

Nova Scotia Birds

A Quarterly Publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society



Summer 2001
(The Birds of Spring)



NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

Executive 2000-2001

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Formed in 1955, the Nova Scotia Bird Society is a member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists and the Canadian Nature Federation. The activities of the Society are centered on the observation and study of the bird life of this province and the preservation of habitat.

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Reporting Deadlines

Winter 2002 issue: Dec. 7, 2001

Spring 2002 issue: Mar. 7, 2002

Summer 2002 issue: June 7, 2002

Fall 2001 issue: Aug. 7, 2001

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- NAMC Results
- Nesting Boxes - Special Section
- Spring Seasonal Reports
- Trip Reports
- Parasite Research - Tree Swallows
- Book Reviews

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Cover Photo: Bird houses are not only fun to build and monitor, they have conservation value as well. The Eastern Bluebird is listed as "sensitive" in Nova Scotia, so nest boxes may be an important factor in their recovery. [Photo Blake Maybank; Urbana, Hants Co. 1989]

NOVA SCOTIA BIRDS
SUMMER 2001

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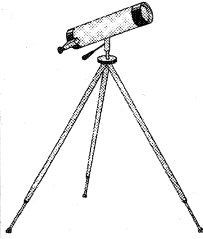
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Cost of the publication of this periodical is partially borne by the Nova Scotia Museum.

ISSN 0383-9537. Publications Mail
Reg. No. 09838.

Published four times a year.

The Spotting Scope



Nest boxes...I built my first one as a Cub Scout way back in the early 70's. My dad put it up on the maple tree in our front yard and *bingo!* I got Tree Swallows that first year. I didn't know that they were Tree Swallows at the time, and I don't remember much about the birds themselves. What I do remember is taking apart the box at the end of the summer to see what had been left behind. It took more than 15 years for me to build my next bird boxes, and I got Starlings, House Sparrows and once again, Tree Swallows. Pretty dismal considering I was trying for American Kestrels and Mountain Bluebirds (no, I didn't live in Nova Scotia at the time).

In this issue we're happy to bring you several articles pertaining directly or indirectly to nest boxes, and some tips on how to build and locate them. You'll find several nest box designs in this issue and elsewhere, from the elegant to the utilitarian. We've also provided a list of resources where more information on nest boxes can be obtained. I'm also very happy to be bringing you articles written by a variety of members. My thanks to all of you for helping to make this issue so diverse, with special thanks to first time contributors.

By no means is this topic exhausted given the contents of this issue. I look forward to hearing about your bird house adventures, and seeing your photographs. Attention Listers! By my count, we have 19 species in this province which are known to use nest boxes, and several more that use artificial nesting platforms (e.g. Common Loon, Osprey). How many of them have nested in your nest boxes?

Working with nest boxes can be a rewarding past time, whether you've got one box in the garden or a so-called nest box trail in the country. It can also be frustrating if your target species is being elusive, say when you put out 30 nest boxes for Bluebirds (for example), get none for three years (for example), then find a pair breeding in the backyard of someone who has no clue as to the significance of the event (grumble, grumble, grumble... not that I'm speaking from personal experiences or anything). This summer, a pair of Bluebirds raised their family in Canso, *totally* disregarding the daily laundry flapping next to their house, *completely* disregarding the kids playing in the yard, and *absolutely* disregarding the 38 tents (almost 100 campers!) that camped out in that very yard for the duration of the Stan Rodgers Festival! But get a picture of them? Oh no...for that, they flew away (grumble, grumble, grumble).

This is my first issue with a theme, and over the next years of *Nova Scotia Birds*, I think we'll have the odd thematic issue. Got an idea for a theme (birding hotspots, thrushes, rails, trains, pelagics)...let me know. Until the next issue, good birding...

Randy

P.S. Our recent membership drive, directed at having previous members re-subscribe, resulted in a boost in our membership, now standing at approximately 435. Welcome back!

P.P.S. We have dived head first into our library of photographs for this issue, they are interspersed with recent submissions from members. Please keep those photos coming!



Nova Scotia Piping Plover Guardian Program - Update

By Anna McCarron
Program Co-ordinator

First I wish to thank the editor for providing this space for what I hope to be a regular, informative piece for those concerned about the Piping Plover. The Spring issue explained the goal of the Nova Scotia Piping Plover Guardian Program so I will not go into that again. Here's an update since I became the program co-ordinator in January.

Piping Plovers arrived in Nova Scotia during the first week of April; the first report to the Guardian program was by Sylvia Fullerton on April 6 from Cherry Hill Beach. On April 7, Terry Paquet reported that at Keji's Seaside Adjunct there were two pairs of Piping Plover "plucking abundant worms from the sand".

The 2001 International Piping Plover Breeding Census took place June 3 - 16. Official results are not yet available, but I am happy to say, unofficially, that there are at least 46 nesting pairs of Piping Plovers reported by guardians and the Department of Natural Resources staff. This is an increase of five pairs from last season's report in the November 2000 issue of the *Piping Plover Guardian Newsletter*.

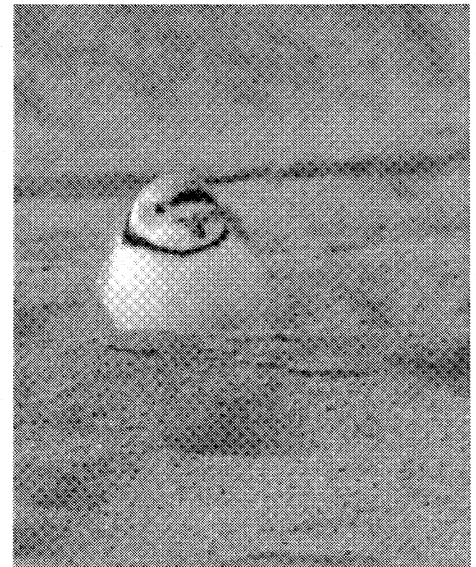
The Piping Plover banding program is now in its third season. Watching the professionals at work has given me great comfort in this sometimes-controversial process. The handling of the birds and the calculated steps taken to ensure minimal disturbance to these birds has calmed my concerns for their well-being. I am convinced that the wealth of information gained by this process will help to protect them. Many questions are being answered in addition to the many more arising. Guardians can help too. If you spot a banded Piping Plover, try to provide as much detail about which legs the bands are on, when and where it was spotted, etc. to the Canadian Wildlife Service at 1-506-364-5044.

Piping Plover recovery efforts are getting a helping hand from a number of students from Antigonish to Yarmouth Counties. Gabriel Benoit was hired to help implement the Important Bird Area project in the Pomquet area. He, along with many guardians in the area have been doing a superb job of guarding two pairs and their six chicks at Pomquet Beach. (*Editor's note:* a third pair with four chicks was discovered after the official census). Julie McKnight, who has just finished her Masters degree and her assistant Amy Marsters, are very busy with the Department of Natural Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service keeping track of - at last count - 41 breeding pairs of Piping Plover in the South shore region! Also in the South Shore region, two youths have been hired, thanks to the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour's Youth Conservation Corps program. Jessica Butler and Erica Stoddart began on July 3 conducting Nova Scotia Piping Plover Guardian Program activities in the Barrington and Cape Sable region. Their office, graciously loaned to them by the Barrington Municipality complete with display in the front foyer, is open during business hours through July and August at 2401 Highway #3 - just across from the Post Office in Barrington Head. Life guards are helping out with the guardian program as well, as part of their community service mandate. Many of their materials will be financially supported by the James L. Baillie Fund (from Bird Studies Canada).

Many thanks to volunteer guardians who have worked so hard, and are continuing to do so to protect the Piping Plover. In particular, the Guardians co-ordinators, Grant Milroy (Shelburne) and James Hirtle, (Lunenburg and Queens) have been doing a great job in seeing that guardians get out to specific beaches - all on their own time! As you may or may

not be aware, about 90% of the Nova Scotia Piping Plover population breeds along the coast in Shelburne, Queens and Lunenburg Counties. If you spend any time on the beaches in these areas and would like to help protect Piping Plover please contact us - we could use your help! Call (902) 860-1263 or email plover@istar.ca. A very special thanks to Etta Parker who has provided me with so many materials, advice, moral support, and the list goes on - thank you Etta!

Finally, here's a wonderful success story from another tireless volunteer guardian, Terry Paquet: "Today at Martinique Beach the four young (now upgraded to immature plovers) were present with only one adult seen. While I watched the birds were attacked by two hungry looking Herring Gulls and took flight easily out-manoeuvring the slower gulls they circled round and landed down the beach where they were joined after a minute by the adult. Voila! - four fledged birds now capable of taking care of themselves. A 100% fledge rate." ☺



An adult Piping Plover sitting in an ATV? tire track.

NSBS Annual General Meeting

The Nova Scotia Bird Society Annual General Meeting will be held in the Auditorium, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, at 7:30 p.m., 25 October, 2001. A wine and cheese reception will follow the meeting, a great opportunity to meet and mingle. ☒

Report of the Nominating Committee

The following have agreed to serve on the Executive for 2001-2002, if elected at the AGM:

President	Andy Horn
Vice President	David Curry
Past President	Gisèle d'Entremont
Treasurer	Bernice Moores
Secretary	Peter Ackerman
Membership Secretary	Mary McLaren
Director	Joan Czapalay
Director	Barbara Hinds
Director	Peter Richard

The following have agreed to serve for 2001-2002, if appointed at the AGM:

Honorary Solicitor	Tony Robinson
Honorary Auditor	Harold Forsyth

The Editor in Chief of *Nova Scotia Birds* (appointed by the Executive) is a *de facto* member of the Executive.

Further nominations from the floor will be accepted at the AGM. It is suggested that the Directors be willing to serve for several years in order to gain experience and move on to other positions. ☒

Sylvia J. Fullerton - Chair
25 June 2001

Nova Scotia Bird Society November Meeting

Mark your calendars...it's time to plan for the yearly "out-of-Metro" meeting of the Nova Scotia Bird Society. This year, the meeting will be held November 23rd, 2001, with field trips on the 24th. The meeting will take place at 8:00 in room 237 of J. Bruce Brown Hall, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish. We are very pleased to have as the guest speaker Dr. Tony Erskine of the Canadian Wildlife Service, best known to birders as the author of *Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Maritime Provinces*. The field trip(s) will survey the birds of the Northumberland Strait and its harbours, with stops at all of the best birding spots, including Ogdens Pond, home of the "inland" Gannets. For more information, please contact Randy Lauff at 867-2471 or rlauff@stfx.ca. ☒

Errata:

In the last issue, conflicting Iceland Gull data were given. In the seasonal report, the count of 550 Iceland Gulls on the Northport CBC is erroneous; the count of 25 Iceland (and 550 *Herrings*) in the CBC summary for Northport is correct. Sorry for any inconvenience. ☒

North American Migration Count - May 12, 2001

By Judy Tufts
NS Coordinator for NAMC

After a night of patchy drizzle and temps around 5 °C, many of us rose to some fog and a few isolated showers before birding really got underway for our count day. Through the morning, clouds broke bringing sunny periods to many areas. However, Pict. Co. had to contend with poor visibility for the day while CB Co. was plagued with drizzle. Winds were northerly light. Highs 9 -15 °C, Lows 3 - 5 °C. Antigonish County was unable to participate this year. Thirty-two people went owling, 385 people were in the field, 49 took up stationary watches, and 393 spent time watching feeders! Results : 217 species, and 119,831 individual birds counted.

Before I give some of the day's highlights I wish to express my appreciation to all who participated in this year's North American Migration Count on Saturday, 12 May 2001. You all deserve great credit for a wonderful day's effort in securing another successful provincial count. Special kudos go out to all the county-coordinators and area-reps who organized their areas. Many, like Susann Myers, worked diligently through very long hours, to put together wonderful coverage of their counties. Additional thanks go to Bob McDonald who undertook to become the new coordinator for Hfx. Co., with great results.

Some rarities were recorded which always adds extra zest to the final results. Who would have dreamed that a Black-tailed Gull or a Whimbrel of the Eurasian nominate race, would be tallied in Cape Breton? The heron family was represented by a Tri-coloured Heron (Lingan Bay, CB Co.), a Great Egret (Pict. Co.) and a Glossy Ibis (Upper Woods Hbr., Shel. Co.). An unusual but impressive spring flight of Broad-wings, to which a Red-shouldered Hawk attached itself, was a good find on Brier I. Turkey Vultures appeared not only on Brier I. (15) but also in Yarmouth (four), and singles in Anna. and Vic. counties. Four Caspian Terns were noted, two in Sheet Harbour, Hfx. Co., one each in Cum. and Inv. Cos. Six species of owl were recorded but the saddest was that of a young Snowy Owl - found by a DNR team from Lawrencetown, Anna Co. - being harassed by crows on count day but found dead the next day, from what appeared to be starvation (there was no apparent injury).

Four new species were added to our provincial list this year - Great Crested Flycatcher (Coldbrook, Kings Co.), two Whip-poor-wills (Hfx. Co.), Vesper Sparrow (Kings Co.) and Dovekie (Shel. Co.). Other interesting species of note - and a very colourful assortment they are: Summer Tanager (Sydney River), two Scarlet Tanagers, three Orchard Orioles (two on Brier I., one on CSI) and 22 Baltimore Orioles (Shel. Co. held 11), four E. Bluebirds (Brier I. area and Cum. Co.); and on Cape Sable I. birders found two Indigo Buntings, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and a pair of Am. Oystercatchers. From Sable I. came word of one Yellow-billed Cuckoo and a Peregrine Falcon (another was spotted in Cum. Co.). In Yar. Co. a Red-bellied Woodpecker came to a backyard feeder; singles of Wood Thrush, Brown Thrasher and Blue Grosbeak was tallied on Seal I., two Northern Shrikes, five Com. Redpolls, and four Horned Larks lingered elsewhere.

This year we recorded the highest number of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds - the jewel of summer gardens - that we have ever counted in a NAMC with 146 (Kings Co. tallied 37); last year there were 124. Up until two years ago we barely tallied a dozen in any spring count. They obviously were in a rush to get here!

Twenty-two species of warblers were seen with 25-50% higher numbers recorded in many of the species (2,911 Yellow-rump Warblers alone !). Other species also showed definite signs of abundance! Ninety Least Flycatchers quadrupled their numbers over last year's migrants while twice as many Blue-headed Vireos were notched. Generally, sparrows increased their representation with Song Sparrows leading the way with 3,237. A high of 136 White-crowned Sparrows were found; an unexpected visitor was a Field Sparrow at a feeder on CSI. Mockingbirds have definitely taken a strong toe-hold in Kings Co. with 18 of the 25 registered in that county - I heard of one nest with two nestlings in Kentville - but surprisingly, numbers of Cardinals (12) seen around the province did not represent the true number currently in the province or did they? Maybe they are just too shy or too busy with nests to appear? House Finches were well down (13)...is that an indication of fewer members of this species in the province or just that they were not visible that day ?

All in all, most birders found this an exceptional day for this spring count. Weather cooperated in most areas and there were plenty of warblers to add song and interest while hunting for other species. ☺

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Oxford Purple Martins

Article and Artwork by Ross Hall

In 1987 Con Desplanque compiled a report on Purple Martins in Cumberland County. At that time there were four active colonies in Amherst. One active colony was at Collingwood and an active colony at the Department of Natural Resources office at Oxford. This year, it appears that only one colony remains in Amherst and the Oxford colony persists, too.

The maintenance of Purple Martin houses requires a lot of work and credit must be given to persons that do this. A year's neglect and the colony can be lost. Rod MacDougall has maintained the Amherst colony. He reports this year 40 to 50 pairs and believes his colony is increasing. He reports some problems with Merlins and raccoons. Twelve to fourteen years ago he remembers a particularly hard spring when 125 Martins were picked up dead.

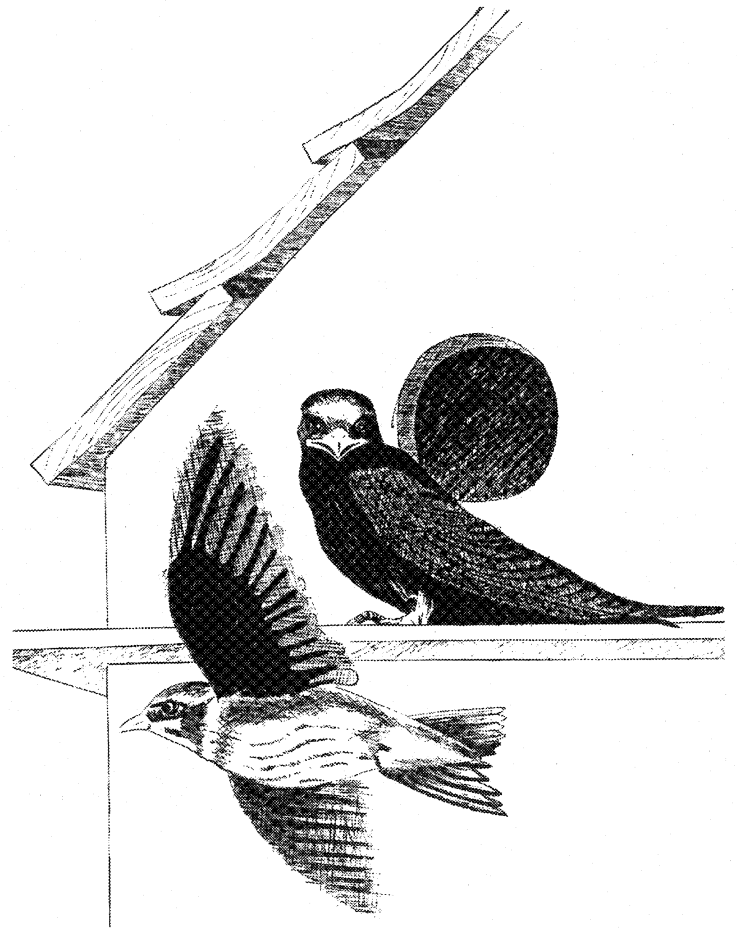
The Oxford DNR houses were first established in 1971. At this time there were two other colonies in Oxford and the house at one colony was in disrepair. It was not until 1973 that the birds moved into the DNR houses. The following year had a period of cold and snowy weather that caused the death of thousands of warblers and swallows but somehow the DNR colony survived and since that time has been the only Purple Martin colony is Oxford.

Brian Brown was the wildlife Ranger at Oxford at that time. The Oxford colony expanded with an estimated 300-400 adult and fledged young at the peak. Brian remembers counting 270 martin on an antenna, a day before they all left on their southward migration. It is thought that the start of a colony at Collingwood was the result of overflow from Oxford.

Record keeping has been sporadic over the years although recently a binder is kept at the Oxford DNR office to record annual observations. The years 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1994 have records of 41, 31, 19 and 19 nests. First arrival date in 1994 was April 28th. During the week of August 10-14, 1992 all martins had left. Numbers of nests from 1997 to 2001 appear to be in the six to 15 range so the colony is not strong. Arrival dates in 1997, 1998 and 2000 were May 5, May 10 and May 2. Departure dates were August 13, 14 and 18.

An innovation at Oxford is a heated compartment. Set on a timer, the compartment is heated from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. until the last frost in June.

In 1985, Oxford was the site of an exciting discovery. The previous winter several hundred thousand Purple martin were marked with a special ink as they flew near their roosts in



Southern Brazil. The ink is colourless in normal light, but can be detected under ultraviolet light. Requests were made to forward the wings from any salvaged dead Purple Martins. The researchers were very excited with the collection of a marked bird from Oxford and another from Stettler, Alberta. The two Canadian sites were 2,250 miles apart but the birds were marked at sites 100 miles apart at Barretos and Araraquara.

If anyone has knowledge of additional colonies please let me know.

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Editor's note: The Purple Martin is provincially listed as a code Yellow species, meaning the population is currently sensitive to human or natural events. Threats to populations include competition with the House Sparrow and European Starling, both of which were introduced into North America. See the URLs and books listed in *Resources for Birdhousers* elsewhere in this issue for plans on building your own Martin house.

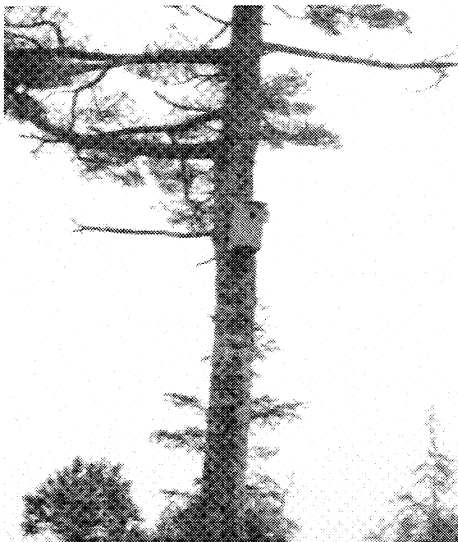
Kestrel Boxes

By Billy Digout and Trevor Wilkie

One day Trevor Wilkie of DNR St. Peters read an article on Kestrel boxes in *N.S. Conservation*. After consulting with fellow DNR staff in Parrsboro and Bible Hill, who have had experience with Kestrel boxes, he decided to give it a try. So, he got some scrap lumber, built some boxes and contacted Billy Digout, a local birder with good knowledge of the area. The two men got together one weekend in late March 1999, found some shavings for the boxes and headed out to some potential Kestrel habitat in the St. Peters area. With an extension ladder, an axe, rope and various accessories, they were able to put out seven boxes, ranging from 3.5 to about 6 meters off the ground. After acquiring landowner permission, the boxes were placed on abandoned utility poles or in trees with the openings facing in a southeast direction in or on the edge of fields, where Kestrels like to roam looking for mice and insects.

Around mid-June they returned to check the boxes, and found one occupied by Tree Swallows, two by Starlings, and one by the target species, the American Kestrel. The others showed no sign of activity.

The following spring, Trevor and Billy returned to clean out the boxes and put in fresh shavings. They also put up an additional box. This time when they



A typical nest box placement, high and in the open. [Photo Billy Digout]



Trevor Wilkie, Terry Power, and Mark Pulsifer banding some of the nestling Kestrels. [Photo Billy Digout]

checked in June, two boxes were inactive, two Starling families were found, along with FOUR Kestrel nests. One of the inactive boxes was removed to be relocated the following spring. At the same time, inquiries were made as to the possibility of a banding program.

This year (2001) an additional four boxes were placed out, again in the St. Peters area and the original boxes were again cleaned out and refreshed with new shavings. This time when the boxes were checked, FIVE Kestrel families had taken up residence. On July 6th, DNR biologist Mark Pulsifer, accompanied by Trevor and Billy along with fellow DNR biologist Terry Power came to St. Peters where he sexed and banded 25 Kestrel chicks as part of an ongoing project.

Interestingly enough, each active nest contained five chicks. The chicks ranged in size from having only a few permanent feathers in some boxes to being nearly fledged in others. Also, the boxes used the year before were used again this time. Although we have only been doing this for three years, it seems that the best results are obtained when the boxes are placed in hardwood trees.

One was successful in a lone Pine tree, another on an abandoned utility pole, both out in the middle of a field. Some food items found in and around the boxes were a meadow vole and a partially eaten green snake.

Eventually, we would like to have 20 boxes placed in the area, (a reasonable number to maintain), and try some boxes for other species, such as Wood Duck and Barred Owl. ♪



The young KESTRELS in the nest. [Photo Billy Digout]

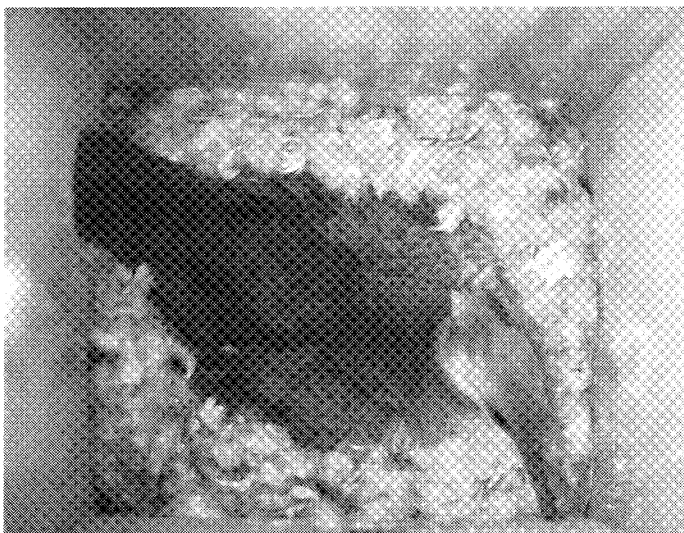
Notes on Artificial Nest Sites

By Bernard Forsythe

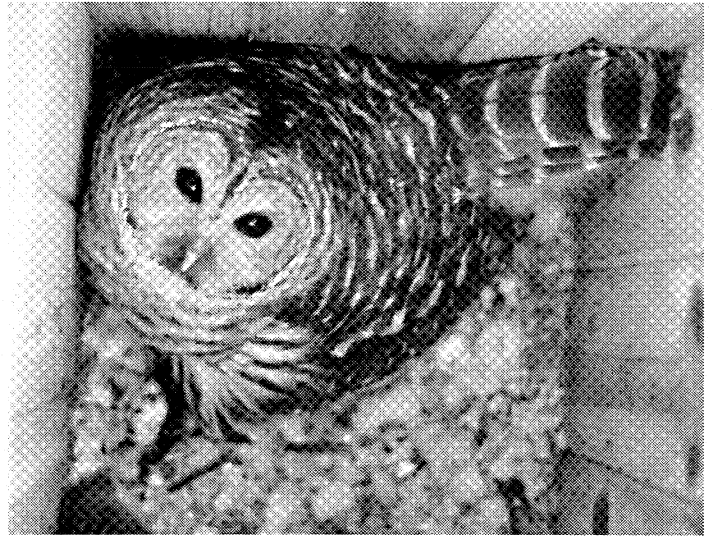
Many people have a swallow nestbox or two in their yards. With a little trial and error it is possible to attract a wide variety of birds and other animals to man-made nest sites. We have lost most of our old growth woods with their natural cavities and woodpecker holes. Nest boxes placed in young woodlots enable species requiring cavities to live in a new habitat. Some of my boxes in second growth woods around farms have been used by Barred Owls for more than twenty years. For various reasons, several boxes have been relocated, but the owls will move as well to the new sites. They stay in young woods because of the plentiful food supply while nest boxes provide a place to raise their young. A word of caution – do not visit an owl nest without wearing a helmet. Barred Owls soon lose their fear of humans and will sometimes attack as the nest tree is being climbed.

Although I refer to several books for tips on nest box sizes, I soon learned cavity nesters are usually not fussy. Black-capped Chickadees will move into Tree Swallow boxes. Wood Ducks, Common and Hooded Mergansers have all nested in my owl boxes with square entrance holes. Some of these boxes used by ducks are a considerable distance from water and thirty or more feet above the ground. Several times I have looked into a large duck box and found a Tree Swallow incubating eggs in a back corner of the box. Once I put up a box that was the suggested size for Great Crested Flycatcher where a family group was seen the previous summer. A pair of Flickers used it. Experiment with various box sizes and locations and you will be pleasantly surprised.

Nesting platforms will also be used. Over the years, Great Horned Owls, Long-eared Owls, and Bald Eagles have used



Fem. HOODED MERGANSER on nest, Mud Lake Bog, Kings Co. May 22, 1995. [Photo Bernard Forsythe]



BARRED OWL in nest box, Kings Co. May 19, 1987. [Photo Bernard Forsythe]

several platforms I have constructed. As well as birds, a wide variety of other animals have used my nest sites including racoon, porcupine, red and flying squirrel, and deer mice.

Seeing one's nest constructing efforts being utilized by wildlife is always rewarding. Each year I look forward to my nest site visits to learn if old friends have returned. This year one duck box contained eighteen eggs being incubated by a Hooded Merganser (the eggs probably were laid by more than one female). Later I saw the new mother being followed by sixteen young she had hatched in my box. At a box fifteen feet up in a pine tree, I counted eleven Common Merganser eggs while the female was off feeding. Just as I started to climb down, I turned and saw the female flying right at me, swing up just over my head and straight into the box without stopping.

A pair of Barred Owls have nested in our back yard for ten years. They come to my owl feeding platform during the winter and spring. The male was banded as an adult and is at least seventeen years old. Many birders have visited us to learn more about Barred Owls. I would encourage all to try constructing a few artificial nest sites. It will greatly add to your enjoyment of the wildlife around you.

References:

Kress, S.W. 1986. *The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds*. Collier MacMillan Canada, Inc.

Layton, R.B. 1977. *Thirty Birds that will build in Bird Houses*. Nature Book Publishers. ☞

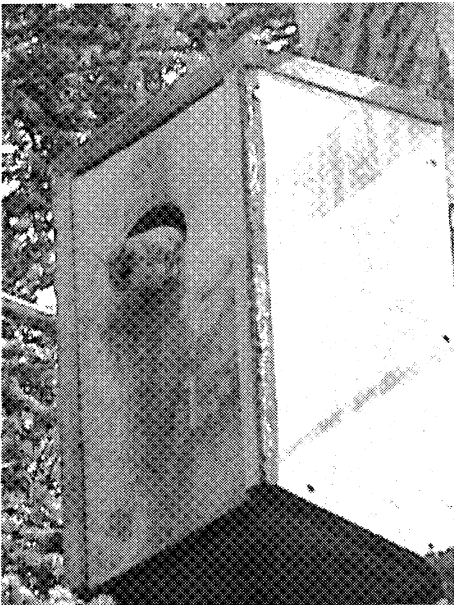
Unexpected Inhabitants

By Randy Lauff

When a nest box is erected, the person doing so generally has a target species in mind. For instance, several Society members have nest boxes set up for Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls, many have Tree Swallow nest boxes, and some of the more adventurous are trying for Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Bluebirds, and Common Goldeneye.

Clearly, an empty box is disappointing. Worse though is inhabitation by the introduced European Starlings and House Sparrows, which are competitors with our native species, and should not be encouraged to nest. However, there are a variety of nontarget species that are often found inhabiting nest boxes, some of them welcome, some of them downright scary!

Probably one of the cutest nontarget species is the "Gund[®]" of Nova Scotia's forests, the Flying Squirrels. We have two species in the province, the Southern, whose known range is largely restricted to Kejimikujik National Park and two sites in Kings Co., and the



This Flying Squirrel appears to find this nest box to be suitable accommodation. [Photo Don MacLaughlin]

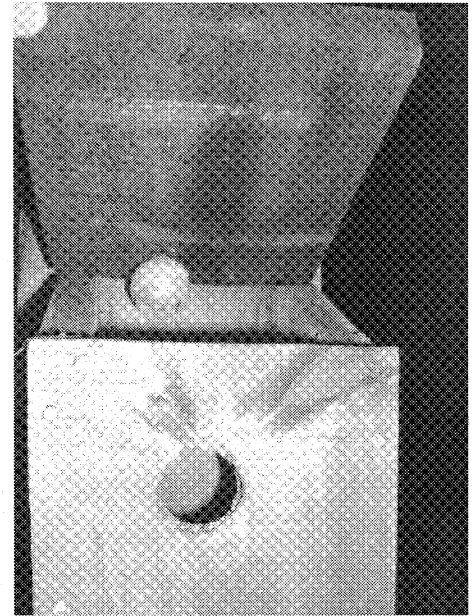
Northern, distributed from one end of the Province to the other. Red Squirrels and Deer Mice are rodents that opportunistically use nest boxes as well.

The larger owl boxes can be home to other mammals, too. Raccoons have been known to use them, and no one would be disappointed if an American Marten took up residence. This member of the weasel family is red-listed in the province, meaning that it is known to be, or thought to be at risk of extirpation.

A variety of insects and other arthropods find the shelter of a nest box inviting. Funnel webs have adorned entrance holes, and cob webs have filled the interior of some boxes, both types from spiders hoping for a meal. If the nest box was used in a previous year, you may find that a queen bumble bee has made her home within the old nesting material. Perhaps this is all the convincing you need to clean out the nest box at the end of the breeding season? Arguably, the most nerve-wracking inhabitants of nest boxes are the wasps. There's nothing quite like the feeling you get when you lift the lid and see a wasp nest suspended from it!

What does one do about uninvited guests? Typically, the nest boxes can be cleaned out on a cold day in late fall or later, after many hard frosts. This will ensure that no more stinging insects are able to come after you, and all rodent breeding will be done. Still, approach with due caution as flying squirrels will winter in family groups within a nest box. If you're so inclined, you can clean out the old nest material so the boxes will be parasite-free for the spring.

And let us know about your nest box successes (expected or unexpected)... we'd like to share them with other members! ☺



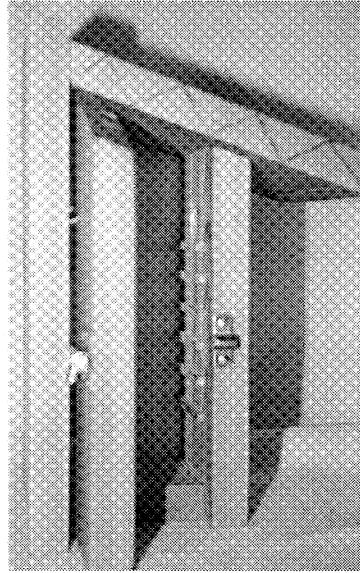
Although birdwatching is usually a relatively benign activity, checking nest boxes can bring unexpected hazards. This wasp nest, in a box set out for bluebirds, was found at South Side Harbour, Antigonish Co." [Photo Randy Lauff]



Sometimes the intended species actually gets possession. This Young BARRED OWL was photographed by Bernard Forsythe at Wolfville Ridge May 22, 2000.

The Chateau Chickadee

By Robert Speirs



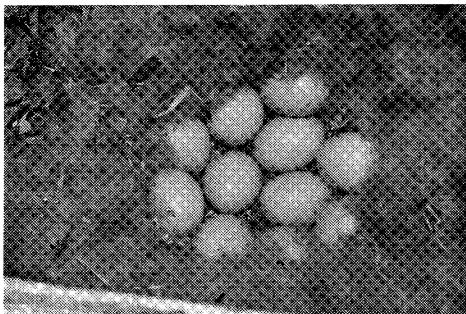
This is the first birdhouse that I have built, so I followed the Audubon Society's guidelines. It is designed for Chickadees, and is made from cedar, brass screws and bolt lock, and has a linseed oil finish. To prevent racoons from working the bolt, I inserted a black screw to block the movement of the bolt.

The steps of the inside ladder are affixed with brad nails. The house includes air vents (in the side opposite the door, near the top), drip holes in the 4" x 4" base, and a groove under the front of the roof to lessen the chance of rain entering the birdhouse. The box should be about 8-10" high and have a 1 1/8" hole drilled in the front.

I plan to use brass L-braces to attach the birdhouse to a 20' - 4" x 4" pole, which will be placed on my balcony that is 8' above the ground. The pole will be supported with twine and wedges and wrapped with barbed wire to deter racoons and squirrels. The birdhouse will be well clear of the human house, and therefore it should be difficult for a squirrel to complete a successful leap from the roof of the human house to the birdhouse. Hopefully, they will not bother attempting such nonsense since they are well fed at the squirrel feeder!

I have also attached a small cup hook to the outside of the door to hang a mesh bag containing natural cotton for the birds to use for bedding. I will keep you posted as to the outcome! ☘

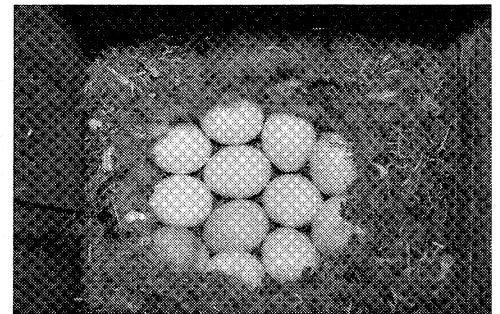
Nest Box Gallery



One shy of a dozen, these eggs are kept warm during the WOOD DUCK'S absence on cooler days by the surrounding feathers. This down is the only addition to the nest that the hen makes. [Photo Harry Brennan]



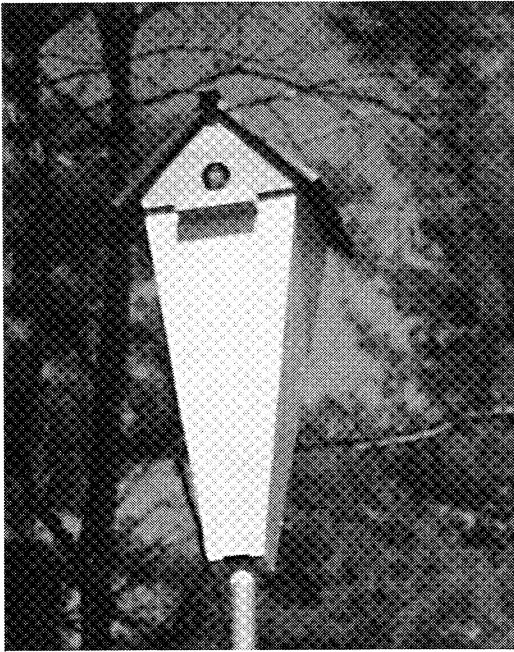
This bespectacled inhabitant is the hen WOOD DUCK, incubating eggs in a nest box in Pictou County. [Photo Harry Brennan]



After 31 days of incubation, these dozen eggs of the HOODED MERGANSER will hatch and the precocial young will ably swim with the hen, and feed themselves. [Photo Harry Brennan]

A Home for Tree Swallows

By Harold Dobson



The completed box, installed, with a tenant in residence. [Photo Harold Dobson.]

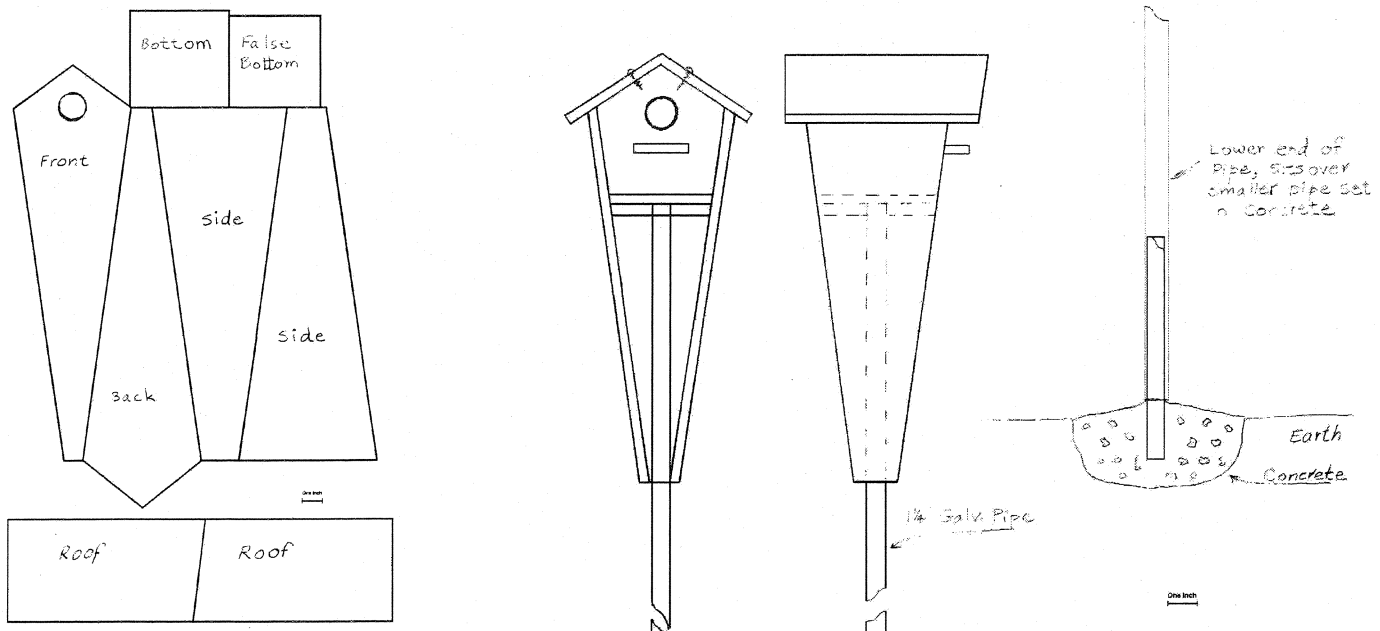
The dimensions for this nest box are as recommended for Tree Swallows, in *How to Attract, House and Feed Birds*, by W.E. Schutz (MacMillan Publishing Co.). The house shown is made of half-inch plywood. The dimensions can be scaled off the drawings, but it may be helpful to a potential builder to say that the roof halves are 5-1/4" by 10"; the bottom is 5" square and a false floor, 4-3/4" square with a one-inch hole in its centre goes right below the floor. The reason for the hole in the false floor is to position the top end of the pipe on which the box sits, so as to hold the box upright. The pipe on which the box sits is a ten-foot piece of galvanised pipe, available at local hardware stores for less than \$10. The bottom end is 1-1/4" O.D., and the top tapers to 1" O.D., presumably to enable the sections to fit together. The birdhouse sits on the one-inch O.D. top end of the pipe, and the larger bottom end fits over a short (8 to 10 inch) piece of 1" O.D. pipe set in concrete, poured in a hole in the ground where you want the birdhouse to stand.

To complete the dimensional data, the sides are 18" long, tapering from 2" wide at the bottom to 7" at the top. The front and back have the same taper as the sides, but are only an inch wide at the bottom and 6" at the widest point, 18" up from the bottom. However, the front and back extend further up 2-1/4" at the top to provide a peak for the roof. The entry hole is 1.5" in diameter. This size hole allows swallows to enter, but excludes starlings. For no explainable reason, chickadees seem to like this design. So, if you want swallows and nothing else, don't put the birdhouse out until about the last week of May, or until you see swallows around, whichever comes first.

If the builder is one of the group that prefers to clean out birdhouses each year, one side of the roof should be screwed on, rather than nailed, to make for easier clean-outs.

Having recently watched a female swallow looking out her door with her mouth open, as if panting, it would seem appropriate to recommend white for the sides and aluminum paint for the roof, to reflect the sun's heat and thus help keep temperatures inside the box more comfortable for the young and parents alike.

This is submitted with the hope that others will find the design easy to put up and take down for cleaning and for controlling the species of occupant. ☐



Resources for Birdhousers

Internet

<http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/hww-fap/nestbox/nestbx.html>
The Hinterland Who's Who site, with good information from the Canadian Wildlife Service.

<http://birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/>
The Birdhouse Network homepage.

<http://birding.about.com/hobbies/birding/library/blhousespecs.htm>
Instructions for building a variety of birdhouses.

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/tools/ndblinds/ndblinds.htm>
Another site with many birdhouse plans. Includes feeders, too.

<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/plans.htm>
The North American Bluebird Society's website with plans for (you guessed it) bluebird nest boxes.

<http://www.seascape.ns.ca/~shearwater/nestbox.html>
And finally, one from Nova Scotia!

Books

How to Attract, House, and Feed Birds: 48 Plans for Bird Feeders and Houses You Can Make by W. E. Schutz .
Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc. 1974.

The Ultimate Birdhouse Book: 40 Functional, Fantastic & Fanciful Homes to Make for Our Own by Deborah Morgenthal.
Sterling Publishing Company, Inc. 1997.

Build Your Own Birdhouses by John Perkins. Chartwell. 1997.

Super Simple Birdhouses You Can Make by Charles R. Self .
Sterling Publishing Company, Inc. 1995.

Birdhouses, Feeders You Can Make by Hi Sibley . Goodheart-Willcox Company, Inc. 1991.

Making Birdhouses: Practical Projects for Decorative Houses, Tables & Feeders by Andrew Newton-Cox .
Anness Publishing, Ltd. 1998.

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Cape Breton Island Checklist

Cape Breton is different.

Many birds are more common, some less common and others occur here at different times than what is presented in Robie Tufts 'Birds of Nova Scotia'. The possibility of clarifying the differences prompted us to compile records, with the assistance of many Cape Breton birders, for Cape Breton from the 1990's and produce 'A Seasonal Checklist of Birds of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia'. The main goal of this version is to get people talking about the status of birds so that the next version will more accurately reflect seasonal distribution of birds on Cape Breton Island.

This version was produced thanks to financial support from the Office of Research and Academic Institutes at the University College of Cape Breton. Therefore we are able to distribute it to birders at no charge.

If you would like a copy, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (9" by 11") to us at the address below. These envelopes will help defray our costs and ensure a speedy mailing of the checklist.

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Book Review

By Peter Hope

Red-tailed Hawk

by Charles R. Preston

Stackpole Books, 2000

This book is one of seven in the Wild Bird Guides series of books published by Stackpole. Readers will be immediately drawn to this book by the combination of its popular subject matter, the widespread and highly visible Red-tailed Hawk, and by the stunning array of photographs that adorn virtually every page. For most readers, a curiosity bred from their personal observations will be the major motivation for purchasing this book. The Maritimer who is curious to delve into the details of the life of his neighbourhood Red-tail may find some surprises about this wonderful bird.

The author launches into his book as he describes, "the broad distribution and sweeping success of the Red-tailed Hawk". The first chapter, entitled *Portrait of a Generalist*, details the size and shapes of the bird. But what immediately grabbed me were the glorious photos showing plumage details and the colour variations of this great bird. Light plumages, dark variations, rich reddish brown birds and a couple of photos of a mostly white as well as an albino bird are truly spectacular.

The book proceeds with two chapters which cover reproduction, from courtship to fledging. Many close-up photos show the range of nest sites with lots of shots of young at various stages of development. There are a few anecdotal stories worked in to personalise the text with the author's observations; this approach makes the text more interesting. I felt the detailed description of the development of the young, from hatchling to fledgling, was well done and informative. New to me was a description of several instances where young Red-tailed chicks were found alive in eagle nests well before they could fly. The author states that two instances have been recorded of the begging chick actually receiving food from the eagles. In time those chicks fledged from their new surrogate parents, that were originally their intended predators.

The chapter on migration and winter range left me cold. There was little depth to the information, only basic material. Novices would find it new and interesting, but perhaps no one else. In the chapter on hunting and diet I was intrigued to read that the average winter consumption for a red-tail is 130 to 150 grams of food, which translates into 6 or 8 deer mice. Our meadow voles are somewhat larger, so possibly 4 or so would maintain a hawk. The final chapter, entitled *Population Biology and Conservation*, was brief and uninspiring. To my mind more authors must work on this subject matter. I believe today's reader needs this message whether they buy the book for that purpose or not.

To sum up, this book is part of a series and as such it fits into a formula. That formula is both a strength and weakness. I believe this book is sold based upon its photos, for there are 129 of them. While many of the photos are excellent it is quite evident that the text is often limited to a description of the photo. In many places the layout offers blank spaces because the text had to be placed adjacent to the relevant photograph.

The references are few and none are Canadian. There is no reference apparent for the range map, but to me it looked like Godfrey's "Birds of Canada" was the source of the Canadian range data. The range map lacks the island of Newfoundland, probably because the red-tail is as scarce as hen's teeth there. The Red-tail's range in Labrador is omitted from the map but covered in the text.

If you are a beginning birder, or wish to buy this book for that type of friend, the reader will find the text easy to understand and should enjoy the photographs. If you want greater biological depth about the Red-tailed Hawk, another source may be more appropriate. ☒



An impressive RED-TAILED HAWK often came to perch in a dead pine in Harold Dobson's Liverpool backyard. Although he found Mourning Dove feathers in the snow, he never witnessed an actual attack. [Photo Harold Dobson]

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Weather Summary - Spring 2001

By Larry Bogan
Cambridge Station, N.S.

Table 1. Weather data for the spring from the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Centre, Kentville. Parenthetic values are the 40 year average.

	Mean Temp (°C)	Snowfall (cm)	Total Precipitation (mm)	Sunshine (h)
March	-1.2 (-0.9)	40 (46)	67 (110)	140 (133)
April	3.7 (4.6)	12 (15)	66 (83)	170 (151)
May	12.2 (10.6)	0 (2)	138 (77)	225 (201)
Season	4.9 (4.8)	52 (63)	271 (270)	535 (485)

A Snowy Spring.

Despite the fact that this is a spring weather summary, I have included graphs of the snow cover to show when we lost the continuous cover we had all winter. It wasn't until mid-April that the snow was gone on the open ground in the Valley. It stayed in the woods here and over other parts of Nova Scotia. Snowfall and precipitation were below normal in March and April (Table 1); it was the cooler temperatures that kept the snow around (Table 1, Figure 1). March was slightly below normal in temperature but April was nearly a full degree lower. The first of March was extremely cold (low of -20 °C) and even when it warmed the temperature stayed around 0 °C right up until the middle of April (Figure 1). When the snow was gone (Figure 2), the temperature quickly rose so that May ended up 1.6 °C above normal in temperature. The overall spring temperature ended up being just average. By the time of the North American Migratory Bird Count on May 12, the Valley had had six days with high temperatures above 20 °C.

It was and wasn't a wet spring.

There is still more water in the low areas than we have had in the recent past at this time of the year. If you look at the total precipitation for the period, it was just about normal (Table 1). However, half of this came down in May which is usually the driest of the three months. The fact that it fell late in the season and that there was snow cover for the first half meant that the most of the water entered the ground in the last half of the spring, hence it is still wet. The season started with 1/2 meter of snow on the ground (Figure 2). That is roughly equivalent to adding 50 mm of precipitation to the season carried over from winter. When that is added in, the water added to the ground in the spring was above normal.

But it was a Cheerful Spring.

When the sun shines everyone is more cheerful. The sunshine got through to the ground more often than normal all spring. In the early part of the season, this was because there just weren't many precipitation clouds around. Even in May, with almost double the normal precipitation, there was lots of sunshine because most of the rain came in brief, heavy rain showers. On the days of 9-10 May, Kentville had 60 mm of rain; three days later it got 50 mm more. Over 3/4 of the month's rain fell in four days in May. So there were plenty of clear days to contribute to the above average bright sunshine hours for the month. ☐

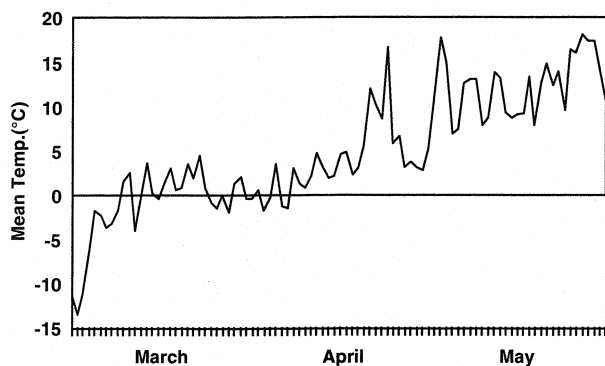


Figure 1. Average spring temperature at the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Center, Kentville.

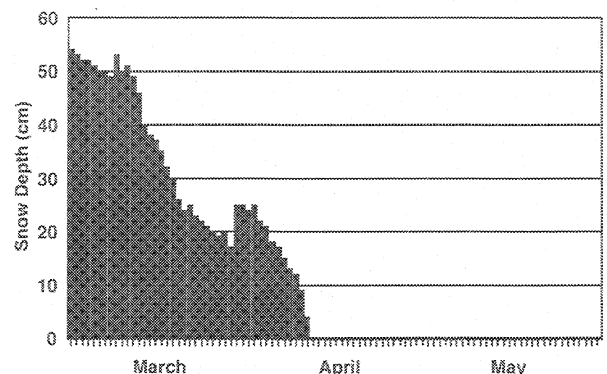


Figure 2. Snow cover at the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Center, Kentville.

Seasonal Reports

Loons and Grebes

By Fred Dobson

RED-THROATED LOONS were reported in small numbers throughout the period in the open ocean from the Bay of Fundy to the Atlantic Ocean off Rich. Co. The NAMC total was 21 with a maximum count of 11 in Rich. Co. Notable were two sightings of birds in full breeding plumage, one May 12, Clam Hbr., Hfx Co. (FLL) and a pair May 19 at the mouth of the Lahave R., Lun. Co. (ELM). COMMON LOONS were well reported this spring. The NAMC total was 321 with a widespread distribution and high counts of 76 (CB Co.) and 57 (Hants Co.). The first mention of the mating calls, so haunting and so beautiful, came Mar. 26, Green Bay, Lun. Co. (JSC). The late retreat of ice from the lakes led to the following

report, giving some insight into the hardiness of this species: "One in a narrow strip of open water at the top end of the lake (sandy bottom) – the only open water at that point (early in the day). The ice went out of the lake that day (latest date I have recorded in 25 years). The loons are always there on 'opening day'!", Apr. 25, W Springhill, Anna. Co. (Maggie Nickerson).

The PIED-BILLED GREBE was sparsely reported. The NAMC total was 54, indicating a relatively wide distribution – but of the total, 33 were found in Cum. Co. The only non-NAMC report received was "Two+, May 24, NS Sand and Gravel pit, Shubenacadie, Col. Co. (DOM, Roslynn McPhee).

The HORNED GREBE usually heads for its breeding grounds in the Canadian prairies and Northwest early in the spring. This year a few stayed behind; there were 10, Mar. 30, off Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co. (ROH). The NAMC total was comprised of a single bird in Queens Co. and was the latest report of this species. Individual RED-NECKED GREBES were widely reported from oceanic locations up until the NAMC on May 12. Notable was a JSC report of four, Apr. 30, Green Bay, Lun. Co. "Breeding plumage ... two pairs – each displaying." The NAMC total was 12 of which 10 were seen in Hfx. Co.; it was the latest report of the season. ☒



'Loon's Regal Hatch' - This photo of a COMMON LOON on the nest was an entry in the 1992 NSBS/ NS Photo Guild (NSPG) Competition. [Photo Lorris Keizer]

Tubenoses Through Cormorants

By Blake Maybank

In the last week of May, Meaghan Jankowski was on a whale-watching research trip, five days of which were spent in NS offshore waters. They cruised north from U.S. waters along the 1,000 fathom line until due south of Halifax, whence they sailed to port. Tubenose numbers were difficult to estimate, but hundreds of N. FULMAR stayed closed to the boat for most of their journey, and GREATER and SOOTY SHEARWATERS were also common, the latter species less so. There were also frequent sightings of LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS, but no estimates of numbers. No other detailed tubenose reports were received, but the NAMC had 25 Greater Shearwaters and 15 Leach's Storm-Petrels, all from Shel. Co. The N. GANNET migration went unmarked, although DBM counted 200+ from Pt. Michaud and Isle Madame, Rich. Co. Apr. 24. On May 23 DBM

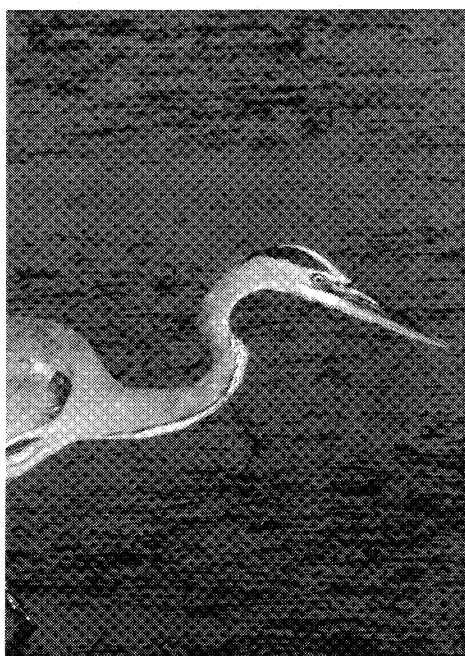
noted 150 off Louisbourg and 100+ birds were seen daily going past Brier I., May 25-27 (IAM, ELM). Both sightings are suggestive of movements of tardy breeders or younger birds. The NAMC tallied 238 birds from eight counties, a modest total compared to a year earlier. Numbers of DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS on the NAMC were up by a third this year to nearly 4,200 birds, well spread out across the province. The species' typical March arrival in Pict. Co. was not noted but a big arrival was noted in the third week of April in Antigonish (RFL) and CB (DBM). MUN noted 30 birds back at the Yarmouth colony Mar. 24, while ELM watched the first birds returning to Lun. Co., Apr. 9 and on Brier I., Apr. 14. The total of 414 GREAT CORMORANTS on the NAMC was down slightly from last year, and most were at their colonies by mid-to-late April (var. obs.). ☐



Roosting DOUBLE-CRESTED Cormorants. [Photo T. Randall - NSBS Library]

Hérons and Vultures

By Richard Knapton



This close-up shot of a GREAT BLUE HERON was an entry in the 2001 NSBS/NS PG Competition. [Photo Terry Danks]

Are AM. BITTERNs declining in Nova Scotia? Not counting the results from the NAMC, there were certainly fewer records this spring than in spring 1999 or 2000. After the first sighting, Apr. 14, Goose Creek Marsh, Yar. Co. (MUN), there were only nine reported, scattered from Schooner Pond, CB Co., to the southern shoreline of Yar. Co. (var. obs.). However, an encouraging 37 were tallied during the NAMC, with 10 and 11 coming from Anna. and Cum. Cos. respectively. To repeat the suggestion from last year, this is a species that should be watched fairly closely in case it is indeed losing ground in the province.

The first GREAT BLUE HERONS reported were two at Baccaro, Yar. Co., Mar. 18 (MUN). A few birds moved into the province during the last half of March and there were scattered reports of individuals throughout the province,

reaching Guys. Co., Mar. 22 (MZG), Cum Co., Mar. 26 (JAF), HRM, Mar. 26 (JAH, PML) and CB Co., Mar. 26 (CAM). Nine were back at their nesting site in the Yarmouth area Mar. 25 and 15, Mar. 31 (MUN). Great Blue Herons were widespread by the first week of April. Thereafter, they were widely reported in good numbers with 439 counted on the NAMC, the largest total coming from Pict. Co. with 92 birds.

Last year was a fantastic spring for GREAT EGRETS. This year was less so, but nevertheless there were many sightings throughout the province. The first report was of two birds Mar. 25 on the Shore Rd., Chezzetcook, Hfx. Co. (IAM, BEM), which stayed until at least Apr. 14 (var. obs.). This is the same location incidentally as the first birds found last year. Thereafter, singles were at Locks I., Jordan Bay, Shel. Co., Mar. 26 (DOE), near Lockeport, Shel. Co.,

Apr. 1 (*fide* DJC), between Aylesford and Berwick on Hwy. 1, Apr. 9 (TOB), at the guzzle, CSI, Apr. 22 (MUN), near Geneva's Restaurant and another at Centreville, CSI, Apr. 29-30 (*fide* MUN), near Baccaro, Yar. Co., May 5 (JAH) and at Back Oler Farm Marsh, Lun. Co., May 6 - 7 (JAH, PML, ELM). Two were at West Lawrencetown Marsh, Apr. 8 (TEP). Not quite the 45 or more birds reported last year, but a good showing nevertheless.

To put it mildly, other southern herons were not particularly well represented this spring. There is usually an annual scatter of SNOWY EGRETS across the province but this year there were only two or three noted. The first report came from Lower Clarks Hbr., CSI, Apr. 20 (Jonathon Atkinson, MUN, var. obs.), one that stayed until at least May 1, when there were possibly two birds present. The only other report was of a bird on Seal I., Apr. 27 (*fide* MUN). Likewise LITTLE BLUE HERONS are

often scattered across the province but not so this year. In fact, there were only two sightings, both of imms., at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., Apr. 21 - 26 (JSC) and Sampsonville, Rich. Co., May 6 (Sharon Digout, BID, GED). Usually much scarcer in spring than either Snowy Egret or Little Blue Heron is the TRICOLORED HERON. One first reported May 10 in Lingan Bay, CB Co. (Richard Boutilier) stayed until at least May 16 (var. obs.) and may have been the same individual seen at Homeville, June 1 (DBM, RWK, GEL).

There was a single report of a CATTLE EGRET, a species not often seen in spring, on Seal I., Apr. 27, the same place and date as a Snowy Egret (*fide* MUN). There were no reports of Green Heron this spring, compared to as many as 15 last year. The only BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON reports came in from traditional localities on CSI during the period. Two there Apr. 16 were the first this spring (*fide* MUN) and

there were ones and twos reported until the end of the reporting period. In keeping with the poor showing of other southern heron species, there were no Yellow-crowned Night-Herons reported this spring.

A few GLOSSY IBIS turned up. Singles were at Petite R., Lun. Co., Apr. 14 (PHB *fide* JSC), Port Williams, Kings Co., Apr. 21 (Sherman Boates, David & Shirley Hughes, var. obs.), Lyons Brook, Pict. Co., Apr. 26 (*fide* MAB) and Upper Woods Hbr. near CSI, May 12 (D. Cameron, var. obs.).

Again, there were surprisingly few reports of TURKEY VULTURES this spring. Brier I. provided most reports, starting with five, Mar. 4 (JCZ) and there were up to four in the Pembroke area, Yar. Co., Mar. 24 - end of April (PRG). There were 21 reported on the NAMC, with 15 coming from Digby Co. alone. FLL spotted a Turkey Vulture flying low over the Westin Hotel, Halifax, Apr. 17. ♂



A YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON waiting patiently for dinner. [Photo Bev Sarty - NSBS Library]

Geese, Swans and Ducks

By Fred Dobson

This year produced a spring that was close to "normal" relative to the longer-term mean climate for Nova Scotia ("climate" is defined as the 40 year mean of the weather) after almost a decade of warm springs. There was lots of snow and the cold weather lasted well into May; most of the lakes opened in early May. Thus, nesting was delayed for many of the waterfowl. The spring migration was not affected in terms of numbers or species count however; the migrants simply arrived later. The only rarity was a single male Canvasback, on the Shubenacadie R. in early April (six were reported last spring). The Tufted Duck was conspicuous by its absence (four individuals at two locations last spring). The North American Migration Counts, once again compiled by Judy Tufts (how can we thank her enough?) were held May 12. These records give an excellent (and quantitative in a relative sense) idea of the distribution of a given species.

SNOW GEESE were seen in three clearly separate localities. In Yar. Co. the sightings were: Mar. 18, Eel L. (MUN), Apr. 1; Cranberry Hd., Pembroke (PRG, RSD) and a maximum of 13, Apr. 5 - 30, at The Hawk, CSI. "Three are Blue Phase!!!" (JON, SAN, *et al.*). In Canning, Kings Co., one was seen Mar. 27, (JCT) and in HRM, two imms. were reported Mar. 30 & 31, Grand Desert (DOU, PLC). This represents an increase from last spring, when only a single sighting was made at Canning. CANADA GEESE were reported from all parts of the province in numbers that increased throughout March and then diminished through April and May. The largest counts (about 1,000) were Mar. 27, Canning/Habitant R. and 700-800, Wellington Dyke, Kings Co. (JCT). By Apr. 11 the numbers were down to 200+. The NAMC total was 656, distributed throughout the province with high counts of 155 (Anna. Co.) and 119 (Inv. Co.). After that the reports were of 10 or less. Notable were two adults with five young, Peter I. (off Brier I.), May 25-27 (ELM, IAM). BRANT, first reported Apr. 13-14 (350+ at Pond Cove, Brier I. ELM),

remained in the province until early May. The latest report was on the NAMC, giving a total of 482: 275 in Digby and the rest in Cum., Shel. and Yar. Cos.

WOOD DUCKS were reported in CB, Lun. and Yar. Cos. and from the Valley this spring. The earliest and latest sightings, neatly bracketing the period, were from DBM in CB Co. The NAMC total was 47 with a high count of 12 in Kings Co. There was credible evidence of nesting, although no young were seen. GADWALLS were reported mainly from the south of the province, presumably reflecting the lack of open water in the north. There were three (two fems.) Mar. 26-28, Chegoggin Dyke, Yar. Co. (PRG), and visitors from Ireland braved the blowing snow to see one Apr. 5 at APBS. A total of 11 were seen on the NAMC with a high count of seven in Cum. Co. The latest report was 19 May, Homeville, CB Co. (SEM). There were sightings of the beautiful EUR. WIGEON in only two locations this spring. In the HRM there were two reports of a single bird, Apr. 16-19 at Sullivans Pond (JBO) and Apr. 25 at Conrad Beach (*fide* AAM) (all the same bird? - *Ed.*). The other sighting, also of a

single bird, was Apr. 21 at the Trenton Power Plant (*fide* AAM). AMERICAN WIGEONS were reported widely but sparsely this spring. Distribution and numbers closely paralleled the previous spring. Throughout the period there were as many as 13 (seven males, six fems.) at Conrad Marsh (DMW), and a few pairs scattered through Kings, Cum. and Ant. Cos. (KFS, JCT, RFL). The NAMC yielded a total of 95, with a high count of 57 in Cum. Co. The latest reports were of a few individuals mid-May from CB Co. (DBM, DAH). The AM. BLACK DUCK appears to be doing as well as ever. The NAMC total was 1,765 and there were substantial numbers in every county; the high counts were 323 in Hfx. Co. and 297 in CB Co. The earliest report of nesting was May 30, "One with young" at Glace Bay, CB Co. (DBM, RWK). MALLARDS were reported from all counties except Digby and Guys.; the NAMC total was 721 with a high count of 222 in CB Co. We are thoroughly colonized. The May 30 report from DBM and RWK says it nicely: "Three males, one fem., young, Glace Bay, CB Co. - have spread out from city parks to nest". Mallard/Am. Black Duck hybrids were reported only on the NAMC and all 11 were from CB Co. BLUE-WINGED



Last spring, a pair of AM. BLACK DUCKS brought off a brood in Harold Dobson's Liverpool backyard. Are there now as many of these nesting in urban areas as in the hinterlands? [Photo Harold Dobson]

TEAL were seen in habitat from a wide variety of locations from mid-April to mid-May. The NAMC total was 103 with a high count of 46 in Cum. Co. A notable report was May 5, 7 & 20, four (three males), one male and one male respectively, Conrad Marsh, Hfx. Co. "A pair still here, perhaps nesting" (DMW). All the mid-May reports were from CB and Ant. Cos. (DBM, RFL, DAH). The earliest N. SHOVELER was seen through the swirling snow Apr. 5, APBS (Brad Robson, Anja Rösler). The NAMC total was 32, with a high count of 23 in Cum. Co. All other reports were from Kings Co. (JCT, JAH, PML, ROH) – several of males with fems. – except for a single male May 16, Morien Bar, CB Co. (DBM, DAH). The N. PINTAIL was reported in small numbers from CB and the Valley. The earliest report was Mar. 9-10 (one male) at Blacketts L. Bridge, CB Co. (JWM) and the latest was from the NAMC. The NAMC total was 36 with high counts of 14 in Hfx. Co. and 12 in Cum. Co. The diminutive but elegant GREEN-WINGED TEAL was reported widely and in good numbers. Lots of pairs were noted (although there was no clear evidence of nesting). The earliest report was Mar. 18, one at Melbourne, Yar. Co. (PRG, RSD). Notable were reports of 20+, Apr. 15 in the impoundment, Apple R., Cum. Co. "Saw for a while, haven't noticed lately." (KFS) and 100+, Apr. 19, Salmon R., Col. Co. (JBO). Also notable was the report Apr. 28 of 13, Grand Pré Dyke, Kings Co. "One male was the Eurasian subspecies ..." (BLF). The latest reports, in mid-to-late May, were from CB. The NAMC total was 240 with a high count of 131 in Cum. Co.

There was a single report of a CANVASBACK, unfortunately with no accompanying details, Apr. 11 at Parkers Pt. on the Shubenacadie R. "(It was) not reported subsequently" (*vide* AAM). Reports of RING-NECKED DUCKS came from a wide variety of locations and in goodly numbers. The NAMC total was a good indicator of the distribution; Ring-necks were reported from all but Col., Digby, and Shel. Cos. The total was 710, widely distributed in good numbers, with 286 in Cum. Co. Notable was the Apr. 29 report of 40, Big Pond, Florence, CB Co. "now widespread in



GREATER SCAUP [Photo Keith Vaughan - NSBS/NSPG Competition 1991]

(the) industrial area" (DBM). All reports after May 8 were from CB (DBM *et al.*). There were no reports this spring of the TUFTED DUCK – was the winter too much for them? The NAMC total for GREATER SCAUP was 124, with high counts of 62 in Pict. Co. and 54 in CB Co.; the only other NAMC reports were from Cum. and Inv. Cos. The earliest sightings were "a few to 11" Mar. 9-11 in CB Co. (JWM, SEM). DMW reported up to two pairs in the HRM area Mar. 20–May 4. All reports in May were from CB (DBM, EMC). LESSER SCAUP, less common than the Greater in NS, was nonetheless reported through March and April in small numbers with adequate descriptive details from HRM, Kings, Shel. and CB Cos. (FLL *et al.*).

The COM. EIDER was reported widely and in excellent numbers. The NAMC total was 3,461 with a high count of 1,135 in Shel. Co. Nesting time was nicely indicated by the Apr. 6 report of 300-400 at Herring Cove, HRM "Before sunset about 100, in small groups, were swimming out to sea in single file, to join a much larger group far out. There were none on Apr. 19 at the same time of day" (PLC). Notable reports were 250, May 21, Morrison Beach, Rich. Co. "virtually all imms. or fem. plumage, in a few rafts off (the) beach, a few heading Southwest along (the) coast" (DBM) and

600+, May 27, Lakeys Hd., Cape Breton Highlands National Park "at least 50% ad. males" (DBM, CET). The beautiful HARLEQUIN DUCK is uncommon in spring in NS and although the numbers were down from the extraordinary figures of last year, it was seen in more locations. There are reports from three areas. From mid-April until the end of May, five-20 were seen on the E. Shore: May 29, 15 males, five fems. at the W Beaver I. WMA, Hfx. Co. "birds close to shore with common eiders; male plumage ad. or close to 5th year" (FLL, ROH); Apr. 15, two (fem. & male) at Green Bay, Lun. Co., "Very close inshore. A male was noted here Dec. 29-Feb. 15 as noted before. In about 35 years these are the only Harlequins seen here." (JSC); Apr. 8 to May 20, one to four were seen in the S of the province: Apr. 8-21, Mavillette Beach, Digby Co. (MUN), Apr. 23, Port George, Anna. Co. and May 20, Cape St. Marys, Digby Co. The piebald SURF SCOTER was first reported in March and early April in small numbers, from Guys., Hfx. and Yar. Cos. The largest numbers were seen on the same day - Apr. 10: 400+, Green Bay, Lun. Co. (JSC) and 300, Linden, Cum. Co. (ROH). The NAMC, the latest report received, revealed a fairly wide distribution - the total was 275 with a high count of 106 in Cum. Co. (note the Apr. 10 numbers!). The WHITE-

WINGED SCOTER were not as widely distributed nor as numerous as the Surf, but they lingered longer. There were 25, Mar. 30 off Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co. (ROH) and similar numbers throughout April and May in Digby, Rich., CB and Vic. Cos. The NAMC total was 1,760 with a high count of 350 in Vic. Co. The numbers tapered off by the end of May. The BLACK SCOTER was the least populous of the Scoter tribe. Most reports were from CB, but the largest numbers were in the S of the province - notable was a report of 150, Apr. 13, Brier I. (ELM). The NAMC total was 116 with a high count of 70 in Shel. Co. There were still five (three males, two fems.) May 27, Lakeys Hd., CBHNP "in with a big flock of 450 eiders" (DBM). The scoters are notoriously hard to differentiate at a distance and as usual, there is an entry for SCOTER SP. The NAMC total was 846 with counts of 593 in Cum. Co. and 223 in CB Co. There were "lots" of LONG-TAILED DUCKS Mar. 15 "along (the) eastern shore" (JBO). The largest count of 350 was Apr. 10, Green Bay, Lun. Co. "This gathering began Mar. 15 and has gradually built up since then." (JSC). The latest report was from the NAMC. The total count was only 11 individuals, distributed evenly among Hfx., Pict. and Queens Cos. BUFFLEHEADS were

reported widely in the province from March until early May. The largest counts were Apr. 17, 150, Belleisle Marsh, Anna. Co. (PBG) and Apr. 30, 45 in Glace Bay, CB Co. (DBM). The NAMC distribution was curious: 100 total, 56 in Anna. Co. and 44 in Col. Co. At the end of the period a few lingered in the Tower Rd. Lagoon, Glace Bay (DBM) and in Green Bay, Lun. Co. (JSC, FED). The vast majority of the COM. GOLDENEYE, like many of the sea ducks, leave the province to breed. In March and April they were reported in small numbers from Guys., Hfx., Yar., Cum. and CB Cos. The NAMC total count was 52 with a high count of 33 in Vic. Co. All reports after Apr. 24 were from CB Co.

The distribution of the HOODED MERGANSER was best delineated by the NAMC, which was the latest report. The total was 28, distributed widely with a single count of 19 in Pict. Co. Most of the other reports were of pairs; a notable exception was of 11, Apr 20, Van Nostrand's pond, Starrs Pt., Kings Co. (JCT, JET). The COM. MERGANSER nests in the province and was reported widely. The earliest report was Mar. 3; the maximum in March was 10 males and six fems.; one pair was found in May at Conrad Marsh, Lawrencetown, Hfx.

Co. (PLC). There were three pairs Mar. 26, Sweeneys Pond, Pembroke, Yar. Co. (PRG). Most of the reports in March and early April were from Kings Co. (JCT, KFS). All but one of the later reports were from CB and Ant. Co. (DBM, RFL). The one exception is worth noting: May 21, "nest with 11 eggs in my nestbox", Methals L., Kings Co. (BLF). The NAMC total was 191 with a high count of 54 from Pict. Co. The rakish and hardy RED-BREADED MERGANSER was widely reported and in good numbers. The earliest report was Mar. 3, "Maximum (March) 12-15, 13 males and eight fems." at Conrad Marsh, Hfx. Co. (DMW). Until mid-March all the reports were of small numbers from the N of the province. From then until mid-April almost all the reports came from the Valley (mainly Kings Co.) and HRM. After that, all the reports but one were from CB (DBM, SEM, RWK, DAH). As with the Hooded Merganser, the one exception was worth noting: May 12, "Nest with 18 eggs in my nestbox ... Large clutch may have been laid by more than one female?" at Mud L. Bog, Kings Co. (BLF, *see the accompanying story elsewhere in this issue, ed.*) ". The NAMC count total was a healthy 796, distributed widely in the province, with a high count of 460 from Pict. Co. ☿

Diurnal Raptors, Galliforms, Rails and Cranes

By Richard Knapton

In recent years, there have been a handful of reports of OSPREYS in March. This spring showed a more traditional pattern of occurrence, with the first birds arriving during the second week of April with a major influx during the third week. The first report was Apr. 9, of one soaring over Lilydale L. just outside Lunenburg (SAH). On Apr. 12 one was at its nest at Enfield, Hfx. Co. (ROH) and one was at its nesting platform at Hebbville, Lun. Co. (PRG). In fact, the first time that Ospreys are seen is when they are actually at their nest site. On Apr. 14 one was at Big I., Pict. Co. (KJM) and HAD saw one standing on the nest at the foot of the Bridgewater town water reservoir, Lun. Co. The pair that nests at Greenwood L., Shel. Co.,

returned Apr. 16 and had already started repairs to the nest (SAH). At Taylor Hd. PP, Hfx. Co., the resident pair was engaged in courtship flight Apr. 21 (TEP) and the pair at Pt. Aconi, CB Co. had added new branches to their nest Apr. 29 (DBM, EMC, CET). Although the Osprey is a fairly common and widespread raptor in mainland Nova Scotia, it is decidedly uncommon and local in CB. Therefore, the 10 reports from CB in late April and May are certainly encouraging (var. obs.). The NAMC provincial total was an impressive 152, with 52 coming from Hfx. Co. alone. There were no comments this spring from observers that there are fewer Ospreys now than in past years.

Surely ranking as one of the most outstanding records of the year was a SWALLOW-TAILED KITE seen Mar. 25 at Glace Bay, CB Co. (CAM, SEM) for over 30 minutes. This spectacular and distinctive bird was first seen circling east of town, then followed as it drifted NW over the town and marvellous views obtained as it was watched at eye-level along the coast, so even the upper surface of this superb bird was admired. On Apr. 20, a bird reported as a MISSISSIPPI KITE east of Bridgetown on Hwy. 101 (Fred Grieg) may actually have been a Swallow-tailed Kite from the description. BALD EAGLE reports mainly concerned nesting birds. JWW has been following the fortunes of Bald Eagles for several years in Kings Co. and the following



After easily enticing crows and ravens to come down for 'handouts' (anatomy lab leftovers), the eagles finally caught on; one is seen here having just swooped through and picked up a pig heart. [Photo Randy Lauff]

comes from his reports. On Mar 12 at Greenwich, north of Noggins Farm Market, the new replacement nest had a single adult fidgeting about in the nest-cup, perhaps still fixing up the nest. Three others, an ad. and two imms., were perched together in a tall pine on the top of the north wall of the Cornwallis R. valley, possibly indicating a new nesting site. Five nest sites visible from roads in eastern Kings Co. were occupied by late March, at Greenwich, White Rock Pond, Muskrat Farm Marsh (east of Jawbone Corner, Lower Canard), Starrs Pt. and Woodside. On Apr. 22 at the Greenwich nest site, an ad. standing on the nest-edge was acting as if it was tearing up a prey item and feeding tidbits to very small eaglets (still too small to see reaching up to its beak). This pair of eagles was probably incubating eggs on Mar. 17; it takes 35 days thereafter before hatching. At the same site, a well-feathered young was found dead below the nest on May 13 (BLF) and in late May, there were one large and dark youngster and an adult in the nest (JWW). Elsewhere, a pair was observed courting Mar. 17 at Port Clyde, Shel. Co. (SAH); a male eagle offered a stick to the female and after several minutes she accepted it and placed it in what would become the nest. Two ads. were inspecting an old nest at Campbells Hill, CB Co., Mar. 2 (DBM)

and ads. were watched carrying nesting material at Apple R., Cum. Co. during March (KFS). The enormous nest at Ben Eoin, CB Co., was once again occupied this year; this nest is along Bras d'Or L. near Big Pond in a heavily-used campground. The birds seem to be remarkably tolerant of human activities so close to the nest site.

There were still 10 at Martinique Beach, HRM, Mar. 4 (TEP). By late March, most concentrations of eagles have dispersed and gatherings thereafter are not very common. Therefore, the following groupings of birds are quite puzzling. Five ads. and five imms. were observed Apr. 12 near a field pond on Middle Dyke Rd, south of Blueberry Acres, Kings Co., surrounded by gulls and a few crows, perhaps feasting on chicken carcasses (JCT). May 20 there were 14 ads. and two imms. at New Campbellton, Vic. Co., flying in pairs, with a lot of rolling, diving and flying at one another. There were still three ads. and seven imms. at the same location May 27, again with lots of calling and action in flight (DBM, EMC, CET). The NAMC total was once again most impressive: 305 birds of which 235 were ads. and 64 imms. (and six of unreported age). Bald Eagles are the most conspicuous raptor in CB; DBM's

records of Bald eagles outnumber any other raptor species by more than 2:1.

NORTHERN HARRIERS were reported at even fewer localities and in lower numbers than last spring, although the species appears to be doing fairly well (the NAMC total was 61). Of a mere 12 sightings, seven came from CBI (DBM). Either SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS are scarce or, more likely, they go unreported. There were only a meagre 10 reports received, seven of which came from CBI (DBM, SEM, DAH). The NAMC total though, was an encouraging 49 birds of which 20 came from CBI. Sharp-shin prey this spring included a Pine Siskin, Mar. 12 at Georges R., CB Co. (CET) and a Mourning Dove at W Springhill, Anna. Co., Apr. 20 (Maggie Nickerson). The Sharp-shin knocked the dove out of a birch tree 8 m above ground and sat on the prey on the ground for a minute before carrying it off. On Mar. 6 Gary Murray witnessed an attack by an *Accipiter sp.* on a Pileated Woodpecker in the Trenton Municipal Park, Pict. Co., as follows " ... saw a Pileated Woodpecker close to the entrance and followed it to a nearby conifer where it proceeded to probe the tree. Soon after a hawk, Sharpie/Imm. Goshawk? came out of nowhere and attacked the woodpecker. It then landed on a branch a few feet away from the Pileated that barely flinched and then the Pileated went back to its duties. The hawk then flew to a nearby tree and then attacked again a few minutes later. Again the Pileated stood its ground and the hawk departed. The two birds appeared similar in size but the Pileated was on the back of the tree when the hawk was perched beside it, so a direct size comparison was difficult."

There were three reports of COOPER'S HAWKS. One with no details (sex, age) was reported at Port Clyde, Shel. Co., Mar. 16 (SAH). A male was seen at Pleasant L., Yar. Co., Apr. 26 (PRG). A third report is worth including because of the careful description of the individual. Suzanne Borkowski reported "...I may have seen a Cooper's Hawk (Mar. 3) outside my dining room window (Clayton Park, Halifax) ...First of all, it was larger than any other Sharpie I've seen - about the same size as a crow;

possibly a shade smaller, but I would have to see it alongside a crow to be sure of that. It was at least twice as large as the starling she was eating; perhaps, 2 1/2 times would be more accurate. The colouring was dark brown, perhaps greyish brown, but certainly not grey, and solid brown, not mottled with white, along the back and over the wings. Her breast was a bright cinnamon, mottled with white. The rump, under the tail, was pure white. There was a small white patch at her throat and some white finely streaked with cinnamon and dark brown along the side of her face, giving her cheek a pale look. She had a bright yellow patch at the base of her hooked beak, the same shade as her bright yellow talons; and her eyes... were mesmerising! They were a startling dark red, which took on an orange hue in the sunlight, but would still have to be classified as red. Behaviour: She killed the starling by smothering it in the snow. She continuously moved it back and forth with her talons, holding it down and seeming to push it deeper into the snow. All I could see of the starling was its tail bobbing up and down ever more slowly until it stopped. She (the hawk) then plucked all its feathers off and proceeded to eat by tearing off small bite size pieces. After approximately 20 minutes, she finally noticed me at the window (I was trying to take pictures) and flew off. She flapped two or three times to get off the ground, then glided, flying low through the trees, carrying what was left of her prey. Her tail, in flight, was fan-shaped and well-rounded. A gorgeous bird! I keep saying "she" because, to me, she looks like an adult, female Cooper's. " There were 10 N. GOSHAWK reports this spring from across the province, from CB Co. to Seal I., plus an impressive 13 totalled during the NAMC. A nest with two eggs was found at Newtonville, Kings Co., May 13 (BLF) and potential breeding pairs were located in Ant. Co. (Frank Randall) and at Silver Mines, Klondyke L., CB Co. (Terry Powers).

There was one report of a RED-SHOULDERED HAWK this spring, an ad. at Brier I., May 12 (ELM, BLM, RBS). The first BROAD-WINGED HAWKS were two at Barrington R., Apr. 21 (GRM) and singles at Jordon

Falls, Shel. Co. (JCZ) and Argyle Hd., Yar. Co., Apr. 22 (PRG). May records came from Cum. Co. (KFS) and Queens Co. (AND) and the NAMC total of 79 included between two and five in Col., Hants, Pict. and Shel. Cos. and 60 in Digby Co.! There were six reports from CB Co., Apr. 27 - May 30 (DBM), including a pair in flight display at Big Pond, Apr. 30. A feature of Broadwings in CB is that they are most often seen perched in the open, either half-way up a tree or on overhead wires alongside highways, such as Hwy 125 or the Louisbourg Highway. Evidently they are hunting prey along the grassy verges where woody vegetation has been cleared.

A **SWAINSON'S HAWK**, unfortunately with no details of morph or age, was reported from Pt. Joli, Queens Co., May 30 (AND). Few RED-TAILED HAWK records were received, most involving nesting birds. However, results from the NAMC showed that this species was the third most numerous raptor reported (109 birds) after Bald Eagle and Osprey. There were still several wintering Red-tails in the extreme SW, Mar. 4, with five on Brier I. and another 12 from Long I. to Windsor (JCZ). The pair of Red-tails at Acadia Univ., Kings Co., once again nested, with an adult sitting on last year's nest on the north-facing ledge of the University Hall, Apr. 3. This is approximately the same date noted in previous years for the start of incubation (JWW). Last year they were not successful in raising young and they may not have even laid eggs, possibly because the female was new and young. Last year's nest was left on the ledge on purpose with successful results. On May 31 an adult female was feeding at least two downy nestlings. Mar. 7 MAS saw two fly past her lab window in the Acadia Biology building, one in pursuit of a Rock Dove, normal prey for these Red-tails, with the other hawk following the chase. On Apr. 4, a nest SE of the Main St./Eye Rd. junction, Wolfville, had an adult hawk apparently incubating. In CB, the majority of Red-tails return in April, this year most appearing around Apr. 8 - 13 (var. obs.) and reach the northern tip of Vic. Co. by early May (Bethsheila Kent).

A number of ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were reported this spring. On Mar. 4 there were three at Hartlen Pt., one at Rainbow Beach Haven, HRM (TEP) and a light-phase bird just west of Berwick exit along Hwy. 101 (Blomidon Nat. Soc. Field Trip). There was one at Sullivans Pond, HRM, Mar. 5 (RSM), a light-phase bird on the dykelands south of Port Williams, Kings Co., Mar. 13 (JWW), one at Pinkneys Pt., Yar. Co., Mar. 18 (PRG, RSD), a light-phase bird near Canning, Kings Co., Apr. 4 (GWT, JCT), two at Cranes Pt., Yar. Co., Apr. 7 (MUN), one at Shubenacadie, Apr. 11 (NatureNS report), one at Pembroke, Yar. Co., Apr. 16 (PRG) and a late bird at Brier I., May 25. The NAMC showed six birds, five from Cum. Co. and one from Kings Co. On Apr. 7, MUN watched an ad. GOLDEN EAGLE for 15 minutes at Port La Tour, Shel. Co.

A report of a likely over-wintering AM. KESTREL came from Lawrencetown Beach, HRM, Mar. 4 (TEP). The species barely rated a mention in the province, so no trends are detectable. In CBI, there was a small influx onto the island Apr. 22 - 24 (DBM) such that by month's end the species was widely, if thinly, distributed all the way to the NE tip of the island (DBM, Bethsheila Kent). Thereafter there were only sporadic reports until the end of May, although the NAMC totals (74 birds from 13 counties) reflect its widespread and fairly numerous status. A pair returned to the nestbox in RFL's yard in late March and were still present at season's end but, unfortunately, did not use the nestbox this time. On May 4, ROH found an ad. with one egg in a box at Tatamagouche, Col. Co.

MERLINS were widely reported throughout the province, from CBI to the SW shores, with 49 from the NAMC from 11 counties. The species seemed to be particularly well represented in CB this spring, with 18 reports from CB Co. alone (DBM, EMC, CET, SEM). On CBI, there were probably three nesting pairs in the Louisbourg area in early May (SEM), a pair in display flight at UCCB, May 4 (DBM) and a pair at Grand Étang, Inv. Co., May 23 (DOM). Elsewhere, evidence of nesting came from Broad Cove, Lun. Co., a pair nesting in an old

crow's nest, Apr. 15 (SJF) and from Big I., Pict. Co., a pair, Apr. 21 (KJM).

There were a few reports of PEREGRINE FALCONS this spring - many more Peregrines are seen in the fall. One was at Kingston, Kings Co., May 12 (Trish Rubin) and singles were reported during the NAMC in Cum. and Hfx. Cos. One at The Hawk, CSI, May 21 was feeding out on the flats before taking off with its meal, scattering gulls as it went (TEP).

The only report of GRAY PARTRIDGE came from the Central Onslow area of Col. Co., Mar. 8, where there was a flock of 15, a combination of three groups (ROH). The homeowner had been putting out grain for the birds. There was a scattering of RING-NECKED PHEASANT reports across the province, from CBI to the SW counties. The species is clearly common and widespread across the province; 498 from 13 counties during the NAMC underscores its status here.

RUFFED GROUSE reports were higher than last year and in fact, the general consensus was that there are more Ruffed Grouse this year than in the past few years. Once again totals from the NAMC reflected its status within the province, 210 birds in 16 counties. In

CB, there were 16 reports totalling more than 25 birds, several of which were detected by Owl Surveyors (var. obs.). Reports of SPRUCE GROUSE came in from Taylors Hd. PP, Hfx. Co. (TEP), Apple R., Cum. Co. (KFS), Louisbourg (SEM) and Big Pond, CB Co., May 23, where there were six seen at dusk prior to an owl survey (Barc Cunningham, Al Mickey).

From the exotic/escapee department there are three entries. WILD TURKEYS continue to flourish in the Torbrook, Anna. Co. area. Thirteen chicks from last year survived the winter and TOB reports observing courtship during spring. A male N. BOBWHITE was seen in the Overton/Pembroke area for a couple of days in May (HUH). The residential property of Carol Crosby of Wellington was invaded by five GUINEAFOWL SP. that appeared May 31 in her back yard (*fide* ANH).

There were no reports of VIRGINIA RAILS this spring. Also, there were very few SORAS. One was at Wolfville, May 4 (var. obs.), one at APBS, May 19 (JAH, STH) and one/two at Schooner Pd., CB Co. in late May (CAM, SEM, RWK). However, the NAMC totals were much more encouraging, with 32 birds reported from six counties. The only reports of COM. MOORHEN came from

Dover, HRM, Apr. 29 (Shirley Hughes) and APBS, May 19 (JAH), with no reports coming from their traditional site at Belleisle Marsh, Anna. Co. Compared to last year, it was not a good spring for AM. COOTS. An over-wintering bird at Sullivans Pd., HRM, was seen up to Apr. 2 (var. obs.) and reports of single birds came from Cum. and Kings Cos. during the NAMC. ☐



This young SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, in typically tense, watchful pose, was probably one of those that tested our tolerance by raiding feeders last winter. [Photo Ken McKenna]

The Shorebirds

By Sylvia Fullerton

JON and MUN, our monitors on Cape Sable Island, report that up to 200 shorebirds which had overwintered were still doing well Apr. 25. Elsewhere survivors were scarce. The relatively few migrants we see each spring, largely non-breeders, which have strayed from their more direct, overland route to the breeding grounds, were in average numbers. We were not graced with the variety of European vagrants as in Newfoundland, but the Eurasian Whimbrel in Cape Breton and the Ruff on Cape Sable Island could have been borne by the same weather system. An American Avocet was the only other vagrant of note.

A single overwintering BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER at Hartlen Pt., HRM was last seen Apr. 1 (TEP). The only other lingerers were 46, Apr. 28, CSI (MUN). Migrants appeared in low numbers in only five Counties on the NAMC, May 12: Digby, Pict., Vic., Lun., and Shel. A seasonal high of 150+, Debert Beach, Col. Co., May 20 (JBO) may be a signal that this beach should be monitored. There were no reports from the traditional Bay Of Fundy sites. On schedule, numbers increased later in the month: 93, CSI, May 25 (MUN); 18 in mixed plumages, Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co. May 27; 42, Marsh Rd., St. Marys Bay, Digby Co., May 27 (ELM, IAM).

SEMPALMATED PLOVER inexplicably continue to maintain their tiny toe-hold on The Cape, CSI, where a single pair is nesting. We have no reports from Sable I. where at one time several pairs nested. Interesting was the report of two at Battery Pt. Beach, Lun. Co. May 19 (ELM). PIPING PLOVER returned on schedule to their traditional beaches: two at Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co., Apr. 6; two pairs at Keji's Seaside Adjunct, Apr. 8 (TEP); one at Daniels Hd., CSI, Apr. 8 (CST). All reports indicate a promising season. For example, in the South Shore region alone, up to 31 pairs have been counted to date. A full report will be available from Anna McCarron, the new Co-ordinator for the NS Piping Plover Guardian Program.

The first plaintive call of the KILLDEER was heard at CSI, Mar. 12 (MUN) and from then on they were seen in good numbers displaying in parking lots, pastures, marshes and shores from CB to Yar. Co. The faithful pair, or their kin, returned for the 16th year to the Ridge Rd. driveway, Wolfville, a little late, Apr. 5 (*fide* JCT). They wasted no time and the first egg was laid Apr. 16. The NAMC tally of 97 was average, 24 of which were in Kings Co.

The much anticipated return of the AM. OYSTERCATCHER to The Cape, CSI was first noted by JON and CST Apr. 11, a few days later than average. A second bird appeared Apr. 17 and a third May 10. Nesting is underway. As oystercatchers do not usually reach maturity until the third year it may be that the third is a returning, imm. bird. Certainly The Cape provides the large expanse of undisturbed shore and flats which these birds need, so eventually we may see an increase in breeding activity. It would help if one or two of the more sedentary population to the south felt the urge to travel.

Of the sixteen or so records of vagrant AM. AVOCET, only two have been for spring. A third made a 20-minute stop at Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co., May 27, announced itself with "wheet" calls as it flew in from the south, fed nervously, and then moved on. JAH and I were lucky to be there at the right time to view this beautiful bird.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS were in good supply and widespread in all counties but Colchester. Early was one along the Cornwallis R., Colbrook, Kings Co., Mar. 18 (ASM) and two at Cole Hbr., HRM, Mar. 22 (Henk Kwindt). The NAMC tallied a respectable 317, with 71 in CB, 37 in HRM, 36 in Kings Co. and 48 in Shel. Co. How many of the CB birds stayed to breed is anyone's guess but 27 were on the Highland Links, CBHNP, Vic. Co. as late as May 26 (DBM) and a "territorial" bird was on the Bog Trail, CBHNP, Inv. Co., May 24 (ELM). An early LESSER YELLOWLEGS was spotted at Doctors Cove, Shel. Co., Apr. 19 (JON, SAN). The NAMC tally was 28, producing a record-high for spring; of these 12 were in Yar. Co.

A WILLET at Port Mouton, Shel. Co., Apr. 8 was unusually early (RES). By mid-month single birds had returned to CSI, Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co. and Bear Pt., Shel. Co. (var. obs.) and by mid-May they were flourishing and reported from every county. The NAMC produced a record-high of 630. HRM and Shel. Co. accounted for 174 and 100 respectively. No one reported early SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, perhaps an oversight, until the NAMC. Fifty-seven were counted, 22 of which were in Kings Co.

WHIMBREL sightings in spring are unusual, but at least two passed through, one at Brier I., May 10 and another at Battery Pt. Beach, Lun. Co., May 19, both seen by ELM. Our Whimbrel which migrates through NS in large numbers in the fall is the subspecies, *hudsonicus*, of the nominate race, *Numenius phaeopus*. The European race, or Eurasian Whimbrel, is the subspecies, *phaeopus*. Approximately seven of the latter have been recorded in NS, all in the autumn. Sharp-eyed JUM and GEM discovered and identified one at Morien Bar, CB Co., May 10 & 12, making it the first record for spring. It was seen again, for one last day, May 13, and was carefully studied (SEM, CAM, ALM). SEM's description is fully convincing and includes the distinctive white rump, the long white "V" up the centre of the back, and the white wing-linings (*see photo*). For all those listers out there AAM notes that this subspecies has been split from *hudsonicus* by the Dutch and could be split by the AOU.



The image of this spring's WHIMBREL, May 13 at Morien Bar, CB Co., is far from sharp, but its white lower back assigns it to an Old-World subspecies (Iceland to Siberia), of which only a half-dozen have been recorded here. This is the first to be photographically confirmed. [Photo Susann Myers]



Among the AM. WOODCOCK returning on schedule this spring, this one April 7 in the Ashfaq's backyard in New Glasgow, must have been somewhat dismayed by the deep snow cover. [Photo Karin Ashfaq]

Two RUDDY TURNSTONES consorting with Purple Sandpipers at Martinique Beach, HRM Mar. 26 were no doubt hold-overs from the winter (David & Janey Hughes), as were two at CSI, Apr. 28 (MUN). The eight on the NAMC from Shel. Co. were probably a mix; three were still at CSI, May 25 (MUN). Of the overwintering RED KNOTS at CSI, 37 were still present Apr. 28. On the NAMC 53 were recorded there, two of which were in breeding/alternate plumage (MUN, JON). A single bird was noted in HRM. The harsh winter did not deter the hardy SANDERLING. About 50 were still at Martinique Beach, HRM up to Apr. 15 (TEP, IAM); 127 were at CSI, Apr. 28 (MUN). The NAMC tallied 361, 250 in HRM and 111 on CSI. SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS were few. The maximum tally on the NAMC was a modest 23 of which 22 were in Col. Co. and one was in Inv. Co. A singleton visited Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co., May 27. LEAST SANDPIPERS also made a poor showing and there were no reports of attempted nesting. Thirty-four was the total on the NAMC, scattered throughout the province. Only an occasional WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER has been seen in the last

few springs, and two of them have been at South Bar, CB Co. This year CB Co. takes the honours once again, with one at Homeville, Apr. 1 (SEM, RWK, CAM, ALM). Another, or the same, was at Morien Bar, CB Co., May 13 (CAM). Wintering PURPLE SANDPIPERS were still with us Mar. 18, when JWW counted 50+ at Margaretsville, Kings Co. Good-sized migrating flocks included 150 at Gull Rock, Brier I., May 16 (CAH) and 60 at Black Rock, Louisbourg (SEM). Two were lingering at Brier I., May 26 (ELM, IAM). Fifty-one overwintering DUNLIN were still at Martinique Beach, HRM, Apr. 15. IAM described them as they fed with Sanderling, "having picked up the same habits, chasing the wash back and forth." Forty-one were tallied on the NAMC, all from CSI, some in breeding/alternate

plumage (MUN). There have been ten or so spring sightings of single RUFFS over the past 20 years, none of which to my knowledge has been on CSI. MUN, JON *et al.* have remedied that omission by finding a Reeve at Daniels Hd., May 2.

The first COM. SNIPE reported was at Caribou, Pict. Co., Apr. 11 (KJM), followed by two at Apple R., Cum. Co., Apr. 12 (KFS). They were common in ones and twos from then on. The NAMC tallied 145, with the bulk of the sightings being in CB and the counties of Hants, Kings, and Pict. It appears that an AM. WOODCOCK reported at CSI, Mar. 7 was a newly arrived migrant and not a hold-over from the winter (MUN, GRM). They seemed unusually common judging by the 20 or more reports received and the NAMC total of 145.

Many observers commented on watching them in March and April probing through supposedly frozen ground for hours at a time. They are such specialised feeders, 50% of their food consists of earthworms in the winter and up to 90% in summer, all obtained with a uniquely structured bill, that one wonders how they are able to survive when they arrive early after a deeply cold winter.

On an encouraging note, phalaropes were plentiful. A fisherman from CSI estimated 15,000 phalarope sp. in the Bay of Fundy, May 21 (*vide* MUN). The NAMC tallied 45 RED-NECKED PHALAROPES, all in Shel. Co. waters, I presume. CAH noted "thousands" of RED PHALAROPES south of Brier I. during the last days of May. ☐

Skuas Through Alcids

By Blake Maybank

The only jaegers were three POMARINE / PARASITIC JAEGERs seen by Meaghan Jankowski on the whale-watching research trip noted earlier (see *Tubenoses through Cormorants*). CSI snagged both LAUGHING GULL sightings, Apr. 22 and May 5 (MUN). With more BLACK-HEADED GULLS overwintering, it's not surprising that some linger later in spring. A dozen birds were still in Antigonish at the sewage plant, Apr. 15 (RFL). FLL had 23 in the back of Cole Hbr., Hfx. Co. Apr. 30, while later sightings included two second year birds in Lunenburg, May 7 (ELM) and seven in CB, May 16 (DBM, DAH). Just where were BONAPARTE'S GULLS this spring? There was but a single bird on the NAMC and no post-March reports at all. Perhaps the cool April dissuaded them from appearing in their usual Northumberland Strait haunts. The adult BLACK-TAILED GULL, last seen in November 1999, returned to CB; DBM rediscovered it at Big Pond Beach, Florence, CB Co., May 6, where it remained through the rest of the period. Pict Co. hosted two MEW (COMMON) GULLS, both adults, in mid-April (KJM). The NAMC posted a slight drop



An ad. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL frequenting Saxon Street, Kentville, this spring, stands out as quite distinctive from its more regular companions in this April 15 photo. [Photo Richard Stern]

in RING-BILLED GULL numbers with 317 birds from nine counties; Pict. Co. had the highest total at 129. They're becoming quite regular in CB Co., with the best concentration being 25 at

Schooner Pond, Apr. 1 (DBM). HERRING GULLS also posted a drop of more than a thousand birds on the NAMC from a year earlier, down to a still impressive 13,700 individuals,

plenty to harass terns and eiders. No county was spared but the low totals from several counties suggests that few observers were afield. Of the 128 ICELAND GULLS found on the NAMC, all but six were from CBI, almost equally split between Inv. and CB Cos. DBM counted 30 at Florence, Big Pond, CB Co., May 19 and a few were still present by month's end. The four reported LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS were split between Kings Co. (RBS) and Pict. Co. (KNK) up until mid-April. Late GLAUCOUS GULLS, especially away from CB, should be reported with care. Of 26 on the NAMC, 24 were from CB, and all but one from Inv. Co. The latest report was a bird at Florence, CB, May 19 (DBM). The only other report that caught my eye was an imm. at the Kiwanis Pond in Truro, Mar. 9 (JBO), a town that rarely gets a visit from this species. Nearly 6,000 GREAT

BLACK-BACKED GULLS were found on the NAMC, a slight decrease from a year earlier, but still plenty to cause mischief. All the 1,500+ BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES on the NAMC were in CB Co. where they breed; the total is a slight increase from a year earlier. There were no mainland reports but some were undoubtedly in the Bay of Fundy earlier in the season. Meaghan Jankowski certainly noted the species' presence offshore in late May as they sailed for Halifax Hbr. Reports of imm. IVORY GULLS in CB, Mar. 21 and Apr. 17 were not accompanied by details.

Four CASPIAN TERNS were seen on the NAMC, two at Sheet Hbr. (FLL). Outside of "count day", the only ones seen away from the Northumberland Strait were three flying by Cape St. Lawrence, Inv. Co., May 22 (ELM).

Terns were back to the Brothers colonies off the Pubnicos in numbers by May 9. The full report of the breeding season will await the summer report. 430 COMMON TERNS were found on the NAMC. Most, as expected for this early date, in Shel. and Yar. Cos.

On the NAMC BLACK GUILLEMOTS were the most common alcid, with 228 on the books, most in CB. Two DOVEKIES on the count were quite unexpected -- MUN saw them off CSI and the birds' presence at such a late date suggests they were not healthy. Murres and Dovekies found past early March are often in dire straits and DJC found three dead COM. MURRES on Crescent Beach in mid-March. Oiling is the usual culprit. Late Thick-billed Murres included two in Yar. Co., Mar. 11 (PRG, RSD) and two at Green Bay, Mar. 12 (JSC). ☒

Doves Through Woodpeckers

By Ian McLaren

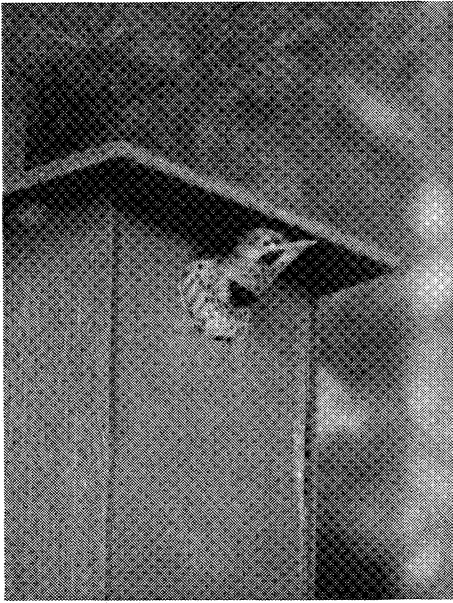
Since they years ago "discovered" highway overpasses, ROCK DOVES are breeding almost everywhere - but not, notes DOM, "at Cape St. Lawrence (yet)." One even wandered to Sable I., Apr. 17 (ZOL). In late May, I watched two crows helping to restore the balance by filching squabs from buildings in downtown Halifax. Overall, Rock Dove numbers were down a little on NAMCs, whereas MOURNING DOVES (another "takeover" species) were up by a full 20%. Thirty-five years ago the latter were regular only in fall-winter and scarce in summer. As PLC notes, they have only recently begun to attend feeders in the Halifax core, although almost none stay to nest. Maggie Nickerson at W. Springhill, Anna. Co., writes that, "long after I have stopped feeding them . . . they also feed the Sharp-shinned Hawk." Some must still migrate here, like one that reached Sable I., Apr. 12 (ZOL). Most unusual for spring were a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (observer?) reported to the May 12 NAMC from Hfx. Co. and another found very freshly dead the same day on Sable I. (NAMC). Their Black-

billed cousins aren't usually reported until they "sing" in early summer.

Other, mainly casual observations (or "hearings") of owls pale beside NAMC totals, which in time may, with the more recently begun owl surveys, reveal fluctuations and trends. So below, for the record, are mostly reports not from those admirable programs. These included 11 individuals or pairs of GREAT HORNED OWLS reported by eight observers. Two belated SNOWY OWLS on CSI, one still there Apr. 16 (MUN), were outstayed by one ticked in Anna. Co. during the NAMC. The long-staying N. HAWK OWL in Cum. Co. was still there Apr. 1 (JAF). Seven (under-reported?) BARRED OWLS were noted by six observers. Bernie Forsythe writes that females laid eggs in nine of his nest boxes in the Wolfville area, most "up to three weeks later than usual, probably due to deep snow protecting the small mammals they prey on." All finds of the uncommon LONG-EARED OWL are worth recording. One was hooting at dusk near South Side Hbr., Ant. Co., Apr. 23 (RFL); another was heard at

Mooseland, Hfx. Co., during the NAMC by FLL and unattributed NAMC individuals were reported from Inv. and Pict. Co. SHORT-EARED OWLS were decidedly scarce. Other than NAMC finds of three in Cum. Co. (at Minudie, *per* KFS *et al.*) and another in Inv. Co., only one other Short-eared was reported, at Eddy Marsh, Amherst, May 19 (FLL *et al.*). Up to a dozen N. SAW-WHET OWLS were reported, including one that had been singing from the beginning of April in Shel. Co. (DHY). Most were reported by RFL who says it's "such a thrill to hear these little fellows around ones own home."

Sometimes reports of very early COM. NIGHTHAWKS have really been of sound-alike woodcock. But this year, three almost-record-early ones were seen, as well as heard, as they hawked over a pond Apr. 23 near Martock, W Hants Co. (JAH). There were many on the NAMC, which itself was earlier than the average date of first sightings in earlier years (*per* Tufts). We'll have more to say about their status when summer's over. Our most exciting night bird was



This youngster poking its head out of one of Harold Dobson's backyard nest boxes in Liverpool last spring, was one of a good-sized brood successfully raised by its N. FLICKER parents. [Photo Harold Dobson]

the province's seventh **CHUCK-WILL'S- WIDOW**, alas untickable by enthusiasts. Chris Majka describes how his spouse Sheilagh Hunt made the find at their south-end Halifax residence in mid-morning, May 13. The overall-rufous toned bird had just landed and crouched in flattened repose on an adjacent gravel driveway, only to be pounced on by a crow. The crow easily dispatched it (it may have already been wounded) and carried the remains to a nearby roof. Intrigued, Chris later searched the scene and found two swaths of barred, rufous feathers that looked to him like some of those in illustrations of this southern goatsucker. Nothing more was found on the roof. He sent an e-mail photo of the feathers to me and I was equally impressed. A trip to the Museum of Natural History by Chris showed the feathers to be an excellent match for the tertial wing feathers of Chuck-will's widow and nothing else. Only two live individuals have been seen (one netted) here by birders in the last 25 years; hopefully some day, someone will pin down a singing one in spring. Our more regular, albeit quite rare, **WHIP-POOR-WILL** was noted twice. The recurrent

male at Long Pond, Spryfield, was singing for **FLL** *et al.* during the NAMC, May 12 and another, presumably migrating through, was performing that night in downtown Dartmouth (**PER**).

Four vanguard **CHIMNEY SWIFTS** were at Bible Hill, Col. Co., May 4 (**ROH**, Linda Hall) and four more shot down their Temperance St. chimney, New Glasgow, May 5 (**KJM**). None were at the Robie Tufts Centre, Wolfville, until four arrived, evening May 8 (**JWW**). Numbers at the latter site were not well monitored in mid May, but reached about 105, May 27 (**JWW**). Other good counts were 90 at the Agricultural College, Truro, May 12 (**ROH**, Linda Hall) and 26 swarming down Donna Ensor's chimney in Lower Ohio, Shel. Co., midday (!), May 19. As usual, scattered birds were seen over forested areas where they nest in open tree stubs. Where were most of the many NAMC birds seen? Those who want them on their property might consider a swift tower, described in the URL: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding/chimneyswift/chimneyswift-index.htm>

The first **RUBY-THROATED HUMINGBIRDS**, males as usual, arrived on schedule May 4 at Clementsville and May 5 at S Milford, both in Anna. Co. (*fide* Maggie Nickerson). The next hummers were at Port Joli (**AND**) and Port Mouton (**RES**), both May 7. Several more were seen May 8-11 and many on the May 12 NAMC, after which they were widely reported. Although numbers of **BELTED KINGFISHERS** survived winter, one that appeared Mar. 27 at Parrsboro (**JAF**) was probably an early migrant. Next reported sightings were, oddly, not before Apr. 16 at New Minas, Kings Co. (**JCT**) and mostly not until later April, but they were clearly well established by NAMC day.

The metro **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS** were last reported Apr. 24, S end Halifax and in Birch Cove, Dartmouth, May 2 (**TIA**). Another previously unpublicised one had been irregular during winter at the Manchester's feeder in Fall R., **HRM** and was last reported Apr. 23. Not counting

the wintering bird reported in the last issue, the first **YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS** appeared record early Apr. 3 at Andy Dean's feeder in Port Joli, Queens Co. The next was at The Hawk, CSI, Apr. 9 (Russ Nickerson). Others were in the S end of the province, in Shel. Co. and Brier I., 13-18 Apr., but were not reported from elsewhere until late April and only after early May from CB. There were substantially more **D O W N Y** and **H A I R Y WOODPECKERS** compared with last year's NAMC totals. Other reports also rated them as "up"; e.g. **PLC** thought the Downy was "pretty common," **JBO** found the Hairy "very common in Truro area this spring and **DBM's** "impression is of a lot more Hairies in the past year than in the previous five." Maggie Nickerson at W Springhill, Anna. Co., found a Hairy nest May 28, 10 m up in a live red maple, with at least two audible young. Once again, lucky Bethsheila Kent spotted a **THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** near Jersey Cove, Vic. Co., May 21. Surely they must be nesting nearby. Three reports of **BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS** were received: a fem., Apr. 26, Wolfville Ridge, a yard-list first for **BLF**; another fem. at Louisbourg, CB Co., Apr. 30 (**DBM**) and another with a (territorial?) fem. Hairy in hot pursuit, early May in E Advocate, Cum. Co. (**MSM**). It is probably impossible to be sure when the first migrant **N. FLICKERS** appeared, but a flurry of records Apr. 21-22 (**DBM**, **RFL**, **RBS**) and one on Sable I. next day (**ZOL**) suggests that a wave had arrived. They too were more common on this year's than last year's NAMC. One amusing tale describes a pushy Starling evicted by a flicker from the latter's traditional nest box in **HAD's** Liverpool backyard. "The Starling was hung [out the box hole] by one leg for several seconds and finally freed itself from the Flicker's grasp . . . Needless to say, I was pleased with the outcome." **PILEATED WOODPECKERS** continue to thrive. They were moderately more common in this year's NAMC and there were ten other reports of 14 individuals, one of which was attacked by an *Accipiter sp.* (Goshawk?) Mar. 6 at Trenton and won the bout (Gary Murray). ♪

Flycatchers Through Thrushes

By Eric L. Mills

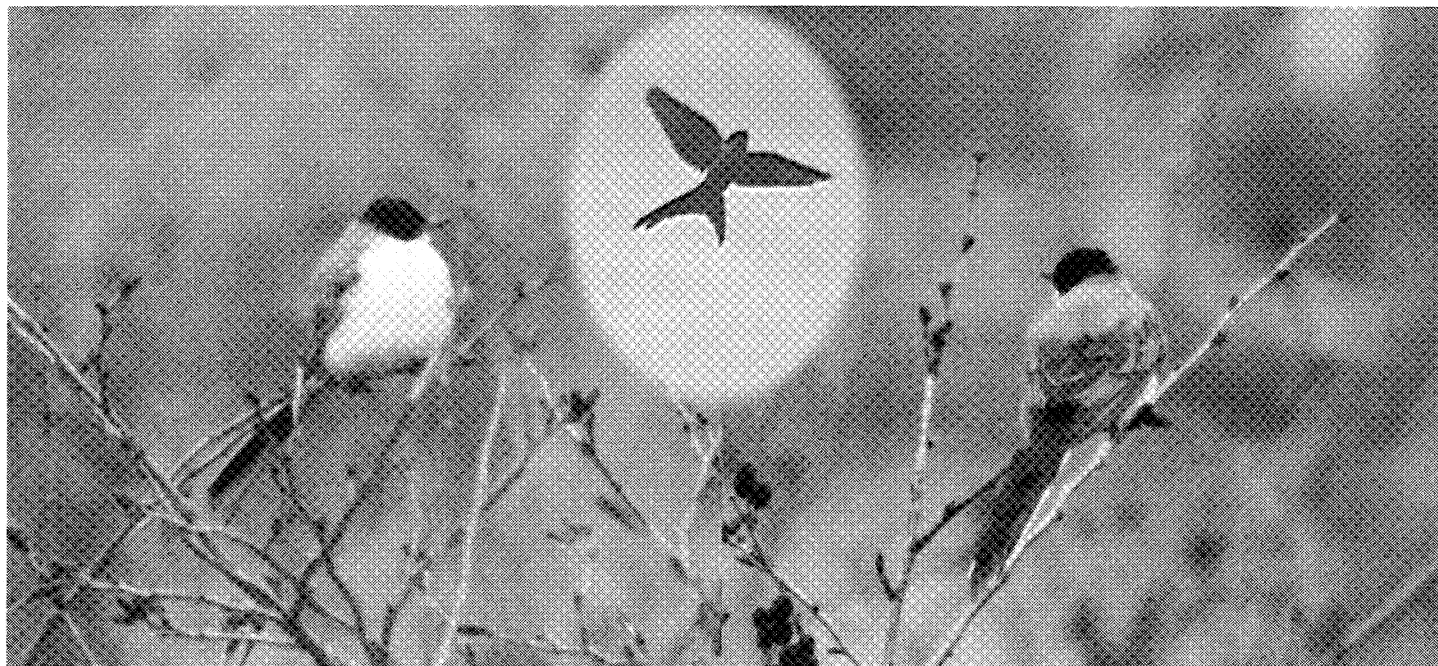
Although they are normally late migrants, two early OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS were recorded on the NAMC in HRM May 12 (*fide* JCT), but there were no other reports. Most observers noted E. WOOD PEWEE arrivals from May 21 through 31 in Anna., Kings and Yar. Co.'s (MCN, JCT, PRG), although six were reported throughout NS from Shel. to Inv. and Vic. Co.'s on the NAMC. Very early YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHERS were in Kings and CB Co.'s on the NAMC (*fide* JCT, SEM) and in Lunenburg May 19 (ELM); by the end of the month they were widespread in CB Co. (DBM) and undoubtedly elsewhere. Newly arrived ALDER FLYCATCHERS were noted on the Wolfville Ridge, May 25 (BLF) and Brier I. May 26 (ELM, IAM). By May 30 they were abundant in Ant. Co. (RFL), Hants Co. (DOM) and elsewhere, but very early individuals recorded in CB, Cum., and Shel. Co.'s on the NAMC (*fide* JCT) indicate a trickle of earlier arrivals. Although new arrivals of LEAST FLYCATCHERS occurred on Brier I. May 26 (ELM, IAM), they were

widespread in significant numbers earlier, as indicated by the 90 spread throughout the province on the NAMC (*fide* JCT), and an arrival at W Springhill, Anna. Co., May 20 (MCN). DOM found a nest around that time at Shubenacadie, Hants Co. The first migrant E. PHOEBES of the season were at Brier I. Apr. 13-14 (CAH, ELM) and W. Springhill, Anna. Co., Apr. 21 (MCN). Four days later the traditional residents at White Rock, Kings Co. had arrived (JCT), followed by one at Apple R., Cum. Co., Apr. 26 (KFS). Twenty-three were reported on the NAMC (*fide* JCT), mainly in low numbers except in Shel. Co., where there were nine. An early GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER was found in Kings Co. on the NAMC (*fide* JCT) and AND found one at Liverpool, Queens Co., on the more typical date of May 27. A single E. KINGBIRD on Brier I. May 11-12 (ELM) was only one of 21 scattered throughout the province on the NAMC. The earliest individual noted was at Broad Cove, Lun. Co., May 4 (SJF) and by the last week of the month they were reported throughout NS. A

much-appreciated and well-photographed **FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** found by MUN was on display at The Hawk, CSI, May 5-6.

A few N. SHRIKES lingered to late April and beyond, for example individuals at Pembroke, Yar. Co., on the 23rd (PRG), Morley Rd, CB Co., on the 24th (DBM), and two near Glace Bay, CB Co., on the 25th (SEM, ALM, CAM). Very late individuals were reported, without details, from CB and Vic. Co.'s, CBI during the NAMC (*fide* JCT).

NAMC observers recorded the astonishing total of 489 BLUE-HEADED VIREOS from throughout NS on the NAMC (*fide* JCT). Late April arrivals of this hardy species are not unusual, but the first recorded this year was at Lake Rd., Lun. Co. May 2 (JSC). A week later they were reported throughout the province. ELM and AHM had the surreal experience of hearing one in song in snow-filled woods at Beulach Ban Falls, near Big Intervale, Vic. Co., May 22 - the date was not unusual but the deep snow was. A lone RED-EYED



This spring's **FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** on Cape Sable Island was admired by many. The fact that it was in moult from its juvenal plumage (brownish cast to some wing feathers, and ragged tail) at this season indicates that it was probably hatched in southern South America, although its back seemed rather pale for that subspecies. [Montage Photos, John Nickerson, Murray Newell (Insert)]



This expert in the upside-down was photographed by Richard Stern outside his Kentville office window in late April. [Photo Richard Stern]

VIREO on Hermans I., Lun. Co., May 9 (LAB) was the vanguard of 66 reported throughout NS during the NAMC (*vide* JCT). Obvious migrants were on Brier I. May 12 (BLM, ELM, RBS) and 26 (ELM, IAM), and DBM's first of the year were at Frenchvale, CB Co., May 28.

GRAY JAYS returned to KFS's feeder in late March-early April. Scattered records throughout the province through April-May and 76 from all regions during the NAMC (*vide* JCT) indicate that this species was nesting quietly in its usual numbers. BLUE JAY reports were few and scattered, indicating only that this over-common species returned to feeders in early spring coinciding with its breeding season. PLC noted AM. CROWS carrying nesting material in South End Halifax, Mar. 15-20; by the end of the reporting period raucous young birds were evident in many places. Noisy young COM. RAVENS on a nest on Brier I. May 12 and 26 both confirmed and dated breeding there. Of the 897 Ravens reported during the NAMC, 279 were in Kings, 120 in Hants, and 116 in CB Co.'s. MCN, who has never before had Ravens foraging in her compost pile, noted it this spring and asked "is the absence of road kill affecting them?" Perhaps the very hard winter forced this clever and adaptable species into unusual habits.

Although DJC noted that HORNED LARKS were numerous on Crescent Beach, Shel. Co., through mid-March, only four (all in Kings Co.) were reported on the NAMC. One was singing at Sydney airport, CB Co., May 27 (DBM).

A PURPLE MARTIN accompanied Barn Swallows on Brier I. May 15 (Robbie Denton, *vide* June Swift). TREE SWALLOWS, which trickle into NS beginning in late March, were first reported from Apple R., Cum. Co., Apr. 11 and thereafter (KFS). Other "first seen records" included six at Jordan R., Shel. Co., Apr. 12 (PRG), about 50 at Goose Creek Marsh, Yar. Co., Apr. 13 (PRG), three pairs in Port Mouton, Queens Co., Apr. 14 (RES), two in Milton, Queens Co., Apr. 15 (AND), one at Port Williams, Kings Co., Apr. 20 (JCT), a few at Shubenacadie, Hants Co., Apr. 24 (JBO), and two at South Side Harbour, Ant. Co., Apr. 26 (RFL). In New Brunswick, the arrivals seem to have been earlier, mainly Apr. 5-12 (*vide* BRD). Most dramatic of all, on May 17, ROH saw about 1,000 Tree Swallows among a flock of 5,000 swallows (also including Barns, Cliffs and Banks) over the Eddy Marsh, Amherst, indicating that migration was still going on. This is borne out by ELM's observation of two migrants rapidly flying north atop Mackenzie Mountain, CBHNP, at dawn

May 24. In the interim, numbers increased throughout CBI from the last week of April through mid May (DBM). No doubt the 3,278 Tree Swallows reported from all parts of the province during the NAMC represented abundant residents and migrants together. A N. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, scarce in spring, was at Publicover L., Lun. Co., together with Tree Swallows, May 26 (SJF). BANK SWALLOWS were sparsely reported, beginning with two at New Minas, Kings Co., May 12 (JCT). This was a portion of the 66 seen during the NAMC that day, nearly half of which were in Yar. and Shel. Co.'s. By May 18, 15-20 were at a colony on Rafuse I., Lun. Co. (JSC, LAB). Unusually early (and probably doomed) were two BARN SWALLOWS at The Hawk, CSI, Mar. 16 (JON, SAN). A month later, but still early, three were at Goose Creek Marsh, Yar. Co., Apr. 19 (PRG), followed by two at the Frog Pond, Halifax, Apr. 28 (PLC). But most observers noted migration in early May and later, including one at Apple R., Cum. Co., May 1 (KFS), one at Port Joli, Queens Co., May 3, and numbers along the coast of CBI May 22-23 (DOM). CLIFF SWALLOWS usually accompany early Tree Swallows, but this year the first noted were at the Fortress of Louisbourg, CB Co., May 4-18 (SEM, *vide* DBM) and at Apple R., Cum. Co., May 8 (KFS). DHH, a faithful recorder of the Cliff Swallow colony at the Halifax International Airport, found about 40 in the IMP hangar by May 12, and on the same day NAMC observers found 81 at many locations, more than half in HRM.

The NAMC indicated just how abundant BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES are in NS: 3,317 reported throughout the province, sparse only in Guys., Col., Digby, Rich. and Yar. Co.'s (probably reflecting the dearth of observers rather than Chickadees). A pair was excavating a nest hole and courtship feeding in Shubie Park, Dartmouth Apr. 21 (PLC), as were others at the Frog Pond, Halifax, May 6 (PLC, JEH). Notes by DBM and DOM on BOREAL CHICKADEES indicate "many in normal habitat" in CBI throughout May, a conclusion borne out for Cum. Co. also by KFS's notes from Apple R. and for the province as a whole by the NAMC (311 recorded overall

from nearly every county). Most observers noted the scarcity of RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES during the winter and early spring, but the sparse reports indicate the arrival of migrants between about April 20 and mid-May. At the Frog Pond, Halifax, May 6, one was excavating a nest hole "in a dead maple that was riddled with nesting holes from previous years" (PLC, JEH). Nearly 300 seen on the NAMC were spread quite uniformly throughout the province. Kings Co. is the epicentre of WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH distribution in NS: 18 were there of the provincial total of 36 during the NAMC. Others, by county, were in Anna., Cum., HRM, Hants, Inv., Lun., Pict., Queens, and Yar. in low numbers (*vide* JCT). Apart from NAMC reports, only one BROWN CREEPER was noted, 22 Apr. at Argyle Head, Yar. Co. (PRG, RSD). On the Count, May 12, 23 of these cryptic elves were sparsely distributed in CB, Cum., HRM, Hants, Kings, Lun., and Pict. Co.'s - by no means everywhere.

Scanty records indicate that WINTER WRENS had arrived back in numbers by late April: one on Lake Road, Lun. Co., Apr. 28 (JSC), one or more singing in woods around Apple R., Cum. Co. by May 3 (KFS), and one at Port Joli, Queens Co., May 7 (AND). A very early bird was singing at Shag Hbr., Shel. Co. Mar. 19 (GRM). By the time of the NAMC, May 12, at least a few birds had reached all of the province, as far as Inv. Co. Probably more BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS than usual were seen this spring, including one at The Hawk, CSI, May 7 (*vide* AAM), one on Brier I. May 13 (ELM), another there May 17 (HUH), and two more May 21 (RBS). One was reported from Shel. Co. (no details) on the NAMC (*vide* JCT). The reports available of GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET occurrences give little information on abundance, but they show that by mid-May the species was ubiquitous and moderately abundant everywhere. By contrast, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS evidently arrived in significant numbers beginning Apr. 23 and were soon in loud song nearly everywhere through the last week of May: one on the Wolfville Ridge, 23 Apr. (BLF); the first at W. Springhill, Ann. Co., 24 Apr. (MCN) and in CB Co.



This LEAST FLYCATCHER was captured on film by **Francis Spalding** and submitted as an entry in the 1992 NSBS / NSPG Competition. [NSBS Library]

that day (DBM) ; one in Apple R., Cum. Co., Apr. 25 (KFS) and another in Halifax the same day (RES); and a few singing around the Bonnet Lake Barrens, Guys. Co., Apr. 28 (RFL, ELM, *et. al.*). By late May they were everywhere, singing loudly, even in the snow-filled woods of the Cape Breton Highlands May 22-24 (RFL, DOM, ELM, AHM). More than 700 were present throughout NS as early as the NAMC.

The whole story of **N. WHEATEAR** occurrences likely will not emerge until a later report. In Newfoundland more than 35 had been seen by late May, and significant numbers seen to have arrived in NS as well. The first appears to have been a female at Sandhills PP, Shel. Co. May 22 (RMC), followed by one at Schooner Pond, CB. Co. from May 27 through the end of the month (CAM *et. al.*, *vide* AAM). Another was at Crescent Beach, Lockport, Shel. Co., May 31 (DJC).

EASTERN BLUEBIRDS too may require updating in the next report. There is good evidence that above average numbers are present in the province and

that some are breeding, possibly in unusual numbers. Among these was a pair inspecting a nest box in Apple R., Cum. Co. Apr. 26 (KFS), and three pairs, the first of which arrived Mar. 31 (JAF), nesting, in the area around Advocate, Cum. Co., through May (JAF, MSM). A male visited Elgin, Pict. Co., May 7 (HAB, JEB, *vide* KJM). Scattered VEERIES were found as early as the NAMC (for a total of 13), some undoubtedly still migrants, followed by one at APBS May 19 (FLL). Singing birds at Paschendale Golf Course, CB Co., (DBM, RWK) and at Antigonish (RFL) May 30 were likely residents. The Cape Breton Highlands' BICKNELL'S THRUSHES had not arrived back on their breeding territories around French and Mackenzie Mountains, CBHNP, Inv. Co., on May 22-24 (ELM, AHM) despite earnest searching, although others reported some heard in the area a week later (*vide* MAB). SWAINSON'S THRUSHES arrive in numbers late, but on May 12, during the NAMC, 19 were reported from locations as far apart as Yar. and Inv. Co.'s, mainly in ones and twos. Eight newly arrived on Brier I. May 26 (ELM, IAM) were more typical

of the main arrivals. HERMIT THRUSHES appear to have arrived in numbers somewhat later than usual this year. First noted by AHM on Apr. 13, large numbers were present on Brier I., Apr. 13-14, hopping everywhere on paths and roads and in forest clearings (AHM, ELM). The first in song along the Wolfville Ridge, appeared Apr. 17 (GWT, JCT). During the following week they appeared throughout the province, reaching significant numbers around Apr. 28. By the NAMC they were abundant and in glorious song everywhere. An overwintering bird near Bible Hill, Col. Co., mentioned in the last report, was still present Mar. 3 if not later (Marjorie Fletcher, *fide* GDE). Reported belatedly, but without any documentation, was a REDWING (the European species) in Truro Feb. 8 (Lyn Ferns, *fide* AAM). Sorting out the migrant AM. ROBINS from overwintering birds was a challenge this year (see the previous seasonal report for an account of the situation in winter), although KFS noted an increase, no doubt due to arrivals, from Mar. 21-25, at Apple R., Cum. Co. RFL found the first migrants at South Side Harbour, Ant. Co., Mar. 28. 150+ on Brier I., 13-15 Apr., indicated that a major migration was still in progress then (ELM, AHM), a conclusion borne out by DBM, who noted "a big influx" in CB Co. Apr. 13-18. On Apr 22 on Boularderie I., CB.

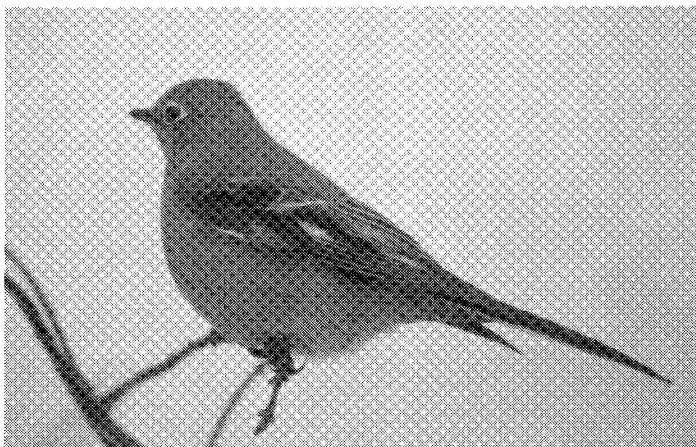


Harold Dobson in Liverpool managed to convince early-arriving AM. ROBINS of his culinary skills with pieces of baked apples, first tied to their favorite rose bush, and then scattered on the snow. [Photo Harold Dobson]

Co., DBM recorded "up to 150 per field" for a total of 1,500+, and by the end the month and into May they were widespread and beginning to nest (first egg in a nest on the Wolfville Ridge, Apr. 28 - BLF) . The NAMC revealed

what we all know, that Robins, 6,519 in total on that count, are our commonest breeding bird, even exceeding the numbers of Starlings, Crows, and Tree Swallows. Floreat *Turdus migratorius!* ☞

Two Rare Winter Thrushes



Last winter's only TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE was a treat for many observers mid-February to mid-March at Kings Hd, Melmerby Beach, Pic. Co. [Photo Ken McKenna]



This male VARIED THRUSH, one of two of that wandered to the province last winter, stayed in New Glasgow through February and into March. [Photo Ken McKenna]

Mimics Through Warblers

By Ken McKenna



GRAY CATBIRD at Cole Harbour. [Photo Rosemary Eaton - NSBS Library]

KFS sent the only EUR. STARLING report with numbers building up to 40 in her yard, Apr. 2, from only four in March. There were 6,300 seen on the NAMC, 1,200 less than last year.

A GRAY CATBIRD seen May 7 at Port Mouton (RES) and one May 8 at Port Joli (AND) represent the early records. From the NAMC, 21 were recorded province-wide, down from 35 on the 2000 count. By May 19, numbers were starting to increase with ELM hearing six singing from the Lunenburg walking trail. A single report of N. MOCKINGBIRD was received May 2, New Minas, Kings Co. (JBO). The 25 reported on the NAMC were about normal with Kings Co. providing the bulk of the sightings (18). BROWN THRASHER reports gleaned from Nature NS were above average this spring and appeared in two distinct groupings in time. An early group appeared May 4 at Canning, Kings Co. (MAG), followed by others May 6 at The Hawk, CSI (AAM *et al.*) and Cape Forchu, Yar. Co. (HUH) and at Bedford, May 8 (B. Sawyer). The later locations were Camp Rd., Brier I., May 21 (RES),

Hartlen Pt., Hfx. Co., May 22 (Mary McLaren) and The Hawk, CSI, May 29, at the feeder of Craig Nickerson (*fide* MUN). The only thrasher on the NAMC was tallied in Yar. Co.

At Hartlen Pt., JBO noted a single AM. PIPIT, Mar. 15, and 12 were seen Apr. 13 at Pond Cove, Brier I. (ELM, AHM). All 26 on the NAMC were from CB Co. The latest report was a solitary bird May 20, near the Caribou I. lighthouse, Pict. Co. (KJM). BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS were scarce this winter as noted by BLF who saw 26 Apr. 4 on Wolfville Ridge and one Apr. 22, Lumsden Dam, Kings Co. Visiting Irish birders, Brad Robson and Anja Rösler however, discovered 250+ in four flocks on a walk between Springhill cemetery and Saltsprings, Cum. Co. Among this group were 12 CEDAR WAXWINGS. Other overwintering Cedars were six, Mar. 9, Victoria Park, Truro (JBO) and 30 on the West Side of New Glasgow, Apr. 30 (KJM). Probable spring arrivals were six at Palmetter Woods, Kentville, May 18 (DHH) and two May 28, Ardness, Pict. Co. (KJM, JEB, HAB). The nine May 30 in Apple R., Cum. Co. ate apple petals in the yard of KFS. The NAMC had only 19 Cedar Waxwings and no Bohemian Waxwings.

A comparison of the results for warblers from the last two NAMCs shows that despite the earlier date this year (by one day), many more warblers were seen with almost twice as many Parula, Blackburnian and Black-and-white, and about 50% more Black-throated Green and Nashville. All our breeding warblers were noted except for the usually late arriving Mourning.

Only three TENNESSEE WARBLERS were counted on the NAMC. Others were noted at the Passchendale Golf Course, CB Co., Shubenacadie, Brier I. and Ardness, Pict. Co. A single ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER, rare in spring, was noted by TIA in Point Pleasant Park, May 15. HHH in Overton, Yar. Co. discovered the first NASHVILLE WARBLER May 2, in

their backyard willows. A singing Nashville was in its usual breeding territory along the Ferry Rd., Pictou, May 6 and three were at the Lake Rd., Lun. Co., May 8 (JSC). The 120 counted on the NAMC were enough to place this bird in eighth place for warbler totals with Hants Co. being the hotbed with 53. JSC also reported the first N. PARULA for the season, May 2 on Lake Rd., Lun. Co., followed by JCT in the Kentville Bird Sanctuary (Palmetter Woods), May 3 and MCD in West Springhill, Anna. Co., May 4. They were widely reported throughout the province following the 385 on the NAMC.

Most individual reports of YELLOW WARBLER to this editor were for dates well after the 172 counted on NAMC so an arrival date is impossible to pin down. May 18, JSC and LAB had ten on Rafuse I., Lun. Co and by May 19, ELM had 20 males in song in the Lunenburg area. A CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER visited Brier I., May 1, (ELM) and 20 were seen the following day on the NAMC. MAGNOLIA WARBLERS were not reported prior to the NAMC when 108 were tallied mostly from Hfx. Co. A number of late May reports of this common warbler were received from around the province. The Lake Rd., Lun. Co. was again the location for the first CAPE MAY WARBLER, May 8 (JSC). A dozen were counted on the NAMC. KJM heard several in coniferous woods in the Ardness area of Pict. Co., May 19 and Amherst had some the same day (NSBS *fide* TEP). May 3, Dave Shutter spotted a BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER near Coldbrook, Kings Co. (*fide* JWW). A total of 17 made the list of the NAMC. Others were noted in late May from Eigg Mt., Ant. Co. (KJM) and Nuttby, Col. Co. (ROH).

MUN felt that six YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS seen on The Hawk, CSI, Apr. 13 were overwintering, but PRG saw three in nice spring plumage at Lower Eel Brook, Yar. Co., Apr. 15 and JSC had singing Yellow-rumps along Lake Rd., Lun. Co., Apr. 17. There were numerous and widespread reports on

Apr. 23 & 24 from both mainland NS and CB. There were almost 3,000 Yellow-rumped Warblers on the NAMC, up 50% from last year. BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER was the second most common warbler on the NAMC with a total of 650. An early report to the Birdline at Burnside, Hfx. Co., Apr. 26, was supplemented by sightings in Lun. and Kings Co., May 2, Spryfield, May 4 and Pict. Co., May 5. The BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER is always a real spring eye-catcher and ROH commented that a male seen May 23 in the Cobequid Hills of Upper Bass R. had a throat "...so fire-red that I had to check my ID". There were 33 reported to the NAMC. The only PINE WARBLER noted was near Canso, Guys. Co. on the NAMC. Early PALM WARBLERS were spotted Apr. 11, Little Hbr., Lun. Co. (DHY) and soon after by DOE, Apr. 15, Lower Ohio, Shel. Co. A total of 205 were on the NAMC. The reports I received did not give me an indication of an arrival date of BAY-BREASTED WARBLER, but seven on the NAMC indicate spring migration was just starting May 12. The snow-filled woods of Beulach Ban Falls, Vic. Co. did not deter a male seen in late May

(ELM) and MAB reported lots from the Inv. Co. portion of CBHNP, May 27. MUN detected an early BLACKPOLL WARBLER among a group of Palms at Swims Pt., Shel. Co., Apr. 25. By May 12, 18 were recorded on the NAMC. More than a dozen were noted by DBM and RWK at the Passchendale Golf Course in Glace Bay, May 30.

With Kentville (AAM) and Vic. Co. (Bethsheila Kent) supporting BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS, May 3, a possible date of arrival may be indicated. Certainly this warbler was in very good numbers on NAMC when 564 were tallied, up from 262 from the 2000 NAMC. Despite an early Apr. 26 report from Spectacle L. in Burnside, Hfx. Co., only seven AM. REDSTARTS were found on the NAMC. This is down almost 50% from the previous year. PRG had a Redstart singing in Barrington, Shel. Co., May 4. From a migration standpoint, ten were new arrivals on Brier I., May 26 (ELM, IAM). The very vocal and easily recognized OVENBIRD song should make it easy to determine an arrival date for this species, but most of the reports received were post-NAMC when 239 were noted. JCT recorded 20

in the White Rock-Kentville section of the NAMC. Like the previously mentioned Bay-breasted Warbler, two Ovenbirds were found singing from the snow-covered woods in Beulach Ban Falls, May 22 (ELM, AHM). Reports of N. WATERTHRUSH came first May 2 at Lake Rd., Lun. Co. (JSC). This songster has such an emphatic note that it probably aided JCT in identifying the 13 males in the White Rock-Palmeter Woods, Kings Co. section of the NAMC, about 25% of the total counted that day.

No one sent in reports of MOURNING WARBLERS. A few were undoubtedly seen in NS during the spring period but were unreported. From the Birdline, there was a very early, Apr. 27 report of a COM. YELLOWTHROAT on CSI and 52 were present for the NAMC. By the end of May, numbers were still moving through Brier I. with 15 May 26 (ELM, IAM). Seven WILSON'S WARBLERS were noted province-wide on NAMC. By May 26 a few pair were setting up territory in Trafalgar at the Pict. Co.-Guys. Co. border (KJM). There were two CANADA WARBLERS on the NAMC and five reports from late May to early June, especially from CB. ☿



This YELLOW WARBLER family portrait by **Lorris Zeizer** was the prize winning entry in the 2000 NSBS / NSPG Competition.

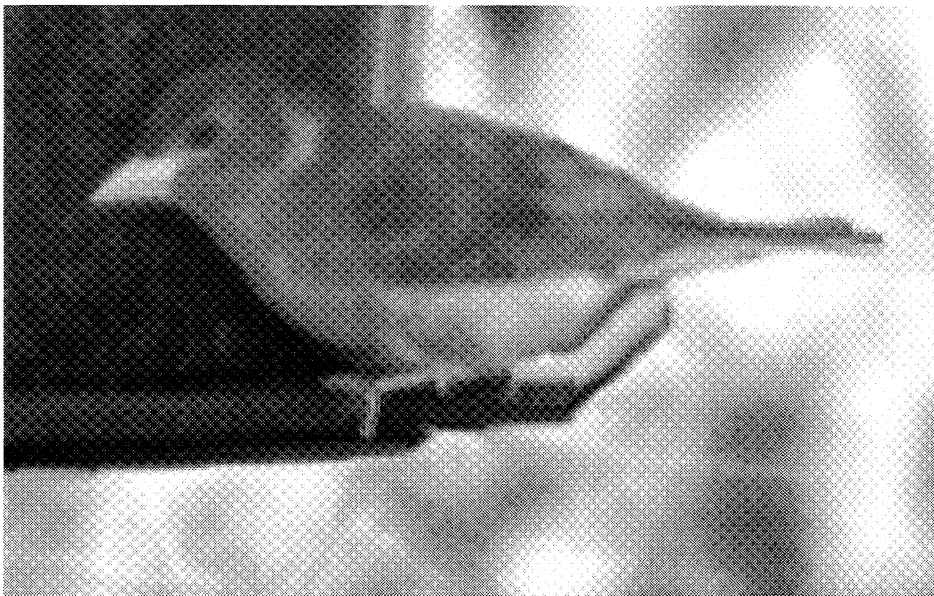
Tanagers Through House Sparrows

By David McCorquodale

Some bright, spectacular birds brightened up the spring. The orange of orioles was spotlighted with the successful overwintering by a Bullock's Oriole in Jollimore, Hfx. Co. and the numerous sightings of Orchard Orioles. April 18 & 19 brought blues and reds, in the form of Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks to many areas, with concentrations on the islands of Brier, Cape Sable and Cape Breton.

SUMMER TANAGERS were found in five different places. The earliest was an imm. male at Tidnish, Cum. Co. on the Northumberland shore late in April (Stuart Tingley). A few days later one showed up in Thorburn, Pict. Co. (A. Hingley *fide* KJM) and then 10 days later still, an imm. male put in an appearance for the NAMC in Sydney R. and stayed for six days (Sandra and Brian Lewis, DBM). It seems possible, even likely, that these three sightings were all of the same bird. Another imm. male was photographed by Pam Clarke in Cole Hbr. where it spent a week, starting May 11, in the yard of Mary and Rick Cole (*fide* BLM). Finally one was observed for more than an hour feeding in alders and in the ditch under them on Brier I., May 15 (DOE). Unlike the past two years, there were no early arriving SCARLET TANAGERS. Instead, there were several arrivals in mid-May, the earliest two being the furthest north, at Irish Cove, CB Co. and the furthest south, on Brier I., for the NAMC. The latter was still on Brier late in May (TEP). Also late in the month another male was singing in suitable habitat near Wolfville, in fact in the same woods where tanagers bred in the late 1980's (JCT, GWT).

Two E. TOWHEES survived the snows of winter. One was found in Wolfville, which is impressive given our winter and one in Ingonish which, given the depth of snow, is extremely impressive (BLF, BBT, Ruth McLagan). The latter was still frequenting feeders in Ingonish in mid-May as the snow banks slowly shrank. In late April both a male and a fem. spent some time on CSI (MUN, Oliver Ross, CST) but neither lingered



One of fewer-than-usual SUMMER TANAGERS this spring was at the feeder of Mary and Rick Cole in Sackville, NS, 11-16 May. The photo editor sometimes sharpens photos digitally. But, with this one, he also considerably sharpened the image with a bit of digital "painting" along fuzzy edges, but not in any way changing the core features of the bird. [Photo Pam Clarke]

past the first week of May. Intriguing was a singing male on Brier I. late in May (ELM).

Through March and April small flocks of AM. TREE SPARROWS were found with most reports from Hfx., Kings, Cum. and Pict. Cos. On the NAMC they were found in seven counties with the most being a dozen in Hants and Kings. At least one lingered until May 20 when it visited a feeder in Apple R., Cum. Co. (KFS). As expected, the many CHIPPING SPARROWS that attempted to winter either made their way south or were unsuccessful. However, one hardy individual was at a feeder in Avonport, Kings Co., Mar. 8 (URB) and at least seven survived at Lilian Perry's feeder at River Hd., Shel. Co. (MUN). The first migrants arrived Apr. 13 in the south on Brier I. and then a couple of days later both in the south, CSI and in the north, Louisbourg (ELM, AHM, JCZ, HOS). By the end of the third week of April they were widespread. Another pulse of migrants was noticed in the first week of May. In late April two FIELD SPARROWS were found on CSI, with one of them lingering until mid-May

(MUN, Oliver Ross, CST). The only other report is of one at Hartlen Pt., May 13. Here is IAM's description: 'Its head was extremely grey and blank-faced with no evident "tick" at the end of the very ill-marked eye line. It also had a very broad grey crown stripe with washed-out rufous margins. It was only weakly washed with buffy on the upper breast. Altogether it seemed a good match for the Midwestern-western race *arenacea*. I've seen a couple of birds like this one in fall, but never before in spring.'

The first VESPER SPARROW of the spring was on Brier I. in mid-April (ELM). In early May one obliged the NSBS trip on CSI and the only other two were on the NAMC in Kings and Pict. Cos. A few SAVANNAH SPARROWS were in suitable nesting habitat on the dykelands near Grand Pré (JCZ, Martin Willison), in southern Yar. Co. (PRG, RSD) and at Apple R., Cum. Co. (KFS) early in April. A major influx of migrants was noticed Apr. 16, Brier I. (ELM). By the beginning of the fourth week of April they were widespread. The larger, paler version, the Ipswich Sparrow, was first noticed this spring Mar. 18, Cherry Hill

Beach, Lun. Co. (SJF). In late March and early April, as expected, there were more Ipswich found on beaches in Hfx. and Queens Cos. than the mainland Savannahs. The peak count of Ipswich Sparrows was 10 on CSI, Apr. 17 (JON, TEC, Emma Craig). Others were seen on Brier I. in mid-April, at Pt. Michaud in late April, Schooner Pond in May and at Florence, this one lingering for the NAMC in mid-May. Normally NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS do not arrive in the salt marshes where they breed until early June. Therefore a singing male at Debert Beach on May 20 is noteworthy (JBO).

A few FOX SPARROWS successfully overwintered in the southern parts of the province, for example at Sable R., CSI and Barrington and probably on Sober I., Hfx. Co. The first migrants arrived at feeders in Apple R., Cum. Co., Mar. 22 (KFS) and then in Elgin, Pict. Co. and a few places on CBI the next day. Through much of April many feeders hosted a few, with peak counts of a dozen at W Lawrencetown, Apr. 8, a couple of dozen in Dartmouth the same day (EBB) and at least 30 in Louisbourg a few days later (SEM, HOS). Lingered birds at feeders and some singing on territory along the coast and in northern CB accounted for most of the ones counted in twelve counties in mid-May on the NAMC. Several of the overwintering SONG SPARROWS reacted to a couple of days of mild weather in early March and started singing in Halifax and CBI. Subsequent snows slowed them down. The first spring migrants were difficult to detect amongst the numbers that overwintered. From Mar. 20 until the end of the month, many people noticed them in places where they had not been all winter. The first few days of April brought a major influx. On both Apr. 4 & 6 CAH noticed significant numbers offshore of Brier I. In between there were upwards of 100 on Brier I. Major arrivals were noticed from CSI to Kings Co. to Rich. Co. at this time. The first LINCOLN'S SPARROWS were the 14 found in five counties on the NAMC, May 12. Later in the month most reports were of males singing on territory on CBI (ELM, DBM). The first SWAMP SPARROWS arrived as expected in mid-April at Goose Creek Marsh, Yar. Co.

and Belleisle Marsh, Anna. Co. (PRG, Steve and Sharon Hawboldt). By the end of the month and in mid-May for the NAMC singing males were widespread. Since so many WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS overwintered, especially in the Halifax area and in the south, it was difficult to detect the first migrants. However there was a significant influx in the first few days of April. In Cum. Co. and on CBI some observers reported their first of the spring during the second and third weeks of April. An average of just more than 100/county was tallied in mid-May on the NAMC. There were two exceptionally early WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS. The earliest was Apr. 9, Falmouth, Kings Co. (Jane McConnell *vide* JWW) and a few days later at Avonport, Kings Co. (URB). The first few days of May brought several to CSI, Brier I. and CBI (MUN, CAH, Joan MacFadden). At least 25 on Brier I., May 12 indicated another influx (ELM). They were also widespread at this time with 13 counties tallying at least one on the NAMC. Numbers dwindled as they continued moving north, with the latest one on the Acadian Trail, CBHNP, May 27 (MAB).

The first major northward movement of DARK-EYED JUNCOS was noticed in late March. For example, there was more than 50 at a feeder in Apple R., Cum. Co. (KFS). Through the first three weeks of April juncos congregated on bare roadsides in spectacular numbers. On Apr. 13 KJM estimated more than 2,000 along roadsides in Pict. Co. Almost 2,500 were tallied on the NAMC from throughout the province in mid-May. A nest with eggs was found on May 12 in the Mud Lake Bog, Kings Co. (BLF). A pair nested along a rock wall in a Halifax garden and had recently hatched young by May 25 (DOM). Both of these are very early nests, surprising given the amount of snow we had this winter. The only reports of LAPLAND LONGSPUR come from the coast near Halifax in early March (TEP) and Morien Bar, CB Co. from late March until late April (SEM, Bethsheila Kent). Through March and the first week of April SNOW BUNTINGS were widespread in flocks of up to 100. On Apr. 9 CAH noticed several small flocks over the water near Brier I. This was likely a major

northward movement as there were only two subsequent reports, one at West Pennant, Hfx. Co., Apr. 13 (FLL) and a flock of 25 at Glace Bay, Apr. 30 (DBM).

NORTHERN CARDINALS continue to thrive in isolated pockets around Dartmouth, Yarmouth, Annapolis, and in Kings and Shel. Cos. The total on the NAMC was only 12, about one-third of last year. However this probably reflects lack of counting effort in some of the hotspots. Apr. 18 & 19 brought an influx of ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS, at least nine, from Shel. Co. to Louisbourg to West Springhill, Anna. Co. The NAMC showed that they were widespread having been found in 14 counties, with the most, 21, in Kings Co. This total is down from last year, but both are in stark contrast to the lone individual tallied on the NAMC in 1999. Along with the influx of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks Apr. 18 & 19 were a few BLUE GROSBEAKS and lots of INDIGO BUNTINGS. The few Blue Grosbeaks were concentrated on CSI and nearby Port La Tour and in Louisbourg and nearby Broughton. Most of these lingered until near the end of April. In May one was located in Yar. Co. on the NAMC. Louisbourg and CSI also hosted their share of Indigo Buntings, however the invasion was much more widespread with reports of about 40 from at least eight counties. Most only lingered for a few days with only two on the NAMC in mid-May, both in Shel. Co. The latest were one in Pomquet, May 30 (*vide* RFL) and another lingering at Loch Lomond, CB Co. (*vide* JWM).

The first BOBOLINK was exceptionally early, Apr. 21, CSI (MUN). The next, near Apple R., Cum. Co., was as expected during the second week of May (Ratchford Merriam *vide* KFS). On the NAMC later that week, they were found in ten mainland counties, with a high of 33 in Kings. The next day the first arrived in Pict. Co., (MAB) and then a few days later in CB Co. (DBM). When the first spring migrant RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS joined the roving, wintering flocks in the south is not clear. However an obvious influx was noticed in the Truro area, Mar. 25 (JBO) and elsewhere on the mainland within a few

days. The first on CBI were not detected until Apr. 1 at Port Morien (ALM, CAM, SEM, RWK). On the NAMC more than 2,500 were tallied, with more than 500 in Anna. Co. and significant concentrations in Hfx., Hants, Cum., Kings and Pict. Cos. The first spring migrant RUSTY BLACKBIRDS were found Mar. 22 in Apple R., Cum. Co. (KFS) and the next day at Elgin, Pict. Co. (HAB). Through April and May reports of birds in suitable nesting habitat were received from a half dozen counties. In mid-May on the NAMC more than 50 were tallied including a remarkable 39 in Kings Co. Mar. 22 brought the first undeniable spring migrant COM. GRACKLES to Halifax and Truro (PLC, HHH). Within a few days they were widespread. The first BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS, in fact a dozen, arrived Mar. 21 in Lower Eel Brook, Yar. Co. (PRG). By the end of the month a few were noted in Cum. and Anna. Cos. (KFS, MSM, DOU). Through April they were reported from many places. The NAMC also reflects this. They were found in all 17 participating counties, with peaks of 40 and 45 in Hants and Kings Co. respectively.



PINE SISKINS often visit our feeders in large numbers. [Photo Randy Lauff]

A remarkable eight ORCHARD ORIOLES were found this spring. Between May 4 & 6 at least five were found, two on Brier I., one at Sand L., CB Co. and two on CSI. By mid-May there were still a couple on Brier I. and one on CSI for the NAMC. Later in May an imm. male came to the hummingbird feeder of Mona MacLeod in Catalone, CB Co. for three days (*fide* SEM). At least two BALTIMORE ORIOLES overwintered at Fred Grieg's feeder in the Jollimore, Hfx. Co. area, with one meeting an untimely demise early in March. Away from this feeder the first spring Baltimore was at Broad Cove, Lun. Co., Apr 23 and may have been around for a few days before that (JAH). The first week of May brought them to several places in Shel. and Digby Cos. as well as one in Advocate, Cum. Co. In mid-May, 22 were counted on the NAMC, with half in Shel. Co. and all of the rest south and west of a line from Halifax to Kings Co. An imm. male BULLOCK'S ORIOLE, also at Fred Grieg's feeders in the Jollimore, Hfx. Co. area, attracted a lot of attention through the winter. In early March, despite the snow, it fed daily on grapes and suet and was even noticeably eating a few peanuts; the last sighting was Apr. 12.

PINE GROSBEAKS were found in 10 counties on the NAMC with a high of 21 in Hants Co. In early April there were a couple of reports from eastern CBI (ALM, CAM) and on the Blanche Peninsula (MUN, NSBS). PURPLE FINCHES were regular visitors at many feeders throughout the spring. Several watchers noticed increased numbers in late March and another influx was noted, including arrivals at feeders where there had been none Apr. 12 & 13. More than 2,000 were tallied, with a high of 300 in CB Co. on the NAMC in mid-May. In contrast HOUSE FINCHES were restricted to a few places. Most were in Halifax and Yarmouth where they are known to nest. Elsewhere one spent some time in Westport, Brier I. and there were a few on the NAMC in Hants Co.

Sightings of both species of crossbills were sparse. RED CROSSBILLS were

tallied in eight counties on the NAMC in mid-May, with a high of eight in Lunenburg and Queens Cos. Early in March up to five frequented a feeder in Louisbourg (SEM) and in May several were at feeders in Gabarus, CB Co. (Joan Mills). The largest flock was 30 near Lower Ohio, May 19 (DOE). More WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS were tallied on the NAMC this year than last year, but with fewer than 100, it is still a low total for the year following a cone year on spruce and balsam. Almost half of the total was in Kings Co.

Most observers noticed the lack of COM. REDPOLLS. There were two at a feeder in Portapique, Col. Co. in early March (JAF). A surprisingly high total, five, was found on the NAMC. PINE SISKINS flocked to some feeders and avoided others. More than 70 spent March in the Georges R. area of CB Co. The last day of March and the first few of April brought small numbers to feeders in several places. In mid-May more than 1,300 were tallied on the NAMC, with more than 200 in each of CB, Hants and Pict. Cos. The abundance of AM. GOLDFINCHES continued. Just about 6,000 were tallied on the NAMC, with a high of more than 1,100 in CB Co. At her feeder in Apple R., Cum. Co., KFS noted more through the winter and in March than in any of the previous 10 years. EVENING GROSBEAKS were also widespread and common, even if not nearly as abundant as the goldfinches. Every county produced at least a few Evening Grosbeaks on the NAMC, for a total of more than 1,000. Almost a quarter were in Hants Co.

As expected HOUSE SPARROWS were found in every county during the NAMC. Of the total of just more than 1,000, both Hants and Kings Co. tallied more than 200. These are adaptable birds that take what is available for food. We are used to seeing them looking for moths around the grills of cars or going through the garbage at fast food restaurants. Late in May a half dozen were acting like shorebirds or pipits and feeding on seaweed flies on the beach in Dominion, CB Co. ☞

List of Contributors

Thanks to all of our contributors, including:

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Book Reviews

By Carol Matthews

Gardening for Birds

(How to help birds make the most of your garden)

by Stephen Moss, Illustrations by Gill Tomblin,

Published by Collins, 144 pages, Hardcover, Full Colour

£12.99

This is a lovely book, well laid out, with colourful illustrations and informative notes. Unfortunately it is written for Great Britain and many of the birds and plants are not native to our area. This doesn't mean it wouldn't be a helpful addition to your bookshelf, however.

There is a large section containing sketches for a variety of garden designs – urban, roof, large and small suburban, country and unusual – which offer an assortment of ideas that could be incorporated into Nova Scotian gardens. For each design the author provides suggestions for suitable equipment – the size and style of feeders, nest boxes, and water features, plus things to consider about the size and location of your garden. The sections on what to grow and what you can expect to see include many plants and some birds with which we are familiar.

The Bird Calendar, which plots the month to month activity of birds and bird migrations, is interesting and quite close to our own. Many of the suggestions can be adapted to our local birding schedules, and the Things to Do sections offer universal activities.

The Plant Directory is filled with familiar plants and shrubs that have been imported to Nova Scotia from across the ocean, as well as many that grow naturally in our area. Each plant description points out the benefits each plant provides for birds, whether it is food, protection, nesting or nesting materials.

The Bird Directory is where the book is least appropriate for our area. Although many of the birds are similar – Waxwings, Redpolls, Swallows, Pheasants, Starlings and Sparrows; many are truly exotic, including the Marsh Tits, European Robins, Green Woodpeckers, and the Rose-Ringed Parakeet which has recently been introduced through Southern England by escapees from the cagebird trade. The information provided for each bird is comprehensive, giving identification features, song and calls, habits and breeding, and sketches of each bird in its juvenile and adult plumage, in flight and at rest.

Besides being a reference volume, this is a book to simply enjoy. I would recommend it as a supplement to references written for our local area.

Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

www.carolmatthews.pwac.net

Building A Backyard Bird Habitat

(Bird Feeding, Gardening, Nest Boxes, Winter Shelter)

By Scott Shalaway,

Published by Stackpole Books, 116 pages, 8 colour pages,

Paperback, \$16.95 US

As a garden writer and birder I'm always attracted to books on how to entice birds to our backyards. Locating a feeder in the middle of an exotic garden or bare lawn will bring a few birds, but a feeder that is surrounded by native plantings that also provide food, shelter and nesting possibilities will become the hot spot in the neighbourhood. Scott Shalaway's book has lots to offer if you are looking for information on how to make your yard a bird-friendly place.

Beginning with the ecological impact of backyard birding and ending with ideas on how to better enjoy birds, the book covers the basic aspects of what you need to do to create a backyard habitat. Shalaway gives information on how to discover which foods the birds in your area prefer, how to identify the common visitors, and directions on how to build a feeding station. Water is another necessity and the book provides ideas on how to provide water year round, as well as directions for a simple pond and dust bath. The information on nest boxes is helpful and interesting, especially the suggestions for building a natural looking nest box, and the suggestions on ways to predator-proof them.

My main interest, of course, was his information on developing natural habitat in your own backyard. Shalaway has suggestions for plantings that provide year-round food and protection, plus a section on plantings to attract hummingbirds, in particular. Unfortunately, due to the length of the book, this information could only skim the surface of possibilities.

The book is an interesting read with personal stories and anecdotes, but could use more pictures, photographs, and diagrams to illustrate the ideas presented. Shalaway offers a variety of helpful suggestions and directions, and I know I will use to this book for hints about backyard birding.

Shalaway holds a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology and has written for numerous birding magazines. Although he is from the U.S., his book is relevant to the Atlantic Canadian region, and the plants and shrubs he recommends for our area are readily available.

While somewhat expensive for a paperback, I'd recommend it to beginner and intermediate birders for their reference shelf, or experienced birders who are just starting to garden. ☛

Field Trip Reports

Eastern Shore

14 April 2000, Leader: Ian McLaren

Our 19 observers left Dartmouth shortly after 8 a.m. As we neared Musquodoboit Hbr., the fog and drizzle increased, but miraculously lifted as we drove down to Martinique Beach. There we made the traditional ramble to Flying Point, out along the estuary and back by the beach. We soon found our targeted IPSWICH SPARROWS (this is usually their peak week), but there were few other landbirds. One unseen FOX SPARROW was singing in the thick tuckamoor (NF term) on the point; we saw some later still hanging around feeders. There was a good northward movement of N. GANNETS, some swinging in close, but there were fewer than usual divers and sea ducks off the point. On the way back we respectfully watched a pair of PIPING PLOVERS on the overwash where they bred last year. Further along, a mixed flock of (by count) 51 DUNLINS and 53 SANDERLINGS landed and chased the wash back and forth, almost at our feet. Terry Paquet told us he had seen them (although fewer Dunlins) through winter. It's interesting that the Dunlins had learned Sanderling habits. We spun out the showery day in safari along the shore road, via Cole Hbr., to Hartlen Pt. Highlights were: the lingering GREAT EGRET at Chezzetcook; a lovely gray male N. HARRIER in wavering flight against dark spruces at E. Lawrencetown; a good variety of ducks at Conrad Beach; and some stunning views of pale IPSWICH SPARROWS against the dark beach wrack of Hartlen Pt. By 3 p.m. the wind was cold and cutting, and we disbanded. My day list was 63 species. Others may have missed birds that were spotted from my car and added their own finds; not bad, considering the weather. ☘



Some of the birders who braved the elements to participate in this annual Spring trip. [Photos Gisèle d'Entrement]

Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary

19 May 2001, Leader: Terry Paquet

Wet and drizzly weather greeted the 15 participants for this field trip. Our enthusiasm quickly overshadowed the weather however, as this was Amherst Point and the peak of spring migration. Birds were numerous and mostly co-operative with 14 species of warbler being seen or heard, including some of my favourites, Blackburnian, Cape May and Bay-breasted.

Some other migrants included many swallows of the four expected species, lots of waterfowl and some of the expected marsh birds including Sora, American Bittern, Marsh Wren, American Coot, Common Moorhen and the returned Black Terns.

Other groups such as hawks, shorebirds, thrushes, vireos and woodpeckers rounded out the day and contributed to our day's total of 86 species.

Thanks to all who came out to help with the listening and looking. ☘

Bon Portage Island, Shelburne Co.

19-21 May 2001, Leader: Clair Diggins

This year's spring trip to Bon Portage Island included seven people on a warm Friday evening. The group was at the northwest end of the island when the clouds let loose on Saturday. Sunday and Monday were beautiful but our numbers stayed low at 60 species. The highlight was the Blackburnian Warbler that showed itself on the path while we were drying our feathers in the cabin.

A sad note was finding two Eiders trapped in lobster pots. Both were carefully rescued and we hope both survived. We were pleased to see two adult Hermit Thrushes with two juveniles on the Saddleback. Also, three Black-crowned Night-Herons were on the island. The Leach's Storm Petrels draw members of this group regularly with their sounds and habits and special characteristics. These birds continue to thrive and spread their community.

This special place provided a wonderful weekend for all participants. ☘

Early Morning Warbler Walk - Prospect Road, HRM

23 May 2001, Leader: Fred Dobson

The weather was sunny, frosty, and calm. There were no flies!

Beautifully plumaged, a wonderfully orangey-red with a long, bushy, white-tipped tail, the dog Fox ranged over the greensward by the Park and Ride at the end of the Prospect Road, alternately crouching and dancing in the newly risen sunlight. He was looking for his breakfast – a mouse, a beetle, or perhaps an unwary Junco. He was a fine specimen, in his prime, and for us it was good way to start the day. As usual Magnolia and Myrtle Warblers, Robins, Goldfinches, Juncos and an Ovenbird sang from the bushes around the parking lot.

The fields and woodlands were full of action and song. All the singing birds were on high perches, to catch the first of the morning sun and release the frosty grip of the night air. A soft gray Junco performed his plain but heartfelt song from a telephone wire; a Blue Jay, still puffed up against the cold, regarded us sleepily from the top branches of a Spruce tree. A Winter Wren tinkled joyously back in the woods – high in a tree but too small for us to see. We were serenaded almost continuously by a sunlit Swainson's Thrush, raising his buffy throat to the sky, uttering his gorgeous burbling song again and again. From Big Indian Lake the huge Loon called mournfully, hauntingly through the mist rising from the glassy still waters. A tiny Ruby-crowned Kinglet used a full half of his body to produce his spring song, so much from so little.

Our wood warblers were many in number but few in species – the norm for spring in the boreal forest. We saw (and heard in full song) Magnolia, Myrtle, Black-throated Green and (last but not best, singing in full sunlight) Bay-breasted. Because we skipped the swamp we missed the Palm and Yellowthroat. There were several high-pitched songs we never found, that ranged in my imagination from Blackpoll through Cape May to Blackburnian, but none were close enough for us to get to. Strangely, we heard no Black-and-white, Yellow, or Redstart.

Other birds of interest included the Blue-headed Vireo, Ruffed Grouse, Raven youngsters making an unconscionable racket, Black-capped (but no Boreal) Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Purple Finch, Flicker (but no sign of a Pileated, known to be in the area). Although we saw none, the Barred Owls called all the previous night at Brookside.

I hope to see more of you next year! ☘

Cape d'Or and /Cape Chignecto - Advocate, Cumberland Co.

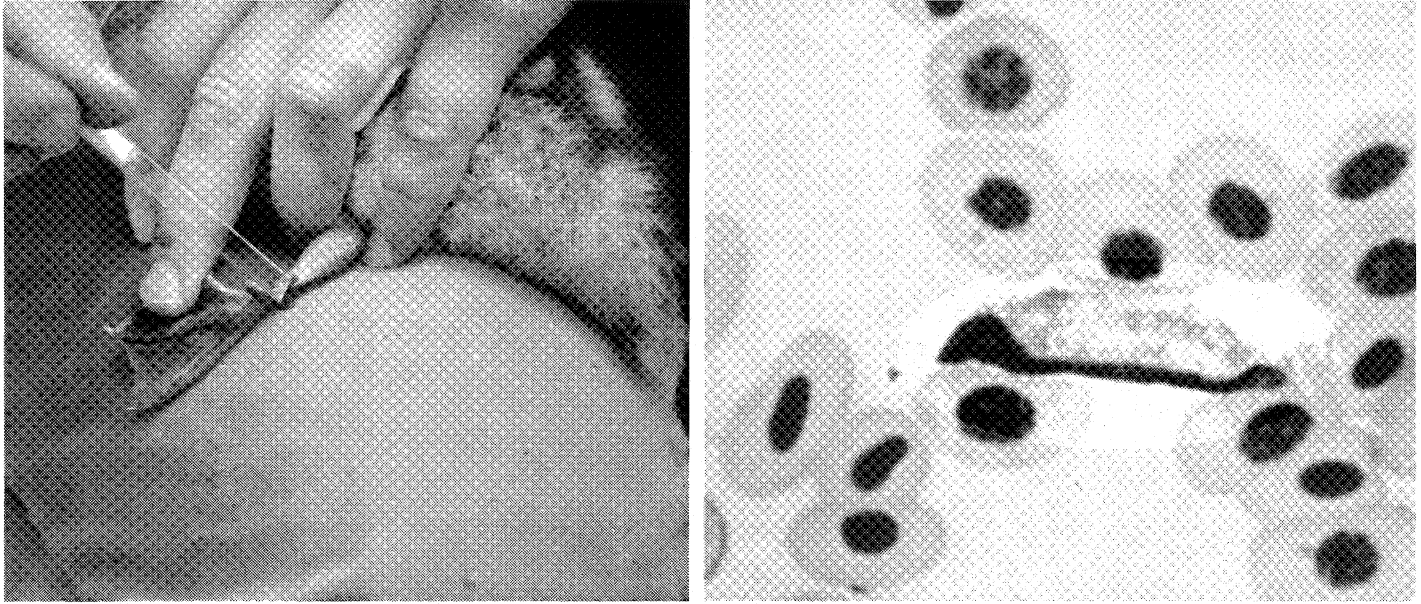
09 and 10 June 2001, Leaders: Jane Fletcher and Maureen Mills.

We had two nice days on the 9th and 10th for our field trips here in Advocate. We also had a nice group of birders. Some of the highlights: Common Tern, Bald Eagle, Merlin, Sora, Snipe, Pileated Woodpecker, Tree, Cliff, and Barn Swallows, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Least, Alder and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, 13 warbler species including Canada, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, lots of Redstarts, Bobolink, Swamp Sparrow, White-winged, and Red Crossbills. We had 75 species in total, a great weekend. I would like to thank all those that came and thanks again Peter, for helping. ☘

Some of my life in science

Dave Shutler, Biology, Acadia University

Modern science has, for now, succeeded in keeping many parasites out of North Americans, but wild birds don't have such luxury. Understanding the battles that birds face on this frontier is a challenge. Ecologists have long known that parasites were a diverse group, but it was too much work to learn them. For example, probably the majority of all animal species are parasitised by a unique, often unnamed, roundworm species (making roundworms the most diverse group of organisms on the planet). Hence, of those who found a parasite in or on a bird, many discovered that they would have to describe the species, which is a monumental task to a hard-core ornithologists.



(Left) A drop of blood is spread on a microscope slide to make a blood smear. (Right) After staining, the roughly oval-shaped, nucleated red blood cells characteristic of birds are evident, but there is also an elongate blood parasite *Leucocytozoon* that has forced the nucleus to the side in one of the cells. [Photos Dave Shutler]

Many ecologists were encouraged to pursue an interest in parasites by a controversial publication by (the late) Bill Hamilton and Marlene Zuk on the evolution of plumage colour and mating displays in birds. The premise of the paper was that parasites are important causes of sickness and even mortality, so there were major advantages to finding a mate with genes for disease resistance; these traits would be passed on to offspring. This tantalising idea forced many of us to start learning about parasites, which led to a plethora of new questions and frontiers, many more than I can cover here; I want to talk about me.

My MSc and PhD research was on birds, and following the Hamilton-Zuk paper, I was often reading about parasites. But I didn't really start studying them until I got interested in how a malaria relative (*Leucocytozoon*) might save American Black Ducks from being replaced by Mallards. In the 1960s, parasitologists in Ontario found that *Leucocytozoon* killed more Mallard than Black Duck ducklings. Based in London, Ontario, I compared susceptibility of Black Ducks and Mallards, but with larger sample sizes (169 ducklings versus the original 40, and using wild-derived versus game-farm stocks). I found that the parasite did not cause mortality or even any noticeable symptoms. The results from the 1960s may have been related to the use of game-farm stocks, which are often bred for traits other than disease resistance. My results may be more representative of what's happening in the wild, and that we can't count on *Leucocytozoon* to save declining Black Duck populations.

After enduring some career "geo-turbulence" (wherein, I moved from London to Oregon to Saskatchewan to Ottawa, and back to Saskatchewan), I once again was provided with an opportunity to work with parasites. Some Europeans had found that when extra young were added to Great Tit nests, the fathers ended up with higher blood parasite loads. The interpretation was that the extra strain made the birds more susceptible to parasite invasion. I decided to test this with Tree Swallows; to some nests we added three eggs and to others we removed three. (Incidentally, parents were able to successfully fledge nests of 10 young, and we did not find any subsequent harm from these manipulations.) We took blood smears (a drop is spread on a microscope slide) from 200 adults and 400 nestling Tree Swallows, and my wife got the job of screening the smears under the microscope. After hundreds of hours, she managed to find only two parasites! Evidently, there's something about Tree Swallows that makes them less susceptible; either they fly too fast for the flies (biting midges, mosquitoes, and black flies) that transmit the parasites, or biting flies don't like going into dark holes where the birds nest. None of this was

any solace to my wife. However, she decided to look at what happened to the white blood cell counts (which can indicate stress) in Tree Swallows raising extra young. The relationship wasn't strong, though nonetheless there was evidence that more kids are more stressful; most of you parents already knew that.

Clearly, blood parasites weren't going to be much fun to study in Tree Swallows. But, Tree Swallows can have in their nests lots of blow flies (the larvae hang out in the nest and at night suck blood from nestling bellies) and fleas. I began work on this system in Saskatoon, and continue to work on it here. Last year, I set up nest boxes in orchards around Wolfville, and it's still too early to say much about parasites here, but I do have one interesting experience to relate. My friends Marty Leonard and Andy Horn (Dalhousie University) also maintain nest boxes in the nearby Gaspereau Valley (they work on begging behaviour, so we don't tread on each others' publishing toes). One day I caught a banded male paired with a banded female, both of whom were "Gaspereau" birds. Unlikely enough (there were probably 1000 equally acceptable nest sites they had to choose from in the area), but what was more amazing was that their band numbers differed only in the last digit. A quick call to Marty confirmed the implausible; the two birds had been nestmates the year before. I hesitate to call them siblings, because Tree Swallows are notorious for fooling around (something colleague Colleen Barber at St. Mary's has worked on), with up to 70% of nests containing offspring sired by more than one dad. Hence, these birds might only have been half-sibs. Regardless, they were over six kilometres from their source nest, and they were inbreeding, something only infrequently documented in wild birds. Although their kids appeared healthy to our eyes, a predator grabbed them before they left, so how they would have fared as adults will never be known.

This last story illustrates a common tale in science; all the planning and preparation in the world (or around Wolfville) never prepares you for all the outcomes that nature has to throw at you. I'm glad. ☐

New Books

The Nova Scotia Bird Society occasionally receives books from publishers for review purposes. We require a review of about a few hundred words (or less for smaller books) which will be printed in *Nova Scotia Birds*; the reviewer gets to keep the book (i.e. the only cost to the reviewer is the written review). Reviewers should have some experience in the topic of the book so a critical review can be written; children's books should be reviewed in conjunction with a child. Reviewers should be able to write clearly and concisely and must be current members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

The following books are available for review. The review is due one month after receiving the book and will be subject to editing.

Puffin's Homecoming by D. Bailer, K. Lee. Smithsonian. For younger children.

Ahmed and the Nest of Sand by K. Bieber Domm, J. Domm. Nimbus. For children.

The FeederWatcher's Guide to Bird Feeding by M.A. Barker and J. Griggs. Harper Collins.

The complete Backyard Birdwatcher's Home Companion by D.S. Heintzelman. Rocky Mountain Press.

Watching Birds – Reflections on the wing by A. Taylor. Rocky Mountain Press.

Sylvia Warblers, by H. Shirihai, G. Gargallo, and A. Helbig. Princeton.

Birds, Birds, Birds by the National Wildlife Federation. For children. McGraw Hill.

Who Killed the Great Auk? by J. Gaskell. Oxford.

Raven's End A Tale from the Canadian Rockies, by B. Gadd. McLelland and Stewart.

Exploring Alaska's Birds. Ed. P. Rennick. Alaska Geographic Society.

Pigeons and Doves by D. Gibbs, E. Barnes and J. Cox. Yale.

Birds of the Seychelles by A. Skerrett, I. Bullock. Princeton.

Crows and Jays by S. Madge and H. Burn. Princeton.

Season of the Eiders (video) National Film Board of Canada.

Wild Goose Chase (video) National Film Board of Canada.

Given the great discrepancy in communication speeds of the postal service and email, all replies will be pooled for three weeks after delivery of this issue of *Nova Scotia Birds*. A lottery system will be used to choose the books' recipients if necessary.

If you are interested please contact:

Randy F. Lauff
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 Biology Department
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 Antigonosh, NS B2G2W5
 rlauff@stfx.ca

Field Trip Reports

Mickey Hill Pocket Wilderness and Belleisle Marsh, Annapolis County

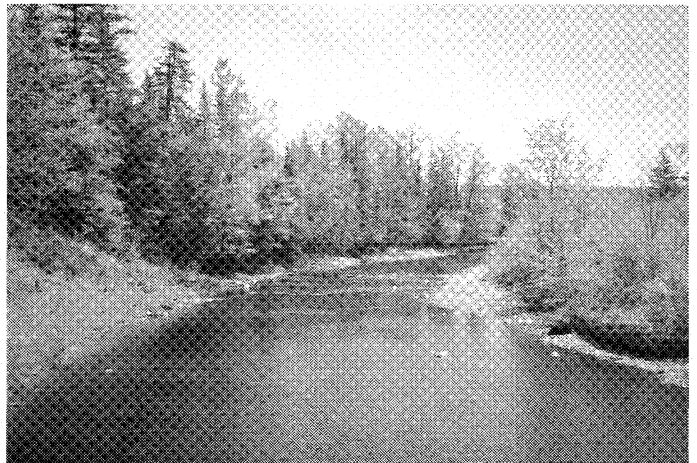
26 May 2001, Leader: Sharon Hawboldt

Ten participants from various parts of the province met at the Tidal Power Plant in Annapolis Royal at 7:30 a.m. Clear skies and warm temperatures stayed with us all day. After a short drive to the Pocket Wilderness we hiked along the rushing brook, around a small swamp, and through the woods stopping at two small lakes. The usual woodland birds were in full song, but were often elusive. Highlights were Blackburnian Warblers and Northern Waterthrush.

Lunchtime sightings in Belleisle included a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak at the feeder. For the afternoon we were joined by seven local birders, including three keen youngsters who eagerly looked for Canada Geese goslings. We walked along the dykes and roads serenaded by Bobolinks and hundreds of swallows and enjoyed a prolonged sighting of a Short-eared Owl as it hunted the fields beside us. The ponds yielded many Ring-necked Ducks, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Sora and American Bittern calling, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler as well as other ducks. A beautiful day with a great group! The total was 78 species. ☘

Shubenacadie Area

27 May 2001, Leader: Roslyn McPhee



This field trip has been lead by Roslyn McPhee (Left insert) for over twenty five years. (Right) One of the beautiful spots visited on the outing was Rines Creek which flows into the Shubenacadie River. [Photos Gisèle d'Entremont]

Photos Needed

We would like to have better photo coverage of your field trips and other birding activities. Whether you have a "point-and-shoot" or a digital camera, why not take it along whenever you go on a field trip? We can use photos of birders (in action!), birds and pictures of birding areas as well. Slides, prints or negatives are all useable, although slides and negatives allow more flexibility in editing. Send your items along to the Photo Editor (who will expeditiously return them). Thank you!

Ian McLaren
Photo Editor, Nova Scotia Birds
Biology Department
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H4J1
iamclar@ac.dal.ca

Book Review

By Richard Knapton

Prairie Water: Wildlife at Beaverhills Lake, Alberta
 By Dick Dekker, photographs by Edgar T. Jones
 University of Alberta Press
 Revised Edition 1998

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I have been to Beaverhills Lake many times - it is a superb wildlife area, and Dick Dekker's evocative and informative writing plus Edgar Jones's fine photographs bring back many pleasant memories. Moreover I learned much more about the history of the lake, both ancient and recent, the birding seasons, the fascinating and careful observations Dekker has made over the decades on wildlife of the region, the problems of land management and the "bovine bulldozer" (what to do about cattle grazing and drinking along the shorelines), and waterfowl hunting and management.

The book is a revised edition first published in 1991. Dekker, who knows Beaverhills Lake better than just about anyone else, dedicates his book to "further appreciation and understanding of the Big Slough near Tofield". And well he might appeal to greater appreciation and understanding. Beaverhills Lake, the closest thing to an ocean in land-locked Alberta, has had a turbulent history, both natural and human-induced. There are stories of the many attempts to dam, dyke and drain the lake (it is very shallow - barely deep enough to cover the blade of a canoe paddle). Natural water level fluctuations have resulted in water stabilization and manipulation projects, there have been massive fish mortalities, and ongoing problems with run-offs of fertilizers, pollutants and pesticides, not to mention oil and coal explorations. At present, the future of the lake seems bright and secure. It has been designated a Ramsar site as a wetland of international importance, a National Nature Viewpoint by the Canadian Nature Federation, and contains provincial natural areas, one of which houses the Beaverhills Bird Observatory. Since 1991, the date of the first edition, the area has

received Important Bird Area status, as well as a site in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (although shorebird occurrence here can be notoriously unpredictable), and the recently established Snow Goose Festival, held annually, is proving very popular. Time will tell if the future is indeed bright and secure.

The chapters are intended to be readable and entertaining, which they are. They are arranged by groups, so we start with grebes and go through 15 chapters to woodland songbirds and rarities, then into mammals and other vertebrates, finishing with an epilogue. There is much evidence of meticulous field notes over more than 20 years of observations, with clear emphasis on bird behaviour. As an example, Dekker has witnessed Peregrine Falcon attacks on 1,478 occasions, with a success rate of 7.5%, which may seem low but is in fact well in line with success rates of other predators. Over half the prey were shorebirds, of 11 species, followed by ducks of eight species, at about 30%, and then three passerines, a gull and a tern. A large data set like this allows him to note differences in hunting strategies between adults and immatures, and the fact that most attacks were surprise attacks, catching the prey on the ground or just as it took flight, rather than the classic text-book "knock the prey out of the sky with clenched talons".

The book is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of wildlife at Beaverhills Lake - that work has yet to be completed. There are checklists of birds, mammals and other vertebrates at the end. However, as an introduction and a highly enjoyable read of an intriguing area, I would highly recommend this book. ☞

In Memoriam

By Barbara Hinds

James Curzon (Jim) Morrow

When James C. Morrow, BA., died in Halifax on June 16, 2001, at the age of 81 years, Nova Scotia Bird Society lost a valued, loyal member and friend. During his long-time membership, he served The Society as its auditor, a post he still held at the time of his death.

Jim was an enthusiast in all his varied pursuits, a philanthropist; a lover of the natural world about us, and a volunteer in many community affairs bringing wise counsel to many a board meeting.

He was essentially a kind man, always courteous, and the president and treasurer of associations such as the Family Service Bureau and the Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty.

One of his great interests was gardening at which he was hugely successful, growing some spectacular roses and dahlias. Inevitably, Jim became a judge seen at many flower shows.

He was educated at Kings College, Windsor; University of New Brunswick, Fredericton; University of Western Ontario, London; Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Mass.; and Maritime School of Social Work, Halifax. He was a schoolmaster, a university lecturer, and a successful stock broker for 41 years, retiring in 1988.

He is survived by his wife Betty, a brother, Robert, sons Brian, Irvine, Mark and their families. He was predeceased by son, John.

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY Membership Application/Renewal Form

Membership in the Nova Scotia Bird Society is open to all. The membership fee includes a subscription to *Nova Scotia Birds*. Application for membership assumes that you have read and agreed to the waiver below. Membership runs from January to

Individual: \$15/year, for _____ years \$ _____
 Family: \$18/year, for _____ years \$ _____
 Institutional: \$25/year, for _____ years \$ _____
 Life: \$375 \$ _____
 Additional for Foreign Addresses:
 \$2/year, for _____ years \$ _____
 Fed. of NS Naturalists:
 \$5/year, for _____ years \$ _____

Membership Total: \$ _____

Gift Memberships:

An excellent way to mark a special occasion! List recipient's name and mailing address on a separate sheet or on the back of this form.

Number of Gift Memberships: _____

Gift Memberships Total: \$ _____

Sanctuary and Scholarship Trust Fund:

Please consider a tax-creditable donation to our Sanctuary and Scholarship Trust Fund.

Sanctuary and Scholarship Trust Fund Donation: \$ _____

NSBS Supplies

The following items are available to members:

NSBS crests @ \$4 each \$ _____
 NSBS decals @ \$1 each \$ _____
 Bird checklists @ four for \$1 \$ _____
 Birding Nova Scotia @ \$5 each \$ _____

Supplies Total: \$ _____

Total Enclosed: (Make cheque payable to N. S. Bird Society) \$ _____

Name: _____
 First Name Mid. Initial(s) Last Name

Renewal

Additional Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

I WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP WITH: Leading Bird Walks
 Hospitality Magazine Publicity Leading School Group
 Conservation Other _____

In signing this membership application I/we hereby waive and release the Nova Scotia Bird Society, its executive committee and members from all claims for injury and/or damage suffered at any function or field trip organized by the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

Signature: _____

Mail to:

Membership Secretary,
Nova Scotia Bird Society,
c/o Nova Scotia Museum,
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6

(Continued from back cover)

Sat. 3 Nov. 2001 - The Pubnicos

Leader: Gisele d'Entremont 422-7739 (Halifax) or 762-2439 (Pubnico). Email gdentremont@ns.sympatico.ca

Enjoy autumn birding. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Red Cap Motel & Restaurant, Middle West Pubnico, Yarmouth County. If people express interest, we could have another trip for the following day. Rain date: Sun. 4 Nov.

Fri. 23 to Sat. 24 Nov. 2001 - Regular Meeting (Antigonish)

The yearly "out-of-Metro" meeting of the NSBS will be held Fri. 23 Nov., with field trips on the 24th. The meeting will take place at 8:00 in room 237 of J. Bruce Brown Hall, St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish. We are very pleased to have

as the guest speaker Dr. Tony Erskine of the Canadian Wildlife Service, best known to birders as the author of *Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Maritime Provinces*. The field trip(s) will survey the birds of the Northumberland Strait and its harbours, with stops at all of the best birding spots, including Ogdens Pond, home of the "inland" Gannets. For more information, please contact Randy Lauff at 867-2471 or rlauff@stfx.ca.

Sat. 1 Dec. 2001 - Cape Sable Island

Leader: Murray Newell 745-3340. Email murcar@klis.com

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Tim Horton's in Barrington Passage. This is an opportunity to have a great start to your winter list.

☐☐☐

Field Trip Report

**NSBS / Blomidon Naturalist Society: King's County Birds
April 29, 2001 Leader: Jim Wolford**

It was sunny all day but cold and windy in many exposed places. There were about 30 participants in a caravan of 15 cars.

Bernard Forsythe's yard on Wolfville Ridge: Here we had a wonderful show that must have somehow been scripted. He showed us the male Barred Owl perched in a poplar tree, as if it was basking in the sun. Then, after telling us about the breeding biology of local Barred Owls, he climbed his ladder to check the nestbox not far from his house. Nearby, Black-capped Chickadees were just as excited as we were! Bernard opened the top, reached in, and showed us the largest of the three owlets -- the one he showed was perhaps a week old or less -- the first egg had been laid March 17, but Bernard told us that this pair is spoiled by hand-outs all winter and lay their eggs well before other more wild pairs. Finally, Bernard climbed the ladder again; this time to put a dead hamster on the feeding platform, and the male swooped in right away to take it away into the woods. Then he called once or twice, probably to attract the female to come for the food. Thanks so much, Bernard!

Also while in Bernard's yard, we saw three Bald Eagles soaring and flapping very high above us (one adult, two immatures). We also viewed the eagle nest north of Noggins Farm Market at Greenwich. Later I showed a couple of people another Bald Eagle nest at Starrs Point, where the adult acted as if she? was attending something (eaglets?) in the nest. At Port Williams a Crow was dive-bombing a Raven near a Crow nest, and it was nice to compare the two species together. Adjacent to the Port Williams flooded field that earlier held a Glossy Ibis too briefly, we saw a Red-tailed Hawk with food in its talons land on the ground by another Red-tail.

At Canard Pond we did quite well, with a male Gadwall, three American Wigeons, several Ring-necked Ducks, two Double-crested Cormorants, and, among perhaps thousands of Herring & Great Black-backed Gulls, two all-white immature "white-winged gulls", one of them an Iceland Gull and the other a Glaucous, plus another Red-tailed Hawk. It was very nice to have easy comparisons of the four species of gull all together to facilitate Iceland & Glaucous identifications.

Harris' Pond in Canning produced one Yellow-rumped Warbler. We stopped in Canning's riverside park and the Canning Aboiteau, where we saw seven Double-crested Cormorants, and 180 Canada Geese grazing on short grass along the Habitant River; also a Raven nest was obvious northwest of the Petrocan station. We walked to Van Nostrands Pond, Starrs Point, and we saw a male Wood Duck, a few Green-winged Teals and Ring-necked Ducks, and Red-breasted Mergansers (one male with two females). Others may have seen a Barn Swallow among the several Tree Swallows seen (no flocks, though).

After I left everyone else and grabbed a mandatory ice-cream cone at Hennigars farm market (I recommend Elderkin's, too) at Greenwich, I continued on to Grand Pré, because Bernard Forsythe had found a single male Eurasian form among several more typical Green-winged Teals in a creek along the main dyke south from the west end of Long Island. All of them were still there, and I think one other carful saw them, too. ☐

Upcoming Events



Field trips are open to non-members as well as members. Please phone or email the field trip leader or contact person ahead of time to register for the trip and obtain further information (e.g. directions). In this way no trip is oversubscribed, and you can be contacted in case of cancellation. Field trips range from early morning warbler walks to all day outings, to overnight expeditions to offshore islands. The area code for N.S. is 902. NSMNH = The Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax.

Ideas and suggestions for future trips are welcome. You do not need to be an expert to lead a field trip, and the trip does not need to last all day; you just need to share your favourite birding spots. Any questions, comments or suggestions should be directed to the Events Editor, Peter Richard 463-5612. Email: prichard@ns.sympatico.ca

Sat. 11 Aug. 2001 Matthews Lake

Leader: David Young 656-2225.

Email dyoung000@ns.sympatico.ca

Meet at the parking lot at the end of the road to Hemeons Head. Take Highway 103 to exit 23 and turn south on the Lighthouse Route for about 4 km. Then turn left on the road marked "West Middle Head, Louis, Little Harbour." Follow this road about 11 km to a stop sign at Little Harbour. Go straight through the stop sign on the road to "Arnolds" which turns to gravel soon after the stop sign. Proceed to the end of the road, about 3.25 km, to a parking area.

Meeting time will be 8:30 am. The trip will take 3 to 4 hours. Walking distance is about 8 km and ankle- to calf-high water will be encountered. Hemeons Head is about 2.5 hours from Halifax. We will be mostly studying shorebirds.

Sun. 19 Aug. 2001 The Hawk

Leader: Murray Newell 745-3340. Email murcar@klis.com

Meet at the Tim Horton's in Barrington Passage at 8:00 a.m. See the migrating shorebirds between The Hawk and Cape Light and look for rarities. Bring proper footwear and a lunch if you wish.

Sat. 25 Aug. 2001 Point Michaud, Cape Breton

Leaders: George Digout 535-3516.

Email george.digout@ns.sympatico.ca

Billy Digout 535-2513.

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Dept. of Transport building, Hwy. 4 and Point Michaud turnoff, St. Peters. It is a good idea to wear boots if it is rainy. Lunch at George and Sharon Digout's home. Rain date Sun. 26 August.

Sat. 1 to Mon. 3 Sep. 2001 Bon Portage Island

Leader: Joan Czapalay 348-2803 (1 July to 12 Aug.)

(Before 01 June and after 12 Aug: 422-6858

Email joancz@ns.sympatico.ca)

Pre-Registration is necessary!

Depart late afternoon or early evening on Friday from Prospect Point Wharf. Bring food, drinking water, warm

clothing and foot-wear suitable for rough (sometimes wet) terrain, a flashlight, mattress sheet and sleeping bag. Carry gear in waterproof bags or containers. Field guides are available on the island, as are cooking pans, dishes and utensils. There is a charge of \$45 to NSBS members for three nights accommodation, as well as a boat trip donation.

Thu. 27 Sep. 2001. Regular Meeting

NSMNH, Summer St., Halifax, 7:30 p.m.

"Ecotouring? and Birding in Costa Rica and Trinidad" Guest speaker Jim Wolford.

Sat. 29 Sep. 2001 Eastern Shore

Leader: Peter Richard 463-5612.

Email: Prichard@ns.sympatico.ca

Meet at Eastern Passage in the parking lot across from the church at 8 am. This trip will cover the common birding hot-spots between Eastern Passage and Lower East Chezzetcook (but not Hartlen Pt.) Please plan to carpool as much as possible since many of the stops have a limited parking area.

Sat. 6 to Mon. 8 Oct. 2001 Brier Island

Leader: Fulton Lavender 455-4966.

Meet at the parking lot of the Brier Island Lodge on Saturday at 8 a.m. Enjoy a complete package of fall migration, highlighted by hawk flights. Weather permitting, there will be a boat trip on one of the days if at least 10 people register in advance.

Sun. 7 Oct. 2001 Cape Sable Island

Leader: Murray Newell 745-3340. Email murcar@klis.com

Meet at the Tim Horton's in Barrington Passage at 8:00 a.m. See late migrants and shorebirds. Bring proper footwear and a lunch if you wish.

Thu. 25 Oct. 2001. NSBS Annual General Meeting

NSMNH, Summer St., Halifax, 7:30 p.m.

As usual, the AGM will be followed by a wine and cheese reception, a great opportunity to meet and mingle.

(Continued on inside back cover)