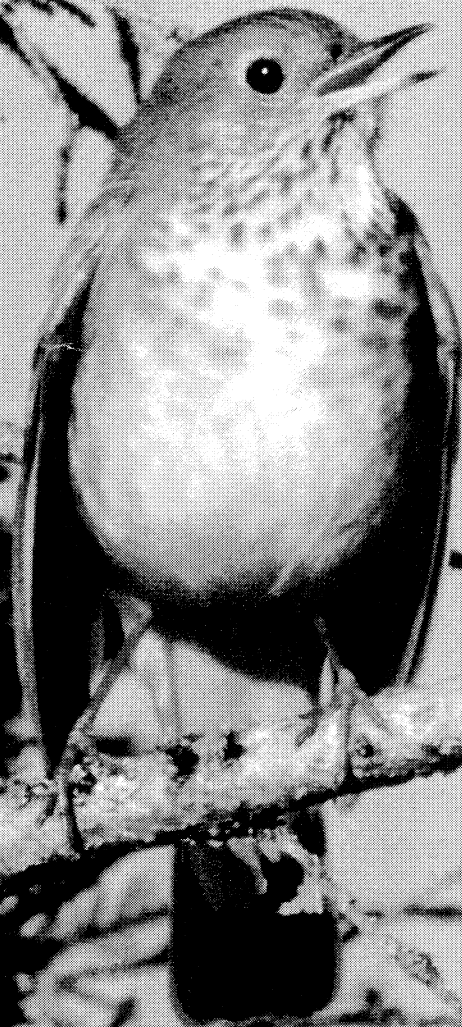


# Nova Scotia Birds

A Quarterly Publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society



**Autumn 2002**  
(The Birds of Summer)



# NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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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 2003 issue: Dec. 7, 2002  
 Spring 2003 issue: Mar. 7, 2003

Summer 2003 issue: June 7, 2003  
 Fall 2003 issue: Aug. 7, 2003

## Inside This Issue

### *Special points of interest:*

- Piping Plover Update
- Project Feederwatch
- Bicknell's Thrush
- High elevation Landbird Program
- Summer Seasonal Reports
- Trip Reports
- Book Reviews

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Cover Photo: A singing male Bicknell's Thrush on Cape Breton's French Mountain. [Photo Dan Busby]

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AUTUMN 2002

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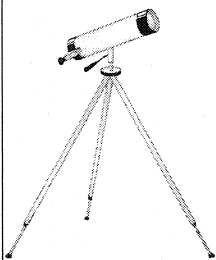
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# The Spotting Scope



Well, I didn't *see* one this year, but I did last year. I didn't *hear* one this year either, and I even went out on a Bird Studies Canada survey specifically to find one (or two, or three...). I heard one last year, after spotting about seven moose, and only then did my watch tell me it wasn't even 6:00 a.m. yet! This bird is one of the elusive ones, rather nondescript, some would even say bland; others would marvel at the subtle tones which, in addition to its behaviour, makes it rather elusive and therefore, a *darn good tick*. This bird is very pleasing to the ear and is a target bird both for locals and for those from afar. The Bicknell's Thrush is the subject of this theme issue of *Nova Scotia Birds*, and it well-deserves this attention.

The issue you now are reading could have only happened because of the concerted efforts of many agencies, both governmental and nongovernmental. Let's remember that it took guts to try to convince financial powers that an uncharismatic bird which steers clear of the human eye is worthy of funding...*surely* more bang for the public buck could have been attained by studying Bald Eagles, Ruby-throated Hummers, or Puffins, something with which the general public can relate! Kudos to the researchers for persevering the mud, mosquitoes and tragically early mornings over the last few years!

But there's more. Very recently, the Bicknell's Thrush was added to Nova Scotia's list of wildlife at risk, ranked at YELLOW (sensitive to human or natural activities), in company with Eastern Bluebird, Short-eared Owl, Vesper Sparrow and 19 of our other birds; four other birds are ranked at RED (known to be, or thought to be at risk), Piping Plover, Harlequin Duck, Peregrine Falcon, and Roseate Tern. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada lists the Bicknell's Thrush as a species of Special Concern (one rank below Threatened), and the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Center ranks this species as G4, S1S2B (apparently secure globally, though extremely rare to rare provincially; breeds). Well, at least there was a good reason that I didn't hear or see one this year. Becky Whittam's article on the High Elevation Landbird Program explains how you can help monitor this at-risk species.

Of course, there is more to this issue than Bickies. We have the quarterly Piping Plover report, and the seasonal reports as well. We have great photos and book reviews. We have a call to arms for all who feed the birds (about 95% of you!) from Project FeederWatch, and our other regular features as well.

During the period between this issue and the last one, we have heard news about three positive tests for West Nile Virus in birds in our Province; this is essentially insignificant when compared to the untold number of birds of many species being found dead to the south and west of us, but certainly bears watching. Within the next few issues, I hope to have the implications of this new invader described to you.

Our next issue will be in the new year, just after the Christmas Bird Counts. For me, the CBCs are the highlight of winter birding, partly because of the competitiveness that I have with other birders, particularly those more skilled than me, partly because of the camaraderie during and especially at the end of the day, partly because of the knowledge that my numbers will help scientists monitor bird populations, but mostly because I just love birding. I hope all of you will consider helping out on one or more CBCs, perhaps for one of the reasons that motivates me, maybe for one of your own. Until next issue,

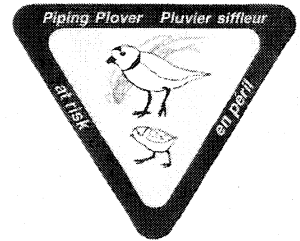
Good Birding!

*Randy*

P.S. And a hearty *Welcome!* to Suzanne Borkowski. Suzanne is now coordinating field trips and will be putting together the Upcoming Events found on the back cover. Email her with your trip ideas and trip reports at: sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca or phone her at 445-2922.

# News from the Nova Scotia Coastal Guardian Program

By Anna McCarron  
Program Co-ordinator

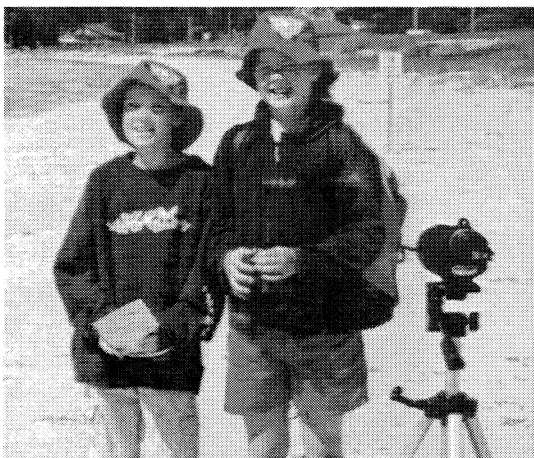


It was a very productive season in terms of guardian recruitment. Unfortunately, the numbers of Piping Plover successes didn't correspond. The count is very sketchy at this point but what we have at press time is:

County	Adults	Pairs	Singles	Fledged Chicks	Success Rate (FC/P)*
Victoria	2	1	0	?	?
Antigonish	9	4	1	12	3.00
Pictou	2	1	0	3	3.00
Halifax	8	3	2	8	2.67
Lunenburg	8	3	2	6	2.00
Queens	18	9	0	?	?
Shelburne	46	23	0	20	0.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>49 (?)</b>	<b>1.11 (?)</b>

\* The fledging success rate goal as set by the Piping Plover Recovery Team is 1.5 chicks per pair; FC/P = Fledged Chicks per Pair

Piping Plovers were hard hit by early storms that washed out nests, and by predators such as foxes, gulls, crows, and mink with an appetite for eggs and newly hatched chicks. It is interesting that this trend was evident throughout the Maritimes this year. This begs the question; why are these trends more prevalent in one year over another? And why only in certain areas? The north shore of Nova Scotia, for instance, saw an increase in the breeding success. In Halifax County the success rate was cut in half, but the numbers of actual birds that returned to the area to breed tripled, and the numbers of fledged chicks doubled! In Pictou County an "old-is-new-again" beach was discovered this year. Apparently, there had been a nest there last year but was not reported until this year. On the South Shore, on the other hand, particularly in Shelburne County, the Piping Plover breeding attempts were devastated by predators and storm tides. To compare, Cape Sable Island saw 35 chicks hatch and 11 fledge last year. This year only three hatched and those three are believed to have fledged. Quite a startling contrast!



Grade 5 students, Christina and Autumn were the latest additions to the Guardian program this season. They were very keen guardians who helped to protect the chick on Lockeport Beach.

Guardians were out in full force this year, although we could always use more, especially in the Shelburne area. The Cape Sable Island staff under the guidance of Joyce Milroy and Emma Nickerson, really made an impact with the Cape Sable Island Welcome Centre. Thanks to the eagerness of the guardian staff to protect the only Piping Plover family on Cape Sable Island, (they called the chicks their "little grandchildren").

In other areas of Shelburne County there have been new guardians from every walk of life interested in patrolling the beaches there. Their efforts were made even more interesting when a late nesting pair arrived on Lockeport Beach this year – after at least a three-year absence! Thanks to the public awareness efforts of the guardians and local birders in the area, and the people who work in the Tourist Information Centre there, people were very cooperative on this busy beach and one chick managed to fledge! I saw the juvenile on August 29 feeding furiously to prepare for the long flight south – another success story from Shelburne County. There were also some unusual "guardians" that helped to protect Piping Plover breeding efforts this year on at least three beaches in Shelburne County; the terns' aggressive behaviour toward people and animals on these beaches helped to protect both nests and chicks.



In Queens County, new guardians were at the ready, and one guarded the nest like it was his own. Unfortunately, foxes got the chicks from that nest just as they hatched. This was very disappointing for Jordan Roy. Jordan did get some just rewards, however, when he spotted two banded Piping plovers from Newfoundland, one each on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, making their way South. It just goes to show how keeping your eyes open for banded birds really pays off.

In Lunenburg County, despite the strong volunteer force on the beaches there, vandals apparently took their toll on at least one nest and the signage surrounding the area. What warrants such senseless acts of violence is beyond my comprehension. Reporting such violations by calling **1-800-565-2224** is extremely important. For the most part, people are respectful of the fenced off areas. Most people keep their dogs on leashes, but there are the few who like to remove leashes once they are away from any authority. This is a big problem no matter where you are in Nova Scotia.

In Halifax, the guardian patrol tripled, coinciding with the numbers of birds breeding. Again, most people are cooperative in this area, respecting the signed areas.

In Antigonish County, the Lifeguards really took an interest in the program and invited me to set up a display about the Piping Plover and the Guardian program at Pomquet Beach. They also supported the program throughout the season in addition to their lifeguard duties by reminding people to keep dogs on leashes and to walk near the water line.

The Guardian program rewarded the guardians who took the most time on the beaches this year with an unbleached t-shirt, decorated with a Piping Plover illustration from the book *Ahmed and the Nest of Sand*, illustrated by Jeff Domm, and written by Kristen Domm, published by Nimbus.

The winners by county are:

Antigonish - Sarah MacLaughlin  
 Pictou - Ken McKenna  
 Halifax - Terry Paquet and Suzanne Borkowski  
 Lunenburg - James Hirtle  
 Queens - Jane Alexander and Jordan Roy  
 Shelburne - Sid and Betty June Smith, Roland McCormick and Grant Milroy



Andrew and Sarah stand guard at Pomquet beach



Sean Lemoine shows a tourist couple where to look on the South Shore.

Finally, a word about Sean Lemoine, the tireless Piping Plover monitor (whom many of you may have spotted on many of the South Shore beaches this season) supported by the Department of Natural Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service. His conscientious effort to promote public awareness within the many communities he visited in all three of the South Shore Counties did not go unnoticed. Many people were impressed that he took the time to talk to people about the birds' behaviours and to show them the Piping Plovers through his scope. Protecting the Piping Plover and its habitat is a partnership effort. If you would like to join us, please contact me: (902) 860-1263 or [plover@istar.ca](mailto:plover@istar.ca). ☘

## **Wanted: Editor for *Nova Scotia Birds***

It has been my great pleasure to serve as Editor of *Nova Scotia Birds* over the past few years. However, the time has come for me to step down from the position, and pursue other interests. I intend to stay involved with the magazine, albeit in a much lower capacity.

Now though, the Society must find a new person or persons to take on the task, to start sometime within the next few issues. I will be available for consultation with the new editor(s). The ideal person would have great interpersonal skills (you will be working with a wonderful team of about a dozen volunteers), basic computer skills (email and word processing) and be able to maintain a schedule. Alternatively, a small team of interested people could share the workload and make up an Editorial Committee.

Interested people are requested to send a notice of interest to the Society's president, Andy Horn at: aghorn@is.dal.ca or 846 Bridges St., Halifax, N.S. B3H 2Z7. Any questions regarding the position can be directed to me at: rlauff@stfx.ca or (902) 867-2471.

*Randy*

## **Executive Seeks Feedback on Your Educational Work**

One of the main purposes of the Nova Scotia Bird Society is education. To improve the Society's efforts on that front, the executive would like to hear from any members who have given talks, led walks, or done any similar educational activities about birds over the past year, outside of our usual slate of monthly meetings and field trips. Not only would we like to have a better feel for who's out there doing such work, but we'd also like suggestions for how we can help such efforts, for example through providing resources, like bird books, demo feeders, and the like, or by offering some other kind of logistical help. You can relay the information through any member of the executive, by writing to the Society's address at the museum, or by sending an email to aghorn@is.dal.ca or a note to Andy Horn, 846 Bridges St., Halifax, N.S. B3H 2Z7. Thanks!

## **Membership Renewal**

Our membership year runs from January to December. If the magazine mailing label says 2002 your membership expires at the end this year. Make sure you get your Winter issue on time, send your cheque today. Help save the Membership Secretary the extra work of sending our reminders after Christmas. Enclosed with this issue you will find a renewal form. Thanks.

## **NSBS Supplies**

The following items are available to members by mail or at regular Society meetings.

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

# Project FeederWatch

By Becky Whittam



WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL at a feeder. [Photo Rhoda Crandall]

Common Redpolls and Red and White-winged Crossbills arrived at Atlantic Canadian feeders in droves last winter. Boreal finches, such as redpolls, usually come to feeders in large numbers every other year. These irruptions are most likely a result of fluctuations in the birds' natural food supply, which consists of tree seeds. When food is low in the north, these birds flock south in search of food, with many showing up at feeders.

Last winter was the best ever for seeing Red and White-winged Crossbills at bird feeders, especially in Atlantic Canada. Opening sunflower seeds looks like a chore for crossbills...the uniquely crossed bills are normally used to quickly pry open conifer cones, after which the seeds are lifted free with their tongues. White-wings visited 13% of 138 participating feeders in Atlantic Canada, while Red-wings visited 4.3% of feeders in 2001-2002.

Common Redpolls were abundant last winter, visiting 70% of participating feeders in Atlantic Canada in groups averaging 13 individuals, compared with only 14% of feeders visited in the previous winter. If the bi-annual cycle continues, this coming winter should be fairly quiet on the redpoll front. However, FeederWatchers should be on the lookout for large numbers of American Goldfinches, which tend to peak in opposite years to the redpolls. According to Project FeederWatch results, the favorite feeder food of the American Goldfinch is niger seed.

Project FeederWatch has over 16,000 participants across North America, with 2,800 from Canada. The information collected by these FeederWatchers tells scientists how winter bird populations are growing or declining, and how their continent-wide distributions are changing – information that is crucial to effective bird conservation programs.

Project FeederWatch is always on the lookout for new participants. Participants watch birds at their backyard feeders once every two weeks from November through March. They count the types and numbers of birds they see, and record the information on data forms or web pages. Project FeederWatch is a joint project of Bird Studies Canada, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.

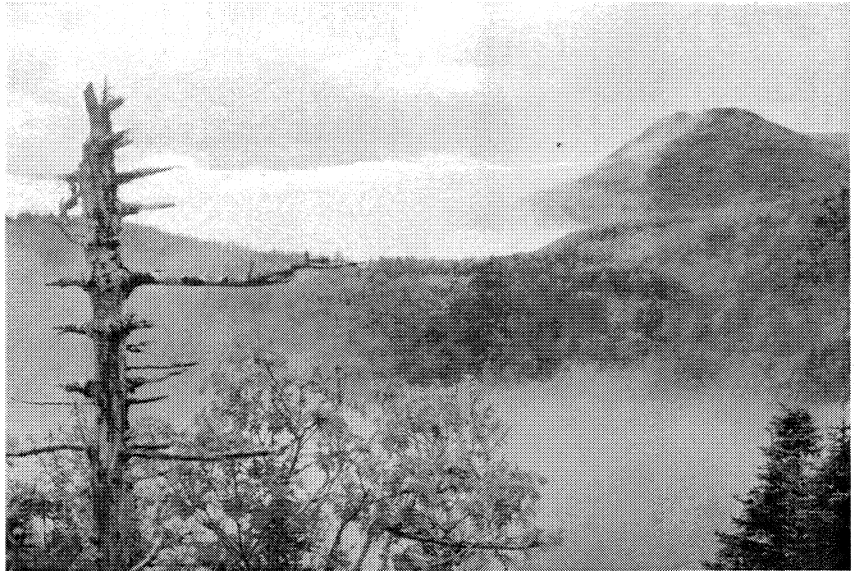
Participants in Project FeederWatch are asked to become members of Bird Studies Canada (BSC), a national, non-profit research institute studying birds and their habitats for conservation. For an annual \$25.00 membership fee, participants receive the FeederWatch instruction booklet, resource manual, data forms, a calendar, a poster of common feeder birds, and BSC's quarterly publication, *BirdWatch Canada*. Participants are also entitled to free participation in other BSC programs, including the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey and the Christmas Bird Count. To register, fill out the online form at <<http://bsc-eoc.org/national/pfwsign.html>>. Alternatively, write to: P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0 (enclose a \$25 cheque to Project FeederWatch), e-mail [pfw@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:pfw@bsc-eoc.org), or call Bird Studies Canada toll-free at 1-888-448-2473.

Canadian Coordinator, Project FeederWatch  
 Bird Studies Canada – Atlantic Region  
 P.O. Box 6227, Sackville, NB E4L 1G6  
 Phone (506) 364-5047  
 fax (506) 364-5062  
[becky.whittam@ec.gc.ca](mailto:becky.whittam@ec.gc.ca)

## An Overview of Bicknell's Thrush

By Dan Busby

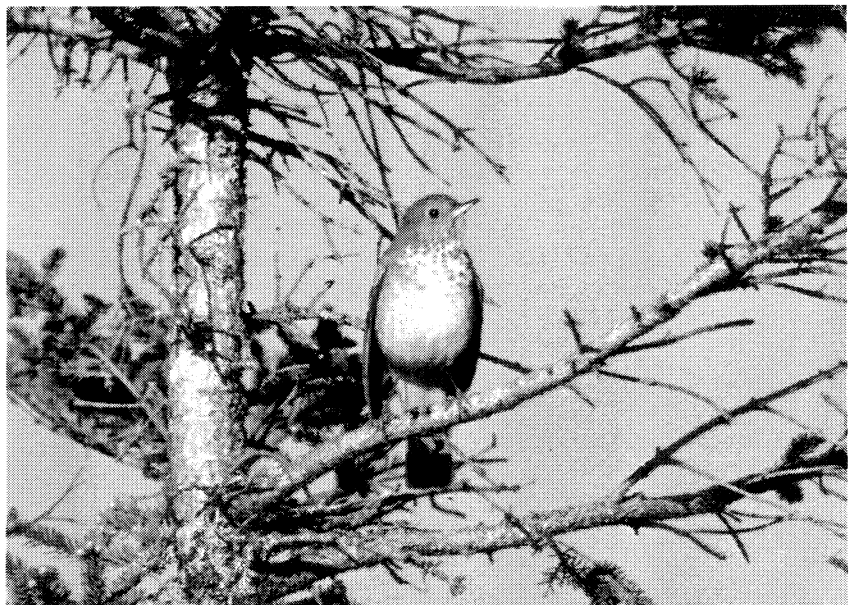
Bicknell's Thrush is no ordinary songbird. It distinguishes itself in many dubious regards. First, to find this elusive songster, you must trek to the remotest corners of our maritime landscape. But only in those areas we classify as high altitude will you have a good chance of finding the bird – namely the highlands of northern New Brunswick and Cape Breton. If the winds are howling, the forest a derelict-looking mess of stunted and dying spruce and fir, and the fog so thick you can barely see your hand in front of you, then you are likely getting very close. If you are lucky enough to find yourself on the shores of St. Paul or Scaterie Island listen carefully and you may be rewarded. These islands apparently mimic the climates found at the more usual montane habitats and support small populations of Bicknell's.



The Cape North peninsula is perhaps the best known site for Bicknell's Thrush; its native habitat is known for very diverse weather. [Photo Dan Busby]

Your search has only begun, however. After years of survey work in nearly every nook of the region I have come to appreciate that the distribution of breeding groups is very clumped – a few pair here, a few there. A larger clump over there. And within that clumped distribution, there seems to be little to distinguish between habitats of areas where they do occur and areas that they do not, perhaps an indication that wintering ecology is more limiting to the population than that of the breeding grounds.

Once you have found the right habitats within these high altitudes your efforts to find the bird will still be tested. Bicknell's Thrush are elusive birds. Usually heard only in the early hours of morning and the late hours of evening, and then only sporadically, they are not an easy bird to detect by sound. They are even more difficult to see. Perfectly camouflaged with its brown back and spotted whitish breast, it blends uncannily with its surroundings. And while thrushes as a group are known for their secrecy, surely Bicknell's Thrush must qualify as the ultimate thrush! However patience and perseverance will bring rewards to those who stalk with determination. The sight of your first bird will bring years of pleasure. To know that you have spotted one of North America's rarest birds is an accomplishment in itself.



A two-hour wait by a known perch allowed for this spectacular shot of a male Bicknell's Thrush on Cape Breton's French Mountain. [Photo Dan Busby]

Current estimates, perhaps more accurately portrayed as guesses, indicate that there are between 1,500 and 5,000 pair in the Maritimes. Perhaps "pair" is a misnomer



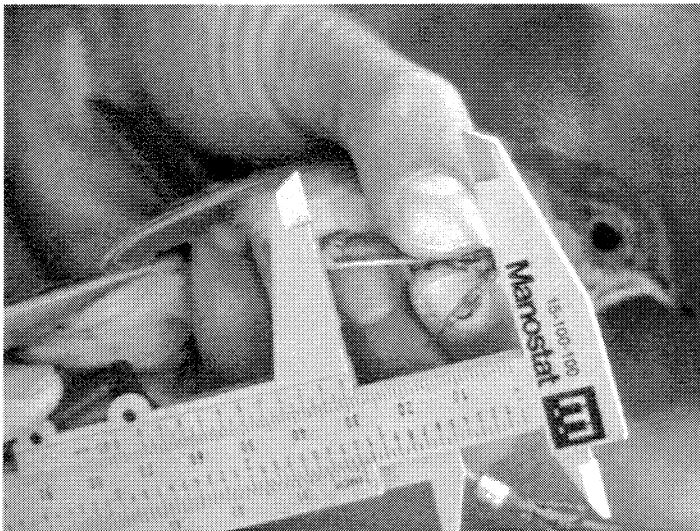
however. Recent studies in Quebec and Vermont indicate that the breeding biology is not typical of songbirds. Most nests have been found to have two or more males involved and the parentage of the eggs within a nest is multiple. Studies are needed to clarify the mysterious ways of Bicknell's Thrush breeding ecology.

While its breeding distribution, limited to northeastern North America, is one of the most restricted of our songbirds, its wintering distribution is even more of a concern. Currently known only from large islands of the Caribbean, namely the Dominican Republic and Cuba, its wintering habitat is under enormous pressure from habitat degradation. Declines in distribution have been documented. It recently received COSEWIC's status of Species of Special Concern and it is listed as a high priority species in the U.S.A.

One interesting twist in the conservation biology of Bicknell's Thrush is its apparent affinity, or, at least acceptance of, second growth forest – it can be found scattered throughout the highland working forests of Cape Breton and northern New Brunswick, but only in habitats where structural characteristics meet their necessary requirements for high foliage density. Research is urgently needed to determine if this type of habitat is suitable breeding habitat and how it may fit into the rotational harvesting strategies of the forest industry. Further potential threats to the long term survival of the species are a burgeoning ski industry, alpine tourism, exponential increase in the number of communications towers and acid precipitation, to name a few.

Some serious concerns aside, there is much to be optimistic about. We are fortunate to have two major areas of Bicknell's Thrush population in protected areas – Cape Breton Highlands National Park and Mount Carleton Provincial Park in northern NB. In another important area, Cape North in northern Cape Breton, although not formally protected there seems little to suggest the birds there have much to worry about. And as for the birds on Scaterie and St. Paul Islands, they should also remain safe for some time to come. Current efforts to work with Cuban and Dominican Republic officials regarding wintering grounds habitat degradation are, perhaps, key to any long term strategy. These efforts, along with others closer to home, will continue to challenge biologists and wildlife managers for years to come. Stay tuned. For more information please check out our Bicknell's Thrush web site at [http://www.atl.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/bicknells\\_thrush/e/index.html](http://www.atl.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/bicknells_thrush/e/index.html). ☞

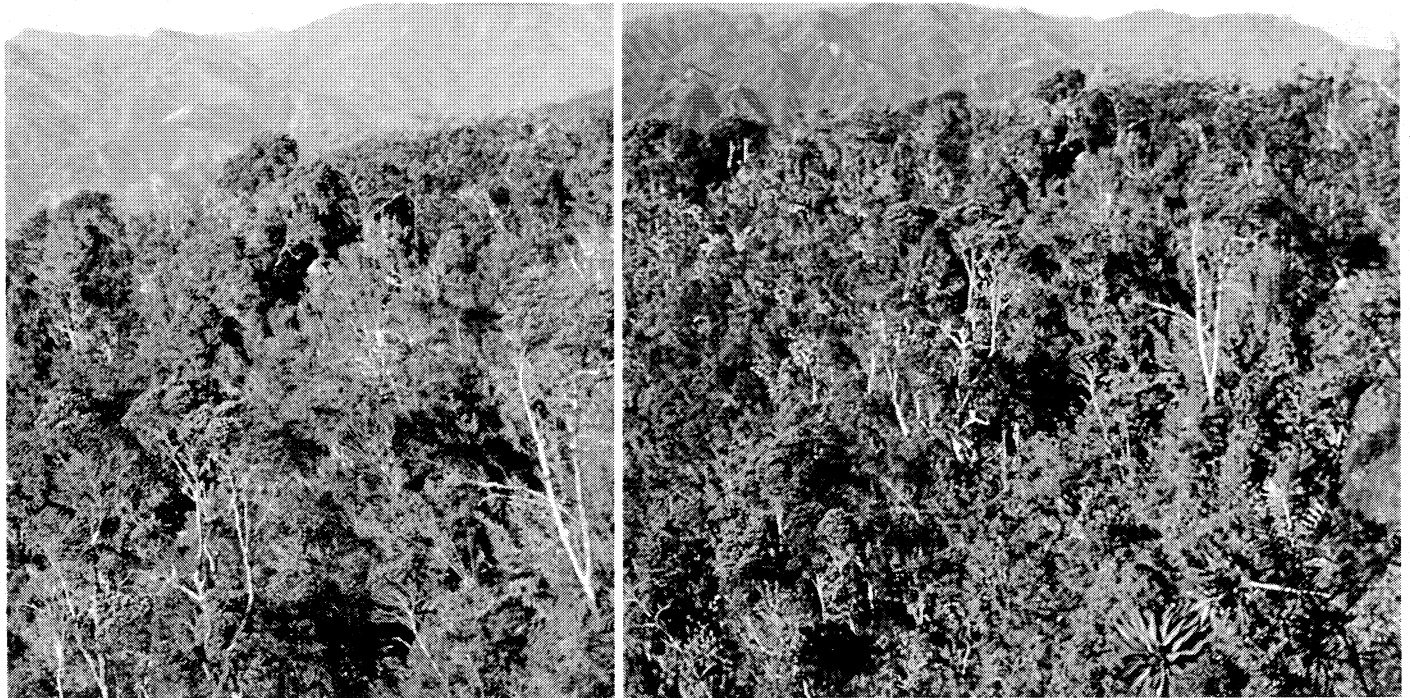
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Given the difficulty in separating Bicknell's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, investigators must make positive identifications of the birds being studied. This bird, from Cape North, was confirmed as a Bicknell's in 1997, and after release was observed to be engaged in nesting activities. [Photos Dan Busby]

# Migration Chronology and Winter Habitat of Bicknell's Thrush

By Yves Aubry



Habitat where BICKNELL'S THRUSHES were calling, Pico Turquino (Cuba). [Photos: Y. Aubry]

By mid-October most Bicknell's Thrushes have deserted their breeding grounds in southeastern Canada and New England and have begun their southbound journey to warmer latitudes. They fly by night along a general flyway over the east coast of United States, north of Virginia and then offshore to their wintering grounds in the Greater Antilles. There are few records of fall transients from southeastern States.

The winter range of Bicknell's Thrushes is restricted to four islands in the Greater Antilles: Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. On Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic hosts what seems to be the bulk of Bicknell's Thrush population, although some individuals may still winter in the few remaining forests in Haiti. In Cuba, Bicknell's Thrush is found on the highest mountains located in the southeastern provinces of the Oriente region. It is an uncommon or rare winter resident in Jamaica and Puerto Rico; little recent information is available from those islands.

In the Dominican Republic, the earliest date for winter residents on territories is Nov 5. Upon arrival, Bicknell's Thrushes disperse widely from sea level to 2200 m, with a majority over 1000 m. Localities include Sierra de Bahoruco and Loma Quita Espuela Scientific Reserve in the eastern Cordillera Septentrional, among others. The species' preferred habitat is mesic to wet broadleaf montane primary forests, but some birds are found in dry forests. The observed use of regenerating secondary forests may represent habitat flexibility or a recent shift from preferred primary broadleaf forest habitat. In the Dominican Republic much of this primary habitat has been lost or degraded. Low elevation habitats are under strong anthropic (farming, plantation, deforestation) and natural pressures. Extreme climatic events such as hurricanes, may have significant negative impact on wintering Bicknell's Thrush populations and their habitats, particularly near the coast, where damages are usually more severe.

Bicknell's Thrushes are apparently sexually segregated in term of habitat, with males found predominantly in undisturbed broadleaf montane forests and females in more disturbed forests; however, a larger sample size and extensive field investigations are needed to confirm this segregation.

In Cuba, the earliest observation of a thrush on its wintering territory is mid-October (15-18) and fall transients have been captured in La Havana on October 24. Our quest of this species on the island, although far from been extensive, yielded birds only in the Parque Nacional Turquino. Individuals were located from 1600 m to 1960 m elevation on Pico Cuba, Turquino and Suecia. They were found in mesic and wet broadleaf forests also designated as cloud and rain forests. In the fall, precipitation is abundant, fog and wind prevail, and temperature may drop to 6 °C at night. Occupied sites are characterised by steep slopes and impenetrable, dense forests with numerous creeping and thorny plants. Bicknell's Thrushes were generally absent from the dryer southern slopes where succulent plants, agaves and low shrubs dominate the vegetation.



Bicknell's Thrush captured on Pico Turquino (Cuba) in November 2000. [Photo Y. Aubry]

On their wintering grounds, individual Bicknell's Thrushes have mostly non-overlapping territories. The thrushes do not sing but they call frequently. Call playback can attract one or sometimes two or three birds. However when a song was played some birds (males?) reacted very aggressively at the speaker. In Cuba, responses to playback between the December and February survey periods were similar.

Departure from the Greater Antilles occurs after the end of April. The species is still present in early May as indicated by an individual banded May 11, 2001 in La Havana. Spring and Fall migrations seem to follow a similar pathway but with slightly more birds observed south of Virginia in Spring. Migrating movements occur mostly in the second part of May.

In Cuba the park status and remoteness of the known occupied sites provides some habitat protection but recent tourism development may threatened some sites. More efforts are needed to locate new wintering locations. Research done by dedicated people from the Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences and their collaborators in the Dominican Republic indicates that Bicknell's Thrush habitat is still being modified or destroyed. More efforts are needed to secure a significant amount of winter habitat. The conservation of this species of special concern in North America cannot occur without a thorough understanding of its wintering habitat requirements. International and local initiatives will be required to achieve these objectives.

Our research in Cuba was supported by Environment Canada - Latin America Program and Canadian Wildlife Service - Québec and Atlantic Regions, the Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática, and the Museo de Historia Natural in La Havana and several dedicated collaborators and agencies.

A very recent, thorough reference on this bird is: Rimmer, C.C., K.P. McFarland, W.G. Ellison, and J.E. Goetz. 2001 Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 592 (A. Poole and F. Gills, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

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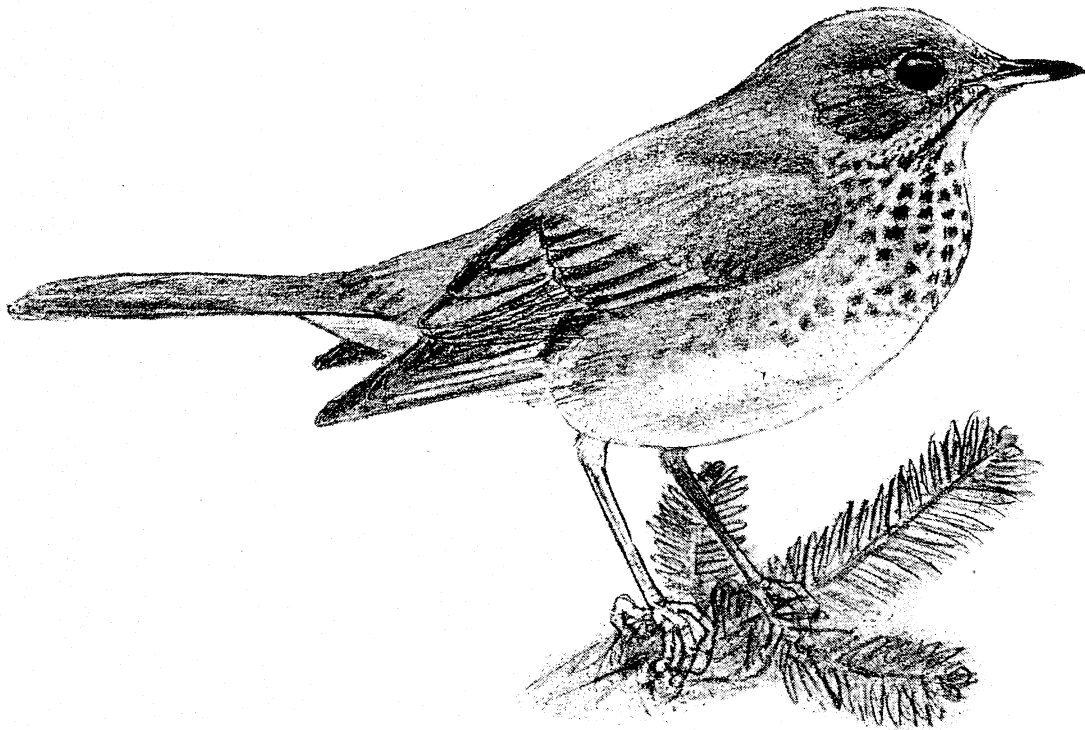
# Bicknell's Thrush Breeding Ecology

By Jim Goetz

We suspected something odd about Bicknell's Thrush all along, but our first three years' records on capture locations, song posts, and nest success did as much to puzzle as enlighten us. Frustrated by the difficulty of observing these inveterate skulkers, in 1997 we began tagging them with tiny one gram radio transmitters. Suddenly we were privy to some of their best kept secrets. Instead of long days of swimming the arduous "krumholz crawl" to find nests, we simply homed in on incubating females. Instead of vainly struggling to follow birds more than a few meters through dense tangles of fir branches, we tracked them for hours. Immediately apparent was the extensive overlap of male home ranges, including very interesting observations of two males often near an active nest. When we watched to see which male arrived to feed the brood... could it be...? Yes, a female and both males fed the nestlings! Over the next four seasons we found about 40% of broods with a single male feeder, 40% with two males, and 20% with three-males. One brood even had four-males feeders! In several cases males fed two broods in the same year. And what of paternity? Three-quarters of broods tested so far were sired by two males, with some males siring young in multiple broods in the same year.

Why does such a high proportion of both sexes mate with multiple partners? Multiple mating is common for many animals (and of course, plants). With the recent advent of molecular genetic techniques that allow paternity testing, it is now clear that - contrary to long and dearly held beliefs - song birds are not paragons of monogamy. As in many species, males can increase their reproductive success by increasing their number of mates, but females cannot, being limited by the number of eggs they can lay and care for. Instead, by mating with multiple partners, females may benefit by increasing genetic diversity within the brood, insuring fertilization, gaining access to better male genes, avoiding infanticide by unmated males, and by competing with other females for male parental care.

Why do multiple males feed broods? With population sex ratios of nearly two males for each female, it may be that there simply are not enough females to go around. This highly skewed sex ratio may actually have its roots far from the breeding grounds, if as theorized, males dominate the best winter habitats and have higher winter survival than females, who are left with lower quality winter sites. Further study of this secretive bird will also encompass effects of food availability, female spacing, and female reproductive synchrony. However, until we can easily observe which males and females mate, and how often, many details of the Bicknell's Thrush breeding ecology will remain enigmatic. ♀



BICKNELL'S THRUSH by Gabriel Willow.



# Lending H.E.L.P. to our High Elevation Songbirds

By Becky Whittam & Melanie Ball

High elevation habitat is threatened by climate change (with serious declines in Red Spruce forecasted over the next century), forestry, and ski-area development in eastern North America. Furthermore, relatively few birders and ornithologists visit this habitat type, leading to a lack of information on birds of high elevations.

One of the most interesting of Nova Scotia's high elevation songbirds is the Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*), a species characterized by its elusive breeding habits, its "after-hours" (pre-dawn, post-dusk) vocal behaviour, and its previous designation as a sub-species of the Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*). The Bicknell's Thrush is considered a "Species of Special Concern" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Species in Canada, because of the threats to high elevation habitat as well as the fact that very little is known about its population size and status in this country. About 30% of the Canadian population (3,800-6,300 individuals) of Bicknell's Thrushes breeds in Atlantic Canada, in the highlands of New Brunswick (400-800 pairs) and Nova Scotia (400-700 pairs). Even these population numbers, however, are only rough estimates.



The FOX SPARROW is one of four species targetted by the High Elevation Landbird Program. [Photo Rudy O'Reilly]

Because so little is known about the population status and trends of Bicknell's Thrush and other high elevation bird species in Atlantic Canada, Bird Studies Canada (BSC), with help from various partners and funders, decided to initiate a monitoring program, with a particular emphasis on determining the population trends of, and habitat use by, the Bicknell's Thrush. In 2001, we conducted preliminary research in Cape Breton Highlands National Park to develop a protocol for the survey. Full details of the 2001 research can be downloaded from BSC's website at [www.bsc-eoc.org/regional/acbithsurvey.html](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/regional/acbithsurvey.html).



Cape Clear, NS; a typical vista for H.E.L.P. surveyors. [Photo Mike Russell]



Bicknell's Thrushes abound at Simeon Lake, Cape Breton. [Photo Mike Russell]

## The High Elevation Landbird Program

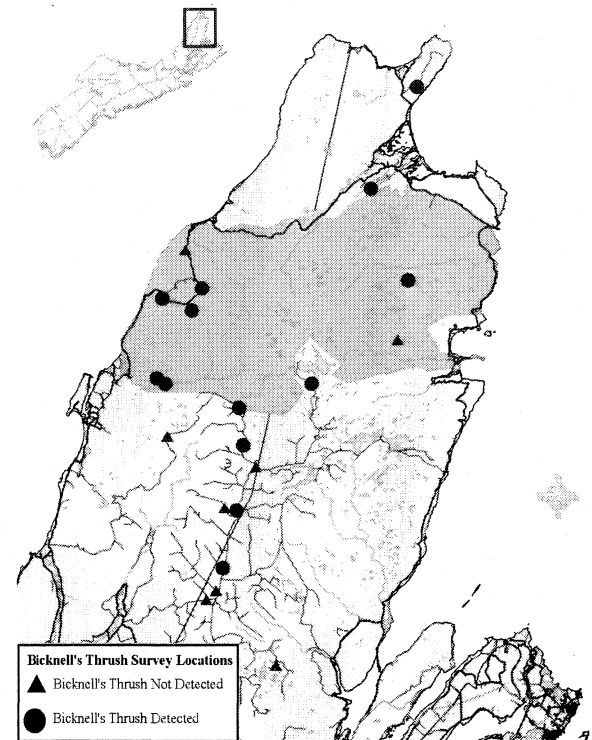
The protocol for the "High Elevation Landbird Program" (also known as H.E.L.P.) consists of one kilometer trails or roadside routes, with each route having five stops spaced 250 m apart. Routes are run starting 30 minutes before sunrise or at sunset. At each stop, surveyors are asked to listen silently for five minutes, noting each "target species" seen or heard within and outside of a 50 m radius. After five minutes, a 30-second playback tape consisting of Bicknell's Thrush songs and calls is played, followed by an additional five minutes of silent listening. Target species include Bicknell's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler and Fox Sparrow. While the Swainson's Thrush is not restricted to high elevation habitats, it is thought to possibly compete with Bicknell's Thrush for available habitat and is thus considered an important aspect of the survey.

In 2002, H.E.L.P. was launched in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Routes were chosen based on GIS models of available habitat and road access (you can't put a route where there isn't a road – or at least not one that a volunteer would want to survey!). A total of 67 routes were run, 45 in NB and 22 in NS. Most routes were run by BSC employees, but a total of 18 routes were run by a set of hearty volunteers who weren't afraid to climb mountains and get up early or stay out late! BSC staff also measured habitat characteristics at all points where Bicknell's Thrushes were detected, as well as on a subset of points where Bicknell's Thrushes were not detected (using only routes where no Bicknell's were detected, on any stop).

### H.E.L.P. Results 2002

Bicknell's Thrushes were detected during the first visit on 40 of the 67 routes across the region (13 routes in NS, and 27 routes in NB). For routes where Bicknell's Thrushes were not detected, BSC staff re-ran most of these routes a second time, but this did not result in any additional Bicknell's Thrush detections. The map shows locations of routes in Nova Scotia and whether or not Bicknell's Thrushes were detected on those routes.

In both NB and NS, Swainson's Thrush was the most common of the four focal species found, followed by Fox Sparrow, Bicknell's Thrush and Blackpoll Warbler (Table 1). Interestingly, while Bicknell's Thrushes were detected on close to the same proportion of routes in NB and NS (around 60%), the number of Bicknell's Thrushes detected per route was nearly twice as great in NB compared with NS. The same pattern held true for Swainson's Thrushes. Blackpoll Warblers and Fox Sparrows showed less dramatic differences between provinces, although both seemed to be detected slightly more often in Nova Scotia than in New Brunswick.



Map of BICKNELL'S Survey routes.

Table 1. Frequency of Detection (number of routes detected/total routes run) and Relative Abundance (mean number of birds per route) for each of the four target species in NB and NS in 2002. A total of 22 routes were run in NS, and 45 routes in NB.

		Bicknell's Thrush	Swainson's Thrush	Blackpoll Warbler	Fox Sparrow
Frequency of Detection	NS	0.59	0.82	0.50	0.59
	NB	0.60	0.91	0.44	0.51
Relative Abundance	NS	1.09	3.55	1.00	1.27
	NB	2.20	11.3	0.91	1.27

### It's all about Power

When developing a monitoring program, it is important to estimate the "power" of the survey, which is basically the ability of the survey to detect population trends when trends are present. We learned that, given our current survey protocol, it will take only five years to see a 3% decline (if present) in the Swainson's Thrush population. However, it will take 10 years to see the same magnitude of decline in Fox Sparrows and Blackpoll Warblers and over 30 years for the Bicknell's Thrush! By increasing the number of routes surveyed, or the number of runs of each route per year, we should be able to detect trends sooner; however, it may be that there are simply not enough Bicknell's Thrushes, or at least not enough Bicknell's Thrushes *detected*, to adequately survey their population. Monitoring a secretive species is not an easy task! Over the next year, we will be re-examining the current protocol to assess its effectiveness in meeting the survey goals, and we may be adjusting the protocol as a result.

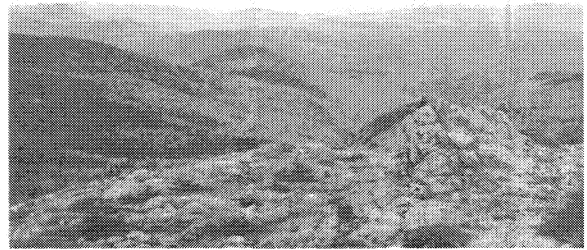
### Preliminary habitat results

Our habitat measurements, while not yet fully analyzed, seem to indicate that the sites where Bicknell's Thrushes are present in Nova Scotia have more Sheep Laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*) and Red Spruce (*Picea rubens*) than sites where Bicknell's Thrushes are not present. In New Brunswick, Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*) and White Birch (*Betula papyrifera* vars. *papyrifera* and *cordifolia*) seem to be more prominent at sites where Bicknell's Thrushes are present. Bicknell's Thrushes are found primarily in regenerating clear cuts in New Brunswick (with the exception of Mount Carleton Provincial Park), compared with the natural, wind-swept scrubby spruce and fir where they are primarily found in most of Nova Scotia. Some, but not all, of the Stora Enso

managed land south of Cape Breton Highlands National Park is similar to that used by Bicknell's Thrushes in New Brunswick. Elevation is also a significant habitat feature in both provinces, with "Bicknell's Present" sites having higher elevations than "Bicknell's Absent" sites. Full results will be available over the next few months on Bird Studies Canada's website or by contacting us directly.

### Future Goals

Ultimately, we would like H.E.L.P. to monitor birds not only of high elevation habitat, but also of coastal habitat. Blackpoll Warblers and Fox Sparrows are found in many coastal areas of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and Bicknell's Thrushes have been known to occur (at least historically) in some coastal areas, including Seal Island, Cape Chignecto, Fundy National Park and Grand Manan. Perhaps over the next few years, if we are able to meet financial and logistical challenges, we may have routes available in coastal areas. Stay tuned!



The view from the top of the H.E.L.P. survey route on Mount Carleton, NB. [Photo Becky Whittam]

In the meantime, if you're interested in participating in a challenging yet rewarding program involving mountain hikes, sunrises and sunsets, rare birds and a conservation goal, please don't hesitate to contact us!

Thanks to the following groups for their financial and/or in-kind support: Canadian Wildlife Service, Canadian Forestry Service, Science Horizons Youth Internship Fund, Federal Habitat Stewardship Fund, Endangered Species Recovery Fund (Environment Canada and World Wildlife Fund), Stora-Enso Woodlands, Parks Canada Species At Risk Recovery Fund (2000-2001), New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy, Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Mount Carleton Provincial Park, Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission, Fraser-Nexfor Paper Inc., and Bowater Forestry Inc.



Beth Flanigan conducts a survey for H.E.L.P. [Photo Andy Carson]



Volunteer Jason Hudson hikes to his survey route near Simeon Lake, Cape Breton. [Photo by Mike Russell]

James Bridgland, Sheldon Lambert, and Derek Quann of Cape Breton Highlands National Park provided scientific and logistical support while in the Park. Thanks to intrepid field workers Beth Flanigan and Mike Russell, and thanks to Kevin Middell of Stora-Enso for helping with habitat measurements on Stora lands. Most of all, thanks to the following volunteers for their dedication, even in the face of adversity! Sean Blaney, Clark Brander, Andy Carson, Jim Clifford, Luc Cyr, Margaret Gallant Doyle, Jason Hudson, Diane Landry, Roy and Charlotte LaPointe, Randy Lauff, Chad LeBlanc, Roger LeBlanc, Mike Lushington, Juliette Pellerin, Ceiridwen Robbins, Marco Scichilone, and Johanne Sebastien. ♣

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# Summer Weather 2002

By Larry Bogan

Do you remember the cool June that we had this year? If you are a gardener, you might. Many gardens were hit with a killing frost on the night of the 7th of June. The mean daily temperatures were 10-15 °C until the 21st of June (Fig. 1). After that we had pretty even mean temperatures of around 20 °C for nearly two months. Only in mid-August did we get that week of hot days that averaged 25 °C or more. It was in that period that we had nine successive days of 30 °C highs (in the Annapolis Valley). We had hit 30 °C only three days of the summer prior to that. August was the warmest month of the summer of 2002 whereas normally July is the warmest. The season as a whole was average because the cool June compensated for the hot August.

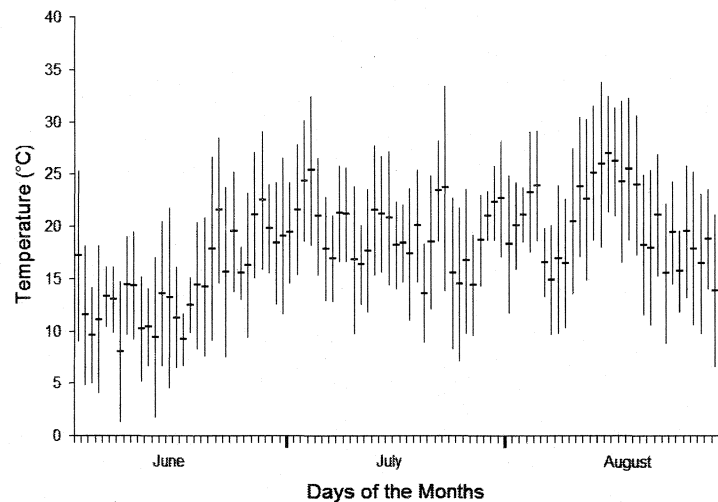


Figure 1. Summer temperatures from the Atlantic Food & Horticulture Research Centre, Kentville, NS. Daily means and ranges are shown.

The distribution of rainfall has been better this summer than last. We had a little rain almost every week of the summer except that hot spell in August. In July and August most of the rainfall occurred in one day of the month. In July, 71% fell on the 19th while in August 53% fell on the 6th of that month. Overall, we received less than 3/4 of what we generally are used to for the three month period. All three months were about equally below normal rainfall levels. August was the driest because it was warmest and had higher evaporation (Table 1). Every year we have a water deficit because rainfall is always less than the evaporation of water from the surfaces. This year rainfall was able to make up less than 40% of the evaporation.

If you live in other parts of Nova Scotia then the rainfall picture could be entirely different. In the summer a good share of the rain occurs during thunder showers and the Valley is not blessed with those as often as other parts of the province. So often, I watch large Cumulo Nimbus clouds build in the distance but not over our dry garden.

There is not much to say about the sunshine this summer. We had a little more than usual during the period, with June being the greyest month and August the sunniest (Table 1).

As I write this in September, we are getting more rain in one week than some entire months of the summer, but those statistics will appear in the next issue. ☼

Table 1 Weather data from the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Center, Kentville. This season's values are followed by the 41 year average in parentheses.

	Mean Temp (°C)	Rain Fall (mm)	Bright Sunshine (h)	Evaporation (mm)
June	14.6 (16.1)	45.8 (67.5)	187 (211)	105
July	19.4 (19.3)	58.1 (69.1)	244 (233)	161
August	20.1 (18.7)	59.3 (88.9)	260 (217)	153
Season	18.1 (18.1)	163 (226)	691 (661)	419



## Seasonal Reports

### Loons through Grebes

By Fred Dobson



This RED-NECKED GREBE in full alternate (breeding) plumage was sitting tight on an islet in the West Lawrencetown Marsh, HRM, June 2. Although it appeared to be incubating, it changed its perch several times on that day, and sat in a different islet a week later. It may have been "broody," but clearly did not represent a first Nova Scotia nesting. [Photo Ian McLaren]

COMMON LOONS, although surely distributed as normal throughout the province in the post-breeding season, are only reported sparingly outside of CB. Adults were seen on a nest June 10-16 at Schooner Pond, CB Co. (DBM, Andrew Reynolds). A nesting pair was seen late June to mid-July at Oyster

Cove, Mira R., CB Co. "On July 16, the nest was abandoned. A neighbouring cottager who kept a close watch reported that the pair had incubated for 35 days, spending less and less time on the nest during the last few days, and had hatched no young (SEM)." The earliest reports of young were one ad.,

seven imms. June 28, off St. Anns Bar, Vic. Co. (DBM) and two ads., two young June 30, Catalone Gut, CB Co. (DBM, Doug McRae). The pair at the head of St. Margarets Bay, Hfx. Co. successfully raised two young in the month of July (FED). Two pairs were reported to have successfully raised young (three in total) in Anna. Co. (MCN, Barbara Ruddock). One of these pairs was observed still fishing for their chick July 29. The season continued until at least July 21 at Inverness L., Inv. Co., when two ads. and at least one chick were observed (DBM, EMC). A single imm. was seen off North Pt., Brier I. (ELM).

PIED-BILLED GREBES were the subject of only two reports. "Several broods" were seen July 14, Wallace, Pict. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM) and an individual was "both seen and heard calling" July 15 at Schooner Pond, CB Co. (DBM, RWK). ☒

### Tubenoses Through Cormorants

By Blake Maybank

A CORY'S SHEARWATER was reported on a whale-watching trip off Brier I. during the last week of July (PAC); there are but a handful of previous Bay of Fundy sightings for this warm-water shearwater, so some details would have been preferred. ELM made several visits to Brier during the period, and supplied the rest of the tubenose reports. On July 26 & 27 he noted thousands of GREATER SHEARWATERS moving slowly SW along Northwest Ledge in the afternoons. He saw five MANX

SHEARWATERS off Western Light, June 22, with two more off North Pt., July 27, in a seabird flypast that included six WILSON'S STORM PETRELS and a LEACH'S STORM PETREL.

NORTHERN GANNETS were reported in modest numbers around CB by numerous observers, but the only large flights noted were of imms. off the southern mainland, with 100+ flying south past Little Harbour, Shel. Co., June 28 (DHY), and hundreds a

day passing the western side of Brier during the last week of July (ELM). From Shel. Co., JQA reports that there are more DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS than in years past, with 60+ adults breeding with gulls on Gull Rock (called Potato I. locally), and no sign of the eiders that used to nest there. DBM forwards the information that ACAP counted 200+ GREAT CORMORANT nests on the Morien headlands in CB Co. ELM noted 15 immature Greats among 50+ Double-crests on Brier, June 22. ☒

## Herons through New World Vultures

By Ian McLaren

As usual, a few AM. BITTERNs were reported from around the province. A much-less-frequent LEAST BITTERN was heard June 11 by experienced ears (FLL, HAT) at APBS, where they once nested. That bird was said to have been still calling a week later (*fide* FLL). Another may have been heard during early July at Bellisle Marsh, Anna. Co. (Paul MacDonald *fide* FLL). A comment by RSM aptly summarizes the view that populations of GREAT BLUE HERON are "healthy – seen on every . . . field trip to suitable habitat." Chicks were still on nests July 14 at Alder Pt., CB Co. (DBM), and first juvs. were noted July 24, Brier I. (ELM), where

they may or may not breed, and certainly not in numbers. So far, it's been a relatively disappointing summer for post-breeding dispersal of southern herons to our parts. GREAT EGRETS turned up on CSI, June 13-21 (*fide* MUN) and at Kentville, June 14 (RBS). An ad. and an apparent juv. SNOWY EGRET were at Sambro Hd. Bog and Ketch Hbr., HRM, July 12-25 (FCG, HAT). An overshooting migrant GREEN HERON at Frog Pond, Jollimore, HRM, was seen June 2 (HFN), and for a few days following (RSM). Another was flushed June 11 at The Hawk, CSI (IAM *et al*). As usual, the BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-

HERONS of CSI were a little elusive during the breeding season. A better find was an exhausted YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON July 14 on far-off Sable I. (ZOL).

A TURKEY VULTURE June 21 over Brier I. was, as ELM noted, unusual there in early summer. One was also noted at W Apple R., Cum. Co., July 25 (Bonita & Gerald Mercer). Another, July 20 at French Mt., CBHNP (excellent details from Mike Russel), was even farther from the usual range. Why haven't we found them breeding in the southwest counties? ☹

## Geese, Swans and Ducks

By Fred Dobson

It was a good breeding summer for waterfowl: lots of rain to keep the ponds full, lots of sun to produce lots of food. July was cool with a higher than normal fog incidence at the coasts and no early tropical disturbances. There were no special sightings. As with last summer, most of the reports were too sparse to merit interpretation. Our thanks to those who did contribute sightings, since they serve to keep us in touch with summertime avian populations in the province.

CANADA GEESE were reported first June 1, "four birds in flight" west of Tremont, Anna. Co. (SLH). The first report of breeding was a pair nesting "for the second year", June 2, Peters I., Brier I. (ELM). There were 95 ads. and 20 young June 27 at Baddeck Inlet and four ads. and 11 young at South Hbr., Vic. Co. (DBM, DAA, FMC). One was seen July 12 at Glace Bay, CB Co. "this is the same one that spends the winter here, a little ratty now" (DBM). Finally, there were eight July 24-31 in Pond Cove, Brier I. (ELM). Eight BRANT remained June 1 on Peters I., Brier I. (ELM).

A brood of WOOD DUCKS were seen July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM); two "in eclipse plumage" were seen July 15 at Tower Rd. Lagoon, CB Co. (DBM). One AM. WIGEON was seen July 12 at Big Glace Bay L., CB Co. (DBM), and a brood was observed July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM). AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS were poorly reported. Two ads. and three young were seen "almost daily June and July" at West Hd., S of Lockeport, Shel. Co. (JQA). A brood was seen July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM). There were at least three broods of five-13 young seen throughout July at Petite Rivière, Lun.

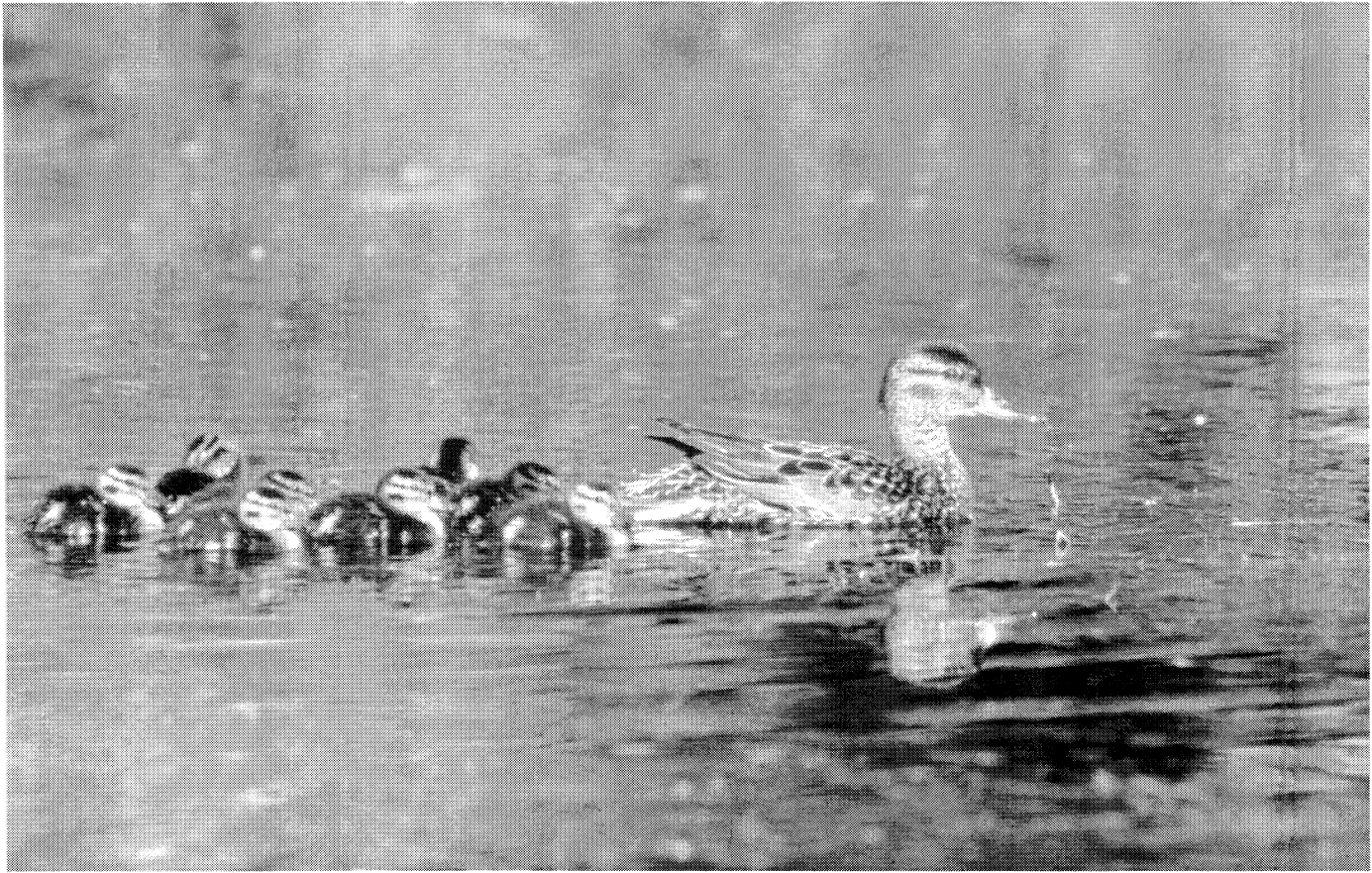


RED-BREASTED MERGANSER at Seal Island, NS. [Photo Ian McLaren]

Co. (FED). MALLARDS were reported "almost daily June and July" - one fem. and two young in the pond, West Hd., S of Lockeport, Shel. Co. (JQA). A brood was seen July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM).

A brood of BLUE-WINGED TEAL was reported July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM). GREEN-WINGED TEAL were reported only once outside of CB. Five males were seen June 18 at Framboise, Rich. Co. (DBM, DAH). Green-wings were found in small numbers (one to three) in June and July throughout CB Co. (DBM, Doug McRae). A brood was seen July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM).

As in previous summers all but one of the reports of RING-NECKED DUCKS came from the N of the province. A single male was reported June 10 at Margaretsville, Anna. Co. (SLH). They were observed in groups of two to five in CB from early June to mid-July (DBM, DAH). There were 13 males and two fems. July 12 at Tower Rd. Lagoon, CB Co., and 60 males July 28, Fullers Bridge, Rich. Co. (SEM). A brood was seen July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co., along with a single LESSER SCAUP (NSBS *fide* RSM).



GREEN-WINGED TEAL family. [Photo Pat Wall - NSBS / PGNS Competition 1990]

COMMON EIDER breed all along most shores of the province. The first report was June 2: "first downy young at Brier I. (broods still appearing on sea at end of June)" (ELM). There were eight males, fems. and imms. June 10 at Margaretsville, Anna. Co. (SLH). About 100, of which about half were males, were seen off West Hd., S of Lockeport, Shel. Co. "almost daily from June 19 - July 31; ... mostly left by the beginning of July, and about 25-50 (varied day to day) of fems. and young inshore. Sadly the eider count offshore is down from years past. A raft of about 300 males was seen July 28 at Johnstons Pond, Port L'Hebert, Shel. Co. (JQA). The latest report was eight July 3, from the lookoff, MacKenzie Mt., CBHNP, Inv. Co. (DBM).

There is an interesting report of SCOTER SPP.: "July 27 a large flock of scoter, about 120 in all, were observed in Thomas Cove, Economy Pt., Col. Co. I was able to positively ID Surf and Black Scoter in this group (RSM)." All reports of WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS were from CB except one.

There were 28 seen June 9 at Morien Bay, CB Co. (DBM, Edgar Barrington, Mike & Andrew Reynolds). An individual was reported June 10 at Margaretsville, Anna. Co. (SLH). There were 90+ in South Hbr. and 120 off St. Anns Bar, Vic. Co., June 28 (DBM, FMC, DAA). The latest report was of 14, July 4, South Bar, CB Co. (DBM). SURF SCOTERS were reported twice from opposite ends of the province: an individual June 10 at Margaretsville, Anna. Co. (SLH) and 12 June 30 at Mira Bay near Catalone Gut, CB Co. (DBM, Doug McRae).

The single report of LONG-TAILED DUCKS was of a single male at the end of July in Green Bay, Lun. Co. "in full breeding plumage" (FED). BLF reported a fem. COM. GOLDENEYE, June 1 at Black River L., Kings Co, flying into a nestbox meant for Barred Owls. On June 3 the nest contained hatched shells and one infertile eggs. BLF believes this is the first nesting record for this area of N.S.

Reports of HOODED MERGANSERS were of a fem. July 12 at Tower Rd. Lagoon, CB Co. (DBM) and a brood seen July 14, Wallace, Cum. Co. (NSBS *fide* RSM). BLF reported two broods from nestboxes at Black River L., Kings Co. Seven fledged in late May and five fledged in late June. Eight young COM. MERGANSERS fledged from a clutch of nine eggs laid in a nestbox in White Rock, Kings Co. (BLF). The eggs were laid at two day intervals from May 1 and began to hatch June 19. DBM reported a single fem. June 18 at Beechmount Rd. near Gillis L., CB Co. and one fem. and eight young at Aspy R., Cape North, Vic. Co. while MCN saw a fem. with eight young June 12, Sandy Bottom Lake, Anna. Co. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER reports all came from CB. There were five June 9 at Port Morien, CB Co. (DBM). Females with 9-10 young were seen June 28 in South Hbr. and Ingonish Hbr., Vic. Co. (DBM, FMC, DAA). The latest report was one fem. July 1 at the Trout Brook Picnic Area, CBHNP, Inv. Co. (DBM). ☐

# Diurnal Raptors, Galliforms, Rails and Cranes

By Ian McLaren

On returning to collate this section after an absence of a few years, I am struck by the under-reporting of some of these most interesting species (although I probably missed some NatureNS material, as I was only assigned this section in August). We badly need a new Breeding Bird Atlas initiative to assess our summering birds.

Was a migrant OSPREY on Sable I. June 2 (ZOL) Newfoundland-bound? We can agree with RSM on our breeding Ospreys that: "dare I say this species seems quite healthy." A like comment suffices for BALD EAGLES, although they're still sometimes depicted in the popular press as in trouble. Mike Russell rated them as "a dime a dozen" in informal surveys of the CBHNP and other CB localities, and they're still establishing new nesting sites in mainland counties. NORTHERN HARRIERS were quite widely reported. Is it of interest that this species is widely dotted in our Atlas as "possible," but seldom as "confirmed?" Is it possible that many summer birds (e.g. on Brier I., ELM, Seal I., IAM) are subadults or failed breeders?

Mike Russell's view that the SHARP-SHINNED HAWK is "not uncommon" in CBHNP may apply widely, but they are unlikely to be noticed in summer unless you come near their nests. Mike Russell watched one chase away an ad. Red-tailed Hawk, June 18 in CBHNP just north of Cheticamp, a sure sign of nearby nesting. An unfortunate ad. N. GOSHAWK crashed through MCN's basement window at Sandy Bottom L, Anna. Co., June 2, but we weren't informed of its fate. An imm. on Wolfville Ridge, June 24, may have been checking JCT & GWT's feeders, and two well feathered young with a scolding ad. were seen at Newtonville Mt., Kings Co. (BLF). An apparent ad. male brazenly chased a Mourning Dove near SLH's feeders, July 28 at Tremont, Anna. Co. Was the latter a post-breeding wanderer?

An imm. BROAD-WINGED HAWK over Brier I. June 1 (ELM) was late for a migrant. Summer reports were few, but from the length of the province. RED-TAILED HAWKS were more frequently reported, but with no anecdotes or comments on status. Of interest was a well-described light-morph ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK at the Donkin Mine site, CB Co., July 13 (DBM, LEL).

An AM. KESTREL was unseasonable on Sable I., July 11-12 (ZOL). They were well reported from CBI, but not from the mainland. It is good to hear of the success of nest boxes put out in recent years by BID and Trevor Wilkie in the area of St. Peters, Rich. Co. This year, 13 such boxes produced six successful broods with a total of 28 young. MERLINS are active and vocal around their nests, but are under-reported. During July, JCT heard noisy nestlings in Wolfville and also from woods behind her property on Wolfville Ridge. Another pair near North Pt., Brier I. (no Atlas record there) almost certainly nested (ELM *et al.*). For some anecdotes on predation on Chimney Swifts by Merlins, see the account on that species. As usual, Merlins began harassing shorebirds in later July. PEREGRINE FALCONS breeding around the inner Bay of Fundy also began to show up at shorebird concentration points at this time. Mike Russell found one June 21 at Meat Cove, Inv. Co. although he saw no evidence of nesting on adequate rock faces in the area.

RING-NECKED PHEASANTS are now almost everywhere and were, therefore, hardly noticed. On CBI, RUFFED GROUSE were noted drumming into mid June in CB Co. (DBM), and a fem. and five young were near Louisbourg, July 7 (SEM), but were otherwise unreported. The only reported SPRUCE GROUSE was a single ad. at West Hd., Shel., Co., June

30 (JQA). Now that the industry is using scrubby black spruce in boggy areas, one wonders about their welfare. FLL says that he has seen them during recent years in tightly stocked fir stands that come in naturally on some logged sites.

VIRGINIA RAILS were heard in "excellent numbers" July 13 at APBS (FLL, HAT). As expected, SORAS were also abundant as usual at APBS (FLL, HAT) and were "everywhere at the Wallace Sanctuary" (RSM). FLL thought that the "usual numbers" of COM. MOORHENS and AM. COOTS were seen and heard July 13 at APBS. A most interesting record of the former comes from Afton, Ant. Co., where a freshly dead chick was found in late July and delivered to RFL (see photo). This is an eastward extension of confirmed breeding (see Atlas) beyond their former limit of Wallace Sanctuary. ☐



This photo of a COM. MOORHEN chick found almost dead at the Afton, Ant. Co., serves to document a breeding-range extension of this uncommon species. [Photo Randy Lauff]



# The Shorebirds

By Sylvia Fullerton

As in other years, Cape Sable Island hosted the largest build-up of shorebirds, with an estimated 20,000 July 27. Morien Bar, Cape Breton County, another major staging area, produced significant numbers, particularly of coastal migrants. Although timing was average, a few species were tardy and numbers low. We will have to await the fall season for the broader picture.

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER**, widespread on every coast world-wide in non-breeding plumage, visit us in only moderate numbers in June and July. Thirty-four, in mixed plumages, Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co., June 3, may have been a mix of laggard north-bound migrants and non-breeders. Similarly indeterminate were five, Morien Bar, CB Co., June 4 & 8 (SEM). Twenty-five, The Cape, CSI, June 25, were either tarrying or early southbound migrants (GRM). SEM was able to age a first-summer individual, Morien Bar, June 28, probably indicating an early-returning, failed nester. Migrants began to appear in average numbers in mid to late July: 60, CSI, July 11 (MUN); 24, Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM); six, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 31 (ELM).

An enigmatic **SEMIPALMATED PLOVER**, in alternate (breeding plumage), appeared at Cherry Hill Beach, June 23 (SJF). Three at The Cape, CSI, June 25, were presumably part of the breeding contingent, which has raised at least one juv. (GRM, MUN). Migration was a little late, just getting underway in late July and peaks were low. First noted were two, Dominion Beach, CB Co., July 13 (LEL). Peaks included: 850, the seasonal high, The Cape, CSI, July 27 (BJS, SIS); 60, Morien Bar, July 27 and 57, Fullers Bridge, Rich. Co., July 28 (SEM); 20, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 31 (ELM). **PIPING PLOVER** success has been carefully monitored by Anna McCarron, the Coordinator of the Piping Plover Guardian Program, and her full report is included in this issue. Some notable successful nesting is

worth reporting, however: one pair with three juvs., South Hbr., Vic. Co., July 15 (FMC, DAA, DBM); one pair with three juvs., Crescent Beach, Lockeport, Shel. Co., Aug. 1 (JQA); three pairs with eight juvs., Martinique Beach, HRM (RSM). Two pairs of **KILLDEER** bred successfully on Brier I., establishing the first confirmed breeding record for the Island (ELM). Up to 14 were seen at Pond Cove, July 24 and by July 31 at least two half-grown young were still in evidence. Twenty-one gathered at Sydney Airport, July 26 (DBM).

The good news from CSI is that the pair of **AM. OYSTERCATCHERS** successfully raised three young. MUN and JON watched from The Hawk while three fledglings alternatively huddled under one ad. and then made short runs to feed at the water's edge under the watchful eye of the other ad. "A great treat," says MUN. A third, unattached individual was still present as of July 21 and the family unit was still intact as of July 27.

More exciting news! **GREATER YELLOW-LEGS** have once again bred in Pict. Co. MAB and KJM found an ad. calling from the top of a spruce tree in a swampy area near Maple L. and a chick briefly sighted walking through the swamp into cover. The last record, by KJM and CGB, was in 1994, at MacKinnons Brook, where young had been raised in three preceding years. Singles were at Ingonish Hbr., Vic. Co., June 28 and at French L., CBHNP, Inv. Co., July 1, the latter almost certainly a breeding bird (DBM). Small numbers of migrants trickled in late in June and early in July, but the first major flight was in the third week of July with sightings from Crescent and Cherry Hill Beaches, Lun. Co., Brier I., Back Oler Farm Marsh, Lun. Co., and Ridge Rd., Kings Co. Their preferred staging area seems to be at Morien Bar where SEM tallied a seasonal high of 158, July 27. Good numbers were found at other CB sites: 36, Glace Bay Bird Sanctuary, CB Co. (DBM, SEM, LEL); 31, Fullers

Bridge, Rich. Co., July 28 (SEM). Three **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** first appeared at Morien Bar, July 6, building to 60 by July 27 (SEM). Back Oler Farm Marsh also produced a good count, 33, July 24 (JAH). Assorted highs elsewhere included: five, Dominion Beach, July 13 (DBM, LEL); six, Fullers Bridge, July 27 (SEM); eight, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 31 (ELM). One early **SOLITARY SANDPIPER** reached us by the end of the period, Oak Park, Barrington, Shel. Co., July 21 (CST), where two had put in an appearance about the same time last season.

Usually gregarious, a lone **WILLET** was present at Pond Cove, Brier I. through the period, apparently a non-breeder (ELM). Willets began gathering at their staging areas as early as July 6 when 78 were tallied at Morien Bar; by July 21 numbers had peaked at 170 (SEM). CB, in fact, seems to be a favourite staging area as up to 30 birds were seen in each of Glace Bay Bird Sanctuary, Fullers Bridge and Big Glace Bay L. in late July. Counts at other areas also indicated a successful breeding season: 175, CSI, July 11 (MUN); 52, Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., July 21 (JSC); 50, Crescent Beach, Lockeport, July 31 (JQA); 35, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 31 (ELM).

Only two reports of nesting **SPOTTED SANDPIPER** were received from the mainland, but several from CB, where they were more closely observed, it seems. SEM, DBM *et al.* noted up to 12 pairs scattered in the four Counties. Once again, DBM found no birds at South Bar, CB Co. in early July, where once significant numbers bred. The absence was later explained by the presence of a fox den on the Bar. Nonetheless, one pair managed to elude its predators, as an ad. and two young were found there July 18.

**WHIMBREL** made a good showing. Earliest was one, Conrads Beach, Lawrencetown, HRM, June 30 (David & Janey Hughes), followed by another

at Cherry Hill Beach, July 2 (JAH). Sizable flocks gathered in CB for their off-shore flight: "several dozen," Scaterie I., CB Co., July 13 (RWK); 24, Morien Bar, July 15 (DBM); 45, Fortress of Louisbourg, July 31 (SEM). Smaller numbers were scattered at coastal headlands on the mainland: 15, The Cape, CSI, July 23 (GRM); seven, Pennant Pt., HRM, July 27 (HAT); four, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 24-31 (ELM).

An early, southbound ad. male HUDSONIAN GODWIT set down at Morien Bar, June 28 (SEM) and two were seen at Dominion Beach, July 3 (DBM, LEL). The numbers of Hudsonians visiting our coasts are relatively low and influenced by off-shore weather as they make their way across the Atlantic directly to S America. Favourable conditions this summer may have accounted for the few sightings we have had. Peak counts, both July 21, were low: nine, Morien Bar (SEM); 17, CSI (MUN).

Late-June RUDDY TURNSTONES are problematic, particularly if they appear at The Cape, CSI, as three did, June 25 (GRM). Summering or returning? All other sightings were in late July. Representative were: two, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 24 (ELM); five, Glace Bay Bird Sanctuary, July 26, (DBM, SEM, LEL); eight, Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM).

CB captured the only RED KNOTS of the period. An ad. appeared at Morien Bar, July 7, and numbers increased to 21 by July 27 (SEM). There is some indication that warmer temperatures in the high Arctic in May and June may have resulted in earlier nesting and that, together with accommodating weather on their migratory path, may have kept many birds on the move. Next reporting period may tell more. High Arctic breeders, SANDERLING arrive here late in the period. Early were two, Dominion Beach, July 13 (DBM, LEL). On schedule were: 19, Cherry Hill Beach, July 19; 20, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 25-31 (ELM); 15, Glace Bay Bird Sanctuary, July 26 (DBM, SEM, LEL). The seasonal high tally was 300, South Side Beach, CSI, July 24 (MUN).



STILT SANDPIPER. [Photo Ian McLaren]

Two SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS were early at South Hbr., Vic. Co., June 28 (DBM, FMC). Low numbers are not unusual in CB, where 23 at Fullers Bridge, July 28 constituted a good tally (SEM). Cherry Hill Beach peaked at a low 54, July 23. Pond Cove, Brier I. supported up to 350, July 24-31 (ELM). A respectable 10,000-15,000 "peeps," presumably mostly Semipalmated, were tallied at Evangeline Beach, July 25, but only 300-400 were at the Windsor Causeway, July 27 (JCT). The count of 1,275 on The Cape, CSI, July 21, was also low (BJS, SIS). However, these figures reflect only the beginning of the migration that normally does not peak until early August. Few reported LEAST SANDPIPERS and numbers were low. Earliest were 12, Big Glace Bay L., July 12 (DBM). The seasonal high of 200, all ads., was at Pond Cove., Brier I., July 24; by July 31 only 20 remained (ELM). Other counts included: 37, The Cape, CSI, July 23 (GRM); 22, Ridge Rd., Kings Co., July 27 (JCT).

Only one WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER made the deadline by arriving at Pond Cove, Brier I., July 31 (ELM). There are always one or two early reports of PECTORAL SANDPIPERS in July, but one at Pond Cove, Brier I., July 1 was very early indeed; it was joined by a second bird, Aug. 1 (ELM). Another was at South Hbr. Beach, Vic. Co., July 14 (FMC, DAA). Monitoring a local beach on a daily basis, as ELM seemed to do at Pond Cove, Brier I. the last week of July, has its rewards, as he was able to spot the only STILT SANDPIPER of the season on July 31.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were in good supply on some of their favourite beaches, but low on others. First to be reported were 25, Martinique Beach, HRM, July 7 (TEP). Three were at Cherry Hill Beach, July 8, but numbers never exceeded seven. Similarly, only five were at nearby Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., July 21 (JSC). On the other hand, CSI attained a peak of 5,000+, an average number for this area, July 21 (MUN, BJS, SIS). Pond Cove, Brier I., was visited by 100 July 31 (ELM) and Morien Bar had 94, the peak count for CB, July 27 (SEM).

Our COM. SNIPE has recently been split from the old world Com. Snipe and is now WILSON'S SNIPE, *Gallinago delicata*, restored to its original common name, and a much more distinctive name it is. The American Ornithological Union (AOU), the final arbiter on lumps, splits, nomenclature, etc., thus recognizes our NA species as a distinct species. WILSON'S SNIPE were still being heard and seen in Margaretsville, Anna. Co., June 10 (SLH) and in their N stronghold in CB in mid-June and early July (DBM, BJS). AMERICAN WOODCOCK are certainly under-reported, as not a single bird was noted.

Thousands of Red-necked and Red Phalaropes were seen off Brier I. during a whale-watching cruise in the last week of July (PAC). Even onshore ELM saw hundreds moving in small flocks along Northwest Ledge, July 26-27. ☞

# Skuas Through Alcids

By Blake Maybank



Ted D'Eon continues to do his marvelous work sustaining and enhancing the ROSEATE TERNS of the Brothers Island, Yar., Co., where this portrait of a beautiful adult was secured in early July. [Photo Grant Milroy]

A SKUA SP. was reported from a whale-watching trip off Brier during the last week of July (PAC). There were no details, but South Polar is much more likely than Great.

Summer sightings of BLACK-HEADED GULLS are not expected though not unprecedented. There were two CB sightings of second summer birds, off Pt. Edward, June 19 (DBM), and at Morien Bar, June 30-July 15 (DBM *et al.*). RING-BILLED GULLS seem increasingly common in CB in

summer, with a couple of counts into the triple digits, and I suspect that Nova Scotia's first [long over-due] nesting of this species will occur there. ELM noted the first post-breeding arrival of the Ring-billed on Brier, July 24.

DBM thought an imm. ICELAND GULL at Sydney's Wentworth Park, June 15 was unusually late. There were 150+ BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE nests on North Hd., off Morien, and several nests on Louisbourg's Harbour Islands (DBM).

A Caspian Tern at Morien Bar, CB, June 12, was a good find for the island (JUM). ELM found no evidence of any tern breeding activity on Peters I., the NSBS sanctuary off Brier. When one sees the number of gulls nesting around Brier these days, this should come as no surprise. TCD has been working with ROSEATE TERNS on The Brothers for more than ten years now, and he documents his labours on a superb web site, [<http://pages.ca.inter.net/~deonted/ternrep.html>]. This past summer a record 90 Roseate Tern nests were found, and at least 62 chicks were hatched, with little mortality despite the cool conditions in July, in contrast to the neighbouring Common Terns which don't have the benefit of TCD's protective nesting boxes (*Editor's note*: TCD isn't being malicious here... Common Terns just don't use nest boxes). DBM attempted to determine the proportion of COM. and ARCTIC TERNS nesting on Morien Bar. Of the 60 pairs, Commons comprised 50-70%, which properly illustrates the difficulty of separating these two species as they wheel about in a mixed colony.

DBM counted alcids on Morien's North and South Hds., and thought that a couple of pairs of RAZORBILL were nesting on North Hd., while as many as 100 pairs of BLACK GUILLEMOTS were spread between the two islands. ♪



Gulls are capable of the most amazing ability to swallow large meals, perhaps because there is often another nearby ready to snatch it. This GREAT BLACK-BACKED gull at Port Bickerton, Guys. Co., after a brief inspection and poke at a stranded eel, swallowed it in one neck-bulging gulp. [Photo May Goring]

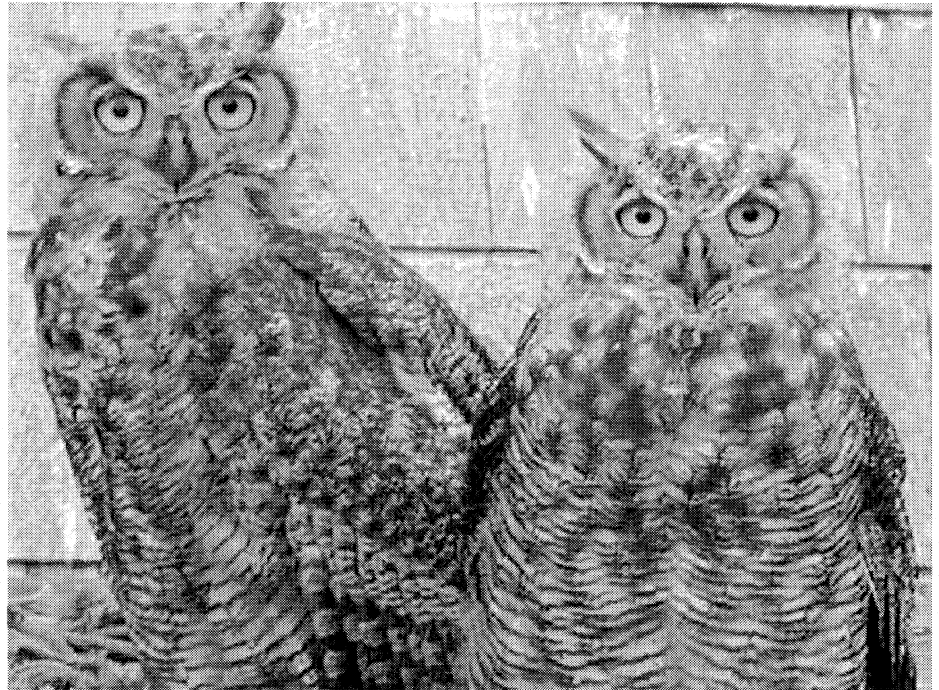
## Doves Through Woodpeckers

By Ian McLaren

Neither ROCK DOVES nor MOURNING DOVES evoked much interest this season. Several reports of numbers of the latter at feeders through July (up to 10 birds at Tremont, Anna. Co.; JQA) show that offspring are quick to learn from parents. BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS are sparse breeders here and more than usual were noted this summer. The first was heard June 20 by SJF during her Breeding Bird Survey near Heatherton, Ant. Co. Others were "singing" June 23 near Caledonia, Guys. Co. (BLM), June 28 at Aspy Bridge, Vic. Co. (DBM), July 12 at New Glasgow (*fide* KJM). Two were heard by KJM during his BBS at James R., Ant. Co., June 14.

GREAT HORNED OWLS once again nested successfully on Brier I. (ELM, JUS). "Two bulky young" (MUN) were at an abandoned property at Baccaro, Shel. Co., July 10 and later took to sitting out on the barn. There were a few other reports of scattered calling birds. BARRED OWL reports included one heard most of the summer at W Springhill, Anna Co. (MCN), one heard in Clayton Park, HRM, in early July (RSM) and three calling, July 29, outside JAH's home in Lun. Co. BLF reported six successful nests in the Wolfville area with 10 young fledged. Was a SHORT-EARED OWL, June 25, Cape Sable (*fide* GRM) nesting there, as they have in the past? A N. SAW-WHET OWL, still calling June 19 at Little Hbr., Shel. Co., "seems late" (DHY). However, RFL found a nest with five eggs in one of his boxes in Jim Campbells Barrens, Inv. Co. on June 6; ultimately, two young fledged in early July. This is a very late nesting for this species, and may indicate a second nesting after a lost brood.

Up to 12 COM. NIGHTHAWKS were noted June 4 in Lun. Co. (Paul MacDonald), and about 20 were hawking over the wetland and bridge at Howie Centre, CB Co., June 8 & 15 (DBM, LEL). Had these birds not settled in to breed yet? They were noted in scattered ones and twos through July



In spring, Murray Newell found a pair of GREAT HORNED OWLS nesting on an abandoned property at Baccaro, Shel. Co. In early summer, the rather fearsome young sat on the barn and posed for this fine portrait. [Photo Grant Milroy]

with KFS reporting eight at Advocate Hbr., Cum. Co., July 12 (KFS), but there were no reports of the larger gatherings of migrants that are usually seen over highways and byways. Apparently the traditional WHIP-POOR-WILL in Spryfield was singing in June, and presumably nesting, but farther back from Long Pond (*fide* FLL). No others were reported. We badly need a systematic search for this diminishing species and its habitat needs.

CHIMNEY SWIFTS reports were as usual enthusiastically collated by JWW, and his account can be summarized as follows. Evening maxima in early June at the Robie Tufts Centre, Wolfville, exceeded those noted in late May (last issue), reaching an astonishing 526 June 6 (two estimates in "good agreement"). On the same evening there were an even more spectacular 712 at the Middleton High School Chimney (PBG). Other fine peak counts were 480 at the Agricultural College, Bible Hill, June 11 (ROH and Linda Hall), and 705 at the Temperance Street School, New Glasgow, June 12 (KJM). Merlins as usual sometimes

harassed the swifts in Wolfville and Middleton, Barbara Giffin reported that one in Middleton actually entered the chimney briefly, emerged with a victim, dispatched it on the spot, and flew off (to feed young Merlins?). Another, more amusing tale is by John Belbin. "At 8:45 . . . a flight of seven Canada Geese blundered right through the [swift flock]. Absolute chaos! The poor geese abruptly changed course and fled [and] the swifts . . . didn't really get themselves going again until 8:56." The final total was nevertheless 650-700 swifts. Numbers were almost always fewer than 50 after late June in Wolfville, but a goodly 480 were still at the Middleton site, July 8 (BBT). JWW concluded that, indeed, "this seems to be a good year for Chimney Swifts, or perhaps last year was good for them" (JWW). It was also noted on NatureNS that these spectacular flocks are of non-breeders, the fully adult and competent nesting as pairs and small groups in hollow trees, etc. Where are the chimney flocks on nights when few or none appear? Are they staying aloft or roosting elsewhere in smaller groups? We have lots to learn.



RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS numbers were as expected this summer. A possibly unusual hummer near Mill Village, Lun. Co., was reported to JAH, who saw it briefly June 15 and thought it had rufous bases on the outer tail feathers. Unfortunately, it didn't stay for further scrutiny. Nothing notable was submitted on numbers or behaviour of BELTED KINGFISHERS.

Three reports of summering YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS came from DBM and one from BLF although surely more were seen. Nestlings of hole-nesting species, probably because they have less to fear from nest predators, are generally more vocal than open-nesters. (They are also able to stay longer and fledge at a more advanced state of development.) In late June, JET was puzzled by a "high-pitched,



This fine portrait of a PILEATED WOODPECKER was obtained 4 July by Randy Lauff in his backyard at Fairmont, Ant. Co.

continuous warbling/whistling" from an old hawthorn in Wolfville, which she then traced to a DOWNY WOODPECKER nest hole "barely two feet above ground." They were being fed "gobs and gobs of aphids" from a nearby old elm. PLC found two fledglings being fed by a female at Lewis L. PP, July 7. Other Downy, and a few HAIRY WOODPECKERS, continued to attend suet and sunflower feeders through early summer. A young BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER at Uniacke Estate, July 1 (D. Hughes *et al.*) and a family group at Taylor Hd. PP July 6 (RSM) were in traditional locales for this elusive species. There were very few reports of N. FLICKERS and only a couple of mentions of PILEATED WOODPECKERS. The latter, charismatic species, usually attracts more attention. ☐

## Flycatchers Through Thrushes

By Andy Horn

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS prefer more boreal habitats, so not surprisingly, most breeding season reports of this species came from CB, where one observer found them at at least five locations (DBM). A northern bias in reports of E. WOODPEWEES, however, probably reflects where they attracted notice rather than where they were more common: breeding season reports came from Pictou (KJM), Cape North, Vic. Co., and Frenchvale, CB Co. (DBM). YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHERS at two locations near Westmount, CB Co., June 8 (NSBS) may still have been migrants (DBM). That date highlights this species' relatively short summer residency, when one considers that an adult at Brier I., July 31, was apparently a post-breeding wanderer, albeit the earliest that our former flycatcher editor has ever seen there. Most move through Brier I. in mid to late August (ELM). The mere trickle of ALDER FLYCATCHER and LEAST FLYCATCHER reports, though coming from throughout the province, was far in disproportion to their abundance. A paucity of reported E. PHOEBES was more expected, as were their locations, all from Anna. and Kings Cos. (SLH, PBG).

GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHERS apparently bred in at least two locations: Coldbrook, Kings Co. (AAM) and Indian Pt., Lun. Co. (Isobel Wiseman *vide* JAH). EASTERN KINGBIRDS were seen throughout the province during the breeding season as expected, though some were still arriving as late as June 2, when ELM saw a flock of six on Brier I. For the second issue in a row, the highlight in this section of reports is a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER, this time at Indian Hbr., just west of Peggys Cove, Hfx. Co., on the afternoon of June 8 (Kay Richardson *vide* BLM).

BLUE-HEADED VIREOS were reported from throughout the province from characteristic nesting sites. PHILADELPHIA VIREOS must surely also be present but, thanks perhaps in part to the similarity of their song to their more common relative, apparently slipped through unnoticed except for one report from Trafalgar, Guys. Co., June 23 (BLM). RED-EYED VIREOS were reported from breeding areas throughout the province.

GRAY JAYS were seen on breeding grounds, of course on CB, in this case Pt.

Michaud, Rich. Co. (DBM) and CBHNP (AGH, RFL), but also at Taylor Hd., Guys. Co., on the Wards Falls Trail, near Wharton, Cum. Co., and, in family groups, at Mt. Uniacke, Hfx. Co. (RSM). BLUE JAYS, AM. CROWS, and COM. RAVENS were similarly noted everywhere (var. obs.), though no one commented on their abundance relative to other years.

Despite at least a week's delay in first egg dates and some cold June days that made nestlings weak and ravenous, TREE SWALLOWS had a good year at study sites in the Gaspereau Valley, Kings Co. (AGH). Successful fledgings there and elsewhere (e.g., Lockeport, Shel. Co.) (JQA) somewhat allayed fears that they would have a bad year. BANK SWALLOW colonies are well worth monitoring, given their reliance on ephemeral nesting sites that are made the more so by road construction and the like. Re-establishment of a colony that had been ripped out of a sand quarry in White Rock, Kings Co. (JCT) was particularly good news. Colonies on Ciboux I., Vic. Co. (AGH) and at Martinique Beach, Hfx. Co. (RSM) were still busy in late July.

CLIFF SWALLOWS met disaster at Halifax International Airport, where as many as 130 pairs have nested successfully in past years. This year, the airport authority knocked down nests repeatedly throughout the breeding season. Fewer than 10 pairs appear to have succeeded this year, compared with 85 successful pairs last year (DHH). Bird strikes at airports can be a serious problem, but surely species less used to aerial manoeuvres are more to blame, even if they are less easy targets for animal control. One Cliff Swallow in a flock of about 30 Tree Swallows on Brier I., July 24, might have been an early migrant (ELM).

BARN SWALLOWS were reported from suitable habitat throughout the province (var. obs.). As you read this on a cold fall day, what better way to recall summer than to remember their twittering amidst the smell of goldenrod and hot barn boards?

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES are reported sporadically in summer. Not surprisingly their harder-to-locate relatives, BOREAL CHICKADEES, get more attention, although this time reports of the latter species were restricted to several locations in CB and HRM (DBM, AGH). The same goes for our pair of nuthatch species; not surprisingly, the ubiquitous RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH received fewer reports than the more notable WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH. Repeated sightings suggestive of breeding came from Tremont, Anna. Co. (SLH) and Halifax (AGH) and a first summer record

for KFS's feeder at Apple R., Cum. Co. BROWN CREEPERS slipped through virtually unnoticed.

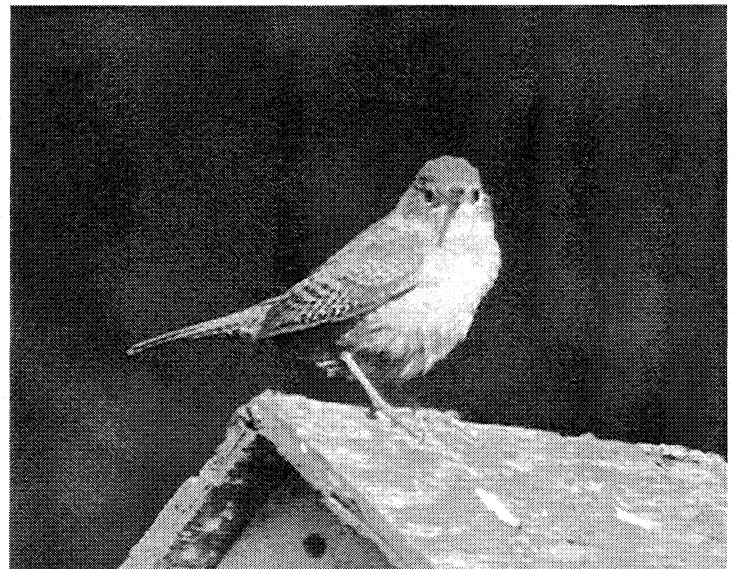
Two HOUSE WRENS delivered nesting material to a nest box in Wolfville, beginning June 12 (JSB *vide* JCT). They eventually filled the box, but then apparently abandoned it by June 28. Sightings of singing individuals at two other locations in town, at one in late June and at the other July 26 (JCT), may have involved the same birds. WINTER WRENS were only reported from CB, at Pt. Michaud, Rich. Co. and CBHNP, Inv. Co. (DBM, DAH).

The GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET is another species whose reports do not reflect its abundance, partly because of its high lispy calls. RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS, however, yielded still fewer reports, despite not being exactly quiet birds, if noisy family groups and occasional loud singing at various locations in CBHNP, late July (AGH), are any indication.

Few species get more attention, and are more deserving of it, than E. BLUEBIRDS. Breeding season records included two males and a fem. at New Salem, Cum. Co., June 1, a male at Apple R., Cum. Co., June 30, single fem. at Apple R. and Advocate Hbr., July 31 (all KFS), a fem. at Mt. Uniacke, Hfx. Co., June 23 (RSM). At former (and thus perhaps current) nesting sites a male visited a box in Gaspereau, June

- July 1 (JCT, BLF), and a pair was at a box at Sunken L., June 13, both sites in Kings Co. (BLF) They nested for sure at Brier I. (ELM), at Gaspereau and White Rock, both Kings Co. (BLF) and, remarkably, almost as far north in the province as they could, in Cape North, Vic. Co., where a pair raised three chicks (FMC).

VEERYS were noted at various locations in Anna. Co. and CB (var. obs.). The first year of Bird Studies Canada's High Elevation Landbird Program (HELP), targeted largely at monitoring BICKNELL'S THRUSH populations, will be described by Becky Whittam in this issue. According to a draft report, however, searches for Bicknell's discovered 27 on 21 survey routes, mainly in and around CBHNP (Melanie Ball). The same routes yielded 98 SWAINSON'S THRUSHES, which of course were also widely reported elsewhere throughout the province. HERMIT THRUSHES are just as widespread but yielded a fifth as many reports, perhaps partly because they are taken for granted this time of year. However, if their presence is taken for granted, their song is not: "This one thrush [a bird south of Lockeport, Shel. Co.] is a masterful songster, singing full out every single day from about 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and again from about 6:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. What an especially glorious singer he is! (JQA)" In that sense they upstaged AM. ROBINS, which were reported nesting throughout the province. Then again, robins too will have their day when spring comes back. ☐



HOUSE WRENS were mapped as "probable" nesters in the Maritimes in the 1992 Atlas, and a number of singing males have been recorded in recent years without any confirmed nesting. The male in Wolfville this summer assiduously prepared a nest in at least one bird box, but apparently failed to attract a similarly wandering female. [Photos Judy Tufts]

# Mimics Through Warblers

By Ken McKenna

The only mention of EUR. STARLING this reporting period was of one to three each day in the yard of SLH, Tremont, Anna. Co. through June and July.

According to the Atlas of Breeding Bird of the Maritime Provinces, GRAY CATBIRD is not a common CB nester. SEM noted two adults at Clarks Rd., Louisbourg on June 1 and the next day saw one gathering nesting material in her own yard in the same town but alas, the bird was last seen June 9 and she felt cold rainy weather in June made have led to nest abandonment. The catbirds in KFS's yard in Apple R., Cum. Co., peaked at a male, fem. and four young in July. Some of the N. MOCKINGBIRD reports indicate this species likes the habitat provided by graveyards. On June 4, JWW was informed about a Mockingbird near the Hortonville cemetery (Kings Co.). By June 17 two were noted and by June 17, four or five birds were present with at least one a well-fledged youngster. At the old Horton graveyard, RES reported a single Mockingbird, July 11. The last reported sighting was at Seaview Park, Hfx. Co., July 21 (RSM). For the second year in a row, a BROWN THRASHER appeared at house #38, The Hawk, and MUN provided details of the subsequent nesting. By July 11 the pair were out and about with two or three young. Brown Thrasher was also reported June 3 at the feeder of JON on CSI (*vide* MUN).

On June 7, Marie Rodgers, a summer resident at Caribou River, noted a small flock of BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS at Marble Mt., Inv. Co. She noted the overall grey appearance of the birds and yellow on the wings. CEDAR WAXWINGS were observed sharing food, June 11 in Aylesford, Kings Co. by SLH. Stokes' A GUIDE TO BIRD BEHAVIOR vol. 2 describes two types of feeding courtship behaviour. The first is a side-hop where a waxwing with food in its bill hops sideways toward another waxwing and passes food to it. The other waxwing hops away then toward the first bird and passes the food back. This display is repeated until one bird eats the food. After egg laying, mate feeding replaces this behaviour. In this second phase of courtship, the fem. on or near the nest crouches, does wing rowing and gives the *zee-zee* call, and



A fine "digiscoped" portrait of a common, but elegant bird, the CEDAR WAXWING. [Photo Richard Stern]

may follow the male around. Other reports of Cedar Waxwings were from DBM in all four CB Cos., KFS, Apple R., Cum. Co. and MCN, W Springhill, Anna Co.

Reporting for warblers during the summer breeding period was a little sketchy with no reports received on Cape May, Bay-breasted and Palm Warblers. Maybe next year some more BBS participants could send along route summaries to provide an idea of how our warblers are doing on a sampling of breeding areas.

The majority of TENNESSEE WARBLER reports were from CBI with FMC hearing a singing bird at Sunrise Valley, Vic. Co. DBM had this species on BBS's in all four CB Cos. On the Londonderry BBS, Col. Co., BLM noted one where normally they are more numerous. JAH, Mahone Bay and DBM, Big Pond, CB Co. and Pt. Michaud BBS, Rich. Co. reported on the NASHVILLE WARBLER. RSM noted an ad. N. PARULA with fledged young at Lewis L. PP July 19. Other N. Parulas were noted by SLH from Tremont, Anna. Co. in June and by DBM from a variety of CB locales.

At West Hd., Shel. Co., JQA heard and saw 10 ad. YELLOW WARBLERS

daily through June and July and by the end of July the number had increased to about 20 with the recruitment of juvs. Adult CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS with young in tow were observed at Lewis L. PP, July 19 (RSM). One of DBM's reports from June 20 is from a gravel pit at Christmas I., CB Co. No doubt the shrubs around the gravel pit provide ideal habitat for this warbler to breed. One of our most common breeding warblers of the boreal forest, MAGNOLIA WARBLER, was reported by only one person with two ads. and two juvs. at West Hd., Shel. Co., July 30 (JQA). A hike along the Economy Falls trail, Col. Co., June 29 produced a BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER for TEP. JQA provided a description of an ad. YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER with one juv. in mixed boggy woods at West Hd., Shel. Co. BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS were reported from a number of locations throughout the province. One described as an imm. by SLH, June 1, must have been a young bird from last year. It would be too early for a juv. bird, as egg laying would only be beginning at this stage. Apart from a singing male at W

Springhill, Anna. Co., June 6-11 (MCN), all BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER reports were from CB (FMC, DBM). At Taylor Hd. PP, BLACKPOLL WARBLERS outnumbered all others for TEP, June 22. Other June Blackpolls were from Brier I. (ELM) and Cape North (FMC). An ad. with a juv. was noted July 12 near a bog at West Hd., Shel. Co. (JQA).

Once again at West Hd., JQA sighted a BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER, July 30 with a young bird. JQA also had the only submitted mention of AMERICAN REDSTART with two ads. in the West Hd. area from June to mid-July.

On a trip to the Carlton area of Shel. Co., June 9, MUN heard OVENBIRDS singing everywhere he stopped. Most N. WATERTHRUSH information came from FMC and DBM in CB. The Waterthrush is one of the early returning warblers in the spring so it is not surprising that TEP found an ad. feeding young, June 13 at Second Lake in Lower Sackville. He noted the ad. "feigning injury with wings half-spread, walking and fluttering in a distraction display and later sitting on a low exposed branch calling in alarm. After settling down, it made several trips to young with beak full of insects".

Probable fairly recent arriving MOURNING WARBLERS were

observed at Four Mile Brook, Pict. Co., June 5 (KJM) and Wolfville Ridge, June 9 (JCT). In CB, DBM located Mourning Warblers at Frenchvale, Gillis Lake, Beechmont, and Pt. Michaud-Richmond BBS, Christmas I., French and North Mountain and Donkin (all on CBI). COMMON YELLOWTHROATS were noted daily June-July at West Hd., Shel. Co. with the eight ads. increasing to 14 ads. and juvs. by July 31.

WILSON'S WARBLERS were seen June 3 at Maple L., Pict. Co. (KJM) and June 15 near Louisbourg, CB Co. (LEL, SEM). CANADA WARBLERS were seen by Bill Hughes and SHU at Lewis L. PP, June 30, and July 30 at West Hd., Shel. Co. (JQA). ♀

## Tanagers Through House Sparrows

By David McCorquodale

A lingering immature male SUMMER TANAGER ate fruit, including watermelon, from early June until June 10 at MUN's feeder on CSI.

After having a singing SCARLET TANAGER around their Wolfville Ridge property last year, and off and on for more than 15 years, JCT & GWT

spent some time observing a male in June and July this year. Their hope was to find a nest. JCT & BLF, had seen a male briefly on BLF's property in early June.

Later JCT & GWT, a kilometer west of BLF's, made two significant discoveries around their property with the aid of

BLF. One was that there were two males. The two frequented different areas and the difference in plumage, one had a brownish patch in the black on the left side and lighter orange on the left side of the breast, indicating a first year male (also noted by BLF), confirmed two singing males. In mid-July Judy spotted the female in a serviceberry in their garden collecting berries, with her mate (possibly to feed the nestlings?).

Following this new turn of events, JCT & GWT began observing the male offering food - usually large insects - to the female. The birds became wary of this new attention. A week later GWT was able to find the nest nearby, both adults were seen taking food to feed their young, and all indications are that it was successful. The nest, formed from the lichen *Usnea*, grass and rootlets, was about 35-40 feet up in a mature Hemlock, about 12-15 feet out on a limb. In late July after the adults had abandoned the nest, GWT hired someone to come and carefully remove the hemlock branch holding the nest. Fecal sacs and indications of large young in the nest pointed to its success.

GWT videotaped the removal of the nest as well as the interior of the nest. Unfortunately he did not have a camcorder in time to record the actual



"Overshooting" spring migrants, like this red-splashed young male SUMMER TANAGER at Murray Newell's feeder in early June, seldom linger here. It was photographed June 10, and disappeared shortly after. [Photo Grant Milroy]





Although there are breeding records of SCARLET TANAGER in Nova Scotia, the pair that nested successfully in the Tufts "back forty" on Wolfville Ridge may be the first example to have been photographically documented. The black-and-white versions cannot do justice to the brilliant scarlet of the male carrying food for the young, or to the vivid yellow underparts of the female attending the young at the large nest, in the original digiscoped images. [Photos Richard Stern]

birds at nest site but Richard Stern took excellent photos of the male, and some showing the female feeding young in the nest.

How unusual is it find a Scarlet Tanager nest, let alone document that it was successful? When birds build their nests more than 10 metres up in a Hemlock, they are difficult to find. During the breeding bird atlas project in the late 1980s, five years of observing by birders looking for evidence of nesting all across the Maritimes only resulted in one Scarlet Tanager nest being found.

Along with this nest there were two reports of Scarlet Tanagers in places where they are not usually found. After eight years of doing the Londonderry BBS route, Col. Co., BLM had his first on the route. In Cape North, near some of the old, rich hardwoods of northern CB, Rosemary Algar saw one for a few days in late June and early July.

In a recent clear-cut on Wolfville Ridge the JCT & GWT found a male **E. TOWHEE**. He sang from late June into late July, apparently unsuccessful in attracting a mate.

CHIPPING SPARROWS rarely attract our attention. One June 1, Brier I., was thought to be very late for a migrant (ELM). Through the summer most nesting birds in CB are most frequent

near lawns and feeders. A pair on the Clark's Rd., near Louisbourg (SEM) was near neither.

VESPER SPARROWS were located in two places, Folly Mt., Col. Co. (FLL, JAH) and Gabriel Hill, Cum. Co. (JCZ), in the blueberry fields where we expect to find them nesting. There were also two reports in unusual locations, a singing male at Portuguese Cove L., (HAT) and a pair at Second Peninsula, Lun. Co. (JAH).

Our most common sparrows, appeared to be common, SAVANNAH in fields and grassy beaches, SONG along roads throughout, WHITE-THROATED and DARK-EYED JUNCOS in abandoned fields and along lakes and roads.

Some of the overwintering NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS on CSI were still around in very late May. In CB the first migrants often arrive the end of the first week of June, like the four SEM found at Morien Bar, June 8. Most reports from elsewhere, Lun. Co., Pict. Co., Kings Co., Vic. Co. and HRM were of singing males in July. For the second year in a row JAH reported a SEASIDE SPARROW from Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co.

On the mainland FOX SPARROW reports came from Portuguese Cove (HAT, FLL) and Taylor Hd. PP (TEP), while on CBI they were vocal and

obvious on French, MacKenzie and North Mts. in CBHNP throughout June and into early July.

There were a couple of reports of LINCOLN'S SPARROWS on the mainland, Duncan Cove Rd. and Pennant Pt. (HAT). There were far more reports of singing males from several areas on CBI.

In late May and into early June a male WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW was singing in the Sunrise Valley, Cape North, Vic. Co. It was last seen June 17 (FMC). In the past 25 years the odd individual has lingered into early June, but only twice later into the summer than this one. They nest as close as northern Newfoundland.

NORTHERN CARDINALS continue to nest in a variety of places in the southern half of the province. Either successful nests or adults were reported from several locations in HRM through most of June and July. These included Pt. Pleasant Park, Brier I., Lockeport, and Kentville. Through June ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS fed at a feeder in the Sunrise Valley, Cape North, Vic. Co. (FMC) and late in the month there was a pair at a feeder in Tremont (SLH). By early July a few were noted moving around, for example in Blockhouse, Lun. Co. and Carleton, Yar. Co. (JAH, MUN). A couple of

Indigo Buntings lingered into June, a fem. June 1 at Cape North, Vic. Co. (FMC) and a male, a week later at the other end of the province in Carleton, Yar. Co. (*fide* MUN).

A late migrant BOBOLINK flew over Brier I., June 2 (ELM). Later in June they nested in hayfields in several places across the province. As expected RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS were common in wetlands with cattails. An intriguing report of a MEADOWLARK SP. sitting on the side of the Cabot Trail, in CBHNP, June 22, was received (Mike Russell). Reports of RUSTY BLACKBIRDS were very sparse – a probable nesting near Economy, Col. Co. (TEP) and a pair in a reliable place near Carleton, Yar. Co. (MUN). COMMON GRACKLES were common in a variety of wetlands and suburban areas through the province. By mid-July scattered flocks of 50 and more grackles were roaming around.

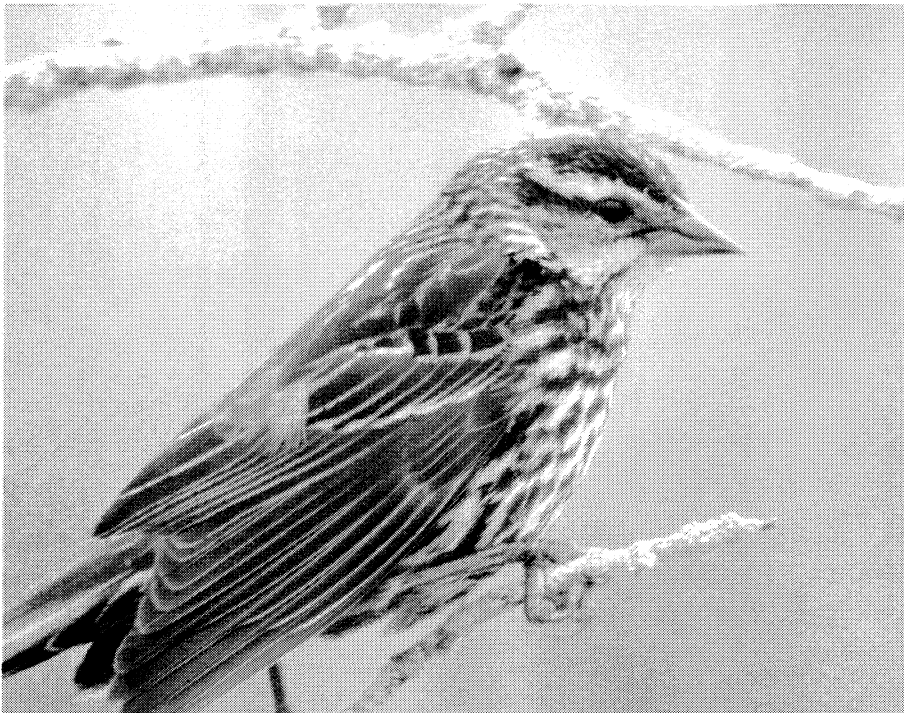
There were few reports of BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS – only a female around feeders in Tremont (SLH). A few of the influx of BALTIMORE ORIOLES lingered into June. The last on Brier I. was a male June 2, down from three males and a fem. the day

before. Another example was the first summer fem. that learned to feed on grapes at a feeder in Louisbourg. It stayed into the third week of June (SEM). There were at least three males at a traditional nesting location near the Hector Centre in Plymouth, Pict. Co. (KJM) in early June.

Since the influx in the fall of 2001, PINE GROSBEAKS have been scarce. This summer some were noted at Taylor Hd. PP (TEP), Portuguese Cove (HAT, FLL), Blockhouse, Lun. Co. (JAH) and French Mt. in CBHNP (DBM). In contrast to the paucity of Pine Grosbeak reports, there were reports of lots of PURPLE FINCHES from many places. A few feeders, in fact several, hosted a dozen or more through June and July. Some of these locations were Cape North, Vic. Co. (FMC), Louisbourg (SEM), Port Hilford, Guys. Co. (RIB) and Tremont (SLH). HOUSE FINCHES continue to hold their own in Halifax (ABM) and there are several pairs in Digby as new resident Rebecca Ellis found out when she arrived in early June (*fide* JCT).

As has been typical for the past few years, most of our records of RED CROSSBILLS come from feeders, in

fact this summer all of the reports are at feeders. The most intriguing were the two pairs that SEM watched coming to her feeder in Louisbourg from the second week of June until the beginning of the last week of July. She noticed a difference in timing of feeding beginning July 20 and then July 25 a male was at the feeder with a fledgling. She assumes, with good reason, that both pairs reared young around her yard. Elsewhere three males visited a feeder in Seabright, HRM (Nancy and Richard Cook *fide* RSM) July 14. In Louisbourg there were also WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS at SEM's feeder, a flock of 12 June 16, and then up to three periodically in to July. Elsewhere there were individuals at Schooner Pond in mid-July (DBM, RWK), and a few the last week of July at Lewis L. PP, HRM (HAT) and at North Pt., Brier I. (ELM). This paucity of sightings is surprising given the cone crop on spruces and balsam, at least in the northern half of the province. Often when there is a big crop like this the crossbills arrive in late June. Perhaps these sightings in late July are foreshadowing an invasion to take advantage of the cone crop, or maybe this year the cones will be left to the Red Squirrels and others.



With their brown, heavily striped plumage, female RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS are sometimes mistaken as large sparrows by beginners at birding. This fine digiscope portrait was made early June at Canning, Kings Co. [Photo Richard Stern]

PINE SISKINS frequented many feeders on CBI through the summer, with adults bringing young to a feeder in Georges R. in mid-July, up to 40 at a feeder in Louisbourg through July (SEM) and regularly more than a dozen in Cape North, Vic. Co. (FMC). On the mainland sightings were few, with the highest number being more than a dozen at a feeder in Port Hilford, Guys. Co. (RIB). In contrast, AM. GOLDFINCHES seemed to be frequent on both the mainland and CBI. Most reports of EVENING GROSBEAKS come from feeders, such as up to eight regularly through the summer at Tremont (SLH) and a similar number in Cape North, Vic. Co. (FMC).

BLF reported five HOUSE SPARROWS fledged from his nestbox June 12, Wolfville Ridge. Black-capped Chickadees moved into the box in July. ♀

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Thanks to all of our contributors, including:

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Smith, Betty June	BJS	Swift, June	JUS	Ball, Melanie	
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☼☼☼

## Field Trip Reports

### Cape Sable Island

04 May 2002, Leader: Murray Newell

About 30 birders set out on a windy, but sunny and healthy day. We found 55 species on CSI alone. Some highlights were: an Upland Sandpiper at the Daniels Head Cemetery, a Warbling Vireo and a Northern Oriole at Kenny Road. Also seen were: Fox Sparrows, an Oystercatcher, two Common Terns, a White-crowned Sparrow, two Northern Orioles and a Tennessee Warbler. At The Hawk there were: Red Knot, Black-bellied Plover, American Golden Plover and Piping Plover. Thanks to a most friendly bunch of birders. It is what makes birding fun.

Murray Newell

### Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary

18 May 2002, Leader: Terry Paquet

12 participants enjoyed a nice, calm day for the NSBS Amherst Point trip of 18 May 2002. There were plenty of birds to keep us occupied although I did hear some mention of "warbler neck" and I'm sure we missed a few birds in the canopy – just too far up there. In all, we saw 16 species of warbler (which did we miss???) and both common vireos. We had seven species of Sparrow, missing only Fox, Sharp-tail and Vesper Sparrows, of our breeders. Six shorebirds, four raptors (including a nesting Bald Eagle) and a number of other pleasantly expected species were found on a great day of birding! ☼

## Book Reviews

### **Common Birds and Their Songs**

by Lang Elliot and Marie Read; Houghton Mifflin Company. ISBN 0-395-91238-5

This small book consists of 124 pages and an accompanying compact disc.

I chose this book off a table display because I could imagine it as dynamite for my grade four students who have been tending feeders at school with enthusiasm. They have shown a keen interest in learning to identify some of the more common birds. This book limits the number of species which students must examine, once they have spotted a bird, only 50 species are described and illustrated.

The introduction is well-written. The language is clear and presents the basic information which all beginning birders must learn. It is advanced enough for adults and would need to be taught to young children.

The layout of the book is excellent for beginning birders. Each picture is accompanied by one page of text with the sub-headings: identification, habitat, voice, and range in bold print. A number at the top of the page refers to a list of the birds near the front of the book and the corresponding number of the song on the compact disc.

Two teachers in my elementary school used this book. My class was able to identify a bird which had been killed on the highway. The picture was beautiful and very easy to recognize. The students learned the habitat and voice of the bird. We were able to repeat the song many times on the disc.

The compact disc is a very high quality and easily replayed. It is not hypnotic like many I have tried.

I have been very pleased to have this little book as part of my birding library. I feel it will be a catalyst for catching new birdwatchers for our future, for the enhancement of their lives and the benefit of our environment. ☐

**Claire Diggins**

### **Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica**

Martín de la Peña and Maurice Rumboll

Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2001

ISBN 0-691-09035-1

Soft Cover. 304 pages. Lists at \$US 29.95

South America has an overwhelming diversity of birds. Because this book deals only with Argentina, Bolivia, southernmost Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, with Antarctica for good measure, its span is equivalent to that of North America north of Mexico. Even so, the region is much better endowed with birds and the book includes 1,140 species.

My reviewing this book may seem cheeky as I've only made two working trips to the region – to Chile in 1991 and 1995 – and I bagged only 126 species. However, it was pleasant to relive my limited experiences. On those trips I had to depend on two field guides published in 1989. One was the "Guía de campo de las aves de Chile" by Araya and Millie that, even with its inadequate black & white illustrations, served well to define the possible. The other was an English translation of Narosky and Yzrieta's *Birds of Argentina and Uruguay*, with helpful, though inartistic, color illustrations. After my return, I had to agonize over more detailed library sources, like Johnson's classic "Birds of Chile . . .," and Ridgley's yet incomplete "The birds of South America." Had this book been available, there would have been less agonizing.

The combined thoroughness and compactness of the book are astonishing. Every species is illustrated, usually with more than one plumage, and there is a range map for each. The text is very clear, and includes accounts of vocalizations. Three Argentinean artists created the excellent illustrations. Since 1990, there have been two extensive books in Spanish for Argentina and an English-language guide for southwestern Brazil, and two English-language guides for Chile are evidently in the works. However, if I'm lucky enough to return to the region, I'll take this quick-and-easy guide to anything likely to be seen. ☐

**Ian McLaren**



## Field Trip Reports

### Petersfield and Big Pond

02 Jun 2002, Leader: Dave McCorquodale

A Nova Scotia Bird Society trip met at Petersfield Provincial Park on Saturday 08 June. After wandering through the poplar woods and the old MacLennan Estate the group adjourned to a nearby Tim's and then proceeded to Big Pond before finishing with a trip up the Glengarry Rd.

At Petersfield, everyone got good looks at singing Red-eyed Vireos, Ovenbirds and White-throated Sparrows. The latter was a typical pair, one bird a tan-striped and the other a white-striped morph. Both sexes can be either morph and there is a strong tendency for a bird of one morph to choose a bird of the opposite morph as its mate.

At Big Pond we enjoyed Jack MacNeil's company for a walk around his ponds. The singing Bobolink and the intriguing Common Grackle nests (about 15), in amongst the ivy, on the side of his barn, were the highlights. As we left to drive up the Glengarry Rd. I told everyone where we would see the Spruce Grouse and how it had been displaying in late May. Well, despite standing patiently and feeding many black flies, there was no Spruce Grouse. A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was very cooperative; a Nashville Warbler less so and a little later a Tennessee Warbler was very obliging. On our way back, a few of us stopped to look for a pair of Merlins at the bridge. At first there was no sign of them, so we watched a Northern Parula for a while, and then we heard, and later saw the Merlins. By then it was time to head back towards town.

### Port Greville and Cape Chignecto

05 to 06 Jul 2002, Leader: Joan Czapalay

The Parrsboro Shore weekend began Friday evening when eight birders met at the Age of Sail Museum for a pleasant three hours of birding around Port Greville. Primarily, we were hoping to find some interesting warblers and thrushes. Highlights of the evening were: Canada and Magnolia Warblers; and a close encounter with a family of Ruffed Grouse – mother and several half-sized young.

Saturday began with overcast skies at Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, where we saw Alder, Least, and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Black-throated Blue and Mourning Warblers, and Barn, Tree, and Cliff Swallows (the latter at Reid's Century Farm, where a nestling was poking its head out of the cone).

After lunch the trip continued at Cape d'Or; then, for a hardy few, Sunday morning at Wasson's Bluff. The total count of species for Friday and Saturday came to 52.

### Wallace Bay National Wildlife Area

14 Jul 2002, Leader: Paul MacDonald

Half a dozen birders met at the wharf in Wallace for the trip to the impoundments of the Wildlife Area. Highlights of the morning were broods of Green-winged and Blue-winged Teals, Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. We could hear plenty of Sora, as well as Least Flycatcher and Veery. After a pleasant picnic lunch in the beautiful gardens of the Wallace Area Museum, the group visited another impoundment area (where the bear dropped by last year). The high point of the afternoon was the discovery of a male Lesser Scaup in the marsh. Some early shorebirds found on the saltwater side of the dyke were Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers, and Willets. There was no bear this year, and the group generally agreed that the four Harbour Seals had likely scared him off. The trip total amounted to approximately 60 to 65 species. ☐

# Compact Disc Review

By Richard Knapton

## The Diversity of Animal Sounds

by MacAulay Library of Natural Sounds (Compact Disc; 2001)

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; ISBN 0-938027-59-X

Ever wonder what a jaguar sounds like? Well, no, frankly, I never wondered either, but hearing the jaguar's uncatlike sawing for the first time was just one of the pleasures of this sampler of animal sounds. Produced by the world's foremost wildlife sound library, the CD was originally distributed as a curiosity at a meeting of professional ornithologists. The library received so many requests for copies that it has now marketed the CD more widely.

Here you'll find, along with the jaguar, short samples of almost 60 other species, including insects, frogs, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Many are sounds of animals that we've all been curious to hear at one time or another: rattlesnake, chimpanzee, lion, elephant, and that quintessential but inapt denizen of jungle movie soundtracks, the kookaburra. However, you'll also find incredibly odd sounds that will send you reaching again and again for the thorough index to the cuts: "What the heck was that?!" A Satin Bowerbird squeaks and whirs; a treehopper, recorded with a phonograph needle placed against its perch, drums stuttery rhythms; a midshipman (which is, as it turns out, a fish) drones like a distant W.W. II bomber.

The CD is organized mainly according to how the various animals use sound to attract mates, as explained in an enclosed 26-page booklet by Jack Bradbury. Bradbury is co-author of an unsurpassed textbook on animal communication, but unfortunately the booklet is pretty technical, and for the most part left me confused and uninspired.

But who cares, when the point of the CD is not to explain so much as to celebrate the awesome diversity of animal sound. The CD is not a field guide, but is, to your ears, what a chocolate sampler is to your mouth. Will you pick a raspberry nougat or a hazelnut crunch this time? A nightingale or a lyrebird? Perhaps just close your eyes and pick the unexpected: a Tui from New Zealand, which surely produces the most diverse sounds of any bird; a Brown-backed Solitaire, which sings two cascading songs at once, like our Veery but more so; or a Musician Wren, which pipes on alternating pitches in a seemingly random, but somehow musical, sequence.

Nova Scotians might want to buy the CD just for the pride of hearing how well our own animals measure up against bizarre and beautiful noisemakers from around the world. Ravens, bitterns, nighthawks, and beavers slapping their tails make world class bizarre sounds, and the Winter Wren's song, which one ornithologist has dubbed "a pinnacle of song complexity," is one of just a few cuts the producers judged worth reproducing at both full and half speed, to be fully savoured. You may be as surprised and pleased as I was to find that, by far the most beautiful sounds on this CD, among all the other fine exotic bird songs, were those of the Common Loon. One wonders why that species wasn't included in the library's previous sampler, "Beautiful Bird Songs of the World," which, incidentally, is by far a wiser buy if bird music is what you're after.

Technically, every recording on this CD impeccably preserves every nuance of sound quality. In fact, in a few cases, the recordings were too good, too thoroughly sterilised of background noise. The Australian Magpies shivered without their usual accompaniment of grasshoppers, parrots, and rustling gum leaves, and the Canyon Wren's song without a canyon's echo was, well, just a wren.

The CD's last cuts are of a pair of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, recorded in 1935, and of one of the last Kauai Oos (a Hawaiian honeycreeper), recorded in 1976. Introducing this end to the album, Bradbury's text is suddenly clear and apt: "Our last two cuts remind the listener of how important it is to preserve the sound world of our native animals and how easily they and that world can be lost, leaving us with only silence."

Hear, hear.

# Field Trip Reports

## Pictou County

27 July 2002, Leader: Ken McKenna

A dozen participants met in the parking lot of the Heather Motel in Stellarton to explore a variety of habitats in Pictou County. Early participants made the most of their wait by ticking Eastern Wood Pewee and Chestnut-sided Warbler from the woods behind the parking lot.

At our first stop, the Churchville beaver dam, a nice group of all our common nesting swallows swooped low for emerging insects, revealing great looks at their distinctive features, including the rump patch of Cliff swallows. Many of the birds rested on dead, protruding Alders which provided Richard Stern with great photographic opportunities. That location also gave us good looks at Sora, American Bittern, Eastern Kingbird, Alder Flycatcher and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Several stops along the Brook Road failed to produce many warblers that were present a week earlier. Both Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes as well as White-winged Crossbills were highlights from this location. The group surprised a Garter Snake on the walk into the beautiful Willard Fraser Property in MacLellans Brook. It was a tad quiet here as well, but the Eastern Phoebe was back at the bridge on the brook this year. A few people took the time to check out the nest under the bridge where the Phoebes were raising their second brood of young.

After a short stop at Sutherlands River Garage, the troops moved on to Big Island. Lunch on the beach, unfortunately, was nearly birdless; but better luck was had on the west end of the island where a group of shorebirds, terns and gulls were studied at close range. A stop at Lower Barneys River produced singing Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Our final stop at the Egerton D.U. Pond gave us Pied-billed Grebes, a nice flock of warblers (finally), including Nashville and Blackburnian, and Bobolinks were heard calling from the hayfields.

Although no rarities were seen and the species total of 80 was about 20% less than last year, everyone seemed to have a great day of comradeship in birding.

## Point Michaud Beach

24 August 2002, Leaders: George and Billy Digout

It was a beautiful day when 10 birders set out for a visit to Point Michaud Beach, Rich. Co., Other than the plentiful mosquitoes, there were certainly no complaints, especially when Dave McCorquodale spotted a Jaeger, species unknown, first harassing, then being chased by gulls near an island offshore. Another highlight of the day was a Sora spotted by Susann Myers in the cattails near George Peter's road. In all, 10 species of shorebirds were seen, along with R.N. Grebe, Gannet, Guillemot, Merlin, Harrier, and a total of 48 species. A lunch of fish chowder and garden stew was provided afterwards at the home of Murdock Digout. The addition of several new birders added to the very nice day had by all. ☐



These days, BALD EAGLE nests are readily observed throughout much of Nova Scotia. These fully feathered eaglets were photographed near Pictou in late June. [Photo Richard Stern]

# 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, Suzanne Borkowski 445-2922. Email: sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca

## **Thu 24 Oct 2002 - 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.

## **Sat. 23 Nov. 2002. - Antigonish Coastal Waters**

Leader: Randy Lauff 867-2471, Email rlauff@stfx.ca

This trip covers the waters of St. Georges Bay and the Antigonish Harbour. We'll end the day at Ogdens Pond, which has hosted thousands of gulls, ducks and in some years, "inland" Gannets. Meet at Uncle Ron's Coffee Shop on the TCH just east of Exit 35 (Lower South River). Rain date: Sun. Nov. 24.

## **Thu 28 Nov 2002 - Regular Meeting**

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

"Hot and Dangerous: Paraguay and its Birds." Guest Speaker: Kristina Cockle.

## **Sun 1 Dec 2002 - 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. No rain date.

## **Sat 4 Jan 2003 - Sewer Stroll I, Halifax/Dartmouth Area**

Leader: Terry Paquet 452-3622. Email terrypaquet@hotmail.com

Meet at Hartlen Pt. at 8:00 a.m. to look for rare birds and regular winter visitors. Dress for cold weather and bring a lunch. Plan to carpool as much as possible. Storm date: Sun. Jan. 5.

## **Sat 18 Jan 2003 - Halifax Field Naturalists Sewer Stroll, Halifax/Dartmouth Area**

Leaders: Linda and Peter Payzant. 861-1607 (evenings).

Email: aa095@chebucto.ns.ca

Dress warmly and bring a lunch, binoculars, field guides and telescope (if you have one). 9:15 a.m. at the Boondocks Restaurant in Eastern Passage. Rain Date: 9:15 a.m., Sunday January 19.

## **Thu 23 Jan 2003 - Members' Slide Night**

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

Members are invited to bring along 10 to 15 of their most interesting slides relating to birds or birding.

## **Sun 2 Feb 2003 - Sewer Stroll II, Halifax/Dartmouth Area**

Leader: Blake Maybank. 852-2077.

Email: maybank@ns.sympatico.ca

Meet at Hartlen Pt. at 8:00 a.m. Dress for cold weather and bring a lunch. Plan to carpool as much as possible. No storm date.

## **Thu 27 Feb 2003 - Regular Meeting**

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

"A Birder's Guide to Field Recording" Guest Speaker: Bob Lindsay

## **Thu 27 Mar 2003 - Regular Meeting**

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

"Avian Interactions with Wind Power Structures" Guest Speaker: Becky Whittam, Bird Studies Canada.

## **Sat 29 Mar 2003 - Baccaro and Blanche Peninsula**

Leader: Donna Ensor 875-4269. Email: ensorg@auracom.com

Early Spring birding with Donna. Rarities have shown up here quite often at this time of year. Dress warmly and bring a lunch. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at exit 28 off Highway #103 (Port Clyde). Rain date: Sunday, 30 March.

## **Sat 12 Apr 2003 - Martinique Beach**

Leader: Ian McLaren 429-7024. Email: iamclar@is.dal.ca

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Scotia Bank parking lot, Bridge Plaza, Dartmouth. Look for early migrants as well as possible rarities. Bring a lunch. No rain date.

## **Thu 24 Apr 2003 - Regular Meeting**

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

"Warblers and their Songs" Guest Speaker: Cindy Staicer, Dalhousie University.

## **Sun 27 Apr 2003 - Wolfville Area**

Leader: Jim Wolford 542-7650. Email: jww.triv@ns.sympatico.ca

Pond hopping for ducks and early migrants. Meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front St., Wolfville, at 10:00 a.m. This will be a joint field trip with the Blomidon Naturalists Society. No registration necessary. Bring a lunch. ☒