

# Nova Scotia Birds

July 1992



DICKIE

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SPRING 1992

RECORD EDITOR'S REPORT

In each issue of **Nova Scotia Birds** we publish the bird sightings you send to us. You mail the reports to me, I sort them into seven groups and send them to our editors: Peter Payzant, Dick Brown, Ian McLaren, Fran Spalding, Richard Stern, Keith Keddy and David Currie. Each editor uses the data to turn out a comprehensive report. He must carefully consider each report and, in some cases, check for accuracy, all of which takes time.

To get our July issue into your hands before the end of July, we must have your reports no later than the end of May so they can be sorted, mailed out to the editors, written up, returned to the Editor-in-Chief, sent to the typist, typed up, and returned to the Editor-in-Chief, proofread, corrected, paged into the book, sent to the printer, printed and returned to be stuffed into previously addressed envelopes, sorted into postal districts for the post office and then mailed to the members. To pull this off, everyone must get his or her particular job done **ON TIME**. So keep those reports coming, but please get them to me before the deadline.

Thanks to all the following for their bird sighting reports.

Bob Dickie

Editorial Note:

We value your reports, but if they arrive after the deadline they cannot be considered for the current issue. Some may be valuable as records and may be included in the next issue if relevant.

IF YOU **ARE LATE** please send along the reports to the **RECORDS EDITOR**. They are valuable data and will be included in the **next** issue. PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SEASONAL EDITORS with late reports. There are two reasons for this:

1. They may have finished or partly finished their write-ups and they will have to rewrite some of their work and they are all busy people.
2. The Records Editor makes up the List of Contributors so if reports do not go through him, the reporter's name and initials cannot be included.

The due date for **RECEIPT** of reports for the next period is always included in **Nova Scotia Birds**, so with plenty of notice and little planning, it should not be too difficult to meet the deadline. It would help everyone concerned a great deal.

Thank you  
J. Shirley Cohrs  
Editor-in-Chief



**DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REPORTS**

for

the **January, 1993** issue**November 15 , 1992****Bird Reports to the RECORDS EDITOR**

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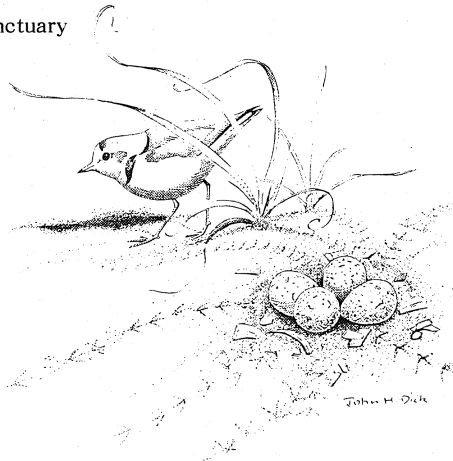
<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Initials</u>
Almon	Mike	MA
Amirault	Brad	Ba
Bezanson	Ron	RB
Bleakney	J.S.	JSB
Bondrup Neilson	Soren	SBN
Burbridge	Katherine	KB
Caldwell	Cyril	CKC
Carpenter	Carol	CCa
Caudle	Bill	WGC
Chipman	Curtis	CC
Clarke	Margaret	MAC
Cohrs	John	JLC
Cohrs	Lise	LC
Cohrs	Shirley	JSC
Covert	Alan	AC
Cretien	Jackie	JCr
Crosby	Donna	DJC
Crosby	Doris	DC
Crosby	Gerald	GC
Currie	David	DAC
Czapalay	Joan	JAC
Dadswell	Mike	MD
D'Entremont	Raymond	RSD
D'Eon	Jerome	JKD
Dickie	Bob	RBD
Dickie	Gerry	GD
Dickie	Helen	HD
Dodds	Don	DD

Ellis	Margaret	MEE
Field	Chris	CF
Forsyth	George (Jr)	GEF
Forsyth	Harold	HF
Forsythe	Bernard	BLF
Fullerton	Sylvia	SJF
Gates	Joy	JG
Gibson	Merritt	MG
Hall	Helen	HJH
Hall	Hubert	HGH
Heaney	Mike	MH
Hemeon	Phyllis & Ward	PWH
Hilchie	Claire	CJH
Hill	Sue	SH
Hover	Chris	CH
Johnston	Gret	GJ
Jones	Barbara	BJ
Jones	David	DJ
Keddy	Keith	KNK
Lavender	Fulton	FLL
MacKinnon	Walter	WEM
MacLeod	Peter	PM
Marsh	Aubrey	AM
Mason	Bernard & Eleanor	BEM
McConnell	Jane	JM
McCorquodale	Dave	DM
McKenna	Ken	KJM
Mills	Eric	ELM
Mills	Maureen	MM
Morse	Jean & Bill	JBM
Murrant	Alan & Cathy	ACM
Newell	Ruth & Reg	RRN
Payzant	Linda & Peter	LPP
Power	Carol & Terry	CTP
Pratt	Mary	MP
Proulx	Gini	GP
Purchase	Don	DWP
Purchase	Joyce	JAP
Richardson	Chuck	CRI
Roberts	Sheila	SR
Rogers	Dick	DR
Ross	Christine	CR
Ruff	Barb & Eric	BER
Sarty	Bev	BS
Shanks	Bev	BSh
Smith	Alan	AS
Smith	Sean	SS
Spalding	Francis	FS
Spicer	Blaine	BSp
Spicer	Cindy	CS
Spicer	Kathleen	KS
Staples	Jeanette	JS
Tams	Miriam	MT
Taylor	Bernice	BT
Taylor	Jim	JWT
Thexton	Brenda & Bill	BBT
Tobin	Deborah	DT
Tufts	Judy & Gordon	JGT
Urban	Eva	EU
Vienneau	Azor	AJV
Williams	Sherman	SW
Wolford	Jim	JWW
Young	Dave	DHY
Zinck	Maureen	MZ

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

There were a few reports of single RED-THROATED LOONS in March and none in April. On May 5, there were 11 in the area of the lighthouse at Bass River (PWH). FLL and FJ had 4 birds at Baxter's Harbour and Halls Harbour on May 6, and there were two at Economy on May 14 (FS).

COMMON LOONS were reported in usual numbers from salt water. The earliest fresh water record was April 8, in Rocky Lake at Waverley (L&PP). There were several records of small numbers through the spring, including 11 in the LaHave River on May 10 (WGC/CR), and 12 at Black Rock Light on the Fundy Shore on May 26 (JGT).

PIED-BILLED GREBES were reported from three locations: 7 at Sand Point on May 2 (KJM), at least 12 at APBS on May 11 (JSC), and 1-3 at the Annapolis Royal DU marsh between May 18 and May 24 (BA, JWW, CTP et al.)

For the second year in a row, HORNED GREBE reports were very low--only six reports of 14 birds. There were 2 at Digby on Feb. 28 (BA), a total of 4 at various points along the Fundy Shore on March 4 (JGT), 2 at Blandford on March 7 (JBM), and 6 off Hawk Point on April 9 (JAC).

RED-NECKED GREBES were present in Mahone Bay in varying numbers throughout the spring, peaking at 11 on April 3, and last seen on April 24 (JBM). In general there were very low numbers, with no other observers reporting more than 4. There were four reports of 1-4 birds from the Fundy Shore, Digby and Brier Island, 4 at Pinkney's Point on May 2 (JKD), and 1 at Crescent Beach on May 3 (JSC).

--LPMP, ed.

## FULMARS TO FRIGATE-BIRDS

Raymond d'Entremont saw 25 NORTHERN FULMARS on Georges Bank on Apr. 15, along with a GREATER SHEARWATER on May 20, and 2 SOOTY SHEARWATERS on Apr. 12. As he says, the numbers of all three species were low for this time of year. The Murrants saw a Fulmar off Port Morien on May 22. I went out from Brier on a BIOS whale cruise on June 8, and saw 3 Fulmars, about 30 Greaters, and 5-10 Sooties. There were no storm-petrels. However, Raymond d'Entremont saw a LEACH'S STORM-PETREL on Georges Bank on May 2, and 2 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS there on Apr. 30. He notes that "even seabirds are late this spring".

NORTHERN GANNETS, on the other hand, were regularly reported. Raymond d'Entremont saw an early adult fishing off Cape Forchu Lighthouse, on Mar. 9. Bradford Amirault saw a bird off Brier Island on Mar. 25, and another off Chebucto Head on Apr. 26. Richard Stern saw 20+ flying SW past Brier on Apr. 19, and birds "streaming past W. Light (on Brier) in small groups" on May 16-18. "About 50% of these were immature birds". The Tufts must have seen the same passage: 400-500 birds off Bon Portage Island, on the NSBS field trip on May 16-17. Farther north, off Big Island in Pictou Co., Kenny McKenzie saw 2 adult Gannets on Apr. 24. Dave McCorqudale caught the spring migration of Gannets into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Newfoundland: 300 adults on Apr. 20, and 7 adults off Glace Bay on May 24.

The first GREAT CORMORANTS were the singleton that Kenny McKenna saw off Pictou Causeway on Mar. 27, and the "few" that Richard Stern saw off Brier on May 18. The arrival of the DOUBLE-CRESTED cormorants was plotted by Kenny McKenna's observations from the Pictou Causeway, beginning with 3 birds on Apr. 5, 2, and quickly building up to 100+ by Apr. 7.

I'll finish this section with an exotic stray: a MAGNIFICENT FRIGATE-BIRD. Bev Sarty and Peter MacLeod saw it off Cape Sable Island on May 15. A cormorant came by about fifty feet overhead, with something larger in hot pursuit. The long wings and deeply-forked tail were well seen. The head and neck were white, but the rest of its plumage was blackish--an immature bird. This is a tropical species. Presumably it came from a colony in the Bahamas or the Florida Keys.

RGBB, Ed.

#### HERONS AND ALLIES

Our first AM. BITTERN was somewhat tardy on Apr. 25 in E. Apple River (KS). About a dozen were reported from late April through May. GREAT BLUE HERONS seemed on schedule, with the first appearing at Yarmouth on Mar. 22 (JAC). Another 8 birds appeared in scattered localities throughout the mainland from Mar. 26 to month's end, and they were in full force by early April.

The LITTLE EGRET returned for the fourth year to Bon Portage Is., where it was savoured by N.S.B.S. field trippers on May 16. A breeding plumage LITTLE BLUE HERON at Conrad's Beach on May 8 (FLL,GJ) and two CATTLE EGRETS at Cow Bay, Hfx. Co., on May 19 (**fide** JWT) were the only reported "southern" herons; where were our usual egrets? The first BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was on Cape Sable Is. on Apr. 29 (JAC), and there were 4 adults on their breeding grounds on Bon Portage Is. on May 16 (N.S.B.S.).

IAM,ed.



A Great Cormorant was a somewhat unusual visitor to Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, in mid-January. Photo Ian McLaren

## GEESE AND DUCKS

JAC reports at least 3 SNOW GEESE among the Brant at Lower Clark's Harbour on April 9. A fisherman told her that there were 7 or 8 "Blue Geese" present. Three more were at Amherst on April 15 (PM), and a single bird lingered with about 200 Canadas on May 2 at John Lusby Marsh near APBS on May 2 (DAC).

A group of 1500-3000 BRANT at The Hawk on March 14 (JKD) was still present on April 5 (JAC), but only 140 remained four days later (JAC). Up to 80 were still present as late as May 15 (BS/PM). There were 200 at Brier Island on March 30 (BA), and over 500 on April 18 (RBS). On May 2, KJM had 40 at Linden and 70 at Northport. The Linden group had departed by May 11 (JSC).

Chezetcook Inlet was home to thousands of CANADA GEESE. PM estimated 2200 on March 20, and 8000 on March 27. There were about 1000 at Port Williams on March 27 (MG). DHY reports 400-500 at Matthew's Lake on Jan. 30 "...these were the wintering birds that weren't shot earlier". The Cohrs' observed 2 unusual Canada Geese at Petite Riviere estuary on April 5--"...extremely small. Barely larger than the Mallards that were present--short bills and neck", and speculated that these may have been "Richardson's Goose", race **hutchinsii**. This race breeds in the Arctic and in western Greenland, and winters on the Gulf coast.

A single female WOOD DUCK was in Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth until at least March 19 (JGT). A pair was in a pond near Yarmouth on April 17, and 2 pairs were in Miller Pond, Lun. Co. on May 3 (JSC). After May 4, all reports were of males-- from Hartlen's Point, Canard, Annapolis and Sydney, except for a pair at Sheffield Mills on May 27. The female broods the eggs, starting about the last week of April, so it's not surprising that there were few females reported for this period.

One female GREEN-WINGED TEAL overwintered at Wentworth Pond in Sydney, to at least April 18 (DM). There were 9 at Wolfville on March 21, including one of the "Eurasian" race (JWW). By May 7, there were 50 in the Canard pond (JGT), with the Eurasian male still present. Other reports included 40 at Conrad's Beach on April 11 and 30+ at Big Island, Pc. Co. on April 22 (KJM).

JSC estimated two segments of the Halifax Harbour population of BLACK DUCK 1100 from Hartlen's Point to Shore Road, and 2000+ at Shore Road, on March 30. There were other reports indicating usual numbers in most areas. CJH mentions an adult with 11 ducklings at Chezetcook on May 23. The adult quacked and 10 more young appeared, for a total of 21. The average clutch size for the species is 9 (Godfrey), so this was clearly an "extended family".

There were only 4 reports of MALLARDS, including 6 between Hartlen's Point and Shore Road on March 30 (JSC), a pair at East Apple River on April 10 (KS), 4 adults at Glenwood DU marsh on April 12 (JKD), and a female with 10 young at Morash Pond, Dartmouth on May 24 (JWT).

A lone female NORTHERN PINTAIL stayed the winter at Wentworth Park in Sydney until at least March 31 (DM). There were 30 at Chezetcook on March 29 (PM), and 15 in Bedford Basin a day later (JSC). Up to 7 could be seen at Conrad's Beach as late as April 16 (BS/PM).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL seemed to be considerably lower in numbers than usual, with no reports of more than 8 birds. JSC felt that the 8 they saw at APBS on May 11 was about 15% of normal--"lowest numbers ever for the place and date".

NORTHERN SHOVELERS were first reported at Canard Pond on April 12--a single male. Two males were seen together at various Annapolis Valley locations until May 26. There were 2 males and 2 females at APBS on May 2 (DAC), a pair at Antigonish Landing on May 16 (DM), and another pair at West Lawrencetown Marsh on May 31 (PM). These species are somewhat reduced from last year, but we have a small

population isolated from the great western one, and large fluctuations in the small numbers would be expected.

A single GADWALL (no sex reported) was in the Sydney River at Coxheath on March 16, and there was a female (same bird?) in Wentworth Park in Sydney until March 31 (DM). There were 5 in the Canard poultry pond on April 26 (BLF **fide** JWW), and 5 at APBS on May 3 (KJM) and May 11 (JSC).

AMERICAN WIGEON were reported in groups of 1-6 from many locations around the province, beginning with a female at Lr. W. Pubnico on March 18 (RSD). There were 20 at Conrad's Beach on April 16 (BS) and 8 in Barney's River, Pc. Co. on April 22 (KJM).

That cute REDHEAD in Wentworth Park, Sydney, remained until at least March 24 (DM).

Two female RING-NECKED DUCKS were seen at Yarmouth on Feb. 29 (IAM), and a pair appeared in Rocky Lake, Bedford, on March 11 (L&PP). By April 7 there were over 50 at Annapolis Royal (RBS). Other reports mentioned 10-20 birds at locations such as Halfway River (north of Parrsboro), E. Apple River, Church Point, Canard, Drain Lake and the Reserve St. pond in Glace Bay.

The 2000 GREATER SCAUP overwintering in the Pictou area had dwindled to 300 by May 2 (KJM). Other significant counts included 200-300 at Matthew's Lake on Jan. 30 (DHY), and 600 at Lingan on Feb. 22 (DM). There were two reports of LESSER SCAUP: 1 off Devil's Island on March 30 (JSC), and a male and female on the saltwater side of the Canning aboiteau on April 26 (JWW).

There was no mention of COMMON EIDER numbers around the mouth of Halifax Harbour. JSC had over 1500 at Green Bay, Cherry Hill and Broad Cove on April 16, Other observers reported counts in the 100-500 range at Brier Island, Brighton (Dig. Co.), Donkin and Bon Portage.

A male and female HARLEQUIN DUCK were at Sandy Cove (Hfx. Co.) on March 26 (BS), and a male with 2 females was seen a Peajack Cove, Brier Island on May 16 and 17 (RBS, H&HH).

OLDSQUAW numbers remain depressed. JGT had 45 at various locations along the Fundy shore on March 4, JBM saw 35 in Mader's Cove on March 9, BA had 20 off the Digby Wharf on March 21, and JAC reports 28 from 3 locations around The Hawk on April 9. RBS had a single male in breeding plumage on fresh water in the Canard Pond on April 19.

BLACK SCOTERS were reported in small numbers as well. JSC reported 25 at Green Bay on April 17, FLL had 53 from Eastern Passage to Conrad's Beach on May 8, and DM saw 40 at Donkin on May 24. There were seven other reports of 5 or fewer birds. SURF SCOTERS were likewise sparsely reported, with 42 along the Fundy shore on March 4 (JGT), 45 at Barton, Dig. Co., May 17 (JGT), and 30 at Glace Bay on May 24 (DM). WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS outnumbered Surfs and Blacks combined along the Fundy Shore on March 4, with 106 individuals reported by JGT. DM reports 70 at Glace Bay on May 24, and CH had 5 at E. Chezzetcook on May 10.

The largest counts of COMMON GOLDENEYE this spring were the 200 at Crescent Beach on March 16, and over 700 at Bayport the same day (both JSC). There were other reports of 25 at Sydney Harbour on April 4 (WEM) and 46 in the same place a day later (JCR).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE were reported from six locations, as follows: a male at Bayswater, Lun. Co. on March 5 (PM), one of unreported sex at Mill Cove on March 26 (BS), a male at Pubwash on March 27 (KJM), a male and female in the East River at Pictou on March 27 (KJM), a single male in Sydney River on March 31 (DM) joined by a female on April 5 (JCR), and finally a single male in the Eddy Marsh on May 3 (DAC).

The only large concentration of BUFFLEHEADS was the 150+ at Annapolis Royal on April 7 (RBS). There were many other reports of up to 25 birds from all around the province.

HOODED MERGANSERS began to appear on the Eastern Shore in late March, when PM had 2 at Conrad's Beach on the 27th and 4 at Cole Harbour on the 29th. A single female was at Annapolis Royal on April 7, and 2 females were in a pond at New Minas on April 26. BA reported a pair in Drain Lake on April 28.

CJH reports that hundreds of COMMON MERGANSERS mingled with the Canada Geese on Chezzetcook inlet this spring. Other observers saw no more than 20 at once. JSC had a total of 50 from Green Bay to Mahone Bay on March 16. FS felt that a pair in the Economy River on April 9 were on nesting territory.

RED-BREADED MERGANSERS were in Mahone Bay all winter, with a high count of 9 on April 3 (JBM). BA had 50 at Brier Island in Feb. 27. Late spring gatherings included about 30 at Glenholme on April 26th (FS), 300 in the Caribou Island area on May 2 (KJM), and 30 at Barton, Digby Co. on May 17 (JGT).

LPMP, ed.

#### DIURNAL RAPTORS

The last report of the wintering TURKEY VULTURE in King's Co., was for Mar. 3 (JGT). One near Yarmouth on Mar. 26 (HGH,HJH) had been observed there for about two weeks, and thus may have been the same wintering bird. They were in good numbers on Brier Island this spring; the first was noted on Apr. 20 (RBS) and by mid-May there were estimates of 9 (RBS) and 15 (FLL et al.) in total. Scattered individuals were at Belleneck, Yar. Co., on Apr. 22 (RSD), near Liverpool on May 15 (BS,PM), and (in ragged moult) near Timberlea on the same date (DAC). Very exciting was a BLACK VULTURE flying inland at Meteghan, Yar. Co., on Apr. 27. Its shape and pattern were well described by JAC. This was only the fifth record for the province, and the first since the sixties, but alas it was not seen again.

Again this year,OSPREYS did not rush in. The first was near Coldbrook on Mar. 26 (DD), but the next were not reported until Apr. 9, at Eastern Passage (FF et al.) and next day at Argyle (JAC). They were not widespread until after mid-April, and brooding was not noted until early May. BALD EAGLES seemed to be in the usual places, but also as usual, were probably under-reported. An adult was a backyard treat for the Hilchies at Chezzetcook on Mar. 12. A late migrant was over Brier Is., Apr. 28 (Carl Haycock), but others were well into nesting then. One was carrying nesting material near Lake Major on Mar. 10 (DWP,JAP), and sitting birds were at Greenwich on Mar. 21 (BLF) and near Gaspereau on Mar. 29 (CKC). Good counts were of 5 ad. and an imm. between Tatamagouche and Pugwash on Mar. 10 (JLC,JSC), and 8 ad. and 10 imm. around Boisdale, C. B. Co., on the same day (DM). The male N. HARRIER at Cherry Hill on Mar. 14 (SJF) could have been a wintering bird, but a female at Barrington on Mar. 27 (JAC) was about on schedule. There were three reports (5 birds) for Apr. 4-6, then a gap until Apr. 19, after which they were widespread.

Totals of 7 SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS in March, 2 in April and 1 in May surely reflect under-reporting. An ad. COOPER'S HAWK briefly at a feeder near New Ross on Mar. 1 (WGC) did not stay for critical study, but its rounded tail and 18" (45 cm) length seem to preclude its smaller cousin. Two N. GOSHAWKS were noted in March. Another was in last year's nesting location near Kentville on May 23 (RBS).

The wintering ad. RED-SHOULDERED HAWK near Yarmouth was spotted on Feb. 26, and (probably the same bird) on Mar. 24 (HGH,HJH). Another well-described ad. was near Bedford on Apr. 30 (PM,BS). BROAD-WINGED HAWKS appeared on schedule on May 3, around the Sydneys (3 birds, ACM), and during the next two days in three other localities. Several were noted after mid-May. The near-albino RED-TAILED HAWK wintering at Sheffield Mills was still present Mar. 22. Few reports referred to birds after March, and only one nesting was noted -- in the Pockwock area on May 15 (BA). Latest ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were at Wallace on Apr. 27 (KJM), Wolfville on Apr. 28 (RRN), and A.P.B.S. on May (N.S.B.S. trip). A convincingly described ad GOLDEN EAGLE unsuccessfully attacked Patricia Elliot's tame ducks at Wallace on Apr. 29.

An AM. KESTREL at Canard on Mar. 2 (**fide** JGT) had presumably wintered, but one at Economy on Mar. 30 may well have been a migrant. Six more were noted between Apr. 5-12, and they were widespread thereafter. The first spring MERLIN was at Petersfield P.P. on Apr. 5 (JCr). Nine reports on later birds included information on nestings in Pt. Pleasant Park, Halifax (BA), and Wolfville (JWW *et al.*). The PEREGRINE FALCON wintering in Halifax took a pigeon on the Dalhousie campus on Apr. 6 (CF), and it or another bird was seen along the McKay Bridge on Apr. 29 (GP); it is worth noting that they nest on a bridge in Saint John, N.B.

#### GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

There were no reports of the diminishing GRAY PARTRIDGES from King's Co., but 9 at Economy Mar. 2 (FS) and a single near Middle LaHave (a new locality, recently released?) on May 9 (WGC) offer some hope. The usual reports of RING-NECKED PHEASANTS came from the Pubnicos to the Sydneys. Four reports of 8 SPRUCE GROUSE were about average for spring. RUFFED GROUSE seem to be present in good numbers this spring--for example 7 in the Pockwock area on Apr. 22 (BA), and up to 12 during walks around East Chezzetcook (CJH). Clair Hilchie observed one at her feeder late in the day on Mar. 9 nearly became a meal for Bobcat. Undeterred, the bird was back courting a female next day. Another courtship display was observed WGC near New Germany on May 17. One has mixed feelings about this spring's introductions of 2 female and a male WILD TURKEY to Seal Island.

#### RALLIDS AND CRANE

The only report of VIRGINIA RAIL comes from Wallace Bay, where one was heard on May 16 (KJM). At least 3 SORAS were heard during the N.S.B.S. trip to A.P.B.S. on May 3; 2 more were calling at Annapolis Royal on May 24 (JW *et al.*). The AM. COOT at Sullivan's Pond was last noted on Mar. 19 (JGT). A migrant was near Apple River on May 5-6 (KS), but 3 on the Eddy Marsh on May 18 (KJM) had presumably settled in. An individual on Sable Is. May 2-8 (Zoe Lucas) appeared to have a rather large white frontal shield with little or no red spot, in the manner of the "Caribbean Coot". This latter is now known to occur as a variant in North American populations, but long-distance vagrants on our islands are also not unprecedented. The highly distinctive calling of a SANDHILL CRANE was heard near Conrad's Beach on Apr. 11 (PM, AV), but the apparently flying bird remained out-of-sight.

IAM,ed.



## SHOREBIRDS

A BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER was at Hartlen's Point, May 10 (PM), followed by 12+ on Cape Sable Is., May 15 (G&JT). The species seems to favour the Minas Basin: 40 were on the mudflats at Wolfville, May 20 (JWW) and 30 on cordgrass marsh at Economy, May 29 (FS). A lone SEMIPALMATED PLOVER was at Lr. W. Pubnico, Apr. 28 (JKD). As for the closely followed PIPING PLOVER, 2 first appeared at Cherry Hill, Apr. 2 (SJF), and by Apr. 18, 2 mated pairs plus a group of 5 males and a female were present there (J&SC). By May 10 the mix had changed and stabilized at 4 pairs (SJF). There were 6 at Conrad's, Apr. 16 (BS,PM) but no further word from that heavily used beach. More positively, there were 2 pairs with nests on Summerville Beach, May 17 (WGC, CR) and 6 on Bowen Is., Pic. Co., May 23 (KJM et al.). Two April reports of singles at Lockeport (DJC) and 2 at Baccaro Beach May 6 complete the total; one should add that reports were not received from all potential breeding sites (e.g. Cadden Bay). This was not a spring for early dates, but a KILLDEER at Short Beach, Mar. 9 was five days earlier than the next, at Wolfville, Mar. 24 (HP); still, 11 had been reported by month's end. Of several first sightings in April 1 at Meadowville, Pic. Co., was two weeks later than last year. The effects of a cold spring on this early nester are mentioned in several reports: at Economy a pair mating and "moulding" nest depressions Apr. 8 in a patch of pasture used successfully for a number of years, abandoned the site, while a mile away a clutch of 4 eggs was completed the third week in MAY (FS). At Wolfville courtship was observed as early as Mar. 28, but a clutch with an estimated hatching date of May 9-10 was still being tended (futilely) May 24, with another nest nearby suffering the same fate. Cold ground is suggested as a possible cause of the poor success (JT). A clutch completed Apr. 26 at New Minas (SBN et al.) is normal, but the outcome is not reported. So also a nest with 4 eggs May 5 at Pubnico (JKD) that completes the breeding data for an unusual year.

The first GREATER YELLOWLEGS were at Conrad's Apr. 16 (BS,PM), at Lockeport, Apr. 24 (DJC) and E. Apple River, Apr. 25 (KS). By month's end 16 had been seen, 7 of them at Lr. W. Pubnico (JKD,RSD). Most observers saw somewhat larger numbers in May, e.g. 11 at Chezzetcook, May 6 (CJH) 20 at APBS, May 11 (J&SC). There were still 4 at E. Apple River, May 24 (KS). LESSER YELLOWLEGS: 3 at APBS, May 5 (JWT) preceded 60+ there on May 11 (J&SC). Last noted was 1 on Cape Sable Is., May 15 (G&JT). The first WILLETS were noted in the southwest, Apr. 24 (DJC,RSD), reached Chezzetcook, Apr. 29 (BS,PM,CJH), the North Shore by May 2 (KM,JM) and the Minas Basin, May 9 (JT,FS)--all dates being on the late side. Only six reports of the SPOTTED SANDPIPER were received (9 birds), from 1 at Laurie Park, May 1 (FLL,BM) to 2 at Sydney, May 24 (DM). There were 2 UPLAND SANDPIPER sightings, neither in breeding habitat: May 15 on Cape Sable (BS,PM) and May 21 at Hemeon's Head (DHY). Eight SANDERLING were still at Cherry Hill, Apr. 5, having successfully overwintered (J&SC). The first LEAST SANDPIPER were at APBS, May 11 (J&SC), but the majority of migrants passed through in the third week of the month: at Port Williams 4 on May 20 had grown to 30 by May 24 (G&JT). A similar pattern developed at APBS/Eddy Marsh, where 4 on May 20 rose to 80 May 25 (KJM). By contrast, farther east there were but 4 at Homeville, C. B., May 24 (DM). A PECTORAL SANDPIPER, seldom seen in spring, was at Hartlen's Point, May 8 (PM,FLL,GJ). Wintering PURPLE SANDPIPERS were noted at Margaretsville (29) and Hampton (20) on Mar. 4 (G&JT) and Mar. 11 at Pubnico, where the species is called "extremely rare" (RSD). There were still 100 on Brier, Mar. 30 (BJM) and 60 at Gabarus, Apr. 17 (DM). Last noted was 1 at Crescent, Apr. 18 (J&SC). The only DUNLIN were 4, not far into alternate plumage, at Economy, May 14 (FS).

No COMMON SNIFE appeared until 1 at Hartlen's Point, Apr. 20 (BS); 8 had been seen by month's end, including 2 in courting ritual at Blockhouse, Lun. Co., Apr. 27 (fide JBM). Somewhat larger numbers were reported in May, suggesting all's well with the species. Two AMERICAN WOODCOCK reached Lockeport, Mar. 25 (DJC); all told, a dozen were reported thereafter.

## PHALAROPES TO AUKS

The WILSON'S PHALAROPE that the Tufts and George Forsyth saw on the Port Williams sewage ponds, on May 24, was rather unusual. We don't often see this inland species. It was a female, almost in full breeding plumage. The BIOS whale-watchers tell me that this has been a good spring for migrating RED and RED-NECKED PHALAROPES off Brier Island. Fulton Lavender and Greg Johnston saw at least 2000 Reds and 4000 Red-necked on May 17-18. The birds were coming by all the time, in small flocks. It sounds very like the big flight over Georges Bank that was reported here in 1991, exactly a year earlier. However, there wasn't a phalarope in sight when I went out with BIOS on June 8.

The NSBS Field Trip saw a PARASITIC JAEGER off Bon Portage Is. on May 16, but that was the only jaeger report; but we've had a good crop of the smaller gulls. Fulton Lavender and Sean Smith saw a MEW GULL in West Chezzetcook Marsh on Mar. 30. Cathy Murrant and Dave McCorquodale report a first year LAUGHING GULL at Point Edward on May 17-18, along with an immature BONAPARTE'S GULL. They also saw 10 adult BLACK-HEADED GULLS coming into breeding plumage at Glace Bay on Mar. 21, and an immature bird at Point Edward on May 17-18. The Morses had 2 at Second Peninsula on Feb. 11. Bradford Amirault saw 1 at the Digby Sewage Plant on Mar. 29. Jerome d'Eon saw 1 at Eel Brook, also on Mar. 29., while Raymond d'Entremont saw 6 there, still in winter plumage, on Mar. 20. Kenny McKenna reports an adult in winter plumage at Woodside Park on Apr. 4. Bev Sarty and Peter MacLeod saw 3 adults and 2 immatures at Conrad's Beach on Apr. 16. Jim Taylor saw 6 immature Bonapartes at Pond Cove, Brier Island on May 25. Jackie Cretien reports 4-5 dozen at Point Edward on Apr. 5. Walter MacKinnon estimated 100+ on Mar. 30, at Watson Creek, Cape Breton. Kenny McKenna reports 12 Bonapartes in early May on Lyons Brook, Pic. Co., and 9 (1 already in breeding plumage) at Bay Head, Tatamagouche May 25.

(A small-gull correction from the last issue. Calvin Brennan points out that the Little Gulls seen at Lyons Brook and the Pictou Causeway in December 1991, reported in the last issue, were first spotted by himself, H. Brennan and R. Murphy. There have been no reports of the species this spring. A pity--rarities are really interesting when they show signs of settling down to breed.)

I'll start off the larger gulls with my usual refusal to discuss the usual abundance of HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS. Bev Sarty and Peter MacLeod report an adult LESSER BLACK-BACK in breeding plumage at Back Cove, Hartlen's Point on Apr. 5; it was still there on Apr. 16. Dave McCorquodale reports 8 GLAUCOUS GULLS on the NSBS trip to Glace Bay on Feb. 22 and, in the same general area, 4 immatures on Apr. 26, 2 of undetermined age on May 10, and a first year on May 24. He also saw an adult Lesser Black-back there between Feb. 22 and Mar. 26. He saw 500 ICELAND GULLS there on Mar. 26, but numbers fell to 30 on May 10, and a single first year bird on May 24. At the other end of the province, Jim Wolford saw an adult and a juvenile "Kumlien's Gull" in the Canard area on Mar. 22, and an all-white immature Glaucous on Mar. 26. Raymond d'Entremont had an Iceland on Georges Bank on May 3. Dave McCorquodale saw his first RING-BILLED GULL of the year, an adult, at Sydney River on Mar. 29. Jerome d'Eon saw a Ring-bill at Eel Brook on Mar. 28. Jim Wolford reports about 15 adults on the Wolfville Sewage Ponds on April 17, and Walter MacKinnon saw 10+ at Point Edward on Apr. 15. Dave McCorquodale saw 40 adult BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES at Donkin on May 24, the Murrants saw 50+ off North Head, Port Morien, on Apr. 2, and Raymond d'Entremont had a single bird on Georges Bank on April 13.

Jim Taylor and Eric Mills saw a GULL-BILLED TERN at Daniel's Head on May 10, the Tufts saw 1 there on May 15 and Bev Sarty saw singletons off Cape Sable Island on May 15 and May 18. Raymond d'Entremont reports 4 ARCTIC TERNS on Georges Bank, May 4. Jerome d'Eon saw 2 COMMON TERNS at Eel Brook on Apr. 28. Kenny McKenna saw 2 Commons in Pictou Harbour on Apr. 4, but didn't see anymore in that area until May 16. Dave McCorquodale saw 80 Arctics and 2 Commons, all adults, in Glace Bay on May 24. Kenny McKenna saw 24 BLACK TERNS in Eddy Marsh on May 18, and a couple at Amherst Point on May 25.



Bradford Amirault reports a DOVEKIE in Grand Passage, Brier Island, on Feb. 27, presumably blown in by one of those ferocious storms we had last winter. The THICK-BILLED MURRE that the Murrants found in Sand Lake, Port Morien on Mar. 24, was another casualty. They returned it to the harbour. The Cohrs saw a Thick-billed, in breeding plumage, off Crescent Beach on May 3. Jim Taylor and others saw a RAZORBILL off Seal Island on May 13. BLACK GUILLEMOTS, as usual were seen from rocky coasts around the province. Don McCorquodale saw 175 adults off Donkin on May 24. Among the smaller concentrations were the 11 birds that the Halls saw off Yarmouth on May 22, Jim Wolford's 20+ off Cape Split on May 9, and Gordon Tufts' dozen off Black Rock light on the Fundy Shore, on May 26. Jim saw an ATLANTIC PUFFIN off Seal Island on May 10, and I had a couple off Brier Island, in perfect summer finery on June 8.

RGBB, ed.



#### DOVES, CUCKOOS, OWLS

MOURNING DOVES continued to come to stocked feeders through April, and some into May. A BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO at Lockeport on May 24 (DC) was on schedule. (These late breeders typically continue to arrive after our reporting deadline; one was observed departing from Seal Island on June 11 by IAM).

Cyril Coldwell's semi-wild f. GREAT HORNED OWL was still incubating in his front yard in Gaspereau on Mar. 18. The two young "fledged" on May 19, when one was found trotting through his apple orchard. Another pair was using an old hawk nest on the Morrison Road, Cape Breton Co. (ACM) and another pair chose last year's Osprey nest on a power pylon near Kearney Lake, Hfx. Co. (PM,BS). SNOWY OWLS remained well into spring. At least 3 can be added to the total up to the end of February and 2 more were seen in mid-March. In late March and early April, an ad. f., an ad. m., and 2 imm. were found between Hartlen's Point and Conrad's Beach (sev. ob.); 1 was still at Hartlen's Point on May 2 (PM,BS). Another late adult was near Yarmouth on Apr. 29 (HGH). An ad. m. at Grand Pré, Apr. 16-22 was probably the one found there recently dead of apparent starvation on May 3 (JWW). Bernard Forsythe had, as of late April, a record fifteen nest boxes occupied by BARRED OWLS These produced a total of forty-two eggs, on average ten to fourteen days earlier than usual. Another pair used an old N. Goshawk nest in Kentville, containing a large chick on Apr. 28 (RBS). Other reports were of 3 single birds. Joan Czpyly reports on a LONG-EARED OWL pursued by crows from its nest on Bon Portage Is. on May 10. A week later, there was, alas, no evidence of the owl. Another was sighted at Apple River on Apr. 27 (KS et al.). A SHORT-EARED OWL being harassed by crows at Greenwich on Mar. 22 was nevertheless luckier than one on mouseless Sable Is. on Apr. 25-26 and a different bird (with abnormally whitish flight feathers) found long dead there on May 25 (ZL). Only three scattered SAW-WHET OWLS were reported, but I'm sure more must have been heard "bopping" on spring evenings. Allan Murrant almost hand-caught a BOREAL OWL in Port Morien on Mar. 24. Last sighting of the Caribou Is. N. HAWK OWL was on Mar. 14 (KJM), but it seems likely that an individual still present at Tatamagouche Apr. 25 (KJM) had a preoccupied mate in the area.

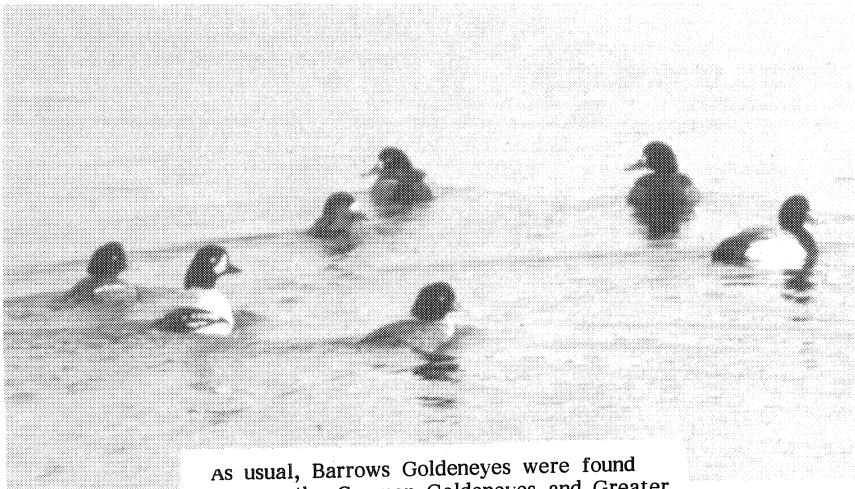
## GOATSUCKERS, SWIFT, HUMMINGBIRD, KINGFISHER

An early COM. NIGHTHAWK was near Deerfield on May 7 (HGH,HJH). The next were individuals over Dartmouth and Halifax on May 21, and we have no further reports. The first CHIMNEY SWIFTS appeared in the evening of May 13, when 52 poured into the front Street Chimney, Wolfville (JWW), and 30 into the Temperance St. School Chimney, New Glasgow. There were 115 at the latter chimney by May 15. Numbers also built up rapidly in Wolfville, with up to 235 on May 19, and independent estimates of 450-600 on May 28 (JWW *et al.*). Apparently none used the Acadia Campus Chimney in Wolfville this spring. According to Glen Marchand (*vide* BBT) 200-300 use a chimney in Oxford in spring. Otherwise, a few outliers were reported in late May. A co-worker reported to Peter Payzant that he had a hummingbird tapping at his window, trying to get at some red flowers on Apr. 30; Peter writes "wish I had seen it", and so do I, for identified RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS were a mite late this spring. The first was at Bear River on May 14 (KB), after which they appeared widely, with reports of 1 on the 16th, 2 on the 17th, 3 on the 18th, and 28 more by May 23. BELTED KINGFISHERS successfully wintered at E. Chezzetcook (CJH) and Sydney Forks (DM), but a bird near Glace Bay on Mar. 31 (ACM) could have been an arrival. One at L. W. Pubnico on Apr. 2 was certainly a migrant, according to RSD. Otherwise, a paltry 9 birds were reported from mid-April through May.

## WOODPECKERS

The first YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, a bright male, appeared on Apr. 21 at Harrietsfield (PM,BS), and another 11 were reported through late April and May. A dozen reports of some 20 DOWNY WOODPECKERS were about average for early spring, but four reports of 7 HAIRY WOODPECKERS seem paltry. Pairs of BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS were reported in March-April from White's Lake (BS *et al.*) and the Pockwock Watershed (BA), and an individual was found in Bedford on May 19 (PM,BS), all in Hfx. Co. N. FLICKERS at Young's Cove, Ann. Co. on Mar. 4 (JGT) and near Sydney on Mar. 15 had presumably wintered, but a calling bird at Meadowvale, Pic. Co., on Apr. 4 (CH) had probably just arrived. The next was noted only on Apr. 9, and they were not widely reported until the last week of April, when 3 even reached Sable Island (ZL). Ten reports of 13 PILEATED WOODPECKERS were about average for recent years.

IAM, ed.



As usual, Barrows Goldeneyes were found among the Common Goldeneyes and Greater Scaups at Annapolis Royal last winter.  
Photo-Richard Stern

## FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

Again there were just 2 reports of OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, from Pockwock Lake and Hants Co. (JWT,MAC). I think they are more common, but occur in less accessible areas. The first EASTERN WOOD-PEEWEE was on Seal Island, May 13 (JWT), and by the end of May many were well established on territory.

The first YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER was reported May 18 on Somerset Road, Lun. Co. (JL&SC) and they were subsequently present at Pockwock Lake (JWT,MH) and north of Kingston (HF) by the end of May. I suspect this is another under-reported species, since it breeds in obscure and out-of-the-way places but is relatively common in banding nets on the outer islands in fall migration. LEAST FLYCATCHERS are more noticeable in spring, and this year the largest numbers seemed to arrive about a week late compared to last year, e.g. 6+ singing Kentville, May 18 (JGT) and all over the woods in the same area by May 21 (RBS). The only ALDER FLYCATCHER reported was by JWW on May 26 in Wolfville, although they seemed common enough to me in appropriately damp habitats by the end of May.

There was a total of 11 EASTERN PHOEBE reports, the earliest being on April 8 on board RSD's boat on George's Bank! The first reported true landfall though was on April 15 at Little Harbour, Shel. Co.(DHY). A pair was nesting in Brookville, Pic. Co. by May 1 (KJM). A GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER was present in Powder Mill Park, Waverley on May 24 (DAC et al.). Eight EASTERN KINGBIRDS were reported, with obvious spring migratory movements on May 5-6 (BS,CJH,HG&JH), and 1 on Sable Island, May 11 (IAM). RSD felt that the arrival date for this species was a trifle early, going against the general trend this spring. As of early June they seem common enough on territory in the Valley, and are noticeable by their fierceness in defence of their territory.

Too late for the official closing date for the write-up, but certainly worthy of inclusion was a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER that spent the first week of June at Seabright, showing off to all and sundry birders who came to gaze at it (with certain frustrated exceptions!).

HORNED LARK migration through coastal areas was underway from late March to mid-April (SJF,JKD,HG&HJH et al.) but 1 seen in a dry sandy area near Kingston on May 17 by JGT raises the probability of nesting there.

Single PURPLE MARTINS were at Conrad's Beach, April 11 (PM, AJV) and Hartlen's Point, May 10 (PM), and Ben Doane reported 1 more at Beaver River on the 11th. They were present in their traditional birdhouses in Oxford by May 27 (JWT). Birds seen around Eddy Marsh and Amherst in May were presumably associated with this site.

The first TREE SWALLOWS were on time, on April 9 in Upper Sackville (BA) and thereafter numbers rapidly built up as expected over the province. There were 30+ at Glenwood three days later (JKD) 300+ on Bon Portage Is. by May 9 (JAC). As of early June, there seem to be plenty of occupied boxes in areas that I have seen or heard about. Many BANK SWALLOWS had not yet arrived by reporting date, but 1 on May 3 in Lun. Co. (Cohrs) represented the vanguard.

The first CLIFF SWALLOW was on time on May at Three Fathom Harbour (JwT). Subsequently a pair returned to a traditional site near New Ross, May 8 (WGC,CR), 50 were present at Walton, King's Co., May 26, following a plough in search of insects (JGT) and the traditional colony of 50+ pairs under the railway bridge at Annapolis Royal was well established by mid-May (BA,RBS). Just eight people reported BARNSWALLOWS, with 1 seen by FS on May 1 and 8 at Glenwood, May 3 (JKD). JKD felt that this was a late date for arrival in the southwest end of the province.

## JAYS TO GNATCATCHERS

There were 8 reports of GRAY JAY, with a group of 4 seen by the Cohrs on Somerset Rd., Lun. Co., 8 on Back Land Road, Cape Breton Co., (ACM) and a nest six feet up in a Balsam Fir with 2 newly hatched young, at Traxville, Lun. Co., in late March (KNK). That is early even by the standards of this species. As usual BLUE JAYS were well noted, usually in small groups, in varying habitats. Two notable sightings were of 30+ in a flock flying along Cape Split, May 29 (JWW) and nest building observed in a spruce in Wolfville, May 10 (JWW).

Only four people sent in AMERICAN CROW reports, which hardly reflects the continuing abundance of the species. The large roost in the Kentville area had dispersed by early spring. IAM noted their new absence from Sable Island. An unusual COMMON RAVEN sighting was of 20 in Sydney on May 24 (DM). Otherwise, 1's and 2's were mentioned from various locations.

There were also only a few reports of BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, perhaps we are taking them for granted? As usual they were commonly observed at feeders at least till mid-spring (SH, JG, PWH *et al.*). The same numbers were reported for BOREAL CHICKADEE, but they more rarely come to feeders. CJH and RSD both had this species at their feeders this spring in E. Chezzetcook and Lr. W. Pubnico respectively.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were also noted, mostly at feeders, with no unusual dates or outstanding numbers. There were only 3 reports of WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, also at feeders. BROWN CREEPERS were reported by DAC, HJ&HGH, KS *et al.*, from diverse areas, with up to 3 at a time in some places.

WINTER WRENS were around the province in late April/early May, in Hfx., Yar., and Cum. Cos., and RSD's bird at Pubnico Point was coming back to its traditional haunts. This was definitely not an abundant year for GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET. Only a few were reported, and CJH commented on their apparent scarcity this spring. It is, however, a species that seems to undergo population cycles from year to year in our area.

It was, in contrast, a good spring for RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS, with large numbers and prominent vocalisation from April 23 (KS) on. DM counted 75 on May 10 in Boisdale and surrounding area. They were all over Brier Island, May 16-18 (RBS) and there were numerous other reports. The bird that overwintered in Dartmouth survived till spring (JWT) for a first provincial overwintering record. This may have to be shared, however, with Madelyn Spicer of Granville Ferry, who had one at her feeder on Feb. 14.

## BLUEBIRDS TO STARLINGS

Five of the overwintering EASTERN BLUEBIRDS in Yarmouth were still present Feb. 22 (HJ&GH) but we have no follow-up on those. Of the 8 overwintering Canning birds, a male was singing, perched on a telephone wire at the same site on Apr. 2 (RBS) and about 3 km away, a pair have successfully nested in a Tree Swallow box in an orchard (JWW). They were initially ousted by Tree Swallows, but relocated to a nearby box and at the time of writing are feeding 4 young. Other sightings include a male at E. Apple River, April 15 (KS)--another traditional site, and 2 near Gaspereau in early June (G. Westphalen).

The first reported VEERY was also at Apple River, on Apr. 29 (KS), its expected arrival date. By mid-May, there were plenty seen or heard around the province (JGT,LC,KJM et al.). A GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH was present at Hartlen's Point, May 31 (PM,BS). SWAINSON'S THRUSHES were also noted by several observers around the same time, but a most unusual record is that of JSC, who had 1 on Mar. 14, at Green Bay. It was also seen back on Feb. 25 (see April issue, p. 17). She described the uniform gray on the back and tail, eye-ring, wash of yellow around the eye and on the breast and no trace of reddish on the rump or tail. This is a most unusual record, as it is said that, unlike Hermit Thrushes, Swainson's virtually never overwinter in northern N. America. There are however, several Nova Scotia sight records for late January. HERMIT THRUSHES started to arrive on Apr. 28, with 15+ at Economy P. (FS) and 5+ near Joggins (KS), and three days later at White's Lake (BS). These observations might suggest a route into the province from mid-N.B. across the Isthmus of Chignecto, rather than from the S.W.

Two WOOD THRUSH were singing this spring, 1 near New Germany, May 18 (WGC,CR) and 1 near White Rock at the end of May (BLF).

There were plenty of AMERICAN ROBIN reports as usual. Large numbers appeared to arrive during the latter half of March all around the province--30+ at E. Chezzetcook, Mar. 10 (CJH), 12 at Mader's Cove, Mar. 30 (JBM), 17 at Ketch Harbour, Mar. 15 (FLL,JAC). JKD saw an early nest, in snow, with 2 eggs at Lr. W. Pubnico, Apr. 25, and EU had a pair that began to build on Apr. 20 and had 4 young by May 15.

The first GRAY CATBIRD was noted May 8 at Cape Forchu (HGH), and another migrating individual was on Bon Portage the next day (JAC). By late May they were in the usual locations skulking around in bushes and sounding like miaowing cats. There were 6 scattered sightings of NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD this spring. One, in Wolfville, was "singing beautifully" (JWW). A BROWN THRASHER was still present Apr. 16 in E. Chezzetcook after overwintering (CJH) and another was seen on a lawn in Lockeport May 24 (G,D and DJC).

There was only 1 AMERICAN PIPIT reported (they have mostly left by spring), and that was feeding in the seaweed at Daniel's Head on May 6 (HJH).

A few flocks of BOHEMIAN WAXWING remained into the spring after a lacklustre winter for this species. Two hundred - 300 were present Mar. 17 (DJ), some of which were drinking in a stream. A few other individuals were noted. The same day JGT saw 21 - 24 CEDAR WAXWINGS down the road in the town of Wolfville. Earlier, on Mar. 10, 6 of this species were unfortunately killed hitting a window on the Acadia University campus at noon (JWW). There were many other reports of small flocks from all over the province all spring (DHY,AP,HG & JH,KNK et al.).

There were as many NORTHERN SHRIKES reported this spring as in the winter, all of course of single individuals, from scattered locations. Particularly late individuals were at Victoria Bridge, Apr. 17 (DM) and Hartlen's Point, May 5 (PM,BS). A LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was in the same location, seen by PM and GB, May 31.

There are, of course, far more EUROPEAN STARLINGS around than people bother to report, but JAC, P&WH and KS all mentioned their continuing presence. There were no huge roosts noted this spring. I have noticed their presence this June near active nests of both Eastern Bluebird and Downy Woodpecker, but without apparent interference.

## VIREOS AND WARBLERS

First SOLITARY VIREOS were noted on May 10, by observers on opposite ends of the province: FLL on Cape Sable Is. and DM at Shunacadie, C.B. During the week following, reports came in from the Valley, central and northern Nova Scotia and the Halifax-Dartmouth area. Richard Stern found a pair apparently on territory around Kentville on May 21. An early RED-EYED VIREO had a close encounter with a window at Pubnico on May 8 (JKD). One on Bon Portage Is., Shel. Co., May 18 (NSBS) and 1 in Hants Co., May 23 (also NSBS) rounded out our meagre reports.

Like the vireos, there was generally a paucity of warbler data, with few rarities. The cold, snowy weather of early May was likely responsible for delaying the migration of many species and for deterring others, or worse.

Only 3 or 4 TENNESSEE WARBLERS were reported in northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, the first one in Meadowville, Pic. Co., May 17 (JGT), and a pair was seen the same day at Hardwoodlands, Hants Co. (DWP,JAP). During the next week a further 7 individuals were scavenged on the South Shore, in the Valley and around Bedford, Hfx. Co.

The NORTHERN PARULA returned to Apple River, Cumb. Co. on time, with KS spotting the first one May 6. Subsequent reports made up a respectable showing from most corners of the province by late in the month, in no discernible pattern but with Pic. Co. and C.B. apparently on the tail end of the migration.

The YELLOW WARBLER gave us our first mention of good numbers. First reported in the Overton area May 16 (HJH,HGH), it was "very abundant in many areas" of Kings Co. the next day (JGT). There appeared to be a movement through Digby-Annapolis, May 18 (BA), and a few days later Yellows were "very vocal and visible everywhere" around Lockeport, Shel. Co. (DJC). A good smattering of reports terminated with the arrival of 3 males in Homeville, C.B. on May 24 (DM). If it were not for the Cohrs' report of 10+ in Hants Co. May 23, the CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER would have gone unreported. The first MAGNOLIA WARBLER was observed near Barrington, Shel Co., May 15 (JGT). Subsequent reports, with a steady west-to-east progression from Brier Is. to Pic. Co. and E. Chezzetcook, brought the count up to 14 individuals. Only 2 CAPE MAY WARBLERS were noted-- 1 at Oakfield Park, May 15 (JLC) and male at White's Lake, Hfx. Co., May 23 (BS). BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER numbers were actually up from last year. The first male was found at Pockwock, May 15 (BA). Two other observers also sent word of Hfx. Co. birds, while a pair was found at Mink Lake, Yar. Co., May 23 (NSBS).

Not surprisingly, there were few late winter reports of the YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, though one of a small flock in Wolfville on Feb. 24, was bravely singing (*vide* JWW). The migration got going just after mid- April, with SJF noting a bright male at Broad Cove on Apr. 18, and KS finding 5+ in E. Apple River, Apr. 22 (with numbers quickly increasing there). Most reports came in early May and spanned the province, including a report of 125 on May 10 at Sydney Forks, C.B. (DM). Other welcome comments included "+" on Brier Is., May 16-18 (RBS) and "many" in Lun. Co., May 17 (WGC,CR).

JSC had her earliest BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER ever on May 3 at Publicover Lake, Lun. Co. Next news came from Overton on May 12 (HGH), with reports from all across western Nova Scotia, clustered around mid-month. DM's report of 12 around Sydney, May 24, was our only C.B. record. BS bagged our only 2 BLACKBURNIAN WARBLERS - 1 on Prospect Road, Hfx. Co., May 20 and 1 at Kearney Lake, Hfx. Co., May 23.

The Little Harbour PINE WARBLER was last seen Feb. 1 (DHY), but no other reports were received. More reports of the PALM WARBLER were received than in recent years, with DHY getting the nod for the earliest on Apr. 16, again at Little Harbour. April birds were also noted from Yar. Co. to Broad Cove, Economy, Apple River (30+) and Pic. and Hfx. Cos. Most reports were from early May, when coverage became province-wide, with a peak May 2 - 4 noticed at Eddy Marsh, Hartlen's Point, Waverley and Lun. Co. (DAC,BS,PM LPP et al.). The first BAY-BREASTED WARBLER was a male at Oakfield Park, May 15 (JLC,JSC). CH added 1 at Meadowville, May 19, while BS found 1 on the Prospect Road on May 20 and 2 at White's Lake on May 21. The BLACKPOLL WARBLER was seen only twice--an early 1 at Pockwock Lake, Apr. 29 (JWT,MH) and a female at Conrad's Beach on May 24 (BS). Were there none on Brier Is.?

The first BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER at APBS, May 11, was noted by the Cohrs. At least 10 were in Hammonds Plains, Hfx. Co., by May 13 (BS,PM) and 3 were found on Wolfville Ridge the same day (JGT). Only 1 was on Brier Is., May 16 (RBS), and indeed only a handful of singletons were reported thereafter, though distribution seemed widespread by month's end. Two or 3 AMERICAN REDSTARTS were on Brier Is., May 17, the first reported. They gradually spread eastward over the next week, with 15+ observed in Hants Co., May 23 (NSBS) and 6 at Homeville, C.B., May 24 (DM).

The OVENBIRD arrived late, but numbers came up to scratch. It was first noted near Quinan, May 17 (JGT), with scattered reports spanning the province over the next week, in no discernible pattern as usual. A NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH heard singing at St. Croix, Hants Co., May 10 (BSH) was the first of 7 individuals reported. The others were in King's, Lun. and Hfx. Cos., as well as 1 at Sydney Forks, May 21, our final report.

A male KENTUCKY WARBLER was found on Sable Is., May 29, identified at first in flight by the sharp-eyed IAM. The late-arriving MOURNING WARBLER was not reported to deadline.

Although "many" a COMMON YELLOWTHROAT was found in Lun. Co., May 17-18 (WGC,CR), only 5 other reports, of from one to several, were received from King's, Lun., Pic. and Hfx. Cos. A male WILSON'S WARBLER at Waverley on May 29 (JWT) was our only report. Only 1 CANADA WARBLER, a bright male singing loudly for a mate, was reported as well--this by RSD at Pubnico Point, May 28. A YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT at a Dartmouth feeder on Mar. 1 (JWT, Blake Maybank) was just past the deadline for our April issue and more importantly, was a first March occurrence for the province.

KNK, ed.



## TANAGERS TO TOWHEE

There were at least 3 male SUMMER TANAGERS discovered this spring. The earliest was one found by Steve Shearer in Meagher's Grant, Hfx. Co on May 9. Close-up photos received from Mr. Shearer, revealed that this bird was drawn to the feeder by a good supply of mixed seed, in particular cracked corn. The second bird was one seen at Hatchet Lake, Hfx.Co. about May 24. The third report was of a recently dead bird discovered on Sable Island on May 29. (IAM) Just a single record of SCARLET TANAGER was noted. That was of a male singing near Kearney Lake on May 23. (DAC)

There were only three sightings of NORTHERN CARDINALS. Joan Czapalay wrote that the female that was coming to Oliver Ross' feeder in Barrington since November was still ther on Apr. 10. A male was seen Mar. 31 in W. Pubnico by Lester d'Eon and an apparent pair was observed in New Minas from mid-April to May 10. (BLF,GD)

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS were very well reported. The earliest record was of 2 males at Little Harbour, Shel. Co., seen on May 4 (DHY) The real influx came during May 15-20 in most parts of the province. This is decidedly later than the average arrival date of May 1. The single sighting of a BLUE GROSBEAK came from Kathleen Spicer in Apple River, Cumb. Co. A male bird arrived at her feeder on May 23, revisiting each day until May 25. INDIGO BUNTINGS were in short supply as well this spring. After several years of being relatively easy to find, there were only 2 seen this year. Males were at Little Harbour and Rockland, both seen by David Young on May 2.

An unusual spring occurrence was a female DICKCISSEL at West Middle Sable on Apr. 24 (DHY). Generally these birds are found regularly during late fall in our region, with only a few spring records. There were 6 sightings of RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEES. The bird that was found at St. Croix in December was last seen there on Mar. 16 (AM,BSh). A male was frequenting the feeder of Jerome d'Eon from Apr. 20-25 in Lr. W. Pubnico, then possibly the same bird was seen on Apr. 25 at Raymond d'Entremont's feeder in Lr. W. Pubnico. Other birds, all males, were found at Centreville on Apr. 26, West head, near Lockeport on May 5 and Bon Portage Is., May 9 (JAC,DHY).

## SPARROWS

TREE SPARROWS were seen occasionally during the winter months. During early spring they begin their migration north and west of Nova Scotia. The latest stragglers were 1 at Apple River on May 10 and 1 on May 11 at Bass River (KS,PWH). All other "last seens" were for middle to late April. The earliest occurrence this spring of CHIPPING SPARROWS was at Apple River on Apr. 29. (KS). May 5-10 was the period when most all others were first found in other parts of the province. It could be the very late spring, but the feeling is that these birds are more uncommon than previous years. Let's hope that they are just late. Three FIELD SPARROWS were encountered. The first was at Three Fathom Harbour on Apr. 29 (BS, PM), the second at Broad Cove on May 4 (JSC,JLC) and the last on Brier Island on May 17 (RBS). Although VESPER SPARROWS breed within the province, they are not an easy find. One was found on Apr. 6 at Wyman Road in Yar. Co. (Sollows) and a male was seen at Oxford on May 27 (BT,JWT).

SAVANNAH SPARROWS were first noted near Apple River on Apr. 10. Most first sightings had occurred by Apr. 25 mostly in the central and northern parts of the province. It wasn't until the last days of April and first part of May that birds were found in the southern counties. This lends weight to the theory that these birds are among many species that prefer to follow the land during migration instead of taking chances crossing water to get to their destinations. The larger, paler SAVANNAH (IPSWICH) SPARROW arrived as usual, slightly earlier with the first one sighted at Three Fathom Harbour on Mar. 30 (Cohrs). Other occurrences were 2-5 at Cherry Hill Beach from Apr. 11 to May 10 and 1 found at Bon Portage on May 8.



The first FOX SPARROW of the season was 1 seen at Broad Cove on Mar. 20 (SJF). The real influx came from Apr. 7-9 with many sightings at feeders from central areas and Apr. 11-13 in the areas of Yarmouth and Cape Breton Island. SONG SPARROWS were later than usual this year. There were isolated records for March but it wasn't until Apr. 4-8 that the majority of first spring sightings occurred. After the long winter and their virtual absence in most areas these birds were as welcome to the eye as they were to the ear. There were three reports of LINCOLN'SPARROW. These were seen at Apple River on May 6 (KS); Kearney Lake on May 23 (DAC) and Homeville on May 24 (DM).

There was a very early record of SWAMP SPARROW on Mar. 31 at West Pennant. This could have been a survivor of the winter as all other first sightings were almost a month later. It appears these birds follow the same migration routes as other sparrows, by way of land, so the earliest records were from Apple River, Cumb. Co. on Apr. 22 and Economy on Apr. 27 (KS,FS).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS were also late. Although there were records submitted for February and March it is likely that these were overwintering birds. This species was very well reported with most first migrants seen or heard singing from Apr. 21 through to May 8. Their close relative, the WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW appeared in several locations from mid-April to mid-May. The earliest was one heard singing in Halifax on Apr. 14 (JSC). Other records were from Apple River, Economy, Broad Cove, Canning and Sable Island. All sightings were of single birds.

DARK-EYED JUNCOS seemed not to have too many problems with the late spring as they arrived right on time and in very good numbers throughout the province. They began arriving by the second week in March and took advantage of the feeding stations until the wooded areas were free of snow. A large flock of 250+ was found at Apple River and 100+ were found at E. Chezzetcook on Apr. 12 (KS,CJH). There were no records of lingering LAPLAND LONGSPURS but SNOW BUNTINGS were seen in large flocks in the Annapolis Valley areas, Port George and Young's Cove during early March (JGT). Late sightings included 2 at Cherry Hill Beach from Apr. 11 through May 10 (SJF,JSC).

#### ICTERIDS

There were no April sightings of BOBOLINKS this spring. The first migrant was found near Windsor on May 5 (SR). Notable was a flock of over 100 at the Eddy Marsh near Amherst on May 25 (KJM). As with many birds, the males of the species migrate first in the spring seeking out prime territory. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS are no exception with the first males arriving in late March with the females arriving up to a month later. There were 2 exceptionally early sightings, a lone male at Starr's Point and 2 males seen at Dartmouth on Feb. 29 and Mar. 1 respectively. These may well have been overwintering birds. The real movement seemed to occur after Mar. 24 with numerous reports of first spring males from all parts of the province.

RUSTY BLACKBIRDS were without any defined arrival date as the sightings were spread over three months. The first was of 12 birds seen at Timberlea, Hfx. Co. on Mar. 25 (PM). There were four records for April from the 5th to the 29th and 1 during May. The usual arrival time is the last week of March. A very good description of BREWER'S BLACKBIRD was submitted by Bev Sarty who had this visitor arrive at her feeder at White's Lake on Apr. 7. Vagrants of this species do show up both in spring and fall and should be watched for with the flocks of blackbirds moving through.

The first spring COMMON GRACKLE was 1 seen at Apple River on Mar. 11, (KS) but the slow northerly movement of birds finally arrived in good numbers by Mar. 29th. (a few days late). BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS arrived on schedule. The earliest recorded was 1 seen on Mar. 19 at Lr. Sackville (BA). It appears that the numbers of individuals reported were high which won't make it any easier for other native songbirds. There were just 4 NORTHERN ORIOLES seen and all were within five days of each other. The first was 1 at Apple River, Cumb. Co. on May 21 (KS et al.). There were 2 seen on May 23, 1 at Kentville and 1 at White's Lake with the last record being at Ship Harbour on May 25 seen by Barbara Jones.

#### FINCHES TO HOUSE SPARROWS

There has certainly been a noticeable improvement in our PINE GROSBEEK population of late. Although very secretive and quiet there were several reports from widely separated areas. Sightings were from Yar. Co. to Cumb. and Pict Cos. Although there were no sign of large flocks, it was typical to encounter 1-3 birds. It was a terrific winter for PURPLE FINCHES. They arrived in large numbers throughout February and March. It was common to have 50-60 at feeders and some observers witnessed flocks of 100 or more during the peak periods. The numbers quickly reduced by mid-April as they began seeking territories. There were 5 records submitted for HOUSE FINCH this period, all but 1 in March. The first sighting was of 2 males at Yarmouth on Mar. 1 (BER,JWW), 2 were found at Maitland, Hants Co. on Mar. 6 (JWW,MH), a pair at Overton on Mar. 14 (HHH) and a female at Digby on Mar. 29 (BA). The April occurrence was a male dressed in a yellow variant plumage at Broad Cove on Apr. 23 (SJF).

RED CROSSBILLS were found by Bradford Amirault various times throughout March at North Range, Dig. Co. and and Brood Cove, Dig. Co. in flocks of 6 to 10. There were several flocks seen near Black River Lake on Mar. 14 (BLF) and others found at New Salem, Cumb. Co. on Mar. 5 (KS). Two sightings in May came from Upper Sackville on May 7 and Digby Neck on May 18 (BA,HHH). There was no indication as to whether or not the bill size was discernible in the reported flocks of these birds but where possible, check for the larger billed Newfoundland form and make note for future reports. WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS were well documented this spring with many records for March and April. Generally the flocks were small, averaging from 10-20. In May though there seemed to be a small movement with much larger flocks descending on the heavy cone crops in the province. Sixty were seen at Cape George, Ant. Co. on May 16 (DM) and 400++ were found on May 5 at Fitch Long Lake, Lun. Co. (JSC,JLC).

COMMON REDPOLLS were very well recorded. There were many reports but all but 2 were from the Valley, north central counties and Cape Breton during March, April and late as May. Typically the flocks consisted of less than 10 individuals however over 200 were seen along the Joggins and Parrsboro shores in mid to late March (KS). PINE SISKINS invaded the whole province by late February and early March. The numbers at times were unbelievable with hundred seen at a time. Most reports were during March with the peak numbers occurring then having smaller flocks staying well into April and early May. AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES were found throughout the winter, the numbers increasing during mid-March with several birders hosting 30-100 at feeders. The largest single flock reported was 100 at Sand Lake Road, Port Morien, c.b. (ACM).

EVENING GROSBEEKS were sporadic during March and April but abundant where present. There was an increase in their numbers by mid-March and then a decrease by early April. Typically flocks of 60-200 were found at feeders on occasion in all areas of the province.

The lowly HOUSE SPARROW was hardly mentioned by reporters. Joy Gates in Glace Bay has had none at all in her area for several years. It is the feeling of many people that these birds are having problems surviving. At my own feeder, 10 birds were daily visitors, but as the winter came to an end only 4 were left. I firmly believe the other 6 succumbed to the elements--which makes me wonder if the breeding success can compensate for 60% winter-kill.

## THINGS-ARE-NOT-ALWAYS-WHAT-THEY-SEEM-TO-BE DEPARTMENT



This dark finch appeared briefly among Purple Finches at Bev Sarty's feeder in White's Lake on March 17. She thought it was an abnormally plumaged Purple Finch and was only able to obtain a quick snapshot. On March 24, a similar bird made brief visits to Azor Vienneau's feeders at Lewis Lake, some 15 km away. Since it certainly seemed to resemble the far-western Rosy Finch, Azor put out an alert. Bev Sarty was among the few to see Azor's bird before it departed for good, and felt that it was the same as or very similar to hers. Although we await some "professional" input from observers familiar with the species, Bev's photo suggests that her bird was not a Rosy Finch. There is no evidence of any pink in the photo, which there should be in all plumages of all races at this season.

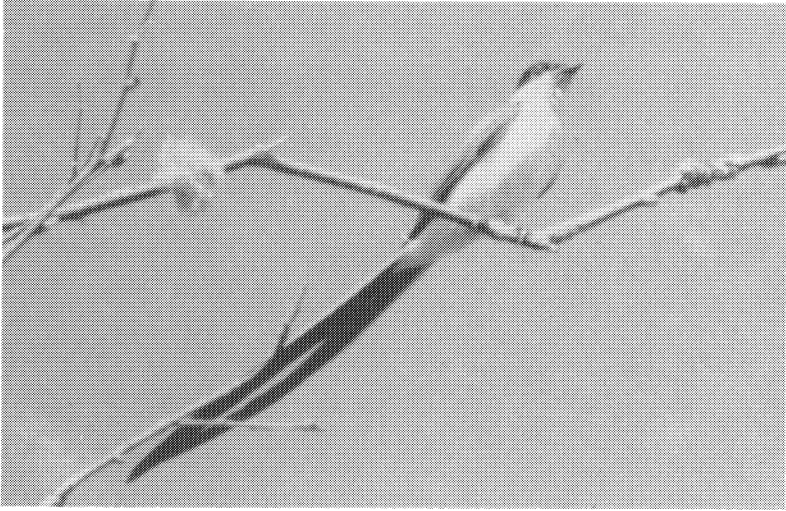
Furthermore, Rosy Finches have "squared off" tertial feathers and extremely long primaries, while the wing structure of this mystery finch resembles that of a Purple Finch. The most plausible diagnosis is that it was a Purple Finch, with dark brown pigment in all feathers that are normally off-white, although I have found no published instance of such a plumage, among many other abnormal ones in this species. For now, it appears that the Rosy Finch, for which there is only one record east of the midwestern states and Northern Ontario, cannot be placed on our checklist.

The identity of the second bird, at a feeder in Upper Granville in mid-April was much more easily settled. Although reported by its "owners" as a McKay's Bunting, which nests on islands in the Bering Sea and migrates to the Alaskan mainland (and at least once to British Columbia), a visit by Peter MacLeod and his photo showed that the bird was yet another partially albino Dark-eyed Junco. Note, for instance, that the entire primaries, secondaries (but not tertials), and most of the wing coverts of the bird are blackish, while the buntings primaries and tertials are black. Also, its bill is pale, like a junco's, not dark, like a breeding-plumage bunting's.



These observations bring to mind the supposed occurrences of a "Mountain Chickadee" at two South Shore feeders last winter. Although I have seen no detailed descriptions of other plumage details of the bird(s), and no photographs are available, it is far more likely that it was an abnormally plumaged Black-capped Chickadee rather than a genuine vagrant of the highly sedentary Mountain Chickadee, unprecedented in North America closer than the westernmost prairies.

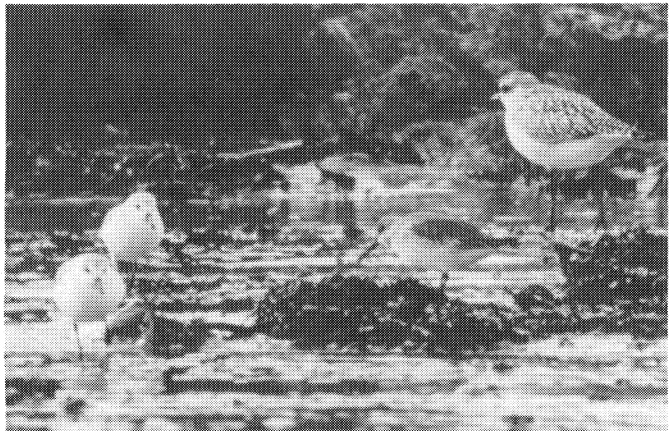
IAM, photo editor.



These two long-tailed beauties were photographed by Peter MacLeod. The Fork-tailed Flycatcher was the bird found in West Lawrencetown in early September 1991. The picture of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Seabright during late May and early June represents a marvelous new technology available to birders who wish to document their sightings. Peter owns a new Canon video outfit, with the compactness and lens capabilities of a very high-quality 35 mm reflex camera. Furthermore, it is able to produce full-colour prints, a black and white version of which is shown here.



The male Eurasian Wigeon in Tufts Cove, Dartmouth, was a first for many local birders. Photo -- Ian McLaren.



How many species of shorebirds can you pick out of this group on the Broad Cove C.B.C., Dec. 31, 1991? Photo Ian McLaren.



Still worth documenting is this Northern Wheatear, photographed by Peter MacLeod at M.W. Pubnico in mid-September, 1988.

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Many thanks to you all.



This Kentucky Warbler was on Sable Island, May 29 - June 3, and photographed there by Ian McLaren -- the first such photograph published for the province.

## A YEAR IN JAPAN

Pat McKay

Our great adventure started in March 1990, when our family left a wintry Dartmouth and set out for the other side of the world. We were off to Japan, where my husband had been awarded a fellowship for one year at the Japanese Geological Survey, based in Tsukuba, a city situated about 60 km N.E. of Tokyo. We were told that Tsukuba was a modern Science City, purposely built about twenty-five years ago to provide accommodation and laboratory space for about twelve hundred scientists from all over the world to go and work with and alongside Japanese scientists, hopefully to promote useful exchanges of ideas and research.

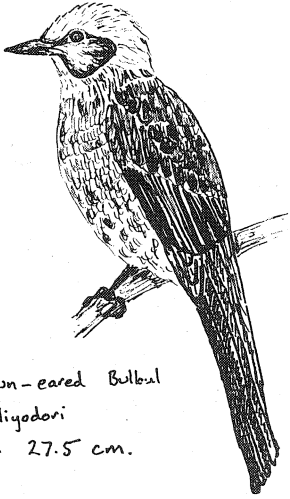
Tsukuba proved to be a city with a total population approximately the size of Halifax, which had been built on what was once farm land. To our delight our home in Matsushiro was right on the very outskirts of the metropolitan area, in amongst fields of vegetables and rice paddies. After the noise and bustle of Downtown Dartmouth, it was a pleasure to be wakened by the crowing of a cockerel from the nearby farm, or the tolling of the local temple bell, just audible at six o'clock in the morning when the wind was in the right direction.

At night in the springtime we were lulled to sleep by the incredibly loud noise of the frogs singing in the paddy fields. In summer the insects took over from the frogs, and sang all night. I have never heard a dawn songbird chorus such as I used to hear in Britain, the insects were just too many and too noisy, though from late April until July it was not unusual to hear a Common Cuckoo calling at three in the morning as it flew over our house. I was often reminded of a well-known old English poem (dating from the thirteenth century) which contains the lines "Summer is icumen in. Lhude sing cucu!" I can now say with authority that Japanese cuckoos are no quieter than English ones.

The birds: the first thing I noticed, with delight, was that in our bit of Japan at least, there were no European Starlings, and no English House Sparrows. This seemed a great improvement until I realized that their places had been filled by the Grey Starling, and the European Tree Sparrow, both species remarkably similar in characteristic behaviour to their cousins we are so familiar with here. Apart from his chestnut cap instead of a grey one, the European Tree Sparrow even looks a bit like his House Sparrow cousin, but the Grey Starling, with his orange bill and legs, glossy black head with white markings, greyish brown body and conspicuous white rump was at least different to look at, so we forgave his noisiness and rude manners, at least at first.

My second surprise was that many of the common birds we saw daily were species I was familiar with from Canada or from the U.K. I had imagined that travelling to the other side of the world would mean that all the birds would be different from what I was accustomed to, but this was far from the case. For example I was delighted to see the tit/chicadee family was represented by three species that were old friends in the U.K.—the Great Tit, the Coal Tit, and the Long-tailed Tit, all of which were very common in parks and woodlands around Tsukuba.

The accommodation provided for us consisted of half of a duplex, one of ten duplexes in a block, all of which were occupied by visiting foreign scientists with families. My neighbours came from all over the world, --Venezuela, Pakistan, Iceland, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, U.S.A., to name but a few. The houses were each provided with a tiny piece of land as a garden, and one task I set myself was to build a bird table to try and attract some birds near enough for video filming from the house. Since bird feeding did not appear to be a common pastime among the local Japanese or my non-Japanese neighbours, it took time before I managed to attract anything other than the grey starlings and the Tree Sparrows.

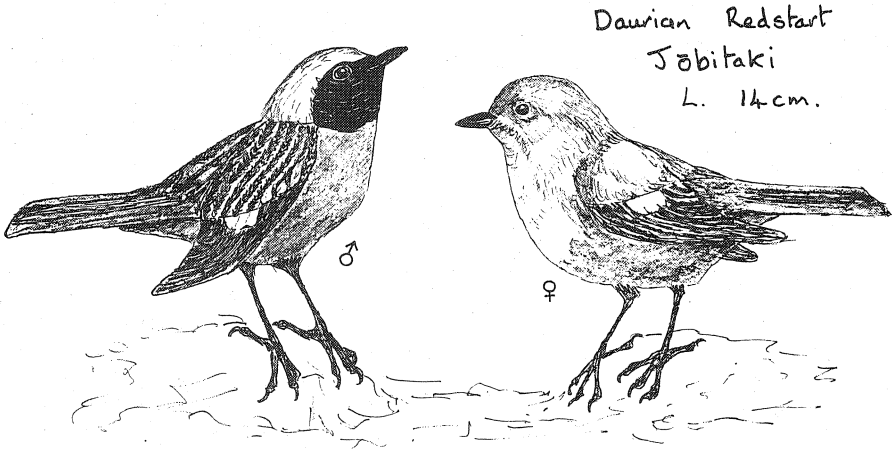


Brown-eared Bulbul  
Hiyodori  
L. 27.5 cm.

The first different species to arrive was a Hiyodori. The English name for this bird is the Brown-eared Bulbul, but this was such a mouthful that we soon got used to saying the Japanese name, which seemed to suit their character better. Abundant, noisy, and boisterous, they reminded me in many ways of our Blue Jays. Similar in size and behaviour to a jay, they are brown medium-sized birds with silvery grey streaky markings on the head and chest, and a chestnut brown patch over the ear. Intelligent, and curious, they soon overcame their initial fears and were our most frequent visitors.

Another fairly frequent visitor to my birdtable was a female Daurian Redstart. This charming little brown bird with its white wing spot and orange rump, underparts and tail was endearingly tame, and would allow one to approach quite close to where it was perched, quivering its tail in a characteristic fashion. The male bird,

which we frequently saw when out on bicycle rides, was even more colourful with a black face, silver grey head, white wing spot and red rump, underparts and tail, but I never saw a male actually in my garden.



Tsukuba city and its surroundings is built on a very flat bit of the Kanto plain, which made it ideal countryside for travel by bicycle. The city had been designed with bicycles in mind, which meant there were miles of bicycle paths through parks where one could safely ride without meeting any four wheeled traffic. Once outside the city boundaries, the bike tracks ended and the paddy fields began, which were almost as good, as one could ride along the tiny country lanes for hours and meet only the occasional farmer in his truck. All other motor traffic seemed to stick to the larger roads, which could usually easily be avoided. We soon learned to travel everywhere by bike. It was convenient, pleasant, and often the quickest way to get to a destination, and there were no parking problems to be overcome on arrival.



Frequently we would go out for a bike ride on Saturday afternoons. We would head for the nearest paddy fields and follow the river, stopping to admire the ancient farm houses with their magnificent upturned tiled roofs and of course, to look at the birds. In the spring when the paddy fields were deliberately flooded before the rice planting, all the acres of water attracted vast numbers of frogs, whose noise when heard close to, was truly deafening. The frogs in turn attracted the birds, in particular those of the heron family. The commonest species was the Little Egret, a lovely little white heron with "golden slippers", very like the Snowy Egrets we see here occasionally in places like Lawrencetown. These birds were present year round and we always saw several on each of our outings.

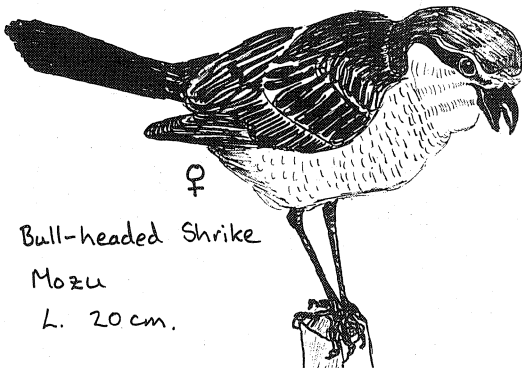
Another resident almost as common as the Little Egret was the Black-crowned Night Heron. This handsome little heron was another of my favourites, with his gray wings, black cap and back, and two long white plumes on the back of his head in the summer. There was a small fish pond near our house, and three of these birds seemed to live in the trees around the pond. Once I had found them the first time, they were nearly always in the same positions whenever I cycled past on my way to do my daily shopping at the local supermarket.

During the summer months, the third common heron species was the Cattle Egret. This small white heron has beautiful orange buff-coloured feathers on the head and neck, during the breeding season. They seemed to be rather more sociable birds than the Little Egrets, and were often seen in small groups of three or four birds to a rice field, solemnly wading in and out of the rows of young rice plants growing the the still flooded paddies, looking for frogs.

When we turned our backs on the rice fields and cycled away from the river, we found ourselves travelling through rather different countryside, usually fields of vegetables, interspersed with small pockets of woodland and patches of scrub bamboo. The crops grown included potatoes, cabbage, tobacco, cereal crops such as barley, or just fields of plain grass turf, which is grown and harvested to sell to golf courses.

The change of habitat meant of course, different birds. Mixed in with the barley were the Bamboo Partridges, and the Skylarks. It reminded me of a grammar exercise on collective nouns in elementary school: "a covey of partridges" (whatever did that mean?), and "an exaltation of larks". Ah, yes indeed, an exaltation is the only word to describe the song that the larks sing as they fly higher and higher.

The biggest assortment of birds occurred in and around the small patches of woodland. Here it was possible to see Japanese Pheasants (the male is a glorious iridescent bottle green, and is Japan's national bird), the Japanese Pigmy Woodpecker (a small mite about the size of our Downies, Oriental Greenfinches, Siberian Meadow Buntings Rustic Buntings, the Dusky Thrush and the Brown Thrush, the three species of tits already mentioned, Rufous Turtle Doves, and two species of crows. Although the Carrion Crow is common around Tsukuba, the more abundant bird was the Jungle Crow, slightly larger, and with a much thicker, heavier bill, and a forehead that sticks out like that of "neandertal man".



Bull-headed Shrike

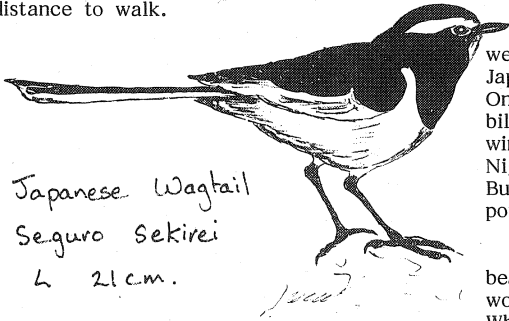
Mozu

L. 20 cm.

The more open countryside was perfect habitat for shrikes, and one day I had a marvelous view of a Northern Shrike as I was cycling home from a Japanese language lesson. However, it was another species, the Bull-headed Shrike, which was particularly common, and could be guaranteed to be seen every day. My most interesting encounter with this bird actually took place in my garden. One morning while I was watching my feeder, a female Bull-headed Shrike appeared and pounced on the Tree Sparrow that was feeding there. Although the shrike was not much bigger than the sparrow, the sparrow had no chance to escape as the shrike quickly killed it by repeated blows to its head with her

bill. She then picked up the corpse and flew off with it dangling from her feet. I was amazed at the swiftness of the kill, and that the shrike could manage to lift a bird so nearly its own size.

After I had been in Tsukuba for a couple of months, I met a member of the local bird society, who invited me to one of their bird walks. These were held once a month starting in the largest park in the city and took in all of the park and its lake, and some nearby woodlands and marshy areas. There was a wide variation in habitats, so it was possible to see a large number of different species in what was really quite a small distance to walk.



Japanese Wagtail  
Seguro Sekirei  
L 21cm.

In the wide open grassy areas there were two species of wagtails, the Japanese Wagtail, and the White Wagtail. On the lake we saw Little Grebes, Spot-billed Ducks, Shovelers, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons in the trees and Reed Buntings in the reeds surrounding the pond.

In the trees, shrubs and fruit-bearing bushes in the park we usually would see Hawfinches, Indian Tree Pipits, White's Ground Thrush, Goldcrests, the Japanese White-eye,

Black-faced Bunting, Siskins, Bramblings and Azure-winged Magpies, as well as most of the common birds already mentioned. On one red letter day we came upon an Ural Owl roosting in a pine tree in a quiet bit of woodland.

I was the only foreigner in the group, but fortunately several of the leaders spoke reasonable English. One of them even knew English names of the birds we saw so that I got to know what I was looking at. In moments of excitement however, when there was a fleeting glimpse of a rare bird, they would call out the name in Japanese for the rest of the party and I would be left wondering whether to look out for a bird the size of an eagle or a hummingbird. It was on one such occasion when my friend shouted out "Kawasemi, kawasemi!", I looked in the indicated direction but saw nothing, and my Japanese friend later explained that a Common Kingfisher had just darted past. I was disappointed not to see it, as this is the same species as the one I sometimes saw as a child in England—a tiny jewel of a bird, with a brilliant iridescent blue back and cap, orange-red underparts and cheek patch, and a white throat and neck patch, seldom seen except as a bright flash of colour as it flew away. However, I was lucky, as a couple of months later on a similar bird walk, I heard the cry of "Kawasemi" again and this time glimpsed it as it flashed past.

The species of bird which got my Japanese friends most excited was, interestingly, a Red Crossbill. This species is an uncommon winter visitor to Japan, and when a flock of them was discovered in one of the areas covered by our monthly bird walks, everyone was very pleased. When we arrived at the place where the birds had last been seen, we were surprised to find that there were more people there than birds, and that some of them had travelled from Tokyo and even further afield especially to see them. Needless to say, we were unable to locate them on that occasion, but I went back by myself on two or three further occasions and managed several good views of them feeding on pinecones. Each time I met numerous other Japanese birders who had travelled from afar to see the crossbills, and they were always most helpful in locating the birds.

During our year's stay in Japan, we managed to have several short family holidays away from Tsukuba and I usually managed to see a few different species on each trip. Some of my special memories from these trips were finding a Stonechat's nest containing three young nestlings very close to a busy carpark high up in the Japanese Alps, finding a wood full of songbirds, including the most colourful Varied Tit, surrounding a shrine on the Izu peninsula, and seeing a male Blue Rockthrush on a rocky shoreline of the Noto peninsula. Each of these sightings gave me great pleasure as the birds were colourful and "lifetime" sightings for me, but to finish this brief article, I would like to describe another much more common bird which I saw and heard regularly, especially during the summer in and around Tsukuba.

This bird was the Bush Warbler, a small and totally insignificant-looking olive-brown bird, but with a song so loud and clear that it seemed almost impossible for such a small scrap of feathers to produce such a lovely sound. The Bush Warbler nests in thickets of scrub bamboo, and there was one such place very close to the bicycle path I cycled on nearly every day. The warblers must have chosen to nest close to the bike path as the male bird was usually on site and singing from a tree top, and I always tried to leave myself an extra five minutes of time so that I could stop for awhile to enjoy his concert. Hundreds of other people must have cycled past him each day, as the route was a popular one leading directly to the city centre, but I never saw anyone else stop to listen as I did. They don't know what they missed—and now they probably never will. Later on in the autumn, all the Bush Warbler's scrub bamboo was torn out by a bulldozer prior to the site being developed for housing.

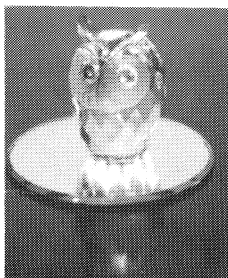
Our year in Japan was a fascinating adventure and a great once-in-a-lifetime experience for me and my family. If you have the opportunity to visit Japan, even if only for a short holiday, do take it. I would be only pleased to help with information if you would like some.

35 Edward Street  
Dartmouth, N.S.  
phone 463-7606



#### RETIREMENT

We are sad to inform readers of the retirement of Mary Anderson as Co-coordinator of the Christmas Counts. For many years Mary has worked at this onerous task, at first with her late husband Ross, and latterly, alone and with help from David Currie.



In appreciation of her dedication to this work, the Society, knowing her love of owls, presented her with the crystal representation pictured.

Many thanks Mary, and good wishes from all of us.

## FORTHCOMING FIELD TRIPS

REMINDER: Please be sure to phone 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.



## JULY

- Sat. 25 North River (Cape Breton). Leader: Nancy More (828-2534). Meet at 8:00 a.m., Cape Breton Shopping Centre, Sydney River.
- Sun. 26 Wallace Bay Area. Leader: James Taylor (434-8516). A variety of habitats, including shoreline, woodland, riverside and marsh. Nesting eagles for a finish. Meet at Wallace Wharf at 8:30 a.m. No registration necessary for this trip.

## AUGUST

- Sat. 1 Economy Area. Leader: Francis Spalding (1-647-2837). Meet at the general store at 9:00 a.m. Returning shorebirds and birds of the area. Great scenery and lots of back roads.
- Sat. 8 Yarmouth Area. Leader: Eric Ruff (H) 1-742-8145, (W) 1-742-5539. Meet at CPR Station at 9:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and suitable footwear for rocky and wet walking.
- Sat. 15 Fullers Bridge (Cape Breton). Leader: Bob More (828-2534). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Marion Bridge.
- Sun. 30 Hartlen's Point and Eastern Shore. Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006) Migrating shorebirds, etc. Meet at old entrance to Hartlen's Point Golf Course at 7:30 a.m.

## SEPTEMBER

- Sept. 4-7 Bon Portage Island--(Labour Day Weekend) Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006). Arrive at Prospect Point Wharf, Shag Harbour for 6:30 p.m. crossing. Depart island about 3:00 p.m., Monday. There is a fee for accommodation and transportation. Bring your own food, drinking water, sleeping gear, clothing, flashlight and a sheet cover for the mattress. Pre-registration is necessary.
- Sat. 12 Cheticamp (Cape Breton). Leader: Wally MacKinnon (564-9981) Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Cape Breton Shopping Centre Sydney River. Come prepared for a long day.
- Sat. 19 Matthew's Lake. Leader: David Young (656-2225). Meet at parking lot at Hemeon's Head at 8:00 a.m. To get there, proceed down Hwy. 103 to Exit 23. Go south for 2 miles until "Lighthouse Route" turns left at Little Harbour. Proceed down this road for approximately 2 1/4 miles until end of road is reached at Hemeon's Head (approx. 2 1/2 hrs. from Hfx.) Wear waterproof boots or be prepared to wade barefoot for a short distance if tide is not completely out. Walking distance is about 5-6 miles in 3-4 hours.

- Sun. 20 Tidnish Crossroads and Northumberland Strait. Leader: Stuart Tingley  
Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Tidnish Bridge on Hwy 366. Fall migration of loons and grebes, etc. Bring a lunch.
- Sat. 26 Wolfville Area - Shorebirds, Grand Pré birds and ducks. Leader: Jim Wolford (542-7650). Meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre-- Front St. Wolfville (Chimney Swift Chimney) at 1:00 p.m. Outing to be shared with Blomidon Field Naturalists. No need to pre-register.

## OCTOBER

- Sun. 4 Hartlen's Point and Eastern Shore. Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006)  
Meet at old entrance to Hartlen's Point Golf Course at 8:00 a.m.
- Oct. 9-12 Bon Portage Island (Thanksgiving Weekend) Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-2006). Meet at Prospect Point Wharf at 6:30 p.m. Oct. 9. There will be a charge for the crossing and accommodation. Bring food, drinking water, flashlight, sleeping bag and a sheet to cover the mattress. Pre-registration is necessary. We will leave island at approximately 3:00 p.m. on Monday.
- Sat. 24 Eastern Shore. Leader: Peter Payzant (861-1607). Late shorebirds, lingering waterfowl and early winter arrivals. Meet at the shopping centre at the end of Porter's Lake at 9:00 a.m. We will visit several locations from Martinique to Lawrencetown. This is an all day trip, bring at lunch.

## NOVEMBER

- Sat. 14 Northern Head (Cape Breton). Leader: Alan Murrant (737-2684). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the site of the Heavy Water Plant, Glace Bay. Be prepared for a 1 hour rugged hike and dress warmly.

## DECEMBER

- Sun. 6 Eagles and Raptors of the Valley. Leader: Peter MacLeod (454-6002)  
Meet at Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front Street, Wolfville, at 8:30 a.m. Bring a lunch.

## JANUARY

- Sat. 10 Sewer Stroll I (rain day, Jan 11th). Leader: Fulton Lavender (477-8984). This is an all day trip. Meet at Hartlen's Point at 8:00 a.m. We will work around to Herring Cove via Bedford.
- Sun. 17 Riverside Eagles. Leader: Ross Hall (893-9665). Meet at the Kentucky Fried Chicken at Exit 11 (Stewiacke) on Hwy 102 at 9:30 a.m. A visit to Berfelo Farm and an eagle nest near the Gosse Bridge -- about 3 - 4 hours. Great for the family.

Continued...

## FEBRUARY

Sat. 14 Sewer Stroll II (rain day Feb. 15th). Leader: Fulton Lavender  
(477-8984). Meet at Hartlen's Point at 8:00 a.m. This is an all day  
trip and ends at Herring Cove.

**ATTENTION LEADERS:** YOU ARE REMINDED TO SEND A FIELD TRIP REPORT TO  
THE EDITOR OF **Nova Scotia Birds**, Nova Scotia Bird Society, c/o Nova Scotia  
Museum, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6.

In addition to our NSBS Trips, Bev Sarty will be leading a Shorebird Trip for the  
Parks Department. This will be on Saturday, September 12. Meeting place is at  
Conrad's Beach at 10:00 a.m. The trip will last about 2 hours. Bev's number is 852-  
5209.

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.



Meetings at the Nova Scotia Museum will resume in the fall. The September  
meeting will be on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, at 8: p.m.

Speaker:

Joyce Purchase on

"gardening is for the birds"

...Pass up the Petunias

...Invert the Impatiens

...Hail Honeysuckle

Attract birds to your garden in all season. A list of suitable plantings will be  
available to take home.

NSBS PHOTOGRAPHIC TROPHY

"The Chickadee Trophy"

Holding his prize is 1991-92 Winner Fred Greene



## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

February 22 - Cape Breton, Harbour Hop

On this trip we travelled the shore roads from Glace Bay to Sydney Mines, stopping at harbours and headlands and any open water in the bays. Glace Bay and Lingan Power Plants opened their gates to allow us access to the best observation points. The snow was squeaking under foot and our eyes watered from the wind, but because there is no limit to our enthusiasm, we endured from eight in the morning to three in the afternoon. Twenty-nine species were observed, including a Barrow's Goldeneye, a Lesser Black-backed Gull and approximately sixty Black-headed Gulls.

Cathy Murrant

March 29 - Eastern Shore

Last year's trip lost out to a snowstorm but we must have finally used up our annual quota of bad weather because conditions were a decided improvement on the forecast. We even managed a bit of blue sky, with temperatures eventually climbing to 6<sup>o</sup> C.

We made our first stop at Sullivan's Pond and saw the American Coot, a Green-winged Teal and a really close look at a Common Merganser, as well as the usual Mallards and Black Ducks. Among the gulls there and at the foot of Canal Street, were several Iceland Gulls (in various plumages) and Black-headed Gulls displaying their striking dark heads. Near the bridge over the Little Salmon River, sharp eyes detected a male Downy Woodpecker feeding in the alders.

While we took advantage of a rest stop at our place on Ross Road, we were able to add a Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Junco, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee and Brown-headed Cowbirds to our list.

Somewhere along the Lawrencetown Road, we added Mourning Dove, Robin and 3 Hooded Mergansers to the growing list, as well as White-throated Sparrow and a Red-breasted Nuthatch at Linda Conrad's feeders. Also enroute a Bald Eagle, Ring-necked Pheasant, Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Yellow-rumped Warbler and a Black Scoter were spotted.

The highlight of the day was located by Peter MacLeod at Conrad's Beach. A Snowy Owl, standing calmly beside the stumps on the ice, permitted a careful approach and a "photo opportunity". The ponds were crowded with Black Ducks and Red-breasted Mergansers; an Oldsquaw was observed at close range on a point near the parking lot and a Red-tailed Hawk moved slowly from tree-top to tree-top.

Bufflehead were found in their usual bay at the causeway, a Great Blue Heron flew straight overhead and there were Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter and about 250 Canada Geese in Three Fathom Harbour. Lunch was enjoyed on the beach near a grassy area where an early Ipswich Sparrow was well seen.

The trip wound up at Shore Road in Chezzetcook, watching Pintails among the Canada Geese which were quietly feeding and vocalizing. We ended the day with a dozen participants, having acquired two birders who joined us along the way, and a very creditable total of 50 species.

Joyce Purchase



March 31 - Owl Prowl - Cape Breton

Eleven birders gathered on Broughton Road, Birch Grove, to hear and maybe see some owls. It was a beautiful moonlight night with no wind. At our first stop along the road we heard a Great Horned calling close by and a Barred calling in the distance. Proceeding along, sometimes playing tapes and other times just listening,--owls were heard at every stop. In all we heard 2 Barred, 3 Great Horned and 4 Saw-whet Owls. In addition to these the final stop on the trip gave us Great Horned calling from the top of a tall spruce in the moonlight. In all, 9 owls were heard and one seen.

Allan & Cathy Murrant

April 18 - West Hants Owl Prowl.

Bird watching is a funny business. This winter we had more owl sightings and reports in West Hants County than any other of the seventeen winters we've lived in Cheverie. Barred, Great Horned, Long-eared, Saw-whet and Snowy Owls were seen and heard from October through early March. Then, as of mid-March, the owls seemed to disappear. The Barred we watched hunt daily at dusk, in February, from our living room window, was gone from its roost in the lower field. The Saw-whet calling from the bog across the river, remained silent. We checked the Great Horned nest site a kilometre away, but found no remains of hare or pigeon, indicating the nesting pair were in residence. Worse still, none of the neighbours reported hearing the pair hoot. I began to get worried. I had a suspicion the first West Hants Owl Prowl sponsored by the Nova Scotia Bird Society would fall flat on its face. Suspicion turned to dread when a few of the throng that attended the early April Blomidon Naturalists Owl Prowl said nesting owls had steadfastly refused to respond to prompts. I tramped over marches, hiked woods roads, walked the fields and drove miles, all hours of the day and night. By April 15, I had not seen or heard a single owl! Finally, on April 16, a Saw-whet "tang-tang-tanged" at Cogmagun. On April 17, a second Saw-whet responded to a friend's tape, at Ashdale. On the strength of this flimsy "evidence" from probably "migrants", I assured one NSBS director who called me the night before, that our best bet--possibly our ONLY bet--would be a Saw-whet. Discouraged, I drove to the Brooklyn rendezvous April 18. The day had been sunny and warm. The evening was beautiful: bright and windless. There was a full moon, as a bonus. Car after car pulled in, as bird friends old and new greeted us enthusiastically. "WHAT A NIGHT FOR OWLS", everyone said. Three NSBS directors were present. "COULDN'T BE MORE PERFECT", they agreed. Off we set, a convoy of ten cars and thirty birders. Winnowing snipe obliged us at the Cogmagun Intervale and I felt more optimistic. These, plus a pair of playful otters and a yowling coyote, supplemented the night music provided by Raven, Red-winged and Rusty Blackbird at the swamp--but at Ashdale, twenty minutes away, whatever ornithological gods there may be, delivered to us a chorus of owls that turned the starry night into a veritable concert. Barred, Great Horned and Saw-whet Owls called, hooted, barked and whistled repeatedly. Opinions as to numbers varied from an estimate of 8 birds (5 Barred, 2 Horns, 1 Saw-whet) to a high of 11 (6 Barred, 3 Horns, 2 Saw-whet). As leader (with substantial help from Gail Davis), the final number mattered less to me than did the smiles on all those faces, grinning in the moonlight, as one person after another exclaimed: "I heard it! It's over there!" Another scolded: "SUSH! LISTEN!" However, when the owls are calling, it's very hard even for those of us who are used to hearing them, to keep still.

Karen Leigh Casselman

April 25 - Lingering Winter Birds, Cape Breton

It was an overcast day, -4<sup>0</sup> C, with light winds. There was a good turnout, about a dozen enthusiastic birders. After our usual chat, we were off to Glace Bay sand bar.

It was covered with birds; 6 Green-winged Teal, Common Loon, 24 Common Goldeneye, 2 Ring-billed Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, 4 Great Blue Heron, Black Ducks, 2 Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, American Crow, Raven, robins and a Bald Eagle.

At the far end of the sand bar we spotted a red fox pouncing on its pray. On the other side of the sand bar we spotted 6 Oldsquaw, 2 Surf Scoter, 20 White-winged Scoter, 5 Bufflehead and 2 Great Cormorants.

Next stop was Schooner Pond. As usual, there were numerous Redwinged Blackbirds courting. There were also Blue Jays, 3 Fox Sparrows, Song Sparrow, 12 Common Grackles, Black-capped Chickadees, Slate-coloured Juncos, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Black Ducks and a pair of Mallards.

On our way to the next stop we saw a Mourning Dove and 200 Common Eider. At Port Morien we saw 30 Purple Sandpipers, Black Scoter, Red-breasted Mergansers and Canada Geese.

At Black Brook Cemetery we spotted a White-throated Sparrow, 50 Red-breasted Mergansers and Common Mergansers.

At the Homeville Bridge we saw 14 Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, 2 Great Blue Heron and a Purple Finch.

At our last stop, Mira Gut, we spotted Double-crested Cormorants, 5 Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls, American Goldfinches, and Evening Grosbeaks. In all 44 species—a large birdwatching day!

Andrew Gingell

#### April 26 - Pond Hopping for Spring Birds

This year we drew about the worst weather imaginable for this annual NSBS/BNS excursion. The day before delivered a blizzard of snow plus cold rain; then today it was 0° C with a very cold, strong, north wind.

Six participants braved the elements. We didn't visit many spots, but we did pretty well for sightings. We couldn't locate the newly-arrived Willet at the Wolfville wharf, but I did see a Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, and a Northern Harrier. Viewing into that north wind was extremely tearful!

We all scoped the Bald Eagle on her nest at Greenwich, and then we drove to Canning. The Habitant River Aboiteau area was very productive: 150 Canada Geese, 2 male Northern Shovelers, a pair of Lesser Scaup, 3 Bufflehead, a Killdeer and a Greater Yellowlegs.

Canard Pond yielded an all-white immature Glaucous Gull, a male Gadwall (Bernard Forsythe saw 5 there today), an American Wigeon, 10 Ring-necked Ducks, plus Green-winged Teal and Black Ducks.

Chipman's Corner pond held 2 Double-crested Cormorants.

Our final pond was at the New Minas River bridge, where we saw 2 female Hooded Mergansers, a male Common Merganser, 6 Ring-necked Ducks and 10 Tree Swallows.

By then we were all ready for some lunch and warmth and we gratefully accepted the offered hospitality of Don Wright's family. In their home at North Alton, we comfortably watched Pine Siskins, Goldfinches, Purple Finches, Cowbirds, Blue Jays, a Junco, a Pheasant and a red squirrel at their feeders (they also have a flying squirrel at night).

We also studied Jenny's award-winning science-fair project on Goldfinch food and her notebooks of pressed and photographed plants.

Jim Wolford

May 3 - NSBS Annual Field Trip to Amherst Point

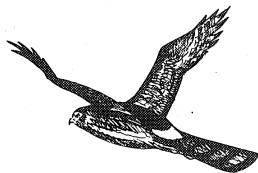
The morning was spent at APBS and the afternoon at John Lusby Marsh. The weather was cloudy with a light mist in the early morning with a temperature of +3 to +5° C with a light wind.

## Observations:

3	Common Loon	2	Sora
7	Pied-billed Grebe	4	Killdeer
1	D-cr. Cormorant	6	Common Snipe
		5	Greater Yellowlegs
2	American Bittern	1	Ring-billed Gull
		17	Gr. Black-backed Gull
6	Canada Goose (2 nests)	60	Herring Gull
1	Mallard/ Black Hybrid	1	Kingfisher
2	Mallard	3	Common Flicker
31	Black Duck	20	Tree Swallow
8	Gadwall	6	Barn Swallow
7	Pintail	2	Blue Jay
70	Am. Green-winged Teal	4	Common Raven
24	Blue-winged Teal	4	Am. Crow
15	Am Wigeon	15	Black-capped Chickadee
3	Northern Shoveler	6	Boreal Chickadee
		8	Red-breasted Nuthatch
		1	Winter Wren (call)
		20	Am. Robin
86	Ring-necked Duck	1	Swainson's Thrush
		26	Gl-crowned Kinglet
		6	Ruby-cr. Kinglet
1	Rough-legged Hawk	2	Starling
2	Northern Harrier	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler
2	Osprey	40+	Red-winged Blackbird
		20	Common Grackle
		1	Evening Grosbeak
		6	Purple Finch
		20	Pine Siskin
		2	Savannah Sparrow
5	Ruffed Grouse (frequent drumming)	10	White- th. Sparrow
		6	Swamp Sparrow
		6	Song Sparrow

Total: 51 Species      607 Individuals

Al Smith



### May 15-18 - Bon Portage Island

This was my fourth Victoria Day Weekend trip to Bon Portage and, with only 70 species recorded, it was the quietest trip yet. This didn't come as an absolute surprise as migration had been slow everywhere this spring. If anything, this had only inspired ever-optimistic hopes in our group of 15 that "it" would happen this weekend--but this was not to be.

Still, there are always "treats". Soon after our Friday evening arrival, 4 Black-crowned Night Herons flew over the boat slip and a Northern Mockingbird put in an appearance. Those who desired the more "cushy" accommodations offered at the main house, found a male Black-throated Blue Warbler along the trail to the lighthouse.

The entire group made the trek to the north end of the island Saturday morning. When we reached the salt water pond, a flock of 11 Brant served as a reminder of the late spring migration (local people had commented on the unusually high numbers of Brant this spring and on how late they had lingered). The only egret in sight turned out to be our rare but now regular "Little"--it was joined by a "Snowy" the next day.

The otherwise fairly quiet days were frequently interrupted by the delightful song of Fox Sparrows. The blissful "purring" emanating from the underground burrows of the Leach's Storm-Petrels indicated that many males and females were now "at home", reacquainting themselves after the long winter months spent apart on the open ocean.

During the clear, sunny days, many pleasant hours were passed scanning the ocean as there seemed to be more activity there than on land--mainly in the form of strings of Northern Gannets (1000+). A couple of jaegers, one identified as a Parasitic, flew by as did several Puffins. A lazy sea-watch on Sunday afternoon was interrupted by word that a possible Summer Tanager had been spotted at the north end of the island. Five of us made it there in record-breaking time but the bird couldn't be found.

The excitement generated Monday by a sighting of a Common Yellowthroat pretty well sums up what a quiet weekend it was. However, this seems to be the chance you take with "island-birding"--when it's good, it can be very, very good and when it's bad--well, it's still pretty good! Join us sometime and see for yourself. Thanks again P.C., and to Peter MacLeod for organizing the trip.

Bev Sarty

### May 20 - Early Morning Warbler Walk, Prospect Road

The morning of May 20 dawned bright and sunny but unseasonably cold. Although some complained about scraping frost from their car windshields, 18 "early birds" had arrived at the carpool parking lot by six a.m.

We proceeded along the Prospect Road to the United Church at Goodwood. There we were greeted by the tinkling song of a Winter Wren in the nearby woodland. As we began our walk, we noticed Tree Swallows perched on the clothesline behind the first houses and White-throated and Song Sparrows picking about in some freshly-tilled garden soil.

As we advanced along the lane towards deeper woods, a fair amount of bird song reached our ears but many of the birds were not yet ready to reveal themselves--was the cool morning to blame or had many simply not yet returned to this neck of the woods? I heard several remarks regarding how slow migration had been this spring--but it was still early and we were hopeful.

Rather apologetically, I pointed out the tree where Fred (Dobson--he usually leads this trip) frequently has a Blackburnian Warbler waiting but quickly added that we shouldn't hold our collective breaths too long today. I should have had more faith in "Fred's birds". We had gone only a short way when we were alerted to the high, thin

song of a Bay-breasted Warbler, which some of the group were lucky enough to see. Then, hard on the heels of the Bay-breasted, what should appear but a beautiful "pumpkin-face"--a male Blackburnian! Although some of the species were represented by only a single bird, our warbler list for the day totalled 9 species and included a Cape May and an Ovenbird.

Several of the group had lingered behind hoping to see a Winter Wren but were rewarded with a Gray Jay instead. Several Solitary Vireos were heard only but a Swainson's Thrush was more obliging, presenting its delicate hues from both front and back.

Remembering how quiet these woods had been the previous day, I was delighted to complete our walk with somewhere around 30 species--but who was counting? Our pleasure was found simply in being out early on such a lovely spring morning and reacquainting ourselves with some old friends, both human and avian.

Bev Sarty

#### May 23 - Hants County Field Trip

As I left home for the rendezvous point at the Mount Uniacke Crossing I couldn't help but be amazed that my dress was much the same as when worn on the St. Petersburg Christmas Count--shorts, sleeveless top, sun hat, covered in Cutter's Insect Repellent, and carrying the usual equipment needed when looking for birds. Yet this was the Hants County Field Trip where one is usually dressed for protection from rain, fog, or a cold spring day!

The first two stops were most disappointing; although the Uniacke House would not be opening until the first of June, we had permission to check out the grounds for birds. The best we could come up with were the Common Loon and the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. However, better sightings were to come--a pair of American Bitterns flew up and circled the large pond on our next stop. The songs of warblers in trees and shrubs just beginning to leaf out made it possible to easily identify 13 different species, with an especially gratifying look by all at the Chestnut-sided Warbler.

As we went on, a Northern Waterthrush sang for quite some time from the top of a spruce tree while nearby robins and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks gave us the opportunity to truly distinguish one song from the other. A greater number than usual of the Birds of Prey were seen--7 different species, including a Northern Goshawk and 3 Broadwings.

The flute-like songs of the Thrushes could be heard from the wooded areas, including Swainson's and Hermit as well as the Veery. It is hard to imagine what a walk in the woods would be like if one could not hear those beautiful songs of the thrushes drifting through evergreen and deciduous trees....

Before our lunch stop at Smiley's Park, we finally heard and saw the Bobolinks on wires and in fields.

The Hants County Field Trip began in 1965. Charlie Allen led them all until 1975, when I agreed to continue this once prolific birding area. It is still excellent habitat but changes in routes have been necessitated due to that most misused word "progress"--be it housing, clearing of woodlands, opening up new gravel pits, filling in wetlands or whatever.

71 different species were seen before the heat of the day quieted the birds and wearied the birders! The sight of a pair of Bald Eagles soaring high over the Ste. Croix River was a fitting climax to another year of concern for our avian population.

Margaret A. Clark

May 23 - Warbler Walk, Yarmouth Co.

A small, but interested group of people gathered at Carelton School for what turned out to be a VERY HOT day, searching for the elusive woodland warblers. The VERY HOT was an indication of the weather conditions, not the birding, as it took a lot of looking to scare up ten warbler species for the day's total. I thought this was a very small number, but on looking at last year's walk in the same area, I noted that the totals were the same.

The participants were: Barb Ruff, Dale Mullen, Gwenneth Reid, Hazel MacDonald, Virginia Stoddard, Nelly Snyder (who is always a very welcome participant as her knowledge of flora and fauna is superb), Robin Rymer, John Cooper and myself as leader.

A nice start at the schoolyard was the appearance of a small flock of Cedar Waxwings in a neighbouring tree top. We then proceeded to the Mink Lake Subdivision area for a walk through the much thinned-out hardwood land.

Although no warblers were to be heard at the parking area, we immediately saw some tree-top feeders that turned out to be White-winged Crossbills. Proceeding along, we noted very few warbler songs, although a Northern Parula soon cheered us on our way. Next warbler to be heard was the thin squeaky call of the Black and White Warbler. The raucous call of the Pileated Woodpecker brought us all to attention, but unfortunately we were treated to only a brief glimpse of it flying through the trees.

Next to titillate our expectations was the unmistakable song of the Winter Wren. It proved to be too elusive for our inquiring eyes and we had to settle for hearing it and another wren just a little farther down the road.

I suppose the "high point" of the day went to a Turkey Vulture that circled us lazily for a while as we tried in vain to spot the wrens. As we watched the vulture, a Red-tailed Hawk was seen circling nearby with a snake dangling from its talons.

A total of ten warbler species were seen, including Black-throated Blue, the elusive--but often heard--Ovenbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler--which was by far the most common warbler species of the day, American Redstart and Common Yellow-throat.

As mentioned earlier, the VERY HOT referred to the temperature, which reached the thirties in the backwoods, yet on returning to Yarmouth, the wind actually felt cold, such is the difference in our climatic conditions over very short distances.

Our lunch break took us back to the naturally gardened grounds of Ingrid and Lloyd Prosser on the shore of Mink Lake. There, the recently returned male and female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were busily feeding and generally making a spectacle of themselves.

The general consensus was reached that it was too hot to continue on in the deep woods, so we decided to proceed to Ellenwood Park, hoping that there would be a breeze off the lake to cool us somewhat. At least we found some shade from which we had the company of some Least and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers to puzzle over.

While the total number of warblers was equal to last year's, the quantity was certainly very small as only here and there was a single warbler sighted.

We returned from last weekend's birding trip to Brier Island with the same sad story--too few warblers! We don't really know if the main body of warblers has not yet returned, or has passed on to other areas farther along their migratory path.

The trend seems to be fewer and fewer returnees each year, as was also the case at Bon Portage Island this past weekend. However, all is not gloom and doom, and we are looking forward to a pleasant summer's birding and finding more warblers in other areas that may be faring better.

Hubert Hall

May 30 - Warbler Walk, Cape Breton

Perhaps it was because a weatherman was with us that we had an unusually warm and sunny May morning to observe the spring arrivals. Good sightings were made on our first stop in an area of about forty to fifty acres in central Westmount. The swampy part lies on the south side. Just above there is a strip of rougher terrain consisting of mixed trees, shrubs, rocks and sinkholes. A symphony of sound greeted us there. Some of the performers were Song Sparrows, Grackles, Robins, Starlings, Purple Finches and American Goldfinches. Also seen were Chickadees, Crows, a Flicker and a male Downy Woodpecker. The two members of the group who stayed behind were blessed with seeing, amongst other things, a female Marsh Hawk and Rock Doves. From the central area which is a large open field, we were entertained by male Bobolinks, vying for territory. We noted that they were in much smaller numbers than last year, perhaps because of the very late and colder spring. From there, we also observed some Double-crested Cormorants and Herring Gulls in flight.

After turning off the Edwardsville Highway, we entered through the south entrance of Sydport Industrial Park to reach the old naval base swimming hole which now lies on Canadian Coastguard College property. We discovered a Purple Daphne plant and sighted an American Redstart darting in and out of the thick growth of spruce trees surrounding the pond. Nearby, several Chickadees and American Goldfinches were feeding.

As we crossed the college bridge, overlooking Crawley's Creek, we observed two Spotted Sandpipers flying across the creek. We also disturbed the flock of Rock Doves living and nesting under the bridge. Reaching the college grounds, we took a quick look at the buildings and landscaping before sighting our first Junco.

Our final stop was at the Petersfield Provincial Park for lunch and a rest under the shade of a black spruce. The heat was intense. Nearby, a Blue Jay was heard. Mustering a little energy, we made our way towards the cove that lies between the park and the college. At the mouth of the cove we spotted two Common Terns. They appear to reside and nest in that area and are often seen perching on the piers. Later, the young couple who had joined us for their first birding trip, made a determined and successful attempt to locate a very elusive Yellow Warbler, which just blended with the new foliage.

By this time, the park had become an inferno. We slowly made our way back to the vehicles, pleased in having had several aural and visual bird identification opportunities.

Jackie Chretien



### June 7 - Kentville and Area

Just seven others apart from myself turned up for this trip, which made for a pleasant and easy-to-handle sized group. As on the two previous trips we started in "Camelot Woods", where this year the resident Barred Owl obliged by sitting on a branch close to her nest while an almost fully fledged chick sat on top of the nest. Both birds looked at us lazily, but evidently were not perturbed. Farther into the woods the resident Northern Goshawk put on a suitably spectacular show while we were able to count at least two chicks in her nest. We then went along the old railway track in the middle of Kentville to see a pair of Northern Orioles, looking and sounding gorgeous. We saw a Gray Catbird and several Chimney Swifts, warblers, etc., as well. Two more stops produced a few more of the common woodland birds and a brief but unpleasant shower.

After a picnic lunch and an icecream stop we finally got good looks at Rose-breasted Grosbeak. We looked unsuccessfully for several other singing birds and found an Eastern Phoebe with Barn Swallows under a bridge.

In the afternoon we made several stops at local ponds to look at American Wigeon and other "puddle ducks", and had very good views of a pair of Eastern Bluebirds, probably feeding young in their nest cavity. After a final "scope-look" at the Greenwich Bald Eagle's nest with three mature chicks we called it a day, with a total of 58 species.

Richard Stern.



Although Brown Thrashers have not yet nested in the province, they are occasional vagrants in spring and fall, and a few try to winter. This one was photographed in early December 1988 in south end Halifax by Peter MacLeod.



## BIRDING THE GULF STATES AND RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Audry Tyler

Driving down to the southern United States from Louisiana around the Gulf of Mexico to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas can be a most rewarding bird watching experience. However, to stay there and visit the various National Wildlife Refuges as Lorne and I have done these past two winters is the ultimate birding experience.

The Rio Grande River headwaters are somewhere in the Colorado Mountains and empty into the Gulf of Mexico. From Laredo to Brownsville, the Rio Grande floodplain is renowned worldwide among naturalists for its diverse plant and animal species--many of which are found nowhere else on this continent. The area's wildlife refuges rank as one of the Rio Grande Valley's main tourist attractions. The state of Texas recently appropriated \$6.5 million to acquire 10,000 additional acres for the lower Rio Grande Valley Wildlife Refuge (Wildlife Corridor) which includes more than 700 different vertebrates, 1200 species of plants, 400 species of birds and 500 kinds of butterflies. People come from all over North America, Europe and Australia to search for their feathered prey that includes such tropical species as Green Jay, White-tipped Dove, Chachalaca, Pyrrhuloxia and more that come across the river from Mexico and up from Central and South America.

The National Audubon Society supports the plan to establish a wildlife corridor along the Rio Grande River before the majority of wildlife species in South Texas are eliminated by unplanned growth and have established the Sabal Palm Grove Sanctuary on the river near the mouth, just east of Brownsville. We took a dull day in February to visit the Brownsville area and this little sanctuary. There is a small pond off the main street going into the city that was the source of 19 species for us in about a half hour and started our day off right. We visited the Gladys Porter Zoo while there, and found it to be as good as the tourist bureau advertises, and better because we saw many varieties of ducks, geese and herons flying in and out at will and were able to see such exotic species as Flamingo, Toucan, Red Macaw, Golden Pheasant and many others that are caged. The zoo has a lot more to offer than the excellent avian section that is well worth a visit, but we had birds on our minds that day. At lunch we watched and identified Laughing, Franklins and Bonaparte's Gulls and one precious Sabine's Gull with its forked tail (the gulls circle the fast-food joints down there instead of a harbour). Afterward, we drove down to Sabal Palm Grove Sanctuary, passing the landfill site, where we were able to see the resident Aplomado Falcon which stays there--amid the gulls of course. We walked its nature trails and found, among other things, a Long-eared Owl (which we should have seen here in Nova Scotia, but never did), the tropical Buff-breasted Hummingbird and a White-tailed Kite, which were all lifers for us. We also saw Lincoln and Field Sparrows on our way out. I remark on this because we rarely saw any sparrows except the inevitable English Sparrows down there, and believe me, those are there by the thousands along with the Mockingbirds, which have a habit of singing all night when the weather is fine. I don't know when they sleep.

Approximately 35 miles up the river from Brownsville is the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, a 2080 acre remnant of subtropical mid-valley riparian woodland established in 1943. The convergence of two major flyways, central and Mississippi, funnels migrating birds from the north into the refuge and contributes to the 377 species known to be in Santa Ana Refuge.

It is one of the easiest places to see birds and is one of the top ten bird-watching places in the United States. During the winter, the refuge's busy season, "Winter Texans" (as we are called down there) flock to the refuge along with the migratory birds from up here and those crossing over the river from Mexico. The Great Kiskadee along with Green Jays and Altimira Orioles abound in Santa Ana. Facilities include a Visitor Center from which any one of three trails may be taken leading to Willow Lake or Pintail Lake. There are viewing blinds along the trails for watching the many waterfowl that frequent both lakes--sometimes in huge flocks, sometimes in small ones, depending on the time of day. We visited this refuge often as it was only twelve miles from where we were living and we were able to see a tremendous number of birds over the winter. On one of our forays to Willow Lake we were lucky enough to be in the photo blind when seven Green Jays and one Altamira Oriole came in to the feeding station. That was one of our most enjoyable moments in birding for this oriole was at least ten inches long and in full breeding plumage, as were the Green Jays.

Going another fifteen or so miles up the river, one comes to Bentsen State Park which is part of the wildlife corridor as well as a State Park with camping facilities. There are numerous trails to walk and roads to drive to go birding and lots of birds to find. Because of the picnic tables at the camp sites there are lots of Green Jays and Chachalacas frequenting them as most campers are very willing to feed them and they get quite bold. In November, we went on a field trip to Bentsen State Park with Red and Louise Gambell, a couple of very knowledgeable leaders, who took us to an area of the park where we saw sandpipers, egrets, ducks, herons, both the Green and Ringed Kingfishers and a Screech Owl, sitting perched in a hollow tree just like the "golden" bird book shows. Altogether we saw forty species in about three hours. This couple regularly take out field trips to the various refuges in the south Texas area.

Another day we drove about fifty miles up the river to Falcon Lake and the dam site. Last year we took this drive in peasoup fog but this year we were lucky--it was a beautiful sunny February day with great birding, not only around the lake above the dam but in the surrounding countryside near Zapata. I have never seen so many Olivaceous Cormorants in one place as there were that day perched in the trees on both sides of the river below the dam. There must have been 1000 at least, and sailing along in the river below them were numerous White Pelicans in their quiet dignity. We were able to add Brown Jays and Black Hawks to our life lists; watch the Ospreys fishing in Falcon Lake and watch the Coots scooting around the Great Blue Herons who were wading near the edge of the lake looking for their dinner. Purple Martins, Mourning Doves, Chipping Sparrows, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Curve-billed Thrashers, Rufous-sided Towhees, Great-tailed Grackles are but a few of many species that abound in this area.

From Zapata, near the top of Falcon Lake, back down to Brownsville, there are camping and RV parks galore, but if you are looking for motel/hotels, then there are plenty of those as well. McAllen, Pharr, Harlingen and Brownsville are all sizeable cities with good accommodations and there are smaller places in between on Highway 83 that could also provide food and housing.

Before we leave the valley area, there is one more place call Laguna Atascosa that is a must to see. It is east of Harlingen (where Highways 83 and 77 meet) approximately twenty-five miles. This on the Laguna Madre and is a large tract of land with walking trails and a Visitor Center, a three mile driving tour to the lookout over Laguna Atascosa, where any number of species of ducks, including Tree Ducks, and shorebirds may be seen. There is also a fifteen mile driving tour around Pelican Lake (well named) to the shore of the Laguna Madre with Ospreys, pelicans, all species of egrets, Great Blue, Little Blue, Louisanna, Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Herons and Snow Geese by the thousands. In just over two and one half hours we had forty-five species which included an Olive Sparrow (a lifer). Last year we were lucky enough to see several Roseate Spoonbills along the shore of the Laguna Madre--also our first.

Leaving the Rio Grande Valley corridor area and heading north on Highway 77, we come to the Raymondville area, which is the gateway to the valley. There is much good birding in the area. Here are congregated large flocks of geese, Sandhill Cranes and ducks and raptors are everywhere - Harris Hawks, Caracaras, Black Vultures, Turkey Vultures and Kestrel which sit on the wires between nearly every utility pole. Flocks of Bronzed Cowbirds follow the herds of steers that feed on what we consider a meager growth of grass but that is the Texas way. North on Routh 77, approximately sixty miles, is Kingsville, where the famous King Ranch is located. This is an immense ranch off Highway 141, just outside Kingsville and has daily guided tours around the ranch. Birding is excellent and when we passed through on our return trip in April, the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were a dime a dozen. Lorne got a very nice picture of one of them as well as one of a Loggerhead Shrike who was busy performing on the same bit of fence. We would have loved to stay over for the afternoon tour (we were too late for the morning one) but we had reservations in San Antonio for that night so we couldn't wait. Another time, we hope.

Traveling on up Route 77 to Corpus Christi, Rockport and on up the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, one comes to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, which is famous as the wintering grounds for our 137 Whooping Cranes that travel here from the Northwest Territories every fall. These majestic birds, as most birders know, were very close to extinction at one time, but are now beginning to make a comeback. Last year on our way south we traveled to New Orleans and then followed the Louisiana coast of the Gulf of Mexico to south Texas. We made numerous stops along the way for birding, some of them just at the side of the highway to watch thousands of Snow Geese rise, circle and then settle down again. This is truly a fantastic sight and we saw it in many places, both last year and this, as we drove along the gulf and it never ceases to amaze us. Last year we spent a day in the Aransas Refuge and managed to see seven Whooping Cranes from a lookout, but at a great distance--just enough to whet our appetites--so this year we drove up to Rockport and Fulton and stayed overnight--then took Captain Ted's Whooping Crane Tour in the M.V. Skimmer. Now THAT is the way to see Whooping Cranes. There is a cost of \$25. with a guarantee to see some or there is no charge, but it was worth every penny, for we saw 46 species of birds and 26 Whooping Cranes. At one place the Captain pulled the SKimmer within 150 yards of a pair of cranes as they fed and we had an excellent view of them with colourful commentary by the Captain who is a very knowledgeable birder himself. He has been doing these tours for fifteen years and the cranes have got so used to him and others bringing their boats in close that they pay no attention as long as the passengers are quiet. This is a four hour trip, twice daily, leaving from Fulton and runs from November 1 to April. At that time they start their Rookery Island Tours which run to July 1. Another year we hope to take this later tour to twelve rookery islands. We returned to Corpus Christi and took in some more birding at a small refuge off Ennis Joblin Drive right in the city. Corpus Christi is built around a bay and offers lots of marshes and beaches right in the city.

Everywhere one goes in Texas and throughout most of the gulf states there is an endless variety of bird life and in the spring there are fabulous wild flowers and flowering shrubs along every highway except the interstates make the drive delightful. We prefer the byways as we see so much more country and the roads are, on the whole, so much better than the interstates. Granted, there are more cities or towns to go through, but that's where the food and accommodation is to be found. Driving from Natchez, Mississippi via Nashville, Tennessee via the Natches Trace Parkway, just can't be beaten for history, beauty and birds. Cardinals abound in this area, along with the more common migratory birds like robins, grackles, etc.

Of course, Lorne's 'raison d'etre' for spending winters in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas are twofold. First there's golf and then birding, but mine is birding first and last with both of us opting to get out of winter's reach. This year we almost didn't--we had over two months of cold (10°C) and damp. Lorne managed to have only two golf tournaments out of forty cancelled, but we got in a lot of birding, even though I missed six weeks of the coldest weather through illness.

When I returned home from Texas in mid-April I received a newspaper clipping from a friend who is interested in birds. It's a write-up from the **Valley Monitor**, dated April 26, 1992, headlined "Hidden gem to become Wildlife Refuge". It is about El Sal del Rey, a five hundred acre salt lake in northern Hidalgo County, where Pharr and McAllen are located, which has been in private hands for decades and has now been sold and will become another link in the lower Rio Grande Wildlife corridor. Quoting from the **Monitor**: "Water birds of all species strut on stick-like legs as they pluck brine shrimp from the shallow water and the lake has become a winter home to geese, cranes and ducks. Indian tribes used the salt to cure meat and tan hides. In the sixteenth century, Spanish explorer Alvan Nunez Cabeza de Vaca visited the lake during the six years local Indians held him as a slave. He claimed the lake for the King of Spain, who retained rights to the salt long after the land around the lake fell into private ownership."

We look forward to visiting El Sal del Rey on our next trip to the Valley.



NSBS CHICKADEE TROPHY

Herring Gull by Ed Boutilier

REVIEW OF A NEW PUBLICATION

## GRAND MANAN BIRDS

John L. Cohrs

This latest checklist of the birds of Grand Manan archipelago is the work of Brian Dalzell. Many will remember him from his hard work on the breeding bird atlas project. This latest update of the checklist was prepared for the Grand Manan Tourism Association and the copyright is held by them.

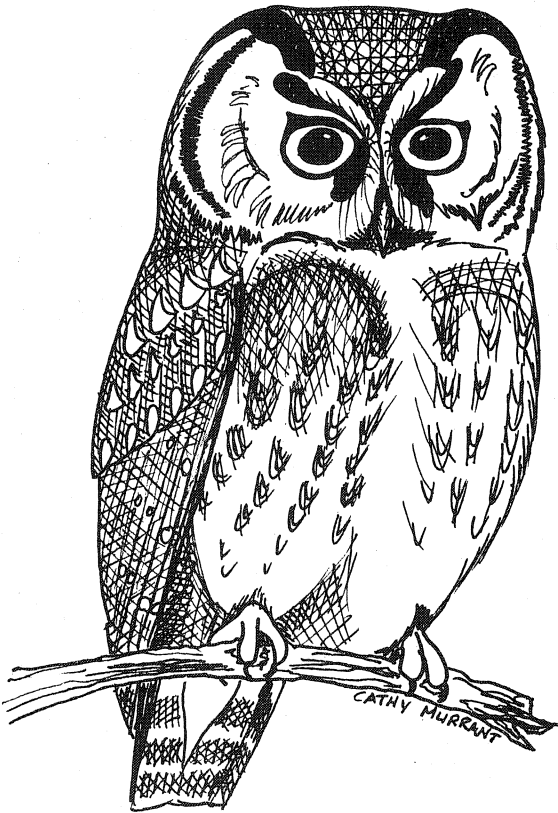
The price is \$4.00 on Grand Manan or \$4.75 by mail from:

Grand Manan Tourism Association  
P.O. Box 193, North Head  
Grand Manan, N.B. CANADA E0G 2M0

If you are planning a trip to Grand Manan, get this publication! It is much more than a checklist, packed in its shirt pocket size, 58 pages, is a description of the islands, a description of the better birding areas with maps, a complete checklist in the familiar bar graph form, a checklist in blank form to enter your own five days of birding, and much, much more. The prose is concise, clear and informative. Would that our politicians could convey one-quarter as much information in even four times as many words. Two thumbs up Brian!

It seems that reviewers must always find something to criticize, but I am hard put to find anything important that can be faulted. I do have one personal note to add. The inclusion of "one-of" sightings like the Northern Wheatear, Sedge Wren, Stonechat, and Ash-throated Flycatcher tend to "pad" a list, confuse a new birder and unfairly raise hopes. Birds that have been seen once, twice, or three times, could really be included in the section headed "Introductions and Exotics".





BOREAL OWL

## LIVING ISLAND - Part VII

by Evelyn Richardson

## The truly "incredibles"...

Then there are the incredibles--an ornithological classification of my own. I don't ask anyone to share my conviction that I saw these birds, yet they are really no more impossible than my white ibis (of which I shall say more later) or Sid's and Betty June's green-tailed towhee at Cape Sable\*, except that these latter observations were backed by collected specimens.

Morrill saw the first incredible, one November afternoon on his way home from gunning. This was before we kept records but after we had Peterson's **Field Guide**, which would make it around 1950. Under a lowering sky the bird was moving along the shore of Kelp Cove with its seaweed insects. As with many strays, the bird was so hungry and tired that Morrill was able to approach it closely. At first he thought that, like gulls we sometimes see, the bird had become entangled in some of the twine-ends about wrecked lobster-traps, and was dragging bits behind it. A closer look showed that the bird's long tail had a deep central split and what had appeared to be dangling twines were the two narrow sections of the drooping tail with their outlining black feathers. When he consulted Peterson's he said that although his bird had been more strongly red, it might have sat for the illustration of the scissor-tailed flycatcher. The range of this bird is Texas and adjoining states, but I was intrigued by Taverner's statement that two of the Canadian records for the scissor-tailed flycatcher came from York Factory on Hudson Bay, and forty years apart!

One of my first, and a well-remembered incredible was the gray kingbird. This flycatcher, which I judged to be larger than a phoebe and smaller than a great-crested, had pale gray (really gray, not one of the indefinite colour-tones we call gray for lack of a more explicit word), scarcely marked upper parts; off-white underparts; a flat thick-billed head which, like the tail, appeared rather large for the rest of the bird. It was sitting motionless on a fence-wire when I caught sight of it, and paid no attention to me as I drew near. Instead of darting out and snatching one of the thin-winged insects that shimmered in the evening light, turning in flight and resuming its perch in flycatcher fashion, this bird launched itself heavily and swooped down into the grass--or rather let itself fall on open wings--as if bearing its victim to the ground. It then flew slowly back to the wire. Was this feeding method used because of exhaustion, or could it be typical of the southern stranger? None of my books was of help, and I've often wondered.

I didn't see the mangrove cuckoo, but I had every faith in Miriam's report (This was in June, 1957, while Hebert and his wife lived in the lighthouse. One late afternoon she arrived at my door rather breathless and urged me to come and corroborate her sighting of a bird about the woodpile. "Longer than a robin but with a breast like a summer robin's. It looks a lot like the yellow-billed cuckoo that stayed about the garden so long, remember?" She also mentioned its "sort of disjointed" stance and declared, "If it's not a mangrove cuckoo, it just isn't in my book!" (Peterson's). Miriam was a farm girl who had known birds all her life, a graduate nurse who would be apt to notice carefully and who had been using binoculars for bird watching since her arrival on Bon Portage. I snatched my glasses and hurried out with her, but the bird was gone, probably slipping away among the reeds near the woodpile. Perhaps I should not mention this incredible, since I did not see it; but in the fall of 1963 when I called upon another bird watcher who lives some ten miles from here across water, she told me she had just been studying a mangrove cuckoo ("black-eared" in her book) about the tree outside her window. Mrs. Smith is a seasoned observer and, remembering Miriam's positive account, I could well believe she had sighted this incredible.

\* May 14, 1953. The second reported in Canada, the other having been recorded in Saskatchewan

I alone saw the Bahama swallow and I didn't really see it, I am now ashamed to admit. A May wind and fog had brought a number of strays and then given way to bright sunlight. On my noon walk I discovered my second wood thrush, under the trees at the foot of the garden, and I spent what remained of my hour watching it, enthralled by its colours in the filtered sunlight, but making sure of every possible identification mark to back up my earlier report of a wood thrush. A tree swallow was sitting only ten feet away on a fence-wire. A multitude of swallows were soaring and calling overhead in the newly cleared sky, but this one sat quietly on its wire. A second glance told me it was an unusual tree swallow—a bit small, with a lighter than ordinary green and blue coat. (Strange how clearly I see it now, though I took no conscious mental notes at the time). This, I told myself, must be one of those interesting individuals which don't run quite true to pattern, and I must watch for it later, after the wood thrush is gone. Of course an island swallow would be around all summer and I would have ample opportunity to study it. Yet I found my eyes straying to it repeatedly between observations of the thrush, as if something about it were nagging for my attention.

At the time I was in what my brother calls "the throes" of housecleaning, and I soon tore myself away. I had just closed the kitchen door behind me and started to kick off my rubber boots, when I was stopped short by a delayed message from my eyes. (I had been blocking it by my engrossment with the wood thrush.) That "pale tree swallow's" tail had been deeply forked, like a barn swallow's. And I had seen that light green-and-blue coat pictured among Peterson's "Florida Specialities." I tore out the door and down the slope, then cautiously crept along towards the fence. But you can guess the sad ending to my story, the wire was empty and I never saw the bird again. My only excuse is that I was then a comparative beginner in the study of strays and was, ironically enough, trying to overcome my tendency to become so interested in all the birds around me that I often failed to note any carefully enough for positive identification. Of course, nobody would have believed me no matter how long I had studied a Bahama swallow. And, anyway, I put it on my list of incredibles.

...Judging by the number of Evelyn's firsts, rarities and incredibles that were later seen and documented by many birdwatchers in the province, some becoming quite usual, my bet is that it WAS a Bahama Swallow..! JSC





## PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

We are pleased to announce the Second Annual Nova Scotia Bird Society Members Photography Competition. In an effort to encourage more entries, slides can now be entered in several categories. These categories are as follows:

1. OPEN:

As the name suggests, in this category anything goes.

2. BACKYARD:

For birds at feeders, birdbaths, nest boxes, or anything else we use to encourage birds to visit our backyards.

3. FLIGHT:

For photos of a bird or birds in flight; the photo should capture the essence of bird flight and movement. Sharp focus may be of secondary importance in this category.

4. BEST RARITY:

For any bird considered rare in Nova Scotia. Rarity will be a factor in the judging but at least some of the identifying field marks should be apparent. In this category the photo must be taken in Nova Scotia.

5. BEST SHOREBIRD:

Everyone should have a good chance at this one, regardless of the equipment you own, since shorebirds are one of our most approachable groups of birds.

6. BEST WARBLER OR VIREO:

From one of the easiest groups to one of the toughest - good luck!

## RULES

1. This competition is open only to members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society.
2. Up to 5 colour slides may be submitted by each photographer. Duplicate slides which will be added to the Society's slide collection would be appreciated. However, if an original slide is entered and the photographer wishes it to be returned, we will do so provided that a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage is included with the entry.
3. It isn't required that the bird be photographed in Nova Scotia, except as noted in the "rarity" category; however, it must be a species that has occurred in Nova Scotia. The bird must have been **in the wild** and not caged or otherwise restrained when photographed.
4. Species winning in previous years are not eligible for the trophy.
5. Photographs must not have been previously submitted in any other NSBS competition.
6. The Nova Scotia Bird Society may copy all entries and use them for educational purposes, publish them in **Nova Scotia Birds** and display them at meetings of the Society, with credit to the photographer. Copyright remains with the photographer.
7. Name and address must be on each slide mount along with the name of the species in the photo. Please enclose a list of slides and indicate in which category each slide is to be entered.

8. Deadline for entries is December 15, 1992. Entries may be hand-delivered at regular monthly meetings or mailed to: Bev Sarty, Site 14A, Box 60, R. R. #4, Armdale, N.S., B3L 4J4.

9. Entries are submitted at the photographer's risk.

10. Entries are accepted only on the above conditions.

#### JUDGING

The International Standard of judging colour slides will be used, which is based on a numerical system of 5 points for each of three judges: 5, 4, 3 and 2 - the "1" is not used.

At least one of the judges will be a well-qualified judge of nature photography and at least one will be a member of the NSBS.

Winners in individual categories will receive an as-yet-to-be-decided award. All entries will automatically be considered for the BEST IN SHOW AWARD, the winner of which will receive the CHICKADEE TROPHY, to be held for one year.

Slides will be shown and the winners' names announced at Members Slide Night in January.



This female Northern Cardinal visiting the Ross feeder on Cape Sable Is., was photographed there by Ian McLaren on January 18, 1992.

TWO PICTURES FROM THE 1991 NSBS PHOTOGRAPHIC CONTEST  
(The Chickadee Trophy)



Chipping Sparrow by Joyce Purchase



Fox Sparrow by Lorris Keizer

## A BIRDWATCHING AND NATURE TRAIL AT WALLACE, N.S.

Wallace Bay is a magnificent natural wildlife area, surrounded by both soft and hardwood land, old farmsteads, swamp, marsh and open fresh and salt water. It is bisected by a road that crosses the bay, and which has a one-way dam or aboiteau through it. This permits the fresh water to escape from the marsh above, but prevents the entry of sea water. The road provides wonderful vistas of open water, cattail marsh, mud flats, forest and bush lands. Apart from this road the area is wilderness, with no dwellings nearby and virtually no traffic. Yet it is only about one kilometer from Route 6, the Sunrise Trail, just west of Wallace, Cumberland County.

The importance of this tract of country was recognized many years ago, and the area has been designated the Wallace Bay National Wildlife Area by the Canadian Wildlife Services, Environment Canada. Citizens of Wallace, aware of the attractiveness of the area for wildlife observation, have begun to improve and develop the area for tourism and for the enjoyment of visitors as well as local residents. The Wallace Area Development Association, together with the Canadian Wildlife Service have now constructed or improved trails through the area for birdwatching and nature observation.

From the aboiteau, a dike has been built and maintained by Ducks Unlimited, which runs for over three kilometers through the marsh. The dike has a beautiful walking trail along its top, which connects with a well-marked woodland trail through spruce and hardwood forest, open farmland, scrub and swamp, returning to the point where the dike trail leaves the road by the aboiteau; a distance of about five kilometers. Several additional side trails to points of special interest are being planned. A parking lot and picnic ground have been built on the roadside at the aboiteau, and trail maps, wildlife and other information will be provided. It is hoped to use student help in the summer to clean and maintain the trails, as well as provide help and information for visitors. Birdwatching observation huts are being constructed so that visitors may watch the magnificent variety of shore and marsh birds without disturbing them. Rustic seats and observation posts will be placed to command special views, and bridges or boardwalks have been built over streams and marshes.

This area has been a favourite spot for birding for years. Nova Scotia Bird Society bird walks have visited the area annually for several years and a marvelous variety of species has been recorded here, including several rarities. Rails and bitterns nest in the marsh. Great Blue Herons abound, and Little Blue and Tricolour Herons have been observed. Bald Eagles and Ospreys nest nearby and can be seen hunting almost every day. Other raptors include N. Harriers, Kestrels, Merlins, Cooper's, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks. In July the mud flats are covered with feeding shore birds making their first "fueling stop" on their way to the other end of the world. The great variety of ecosystems and the many boundaries ensure that there are many warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers and other field and woodland birds. Seabirds also abound, including gulls, cormorants and terns, and several varieties of ducks nest or feed in the marshes or on the mudflats.

The Wallace Bay Nature/Wildlife Trail promises to be a world class birdwatching facility. Visitors are always welcome. A sign on the Sunrise Trail between Wallace and Pugwash will point the way down to the parking lot. The trails are well marked so that you will not go astray. If you do not want to do the whole loop, a short stroll, either along the dike trail, much of which is sheltered by shrubs and small trees, or through the woodland trail, will provide a wonderful experience. Plants and points of interest will be labelled, and hints about watching the wildlife will be available. Animals, reptiles, insects and plants are all as interesting to watch as birds, and this area is rich in all wildlife. Come and enjoy it!

Tony Bidwell

## ENGLAND IN JANUARY

Marion and Keith Allesbrook



Black-headed Gulls, Bedford, England--photo Allesbrooks

The letter from Mike-Anketell-Jones in the January 1992, issue of **Nova Scotia Birds** was of particular interest to us. Although we grew up in England, we did not take up birding until we came to Canada. Consequently we regret all the missed birding opportunities both living in Britain and touring Europe and North Africa. We even used to live so close to Slimbridge that we would cycle there just for a day out and a picnic!

Recently, however, we made an unplanned two-week visit to see our families in England. Although this was not primarily a birding trip, we made do with limited time (daylight hours are shorter in England in winter than in Nova Scotia), and the few available nearby birding sites.

Our first trip was to a book store where we bought both **The New Where to Watch Birds** by John Gooders, updated in 1986, and some field guides. We came to prefer the Collins **New Generation Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe**, which had colour paintings of each bird at different ages, sexes, and seasons opposite the distribution map. The main drawback is that it was two books in one (and actually boasted about it on the back cover!). The field guide section was less than half the book--there were also interesting sections on the evolution, life and ecology of birds. As always, the discrepancy in common bird names was confusing, so we had to resort to Latin names to compare British names with ours.

We spent a day in East Anglia doing the Ouse Washes. The Washes traditionally flood in February and March. Even in January there had been early flooding, so birds were present. There were nine different hides and a feeder around Purls Bridge, where we saw many Eurasian Wigeon, a flock of 10 Fieldfares, a Redwing, Song Thrush, Blue and Great Tits, Eurasian Goldfinches and Eurasian Siskins. The fields nearby hosted hundreds of Northern Lapwing.

After an excellent pub lunch at Purls Bridge, we headed to Welney, where we were allowed to use the Members' Observatory (a heated hide with chairs and picture windows) where we saw a beautiful male Mandarin Duck in breeding plumage in close view, as well as several thousand Bewick's Swan (a subspecies of our Tundra Swan), many Eurasian Wigeon, Pochard and Tufted Duck and a few Shelduck and Eurasian Teal.

We also visited Priory Country Park in Bedford, which covers 228 acres, 80 acres of which are water. It is a new reserve created to attract wildlife, made by flooding gravel pits to "provide passive enjoyment". It included a hide, fishing and water sports. Since we were there in winter, the main activity was walking dogs. The winter waterfowl were good, particularly numerous Great Crested Grebes (who were starting to dance) and seven Grey Herons. There were landbirds in the bushes too, including Reed Buntings, Collared Doves, Bullfinches and Dunnock.

In Sheffield our only trip was to some gardens and ponds where we fed Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Pochard, etc. This also gave us an unexpected Ferruginous Duck, a Least Grebe and some Egyptian Geese. A walk in a cemetery yielded a flock of 50 Redwings--we are not used to seeing such a large flock of thrushes.



European Robin, Sheffield, England--photo Allesbrooks

We finally managed to find the RSPB reserve at Sandy, Beds., despite hopeless directions in the guide. There were hides, feeders and nature trails. Many birds were singing, even in mid-January, so it seemed like spring.

All in all, considering the circumstances, our trip list was a respectable 58 (N. American names in parentheses):

Red-throated Diver (Loon)	Little Grebe (Least)
Great Crested Grebe	Cormorant (Great)
Grey Heron	Canada Goose
Greylag	Shelduck
Egyptian Goose	Mallard
Wigeon (Eurasian)	Pintail (Northern)
Shoveler	Pochard
Tufted Duck	Teal (Eurasian Green Wing Teal)
Greater Scaup	Mandarin Duck
Mute Swan	Bewick Swan
Hen Harrier (Northern)	Kestrel (Eurasian)
Pheasant (Ring-necked)	Moorhen (previously Common Gallinule)
Coot (Eurasian)	Lapwing (Northern)
Black-headed Gull (Common)	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Common Gull (Mew)	Herring Gull
Collared Dove	Wood Pigeon
Rock Dove	Pied Wagtail
Wren (Northern)	Dunnock
Robin (Winter)	Blackbird (Eurasian)
Fieldfare	Song Thrush
Redwing	Mistle Thrush
Coal Tit	Great Tit
Blue Tit	Long-tailed Tit
Treecreeper (Northern)	Jay (Eurasian)
Magpie (Black-billed)	Rook
Carrion Crow	Starling (European)
House Sparrow	Chaffinch (Common)
Goldfinch (European)	Siskin (Eurasian)
Reed Bunting	

Refs: **Collins New Generation Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe**, 1987, C. Perrins

**A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe**, 1983, R. Peterson, G. Mountford and P. Hollom

**The New Where to Watch Birds**, 1991, J. Gooders

Marion and Keith Allsebrook



Waterfowl at Walney, England--photo Allsebrooks

## A PLEA FOR CLOSER OBSERVATIONS OF GREAT BLUE HERONS

In my earlier article on our Little Egrets (**Nova Scotia Bird**, July 1969, p. 42-43), I suggested that we should also be on the lookout for Gray Herons. These close relatives of our Great Blues have, like Little Egrets, been found in recent years in the Caribbean region, probably having arrived from Africa. Like our Little Egrets, these displaced Gray Herons could be making annual migrations to our region.

The trouble is, as Bill Smith noted in a recent article on their occurrence on Barbados (**American Birds**, 1990, Vol. 5, p. 1096), there "is no good treatise on separating these two species" ( i.e., Gray from Great Blue). The difference almost always given (apart from the smaller average size and paler plumage of the Gray Heron, which may only be evident on direct comparison) is presence of cinnamon-to-rufous feathering on the "thighs" (feathered upper tibia) and leading edges of the wings in the Great Blue, not found in the Gray Heron. The usual brownish-rufous cast of the neck plumage of Great Blues, generally distinct from the paler gray of the Gray Heron, is not always present. Immature plumages are tricky. The difficulty is illustrated by a heron that I observed on Sable Island between May 28 and June 43, which I had been casually "ticking" as a Great Blue. Then, about two hours before I had to leave the island, I saw it sitting somewhat closer than usual in full sun, and was impressed by its grayness and by its off-white "thighs". I stalked it as best I could, and got a few poorish pictures at 150+ m, and one closer one as it flew by. The slides show no obvious rufous on either "thighs" or forewings, although the former seem somewhat ivory in tone. Particularly striking were two large white patches in the carpal area of the forewing, which appeared almost like "headlamps" in the field. Interestingly, such patches are frequently shown on paintings and photographs of the Gray Heron, but among illustrations of Great Blue Herons scanned by me, only that of a flying bird in the new Peterson guide seems to show them, although not so prominently as in the Sable bird. The bird also had dark tarsi with some yellow on the bare tibia. This is stressed as the usual colouring in serious descriptions of the Gray Heron, but leg colour is variously and inadequately given in descriptions of Great Blues. I judge from its rather dingy cap with a paler gray crown, with limited blackish on sides and underneck, that the bird was in basic I or first summer plumage, perhaps about a year old.

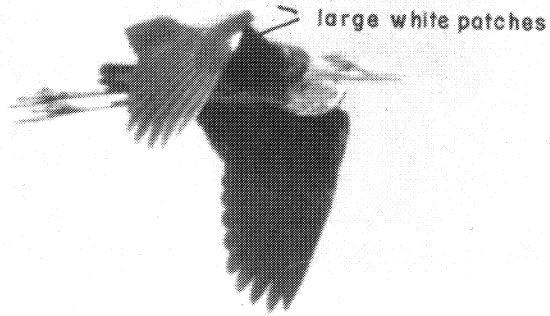
Was the Sable Island bird North America's first Gray Heron? I don't know. Experts may help decide from my slides, but in the meanwhile, we should all be alerted to the possibilities. More information on Great Blues would be easy to get and very useful. Here I pose some things which you should check out whenever you get really good views of a Great Blue Heron (or what appears to be a Gray!)

1. Try to determine age of the bird (adults have white crowns and black eyestripes, juveniles have all-dark caps, and immatures have grayish crowns on the dark cap).
2. If possible, note its size and paleness (beware of differing light conditions) in comparison with other Great Blues.
3. Precisely what are colour of bare parts of the legs?
4. What are the limits of "fading" of the cinnamon-to-rufous on the thighs and forewings of young and adult Great Blues? Do off-white extremes ever occur?
5. Do large "headlamps" like those on the Sable Island bird occur regularly in Great Blues?

I would be very pleased to receive any of your observations on such matters.

IAM, photo editor





## NOTES

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