuming hobby of ordinary men and women--and boys and girls for that matter--from all walks of life, in search of a relaxing antidote to the pressures of the modern-day world. It has been described by a recent study as the fastest-growing pastime in Canada and the United States attracting millions of newcomers to its ranks every year.

If you wish to observe the species in one of its favorite habitats you could not do better than to visit Point Pelee, at the southern tip of Ontario, at the height of the spring migration. One of the most famous birding spots on the North American continent, Pelee is a bird-watcher's Mecca. Every spring it serves as a staging point for hundreds of thousands of birds en route from their

wintering grounds in the southern United States, the Caribbean and South America to their summer nesting sites in Canada. With some effort and a little luck, it is possible to see upwards of a hundred different species in a single day.

It is an exhilarating experience but it can be an exhausting one. Increasingly, Point Pelee draws bird-watchers from hundreds of kilometres around, in quantities that sometimes threaten to outnumber the birds. It is not the place to spend a tranquil afternoon savoring the quieter pleasures of this gentle pastime. My preference is for less trodden paths that offer surprise rather than surfeit and these, happily, are not difficult to discover.

A few summers ago my wife and I, holidaying on the island of Grand Manan, in the Bay of Fundy, paused to picnic alongside a freshwater pond. Feeding at the water's edge was as unlikely a pair of birds as you are ever apt to encounter in that locality: a Hudsonian godwit, resting on its long journey from its Arctic nesting grounds to winter in South America, and a snowy egret, a southern heron that rarely strays as far north as Canada.

We were still congratulating ourselves on our good fortune when we were joined by a local resident. The egret, he told us, had been there for the past two weeks; he had seen great egrets there before occasionally but this was the first snowy egret he had ever seen. "Ah!", we said. "A fellow bird-watcher!"

Well, no, replied our friend, he was no expert. He came to that pond every day simply to observe the birds that visited it. And he proceeded to tell us his story.

He had been a lighthouse keeper for 40 years until automation had made it no longer necessary for lighthouses to be tended by human hands and eyes. He knew no other job and wanted none. But when technology had rendered him redundant (he would not have recognized the phrase) he had looked for something to pass the time and had found it in watching the gulls and shorebirds that came every day to the pond. He had discovered it to be an absorbing occupation and, in fact, had recently taken up wood carving to capture their likenesses. Would we, he asked shyly, be interested in seeing his work?

We would and we did. Over tea and homemade cake, in a pin-neat bungalow on the edge of the sea, we inspected our new acquaintance's carvings. On a largish table in his modest workshop were representations of perhaps a dozen different birds, among them herring gulls, black-backed gulls, dowitchers, sandpipers, killdeers, a great blue heron, a selection of ducks. They were exquisite, not only in their skill of execution but in the perfection of their detail and the faithfulness of their poses. Every feather was in place, every nuance of the species had been captured, every eccentricity of habit carefully recorded. I doubt whether this talented artist--for such he was--had ever consulted a birding guide in his life but it would have taught him nothing that his eye had not learned for itself. He was, indeed, a skilled observer.

Our friend was pleased but slightly embarrassed by our admiration. He had recently loaned his collection, he said, for display at a provincial craft show and several people had wanted to buy his carvings. But he was reluctant to part with them. They were for his own pleasure, not someone else's.

An unlikely encounter? Perhaps. But I have come across bird-watchers in more improbable locations. On an oil-drilling rig in the Davis Strait, off the east coast of Baffin Island, I asked a meteorologist how he enjoyed his job. "It's lonely," he replied, "but the birding is terrific." He was studying the storm petrel. As we spoke a vast raft of them--more than 3000 by his count--floated on the sea ahead of us.

There had been earlier watchers in those coastal waters. The French explorer Samuel de Champlain described a bird with an aquiline beak--probably the black skimmer--and was sufficiently intrigued by a "red-winged songbird" to take a couple of them back with him to France to present them to his king. Nicolas Denys, who first set foot in New France in 1632 and who became the first governor of Acadia, was much taken by the beauty of the hummingbird, whose throat "when it is seen in a certain light emits a fire brighter than the ruby."

But there is evidence to suggest from the names they gave to birds, that Canada's native peoples were even more meticulous observers. The Malecite Indians of New Brunswick gave the name non-a-mik-tcus--literally "rocks its rump"--to a common visiting shorebird. We know it today as the spotted sandpiper and its rump-rocking, teetering action is an accepted diagnostic clue to its identity. The storm petrel was men-hebi-meh-sit, or "skims the water".

It would, of course, be naive to assume that these pioneer chroniclers of Canada's avifauna were prompted by the same motives that inspire the bird-watchers of today. Their interest was practical rather than recreational. Nicolas Denys may have been taken with the beauty of the hummingbird but his comments on a couple of other birds, the brant goose and the heron, were confined to their merits as table fare. (The brant, he wrote, should be "roasted or boiled but not salted").

Today's birders, as bird-watchers have generally come to be known, give a variety of reasons for their interest in the subject. Some find it a friendly and congenial hobby that takes them out of doors in the company of like-minded friends. It is a pastime that adds a new and fascinating dimension to a walk in the country. There is nothing wrong with that. For others, the impetus lies in the challenge--indeed, the sport--of seeing as many different birds as possible, of adding to their "life list," as it is described in birding circles. Norman Chesterfield, a Wheatley, Ont., mink farmer, has seen more species of birds than anyone else in the world--at last count more than 6200 out of a total world population of around 9000 species. It is an outstanding achievement and one that has earned him a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

In this respect I am a grave disappointment to some of my bird-watching friends. I enjoy seeing a new species as much as anyone, and I have a reasonably respectable, if not noteworthy, "life list". But I derive more pleasure from welcoming back the swallows to our barn every spring, from greeting my old friend the part-albino grackle for what is now the third successive year, from watching a robin build its nest than I do from dashing off to some distant location in the hope of catching a fleeting glimpse of the rarity of the month. In other words, I am a watcher rather than a lister. At the beginning of every year, ashamed of my sloth, I conscientiously resolve to mend my ways and embark on an orderly record of the year's sightings. Last New Year's Day I saw a greater black-backed gull, not a great find by any means but sufficiently uncommon to represent a good start to the year's list. But by the end of January my resolve had weakened and the list petered out. Next year though, for sure.

What birding has done for me is not provide me with a single riveting pastime but, rather, to open the door to a wider appreciation of nature as a whole, to glimpse albeit imperfectly, its interdependencies and its mechanisms.

I am, heaven knows, no great naturalist. I lack the dedication and perhaps the intellectual discipline necessary to acquire a high degree of specialized knowledge in any particular field. I shall never have a bird named after me nor shall I merit a footnote in any learned journal of natural science, although that would be nice. But I am a watcher of nature and that brings rewards enough. It is an undemanding, untaxable and inflation-proof pastime of which I rarely tire and which never disappoints.

No one can watch birds or observe any aspect of nature, at no matter how cursory a level, without gaining some measure of better understanding of how this mysterious universe of ours operates, of sensing the inescapable bonds that shackle us humans to our environment, of glimpsing an inner harmony and interdependence in every work of nature. That has been my reward and it is a difficult one to articulate.

From time to time I ask myself, from my perspective as an amateur naturalist, what I would want for this world of ours. And the best answer is that I would wish for a better realization on the part of its most intelligent species, homo sapiens, of its rightful place in the universal order. Hubris is a dangerous trait and there is no evidence to suggest that man possesses the ability, let alone the divine right, to shape the world to his image.

The irremissible logic of nature requires a perfect unison, an intricate balance, among all living things. When man assumes that he can detach himself with impunity from the other species and pursue actions without reference to his fellow creatures, he threatens that unison and, in doing so, jeopardizes his own survival. Every species that we allow to disappear, through benign neglect or thoughtless action, inevitably hastens our own extinction.

The more we learn of nature, the more we appreciate that elementary truth. The more each of us knows of birds, of flowers, of trees, of any other organism, the better informed we become of our own species and of what we must do to ensure our survival. To acquire the art of seeing things is to acquire the secret of knowing ourselves.

About the Author

Whynne Thomas is a member of the public affairs department of Imperial Oil Limited.

Born in Wales, he was a journalist in the United Kingdom before coming to Canada 30 years ago. Since then he has birded in all ten Canadian provinces and in the Northwest Territories.

(Reprinted with permission from The Review--a publication of Imperial Oil Ltd.,-- Fall 1987.)

SANCTUARY AND SCHOLARSHIP TRUST FUND

While we are most grateful for the generosity of those members who donated to our recent fund-raising campaign in the April issue, there is no doubt that the overall result was disappointing.

One of the main objectives of the SSTF is to engage in activities which ensure that we will always have birds to see. Nova Scotia Birds tells you about birds that have been seen in the last three months; contributions to the fund might ensure that there are birds to see in the next three years--or thirty years.

Our latest project has been to assist the Nature Conservancy of Canada in the purchase of a large tract of Brier Island, to preserve it as a sanctuary for the annual migrants.

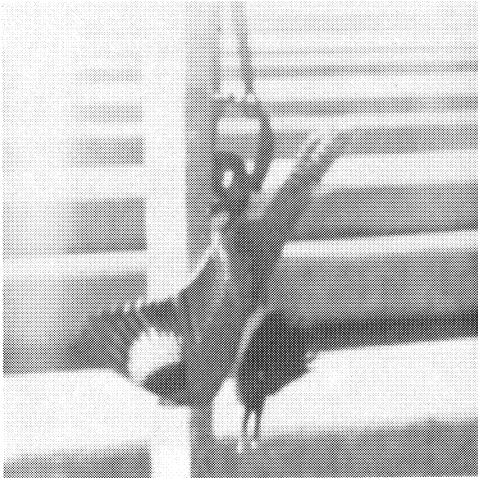
If each member of this society contributed just \$5.00 per year to the fund, we could afford to do this kind of thing whenever the opportunity arose.

So,--WE NEED YOU.

Please send contributions to:

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

Receipts for tax deduction will be issued.



Edith MacLeod of Glace Bay sent this disheartening picture of a kingfisher dangling from a leg-hold trap set for the purpose. However, this was in 1961, and we share her "hope that this doesn't happen now". Actually, the N.S.B.S. was instrumental in having the practice stopped at some hatcheries years ago. If members know of any current cases, we would like to hear from them.

NEW RARE BIRD ALERT

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The Halifax based Rare Bird Alert is to be reorganized in September, in time for all the fall rarities!

With people moving away, changing telephone numbers, or becoming more or less interesting in being included, the simplest way of doing this is to COMPLETELY CANCEL the present lot and start afresh.

IF YOU WISH TO BE INCLUDED, PLEASE LET US KNOW BEFORE AUGUST 30

Include: Name, address and a telephone number for daytime and evening as well as a stamped addressed envelope.

If you live outside the Metro area please state that you are willing to accept collect telephone calls.

All members who participate in the RBA are reminded of the OBLIGATION TO GET THE NEWS PASSED ON, even if your first contact(s) is temporarily unavailable. Sometimes this means a fair amount of telephoning down the list as well as making the effort to reach the unavailable parties later.

The present RBA remains in effect until replaced by the new one:

DEADLINE: AUGUST 30

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

Telephone: 477-6036



Pileated Woodpeckers can produce an astonishing pile of woodchips, as this photo by Evelyn Coates demonstrates.

Note the characteristically oblong holes.



THE ARCHIVES
OF
THE NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

Margaret A. Clark

Following a year of special events and activities that were held in 1980 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, an Archives was initiated. The Executive appointed me, as Past President, to act as Chairperson. As the boxes of documents and records of the Society began to stack in my basement, the arduous task of sorting took place. Calling upon the expertise of a charter member, Ethel Crathorne, we arranged, filed, compiled and sorted the material as it related to the history of the Bird Society.

Files have been made to include such information as the constitution and by-laws; correspondence, especially that which took place between founding members and eventually brought about the organization of the society; membership lists; early records kept on birds; surveys, such as one carried out between 1961-1965 on the Bald Eagle; files on conservation concerns and many other materials pertaining to the society.

Also included are the records kept by the Cape Breton Branch during the period between 1961-1980; copies of the Newsletters 1958-1963; bound copies of the Nova Scotia Bird Society Newsletters 1964-1980; and then when the change of name was made to Nova Scotia Birds, the bound copies from 1981 to the present. Pamphlets and brochures printed by the Society and by the Nova Scotia Museum have been filed, as well as books and pamphlets by such birding notables as the late E. Chesley Allen and Robie Tufts.

Some newspaper clippings and a few pictures have been protected within the covers of a photo album that acts as a scrapbook, which also includes articles that appeared in local newspapers as part of the anniversary celebrations. Of special interest is an article entitled "100 Gather To Organize Bird Group", accompanied by a picture of four founding members.

Of course, there are gaps and room for additional material. For example, the membership lists filed in the Archives begin with 1957, none for the two years before that.

Among the drawers, files and boxes stored in your home, perhaps there is material pertaining to the founding and early years of the Bird Society that you would be willing to part with and that could be preserved in the Archives.

Any donations of pictures, articles, or items will be gratefully acknowledged and recorded. They may be sent to me in care of the Nova Scotia Bird Society marked "Archives" or direct to my address at 12 Crest Road, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 2W2.

Title: Wildfowl, an Identification Guide to the Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World

Author: Steve Madge and Hilary Burn

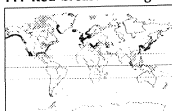
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co.,
2 Park Street,
Boston, Mass., 02108

Price: \$55.00 (cloth)

PLATE 45: Large sawbills

144 Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Text page 277

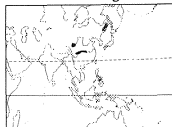


Northern hemisphere. Lakes, rivers and coastal waters. Overlaps in range with 145 and 146. Long-tufted, slender-necked diving duck, with spiky crest and thin bill. Male has dark head and upperparts, white collar, patterned breast sides, grey flanks, and shows extensive white in wing. Female and juvenile dull grey-brown, with whiter breast and warmer brown head and neck, ragged crest and slender bill; head and neck pattern diffuse and darker than on larger and bulkier 146. See also 145.

a ADULT MALE BREEDING: In eclipse is like b, but has blacker mantle and retains white wing-coverts.
b ADULT FEMALE
c JUVENILE: Like b, but duller, with shorter crest and greyer breast and central underparts.
d IMMATURE MALE: Late first winter, showing developing male features.

145 Chinese Merganser *Mergus squamatus*

Text page 279



Eastern Asia. Forested rivers and lakes. Rare. Overlaps in range with both 144 and 146, even on same rivers. Slender, more like 144 than 146 in proportions, with very long spiky crest. Male lacks dark breast of 144, but has flanks finely scaled. Female differs from 144 in being brighter, with scaled flanks. Juvenile (and possibly summer female) very similar to 144, lacking scaling of breeding female, but nostrils midway along bill (close to bill-base on 144). See text.

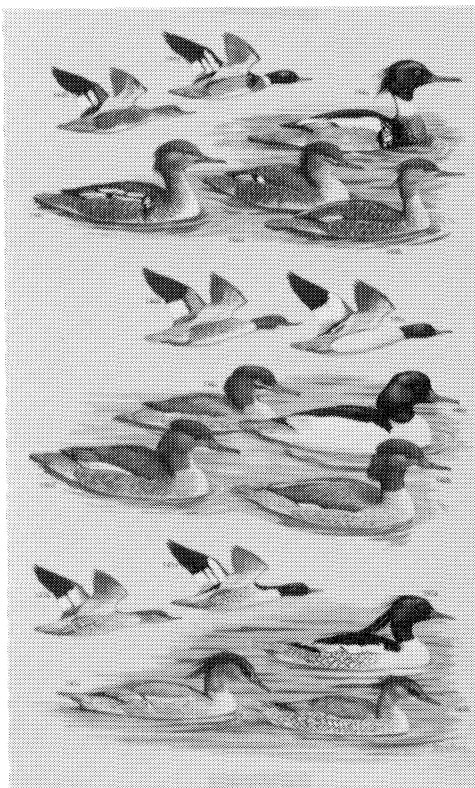
a ADULT MALE BREEDING: In eclipse is like b, but retains male wing pattern and has blacker mantle.
b ADULT FEMALE: Juvenile is similar, but lacks underpart scaling. Summer females also possibly lack scaling (see text).
c IMMATURE MALE: Mostly juvenile (little scaling). See text and above.

146 Gosander or Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* Text page 280



Northern hemisphere. Freshwater lakes and rivers. Larger and bulkier than 144 and 145, with which it overlaps, and has more erect to head (not spiky). Male with dark head and central upperparts and pinkish or creamy white breast and underparts. Female and juvenile with darker head and neck than 144 or 145, clearly demarcated from white breast and throat; upperparts purer grey. Three similar races, nominate shown. See text.

a ADULT MALE BREEDING: In eclipse is like b, but retains male wing pattern and has whiter underparts.
b ADULT FEMALE
c JUVENILE: Duller than b, with lighter brown head and less pure grey upperparts; also has pale loreal streak.
d IMMATURE MALE: Develops adult male plumage during first winter, but retains juvenile wing pattern to first-summer moult.



In 1983, Peter Harrison stood the pelagic birders' world on its ear with the publication of Seabirds, an Identification Guide. This complete guide to the seabirds of the world, with its excellent illustrations, maps and text instantly became the standard single-volume reference for this group of birds.

Three years later, in 1986, John Marchant, Tony Prater and Peter Hayman did the same thing with Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World. Like Seabirds, this new volume featured superb illustrations and detailed identification data.

Now, the same publishers (Croom Helm in Europe, Houton Mifflin in North America) have issued the third in what is starting to look suspiciously like a series: Wildfowl, An Identification Guide to the Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World, by Steve Madge with illustrations by Hilary Burn. This book is every bit as complete as its predecessors, and should soon occupy a similar position of importance.

Let's start with the illustrations, since that is where most of us look first when trying to identify an unknown species. They are excellent. Each species is shown in several different plumages (juvenile, breeding, eclipse, male, female, subspecies, etc.). The Common Eider is illustrated in no less than seven plumages. The colours are accurate (at least for the species I know), and the neutral background colour provides a good approximation to field conditions. Burn shows her subjects in natural and appealing postures, and just browsing through the plates is enjoyable in itself.

The page opposite each plate contains comments on the important features of each illustrated plumage. These pages also contain the range maps, which clearly show the breeding and non-breeding range for each species.

So far, what we have is what you would find in any good field guide. However, this is far more than just a field guide. The main text following the illustrations makes it an almost exhaustive reference on identification of wildfowl. Like the seabird and shorebird books, details for each species are presented in sections, including field identification (at rest and in flight), voice, description, measurements, geographical variation, habits, habitat, distribution and population. Cross references between the text and the illustrations make it easy to get around. Finally, there are references to other sources on each species, which are very valuable when you get curious about some point that this book might not cover.

Other sections in the book include a general introduction, containing discussions on field observation, wildfowl topography, plumage sequences, unusual plumages, hybrids and escapes; a useful, but perhaps short, glossary containing 45 terms; and the list of about 180 references.

Is this a "field guide"? Probably not, because it's a little too big and heavy. Anyway, it's such an attractive book that you probably wouldn't want to take it into the field. Is it worth the rather imposing price? That really depends on your priorities. From my point of view, having every one of the world's 155 ducks, swans and geese magnificently described in one place is worth a great deal.

I would like to thank Norm Seymour, of the Department of Biology, St. Francis Xavier University, for his helpful comments on this book.

Wildfowl, is available in the Halifax area from birding specialty outlets. It is available by mail from the Nature Canada Bookshop, and probably from other outlets specializing in natural history items.

--Peter Payzant

BOOK REVIEW

Title: Treasury of North American Birdlore

Author: Edited by Paul S. Eriksson & Alan Pistorius

Pages: 388

Price: \$24.95

ISBN: 0-8397-8372-8

(a new edition of A Treasury of Birdlore, 1962 with 30 new additions)

When this book was sent for review, I approached it with very mixed feelings. As far as anthologies go, one is at the mercy of the editor and too often his selections are too similar, or too dull, or just too mediocre. I changed my mind about this one, however.

Of course, all the essays are about birds, which is a good start!, but the viewpoints are extensive and the styles varied in the extreme. I found much to enjoy, very little to irritate, and one or two essays to be treasured.

There are seven sections, arranged as follows:

The first is "Birds through the Seasons", containing pieces of the more poetic type of prose such as "Spring in a New Land", describing the feelings of a young Scottish lad newly arrived in America. Most of this section's selections are quite short, not too sentimental and enjoyable reading.

The second section is entitled "Flight and Migration" and as the title suggests, is more technical, although quite literate and mercifully free of scientific jargon. James Brett's piece on the use of thermals by various species of hawks is very worthwhile.

Section three, "What Makes a Bird Tick" is a series of biological essays on topics such as the origin of bird feather maintenance, bird song, etc.

Section four, entitled "Family Matters" has some of the BEST BITS in the book. Peter Matthiessen's on "Shorebird Courtship" is a gem, and other articles by A. C. Bent, Henry Beston (Outermost House) and Audubon make excellent reading. On the other hand, Rachel Carson's "Sanderlings in the Arctic Spring" had me gritting my teeth at the sugary anthropomorphism.

Part five is "Birds of a Feather", and the section I enjoyed the least. There is more sugar here with selections like "Old Sickle Wings" and "Master of the Woods". It is a short section however, and the next one is really worth the price of the book.

Part six, "Birds and People" is most interesting. I was surprised to learn that Alexander Wilson (Wilson's Plover, Wilson's Phalarope, etc., etc.) was not a trained biologist but a slave wage weaver and jail-bird! Edwin Way Teale, R. T. Peterson, Walt Whitman, Ernest Thompson Seaton all contribute.

The last collection is entitled "Extinction and Conservation". I enjoyed it very much. There are fascinating stories here--how Hawk Mountain went from a shooter's paradise to a famous sanctuary, the

the story of Guy Bradley, the warden martyred by plume hunters, another Matthiessen piece about the heartbreaking wholesale slaughter of shorebirds in the latter 1800's.

All in all I found this a worthwhile read. Visually, it is a pleasing book as well. Printed in clear, readable type on good paper, it is nicely laid out and not too large or heavy (as is the case with many anthologies) to be read in bed or carried down to the beach.

--J. Shirley Cohrs

LENS/TELESCOPE FOR SALE

CELESTRON 500 mm f/5.6 catadioptric lens for sale. 90 mm (3.5") aperture. This is a very fast but compact telephoto lens suitable for use with any 35mm SLR camera, with the addition of a suitable adapter (about \$10). Comes with adapter for Minolta cameras.

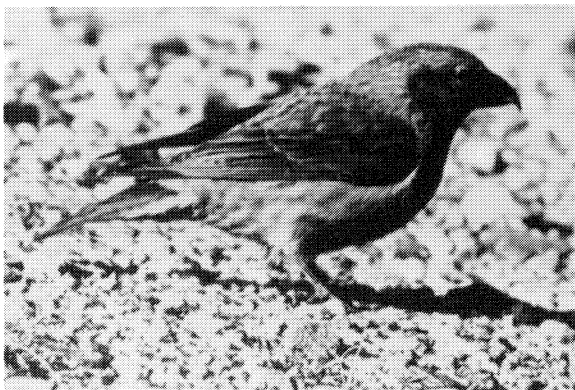
This can also be used as a high-resolution terrestrial or astronomic telescope. Two eyepieces, star diagonal prism and carrying case are included.

Price \$400. Call Linda or Peter Payzant, 861-1607 evenings and weekends, after August 12, 1988.

The following plea was received by the Editor. Perhaps some member can help.

The Institute for Field Ornithology at the University of Maine is in the process of building a small ornithological library with particular reference to New England and the Maritimes. We are very desirous of obtaining all back issues of Nova Scotia Birds. I wonder if it is possible that there might be a set which one of your members would consider donating or perhaps selling. The Institute is a non-profit organization, part of the University of Maine at Machias, for increasing knowledge of birds in their natural habitat.

Charles D. Duncan, Director
Institute for Field Ornithology
9 O'Brien Avenue
Machias, Maine 04654
207-255-3313



There is much current interest in Red Crossbills, with ongoing attempts to straighten out their complex racial patterns. They seem to consist of 3 or more "semispecies", wandering widely from their "core ranges", but remaining reproductively isolated when they overlap. So, birders should keep careful notes on these--their sizes (say relative to White-winged), their voices (hard or soft "kip") and colours. This bird, near Shelburne on Feb. 21, was one of several bright yellow-green, large billed birds, uttering hard "kip Kip" notes. It may be of the Newfoundland (core range) form percna (formerly known as pusilla). Photo-Ian McLaren



Seven or 8 Common Black-headed Gulls wintered around the Commercial Street Bridge in Glace Bay; this one stood still for Edith MacLeod.



BIRDING TRIVIA

1. Name four shorebirds which have white rumps?
2. What are the colour of the eyes of a Barred Owl?
3. What is the largest warbler found in Nova Scotia?
4. Which egret has yellow feet?
5. Name two diurnal owls.
6. What is the correct name of a baldpate?
7. How many scoters are seen off Nova Scotia? Name them
8. Name four birds with red feet.
9. Name two sparrows with white outer tail feathers.
10. What is the provincial bird of Nova Scotia?

Answers Page 60



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

CALLING ALL BIRD FEEDER WATCHERS!

Have you ever wondered where the birds at your feeder come from, where they go when they leave and why bird numbers change from year to year? Do you want to know what birds come to feeders in different parts of North America? Project Feeder Watch is a new continentwide survey of bird feeders designed to help answer questions such as these, and you are invited to join.

Project Feeder Watch is a cooperative research venture of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Canada's Long Point Bird Observatory, and is in the midst of a successful pilot year with 4,000 participants from all across North America. The project is modelled on a survey run successfully in Ontario for the past 11 years, which has shown that male Evening Grosbeaks winter farther south than females, Black-capped Chickadees are found in low numbers when Evening Grosbeaks are abundant, and numbers of many species at feeders parallel those found on Christmas Bird Counts.

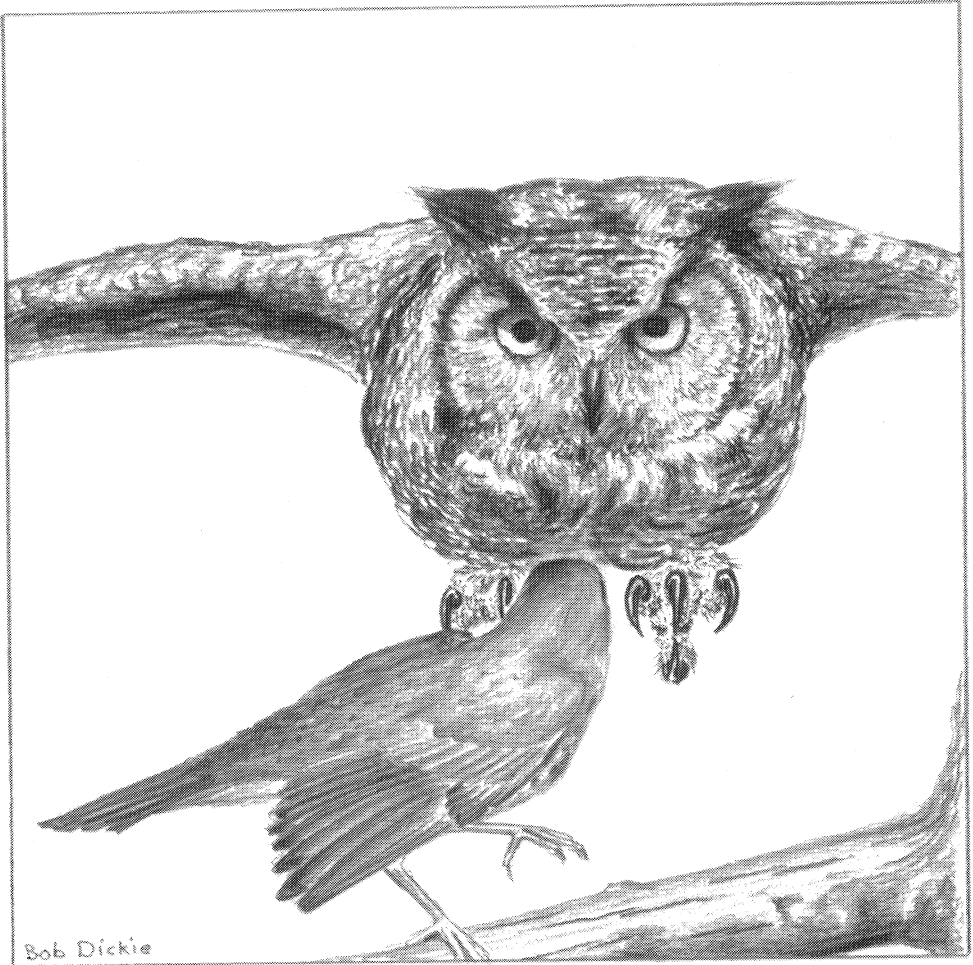
Sound interesting? Project Feeder Watch needs thousands of additional observers across the continent to help answer questions about feeder birds on a broad geographic scale. You need not be an expert birder to take part--the project concentrates on common species, and baffling rarities can be ignored. Although counts are made over a one to two day period of your choice every other week from November through March, you are not obliged to watch every time, nor must you watch continuously on count days. All observations are recorded on computer-readable forms so that detailed summaries can be provided to participants promptly each season and to insure that the data are readily available for further analyses.

In return for your observations, Project Feeder Watch will send you an annual newsletter and report on the season's results, plus 2 issues of "Birdscope", the Laboratory of Ornithology's research newsletter. If you can't take part but would like to receive these publications anyway, you may subscribe to them separately.

Project Feeder Watch requires an annual registration fee of \$9 (Canadian), which helps to pay for data forms, analysis and preparation and mailing of reports and newsletters. To join, write to Erica Dunn, Coordinator, Project Feeder Watch, Long Point Bird Observatory, P. O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1M0. Include your name and address, state whether you wish to contribute observations from your feeder or just receive reports, and enclose your cheque for \$9 (made payable to Project Feeder Watch). Please sign up right away, to help them plan how many forms to print and to avoid mailing delays. You will receive all materials and instructions just before the season begins in mid-November, 1988.

THE GREAT HORNED OWL

by Bob Dickie



Arthur Cleveland Bent in his Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, tells the story of a man who had a male Great Horned Owl in captivity for twenty-nine years. For seven of those years, the owl had a mate. Then one day, without warning, he attacked and killed his mate and partially devoured her body.

The word "owl" comes from the Latin ululo, which means to howl, shriek or wail. The Romans referred to the owl as "Bubo", which probably referred to all owls but undoubtedly referred to the huge Eagle Owls found in much of Europe, Asia and North Africa. The scientific name Bubo still specifies the Eagle Owls (Bubo bubo), and its first cousin, the Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus). Both species are similar in appearance with the Eagle Owl being somewhat larger.

The Great Horned Owl is restricted to the western hemisphere but distributed throughout from Alaska to Newfoundland and all the way south to Tierra del Fuego. Living almost exclusively in forested areas where they hunt by day and more often by night, the owls frequently select a favourite spot to dine, a roost where they bring their prey to be torn up and eaten. These feeding roosts can easily be identified by the feathers, fur, bones, pellets and droppings strewn about. For the most part, the owls rip the food into pieces and swallows it whole. Inside the stomach, the indigestible materials are formed into pellets and regurgitated about twelve hours after being eaten.

The eyes are located at the front of the head, which enables them to see in three dimensions, a decided asset in hunting. The eyes are large and have a high level of light-gathering efficiency. This enable the birds to hunt under very subdued light conditions. They lack, however, the visual acuity of the eyes of diurnal (daytime) birds and the species is almost certainly colour blind. Since the eyes are fixed in their sockets and cannot be swivelled, they must move the entire head up and down and from side to side, a feat easily accomplished by the marvelously flexible neck.

Endowed with extra-ordinarily soft feathers that make almost no sound while in flight, Great Horned Owls make extensive use of very acute hearing to detect the miniscule sounds made by mice and other creatures. The large ears are located on either side of the head, hidden under feathers. These ears are asymmetrical, differing from each other internally and being located at different heights on the head. This, it is believed, assists them in locating their prey.

Great Horned Owls are endowed with long, powerful, razor sharp talons (claws), which clamp shut on the prey, usually killing it instantly. Victims not killed by the talons are dispatched by a bite to the base of the skull.

This species usually lays two roundish, rough-textured, white eggs; it may lay only one and has been known to lay as many as five. They can build nests but seem to prefer using the nests of other large birds like crows, Red-tailed Hawks, Osprey, Great Blue Herons and even Bald Eagles. Man-made platforms made of chicken wire and sticks have also attracted the species. The eggs are usually laid in March in Nova Scotia. The period of incubation is about twenty-eight days and the young remain in the nest for six to seven weeks. They tend to change the nest location every few years; perhaps because their voracious feeding depletes the supply of suitable prey.

They eat virtually everything that walks, flies or swims, with the exception of very large mammals. They can be attracted to hidden food by its odour, which attests to an ability to smell, yet one of its favourite foods is skunk, the odour of which permeates everything around the nest, including the adult birds and the young. They are excellent providers and frequently venture forth during daylight hours when the babies are in the nest. Investigation of one Great Horned Owl's nest yielded no less than six rabbits at one time and Bent relates the contents of another nest as "a mouse, a muskrat, two eels, four catfish, a woodcock, four Ruffed Grouse, one rabbit and eleven rats. Scattered around another nest were the remains of more than one hundred Norway Rats".

Tampering with the nest of these birds can be a very dangerous practice for they have been known to attack people who have done so. There are numerous records of people being attacked and injured, at times seriously, by the parent birds.

Their worst enemy, next to man, is the American Crow. The owl endures incessant harrassment by these pests and never retaliates. However, according to Bent, the owl gets even with his tormentors by attacking them at night on their roosts.

Earnest Thompson Seaten said of these birds, "...their untamable ferocity; their magnificent bearing, their objection to carrion and strictly carnivorous tastes would make me rank these winged tigers among the most pronounced and savage of the birds of prey".

The Great Horned Owl is a truly remarkable raptor.



Cyril Coldwell's half-wild female is here trying to look her wildest and fiercest, alongside her two (probably foster) offspring.

1987 CROSS-COUNTRY BIRDING

by V. A. (Audrey) Tyler

We left Shubenacadie on a sunny but cold May 1, to start our retirement trek across Canada and the United States in our motor home to do as much birding along the way as possible. With A Bird Finding Guide to CANADA, edited by J. C. Finlay, both of Peterson's Field Guides (Eastern & Western), the National Geographic Field Guide, Audubon's Field Guide and my own dog-eared version of the Golden Field Guide to North American Birds as our reference library, we set out for the Yukon and all points beyond.

Our first surprise and delight came on May 2, as we travelled down the St. Lawrence River on Highway 20, just past La Pocatiere. The south shore mud flats were absolutely white with thousands of Snow Geese. As we watched, they were starting their northward migration and were lifting off in skeins of 20-30 geese every few seconds. We stayed watching them for about forty minutes and at that time there were still thousands left. Every so often they lifted into the air, circled and landed again--a real thrill to see for the first time.

On to Ontario, and as we were combining birding with visiting family and friends along the way, we spent ten days in southern Ontario. We birding at Presque Isle Provincial Park, Caledon East Area, North Toronto area, Orillia, Parry Sound and St. Joseph's Island in northern Ontario, where we saw our first Sandhill Crane and Turkey Vultures. Other lifers seen in Ontario were Red-Shouldered Hawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Great-crested Flycatcher, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Meadowlark, House Finch and Northern Oriole. Due to forest fires raging around Hwy 17 at Dryden, we opted for the Fort Francis-Rainy River route to get us to Manitoba, up Hwy 12 to Winnipeg. In camp the first night, we saw a Great Grey Owl and a Whippoorwill. We were up early and on the road for more birding and as we neared Steinbeck we saw our first (of hundreds) Black-billed Magpie. Near a garbage dump were a Franklin's Gull, Swainson's Hawk, Western Meadowlark, American White Pelican and of all things, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher which we did not believe until we ran into a Winnipeg birder in Assinaboine Park who told us there had been one on the rare bird alert. In La Barriere Park, we were treated to two new sparrows-- Clay-coloured and Harris'. At the Brookside Cemetery, we saw our first Western Kingbird and at Bird's Hill Provincial Park our first Gray-cheeked Thrush. Both of these areas were excellent birding, as were the other parks in Winnipeg area as recommended by J. C. Finlay.

We moved on to Oak Hammock Marsh which is just north of Winnipeg spent the better part of three days birding the Marsh. This was a terrific experience as we were there at just the right time--the breeding season. We saw 13 lifers in one day and that did not include a Cinnamon Teal that local birders saw but which eluded us on the three occasions we tried to find it. Among the lifers were Pied-billed, Horned and Eared Grebes, Greater White-fronted Goose, Blue Goose, Redhead, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Marbled Godwit, Black Tern, Marsh Wren, Baird's Sparrow and Yellow-headed Blackbirds by the thousands. We followed this with a visit to Delta Marsh where it was cold and rainy but we managed to see a Western Grebe and a Canvasback despite the weather.

Our next major stop was at Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where we spent three days visiting an old friend who took us to all the good birding there and we added a Wilson's Phalarope to our list. On our way southwest to Cypress Hills Provincial Park, Saskatchewan, we also added American Avocets that were feeding in a slough beside the

highway. At Cypress Hills the birding was excellent and yielded a Trumpeter Swan, Cooper's Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, Stilt Sandpiper, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, Sprague's Pipit, Le Contes Sparrow, Oregon Junco and Lapland Longspur. The following day we drove around through gooey clay to Cypress Hills Alberta Provincial Park and added White-crowned Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Wild Turkey. From here we drove north to Dinasaour Provnclal Park, where we saw lots of very interesting things and oodles of birds but the only new ones were the Red-shafted Flicker and Yellow-crowned Night Heron. We drove back south through Brooks to Kinbrook Island Provincial Park, which is a small park teeming with waterfowl in marshes and ponds but we managed to add mostly land birds--the Greater Prairie Chicken, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Prairie Falcon and California Gull. We drove on down southwest to Waterton Glacier International Peace Park on the Alberta-Montana border spending two days there searching for the American Dipper that was supposed to be there but wasn't visible to us. We did have a marvelous twenty minute view of two male Varied Thrushes carrying nesting materials from the path in front of us and as we stood quietly they returned again and again for more materials. There was no sign of their mates so presumably they were doing the building. I had seen a Varied Thrush here in winter but not in breeding plumage which is beautiful so it was a really interesting twenty minutes for both of us and another lifer for Lorne.

After leaving Waterton Lakes, we headed over to south eastern British Columbia and went up through Kooteney National Park to Radium and had our first visit to the Hot Springs. As we were driving along a canal, we spotted a Cinnamon Teal swimming back and forth, as well as a Bufflehead, a Harlan's Hawk and a Ferruginous all seen from this stretch of highway. From here we went on into Banff and Calgary and on out to Water Valley to visit Lorne's 86 year old Aunt for five days of wonderful tramping around their ranch guided by Aunt Edie who is a nature lover from way back. We added Stellar's Jay to our growing list. On to Edmonton, via Banff-Jasper highway, where we saw Bighorn Sheep grazing on the mountain side. We left Edmonton, June 9 headed for Dawson Creek, British Columbia, which is the beginning of the Alcan Highway and travelled in a northwesterly direction through Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, B. C., into Watson Lake, Yukon where we stopped early to do our first birding in the Yukon. By now the days were getting very long, daylight and birding till 11:00 p.m. We drove on to Whitehorse arriving on the 13th and pulled into the downtown Sourdough City Recreational Vehicle Park and went out to see if we could find my brother at his last known address which was the main purpose of our trip to the Yukon. I had not seen him for thirty-eight years nor heard from for nearly two years, so I was delighted when I knocked on his apartment door and he came to answer it. We spent the next three weeks walking, birding and reminiscing. Warren had spent many years in the north while in the RCAF, so when he retired, he moved there. It's a different world up there and after only a week it is hard to remember what it is like down south. The "Spell of the Yukon" really is as Robert Service described it--we both really loved it and one day will return.

We took a side trip out of Whitehorse up through Kluane National Park where we saw the elusive Dahl Sheep high on the mountain and lots of birds in this area. We carried on to Tetlin Jct., Alaska, drove north to Chicken and Boundary, Alaska and crossed back into Yukon at 9:00 p.m. just before the border closed for the day. This brings you onto the "Top of the World" highway to Dawson City and was truly a magnificent drive along the tops of rolling mountains with the sun shining brilliantly all the way. Lorne took one picture at 10:30 p.m. and another at 1:00 p.m. and

they look like a picture taken at 5:00 p.m. would here. We arrived in Dawson City at 11:30 p.m. having seen only a few animals and birds but not one human or vehicle in that 2 ½ hours. It is a totally unspoiled area and was one of the highlights of our trip. After spending two days in Dawson, we headed back to Whitehorse birding all the way and some of the new species we saw on this circuit were Red Knot, Pomerine and Parasitic Jaegers, Black-headed Woodpecker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Bank Swallow, Northwestern Crow, Golden-crowned Sparrow and Townsend's Solitaire. The balance of our time up there was spent in and around the Whitehorse area where one could go birding literally day and night--the swallows were flying around feeding on the mosquitos at 1:30 a.m. and quieted down for a couple of hours about 2:00 a.m. and up again at 4:00 a.m. twittering. Lorne slept through all this but I couldn't get my biological clock in a sleeping mode so only managed to catch a few hours sleep each night.

We carried on into Vancouver and spent the rest of the day at the Geo. Riefel Migratory Bird Sanctuary where we saw thirty-five species and spent a couple of hours with the superintendent of the Sanctuary who helped us immensely in finding many of the birds. From there we went to North Vancouver and up Mt. Seymour to find the Blue Grouse and this time we were in luck as we found one just where Findlay's book said we would. We also found a Winter Wren and Brown Towhee to add to our list.

We crossed over to Vancouver Island at Nanaimo and drove out to Pacific Rim National Park where we spent hours hiking the trails and looking for the Black Oystercatcher but again it eluded us but we did see, with the help of one of the Park Rangers, the Pelagic Cormorants, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, a Summer Tanager and a Lazuli Bunting. We returned to Nanaimo, where we stayed with friends for four days. They too are very interested in birds and wildlife and drove us to every nook and cranny of Nanaimo. On Thursday, we drove down to Victoria where we stayed a week and had a terrific time going to all the parks and birding. We added Bushtit, Black Swift, Eurasian Skylark, Green-backed Heron and at last, not one, but three American Dippers feeding in the stream at Goldstream Provincial Park.

On August 1, we headed south to the United States, driving down the Oregon Coast and into San Francisco seeing a lot of beautiful country and a few more species of birds but not as many as we had hoped due to the extreme heat. Included in this part of the trip was the Brown Pelican, Great Egret, Tri-coloured Heron, Green-backed Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, White-faced Ibis, Heermann's Gull, Western Gull, Forster's Tern, Band-tailed Pigeon, Lesser Goldfinch. We spent three days in San Francisco area where it was relatively cool (only in the low 80's) and when the heat wave broke, we headed east across 180 through Reno, Nevada, Salt Lake City, Utah on to Cheyenne, Wyoming travelling from the wee small hours of the morning until noon and then stopping before the heat of the day got to us.

At Salt Lake City we managed to add the Black-necked Stilt to our list. From Cheyenne we drove south to the ranch of a friend of ours near Denver, Colorado, where we stopped over for three days and as this is canyon country we spent a good deal of time birding. Every morning, we were awakened by the Peacocks screaming. Among the lifers we saw there were the Dusky Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and the spectacular Rose-throated Becard. We left Colorado, Friday morning and drove on through Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois and Michigan, crossing back into Canada at Port Huron, Michigan-Ontario, on Monday and after spending the better part of two weeks visiting around southern Ontario, we arrived home four months and three days after leaving--all in all a great trip, with a

lot of beautiful scenery, lovely visits with old friends and family we hadn't seen for many years and as if that was not enough, we added 113 new species (out of 280 seen) to our life list. The only disappointment was not seeing some of the owls that are in the west and north but that is for another time and season.



Perhaps we've had too many Snowy Owl pictures through the years, but it's hard to resist a little photo celebration of this year's huge invasion. This immature male was snapped at Cole Harbour on Feb. 21 by Ian McLaren



We have to thank Cecil Johnston of Saint John for these documentary photos of the Eurasian Kestrel, taken at great range through his Questar 'scope. Although far from "portrait" quality, the pictures are revealing.

Note the robust body and relatively small head compared to our American Kestrel. Also, the pale underparts (lightly streaked compared to our bird), and in side view, the single facial streak compared with the 2 strong ones on our bird.



SKUA SORTING

In the mid 70's, it became news that there were two species of skua in the north Atlantic Ocean. Besides the Great Skua, (Catharacta skua) familiar in name at least, which bred in the North Atlantic, there was the South Polar Skua (Catharacta maccormicki) which bred in the Antarctic and could come as far north as the North Atlantic during our summer.

At first we thought it was going to be a rare sighting in the North Atlantic, although there was a specimen record for as far north as Greenland. The first few sightings from the east coast of the U.S. in the late 70's were exciting.

We were astounded when we heard about Dick Veit's discovery that they were almost common on George's Bank in June 1977. Through the early 80's, as observers learned more about what to look for on South Polar Skua, sightings became more routine from ferries in Atlantic Canada and on pelagic trips off the U.S. east coast. By the mid 80's the top North American bird listers have all seen South Polar Skua and are crying out for Great Skua.

At present the status of Great Skua and South Polar Skua in the western North Atlantic is not at all certain. Except for specimens, most of the pre-1980 skua sightings are of little value at the moment. We have to start almost from scratch to work this one out, a chance for pioneering.

There are numerous skua records in the Memorial University bird files. Almost all of these are sight records without details on the appearance of the bird. The dates fall between March 27 and November 7, with most sightings from July to September. Several observers can recall seeing skuas in the 1970's that were probably Greats.

Great Skua Six band recoveries from the east coast between Horse Is., and Bonavista Bay from August 20 to November 7, 1952-66. Four were one year olds, two juveniles. Five had been banded in Iceland, one in Scotland.

Eight specimens collected on the eastern edge of the Grand Banks, September 14-18, 19661 (S.W. Gorham).

One sight record Placentia Bay, July 10, 1986 (J. Pratt).

South Polar Skua: One specimen eastern edge of the Grand Banks, September 18, 1961 (S.W. Gorham).

Four photographed and about 100 observed on eastern and south eastern edge of the Grand Banks, August 28-0, 1978 (B. Mactavish).

One observed Grand Banks, September 7, 1980 (M. Purdy).

One observed Placentia Bay, July 15, 1984 (I. MacLaren, E. Mills).

One observed 5 miles east of Renew, July 7, 1985 (E. Mills).

One observed Frenchman's Cove, Burin Pen., August 14, 1985 (B. Mactavish).

One photographed St. Pierre et Miquelon, July 7, 1986 (R. Etcheberry).

Three observed Placentia Bay, July 12, 1986 (P. Grant, S. Tingley).

One should not try to see a pattern in these few records. There are scores of pre 1980 skua records for which we don't know the specific identities.

Great Skuas breed in the North Atlantic in Iceland, Faeroes, Shetland and Orkney Island. The main wintering area is thought to be from Bay of Biscay south to N. W. Africa. There are a few winter records for the western, North Atlantic but none from as far north as Newfoundland. Adult Great Skuas migrate to their breeding colonies in late March and April and depart August to November. Sub-adults wander over the North Atlantic, including Newfoundland waters in summer and fall. August, September and October may be the best time to look for Great Skua because the adults will be in a more leisurely migration, numbers will be inflated by new juveniles and there will be the sub-adults as well.

South Polar Skuas breed in the Antarctic during our winter and in the non-breeding season, our summer, they range north as far as Japan and Alaska in the North Pacific Ocean and Greenland in the North Atlantic Ocean. South Polar Skuas can probably be expected in our waters at the same time as large numbers of Greater and Sooty Shearwaters are here, late May to October. These shearwaters also migrate from the South Atlantic and are a favourite target of piratical attack for skuas.

IDENTIFICATION

Skuas are big Herring Gull sized birds with broad wings, which of course have large white flashes at the base of the primaries. They are very powerful, flying fast with deceptively slow wing beats. A big dark Pomarine Jaeger is sometimes mistaken for a skua. If there is ever any question as to whether you are looking at a skua or a jaeger, then you are probably looking at a jaeger. When you see a real skua there is never any doubt.

Since skuas are usually seen in less than ideal viewing conditions such as from a windy perch on a rocking boat or during a raging storm from land and too, often at considerable distance, many skuas are left unidentified even by the people most familiar with them. Consider yourself lucky if you see a skua and it is a bonus if you identify it to species.

Great Skua: Body above and below, head and upper wing coverts; warm brown with gold and rufous, streaks and blotches. Golden streaks often concentrated on hindneck giving a hackling effect. First year birds are less boldly marked, have more rufous and the underparts are brighter.

South Polar Skua: Come in light and dark phases with intermediates. All phases have uniform blackish-brown back and upper wing coverts. Light and intermediate phases: head, hind neck and underside of body vary from uniform grayish-white to buff-brown to those with darker heads but still with paler uniform nape and pale underbodies.

Dark phase: Head, hind neck and body above and below can look uniformly blackish-brown. However, at close range a slighter paler underbody, a pale area of feathering around the bill and pale nape

should be discernable. (Most of the 100 South Polar Skuas that this writer saw on the Grand Banks in August 1978 were dark phase with the underbodies dark gray or as dark as the back and almost all had blond to dull golden napes.)

Light and intermediate phase South Polar Skuas are the easiest skuas to identify. The uniform pale gray or buff underbody and extensive pale hind neck and light head contrasting with the smooth, solid blackish-brown back and upper wing coverts is very diagnostic. First year Great Skuas with bright underparts would not have the uniform blackish-brown back and uniform pale nape as a South Polar Skua would have. The golden streaks or hackling often present on the nape of a Great Skua should not be confused with the uniform, smooth extensive, pale napes of South Polar Skua.

Dark phase South Polar Skuas present more of a problem. The streaks and blotches on the upper and underside of the body of a Great Skua will look uniform dark at a distance or in poor lighting conditions, thus looking like a dark phase South Polar Skua. If you could see a pale area of feathering around the base of the bill or a pale, uniform, smooth nape patch (again beware of the golden streaks concentrated on the nape of some Great Skuas which is not the same) than it would be a South Polar Skua but if you cannot see this it can still be a South Polar or a Great Skua. To identify a Great Skua you need a good look. You need to see the gold and rufous streaking and blotches on the back and upper wing coverts (and underside of body if not a 1st year) and no more than golden streaking on the nape.

For more detailed descriptions of skua plumages Peter Harrison's book Seabirds: An Identification Guide, 1983, Houghton Mifflin Company, is highly recommended.

Good Skewering!?

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PLANNING A TRIP?

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

If you are planning a trip to any of these places let us know and we'll send you the club's name and address, contact persons, best birding spots and any other information we have.

WRITE TO..BOB DICKIE, 43 DEEPWOOD CRES, HALIFAX, N.S,B3M 2Y5

ANSWERS TO BIRDING TRIVIA

(page 47)

1. White-rumped Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Hudsonian Godwit, Wilson's Phalarope, oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover
2. Brown
3. Yellow-breasted Chat
4. Snowy Egret
5. Snowy and Short Eared Owls
6. American Wigeon
7. Three: White-winged, Surf and Black
8. Guillemots, Booby, Black-headed Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Arctic and Common Tern
9. Junco, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow (corners)
10. There isn't one!

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Cover: Alan Covert's delightful photograph of the Painted Bunting at the feeder of Ethel and Ray Helpard in Halifax on November 22, 1988. This was a first documented record for Nova Scotia and the second for Canada

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