

*Nova Scotia
Birds*

July 1990

DICKIE

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RECORD'S EDITOR'S REPORT

One hundred and ninety-six reporters, A NEW RECORD. I would really like to thank all of you for sending in the reports in the format we requested. It makes our job so much easier.

I would especially like to thank JIM WOLFORD (JWW) for collecting a huge number of reports of sightings and sending them to us. Jim is a superb birder and has always been a major contributor to **Nova Scotia Birds**.

"Thanks, Jim" and,
"Thanks to all the following, for your reports."

Bob Dickie
Records Editor

List of Reporters

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Dickie	Bob	RBD
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Diller	David	DDi
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Duval	Paul	PD
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Ellis	Margaret	MEE
	Virginia	VE
Fisher	Rick	RF
Flecknell	Bob	BF
Forsyth	George	GF
	Harold	HF
Forsythe	Fred	FF
	Sandra & Bernard	BLF
Fullerton	Sylvia	SJF
Gates	Joy	JG
Gertridge	Ellis	EG
Gibson	Jamie	JG
	Merritt	MG
Gillis	Mike	MGi
Green	Tony	TG
Greeno	C.D.	CDG
Hall	Helen	HJH
	Hubert	HGH
	Tim	THa
Harris	Paulette	PHa
Hawboldt	Sharon	SH
Hawes	Chris	CH
Helleiner	Chris	CWH
Hemeon	Phyllis	PH
	Ward	WH
Herbin	Jack	JHe
Herman	Tom	TH
Hilchie	Claire	CJH
Hill	Maxine	MH
	Nick	NH
Hope Simpson	David	DHS
Horton	Bill	BH
House	Nancy	NHo
Huang	J.P.	JPH
Jackson	Shirley	SJ
Jarvis	Joan	JVJ
Johnson	Dave	DJo
Jones	Dave	DJ
Keddy	Joan & Don	JDK
	Keith	KNK
Kinsman	Pearl	PK
Kristie	Dave	DK
Lavender	Fulton	FLL
Laviolette	Andree & Lance	ALL
MacDonald	Jake	JM
	Peter	JM
	Rosaleen	RMc
MacDougall	Glenn	GM
MacIntosh	Beverly	BMc
MacKinnon	Anne Margaret	AMM
	David	DMA

MacKinnon	Walter	WEM
MacLean	Gordon	GMa
MacLeod	Peter	PM
MacNeill	Don	DM
	Jack	JMa
Martell	Pat & Bill	PBM
Maybank	Blake	BMa
McCarthy	Steven	SMc
	Tina	THM
McLaren	Ian	IAM
McLeod	Pat	PMc
McMillan	Scott	SM
Melanson	Reg	RM
Mills	Eric	ELM
Moores	Bernice	BMo
Morris	Charles	CM
Morrow	Betty	BeM
	Jim	JMo
Morse	Bill	WM
	Jean	JeM
Muntz	Erich	EM
Murphy	Ethelda	EMu
	Terry	TM
Murrans	Alan	AM
Murrant	Cathy	CMu
Naugler	Chris	CN
Newell	Ruth & Reg	RRN
Olsen	Michael	MO
Parker	Lolita	LP
Payzant	Linda & Peter	L&PP
Pickwell	John	JP
Pitoello	Gini	GPi
Porter	Arthur	AP
	Shelly	SP
Pratt	Mary	MP
Prescott	Shirley	SPr
Prosser	Ingrid	IP
	Lloyd	LPr
Proulx	Gini	GP
Pulsifer	Mark	MPu
Purchase	Don	DWP
	Joyce	JAP
Rathbun	Gerry	GR
Rockwell	Betty & Paul	BPR
Rogers	Barb & Gerry	BGR
Ryan	Ann	AR
Sarty	Bev	BSa
Scott	Jack	JS
Shanks	B.L.	BLS
	Bev	BS
Simpson	Jeanette	JSi
Smith	Chalmers	ECS
	Peter	PCS
	Sean	SDS
	Sid	SS
Spalding	Edgar	ES
	Fran	FS
Spicer	Kathleen	KS
Stern	Richard	RBS
Stevens	Clarence	CSII
Tams	Miriam	MT
Tay	Karl	KT
	Wendy	WT

Taylor	Hilda	HT
	Jim	JWT
Thexton	Bill	RGT
	Brenda	BET
Thomson	Linda	LT
Thorpe	Dianne	DT
	Heather	HTh
	Kimberly	KTh
	Merrill	MTh
Timpa	Jean	JT
	Sean	ST
Toews	Dan	DT0
Trueman	Gerry	GT
Tufts	Judy & Gordon	JGT
Urban	Eva	EU
Van Norstrand	Kate	KV
Vander Kloet	Sam	SVK
Viersma	Jelmer	Jwi
Williams	Sherman	SW
Wolford	Jim	JWW
Woodman	Harold	HW
Yoell	Betty & Barry	BBY
Youill	Carl	CY
Young	David	DHY
Zillig	E. & G.	EGZ
Zinck	Marian	MZ

DEADLINE

for
the **JANUARY, 1991** issue

NOVEMBER 15, 1990

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, Glenwood, Dayton, Quinan
Shelburne Co. (Shel. Co.)	Cape Sable Is., Cape Sable, Matthews Lake, Lower Ohio, The Hawk, Seal Is., Sand Hills, Little Harbour, Port L'Hebert W.
Queen's Co.	Port Joli, Port L'Hebert E.
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., Martinique Beach, Hartlen's Point, Oakfield Park, Laurie Park, Powder Mill Park, Chezzetcook
Colchester Co. (Col. Co.)	Economy, Glenholme
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 Pre, White Rock, Starr's Pt., Lumsden Reservoir
Cumberland Co. (Cumb. Co.)	Lusby Marsh, APBS*, Lorneville, Linden, Port Howe
Hants Co.	Shubenacadie, Noel Shore
Digby Co.	Brier Island
Guysborough Co. (Guys. Co.)	Hazel Hill
Cape Breton (C.B.)	Big Pond, C.B. Highland National Park (C.B.H.N.P.)

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

BIRD REPORTS

LOONS AND GREBES

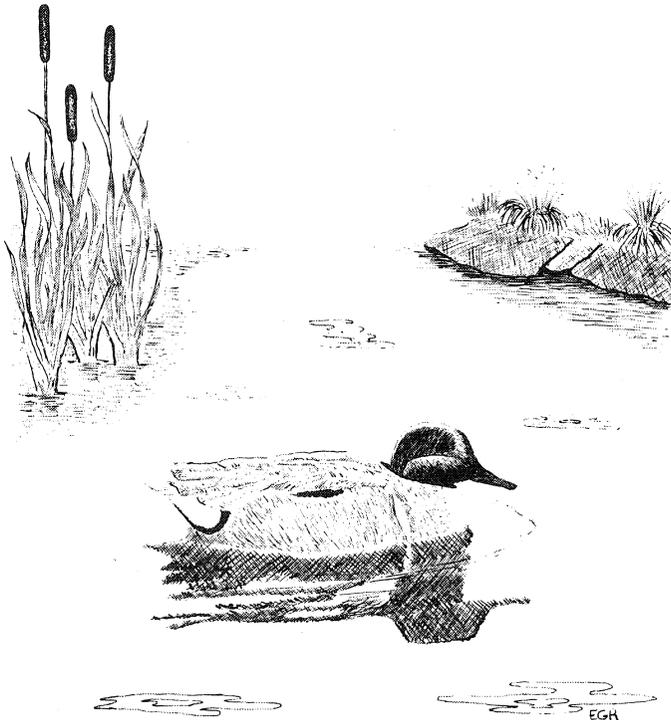
RED-THROATED LOONS were reported in usual numbers, including 10 at Economy on April 6 (FS). However, they may have departed somewhat earlier than usual, with the last record being of a single bird at Lawrencetown on April 28 (BMa).

COMMON LOONS massed as usual in early spring prior to departing for their breeding areas inland. SJF reported 30+ between Crescent Beach and Cherry Hill on March 10 through March 25, and JSC had over 100 in the same general area on March 12. BSa reports a pair arriving on Sandy Lake near Bedford on April 12, the morning after the ice broke up.

There were no records of PIED-BILLED GREBES. As usual, the only numbers of HORNED GREBES were reported from the Crescent Beach and Cherry Hill areas, where JSC had a total of 78 on March 13. By April 6, however, there was only one left in this area. Other reports mentioned 1 at Mader's Cove on March 21 (WM,JeM), 2 at Pinkney's Point (JKD) on April 18, and 1 laggard at Hartlen's Point on April 21 (BMa).

RED-NECKED GREBES were present in small numbers up to late March, when their numbers increased sharply. JSC reports 4 flocks of 10-20 at Hartlen's Point on March 25, and the following day JKD had over 60 at Pinkney's Point. There were 16 at West Baccaro on April 8 (SS), and numbers tapered off through the spring until the last record, a single individual in breeding plumage in Green Bay on May 12.

LPMP, ed.



FULMARS TO CORMORANTS

NORTHERN FULMARS were here as usual, in small numbers. Alan Murrant saw one off Morien Bay on May 22. Hubert Hall, on the **Bluenose** ferry between Yarmouth and Maine, saw a bird with a large oil stain on its belly off Yarmouth on March 4, and several clean birds on May 10. His 2-3 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS on May 14, "were dancing on the choppy seas like they are supposed to!" However, his first storm-petrels of the year were LEACH'S, about 38 miles west of Yarmouth on May 10. We're too early for the flocks of shearwaters from the Southern Hemisphere, but John Taylor and Fulton Lavender saw a MANX SHEARWATER off Bon Portage Island on May 19.

The spring migration of NORTHERN GANNETS was well reported, and it went something like this. The first sighting was Hubert Hall's adult off Yarmouth, 3 miles west of Cape Forchu, on March 4. ("My previous earliest sighting was March 13 in 1985.") He saw another there on March 27, but "not many around as yet". April was a different story. Jerome K. d'Eon counted 150-200 off Pinkney's Point on April 5, and thinks they may have been going by at the rate of 1,000/hour. David and Anne-Margaret MacKinnon, at Pennant Bay, saw a single gannet on March 22, 30 and April 18, 300-600 per hour on April 19, but 8 per hour on May 2. David Young counted about 150 gannets an hour, going past Little Harbour, Shel. Co., on April 17: most of them were immatures. The Payzants saw hundreds of gannets off the east coast of Cape Breton on April 28: "about 100 fishing off Little Smokey...a spectacular sight looking DOWN on them from the Cabot Trail", but "most seemed to be heading north, when not feeding actively". They must have been heading for the colonies in Newfoundland, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On May 27, off Brier, Eric Mills and Ian McLaren watched a "constant stream of immatures"--at least 100 gannets--flying past the island.

Some DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS either left very late, or spent the winter with us. Graham Daborn (via Jin Wolford) saw 4 possible flying up the Cornwallis River from Minas Basin, on or about Dec. 8. However, the first spring records were David and Anne-Margaret MacKinnon's birds in Pennant Bay: 2 on March 22, 5 on April 19, but 1050 per hour on May 2. Michael Olsen, at Pictou causeway, reports 1 on March 27, 2 on April 5, but 40-50 on April 7 and "hundreds soon after". Eric Mills and Ian McLaren note that flocks of migrants were still coming past Brier Island from the southwest on May 26-27. However, Karl and Wendie Tay found them unusually scarce this spring, between Ship Harbour and Tangier. "Is this due to a late spring...or related to mussel culture?" Not mussels, I think: cormorants mostly eat trash fish like sculpins.

GREAT CORMORANTS definitely did winter here. The MacKinnons saw about 20 at Lr. Prospect on January 5, and small numbers all winter in Terence and Pannant Bays, building up to about 50 on March 22, 40 on April 8 and 45 on April 9. Gordon MacLean saw 10 at Morien Bay on April 14. The Halls report 15 Greats, all with the white flank-patch of breeding plumage, off Mahoney's Beach, Ant. Co., on March 23. On the other hand, their two birds in Yarmouth Harbour on March 27 were still in winter plumage.

HERONS AND RELATIVES

The first reported AM. BITTERN was at A.PBS. on April 13 (JHD). Another was at Sheffield Mills during the NSBS field trip (SDS), and there were 5 reports of 7 scattered birds in May. As usual, GREAT BLUE HERONS seemed to arrive via the southwest. Several were feeding at the Annapolis Royal impoundments on March 15 (JHD). The next was at Overton on March 20 (H&HH) and another was at Lr. W. Pubnico on March 22 (JKD). One was at Apple R. (KS) and two reached Conrad Beach (SDS) by March 25. They were widely reported by late March and early April, but there was some inertia in first appearances at Canning on April 1 (JWW), Economy on April 3 (FS), and Pictou Co. on April 9 (MO). Numbers generally stayed low through mid-April, with only 6 noted on the Lawrencetown-Chezzetcook "circuit" on April 13 (BS). However, 14 were "apparently feeding on the spring run of smelt" at Pt. Edward. C.B. Co., on April 14 (WEM).

A LITTLE EGRET, presumably the one there last year, was on Bon Portage Is. from early May (PCS,CN), and was a treat of N.S.B.S. field trippers there on May 19-21. It appears, in fact, that it was there in spring-summer 1988 as well, according to retrospections by PM! This seems to support speculations in the July 1989 issue that our birds have come from the south, after displacement from Africa, rather than via the North Atlantic. It was closely studied by ELM and IAM on May 29. Its rangy, larger-headed appearance, and its size, notably larger than two Snowy Egrets, matched last year's birds, but this one had lores that were bluish-grey, with only a small dot of yellow in front. A SNOWY EGRET reported from Hackett's Cove, Hfx. Co., on May 1, was seen by others in the next few days (BMa). They again appeared on Bon Portage Is., in early May, but only 2 seemed to be present for the N.S.B.S. field trip on May 19-22, and they were not seen on the 29th (ELM,IAM). Does this mean that their colonization has been thwarted by the myriad gulls and crows there? Other individuals were at Crescent Beach, May 19 (JSC), Pinkney's Pt., May 21 (JKD), and Glace Bay, May 27 (GMAa).

Overshooting GREEN-BACKED HERONS were seen on Seal Is. on May 9 (EMu), on Brier Is. on May 20 (RBS), and in Dartmouth on May 22 (CSII, BS). Although doubtless there earlier, the BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS of Cape Sable Is. were first reported in mid-May. At least 4-5 were on Bon Portage Is. and an equal number on C.S.I. later in the month.

This spring, for the first time in some years, there was a fair show of GLOSSY IBIS, also noted in Maine and N.B. The first was on Seal Is., April 13 (EMu), followed a day later by individuals at Black Pt. and W. Chezzetcook, Hfx. Co. (RF, BMa *et al.*; the W. Chezzetcook bird had been seen for several days by locals). In Yar. Co., one near Overton on April 19-22 (sev. obs.) was probably not the same bird seen May 23-24 at Pinkney's Pt. (*vide* Eric Ruff). Two briefly at Hartlen's Pt. on May 10-11 were seen by only a few metro birders (MA *et al.*).

IAM, ed.

GEESE AND DUCKS

A BAR-HEADED GOOSE tantalized Valley birders following its arrival around March 18, near Chipman Corner (JWW). It was seen in various locations until March 31, and again on May 10. It was reported as being relatively tame, and it associated freely with domesticated Canadas. This behaviour, coupled with this species' popularity in wildfowl collections and the lack of accepted records for Canada make it unlikely that this was a truly wild individual. The wild population breeds "on the high plateaux of central Asia and winters in the lowland marshes of northern India", according to Madge and Burn in **Wildfowl**.

BRANT numbers were well below usual, with the largest flock being about 105 at Little Harbour, Shel. Co., March 23 (DHY). This is less than a third of the count at the same location last year. Other significant reports were of 42 at Pinkney's Point on April 10 (JKD), 70 at the Grand Pré dyke on April 26 (RGT,BET), and 80 at Linden on May 4 (JSC). There were a few other reports of 10 or fewer birds.

CANADA GEESE were reported from Port Morien ("thousands" by March 25--AM) to Yarmouth Harbour, and most places in between. The usual large flocks on the Eastern Shore were not mentioned, however, and there were very few--not more than a few hundred--from the Annapolis Valley. In other years the Valley has had counts of over 3000, and the Eastern Shore locations typically were home to around 4000 individuals.

Three male WOOD DUCK were in Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth through most of the winter. Other reports were of 2 ("a pair") at Lr. W. Pubnico on March 14 (JKD), single males at the Annapolis Royal DU marsh on April 1 (JHD) and Lr. Three-fathom Harbour on April 10 (DWP,JAP); another pair at Framboise, Cape Breton on April 21 (John MacInnis), and a female in a nest cavity on May 26 at Uniacke House (SDS,NSBS, FT).

A single male Eurasian race GREEN-WINGED TEAL could be seen on and off in the ponds at Greenwich and Canard, from December 2 until April 16 (many obs.). Another was seen at W. Chezzetcook on April 6 (BSa). On "our" race, SJF says that "not one was seen in all the usual haunts at Cherry Hill or Crescent Beach this spring", but there were counts of 15-20 at Lr. Canard River on March 25 (JWW), 60 at W. Chezzetcook on April 15 (BMa), and groups of 7-10 were reported from several other locations.

Sullivan's Pond held about 700 BLACK DUCKS in mid-March (L&PP), and there were hundreds more in Halifax Harbour. Our only report of larger numbers from the "traditional" areas is the 400+ at W. Chezzetcook on March 29 (BSa). A brood of 6 young was at Little Salmon River, Hfx. Co, May 9 (JWT, Bernice Taylor), and another family appeared at the Annapolis Royal marsh on May 14 (JHD).

MALLARDS were present in small numbers at several locations in the Valley, with an unusual peak of 33 at Greenwich on December 2 (JWW). Other reports of ones and twos were from Doris Cover (Guys. Co.), Trenton, Glenwood, and Melbourne.

NORTHERN PINTAILS peaked in late March and early April, when there were 17 at Conrad's Beach on March 29 (BSa) and 10 at the Annapolis Royal DU marsh on April 1 (JHD). A late group of 14 ("heading west") stopped off at Economy on April 23 (FS).

An early pair of BLUE-WINGED TEAL arrived near Starr's Point on March 25 (BLF **vide** JWW). By the second week in April they were present in small numbers at W. Chezzetcook, Three Fathom Harbour and Annapolis Royal. The end of April saw them present at many locations, and JWW mentions a pair in the Canard Poultry Pond on May 13.

A lone male NORTHERN SHOVELLER was in the Annapolis Royal DU marsh from April 4-24 (JHD). Another was at Wadden's Cove, C.B. on April 14 (AM,CMu) and there were two pairs at APBS on May 3 (JSC).

Similarly, a single male GADWELL could be seen at Canning and Greenwich (not simultaneously!) from Nov. 8 to March 27 (GF,JWW,RBS). One was also at Cow Bay outside of Dartmouth on April 13 (BMa), and JSC reports a pair at APBS on May 3.

AMERICAN WIGEON were well reported--seventeen reports numbering about 150 individuals. Most reports were of 1 to 5 birds, but there were 10 in Canning on Nov. 8 (GF **vide** JWW), 10 more at Onslow on May 2 (RG,BET), and 100+ at APBS on May 3 (JSC).

That Sydney REDHEAD stayed on in Wentworth Park until at least May 27 (BSa, G and J Crowell, JMa). It was first reported from Sydney Harbour on January 29.

Six hardy male RING-NECKED DUCKS spent the early spring in Rocky Lake near Bedford, in a small patch of open water from March 9 until about the end of the month (L&PP). There were up to 25 on the Annapolis Royal DU pond from March 21 to mid-April (JHD), and by May 3 Drain Lake had about 40 (JWW). On May 8, there were only about 16 left in the lake (CDG). There were 150+ at APBS on May 3 (JSC), and over 80 at Little Lake, Port Morien on May 5 (AM,CMu).

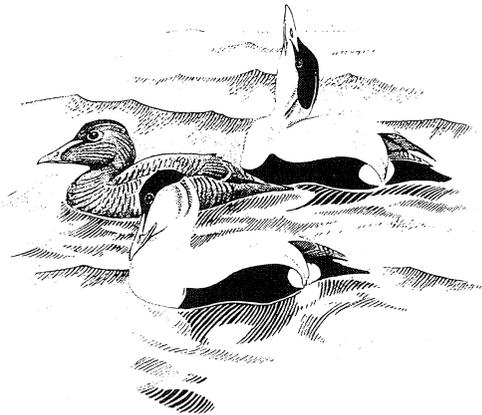
A year ago, we reported about 950 GREATER SCAUP in Pictou Harbour, and we made mildly appreciative noises. Somewhat more emphatic noises are in order: it looks as if an upward trend in their wintering population at this location may be developing. On March 10, there were 1600 at Pictou (BMa), and by the 24th of the month Blake saw 2300. Other reports include 250 at Crescent Beach on the 13th of March, dwindling to 110 by April 6 (JSC), and 300+ at New Waterford Harbour on March 3 (JMa). There were no reports of LESSER SCAUP.

COMMON EIDER were also present in good numbers: Pennant Bay held about 2000 in mid-March, falling to 600-700 by April 19 (AMM,DMa); FLL estimates about 16000 at Three Fathom Harbour on March 28; and BSa saw about 5000 at Sandy Cove, Hfx. Co. on April 5. There were several other locations (Terence Bay, Conrad's Beach, Economy, Woods Harbour, Port Morien) with reports in the 50-250 range.

OLDSQUAW seem to have rebounded from the low levels of recent years. In the July 1988 issue of **Nova Scotia Birds** there were 5 reports of about 100 birds; in July 1989 also 5 reports of about 120 birds, but this year we have 15 reports of over 600 birds. Reports of larger numbers included: about 75 in Mader's Cove from fall until the end of March (WM, JeM), 250 at Green Bay on March 13 (JSC), 50 at Short Beach, Yar. Co. on March 29 (JKD), 55 at Conrad's Beach on April 13 (BMa), and 100 at Cow Bay on April 21 (BMa). There were many other reports in the 10-20 range.

SCOTERS were most numerous at Hartlen's Point on April 13, when BMa counted about 120. The Green Bay/Crescent Beach area of the province had a mixed flock of about 200 (about equally divided among the three species) on April 6 (JSC); there were 40 at Port Morien through April (GMa), and 20 at Pond Cove, Brier Island on May 26 (ELM, IAM). SURF SCOTERS didn't even come close to the 1500+ reported a year ago--there were only about 400 at Green Bay on May 11, and 150 at Hartlen's Pt. on April 13 (BMa), 100+ at Economy by May 27 (FS). The 350 WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS at Hartlen's Pt. on April 13 (BMa) were the largest group reported by far--there were seven other reports of 70 or fewer birds.

The COMMON GOLDENEYE picture seems to be about as usual, with around 250 in the Pictou area, 75 at Trenton, and a few hundred more at various locations including inlets in Guys. Co. (BMa), Bedford Basin, Crescent Beach, Wallace, Chezzetcook, etc. The Pictou Causeway crowd cleared out shortly after April 5 (MO), but there were still 30 at Port Morien as of May 5 (CMu). Only 1 BARROW'S GOLDENEYE was reported--a female at Crescent Beach on April 8 (JSC). I expect that closer examination of the Common Goldeneye flocks might turn up a few more.



BUFFLEHEADS (or is the plural Bufflehead, as in moose?) were well reported: 19 reports of about 160 individuals. They were present in only small numbers until mid-March, when they began to build up. The Annapolis Royal DU pond had over 50 on March 15 (JHD), and there were 22 at Melbourne on the 26th (JKD). Early April saw 16 at Petite Riviere (JSC), 12 at Grand Desert (AMM, DMA), and 17 at the Causeway Road, Three Fathom Harbour. By late May, only small numbers remained: 2 at Annapolis Royal on May 26, for example (ELM, IAM).

A few HOODED MERGANSERS over-wintered at scattered locations including the Gaspereau River at Melanson on Jan. 27 (JGT **vide** JWW), Ketch Harbour on Feb. 7 (JGT **vide** JWW), Trenton on March 10 (BMA), and Conrad's Beach on March 11 (SDS). By April 10, some were paired: at Aylesford Lake (Brad Sweet **vide** Jww), and at Bishop's Pond (BLF **vide** JWW), and 8 there by the 16th.

COMMON MERGANSERS first arrived in Eel Lake, Yar. Co. on March 13, when there were about 44 present (JKD). A day later, there were 27 in Canning, and by the 20th there were 100 in River Ryan, near New Waterford (GMA). As late as April 15, they were still on salt water at W. Chezzetcook (BMA). By May 5, a nest box at Methal's Lake held 11 eggs (BLF **vide** JWW).

COMMON MERGANSERS seem to have had a normal winter, with small numbers (up to 50 or so) at various coastal locations and in the industrially-warmed water at Pictou and Trenton. JSC saw them doing their "spring head-tossing" at Crescent Beach on April 6, and a late flock of 100 lingered in the Glace Bay sanctuary on May 5 (BSa, George Crowell).

LPMP, ed.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

An early TURKEY VULTURE was in Yarmouth on March 11 (H&HH). Another soaring near Sand Lake on May 9 (A&CMu) was one of the rare records for Cape Breton Is. They were found as usual on Brier Is.--4 on May 19 (RBS) and 3 on May 28 (ELM,IAM).

The earliest OSPREY was at Sackville on April 9 (CDG), the next at W. Pubnico on the 12th (JKD), and there were several reports for the next few days, including some of birds gathering nesting material or sitting on nests. Although CHC commented that only 2 of 5 nests along Indian Path Road, Lun. Co., were occupied in late May, they seemed well established elsewhere. The Lands and Forests roadside surveys of BALD EAGLES in King's Co. produced only 12 imm. and 6 ad. on April 4 (**vide** JWW). Other department personnel found up to 35 birds at the feeding station in Argyle, Yar. Co., in early March (**vide** JKD). There was another good count of 11 around Jintown Beach, Ant. Co., on March 23 (HH). A total of 16 were seen by BMA during travels in the Canso Strait area on April 10. Pairs were reported on nests from seven localities. An adult was seen to catch a vole at Grand Pré on April 5 (CKC), paltry augmentation of its normal diet of poultry offal at a nearby chicken farm. A male N. HARRIER at Lr. W. Pubnico, March 10 (JKJ) had probably wintered. A total of 4 birds spotted in Yar., Digby, and King's Cos., March 27-31 (sev. obs.) must have been first arrivals. They were widely reported through April, and there were "seemingly more than usual" around Economy (FS). There were still "a few passing through" Pictou Co. during May 7-10 (MO). There were 15 reports, doubtless incomplete, of 35+ SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS, including 4-5 still migrating on Brier Is. on May 27-28. Only 3 N. GOSHAWKS were reported.

Two BROAD-WINGED HAWKS near Kentville, April 5 (BMA) and one near Mahone Bay on April 6 (JLC,JSC) were 4-5 days earlier than our earliest spring arrival on record. Interestingly, one in Maine on March 25 was also unprecedented (Guillemot). The next was not until April 27 at Kentville (RBS), but thereafter they were widely reported in small numbers. By far the most interesting raptor was a belatedly reported SWAINSON'S HAWK, an errant immature banded on Cape May, New Jersey, on Sept. 26, 1988, and found dead on Spenser's Is., Col. Co., the following spring. We would like to get details from the person who sent in the band. Was it an old corpse, or a spring

arrival? This is the second report, and the first confirmed, from Nova Scotia. We have 11 reports of ca. 16 RED-TAILED HAWKS, including two nests. (Two corrections of the April issue are in order: the albino Red-tail was found by MA & KA on Dec. 10 at Sheffield Mills, not Grand Pré, and the big count in King's Co., included 20 ad., not 29) A number of ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS lingered. Up to 4 were in E. King's Co. on April 1-19 (GF,JWW, et al.), a very light one was at Tiddville, Digby Co., on April 20 (H&HH), a very dark bird was at APBS on May 3 (JLC,JSC), and 2 were over Brier Is on May 19 (RBS).

GOLDEN EAGLES are always good copy. A "fly-by" adult was at Hartlen's Pt. on April 9 (PM,BS), and another (?) at Chezzetcook on April 15 (BMa). The adult near Wycogomagh, Inv. Co., on April 14 (FLL) heightens our hopes that they nest somewhere on the C.B. Plateau. After a long winter absence, 2 AM. KESTRELS near Wolfville on March 20 (RGT, BET) were probably first arrivals. Two or 3 were reported before month's end, but there were more widespread arrivals of ones and twos from April 10-15, and small peaks of 4 on Seal Is. on April 18 (EMu) and "several" on Brier Is. on April 19-20 (H&HH). A MERLIN on March 3-4 near Wolfville (RGT,BET,CKC) had presumably wintered. Migrants arrive later, some from South America, and the earliest reported was at Hemeons Head on April 14 (DHY). There were only three more April reports, but 5 were seen on May 3-4, and the usual scattering thereafter. The only reported PEREGRINE FALCON was on Sable Is. through the period (ZL), probably a laggard from winter.

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

The single GRAY PARTRIDGE found on April 6 at Economy suggested that they'd had a hard winter. There was also only one report from King's Co. (MA), but doubtless more were seen there. CHUKARS, a partridge of dry, mediterranean climates of Eurasia, were released at W. Pubnico in spring 1989. In spite of doubts by the Dept. of Lands and Forests, they survived winter and a nest with 13 eggs was found on May 13 (JKD).* I still wouldn't bet on their future. Worth belated mention is the Thexton's report of 45 RING-NECKED PHEASANTS in mixed flocks at Grand Pré on March 1. There were reports of small numbers away from King's Co., from W. Pubnico, Ohio, Cow Bay and Hartlen's Pt., Stewiacke, and Amherst Shore. There were 4 reports of 8 SPRUCE GROUSE, from Ohio, Mooseland, Apple River and Glace Bay. About 15 reports of 30 RUFFED GROUSE is more than usual, and in addition KS notes that "on good days you can see 12-16 grouse along the 10km drive from hwy. #8 to Grafton Lake."

RALLIDS

The only reported VIRGINIA RAIL was one "kidicking" at A.P.B.S. on June 3 (IAM), in the midst of several shinnying SORAS. One of the latter was recorded earlier on the N.S.B.S. field trip at Lorne, Pic. Co., on May 20 (SDS). Our first AM. COOT was at the Wolfville wharf on April 29 (NSBS field trip, per SDS), and on May 3 there were 4 at A.P.B.S. (JSC) and a male feeding on fresh shoots at the Annapolis Royal impoundments (JHD).

IAM, ed.

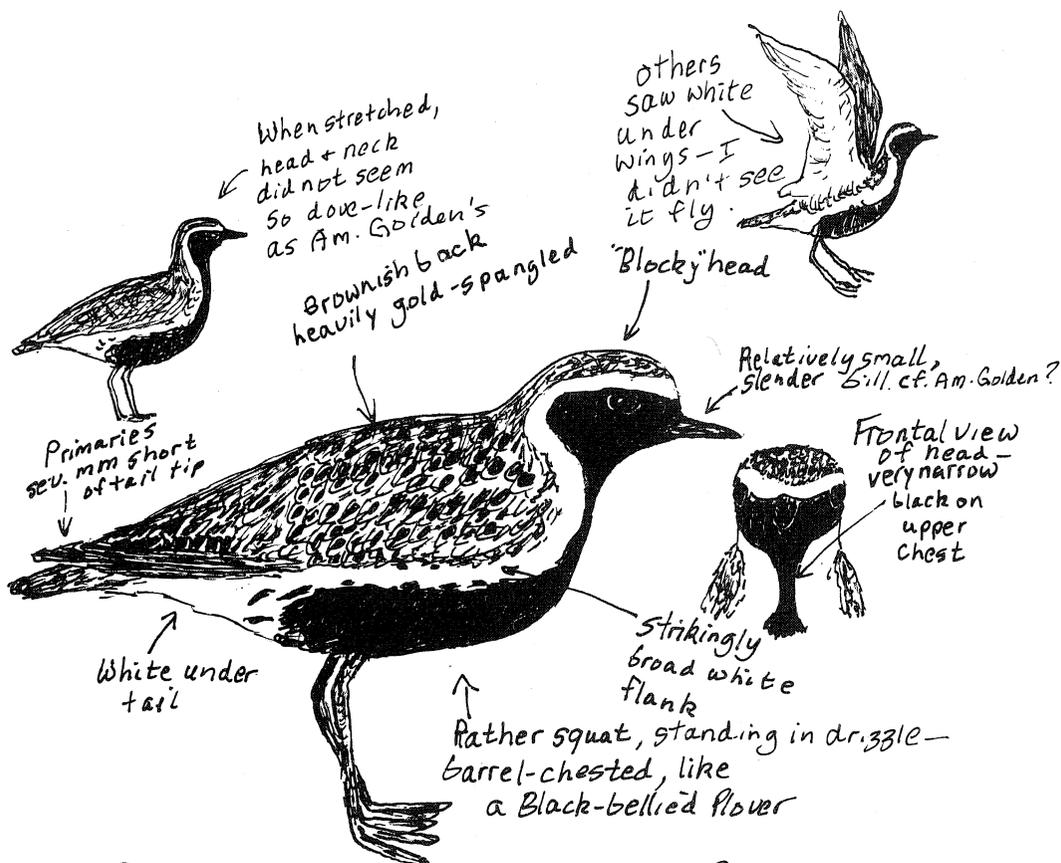
* See Letters to the Editor

SHOREBIRDS

An AMERICAN AVOCET, the province's first in spring, was found on May 9 at the back cove of Hartlen's Pt., by Paul Duval, and seen there by several others up to May 12.

The first BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER was at Three Fathom Harbour, April 19 (FLL et al.) and another early arrival was at Cherry Hill, April 21 (SJF). On May 4 there were about 50 at Cape Sable, where the number rose to 187 by May 27 (SS). The largest flocks elsewhere were 42 at Pinkney's Pt., May 21 (JKD) and c. 100 at Economy, May 26 (FS).

Nova Scotia's second GREATER GOLDEN PLOVER, in breeding plumage, was at Hartlen's Pt., May 22-24. It was discovered by IAM as he was about to go on cross-country TV together with other birders at Pt. Pelee and Calgary, so the news spread fast. Many came to see it in the next two days, including Benton Basham from



Greater Golden Plover, Hartlen Point, N.S.
22 May 1990. Based on field sketch, notes. J.A.M.

Tennessee, for whom it became species number 808 on his North American list. IAM supplies a detailed description and sketch, noting the diagnostic white underwing, coverts and mellow calls. Perhaps by now it has found its way to Iceland, where it may have been heading in the first place after a winter in Ireland.

The only report of SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS is of a pair at Cape Sable, May 27 (BJS). The first two PIPING PLOVERS were at Cherry Hill, March 30 (SJF), with another early arrival at Barrington, April 1, preceding a migratory group of 10 there April 13 (SS). There were a maximum of 6 in late May at Baccaro and 4 at Cape Sable (SS). Reports of 1 to 3 at Conrad's Beach in April (BM,BS,BD) round out a summary notable for its absence of nesting data. A KILLDEER was at Lr. W. Pubnico, March 16 (JKD'E). Two arrived "earlier than usual" at St. Patrick's Bay (H&HH) and at Hartlen's Pt. (SJF) on March 17. At Economy, in a nest only a few feet from last year's location in a too rocky pasture, a clutch of 4 eggs are relatively large, so given the wretched weather it is not surprising that only three hatched May 20 (FS). In Lr. W. Pubnico, four young were out of the nest by May 16 (JKD'E), the same date as last year's report from the SW, at Yarmouth.

Very early GREATER YELLOWLEGS were at Canning and Upper Dyke, April 2 (MG **vide** JWW). From April 21 to month's end 15 more appeared; in May the largest number noted was 12 at Glace Bay on the 5th (BS,GC), where there were still 6 on the 27th. Worth noting is the report of an "agitated" 2 at Loch Lomond, May 28 (JM). No LESSER YELLOWLEGS were reported. A SOLITARY SANDPIPER, always a pleasant surprise in spring, was at Little Harbour, May 19 (DHY). WILLETS sensibly appeared rather late this year: the first was at Baccaro, April 25 (SS), with further reports from the SW in the following two days (IAM,JKD'E). They had reached the Halifax and Wolfville areas by the 28th (BM,JWW) with May reports more widespread. A nest with 4 eggs was found May 26 near Acadia Univ. (SVK,JWW). The earliest SPOTTED SANDPIPERS were at Lake Egmont, May 10 (DD), with several reports for the following week. An early UPLAND SANDPIPER was at Windsor, April 13 (JWT). The number at Lr. W. Pubnico rose from 1 on May 1 to 3 on May 4 (JKD'E). Two WHIMBREL were at Cape Sable, May 4, one there May 27 (SS) and another at Brier (ELM **et al.**); the only RUDDY TURNSTONES were noted by the same observers in the same places on the same late-May date. Two RED KNOTS were also at Cape Sable, May 27 (SS). Twelve SANDERLINGS at Summerville Beach presumably overwintered in N.S. (GP,BS **vide** JWW). There were 60 at Cape Sable, May 4 and 45 still there May 27, as well as the only sizeable flock of SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS (SS). The only report of LEAST SANDPIPERS is of c. 30 at Economy, May 26 (FS). There were still 75 PURPLE SANDPIPERS at Metagan, April 14 (JWT **et al.**). A BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER was at Conrad's Beach, April 7. It is only the third spring record for the Province (in spring the species uses almost exclusively a mid-continental route from South America) and the earliest by a day, another having touched down at Conrad's Beach, April 8, 1976 (NSBS). A RUFF was at Lockeport, April 1 (Donna Crosby **vide** IAM) and it or another was at Little Harbour, April 10 (DHY). Two SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were at Mavillette Beach, May 16 (JKD'E).

A couple of COMMON SNIPE arrived fairly early at W. Apple River (KS) and Lawrencetown (JWT), both on April 7. The majority either arrived late or skulked about during the bad weather. First winnowing was heard Apr. 16 at Bass River (**vide** P&WH) but not elsewhere until late in the month. The AMERICAN WOODCOCK received much interesting notice. The first was at New Ross, March 17 (JWT **et al.**). One at Wolfville, March 27, was observed "rocking", that is, alternately stamping one foot then the other as a preliminary to probing (GD **vide** JWW). BLF crept up on one in thick alders and heard it give "several hiccuping sounds" before making its peenting ground call (JWW). One had reached Ben Eoin, C.B., March 31, only to become a roadkill (JMa). At Sand Lake, Broughton there were 5 during April and May, two of which came to their taped calls (A&CM). Mating flights were in progress at Mantua by April 30 and at Lucasville, May 8 (CDG). L. Benjamin of Lands & Forests found very young (attended) chicks at Scott's Bog, King's Co., May 17 (FS), while at W. Apple River a hen was still incubating 4 eggs of what was presumably a second nesting attempt on May 26 (KS).

PHALAROPES TO AUKS

WILSON'S PHALAROPE is a fairly unusual stray here: Jim Wolford and George Forsyth saw one at Port Williams sewage ponds on May 27. John Kearny saw a RED-NECKED PHALAROPE in a flock of phalaropes off Brier Island on May 26-28, but Eric Mills and Ian McLaren saw no phalaropes off Brier on May 27.

This last record may have all the news appeal of a lead balloon--but please re-read your fall '89 edition of **Nova Scotia Birds**. There's been a drastic crash in the numbers of phalaropes migrating through Fundy, and I'm trying to find out why. Please send in ALL your records of phalaropes--particularly when, like Eric and Ian, you expected to see phalaropes, but they just weren't there.

The LONG-TAILED JAEGER on April 6-7, at Gaspereau, was a sensation (GA,RBS,RGT,BET,JWW). It was a light-phase bird, as almost all Long-tails are, but with something wrong with its right eye. The poor devil was reduced to eating earthworms. It must have seemed a far cry from lemmings on the tundra, or pirating other seabirds off West Africa.

Our BLACK-HEADED GULL records continue to increase. They're the spearhead of European invasion, comparable to the Fulmars' and the Manx Shearwaters'. Jack MacNeil saw 12 at Point Edward, C.B., April 15. Blake Maybank reports 10 immatures in Cole Harbour on April 28. However, most of the birds that Bev Sarty saw at Tufts' Cove on April 4 were already in breeding plumage, down to the pink flush on their breasts.

BONAPARTE'S GULLS are also moving in on us from the west, and the Halls' description of the 25 birds that they saw at Antigonish on March 25 is interesting: "these gulls looked very dapper with black heads and bills..." They were probably heading north for the forest zone in Labrador, just south of the tundra. Our other Boney record is the bird Jerome K. d'Eon saw at Eel Brook, Yar. Co., April 1.

RING-BILLED GULLS were reported regularly. The largest numbers were at Kingsport, where Jim Wolford saw 200 ("nearly all adults") on November 19. At Economy, Francis Spalding saw 6 on March 21, 30+ on March 28, and 150 on March 30. There were still 6 birds on May 27. In Cape Breton, Jack MacNeil saw 5 in Sydney Harbour on April 14, and John MacInnis reports 12 at Forchu on April 28. Donna Crosby saw an adult LAUGHING GULL at Crescent Beach, Lockeport, on May 27, and 3 adults there on June 3.

For once, I won't brush off the HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS. They were here as usual, but Shirley Cohrs says that there were 68 Black-backs on March 15, on the estuary of Petite Riviere, Lun. Co: "most unusual". I don't know what could have been different. The Payzants saw the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL at the ex-Volvo plant in Halifax on March 10. John W. MacInnis saw another at North Sydney on April 10. The NSBS field trip found a "THAYER'S" GULL in Dartmouth Cove on March 11. The southernmost ICELAND GULLS were the 6 that Hubert Hall saw in Yarmouth Harbour on February 18. The latest was Blake Maybank's bird at Cole Harbour on April 28. Shirley Cohrs saw a subadult GLAUCOUS GULL ("pure white, huge and beautiful") at Green Bay in December: it was still there on May 20. Jim Wolford says that there was an adult and a subadult at the Canard poultry plant from January 14 at least as late as April 29. Hubert Hall saw a second-winter bird off Yarmouth on February 18, and Blake Maybank reports 10 at Mulgrave and 7 at Canso on March 11, 6 at Hartlen's Point on April 13, and a singleton there on April 28.

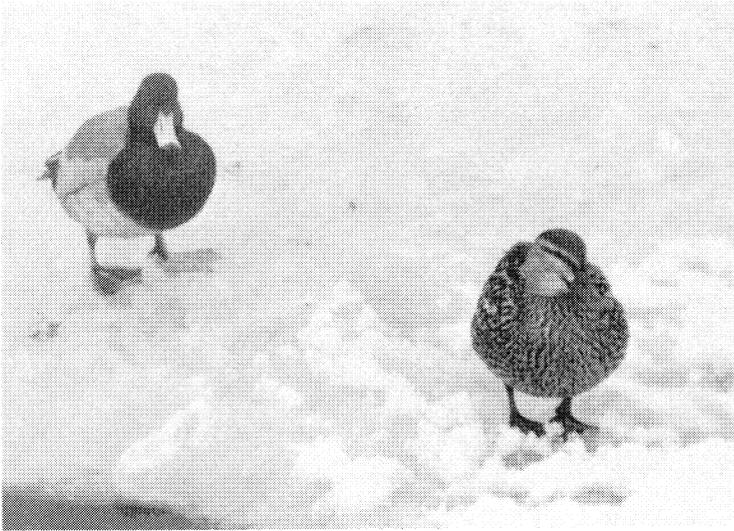
Hubert Hall reports a BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE from **Bluenose** on February 18, about 18 miles west of Yarmouth. Eric Mills and Ian McLaren saw 3 off Brier Island on May 3. Bev Sarty found an oiled bird sitting on the ice on Sandy Lake, Bedford, on April 4. "One can only hope it survived", but the prize goes to Allen Murrant, who saw 200+ off Port Morien on May 15.

Annik Faucher (via Ian McLaren) saw a very early adult "COMIC" TERN on Sable Island Bank on February 9. On May 27, the Smiths saw 45 COMMON TERNS at the

colony on Cape Sable, and Gordon MacLean saw 27 in Glace Bay Sanctuary. Richard Stern, Bev Sarty and others saw a CASPIAN TERN in the Conrad's Beach/Lawrencetown area on April 25-27.

Hubert Hall saw 5 DOVEKIES from **Bluenose** on March 4. "These dovebies and others on previous crossings have been staying in the Lurcher area 17-20 miles west of Yarmouth Harbour". The MacKinnons report 2 birds at Terence Bay on January 6, and another there the next day; there were 2 in Pennant Bay on February 3. The bird that Fulton Lavender and Rudie Dubois saw at Mill Cove on March 11, was in partial breeding plumage. The latest record is Blake Maybank's bird off Hartlen's Point on April 13. The MacKinnons saw a THICK-BILLED MURRE in Pennant Bay on Feb. 3. The last one of these that Bev Sarty and Gordon Tufts recorded was at Sandy Cove, Hfx. Co., on March 5. Our only COMMON MURRE record is Blake Maybank's bird off Hartlen's Point, on April 13. Finally, we come to BLACK GUILLEMOTS, our resident auks. David and Anne-Margaret MacKinnon saw them regularly through the winter, in small numbers, in Pennant Bay. Hubert Hall's bird off Yarmouth, on March 13, was already in breeding plumage. However, this was true of only one of the 4 that Bev Sarty saw in Sandy Cove on April 5, and 1 of the 2 there on April 17.

RGBB, ed.



Take a second look! This is not a female Mallard and her mate; he is the drake Redhead found last winter at Sydney, and nicely photographed (with a borrowed camera!) by Cathy Murrant.

DOVES, CUCKOOS

Wintering MOURNING DOVES stayed around many feeders through spring. However, there were arrivals (from how far?) at several feeders through the first few days of April, beginning with one at Musquodoboit Harbour on March 31 (CJH). One was "singing" in Wolfville by April 4 (MZ), and at least 20 pairs were breeding in the Pubnico area (JKD).

There was no word of cuckoos, and I hope somebody notes spring arrivals for the next issue.

OWLS

Cyril Coldwell's half-wild GREAT HORNED OWL was confirmed as having 3 eggs on March 13 (JWW). One of the 3 ensuing young disappeared sometime between April 29 and May 11, when the remaining two (cannibals?) were "branchers". They couldn't be banded by BLF, because the parents were too aggressive, in contrast to last year. An adult with a young filched 2 nestlings from a Starling nest in Canning on May 26 (MZ). A few others were heard around the province. A late SNOWY OWL on Cape Sable on May 4 "appeared well" (SS), but another that died on Sable Island during April (ZL) clearly was not.

Bernard Forsythe reports that 10 pairs of BARRED OWLS laid 24 eggs in his Wolfville area nest boxes. In one box, he found the following delectables on May 11: 3 Short-tailed Shrews, 2 Red-backed Voles, 1 Jumping Mouse, 2 Garter Snakes, 2 small Brook Trout. One sitting at a pond edge near Wolfville on April 2 (DA,RD) was apparently seeking aquatic or amphibious prey (JWW). Otherwise, there were 8 reports of about a dozen calling Barred Owls and I know of others heard by atlasers. One LONG-EARED OWL was found recently killed on April 15, near Lr. Canard, King's Co., but another live one was found nearby at dusk (BLF). Two pairs were on Bon Portage Island this spring, again evidently subsisting on Leach's Storm-petrels. A roost of 6 SHORT-EARED OWLS was found in late March near Lr. Canard, but none were in the Wolfville area a month later (BLF). Two birds that wintered in the Glace Bay area were carrying nesting material in April (**vide** BS). N. SAW-WHET OWLS were heard by atlasers and others in many localities this spring, although not all were reported to us. Of interest is the report of a juv. female banded on Bon Portage Is., Oct. 1, 1989, and recaptured on Cape May on Nov. 12 (**vide** JWW). A pair of BOREAL OWLS AT Bay St. Lawrence, C.B. Co., were both calling on the evening of April 13, the male giving a prolonged staccato call indicating his close proximity to the nest (FL).

GOATSUCKERS, SWIFT, HUMMINGBIRD, KINGFISHER

Four rather early COMMON NIGHTHAWKS were seen at Mantua, Hants Co., between May 1-5 (CDG). Another was seen on May 8, but they were not widely noted until late in the month. No WHIP-POOR-WILLS were reported, so let us know if and when you first heard them (they appeared in late April in Maine). Jim Wolford, who reports for many observers in King's Co., gives a thorough account of the famous Wolfville CHIMNEY SWIFTS. The first for the province were 2 over the town on May 1 (JSB), and by the 4th there were 7 at the Front Street Chimney. Some big estimates included 350 entering the chimney on May 11, 800+ on May 20, 670 on May 26, 270 on May 29, and 44 on May 31. The drop in numbers latterly was made up by a minimum of 430 in the University Hall chimney on May 31. Big counts elsewhere included ca. 150 entering the Legion chimney at Annapolis Royal on May 9 (JWW), and ca. 75 at the Temperance Str. School, New Glasgow, on May 16 (MO). The miserable weather in mid to late May took its toll; 15 were found dead at Middleton High School, where lots use the chimney, but only 7 corpses turned up in Wolfville (JWW).

I sure would have liked to have been there when a hummingbird appeared magically at Mosherville on a very warm (11°C) March 1 (Carol Taylor, **vide** JWW). I think it must have been something exotic, as many western and southwestern hummers migrate much earlier than ours! An ad. male RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD appeared at RJB's feeder at Maitland Bridge on May 9 and a remarkable 13 were seen in scattered

localities during the next 5 days. Doubtless feeders and garden flowers sustained them through the bad weather, for they continued to be reported through late May.

A BELTED KINGFISHER at Whycomogah on March 26 (BS) had probably wintered, and a small flurry of 4 between April 18-21 may have signalled belated first arrivals.

WOODPECKERS

Ethelda Murphy had a stray RED-HEADED WOODPECKER on Seal Is. on May 14-19. The earliest YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS were 2 at Durham, Pic. Co., on April 21 (MO), but there were only 2 other reports involving 4 birds. There were only a dozen reports of ca. 20 DOWNY WOODPECKERS, mostly not weaned from suet, but also found nesting at New Minas on May 16 (JRB). Eight similar reports of 16 HAIRY WOODPECKERS included a pair with young on the nest at Kentville in mid-May (RBB). Bernard Forsythe asks if an excited male Hairy following a fe. BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER at Melanson Mountain on April 16 was nearsighted; I believe hybrids are known between these two. A couple of N. FLICKERS in the Wolfville area in March (fide JWW) had doubtless wintered. One at Mader's Cove on April 6 (Je&WM), and 3 scattered individuals on April 7-9, were clearly migrants, and were followed by good numbers after mid-month. A nest was noted in Bedford on May 27 (JWT). We have 14 spring reports of ca. 20 PILEATED WOODPECKERS.

--IAM, ed.

FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

An early OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was present at Quoddy on the Eastern Shore on April 30 (HDI), but after that, sightings were more seasonal, with 3 reports from around the province in late May. EASTERN WOOD-PEWEES were also drifting in, in late May (BSa,ELM,IAM). YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHERS were reported May 26 (JSC), 27 (RBD) and 28 (FLL) from areas where territories were probably being established, rather than outlying islands. ALDER FLYCATCHERS were also back around the same time (JSC,JWT,MO,FLL), but the first LEAST FLYCATCHER reported this year was already calling on territory in Kentville, May 10 (RBS), with others being seen in various locations from May 19 (JWT) onwards.

The EASTERN PHOEBE is usually our first Flycatcher to return, and indeed 5 were present on Seal Island on April 9 (EMu), one was seen April 10 at Little Harbour (Shel. Co.) by DHY, and several others from then on. One was nesting in Annapolis Co. by May 26 (JWT). There were only 2 reports of GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER this Spring, 1 dead on Seal Island, May 17 (EMu) and 1 on Brier Island, May 28 (ELM,IAM).

Although 2 EASTERN KINGBIRDS were present in Wolfville, May 11 (MP), the main arrival seems to have been around the 20 and 21, with many migrants arriving on Brier Island (RBS,BLF), and 4 on Bon Portage Is (many obs.). Two had reached Mira, C.B., by the 24th (C.Macinnis). This pattern was the same as last year.

An intriguing, and all too brief, sighting was obtained of a POSSIBLE GRAY KINGBIRD, which appeared in Cyril Coldwell's back yard in Gaspereau on May 12. The bird was closely seen and well described, but only stayed a few minutes and was never seen again.

Mentioning HORNED LARKS reminds us of winter, and indeed large flocks were around in late winter, e.g., 50 at Port Williams, February 27 (RBS), 25 at Grand Pré, April 1 (Jww), with the last report being of just 1 bird at Barrington, April 13 (SDS).

Jumping back to the Summer again, there were 2 sightings of PURPLE MARTINS away from their usual Amherst haunts: 1 from Blueberry Acres, near Canning, April 25 (MZ), and 2 with the Tree Swallows at Eastern Passage, April 29 (BSa). Perhaps one day the number of Purple Martin houses put up by people who don't know that they are so rare in the province will in fact encourage them to breed more widely.

An early TREE SWALLOW was at Pleasant Lake, Yar. Co. (JKD), and others were

appearing in the same area by April 11 (HJH,HGH). They worked their way N.E. along the province as April went on, with many reports from King's Co. by late April, Bridgewater by April 23 (JSC), Pic. Co. by the 27th (MO), and a comment from JMa that they were present at Big Pond, C.B. in mid-May, disappeared during 2 weeks of cold, wet weather, and then reappeared. JSC noted the sudden appearance of hundreds of these birds along the North Shore near Amherst between May 3 and 4. BANK SWALLOWS are later arrivals, and FLL noted 1 at Cole Harbour, May 11, there were 10+ at Canard Poultry 2 days later (JWW) but the first big flock (60-70) was at Cape Sable, May 27 (SS). A few CLIFF SWALLOWS were seen as usual, and JMa noted the return of the Pig Pond, C.B. colony by May 28. BARN SWALLOWS seem to have returned a little late this year. The first report was on April 27 at Sandy Lake (BSa), but they had become well established by mid may (JWW,KT,WT). HGH saw one circling the **Bluenose** 42 miles west of Yarmouth, May 10, and it followed him all the way back to Bar Harbour, Me. Last year he saw one only 32 miles from Yarmouth!

JAYS TO GNATCATCHERS

Despite AA's comment that only a few GRAY JAYS were seen this spring, there were quite a few reports. SDS had one at suet in Col. Co., March 3, HGH and HJH noted 1 each at Mavilette and Chegoggin, both in the S.W. end of the province, on March 9, and BSa noted small numbers in the Kearny Lake area throughout March and April. DMa and AMM had 3 at Riverport, May 27, and there were other scattered sightings. There must have been something special about March 4 for BLUE JAYS. On that date there were a peak of 21 at BSa's feeder in Bedford and an even bigger peak of 50 at RGT and BET's feeder in Wolfville. Other big flocks included 21 in Glenwood (JKD) March 20 and 31 in St. Croix (BLS). Numerous other reports of less spectacular numbers were also received.

I suspect AMERICAN CROWS tend to be under-reported, but large numbers included 30 on Caribou Is., March 24 (BMa), 75 in Stewiacke throughout April (PVB) and 50 at Chezzetcook, April 8 (DMa,AMM). PH and WH from Bass River, and CJH from Musquodoboit Harbour commented on Crows visiting feeders and garbage, and I have noticed the same, and many "non-birders" have commented too on this phenomenon. Only a few reports of COMMON RAVENS came in. A pair with fledged young were noted by JWW on the Acadia University campus, Wolfville on May 11, and a group of 8 was seen by BMa in Kinloch, Inv. Co., March 10.

There was no shortage of reports of the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE. Most seemed to echo CJH's comment that they were present in abundant numbers, particularly at feeders. Some large numbers included 24 in Waldegrave, Col. Co. on March 24 (BMa) and 16 in Kinloch on March 10 (BMa). Two with green leg bands from an unknown source were visiting GP's feeder in Annapolis Royal for the second successive winter, and later in the season nesting was reported from Big Pond (JMa) and Wolfville (BLF). A smattering of BOREAL CHICKADEES was reported from a variety of dates and locations around the province, with no unusual dates or concentrations (BMa,RBD,KS,CDG, etc). Not surprisingly, several reports mentioned the birds being in spruce trees, often with other boreal forest passerines. One of these is the RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, which was also widely reported from similar habitats, but mentioned as coming to feeders, both for suet and for seeds, in several cases (BLS,PH,WH,AA,CDG, etc.). JWW reported a group of 6, including a pair engaged in courtship feeding, on March 2, at Arlington, King's Co.

The WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH prefers different habitat--hardwoods, suburban gardens, etc., and is generally less common over most of the province. However, this spring there were also plenty of reports, mostly of single birds at feeders, from all over (HGH,BMa,BLS,FLL, etc.). JWW found a nest on May 26, in a cavity in a maple, only three feet from a Starling's nest, in Wolfville.

BROWN CREEPERS are another species that largely migrates, although enough over-winter to remain noticeable, and indeed several were reported from around the province throughout the reporting period. BLF in particular found that by late May they were in several woodlots around the South Mountain, King's Co.

I get the impression that the numbers and distribution of all of the last 5 species were fairly similar to last year.

Several WINTER WRENS were singing in west Hunts Co. on April 26 for AA, and one was seen but not heard by BSA and Barbara Hinds on the Kearney Lake Trail on April 30. There were also several on Bon Portage on the May 19 weekend. GOLDEN CROWNED KINGLET numbers seemed way down from the bonanza of last year, although several reports were received from around the province (JKD,SDS,DMA, AMM et al.). The first RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET was back early, on April 7 at Ross Rd. (SWP,JAP), and after that, numbers began to build up with larger numbers occurring mostly after May 1. MO, of Durham, Pic. Co., noted "hundreds" within a couple of weeks in late April, in a similar pattern to last year.

BLUEBIRDS TO STARLINGS

A "beautiful male" EASTERN BLUEBIRD was present in the cemetery on Brier Island on April 20 (HGH,HJH), still very much alive despite the nearby presence of a kestrel and a shrike. In addition KS saw a male, then 2 males in Apple River, then a pair at New Salem, then a male at New Salem, all in late May. Please keep a lookout for a nest!

Only one VEERY was reported, by KNK at New Ross on May 19. I get the impression that the number I have heard in the Valley this spring is similar to last year and down compared to previous years. SWAINSON'S THRUSHES were also not exactly plentiful, although KS saw several (up to 8 at one point) in Apple River in late May. HERMIT THRUSHES were as usual better reported, with CDG seeing an early one in Sackville, April 12, and several reports of singing birds by April 26 (Bedford, BSA; Little Harbour, DHY, etc.).

The main AMERICAN ROBIN migration seems to have taken place during the latter half of March, the same as last year, with 15 arriving at Economy, March 17 (FS), 4 arriving the same day in Apple River (KS), and then 75-100 in Ste. Croix (BLS), 200 in Gaspereau (JWW) by the 24th. BSA saw tired birds arriving over the sea at Conrad's Beach, March 29, with one even landing on the roof of her car. Hopeful Long-tailed Jaeger-watchers noted the huge numbers in Gaspereau around April 7 and 8. Pic. Co. arrivals were a little later, with 150 in Durham, April 10 (MO). These birds waste no time before nesting, and JRB found a nest with 4 eggs in New Minas by May 1, and RBS saw a fledged young being fed by its parents on Brier Island on Victoria Day.

Two GRAY CATBIRDS were present in Little Harbour, Shel. Co., May 6, but the main migration arrived some ten days later, with sightings around the 16th and 17th in Wolfville (GWT), Cape Forchu (HGH), Hartlen's Point (MA), Green Bay (JSC). NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS were also present in good numbers this spring, with sightings throughout the season from Yarmouth to Glace Bay (BSA, L&PP,HGH,KLC,ELM,IAM). Two BROWN THRASHERS were seen, 1 on May 12 in Little Harbour (JMY) and one singing at 3 a.m. in Halifax on April 24 (JSC).

The winter's major invasion of BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS continued into spring, and were still being widely reported from all areas till April 29 (Canning, SDS; Avonport, JWW). The largest flocks seen were of 3-500 around Wolfville, during the last week of February (sev. obs.). However, they were gradually replaced by our more regular CEDAR WAXWINGS, with a few around in early spring (e.g. 60 in Wolfville in mid-Feb., PCS) but more being seen as expected by mid-May (20-25, Bedford, BSA; 15, Mira, C. Macinnis).

The scattered appearance of NORTHERN SHRIKES continued into spring, and individuals were seen on Spencer's Island, February 17 (KS), Lingan, C.B., March 3 (JMa). Finally, the EUROPEAN STARLING seems to be present in the usual locations and numbers. A partial albino was noted by JWW in Canning on March 25.

Overall, in the group of birds thus summarized, there seemed to be nothing exceptional this spring in terms of numbers reported, unusual dates, or outstanding rarities.

--RBS, ed.

VIREOS AND WARBLERS

The first SOLITARY VIREO was noted on Route 14, May 5 (JWT), right on schedule. Reports of about 25 individuals followed, from Hfx., Pic. and Col. Cos., and from Cape Breton, where 5 or more were at Loch Lomond on May 27 (John MacInnis). A YELLOW-THROATED VIREO was observed on Route 14, Lun. Co., May 27 (JWT), our only rare vireo report. Half a dozen observers each found the odd RED-EYED VIREO, for a total of 10 individuals--all reports were from the western half of the mainland on or after May 26.

Warblers were described as "very sparse" on Brier Is., May 27-28 (ELM,IAM). It's a wonder they didn't head back south after the inhospitable third week of May, but gloom and doom were largely avoided this spring as most species answered their cues with a full roster. A few persons mentioned waves of arriving migrants -- JSC at Green Bay and Petite Riviere on May 12-13 and IAM in Halifax, May 31. A few new observers were added this spring, and together with the old faithfuls, gave us nearly province-wide coverage. My thanks to all for the many high quality reports.

The TENNESSEE WARBLER made a good showing for a species which returns late. Arriving at Apple River, Cumb. Co., May 17 (KS), it was subsequently reported five times on the western mainland; and 2 individuals were noted at Middle River, C.B., May 26 (BSa). Once again this spring there was a single ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER observed, this time at Green Bay, May 17 (JSC).

After a poor showing last spring, the NASHVILLE WARBLER was well reported. First seen at Sandy Lake, Bedford, May 7 (BSa), reports followed from Hants (May 8), Col. (May 13), Cumb. (May 17) and Lun. (May 19) Cos. The NORTHERN PARULA was extremely well documented. First observed near Bridgewater, May 3 (vide IAM) and at Kentville (3) May 5 (BMa), Parulas had spread across the mainland by mid-month. A singleton was noted at Loch Lomond, C.B., May 27 (John MacInnis). Some really encouraging numbers were noted, such as 18+ at Apple River on May 24 (KS). Our YELLOW WARBLER fared equally well, with reports spanning the province from Cape Sable to Cape Breton. An early male was spotted at Economy on April 24 (FS), but reports indicated it was around mid-May that Yellows became common, or even abundant, on the mainland, and about May 25 in Cape Breton.

The arrival of the CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER was timely, with 2 at Green Bay, May 13 (JSC). Though only about 15 individuals were subsequently reported, coverage was again province-wide, with the first in Cape Breton observed May 26. BLS found "lots in the area" of Ste. Croix, Hants Co., May 19. Certainly their loud, distinctive song allows birders to know of their presence. A little less vocal but equally as beautiful, the MAGNOLIA WARBLER was first observed in Sackville on May 12 (AA), with three observers noting it the following day in Col. and Lun. Cos., and elsewhere in Hfx.

Co. "Maggies" appeared to be ensconced in their usual habitat on the mainland by about May 20, though a few were still arriving on Brier Is. on the 28th. Reports of the CAPE MAY WARBLER were down, with just singletons sighted at Green Bay, May 13, Apple River, May 18 and Ste. Croix, May 19 (JSC,KS,BLS resp). And early BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER was on Seal Is., April 15 (ELM). Bev. Sarty *et al.* listed the next three at Sandy Lake, Bedford on May 15. A dozen or so later individuals were reported, including a male at Glace Bay from May 20 (GMa) which frequented a suet feeder for a week--I doubt if there were many insects to be had during that cold spell.

I had more YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER reports than I knew what to do with ! A few March reports of wintering birds came in from the South Shore and Valley. Beginning April 20, the migrants began appearing, with first reports of generally small numbers coming from Hfx., Cumb and Yar. Cos. A few made it to Cape Breton by month's end (JMa *et al.*). Greater numbers materialized in May, with a flock of 50-60, nearly all males, at Laurie Park, Hfx. Co., May 9 (Cohrs). MO found them "all over the county" (Pic.) by May 12; they were common at New Ross May 20, Mira, C.B., May 22 and Mooseland Rd., May 27.

A well documented female BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER, only our seventh record, was seen at close range at Green Bay on May 17 and 19 (JSC). This, incidentally, was the same time (May 19) that one was discovered on Sable Is. last spring. A record early BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER was heard near Bridgewater on Apr. 25 (*vide* IAM). Otherwise, first reports came in from the Valley, May 7-8 (RBS,CDG) and from Pic. and Hfx. Cos. on May 9 (MO, Cohrs). Becoming well established on the mainland, May 15-20, BTG's had spread to Glengarry, C.B. by May 27 (John MacInnis). Yet, they were still arriving in numbers on Brier Is., May 28 (ELM, IAM), so the species appears to be in good shape. First arriving (1) at Balfour, Col. Co., May 13 (JWT), the BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER was mentioned by seven other reporters by month's end, from Brier Is. to Durham, Pic. Co.

A PINE WARBLER at Mooseland Rd., Hfx. Co, May 20 did not escape the attention of K&WT. The first PALM WARBLER showed itself to KS at Apple River on April 17, and hordes of reports were received for April from all the way to Big Pond, C.B. Good numbers were observed at Cole Harbour (15 on April 28--Bma) and later at Apple River (30+ on May 23--KS), but BSA felt numbers were low around Bedford.

If the BAY-BREASTED WARBLER had a more distinctive song, it would likely be more commonly reported, but even so, it fared okay. The migration was perceived to begin with 4 on Bon Portage Is., May 19-21 (BSa). A singing male was reported from Big Indian Lake, Hfx. Co on May 21 (DDi); then one was noticed at Mira, May 24 (Cyril MacInnis) and 2 were at Sackville May 26 (AA). Around 5 at Durham, May 27, caused MO to remark that it was "the biggest concentration I've seen here". A few were still moving through Brier Is., May 28. The first spring BLACKPOLL WARBLER was listed by JSC at Green Bay on May 17, then nothing for another week until Cyril MacInnis counted 7 at Mira, C.B. (May 24). Another dozen or so birds were noted, from Brier Is., the Halifax area and Cape Breton at the end of the month. The BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER migration was a little more tangible. An early bird was listed at Pubnico Head, April 30 (LD), and one at Kentville, May 5 (BMA). Reports from right across mainland N.S. came in thick and fast, May 10-20, and several observers included remarks such as "regular" or "common" during that period. Our only Cape Breton report was of 2 at Loch Lomond, May 27.

RBS sighted the first AMERICAN REDSTART of the spring at Kentville on May 15. May 17 brought reports from Green Bay, Mantua (Hants Co); and the following day, from Apple River. They seemed to be well distributed, though in no great numbers, by the end of the month. A brilliant male PROTHONOTARY WARBLER attended the feeder (fed on apple jelly and peanut butter) of Oliver Ross on Cape Sable Is. from April 3-27. Another, or the same one, was there a week later (*vide* IAM). The OVENBIRD is another warbler with a diagnostic song, and I'll wager that most of the early records were of voice only, but no matter. Ovenbirds first were noted at Bedford, May 10, at Hall's Harbour and Waverley, May 12, and at Petite Riviere and Durham, May 13. No great numbers were reported up to the May 31 deadline (none in Cape Breton), but BSA

did comment that there were "many" in the Bedford area. NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH reports continued to increase, with a total of 10 or 11 individuals spotted (or more properly, streaked?), beginning with one at Ste. Croix, May 12 (BLS), "singing loudly in his usual territory", and spanning much of the province. Clearly it is a matter of being in the right place to list this rather unusual warbler, as CHC's bird on May 21 at Second Peninsula, Lun. Co., was only his second sighting there in 20 years. The MOURNING WARBLER was our only breeding warbler not reported.

The first COMMON YELLOWTHROAT arrived at Sandy Lake, Bedford on May 10, with 3 at Green Bay, May 13. They spread in slowly but surely, reaching Mira on May 24 (6). Numbers were described as about usual by those who commented. Five western N.S. observers each came up with a single WILSON'S WARBLER, the first of which appeared at Ste. Croix on May 20 (BLS). Bev. Sarty nabbed the first two CANADA WARBLERS, again at Sandy Lake on May 14. She indicated they were fairly regular there since. A scattering of reports were received, mostly from western N.S. and during the last week of the month. One at Durham on May 27, was the only "eastern" report. I have always found it necessary to frequent the boggiest, most mosquito-infested areas to see Canadas, but IAM, true to form, had one in his central Halifax backyard on May 31.

KNK, ed.



This Prothonotary Warbler was hurriedly snapped by Ian McLaren through the window of the Oliver Ross's house at Stony Is., on Sable Is., on April 26. It had been at their feeder since April 3.

TANAGERS TO INDIGO BUNTING

SUMMER TANAGERS numbered two in the spring report. The first was a male on Bon Portage Island, May 9 through to May 23, seen by Peter Smith and Chris Naugler. The second was a mottled looking male seen by Ross Baker at Middle Stewiacke on May 10. There were at least five SCARLET TANAGER records. First was at Brier Island on May 20, then four other birds, males, seen May 27 & 28 at Brier Island, Bedford, Mooseland and near Kearney Lake, Hfx. Co.

To have only a single sighting of NORTHERN CARDINAL is rather unusual although spring generally has fewer records than fall and winter. The record was of a female seen from March 2 to 9 at Lr. W. Pubnico. (JKD)

It appears that ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS either had an extremely good breeding season last year or have decided to populate Nova Scotia like never before. I have been writing this section of bird reports for five or six years and I've never seen so many reports of this species. There were 29 records sent in, which comprised of over 100 birds. Of particular note were 18 at the feeder of Hazel Dickie in Bass River on May 20. Other sightings were from every area of the province from Yarmouth where there were "lots" to Cum. Co., and throughout Cape Breton. To have one sighting of BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK at any time of the year would be an event, but to have two and in the spring would be unheard of, but that is what happened. On May 16 through to the 24th, a male was scrutinized at Henry Dick's feeder in Hilton, Col. Co., and a second was seen by many at Mrs. Gerry Rathburn's feeder at Cheverie with a "flock" of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. This brings the all time total sightings to twelve and of which only three have been in spring.

Unfortunately, there were no showers of small blue birds this season as often happens. INDIGO BUNTINGS were an uncommon sight and BLUE GROSBEAKS were non-existent. There were just six records of Indigo Buntings totalling seven birds. The first to arrive was a male seen at Middle Musquodoboit on May 11 (Joyce Butcher); May 12 (a pair) at Little Hbr., Shel. Co.; May 14 at Tatamagouche; May 19 at Brier Island; May 21 at Sable Island; and at Big Pond, C.B. on May 27.

SPARROWS TO SNOW BUNTING

TREE SPARROWS were quite uncommon throughout the winter months, although during mid-March their movements were noticed in all areas of the province. Most commonly three or four were coming to feeders or seen along roadsides during March and April. The latest date was May 21 when two were found at Sand Lake by Allan & Cathy Murrant. CHIPPING SPARROWS were right on time even though the weather wasn't about to co-operate. Of the many records received, the most recurring date was May 5 with most other sightings within a few days of that. Early reports came from Stewiacke on April 1 and Big Pond on April 8. These, possibly, were over-wintering birds anxious for spring and on the move. FIELD SPARROWS were found at two different locations. One was seen by Ethelda Murphy on Seal Island on May 19 and another at a feeder in Dingwall. (no date).

SAVANNAH SPARROWS were well reported setting up territory by mid-April in the expected areas of Cherry Hill, Conrad's Beach, and the Valley areas of Canning and Wolfville. Most records were of 3 to 10 seen during the last week of April into the first week of May. SAVANNAH (IPSWICH) SPARROW continues it's precarious survival. There was one seen at Hemeon's Head on March 26, (DHY); 3 at Baccaro Beach on April 8 (SS); a total of 6 at Hartlen's Point on April 7 & 9 (IAM,BSa), and single birds at Conrad's Beach on April 7 and Cape Sable on May 4, (IAM,SS). FOX SPARROWS began arriving as usual in late March. The first to be seen were on March 19 in several central areas of the province. By April 1, one or two birds could be seen scraping at the ground near feeders throughout the province. As with many spring and fall migrants SONG SPARROWS are very exact in their timing of arrival and departure. Fresh spring males were seen and heard for the first time on March 19 in many locales. Within the next few days most exposed perches in suitable habitat held one of our most welcomed songsters.

LINCOLN'S SPARROWS were either late in their arrival this year or they refused to announce their presence until the weather improved. Of the three reports received, May 20 was the earliest, that of one bird at Sand Lake (AM,CMu). One was at Penney's Mountain, Col. C., May 21 (SDS) and there were 2 at Sandy Lake in Bedford on May 31 (FLL,BS). The date for arrival of SWAMP SPARROWS was difficult to determine but it does appear that April 8 to 10 was the period at which birds began to sing in their preferred habitat of cattail and fresh water edges.

Encouragingly, WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS were found to be rather common and easy to find this spring. They began arriving in early April but it wasn't until April 20-21 that they were found singing or scraping in the underbrush in small groups of 5-10. By early May, they were well represented in all areas. It was a good spring for many to see WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS as there were numerous reports sent in from widely separated areas. There were 9 reports sent in totalling 18 birds. They were found in Yarmouth, Seal Island, Sand Lake, Brier Island, Annapolis Royal, Apple River, Dartmouth, Durham, Port Howe and Fort Lawrence from May 8 to May 26-27. After virtually no wintering bands of DARK-EYED JUNCOS anywhere in the province it was a welcome sight to see hundreds of these birds returning in the spring. They began arriving in mid-March at feeders and along roadsides and by mid-April they could be found nearly anywhere you happened to be. A notable influx came during March 24-25, and hundreds were seen along the roadside from Green Bay to Broad Cove between April 6-10 (Cohrs).

There were fair numbers of LAPLAND LONGSPURS during the winter months especially in the Grand Pré area. They usually start moving northward by late February and early March and stragglers are occasionally sighted late in March and early April. During this reporting period there was just one record of three birds seen at Grand Pré on April 1 (JWW). SNOW BUNTINGS tend to linger well into May each year, but the latest sighting this year was April 29 and that was of a single bird at Cherry Hill Beach (SJF).

ICTERIDS

The first BOBOLINKS for the year were recorded at Middleton on May 9 (JKD). By May 20 all areas including Cape Breton had observers noting their presence in small groups of 5 to 20 birds. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS arrived a few days earlier than average. March 19 was the date at which they were found for the first time in several locations. There were a few early dates; a female at Cape Sable on March 4 (SS); one at Durham on March 12 (MO); and several at Apple River on March 17 (KS). The earliest spring date for RUSTY BLACKBIRDS was March 22 at Big Pond, C.B., when there were 2 seen there by Jack MacNeil. Francis Spalding witnessed migrating flocks stopping over in a salt marsh near Economy on March 27 and 28. There was just one April record but by May these birds were on territory and well reported throughout.

COMMON GRACKLES began trickling into the province March 15 and 16, but they were reported as first seen on March 19 by many observers in as many locations. As usual they were found in small groups in the earlier days and then moving in larger noisy groups of 100 or more during April. BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS are generally later to arrive than their relatives and this year was no exception. Although there was an early report of 4 at Durham on March 24, most fresh spring males were first seen during the first 7 days of April.

NORTHERN ORIOLES were quite well reported with thirteen birds seen starting with one at Little Harbour on May 6 (DY). Other sightings were from the central areas of the province most notably three in Durham, Pic. Co on May 27-28, (MO) one each at Apple River and Economy on May 26 (KS,FS) and one at Tatamagouche on May 28.

FINCHES

A rare find this spring would be a PINE GROSBEAK and only three reports were received. Ten were found at Apple River on March 1 (KS); and individuals were found at Bass River on March 21 (PH,WH) and at Caribou Island on March 24 (BMa). These birds have become very uncommon over the last two years in particular and over the last decade they have become increasingly harder to find. Although later than usual, PURPLE

FINCHES arrived with a considerable impact by the last week of April. The Wolfville areas had numerous sightings during March although in most other areas the first bird arrived around April 24. HOUSE FINCHES continue their systematic encroachment into Nova Scotia. This spring brings evidence that we are witnessing a dramatic range expansion. Sightings came from Seal Island, Cape Sable Island, Barrington, W. Pubnico, Wolfville and surrounding area, Bedford and Durham. Apart from the many sightings in the Valley areas, most notable was at least twelve on Seal Island on April 14 (EMu).

To see a crossbill would have been a notable entry into your journal as both species were practically non-existent this reporting period. RED CROSSBILLS were seen at New Ross on March 9, a single bird (JWT). Two were found at Halifax on March 28 (SJF); and 4 were seen in Halifax on April 3 (CWH). WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS were only found at Apple River with 20 seen there on March 3 and 9 on March 6. (KS).

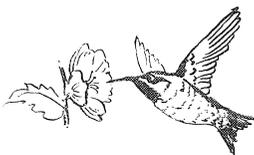
Although there were isolated flocks of 30-70 COMMON REDPOLLS seen in February there were far fewer to report for March, April and May. Of particular note were about 60 in Canning on March 4 (MG) and 40 or more at Port Morien, April 7 (CMu). It is very encouraging to see so many reports sent in as evidenced by the number of sightings of PINE SISKINS. Here is a very non-descript bird which was reported 40 times, which for any species would ordinarily be unheard of. These small finches arrived to squabble amongst themselves at feeders by the third week of March and kept increasing their numbers throughout April. By mid-May there were still many visiting feeders but the numbers had dwindled. Common were flocks of 30-60 which kept feeder keepers re-filling their feeders several times daily during April then smaller groups of 8-15 during late May. AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES became quite common as the spring approached. They were uncommon visitors at feeders in the winter and their arrival was a bright spot in the otherwise dull and cold days of March, April and May. There were numerous reports of 20-40 birds per flock occasionally mixed with Pine Siskins starting in late February and continuing to increase in number well into May before they paired and dispersed.

EVENING GROSBEAK AND HOUSE SPARROW

EVENING GROSBEAKS were found in widely separated areas and rather uncommonly during February, but by late March there was a gradual build-up of their numbers. Many observers had these birds visiting feeders during April and May but the flocks were small, rarely exceeding 20. Exceptions were 45 seen in Dartmouth on March 21 (BMa) and 40 on May 27 at Port Morien (CMu).

HOUSE SPARROWS continue to be neglected when it comes to reporting. Of the five reports received all observers feel there is a definite decline in their particular areas. A report from Keith MacInnis of Hantsport, describes finding 8 dead in nest boxes over a few weeks during March. This species seems to be having its problems but it is difficult to judge without more of your valued comments from all parts of the province.

DAC, ed.



SEABIRD RECORDS FOR THE APRIL 1990 **Nova Scotia Birds**

I'm sorry your seabird reports didn't reach me in time for the April **Nova Scotia Birds**. Canada Post plays tricks when you're moving house: it forwards ALL your mail--except the letter that really matters. By the time this one arrived, I'd missed my deadline.

It leaves me with a stack of records from the fall of 1989, that ought to be published. Here they are--better late than never, I hope.

FULMAR TO CORMORANTS

Hubert Hall, on **Bluenose**, saw at least 7 NORTHERN FULMARS and 4 GREATER SHEARWATERS on the Lurcher Shoal, 15 miles west of Yarmouth, on Nov. 7. George Surette (passed on by Raymond d'Entremont) had at least 200 Greaters around his boat, while he was hauling nets on Georges Bank on Nov. 14: a large flock for so late in the year. Raymond himself reports 12 Fulmars from Georges Bank: "I was surprised at the small number of these birds."

Our other tubenose sightings are belated summer records from Machias Seal Island, in the Bay of Fundy--as near to Nova Scotia as makes no difference. These were counts of very large numbers of shearwaters, made from shore between July 21-August 5, 1989, by Andrew Hicks, the Canadian Wildlife Service warden. July 31 was his peak day: 3,000-5,000 SOOTY SHEARWATERS, 300 MANX, but only 200 Greaters. On several days, these birds were in "feeding frenzy". The mass of Manx fits in with the reports of these birds in the last **Nova Scotia Birds**, but whatever happened to the Greaters? They're normally the **commonest** shearwaters in Fundy.

ALBATROSSES: Ian McLaren asks me to note that the albatross photo in the last issue, mistakenly labelled "Black-browed", is actually a YELLOW-NOSED ALBATROSS.

The flocks of NORTHERN GANNETS off the Canso Causeway continued into November: Jack MacNeill saw "dozens among clouds of gulls" on Nov. 18. At the other end of the province, Hubert Hall reports an adult and a subadult from **Bluenose**, just west of Yarmouth, on Nov. 7 and Dec. 10, respectively. Raymond d'Entremont's "beautiful adult bird", from Georges Bank on Feb. 11, sounds like the first of the returning flood.

As usual, our reports of wintering GREAT CORMORANTS come from southern Nova Scotia. There were 11 at Three Fathom Harbour on Nov. 18 (BMA), 18 in the Prospect area on Dec. 23 (BMA), and "good numbers" off Brier Island on Dec. 19, on the Christmas Bird Count (RBS). Gordon Tufts saw a bird in Fundy, on the Annapolis Shore, on Jan. 29. DOUBLE-CRESTED Cormorants were scarce, also as usual. Richard Stern saw a bird in Digby Harbour on Nov. 21, and single adults on the Brier Island CBC, and at Tiverton on Feb. 17. There was a bird in Yarmouth Harbour on Dec. 10 (HGH), and 2 at Lr. W. Pubnico on Jan. 29 (JKD). The only Atlantic shore record is Blake Maybank's bird at Three Fathom Harbour on Nov. 18.

Ian McLaren points out that the date of the MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD record in last fall's issue was Nov. 1, 1989.

JAEGER, GULLS AND AUKS

Raymond d'Entremont saw 2 PARASITIC JAEGERs on Georges Bank on Nov. 7. Andrew MacFarlane reports a SKUA ("presumably GREAT") from Sable Island on Nov. 15.

The further details of last fall's IVORY GULL, that I promised earlier, are that it was a full adult, sitting among shorebirds on Conrad's Beach on Nov. 11, and closely studied by Colin Stewart and Betty Hodson, but there are no further sightings of the species.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES were common off Brier Island for the CBC on Dec. 19. Richard Stern estimates "21-1,000" on the western horizon. Hubert Hall saw 4 birds feeding, ten miles west of Yarmouth on Nov. 9, while Raymond d'Entremont saw 200 on Georges Bank on Jan. 20. We had a first-winter MEW (COMMON) GULL in Halifax Harbour from Dec. 24 at least until Feb. 18 (IAM, BMa). There were 2-3 RING-BILLED GULLS in the Halifax area, from early January onwards, building up to at least 6 by mid February (BS).

We had HERRING and GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULLS in abundance, as usual. I wonder why CBC's "Information Morning" chose the Osprey as Nova Scotia's official bird, when the province is plastered with Herring Gulls?

Our two LESSER BLACK-BACKS were here, as usual, at the Volvo Plant and on the "Sewer Stroll". The first report for this period was Jan. 13, and the latest was Feb. 9 (BMa,FS). Our first ICELAND GULL reports were Hubert Hall's bird ("first Iceland I've seen this winter") on Dec. 9 on the Yarmouth waterfront, and Richard Stern's couple on Dec. 19, on the Brier Island CBC. If we go north from there, the other sightings include one at Wolfville Sewage Pond on Jan. 29, and one at Fairview Sewage outflow and at least 7 more at Herring Cove, on Feb. 7 (GWT,JCT). However, as you'd expect, there were "hundreds" in Glace Bay Harbour, up in Cape Breton, on Jan. 13 (JM). Allan Murrant reports a bird at Port Morien Wharf on Feb. 20. Nobody sent in GLAUCOUS GULL reports from Cape Breton, though that's where they normally winter in Nova Scotia. Our first sighting is the southernmost: the second-winter Glaucous ("larger than the nearby Herring Gulls...whiter than the Iceland Gulls the same area on Dec. 9") that Hubert Hall saw in Yarmouth on Dec. 10. Among other places in mainland Nova Scotia, we had at least one adult and one subadult through the winter in Halifax (GW&JCT,DW&JAP,BS), and 4 Glaucous in the Kentville area (RBS,BMa).

EUROPEAN BLACK-HEADED GULLS are established visitors to Nova Scotia by now, though I don't think we've proved that they breed here yet. However, since they're already nesting in Newfoundland, Cape Breton is a likely place to start. Jack MacNeill commonly saw them in "couples and dozens" through the winter in Glace Bay, though not in the Bras d'Or Lakes. At Canal Street, Dartmouth on Jan. 19, the 17 Black-headed Gulls that the Cohrs saw were already "beginning to be rosy" they had the pink flush on their breasts that shows they're coming into breeding condition. BONAPARTE'S Gulls, their North American equivalents from the west, were also here in small numbers for most of the time. There was a bird at Cole Harbour on Nov. 18 (BMa), a winter-plumage bird at Yarmouth on Dec. 3 (HGH,HJH), 6 Boneys at Pubnico Point on Dec. 3 (RSD), 6 at Conrad's Beach on Dec. 8 (ABM), and 3 at Dartmouth Cove between Jan. 3 and Feb. 27 (BS). However, the biggest flock of all was large, and rather late: Michael Olsen's 130-odd birds on Nov. 25--"latest seen"-- at the sluice in Pictou Causeway.

It was a good winter for DOVEKIES and, with our Polar cold-snaps, that's hardly surprising. David Young, in Little Harbour/Hemeon's Head, saw them on Most days after Dec. 13. "This number of Dovekies is unusual here: we're usually lucky to see one or two all winter". It's normally a bird of the outer fishing Banks--but the one that Warren and Ben Parsons saw, in Spry Harbour on Jan. 14, was "inside the Bay, in sight of houses". Bev Sarty, in Sandy Cove, says that "a drive along the shore seldom fails to turn up at least one". I'll only cite the southernmost records in this unusual year: Raymond d'Entremont's bird at Lt. W. Pubnico on Jan. 7, and Joan Czaplaj's at Barrington on Feb. 6.

THICK-BILLED MURRES, the other auks that come here from the High Arctic, were also unusually abundant. Bev Sarty, looking carefully for COMMON MURRES in the Sandy Cove area, only saw Thick-billed instead. "Usually in ones and twos but, on Jan. 17, there were 10 at Sandy Cove, and not a "Common" to be seen". The Thick-billed Murres came at least as far south as Blue Rocks, Lun. Co., where the Thextons saw one on Jan. 27. Hubert Hall, on **Bluenose**, saw a probable Common Murre off Yarmouth on Dec. 10, and 3 more on Jan. 4, off Cape Forchu.

Our only RAZORBILL report was Blake Maybank's two birds, off Crescent Beach,

on Jan. 13. Hubert Hall saw 3 ATLANTIC PUFFINS, 23 miles west of Cape Forchu on Jan. 3. Bev Sarty "had a good view of an immature Puffin on Jan. 17, at a range of less than 200 feet, off Sandy Cove, Hfx. Co.

This leaves us with BLACK GUILLEMOTS, the most successful Atlantic auks. They nest in jumbles of rock along the shore, and make their living inshore, by diving for blennies and sculpins. It's easy to overlook them, though they stay here all winter, in Fundy as well as along the Atlantic coast. Most of our reports come from the Halifax area. However, in Cape Breton, Allen Murrant saw one off Cape Perse, Port Morien, on Feb. 15. At the other end of the province, off Yarmouth on Dec. 17, the Halls and Prossers saw a Black Guillemot "braving the rough seas off the breakwater at Yarmouth Bar, to become a CBC statistic".

Thank you, everyone, for your seabird records. I hope you'll keep on sending them in to **Nova Scotia Birds**, and I look forward to hearing from you again,

RGBB, ed.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS



Prior to the 1991 count period, a "Christmas Count Kit" will be issued in a special mailing to all the compilers of the 1989 counts. We welcome those who wish to set up new counts for Nova Scotia following the approved criteria as set out in the kits.

More information will follow in the **Fall Flyer**, at which time the kits will be available.

NB

NEW RARE BIRD ALERT

As is usual every second year, the RARE BIRD ALERT will be reorganized this fall. We will start again from "scratch" as many participants have left, returned or newly joined since 1988, when last it was done. Any member in the Society may be on the R.B.A. but must assume the responsibilities of passing on the message immediately, leaving messages, and CALLING BACK (sometimes several times) when contacts are difficult to make.

If you wish to be on the alert, please send your name, your work and/or home telephone numbers and a stamped self-addressed envelope to:

Shirley Cohrs
8 Rosemount Ave.
Halifax, N.S. B3N 1X8
(Telephone calls will not be accepted)

If you live outside of the Metro area, you may still be included as long as you are willing to take collect telephone calls.

THE DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 1, 1990

ERRATA from Photo Editor:

I apologize for two errors. Last fall's Fork-tailed Flycatcher, reported without details in the January 1990 issue, was misattributed by me in the central photo pages in the April issue. The bird was actually spotted on their property at Apple River by Blaine and Kathleen Spicer, and reported by them to Maureen Mills, who in turn spread the word.

Unaccountably, I wrote "Black-browed" rather than Yellow-nosed Albatross on the photo on p. 42 of the January 1990 issue. The photograph, although poor, is good enough to tell that it is indeed the latter species.

I.A.M.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON CHIMNEY SWIFTS

For many years we in Wolfville thought we had the single hotspot, or one of very few, in Nova Scotia. In the last few years, and especially last summer when Wolfville's ex-dairy-chimney swept the media, I've been gradually finding out about other sites. I'm interested in both roosting (large flocks) and nesting (usually solitary pairs, nests or nestlings falling into fireplaces). Also of interest are old, former-use records as well as recent or current ones.

Please jot down a few notes, as specific as possible, and send them to me, c/o Biology Dept., Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0, or phone 1-902-542-7650 (home) or 542-2201, Ext. 391 or 334.

Please also include your name, address and phone number. I would be pleased to hear from ANY readers of **Nova Scotia Birds**, not just from Nova Scotia.

Jim Wolford

BIRDING MONACO - A SITE GUIDE

by

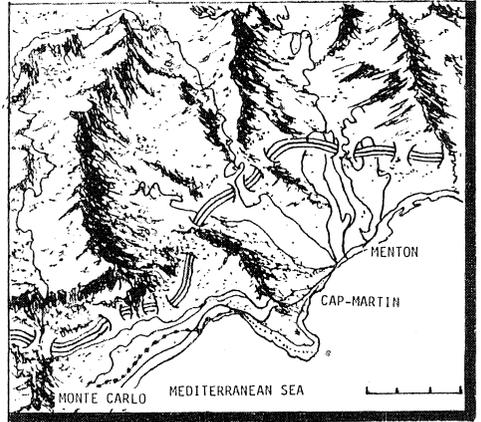
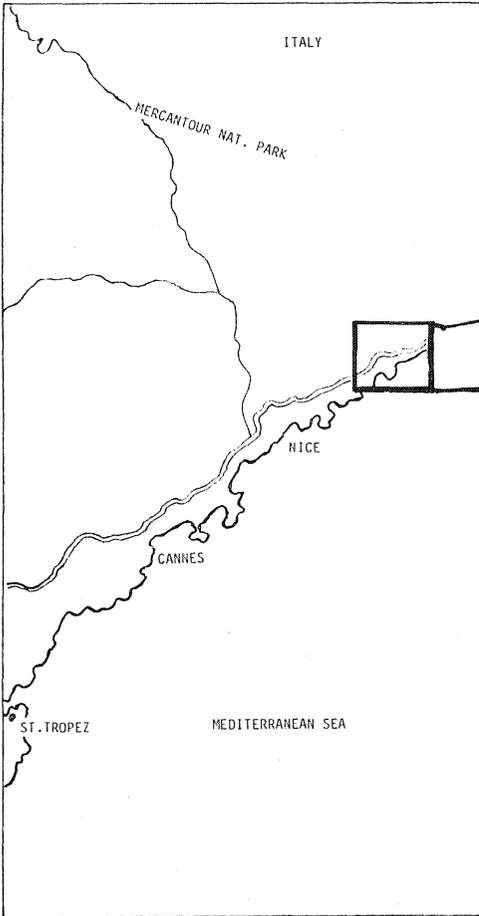
Eric Mills

The tiny Principality of Monaco, between Nice and Italy on the French Mediterranean coast, is better known for fast living and for high rolling than for birds, but it and its surrounding countryside deserve more attention than they get from naturalists. Monaco itself, with a population of 28,000 in 192 hectares along only 4 kilometers of coastline, is highly urbanized. But outside it, especially away from the coast, is the hinterland of the Alpes Maritimes stretching north to the magnificent massif of the French - Italian Alps along the Italian border. This is fascinating, little-known birding country. The information that follows is based on 8 1/2 months that Anne and I spent in and around Monaco between October 1988 and June 1989.

1. *The Principality of Monaco.* The preserve of the Grimaldi family since the 14th century, now best known for its ruler Prince Rainier, Princess Grace, and their photogenic offspring, Monaco is densely populated, manicured like a middle-aged courtesan, and expensive. The business section, Monte Carlo, known for the Casino, is distinguished ornithologically only by the tens of thousands of Starlings that winter between November and March in the trees of the Place du Casino, where the rich run the gauntlet of their droppings.

The old city, Monaco-Ville, offers more to the birder. It perches on a rocky headland over the Mediterranean, giving excellent views of the sea, the mountains, and the rest of Monaco. Birding is best in the Jardins Saint-Martin just west of the Musée océanographique, especially early in the morning. The year-round residents include Sardinian Warblers, Blackcaps, European Robins, Firecrests (look especially in low pines and deciduous trees near the cliff), Greenfinches and Yellow Wagtails. From April through October large flocks of Common Swifts (sometimes with a few Pallid Swifts) and Crag Martins circle the Musée. There are Black Redstarts, Jackdaws, Rock Doves (the real thing) and nesting yellow-legged Herring Gulls (soon to be a separate species) on the cliff face. Migrants are a possibility in spring (early March - June) and in fall - I have seen Spotted Flycatchers, Chiffchaffs, Garden Warblers and (Red) Crossbills there. One April morning five Night Herons circled the dense pines of the Jardins, looking for a roost after an overnight flight from Africa. Looking seaward, check the outfalls below the Musée and to the west off Fontvieille for Black-headed Gulls and the occasional Mediterranean Gull. Sandwich Terns frequently pass by, or fish just below the Musée.

Elsewhere in the Principality the birding is mediocre. But watch for Ravens, Peregrines and Eurasian Kestrels foraging along the cliffs above Beausoleil and Roquebrune-Saint Roman, just above and to the east of the Principality. Blue Rock Thrushes are surprisingly abundant wherever there are rock outcrops they can use as singing and foraging perches (sometimes the Cathedral serves this purpose). A significant number of birds occur in vegetated gulleys and along steep rocky cliff faces. We lived just below a partially-vegetated peak. From our flat's roof-top terrasse we could survey the Mediterranean, Monaco and its environs, and the cliff above. Our terrasse list in 8 1/2 months was fairly short - 43 species - but what a selection, seen over coffee or other refreshments: Great Crested Grebe, Little Egret, Mute Swan (rare), Marsh Harrier, Kestrel, Sparrow Hawk, Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull, Rock Dove, Collared Dove, Pallid Swift, Alpine Swift, Common Bee-eater, Crag Martin (200 wintered above our flat, roosting in a sunny crevice), Barn Swallow, House Martin, Yellow Wagtail, Wren, Alpine Accentor, European Robin, Nightingale, Black Redstart, Blue



Rock Thrush, European Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Firecrest, Crested Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Linnets and Ortolan Bunting.

For a map of Monaco (and a stamp in your passport), visit the Tourist Office at the Place du Casino, or use the *Michelin Green Guide, French Riviera-Côte d'Azur*.

2. *The Monaco hinterland.* The mountains rise steeply, in places to 1000 meters only 2 km from the coast. The terrain is, to say the least, steep and rugged, made up of calcareous rock with thick, low scrub (maquis), with occasional patches of deciduous trees and pine groves in sheltered locations. Rosemary, thyme and basil grow wild along the roadsides and paths. A spring walk along a mountain trail just after the flowers come out (May-June is best) when the sun is warming the fragrant vegetation is unforgettable.

Excellent maps are available for the area. For the region between the Italian border and Nice, encompassing Monaco and its environs to the main massif of the Alpes Maritimes, use the 1:25000 series prepared by the French Institut géographique national (IGN) especially numbers 3742 est, 3742 ouest and 3743 ouest (available from Rontani, a map shop with nature guides, near the Palais de Justice in Nice). They are very detailed, showing all the footpaths giving access to birdy country. A walker's touring map, also produced by the IGN, but at a scale of 1:50000, titled *Au pays d'azur, Itinéraires pédestres no. 26* is also very helpful.

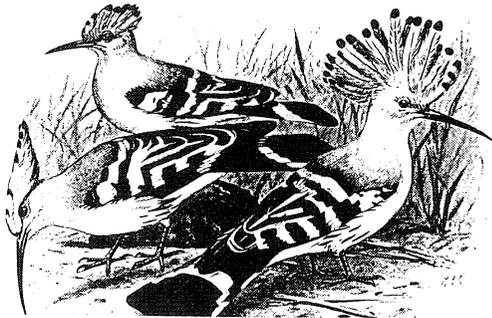
We did not have a car, so our explorations were limited but very detailed. We soon discovered a network of excellent walking trails in and around the villages of Roquebrune, Gorbio and Ste Agnès, and extending around and across Mont Agel and other peaks (maximum elevation 1200 meters). All allow day-long round trips from parts of Monaco and its suburbs - provided you are fit, well-booted, and have some warm clothing in case the clouds come in. Take a compass. Guide books to the walking trails, which are marked with blue or red and white points are available in a few shops in Monaco and in book shops like Rontani in Nice.

In winter, Alpine specialties come down to lower elevations in the coastal mountains. From October onward, try for Wallcreeper and Alpine Accentor, which are regular on the rock faces of the *Parc forestière Départementale du Grande Corniche*, about 2 km west of La Turbie (village accessible by bus from near the Monaco RR station). Walk or drive west from La Turbie along the Grande Corniche (D2564) to a walled road (closed to motor vehicles) that rises steeply on the right. Blue Rock Thrushes on rocks and Sardinian Warblers in the scrub are common. Check the rock faces for Wallcreeper, Accentor, and raptors. As the elevation increases watch carefully in winter for flocks of Rock Buntings, often in song, and the occasional small flock of Citril Finches in rocky, barren areas. In October, migrant passerines may be abundant; from August to September there is a major raptor passage across this area, visible from a viewing tower near the top of the access road, close to the old concentration camp, Fort de la Revère. There is also an excellent view of the ancient perched village of Èze and the coast westward past Nice to the Esterel beyond Cannes.

We spent most of our weekends walking in the vicinity of Mont Agel, Col de la Madone, Gorbio and Ste Agnès, north and east of Monaco. In winter the birds are sparse but interesting: wandering flocks of Crested Tits, Goldcrests, and other tits; sometimes Siskins; once a pair of Golden Eagles; Hen Harriers and Buzzards; Common Wheatears and Mistle Thrushes; a flock of Choughs. Spring begins in early March when the Wood Larks return to Mont Agel; their song fills the air above the rocky slopes and the huge transmitting towers of Radio Monte Carlo. A little later a few Tree Pipits appear and Skylarks join the other larks. By late March Hoopoes were spectacularly present in sheltered, shrubby and grassy areas. In early April we found our first Rock Thrush (the spectacular orange and blue one, not Blue Rock Thrush) on the scree of Mont Agel; later, in June, we found an adult and a newly-fledged immature, proving that this alpine species breeds within sight of Monaco and the coast. By mid April Alpine Swifts have returned from Africa; look for them in early morning or evening along the coastal crags or around the peak of Mont Agel at any time.

Spring migration is late in this part of France. Many birds cross the Mediterranean farther east or west, then follow the coast into the Alpes Maritimes. By early June, with the green vegetation and a profusion of flowers on the mountain slopes, most of the residents are back. In the pine groves between about 400 and 800 meters Bonelli's Warblers are common, easily located by their dry trill. Nightingales sing from thickets, and Dartford Warblers are sparsely spread, chattering, through the maquis-covered slopes, accompanied by their much more abundant cousins the Sardinian Warblers. Occasionally a flock of Common Bee-eaters will chatter past, or a Black Kite will glide along. Mixed flocks of Common, Pallid and Alpine Swifts feed low over the hillsides (try La Coupière, near Gorbio) just after dawn, rising out of sight as the day goes on. On the bare upper slopes of Mont Agel, with the few breeding Rock Thrushes, are Red-backed Shrikes, the ever-singing Woodlarks, Black-eyed Wheatears, Tawny Pipits, Black Redstarts and Ortolan Buntings. In a particularly favored thicket in a little valley on the north side of Mont Agel we found a valiantly singing but very skulky Orphean Warbler, the only one we ever saw or heard.

This very selective account of birding in the Monaco area by a couple of pedestrians will give at least an indication of the species one can find. In fact, this part of France appears to be poorly known ornithologically and rarely birded. In 8 1/2 months of weekly birding we met a few walkers but never another birder. Intensive birding would provide some surprises, I'm sure. For example, I believe that an elusive, loudly singing warbler that never gave me a decent view all spring on Mont Agel was an Olivaceous Warbler, well out of its known breeding range. One should be able to find Nutcrackers and maybe Snow Finches during winters when the snow is exceptionally heavy in the Alps. No doubt there are plenty of other surprises for the birder who leaves the man-made wastes of the coastal Côte d'Azur for the remote hillsides, valleys, and mountain slopes inland. Mediterranean birding - sun, rosemary and thyme, lovely scenery and surprising birds - is hard to beat, especially in a little-known area.



HOOPOE

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

If you wonder at the few field trip reports in this issue, consider the following: there were thirteen trips run between the deadlines for the April and July issues. FOUR were reported. Contrary to what may be imagined, the editors of Nova Scotia Birds are not gifted with second sight and are unable to report trips without the co-operation of the trip leaders.

March 11 - President's Field Trip - Eastern Shore

Not many presidents have chosen to lead a field trip in the dying days of winter and even the calendar shows it is more than a week until spring, so I was really pleased to find an enthusiastic group of eighteen birders gathered at the starting place. One had come from as far away as Montreal.

We started, as is traditional, at Sullivan's Pond where, among the Black Ducks and Mallards, we found an American Coot (staked out by Ethel Crathorne) and an American Wigeon. At Dartmouth Cove, we had Bonaparte's and C. Black-headed Gulls, a Kumlein form of Iceland Gull and a possible Thayers...it certainly seemed to have dark eyes as it flew past at close range but was the mantle sufficiently dark? On to Hartlen's Point, Cow Bay with another stop on a high vantage point near the Dykes and we picked up seven kinds of sea duck and a large flock (gaggle?) of Canada Geese to add to the list.

After a quick pit-stop at Ross Rd., we set out along the Lawrencetown loop. At Conrad's Beach we were treated to the sight of a pair of Northern Pintail accompanied by courting Red-breasted Mergansers, several Common Mergansers and a Hooded Merganser, all in one pond. By this time the weather, which was raw and windy instead of sunny as forecast, drove us out of the drizzle into our cars for lunch.

We found Bufflehead at the Causeway, but no alcids anywhere no matter how hard we tried, which was a disappointment to the birder from Montreal. Completing the trip at Shore Road in W. Chezzetcook, we came back to Ross Road, to tally a very respectable 40 (if you count the Thayers) and the sun came out as we warmed ourselves with hot tea. Many thanks go to those who ferried passengers around the shore and back to their cars.

Joyce Purchase

April 29 - Kings County

This joint NSBS/BNS excursion attracted about 30 people. The day was overcast and the morning quite chilly, but by noon the temperature was comfortable.

Our first highlight came at the Wolfville wharf. After a few minutes of boredom, some willets flew in. Then, from somewhere under the wharf where we were standing, an American Coot flushed, landed on the mudflats, and foraged in front of us. (Coots are hardly ever seen in our area, and never before on the seashore.)

We caravanned to cover the area's hotspots, and I'll only list a few memorable encounters. Near Starr's Point, I entertained everyone by chasing a very elusively skulking swamp sparrow through the cattails.

At the Habitant River aboiteau in Canning, with 70 Canada Geese was a light gray goose that proved to be a Bar-headed Goose. Probably the same bird had been near Kentville in late March but had not been seen for a month. It is very unwary, is not banded, and very probably is an escapee from somewhere.

Then we had lunch at Harris' Pond in Canning. Right there for our viewing were 12 very late Bohemian Waxwings, 8 male Myrtle Warblers, a Greater Yellowlegs and a couple of painted turtles!

At Canard Poultry Pond, sticking out like a sore thumb among the usual zillions of gulls was an all-white huge Glaucous Gull (a 2-year-old). Also 6 kinds of ducks were

"scoped" there.

At Sheffield Mills marsh, an American Bittern "froze" quite close to the road, and a nice chorus of spring peepers and leopard frogs was a bonus.

Back at Wolfville, the sewage ponds had 22 adult Ring-billed Gulls. The mouth of the Cornwallis River, as usual, produced 65 Brant.

In late afternoon, our final stop was Cyril Coldwell's farm at Gaspereau, where his nest-platform held the female Great Horned Owl and three large nestlings.

My personal species list for the day was 46, plus the semi-tame, semi-feral Bar-headed Goose and Great Horned Owl.

Finally, as usual, and as I predicted on the wharf in the morning, I somehow got my face badly burned (and we never saw the sun).

Jim Wolford

May 6 - Amherst Point Migratory Bird Sanctuary

Weather conditions were absolutely dreadful, with a strong SW wind, +2°C temperatures, plus light rain and snow flurries. Despite that, six stalwart members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society braved the elements and recorded the following:

2 Common Loon	40 Tree Swallow
4 Pied-billed Grebe	3 Common Raven
1 Great Blue Heron	2 American Crow
6 Black Duck	40 Black-capped Chickadee
1 Gadwall (male)	2 Boreal Chickadee
2 Pintail (pair)	1 Red-breasted Nuthatch
30 American Green-winged Teal	2 American Robin
12 Blue-winged Teal	6 Golden-crowned Kinglet
4 American Wigeon	2 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
5 Northern Shoveler	30 Yellow-rumped Warbler
30 Ring-necked Duck	12 Red-winged Blackbird
1 Oldsquaw	12 Savannah Sparrow
2 Red-breasted Merganser	2 Junco
4 Northern Harrier	6 White-throated Sparrow
2 Osprey	2 Swamp Sparrow
1 American Kestrel	2 Song Sparrow
2 Greater Yellowlegs	
5 Great Black-backed Gull	
12 Herring Gull	<u>35 species</u>

Al Smith

May 26 - Petersfield Park and Point Edward area--C.B. branch N. S. Bird Society

A good turnout of seventeen bird watchers assembled at Sydney River Shopping Centre for the second field trip of the season. One couple was all the way from California and another person was from British Columbia. Fortunately, the prolonged spell of very inclement weather had at last come to an end and the day dawned sunny. It was a real treat to see blue skies and water after so many grey days. It was warm in sheltered spots but cold in exposed shore locations.

The main area to be visited was Petersfield Provincial Park which is a fairly new park located in a lovely estate which once belonged to a prominent local family, who took great care of the gardens. Unfortunately, the gracious home has long gone and only the foundation remains. The gardens have become overgrown but many of the rare imported trees and plants remain and steps are being taken to preserve them. It is a good birding area containing a variety of habitats, as the estate takes in a waterfront area of the Sydney Harbour. There is ample parking space at the entrance and plenty

of paths to wander along.

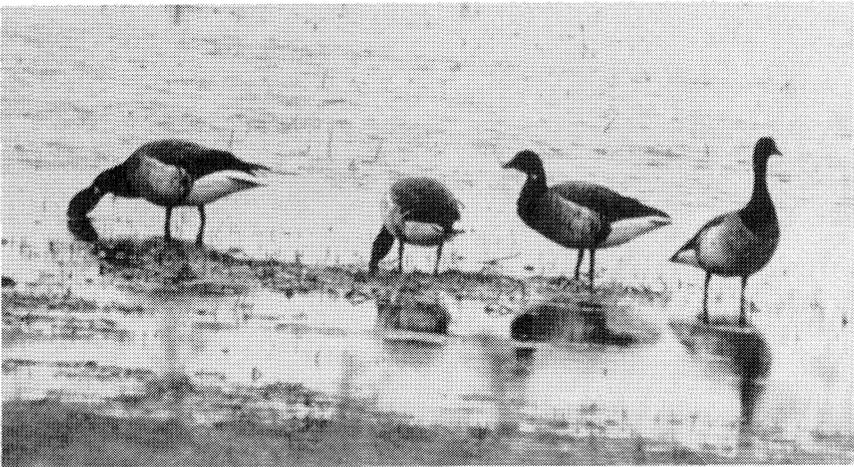
The first exciting sighting was of a Merlin which obligingly perched in a tree long enough for everyone to get a good look at him. A Downy Woodpecker was spotted drilling out a nest hole in the dead fork of a large tree. Two fresh holes quite close together could be seen. Later three male Downy Woodpeckers were seen together and fighting, so it would seem that more than one was trying to nest in the same tree and a territorial dispute was taking place. Other birds seen in this park were: Kingfisher, Common Tern, Juncos, Mallard, Yellow-rumped and Parula Warblers, and Robins.

The next stop was at Point Edward, where conditions were colder, so not as much time was spent. However, Spotted Sandpipers and Greater Yellowlegs were seen, also Red-winged Blackbirds.

Another stop by the shore yielded a Great Blue Heron, a large number of Common Terns and Double-crested Cormorants.

Most of us returned to Petersfield to eat our picnic lunch and enjoyed conversation together at the picnic tables. A most enjoyable field trip had come to an end and the most pleasure, apart for the birds, was to see and feel the warmth of the sun after such a long absence.

Joy Gates



Brant are becoming more regular along the Atlantic coast in migration. This quartet was photographed on Cape Sable Is. on April 26.

FORTHCOMING FIELD TRIPS

REMINDER: Please be sure to continue phoning the field trip leader or contact person ahead of time to register for the trip. In this way no trip is oversubscribed and you can be contacted in case of cancellation. All trips have names and phone numbers listed for your convenience.



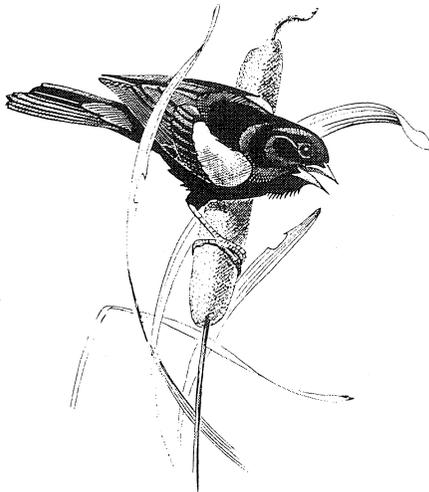
- Sat. July 28 North River (C.B.) Leader:
Nancy More (539-3285) Meet at Sydney River Shopping Centre, Woolco at 8:00 a.m.
- Thur. Aug. 2 Crescent & Cherry Hill Beaches
Leaders: John & Shirley Cohrs (Hfx. 477-6036/Green Bay 688-2131). Meet at entrance to Crescent Beach at 8:45 a.m. Be prepared for a short walk at Crescent Beach in the morning and a more rugged one at Cherry Hill in the p.m. This is a shorebird field trip.
- Sat. Aug. 4 Economy Area Leader: Francis Spalding (647-2837.) Meet at the general store at 9:00 a.m. Returning shorebirds and birds of the area. Great scenery and lots of back roads. On Sunday, Ross Hall is willing to tour Ducks Unlimited Ponds in Advocate, Appleriver and on to Minudie so bring your camping gear if you wish to stay on.
- Sat. Aug. 11 Yarmouth Area --shorebirds, Leader: Eric Ruff (H 742-8145) (W) 742-5539) Meet at the CPR railway station at 9:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and suitable footwear for rocky and wet walking.
- Sat. Aug. 18 Fuller's Bridge Leader: Andrew Gingell (564-8298). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Marion Bridge migrating shorebirds.
- Sun. Aug. 26 Hartlen's Point & Eastern Shore--migrating shorebirds. Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006). Meet at Hartlen's Pt. Golf Course entrance at 7:30 a.m.
- Labour Day Wk.-end Sept.1-3 Bon Portage Island Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006). There will be a charge for crossing & accommodation. Preregistration by Aug. 19 is necessary to ensure accommodation. Meet at wharf in Shag Harbour on Friday at 7:00 p.m.
- Sun. Sept. 9 Tidnish to Wallace Leader: Stuart Tingley (506-389-8166). Meet at Tidnish Bridge on Route 366 at 10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch.
- Sat. Sept. 15 Louisbourg-Kenington Cove (C.B.) Mystery Leader (564-8298.) Fall migrants. Meet in Louisbourg at Hwy 4 and Morrison Road at 8:00 a.m.
- Sat. Sept. 15 Matthews Lake.--late shorebirds. Leader: David Young (656-2225) Meet at parking lot at Hemeon's Head at 1:00 p.m. To get there proceed down Hwy #103 to Exit 23. Go south for 2 miles until "Lighthouse Route" (rain Sept. 16) turns left towards Little Harbour. Proceed down this road for approximately 7 miles until "stop" sign. Go straight through on dirt road 2 1/4 miles until end of road is reached at Hemeon's Head. (2 1/2 hours from Halifax) Wear water proof boots or be prepared to wade bare-foot for short distance if tide is not completely out. Walking distance approximately 5-6 miles--3 to 4 hours.

- Sun. Wolfville Area --shorebirds & challenging ducks. Leader: Jim Wolford
 Sept. 30 (542-7650). Meet at Acadia University Gym at 10:00 a.m. Morning, shore-
 birds, afternoon; duck ponds.
- Oct. Bon Portage Island Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006). Meet at wharf in
 5-8 Shag Harbour, Oct. 5 at 6:00 p.m. There will be a charge for the cross-
 ing and accommodation. Bring food, clothing, sleeping bag. Preregister-
 ation is required.
- Sun. Hartlen's Point & Eastern Shore Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006) Meet
 Oct. 14 at Hartlen's Point Golf Course entrance at 8:00 a.m.
- Sat. Eastern Shore Leaders: Peter & Linda Payzant (861-1607) Late shore-
 Oct. 27 birds, lingering waterfowl and early winter arrivals. Meet at the shop-
 ping centre at the end of Porter's Lake at 9:00 a.m. We will visit
 several locations from Martinique to Lawrencetown.
- Sun. Sewer Stroll I Leader: Fulton Lavender (477-8984). This is an all day
 Jan. 13 trip. Meet at Hartlen's Point at 8:30 hours. We will work our way
 around to Herring Cove via Bedford.
- Sun. Riverside Eagles Leader: Ross Hall (893-9665) Meet at Kentucky Fried
 Jan. 20 Chicken at Exit #11 (Stewiacke) on Hwy 102 at 9:00 a.m.
- Sun. Sewer Stroll II Leader: Fulton Lavender (477-8984) Meet at Spryfield
 Feb. 10 Town Centre parking lot (Zellers) at 8:30 a.m. This is an all day trip
 from Sambro through to Bedford and will finish at Hartlen's Point.

Any questions or suggestions should be directed to the Field Trip Co-ordinator
 Jim Taylor (434-8516), 69 Woodlawn Rd., Dartmouth, N.S. B2W 2S2.

Leaders are reminded to send a Field Trip Report to the Editor of **Nova Scotia
 Birds** (Museum address).

Field Trip Leaders are requested to report any interesting sightings to the RARE
 BIRD ALERT 477-6036 and the Nova Scotia Bird Information Line 852-CHAT



PROGRAMMES FOR THE FALL AND WINTER
(at the Nova Scotia Museum)

Please note that our meeting is always on the FOURTH Thursday, not necessarily the last Thursday

September 27--8:00 p.m.

GRAND AUCTION

The late Carin Somers left a large collection of books, records, tapes, pictures and other items relating to birds. Her husband Frank and her mother, Helen Stein (one of our members for many years) have donated them to the Society to be auctioned. The proceeds will be donated to the Sanctuary and Scholarship Trust Fund.

VIEWING FROM 7:30-8:00
Auctioneer: Chris Field

October 25--8:00 p.m.

Annual General Meeting
Wine and cheese.

November 22--8:00 p.m.

Raptor Rehabilitation
Dr. Ian McKay, DVM
Mrs. Michael (Elaine) Kew

January 24, 1991--8:00 p.m.

Members' Slide Night

February 28--8:00 p.m.

Winter in Arizona
Margaret Clark
Margaret Slatkin

March 28--8:00 p.m.

Birding the Australasian Region
Peter Payzant

BIRDWATCHERS I HAVE KNOWN

John Cohrs

It is time once again to visit the fascinating world of birdwatchers. I don't mean who they are, why they do it or how they go about it, but rather the taxonomy of that great class **Avespectator**. By carefully studying birdwatchers in the field you will always be able to recognize the order and species and occasionally the races and sub races.

Today we will be looking at three distinct species of birdwatchers and discussing several races.

1. WANDERING FIELD TRIPPER

We have all encountered this uncommon species in mixed flocks of the COMMON and the OCCASIONAL FIELD TRIPPERS. The species are almost indistinguishable in resting, feeding or birdwatching activities and present real problems of identification. They are more readily recognized by experienced field trip leaders.



While you can detect some very subtle visual field marks, this birdwatcher is best singled out by its aberrant behaviour. At the field trip meeting spot, he tends to edge away from the group. When instruction is being given on intermediate assembly points (in case the party becomes separated) he appears inattentive to a marked degree. If at this point you suspect that you have a Wandering, rather than one of the two common species of Field Trippers, take a quick look at the gas gauge in his car. If it reads empty, or near empty, you have a possible.

The principal field mark of the species is most often observed when the caravan of automobiles gets under way. At the first, less frequently the second but seldom if ever beyond the third fork in the road, the Wandering Field Tripper will take the wrong fork. If the leader has not identified the species at the start and has placed him in the middle of the caravan, he will have lost half his flock of Common and Occasional as well.

If the field trip is on a long straight road with no turns or crossroads, the identification becomes much more difficult. The experienced birdwatcher can look for one of two obscure field marks. First, observe any suspect carefully when you stop at likely spots for birds. Which of the flock of field trippers strays farthest from the cars? Who is the last to get back to his car when ready to move on? You have a possible Wanderer! Secondly, note carefully all of the flock present at the beginning of the trip. The one or two missing at the end of the trip were without a doubt true WANDERING FIELD TRIPPERS. You have added another species of birdwatcher to your life list.

2. SPRUCE OR ELEGANT BIRD OBSERVER

This species is not to be confused with Spruce Grouse which is named for its habitat. You are as likely to see one of these in a spruce bog as you are to see them buying their plumage in a thrift shop!

The species is dimorphic with the females' plumage exceeding the beauty of the males, hence the double naming of the species as "spruce" to describe most males, and "elegant" to describe most females. Again the identification is not always an easy one. A great many species of birdwatchers can imitate a Spruce or Elegant, but not for long! It is by following one of this species for a few hours that a dedicated Watcher picks up the clues that will eliminate the false, or imitative species that would like to be spruce or elegant.



If the ground underfoot is muddy or boggy, carefully examine the feet of a suspected ELEGANT. Although well prepared for the conditions with LL Bean super waterproof boots, there is not even the hint of a splash of mud on the feet of an

ELEGANT or a SPRUCE. Any other birdwatchers present are stumbling along with mud clogged feet like Clydesdale horses, but the feet of this species look suitable for a ballroom floor. If you are so unfortunate as to have a dry pleasant day for your birdwatching, it will take you longer, but if you persevere, you will succeed. A few tips: birdwatchers sweat, this species doesn't even perspire; no birdwatcher can emerge from a car on a hot day without wrinkled plumage, this species must travel in cars standing up; this species arrives home after a fourteen hour bird trip, even a pelagic trip, looking like you wish you looked when setting out to the Lieutenant-Governor's garden party.

An easy species to identify given ample time to observe it, but a welcome addition to your life list. Its rarity makes it a very worthwhile specimen, especially in colder, wetter, muddier areas like Nova Scotia.

3. TALL TALE TOPPER

We have all encountered this species. It has the greatest variety in plumage in the entire order of birdwatchers. Almost any person you meet while out in the field could be a TTT in disguise. If it is such a master of imitation and disguise, how can one identify it? The purpose of this short field guide is to provide the new birdwatcher with the necessary tools!

The Tall Tale Topper can be identified only by its song, utterances and alarm calls. If you are walking through a Nova Scotia woodlot and have just seen your first Black-backed Woodpecker of the year, you are dying to share it. A stranger with binoculars appears. Obviously another birdwatcher, so you rush to tell your story. He listens politely and utters, "Look out for a little flock of Northern Three-toed Woodpeckers up the path. They were scattering as I left, but there was an Ivory-Bill in the same tree". You have just had your first sighting of a TTT.



Two more examples will fix the vocalizations of the species in your memory. You are scanning the fringes of a marsh and follow the movements of a Snipe in the reeds. An alarm call rings out from the side. "Did you see that bird! That's only my third Least Bittern this year." You have been privileged to hear the alarm call of the Tall Tale Topper. Now, an example of the song. This is an hypothetical example but truly follows the normal song. The scene is an autumn beach. By some miracle, three ordinary birders get a long, once-in-a-lifetime look at an Eskimo Curlew. A birder's dream come true! Farther down the beach your party encounter the ever-present stranger. You tell him the good news only to hear, "Was its left leg hanging down when it flew away? No? Must be two of them then."

Finally, if the birding has been really off on a cold winter's day here are two little traps to make a TTT reveal himself. Make some innocuous statement like "My, but it's cold this afternoon." Quick as a flash a TTT will reply "You should have been here this morning. A bird flew over, froze in mid air and fell to the ground just in front of me. Couldn't identify it, it was frozen so hard it shattered when it landed!" If you mention in the presence of a disguised TTT that you have been birding all day and haven't seen a single bird, he will invariably give himself away. So deep rooted is the instinct to top your tale that he must reply "You should have been here yesterday, there were even fewer then."

LIVING ISLAND (II)

Evelyn Richardson

We continue our excerpts from **Living Island** with a piece about the arrival of spring migrants on Bon Portage Island.

The only small birds I have observed migrating by day are swallows and cowbirds. Because of their strong swift flight, swallows need not fear the enemies which beset less powerful fliers; the cowbirds must have some other courage-engendering capability. It is understandable that the small, retiring birds of thickets and trees--the thrushes, flycatchers, sparrows and warblers--should wait for covering darkness and mount high in the air to pursue their journey. What I find surprising is that such tiny birds as warblers are among the bold spirits undaunted by wide stretches of foodless sea where, should they be caught in a storm, an ocean grave is inevitable for most of them. And many do perish on their over-water flights. Fishermen, many miles offshore, glimpse spring flocks of small birds landward bound, so high as to be scarcely visible in the clear sky overhead. They recognize the migrants as warblers (which they loosely class as "yellow birds") only during rainy or foggy spells when the weight of wet feathers forces them lower and lower. Then the luckier ones land on the fishing-boats to rest and dry their plumage, but many are seen only as pitfully small bodies floating momentarily before they are seized by the ever-present, ever rapacious gulls. Gulls also pounce upon the tiny wearied migrants still able to fly and snatch them out of the air, or brazenly swoop to pick them off the "house" or deck-rail of the boats where they have sought refuge. A fisherman told me in great indignation "I'd been right proud to have a poor little yellow bird resting on my engine-box, but one of them damned big gulls landed right under my nose and carried it off!" Even if fishermen did not hate gulls on general principles, such behaviour would not endear the big predators.

Arth had an unusual passenger one foggy spring day--a bird he had never seen before but which he unhesitatingly identified from Peterson's **Field Guide** as a female vermilion flycatcher. As well as being weary and fog-soaked, it must have been sadly off-course (Peterson gives its easternmost range as the Gulf Coast) and had probably been carried northward by one of the strong air currents which sweep up the seaboard during the spring months and bring us many strays. When this little bird fluttered aboard, near complete exhaustion, Arth dried it off as best he could in the warm convection above the engine, then opened the cuddy door and put it inside. He told me, "It started right away to work its passage by cleaning out all the flies that had collected around my cuddy windows." Later, when he opened the door, it flew out and "Set a strong due course for Seal Island and disappeared in the fog." Seal Island was the nearest land, twelve to fifteen miles away, but how did the bird know? How did it set its compass? Arth said that three days later a wet Arth said that three days later a wet Yellow-bellied flycatcher also "hitched a ride" in much the same manner. I might mention here that on May 29, 1960--which was the following spring and one noted for the number of strays driven to this coast--Carroll came across a male vermilion flycatcher feeding on the tide-line kelpflies at his very feet. This bright black and red bird would not easily be mistaken, especially since Carroll knew the scarlet tanager.

So, after who knows what perils and hardships, a golden troop of warblers appear some morning among the trees below the garden, and I can scarcely wait for noon. A wave of warblers is always a feast of beauty but I never have, and probably never shall, see another to match that of May 16, 1957. This happens to be my birth date, so I mentally refer to the darting, flashing company as my "birthday party."

May had been unusually cold; day after day my brief weather notes read, "cold n.wind," "cold and windy." On May 1st, I had seen a few palm warblers and two parulas, practically no warblers at all, from then until the middle of the month I glimpsed only a single myrtle. I began to think that weather or wind had compelled the warblers to bypass Bon Portage and I felt as sorry for myself as if I had been completely cheated of spring.

On May 15, we had a sou'west fog-breeze, cold and wet and "coarse-grained." Not a bird-watching day; but when Morrill came home to supper he informed me he had met "the most beautiful bird I ever saw" feeding along the wooded road next the boathouse. It had been very "tame" (hungry and weary and astray in the fog) and had let him walk right up to it so that he could note every marking as it continued to feed, almost at his feet. "Where's Peterson's? That page of warblers? Yes, there's the bird!" Our first Blackburnian warbler. If the Blackburnian is not the most beautiful bird Morrill ever saw, it certainly is the most entrancingly coloured of the warblers, with its clear black and white, its glowing orange about head and throat--a true joy to behold. I have seen only a male (no doubt the one Morrill saw) and, in a later spring, a pair in swift courtship flights. A bird-watching friend tells me that a pair nests near his camp in the deep mainland woods, but the bird is uncommon in this area.

By morning the fog had cleared, the wind was strong and cold from the northwest but the sun was pleasant when I set out hoping to sight Morrill's Blackburnian. As I neared the wooded road beyond Saddleback, I saw that the trees were "alive" with flicking wings and darting bodies while the air was filled with a sweet confusion of call notes, twitters and bursts of song. I sat down upon a handy stump and raised my glasses. (I might have been one of the fungi on that stump for all the attention the birds paid me while I studied them.)

Kinglets and sparrows were there, but they were almost lost among the warblers. I soon found Morrill's Blackburnian, and I brought my glasses back to him again and again. I also picked out a single Cape May, an uncommon species in Nova Scotia and the first I'd seen; one chestnut-sided and two bay-breasted warblers, both rather rare though I had seen a few of each before this. There were parulas, blackpolls, black-and-whites, magnolias, palms, myrtles, black-throated greens, yellow and Maryland yellowthroats. Not only was this a great variety for me to see at one time, but the commoner species were present in the largest numbers I have ever witnessed. There was no way of making an accurate count of such active birds but the small area I watched held hundreds, and in addition to those in sight, occasional glimpses and perpetual notes told me that the inner trees held fully as many more. Those I saw were all males, in the perfect and glistening plumage of spring, as colourful as tropical birds, all alive with the season's bursting energy. I wish I could let you see them as I did there in the bright noon sunlight against the blue sky or the green branches--flashes of blue and orange and black and white, of buttercup yellow, deep chestnut and glossy olive-green--and let you hear the happy choir.

My conscience finally drove me home to waiting housework, yet once the supper dishes were washed I sallied forth again. But the wind had risen and turned bitterly cold (there was heavy frost that night); the birthday party was over, for all my warblers had gone into the deep woods. The roadside firs were as silent and bare as Christmas trees stripped of their ornaments.

During the next few days I saw most of the birds again, and sighted a few additional varieties as the concentration spread and scattered: a redstart, an oven bird, a black-throated blue, that aristocrat in conservative blue broadcloth, black velvet stock, and white linen shirt. (I don't often see more than a single one of these, but on June 5th I found at the boathouse a flock of twenty- males--an unusual number on an unusually late date.) With these were a veery (my sole sighting of this bird), a Philadelphia vireo, a Swainson's thrush, a white-crowned sparrow in the midst of fifteen white-throats, and a scarlet tanager.

This same spell of weather brought an eastern towhee to Anne's backyard on the mainland, some eight miles from here. This was the first towhee recorded in the family, though Betty June and I have since seen several.

Besides the warblers I have already named I have also seen at various times: a single Wilson's warbler with his little black cap, several Canada's with unmistakable spectacles and necklaces, Nashvilles, pines and Tennessees. With strays, to be mentioned later, that leaves of the warblers listed in R. W. Tufts' authoritative **Birds of Nova Scotia** only the prothonotary, the Kentucky and the orange-crowned, and since a

prothonotary was present at Cape Sable during September, 1963, I live in hopes that one may yet find its way to Bon Portage.

Most of our spring warblers move along to the mainland but members of some species stay to nest: blackpolls, black-and-whites, black-throated greens, myrtles, yellows, redstarts, and yellowthroats. Warbler colour and activity enliven our trees and bushes until fall, and a few myrtles winter here, especially when the bayberry crop has been plentiful.

The male blackpoll somewhat resembles the black-and-white but has a solid black cap instead of a striped crown, and the female is a mousey little wife with a greenish-yellow tinge in her dress. In actions the blackpoll is a typical warbler while the black-and-white is a creeper, feeds upside down and hangs under branches. When it is out of sight, its wiry ~~see-see-see~~, the highest and thinnest note I hear, reveals its presence in a treetop. Only one or two pairs of black-throated greens nest near the point, and those on the inner edge of a woodcutting, so that once nesting starts I hear its rather easy-going song oftener than I see the singer. The myrtle is one of our three commonest warblers, the others being the yellow and the yellowthroat. There is no mistaking the myrtle's yellow rump spot, which with the yellow crown and side patches make a striking pattern against its blue-grey and white. We see much of these hardy birds, for they feed openly about garden, field and trees, while they are the warblers most often found picking along the kelp rolls.

The yellow warbler is the local "alder bird". The name designates its common habitat but the bird also likes garden bushes where its rich yellow coat shines as I imagine distilled sunlight might. These tiny travellers could well consider me a stick-in-the-mud, and when I see the first each spring I admiringly bid them, "Welcome home from Yucatan." Perhaps because of the fishermen's tales of "yellow birds" these are the warblers I most often picture beating home across the vast ocean.

I saw my first redstart, a male, during one of our earliest summers on Bon Portage. He was hovering above a row of potato blossoms and I recognized the aptness of "butterfly-bird," a name by which this warbler is often known. "Little torch-bearer" also seems applicable since he wears such flame-like orange. I then thought "redstart" must refer to its colour and rapid movements, but later I learned that "stert" was an old word for tail, and this name, like "robin redbreast" was transported from Britain to the New World and applied to a species with real or fancied resemblances to the one long known. By any name this is an exceptionally lovely bird. Perhaps if it were as rare as the Blackburnian I might have difficulty in deciding between their beauty. The female, too, is charming in her grey and yellow which replace her male's black and orange. I was surprised the first time the binoculars revealed that, like the flycatchers, this warbler has a net of bristly feathers at the base of the bill to aid in the capture of small flies.



The Maryland yellowthroat is a special favourite of mine. I like to call it "domino", another of its names, because the male's black mask is so cute and because the little bird acts as if it allowed him a carnival licence and immunity. For this is one of our tamest birds; I have picked raspberries with a yellowthroat watching from a bush I could have reached out and shaken. They do not often sit still as that one did; they are nervously active, and they dart or slither in and out of every alder-clump along the road, uttering their strong husky note, or brief bursts of melody.

During fine May weather our woods and fields ring with a mixed chorus: the familiar songs of robins, sparrows and warblers; the flute notes of Swainson's thrush; the soft sweet voices of goldfinches, in undulations that match their wave-like flights; the cries of spotted sandpipers from the shores; the twittering calls of swallows high overhead; the run of close metallic clicks, like a winding toy, that is one of the crow's spring calls; and from a distance the osprey's whistle and the gulls' dissonant screams. Before the end of May birdsong has reached its peak; then migrants leave and nesting birds settle down to family cares.

Many people hold that the best time to hear birds is between sunrise and six o'clock, and that by eight the first rapturous singing is over. Well, Morrill is on duty until 2 a.m., seven days a week and, while I am usually in bed and asleep before that hour, I do sit up and keep him company so long as I can hold my eyes open. Hence I feel no great urge to be up with the sun. And, for some reason, on the few occasions I have risen to greet dawn and birdsong, the birds have been shamefully laggard. Perhaps our cold damp mornings have something to do with this island variation in bird schedules. Eight o'clock is a good hour, but I have heard and seen quite as many birds on my regular noon walks as I have in the early morning.

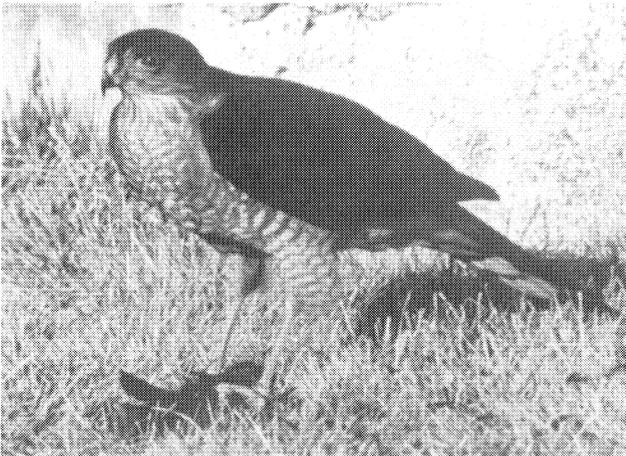
Though song and movement may have passed their peaks, newcomers continue to arrive and during the last week of May I have counted thirty-four species on a short noon walk. Bobolinks! On their way from Argentina. Once to sight a bobolink's black-and-white coat and yellow-fawn nape was a rare experience, but we now see them in considerable numbers and a few are known to nest on the adjacent mainland. Usually four or five males first appear, though they are often joined by females before they move along. They may announce their arrival by a wild flood of melody that seems to come from over-brimming hearts, as they drift about the grassy field; or in **pink, plink** notes of a gleeful guitar as they perch on boughs or reeds; or in a rusty twanging that makes me look to see which of the cattle is hooking at the fence wire.



What few vireos we see arrive a week or so after the warblers, which they resemble though they are shyer and move rather more slowly. They do not flit about as most warblers do, but hunt patiently among the low bushes and along the bark of trees wind-forced to branch close to the ground. None stays to nest and all stop but briefly.

The cedar waxwings, too, are late transients and many springs pass when we see no single representative of this species. "Delicate", "gentle", "soft-tinted" and velvet-textured" are adjectives which fit this bird with its distinctive crest. One of the most satisfying five minutes I ever spent was in watching six spring migrants of these lovely beings, refined in action and demeanour as in dress, as they sat, all facing the same way, in a quiet row along a spruce limb.

But the last week in May belongs to the flycatchers, for even the phoebes, which we sometimes see in April, come in larger numbers then along with its relatives. These form a rather dull appearing tribe and none can boast musical prowess, yet the flycatchers are among the most interesting and most easily watched birds. They sit on conspicuous perches and never go dashing about as swallows do, but wait for passing prey. They dart out; there is a snap of the flattish bill; they swing about and the end of their aerial circle brings them back to their perch. There they sit again, looking sleepy and listless but in reality poised to flick out like a snapping whip. They line the dead trees along the shore near the tide rolls where flies are hatching in such numbers that a pin could not be put through a kelp-blade without piercing a wing or body. They also like the fence wires, particularly on fine evenings...



To some, a "good" hawk is one that eats Starlings!
Photo--IAM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

A few years ago Lester D'Eon and I raised a few Chukars with the hope of releasing them in the wild. After checking with the Department of Lands and Forests, we almost quit. They told us that it had been tried before with no success. The winters are too long and cold in these areas. One of the biologists told me that they would never survive the first winter. Well we did not lose hope. We started with three Chukars in 1985. That spring all three birds laid eggs, so we had to get some male birds. The next year we got five more birds. The following year all the female birds laid eggs, and there were lots of chicks because they lay about ten to fifteen eggs each.

In the spring of 1989 we released Chukar at two location in the Pubnicos. What I was afraid of was that the birds were going to be easy prey for the house cats. After a few days of being released you could almost catch them with your bare hands. Winter came and the snow fell and some birds were going to bird feeders for something to eat. One lady called me and told me that a bird had hit the window and had died and that she did not know what kind of bird it was. When I got there it was one of the Chukar that we had released behind my house. During the winter I heard of two birds that had been hit by cars. The spring of 1990 came around the corner and we started hearing and seeing Chukars. However, they were not as tame as when we released them. On May 18, 1990, Lester told me that he had found a Chukar's nest. I asked him if there was anything in the nest and he told me that the bird stayed on the nest and he could not see if there was anything there. That afternoon I went to check the nest and when I got there she was out of the nest. There were thirteen eggs. Lester told me that he was sure that there were more nests around because he had seen more Chukar around the area.

If the young ones survive it would be a first for the province.

Jerome K. D'Eon

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS) is trying to answer questions about the loon's future in Canada by building a network of volunteers across the country to study loons. Perhaps members of your club would be interested in becoming part of this network.

Since 1981, the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) has been conducting surveys of loons in Ontario. The Ontario surveys were begun over concern about the possible effects of acid rain and human disturbance on Common Loons. These surveys discovered that loons may not be successfully producing young on lakes that are susceptible to acid precipitation. But it is clear that we need to have information from all regions of Canada, from both disturbed and undisturbed habitats, in order to monitor the health of loon populations and the aquatic ecosystems that support them. For example, Quebec is home to a large proportion of Canada's loons, yet 82% of its lakes are considered acid sensitive. Are loons in Quebec being affected in ways similar to those in Ontario?

Each year, volunteers survey lakes and record information about the breeding success of loons. Three careful visits (perhaps an hour and a half checking the whole shoreline) at the right times should tell us all we really need to know, but additional observations are always useful. In June, volunteer surveyors watch for pairs of loons that seem to be resident on the lake, and any possible nesting behaviour. The main event in July is the appearance of newly hatched chicks, and in August surveyors record how many chicks have survived the summer. But we don't just need records from lakes with loons. It is equally important to know what types of lakes loons do **not** successfully nest on, as well as where they do.

Many volunteer surveyors have cottages or homes on the lake they report on, or

they regularly visit the same lake to canoe or fish. Some surveyors are able to report on several lakes in one area, or survey assigned lakes that are of particular scientific interest. Others even act as volunteer regional coordinators, organizing their own group of volunteers to cover a large lake or group of lakes. Cottage associations may also appoint a member to organize a loon survey.

Members interested in participating in the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey should send their name, mailing address, and the name and location of the lake (or lakes) they will be surveying to: Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, N0E 1M0, 519-586-3531. Volunteers will receive a survey kit, complete with instructions and a report form.

Christopher McCall
Canadian Lakes Loon Survey Coordinator

Editor, Nova Scotia Birds:

When we decided to spend the first two weeks of March in the Canary Islands, we puzzled over the appropriate bird book to buy, and finally chose the Peterson-Mountford-Hollom field guide to birds of Britain and Europe. This proved to be a wise choice, but we also bought a guide in Santa Cruz listing birds of the Canary Islands (81 pages and 30 photographs). Since many of their birds are wintering or passage species, and these are only listed in this book, we made good use of both books.

By dint of considerable effort, we managed to list 41 birds in the two weeks we spent—first in north Tenerife with its more luxuriant vegetation and then in south Tenerife and with a more arid climate. While in the south we walked about five miles into a canyon called Barranico del Infierno. At the far end of the canyon, as we approached the waterfall, there was more vegetation and it was here we saw Blue Tits, Great Tits and Sardinian Warbler with a red ring around its eyes. Soaring high overhead was a Common Buzzard and two types of swift. En route, as we sped along in a taxi, Jean had a brief (and so unsatisfactory!) sighting of a Hoopoe, with its distinct silhouette. On the southern shore we saw many familiar species—lots of Ruddy Turnstones and Gray (Black-bellied ?), Plovers, a Whimbrel, a Curlew, Sanderlings (as perky as they are in N.S.) plus a few species we were seeing for the first time—Kentish Plover, a Gray Heron and the Little Egret, complete with lovely plumes. Lesser Black-backed Gulls are common, as are Herring Gulls and Sandwich Terns.

In a vacant field in the south we found Bertholot's Pipits, and Spanish Sparrows (a jazzed up version of an English Sparrow) were abundant everywhere. We saw both Kestrels and Sparrow Hawks, the latter an accipiter. Up north we enjoyed the songs produced by Linnets and Black-caps (warblers). The bird called a Canary is a finch and a rather drab little fellow. In the Botanical Gardens in Puerto de la Cruz we saw many Blackbirds and heard their cheery song, and also saw and heard Chiff-chaffs and Yellow Wagtail. One of the guides reported that there are fewer birds in the islands in recent years. He attributed this to the spraying of the banana plantations. However, we did not see many birds in areas where bananas are not grown. Nevertheless, it was a good trip, one which we recommend.

Jean and Bill Morse

Editor, *Nova Scotia Birds*:

The enclosed note, that I found when browsing in the 1971 volume of *British Birds*, might be of interest.

"**Cold feet in the Nature Conservancy?** It is an unfortunate fact (noted in various British coastal localities) that in protected areas gulls are inclined to increase greatly, to the detriment of other shore-nesting species and of local vegetation. One such locality is the Isle of May, Fife, where the breeding population of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls has jumped from 800 pairs in 1940 to 17,000 pairs at the present time; as the gulls prospered so the island tern colonies dwindled, while some passerines ceased to breed as the gullery area expanded. Eiders and Oystercatchers are heavily predated by the gulls, and the island's vegetation is suffering (with soil erosion in parts). It has long been clear that gull control measures are essential on the Isle of May, and egg-taking having proved unsuccessful the only effective alternative in a colony of this size is to kill large numbers of adult gulls with poisoned bait—unpleasant, of course, but necessary to stabilise the island's ecology. The control measures were to have been carried out by staff of the Nature Conservancy (Scotland), beginning in May 1971. Scottish newspapers obtained the "story" prematurely, however, and the Nature Conservancy then announced that they would not begin during 1971; one can only assume that, fearing adverse publicity, they lacked the courage of their convictions. We support the view of the editors of *Scottish Birds* (6:294: '...it is a pity that time should be lost in implementing an effective gull-control policy on the island, for its necessity seems adequately demonstrated.'"

Of course, such gull control programs have since been carried out on the Isle of May, and elsewhere in Britain and Europe, but there was obviously some agonizing before these were instituted.

Ian McLaren

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MERLIN WORE A POINTED HAT

Jack Connor

Reprinted from *The Living Bird Quarterly*, Winter 1990

As dusk darkens at the local marsh, you're tiptoeing along the edge of the water, binoculars held high and ready, when a bird flushes from the reeds 50 yards in front of you. Broad wings, strong flap, football-shaped body, thick neck tucked in a tight "S"--it's a night heron, obviously. But it's wearing that confusing plumage, brown with white spots, that both species of night heron wear in their first year. It flies away, legs trailing behind the tail, straight into the sunset.

Is it a Black-crowned or a Yellow-crowned?

If your experience is like most birders', you've heard many times that one of the two night herons has noticeably longer legs. And, if you're truly typical, you've forgotten which one it is. All birders forget field marks. In fact, unless you have a photographic memory, you have forgotten more field marks than you can possibly remember. If it's not Black-crowned vs. Yellow-crowned that stumps you, it's female House Finch vs. female Purple Finch, or Chipping vs. Clay-colored Sparrow, or Merlin vs. Peregrine Falcon. "I know a field mark separates these two," you've found yourself thinking. "I just can't remember what it is."

All birders wish they had photographic memories. I sometimes wonder if we want them so much that we pretend to ourselves that we do.

One common technique for learning the songs of birds is the use of memory tricks--mnemonics--but few birders seem willing to admit that their visual memories also need assistance.

Mnemonics may be as old as civilization. Mnemosyne was the goddess of memory in Greek mythology, and the Greeks and Romans used mnemonics to memorize the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, and other poetry before the written word became widespread. Some scholars have argued that poetry originally developed because rhymes and metaphors are such useful mnemonic devices: the need to remember came first, the poetry came second. Whether or not that's true, there's no doubt that mnemonics can be very effective.

The Mind of a Mnemonist, A. R. Luris's fascinating study, describes the techniques of the Russian he calls "S". who could memorize strings of random numbers or nonsense words, complicated and meaningless mathematical formulas, even whole poems in languages he didn't know, and repeat them with unflinching accuracy a dozen years later. S. did not have a photographic memory. He depended entirely on his ability to convert words and numbers into mnemonic images.

The contemporary American mnemonist Harry Lorayne used the same method in his act--which includes memorizing the names and faces of each member of his audience, sometimes as many as a thousand. Lorayne claims that his real memory is actually weak. He originally took up the use of mnemonics because he couldn't remember much without extra help.

Why do many birders forget that it's the Yellow-crowned Night Heron that has the longer legs? Because we have never really tried to remember the fact in the first place. The length of a night heron's legs is a rather humdrum piece of information, and so it glides by the mind's eye as we thumb through the field guide. "In most cases," Harry Lorayne has explained, "forgetting is not getting."

To remember the night heron's leg lengths you must stop to convert the humdrum fact "out there" in a book to a sharp image "in here," in your head. Both herons have long names--two long names for two long birds--but one is a touch longer, and so you might picture both names flying from left to right across the page:

Black-crowned Night Heron
 Yellow-crowned Night Heron

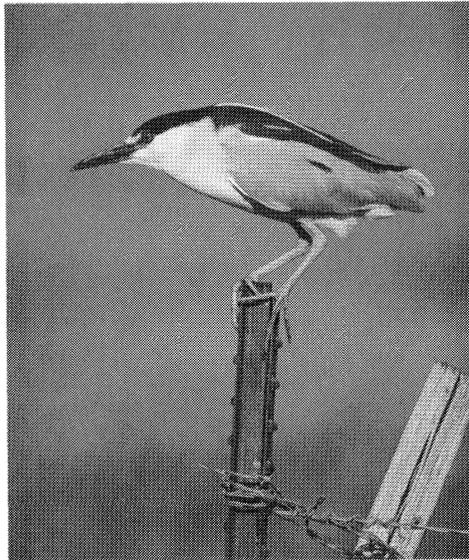
The "Y" in "yellow" trails behind, like the real bird's legs.

Can you depend on your real memory to separate Eastern Wood Pewees from **Empidonax** flycatchers? Me neither. The separation should be an easy one, but before I constructed a mnemonic, empid vs. Pewee stumped me dozens of times. A flycatcher would flick down from the canopy to perch on a tree branch 20 feet overhead, and while better birders were considering such respectable questions as "Which kind of **Empidonax** is this--Willow? Alder? Acadian? Yellow-bellied?" I was stuck at an elementary fork of confusion: How do I know it's not a pewee?"

One field mark that separates the two groups is easy to spot: empids have eye-rings; pewees do not. How to remember this? Change the standard translation of the Pewee's call from **pee-o-weee** to **See? We seeee**. Which will remind you that pewees don't need glasses (eye-rings); they see well enough without them.

If you find that sequence so idiosyncratic or complicated that it would be worthless to you, my next point is made: A mnemonic works best (and sometimes only) for the mnemonic maker.

I have some mnemonics I can hardly explain to myself: "Gadwalls wear whitewalls," for example, somehow helps me remember the wing patches on the trailing edges of Gadwalls' wings. "A plain face for a plain bird" reminds me that female House Finches have less interesting faces than female Purple Finches (and in New Jersey, at least, a House Finch is a less interesting find). Renaming the Clay-coloured Sparrow the "clay-collared sparrow" has helped me remember its distinctive gray nape. "Merlin wore a pointed hat" reminds me that Merlins have harder-edged, more triangular wings than Peregrines. "Peregrines fly like sea turtles swim" somehow helps me remember the big-chested fluidity of Peregrines in flight. Raptor expert Pete Dunne can separate a Merlin from a Peregrine at three times the distance I can, maybe because his mental image is even weirder than mine. "The flap of a Peregrine," he claims, "travels down its wing like the roll in a garden hose when you shake it."



If Merlin the magician doesn't wear a pointed hat in your mind's eye, if clay is not gray, if eye-rings don't make you think of glasses, if the names "Yellow-crowned

Night Heron" and Black-crowned Night Heron" don't strike you as long and odd, trying to memorize the mnemonics above will only add to your difficulties. The make-or-break element of every mnemonic is the component that jumps out at you, **the component you don't have to memorize.**

As you set out to construct a mnemonic, you might want to close your eyes. Ask yourself, "What do I see when I think of this bird's name?" The subtlety of the particular field mark you want to link to the bird's name is not important. You can always create a mnemonic, no matter how complicated the identification puzzle. Any birder who has moved past distinguishing pewees from **Empidonax** flycatchers, for example, to the far more difficult challenge of distinguishing **Empidonax** species from one another might consider turning to mnemonics. Otherwise, the dozens of details involved in mastering this 10-species complex--the Western shows almond-shaped eye-rings, the Willow shows hardly any eye-rings at all; the Dusky has a small bill for an **Empidonax**, the bill of the Hammond's Flycatcher is still smaller; and so on--can give you a severe case of field mark overload.

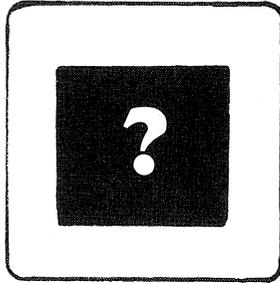
The trick is to take one species and one field mark at a time, and rely on your subjective associations to tie "out there" to "in here". The book tells you the Willow Flycatcher's eye-rings are fainter than other empids'. What does the word "willow" suggest to you? Weeping? O.K., then, how about picturing the Willow Flycatcher weeping so hard that its eye-rings are washed out? The image is the important thing--a flycatcher crying--but in words the mnemonic might read: "Willows weep their eye-rings away."

You'll often find that one image helps you remember the field marks of other species, or other field marks of the same species. Do you have trouble remembering whether it's the Willow or the Alder Flycatcher whose call is that sneezy **fitzbeu**? It's that Willow that sneezes. It has a cold. That's why it's crying? "The Willow weeps its eye-rings away because it has a cold: **ah-choo! (fitz-beu!)**."

I better stop here. The discussion is veering into the idiosyncratic again, and if I keep going I might find myself explaining how I use the "dangling y" Yellow-crowned Night Heron image to remember that a totally dissimilar bird, a certain songbird, wears a vest pocket handkerchief in both adult plumages.

Let's end with a challenge. Can you guess that songbird without the explanation?* The association between it and the night heron is made because the songbird is one of the few (only five) North American nesters with a longer name than "Yellow-crowned Night heron". A free copy of **The Mind of a Mnemonist** goes to the first reader who names the bird--if I can only remember where I put that book.*

Editor's Note: * Instead of **The Mind of a Mnemonist** offered by the author, we are offering a free year's membership in the N. S. Bird Society to the first person to name this bird. Reply to The Editor, **Nova Scotia Birds**, 8 Rosemount Ave., Halifax, N.S. B3N 1X8.

SLIDE COLLECTION

Review, cataloguing and filing of the Society's collection of slides are well advanced. It would be very helpful if members would make a special effort over the coming months to photograph the species for which slides are lacking entirely, are few in number or are inadequate. We can make copies of particularly good slides with which members do not wish to part. Members donating slides which are accepted for the collection will receive credit in **Nova Scotia Birds**.

A partial list of species for which slides are needed is as follows:

Loons	Grebes	Storm Petrels
Shearwaters and Petrels		Ospreys
Ibises		Pheasants and Partridges
Grouse and Ptarmigan		Woodcock, Snipe, Sandpipers
Oystercatchers		(Am. Woodcock, Common Snipe, Whimbrel
Phalaropes (Red Phalarope)		Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Greater
Jaegers		Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher
Auks, Murres, Puffins		Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Purple
Pigeons and Doves		Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper
Owls (Short-eared Owl, Boreal Owl)		Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Marbled Godwit
Goatsuckers		Hudsonian Godwit)
Swifts		Kingfishers
Hummingbirds		Tyrant Flycatchers
Woodpeckers		Swallows
Larks		Chickadees
Crows and Jays		Creepers
Nuthatches		Mimic Thrushes
Wrens		Gnatcatchers and Kinglets
Thrushes		Shrikes
Waxwings		
Vireos		

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Phone 454-0187

and please make it clear for each slide whether it is a donation or whether it is for copying and returning.

BOOK REVIEW

Title: **A Field Guide to Little-known and Seldom-seen Birds of North America**

Author: Ben, Cathryn and John Sill

Publisher: Peachtree Publishers Ltd., Atlanta - Memphis 1988

Number of pages : 75

Price: \$10.95 soft cover

A funny bird book? Really funny, rather than silly or "cute"? Yes indeed, here it is. Set up in the same way as other Field Guides, each "species" (thirty-two of them) is illustrated on one page with the explanatory field marks, observation hints and (exclusive to this guide) specialized equipment needed on the facing page. An extensive bibliography (example: "Pelagic birds of Nebraska"), an appendix and ready-to-fill-out field cards are included.

MILITARY WARBLER



FLEDGLING



FIRST YEAR



CAREER

The illustrations are as well done as any normal field guide, for John Sill, in "real life" is a noted wildlife artist. Here, with the general format and illustrations, the similarity to any other field guide ever published, ends abruptly. The "species" are quite, quite different. For example, on turning to the page on Yellowlegs, we find Great, Greater, Middle, Slightly-lesser, Lesser, Least and Very Least Yellowlegs, accompanied by suitable (?) remarks.

Flycatchers are represented by the Small Flycatcher (*Empidonax Smallii*); the illustration includes the small fly as well as the bird. In the comments on the species is a not too subtle dig (as elsewhere in the book) at the hot shot birder, for after stating that the identification of this bird is almost impossible (the bird having no field marks), the observation hint is that this bird is "most often seen when birding alone".

Pelagic birds are represented by the Skia, subspecies Alpine, Nordic and Southern (water).

There are shorebirds, sparrows, warblers, gulls, grouse, etc.,etc., just like the usual field guide—but to describe these would be to spoil it for you.

Suffice it to say that in among the more outlandish take-offs there is a more subtle humour, so that the book warrants more than a quick run through for the most obvious spoofs.

It is really a very funny bird book.

J. Shirley Cohrs

BOOK REVIEW

Title: **Peterson Field Guide to Western Birds**

Author: Roger Tory Peterson.

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1990

Price: \$19.95 (paperback)

When the Editor asked me, a mere mortal, to critically review the long-awaited latest edition of the birding equivalent of the Bible, I was filled with trepidation. After all, without Peterson and his original field guide, the whole hobby of birding as we know it might not have existed! So, I set about browsing through the book at every opportunity and comparing it with the current eastern Peterson, the National Geographic guide and the Golden guide to see how it measured up to its peers.

The third edition is very different from the second, and is similar to the 4th edition of the eastern field guide in its layout, descriptions, maps and illustrations. This guide covers all of North America west of the 100th meridian, which lies in the western half of the Great Plains, and thus in Canada, includes all of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, plus, where appropriate, the Yukon and western N.W.T. A significant number of ecologically eastern birds is therefore covered. Because of this, twenty-four of the plates have been "borrowed" from the eastern guide, and all the others are new. The range maps are in a separate section at the end. The "Peterson system" of pointers to the diagnostic field marks in the plates has been retained. There is an introduction on bird identification in general, and a nice note on caution in sight records. Anyone familiar with the current eastern guide (every birder?) will feel instantly at home with this western guide.

There are some nice new touches, perhaps to answer some of the criticisms the National Geographic fans have levelled at Peterson, such as the plate that details the plumage transitions of a four-year gull, and the inclusion of juvenile plumages for "peeps". Identification of this difficult group is treated much better here than in other editions. Asiatic rarities seen normally on Attu, accidentals from Mexico, etc., are also described and illustrated.

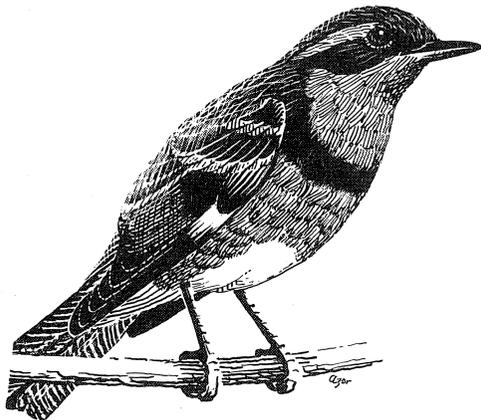
Now for my subjective opinion of how this book compares with its three rivals. I have always felt that the majority of the illustrations in Peterson were more life-like than those in the **National Geographic Field Guide** and I personally like the pointer system. This is particularly true for most of the groups and especially the passerines, although for a few other groups such as shorebirds and gulls, I find the **National Geographic Field Guide** illustrations better. Generally the narrative descriptions in the **National Geographic Field Guide** are more detailed than in eastern or western Peterson. I certainly think that for a relative beginner, Peterson is a better choice than either of the other two, particularly because **National Geographic Field Guide** could bog him/her down in minutiae about sub-species, etc., and the way the relative sizes of some groups in the latter are depicted (orioles, etc.) are confusing for the beginner. The Golden Guide unfortunately, while retaining considerable usefulness, is now outclassed. Compared to the eastern Peterson, I found some of the illustrations in this book a little darker, but of just as high quality.

Does one need both western and eastern Petersons? There are a lot of birds in the western guide that are not in the eastern (e.g., western Alcids, hummingbirds, etc.) but the new western guide comes closer to being an all North American guide than does the eastern. Also, some of the birds that do have different eastern and western forms (e.g. Red-tailed Hawk, Hermit Thrush) are illustrated differently but appropriately in the two books. **Please** would Houghton Mifflin add the few pages from the eastern guide to this book that would enable the two to be combined into a **Peterson's Guide to the Birds of North America**?

No doubt birders far more expert than I could find minutiae to quibble with, but personally, I could find very few. For instance, I was a bit surprised at the depth of yellow on the throat of the Acorn Woodpecker, and I was also disappointed in the lack of differentiating between the two dowitchers by sight in juvenile plumage. I also found that the reproduction of many of the plates had a slightly "soft" quality, rather reminiscent of a photograph with very slight camera-shake. However, I am down to nit-picking, and this is offending to a book which is outstanding and will long remain one of the "gold standards" of bird identification throughout North America. At \$19.95, it is terrific value.

Even if you have every other available field guide, and even if you never bird outside Nova Scotia, buy this one!

Richard Stern



A MASKED BOOBY IN WATERS OFF NOVA SCOTIA

Stefan Strawinski
 Department of Vertebrate Ecology and Zoology, Gdansk University
 Gdansk, Poland

During my daily bird watches on a Polish merchant vessel travelling from New York to Europe, I saw an adult Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*, at 0900 hr EST, March 15, 1989. The bird was flying low over the waves and, as I was on the bridge, I was able to watch it from above for fully 8 minutes as it circled the ship. Visibility was excellent, and I was able to study it with 15x50 binoculars. The booby was smaller than the N. Gannet, *Sula bassana*, and the black hind margin of the wing did not include the primary coverts. The whole tail was black, whereas the entire back and head, except for the black facial area, were pure, brilliant white. I did not note the colour of the bill.

The bird was seen about 78 mi (by radar) SW of Nova Scotia, a little above 43⁰⁰N. This is far to the north of the Masked Booby's range as given in the literature. Harrison (1985), noting that its pelagic range is not well documented, states: it "occasionally occurs Gulf coast of Texas, N to Carolina in USA." "My" bird was some 1200 km north of Florida. (see footnote.)

Although I carried out bird observations for 4 hr every day of the 13-day voyage from New York to Le Havre, in accordance with Powers' (1982) recommendations, this was the only Masked Booby that I saw. By comparison, I saw 32 N. Gannets.

Literature Cited

HARRISON, P. 1985. **Seabirds**. An identification guide. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

POWERS, K.D. 1982. A comparison of two methods of counting birds at sea. **J. Field Ornithol.** 53: 209-222.

(Editor's note. Recent pelagic trips have shown it to be regular in small numbers off North Carolina (LeGrand 1984, 1985, 1988). All these North Carolina sightings have been between late July and early October. Thus, the bird off Nova Scotia was both far out of range and unseasonable.)

LeGRAND, H. 1984. Southern Atlantic coast region. **American Birds** 38:1008-1011.

LeGRAND, H. 1985. Southern Atlantic coast region. **American Birds** 39:39-42.

LeGRAND, H. 1988. Southern Atlantic coast region. **American Birds** 42: 56-60.

BIRDING HARTLEN'S POINT, PART III

Summer

Fulton L. Lavender

Of all Hartlen's seasons, summer is the shortest. Beginning at the middle of June, it extends just to the end of July. By then most of Hartlen's breeding birds have finished raising their young. However, a few late nesting species require an early fall extension to complete this task.

From recent Maritime atlas data, we know that about seventy species of birds are resident in the Eastern Passage--Hartlen's Point area. Of these about forty-five are extremely common.

Among the most highly profiled species are: Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Herring Gull, Greater Black-backed Gull, Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Willet, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruffed Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Raven, American Crow, Blue Jay, Alder Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Swamp Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Purple Finch, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird and House Sparrow.

Less abundant are: Common Snipe, Common Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Gray Catbird, Solitary Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Blackburnian Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Pine Siskin.

Rarely seen are: Blue-winged Teal, Spruce Grouse, American Woodcock, Canada Warbler, Ovenbird, Palm Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, White-winged Crossbill and Bobolink.

It would be unfair to one reading this article, to leave the impression that this list of birds covers the full extent of Hartlen's potential at this time of year. For even during this most settled of seasons the unexpected have been recorded here. Godwits, Whimbrel, terns, shearwaters and many others await the keen, sharp-eyed bird watcher who has wisely included Hartlen's Point among his or her summer haunts.



BIRDS IN A SUBURBAN PARK

In the July 1976 (Vol. 18, No. 3) issue of what was then the **Nova Scotia Bird Society Newsletter**, Rosemary Eaton wrote a short piece concerning the transition of Cole Harbour from a farming to a suburban community. In particular, she mentioned the effect that the Forest Hills housing development might have on the small, marshy pond beside Dorthea Drive. At that time both the Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Society and the N.S.B.S. were hopeful that the "little pond and its birds remain as undisturbed as possible". After all, the area was not only an oasis for local birds, it proved to be a trap for out-of-the-way vagrants like Glossy Ibis, Marsh Wren, and Virginia Rail. Unfortunately, detrimental, even devastating changes brought on by such development almost ruined this haven for birds seemingly overnight. Since that time, the area has recovered somewhat. Settle Park, extending from the pond through to Settle Lake, provides a green buffer zone; on the Dartmouth side new alder growth has prevented further siltation and low water levels. With the recovery of habitat, the birds returned. Eric Cook compiled the original list of birds spotted in the area, and this now totals 74 species. Not bad for a small suburban park. It also proves that one does not need to venture to the ends of the earth for some fairly decent birding. A year of birds at Settle Park provides, in part, a microcosm of land birds that both breed and visit our province.

As in the rest of the region, grackles, robins, Song Sparrows, and Red-winged Blackbirds are making their presence known in the pond and parkland by the last week in March. Soon after this, during April's warmer weather, the ubiquitous House Sparrows, starlings, and crows can be seen gathering nest materials, and except in the latter's case, are busily beginning to nest in farm buildings. About this same time Killdeer are above the farm, rather out of their element, but noisily going about their business. Black-capped Chickadees are still giving their fee-bee call and deeper in the woods their shyer cousins, Boreal Chickadees, lurk. Golden-crowned Kinglets continue their year round presence in the evergreens along the nature trail.

Two months later the woods and pond are alive with bird and insect life. Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers feast on newly emerging mayflies and mosquitoes. Tree and Barn Swallows show off their aerial skills over the farm's buildings and Settle Lake. White-throated Sparrows and Ruby-crowned Kinglets add their songs to the chorus. Luckily, the parkland provides just enough cover for some of our warbler gems like American Redstart, Common Yellow-throat, Tennessee Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. Most wonderful of all, and despite the bustle of traffic, lawn mowers, and roar of military planes overhead, an American Bittern has been spotted on the fringes of Settle Lake, stealthily capturing frogs and small fish.

Other birds that can be seen around this time are those which are familiar to suburban birdwatchers. Goldfinches, Purple Finches, both kinglets, the usual blackbirds such as starlings, grackles and cowbirds can be seen, and occasionally a Bobolink will gurgle up from the weedy fields opposite Settle Lake. During the sultry summer evenings a Sora Rail can be heard, but usually refuses to be lured out of the dense cattail cover. A Black Duck raises her young each year with no problems except the occasional rock-throwing schoolboy. The ducklings dine well on handouts from the adjacent service station's car wash goers as well as their more natural pond fare.

As the alders along Dorthea Drive grow, not only is better drainage into the pond provided, but also suitable cover for Yellow Warblers, empidonax flycatchers and that wonderful noisemaker, the Grey Catbird. By August, Cedar Waxwings can be observed going from tree to tree uttering their high pitched calls and devouring ripening berries. The floating dock on Settle Lake makes an excellent resting and drying out platform for ducks and Double-crested Cormorants.

During the fall, the song birds do not tarry, but Downy Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers are still seen foraging. Spotted Sandpipers sometimes stop to feed at the pond for a few days on their southward migration. A feeder set up near the pond catered to a small clientele as the weather grew colder in late November. The small stand of spruce, alders and wild roses near the now frozen pond provides just enough cover for wintering Song, Tree and even a couple of Swamp Sparrows, as well as Dark-eyed Juncos

and Black-capped Chickadees. Of course, the raucous Bluejays were the first to discover this food source.

Compared to spring and summer, winter is a very quiet time for birds at our suburban park. December's bitter cold brings some northern species to the parkland and farm. Snow Buntings become common around this time and are all about the parking lot, garden, and pastures of the Heritage Farm. Sometimes thirty or more birds form a complete line along the main barn's roof and make forays into the parking lot. During this past year's Christmas Bird Count a flock of Pine Grosbeaks were eating spruce cones atop trees at the lower end of Settle Lake when they were attacked (unsuccessfully) by a Sharp-shinned Hawk. The winter of 1989-90 has gone down as a "Bohemian" winter in Nova Scotia and the parkland was graced by flocks of these colourful waxwings on several occasions. They are welcome western visitors and this writer, for one, will never again snort deprecatingly at a passing flock of starlings. They might not be!

The parkland and especially the pond, do not quite have the ingredients necessary to attract wayward migrants the way they did before the area was built up. However, have a glance when you drive by the pond or come and park and take a stroll. Who knows when another Glossy Ibis or Virginia Rail might be spotted? In the meantime Settle Park and pond provide an excellent spot for some pre-work birding or just a place to gain some respite from the noisy world that surrounds.

Sean D. Smith





Bernie Forsythe photographed (and fed!) the Long-tailed Jaeger at Gaspereau on April 7. Early next day it was photographed standing in the overnight snow by Ian McLaren, but was gone by 9:30 a.m., before several carloads of birders had a chance to "tick" it.



THE WINNING SLIDE

"Confrontation Red-tailed"

by
Fred Greene



1990 Winner of the Trophy for the **Best Bird Photograph** taken by a member of the Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia, presented yearly by the Sanctuary and Scholarship Trust Fund of the Nova Scotia Bird Society

PUFFIN OF THE YEAR

1989-90

At our Annual General Meeting last October (1989), Richard Stern announced that the winner of the Puffin of the Year Award was Ken Gregoire (see the account in the President's Report in the January 1990 issue of **Nova Scotia Birds**) Ken was not present at the time, so the Puffin was presented to him at the Executive Dinner in December.



THE GREAT GULL CULL DEBATE

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In April 1990, the Canadian Wildlife Service proposed to carry out a cull of gulls breeding on Sable Island, off Nova Scotia, using an avian kidney poison, in order to try to save the dwindling tern population on the island. Around the turn of the century Sable Island was home to the largest tern colony on the North Atlantic seaboard, and there were no gulls. The situation is now somewhat reversed, and predation by gulls is thought to be largely responsible for the dwindling of the tern numbers.

The proposal from the C.W.S. elicited a heated public debate, with much media coverage and strong emotions as well as cool science being expressed on both sides of the argument. Some people agreed with the proposal, others disagreed totally, and others agreed in principal but disagreed with the methods or the process by which it was to be carried out. Perhaps because of the degree of public debate the program has now been postponed until next year.

The N.S. Bird Society was asked for its "official" viewpoint on a number of occasions during this debate, but in true democratic form, we felt that both sides of the issue should be brought to the attention of our members, who should then be asked for their opinions. The problem is not going to disappear, and indeed may resurface in the future with regard to other tern and seabird colonies.

In the following two articles, both sides of the debate will be presented, and we fervently ask our members to **read these, make an informed opinion, and let the editor know (either by a simple for/against, or a letter) whether you want your society to have a policy on gull culling, and if so what is should be.**

Richard Stern

Jill MacLean

I have a number of concerns with the CWS program put forward by Dr. Lock to eliminate the gulls on Sable Island in order to preserve the tern colonies there; this project was to have been implemented this May, but has been postponed for a year due to public controversy. The executive of the N.S. Bird Society declined to have any official role in the program.

One of the reasons for choosing Sable Island as the starting point for an Atlantic Region Tern Management Plan is its remoteness from the mainland; it is assumed that if the nesting gulls are poisoned for two years in a row, there will be little recruitment of new gulls. Since there were no gulls on Sable before 1920, it is obvious that gulls do come to Sable from the mainland; the gulls leave in the winter and reappear in the spring, and it is known that on Sable they have very low reproductive success. As far as I am aware no tagging studies have been done to ascertain the makeup of Sable gull population. I would suspect there is considerable recruitment, and that the poisoning would have to be repeated on a yearly basis to be effective. This is certainly true of other proposed management areas in the Maritimes.

The plan represents single species management, a concept now out of favour. Sable Island is a very restricted ecosystem; the gulls have a role in that ecosystem, part of which is preying on terns. However, the gulls also clean up over 10,000 afterbirths of seal pups every year, the bodies of dead pups, and other organic matter that washes up on the beaches. What will be the ramifications of removing the gulls totally from the ecosystem? To the counterargument that originally there were no gulls on Sable, I would reply that the seal population has exploded since then in a manner similar to that of the gull population.

This seal population is maintained by the same food source (juvenile gadoid fish and sand lance) that the terns feed on; will the CWS decision to make Sable a tern sanctuary necessitate the removal of the seals should a food shortage occur?...and I quote from the second draft of Dr. Lock's tern management plan..."..the terns breeding there (i.e. Sable Island) are undisturbed except for the impact of the feral horses and breeding gulls." Because the horses on Sable share the habitat of the terns, which nest on the areas of the dunes where there is vegetation, I am sure horses must trample on tern nests. How far will the management of Sable be carried?

The poison to be used is called DRC 1339, a restricted-use pesticide only allowed in the country by Agriculture Canada on a research permit. The precautions on the label read as follows: "This pesticide is harmful to birds. Do not expose in areas accessible to waterfowl, poultry, and other non-target birds. Keep out of lakes, ponds, streams, tidal marshes, and estuaries. Do not apply where runoff is likely to occur." Although the research states that it is lethal in doses from 10-1800 mg/kg body weight to various mammals such as cattle, sheep, coyotes, dogs and rats, and can cause side effects such as strong eye irritation in rabbits, it is unlikely, if used correctly, to get into the food chain in the amounts used for poisoning gulls. However, I find the nature of the above research repugnant, and do not want my tax dollar, even indirectly, being used to support such a project.

DRC 1339 causes kidney failure in birds, and according to Dr. Hugh Chisolm, a Halifax veterinarian, allowing a bird to feed on it is the exact equivalent of feeding antifreeze to a cat. The Canadian Council on Animal Care, a committee of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, states that for a method of euthanasia to be considered humane, it must have an immediate depressive action on the central nervous system to ensure insensitivity to pain. DRC 1339 causes toxic waste products such as uric acid to accumulate in the bloodstream, leading to uremic poisoning; the gulls become lethargic twelve hours after ingesting the poison and die within twenty-four to forty-eight hours; Dr. Chisolm states categorically that this cannot be a painless process.

Although the above objections are rational, my first reaction when I heard of the CWS plan was visceral. Much as I might like to go to Sable Island, I would not go there to poison gulls. There is no guarantee the plan will work; it is, furthermore, a very shallow attempt at management that solves none of the underlying problems. For there are major problems facing the less adaptable seabirds such as terns: oil slicks, drowning in drift nests, toxic chemicals that cause reproductivity to decrease, disturbance of nesting sites, lack of food due to over-fishing, and predation by gulls (whose population increase can be laid solely at our doorstep). These problems are human in origin, stemming from economic greed and from an arrogant disregard for the environment: nature is to be dominated and exists to serve us. So we scapegoat the species that succeed in spite of, or because of, us (gulls, seals, starlings, coyotes), and ignore the fact that we are the nuisance species par excellence. I see the CWS program as another example of this arrogance: kill large numbers of one species--after all, gulls are dispensable--in order to preserve another that we have deemed aesthetically pleasing. I would be extremely sorry to see terns become extinct in the Maritimes; but I would not kill thousands of other birds in order that they survive. In my opinion the end does not justify the means.

Tony Lock

Humans are highly adaptable, and a part of this adaptability is our ability to accept and even thrive in conditions far removed from anything that could be considered natural for our species. We unthinkingly accept the world around us and rather assume that, apart from our cities and industrial landscapes, the world is pretty much as it always has been, or at the very least, pretty much as it has been for the last millenium or so.

However, the natural world was not always as it is today. Things have changed since industrial man became the dominant species in the world. The most obvious changes are extinctions: we no longer have Labrador Ducks, Passenger Pigeons or Great Auks. Less easily appreciated are changes in numbers. That numbers of many bird species have greatly decreased is a conclusion forced upon us when we read nineteenth century gunners' tales of a single shot bringing down a dozen curlews from a flock of thousands, or early accounts of the numbers of seabirds at colonies now deserted. We have no real idea of the relative numbers of the various species of birds and beasts which inhabited this continent before humans arrived, or even before Europeans arrived. We can only be certain that "nature", as we see it now is not natural.

This is not an argument to sit back and accept the state of our world, to philisophically accept extinction as a small but necessary price to pay for our comfortable existence. There are few of us who would deny that we have a responsibility to preserve as much of the natural world as possible. The Canadian Wildlife Service has, by the Migratory Birds Convention Act, been given charge and care of most of the native species of birds in Canada. Our responsibility is to manage populations to prevent extinctions or threatening decreases in populations of birds. Discharging this responsibility in a rapidly changing world is an increasingly difficult task.

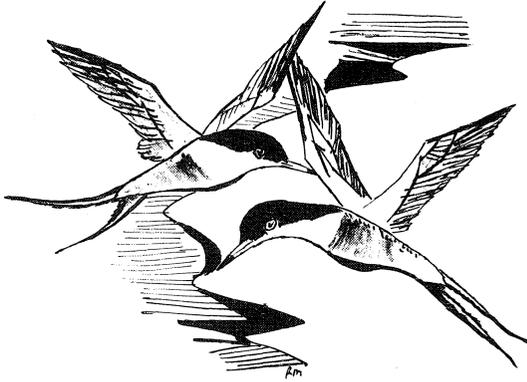
One example is the problem of effectively managing decreasing tern populations. There is no mystery in the declines of terns. Terns are a behaviourally stereotyped species in a changing world. They are vulnerable. We no longer hunt or otherwise directly exploit terns to any great extent, but we have changed the environment in which terns must live. The most important of these human-induced changes is an increase in numbers of large gulls, behaviourally flexible and adaptable birds which have thrived by exploiting many of the wastes of human society and industry as food. Gulls breed in the same island habitat as terns. Gulls, as flexible scavengers, generalists, prey on terns, as they do on the adults and young of many other species with which they share breeding habitat: eiders, puffins and petrels.

The Canadian Wildlife Service is attempting to devise a strategy which will ensure the survival of terns in Atlantic Canada. We are attempting to initiate changes in the management of dumps and fisheries to sequester the wastes which have fueled the gull increase. However, this is a long-term task and even if we are successful it is likely that tern populations will be dangerously reduced before gull populations are affected. So we must put in place a strategy to ensure the survival of terns in the immediate future. We do not have the resources to protect all the small tern colonies but we believe that we can maintain tern populations at close to present numbers if we give protection to a smaller number of the most productive colonies.

In Nova Scotia, Sable Island is probably the most important tern breeding site. At present only about a thousand pairs of terns breed on Sable Island, but the island lies on a highly productive area of the continental shelf which abounds with food for terns. The productivity of the colony on Sable is very low, not because of food shortages but because of predation by the approximately six thousand gulls which breed on the island. Gulls were not present on Sable when its breeding tern population was estimated to be not far short of a million birds. They arrived as breeding birds sometime between 1920 and 1954, probably in the 1930s when gull populations were expanding rapidly in eastern North America. The decline of the terns on Sable, and on the mainland, has been contemporaneous with the increase of the gulls.

Sable Island has thus been identified as an important Sanctuary for terns, but three years of study by the Canadian Wildlife Service have shown that because of intense gull predation, tern reproductive success is very low. If terns are to flourish on Sable Island, gull predation will have to be reduced. It is not pleasant to have to make the decision to kill birds of one species so that another can survive, but do we really have a choice? To do nothing is an abdication of responsibility. To do nothing is to make a decision that terns will continue to decrease in Atlantic Canada.

* See also Letters to the Editor



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