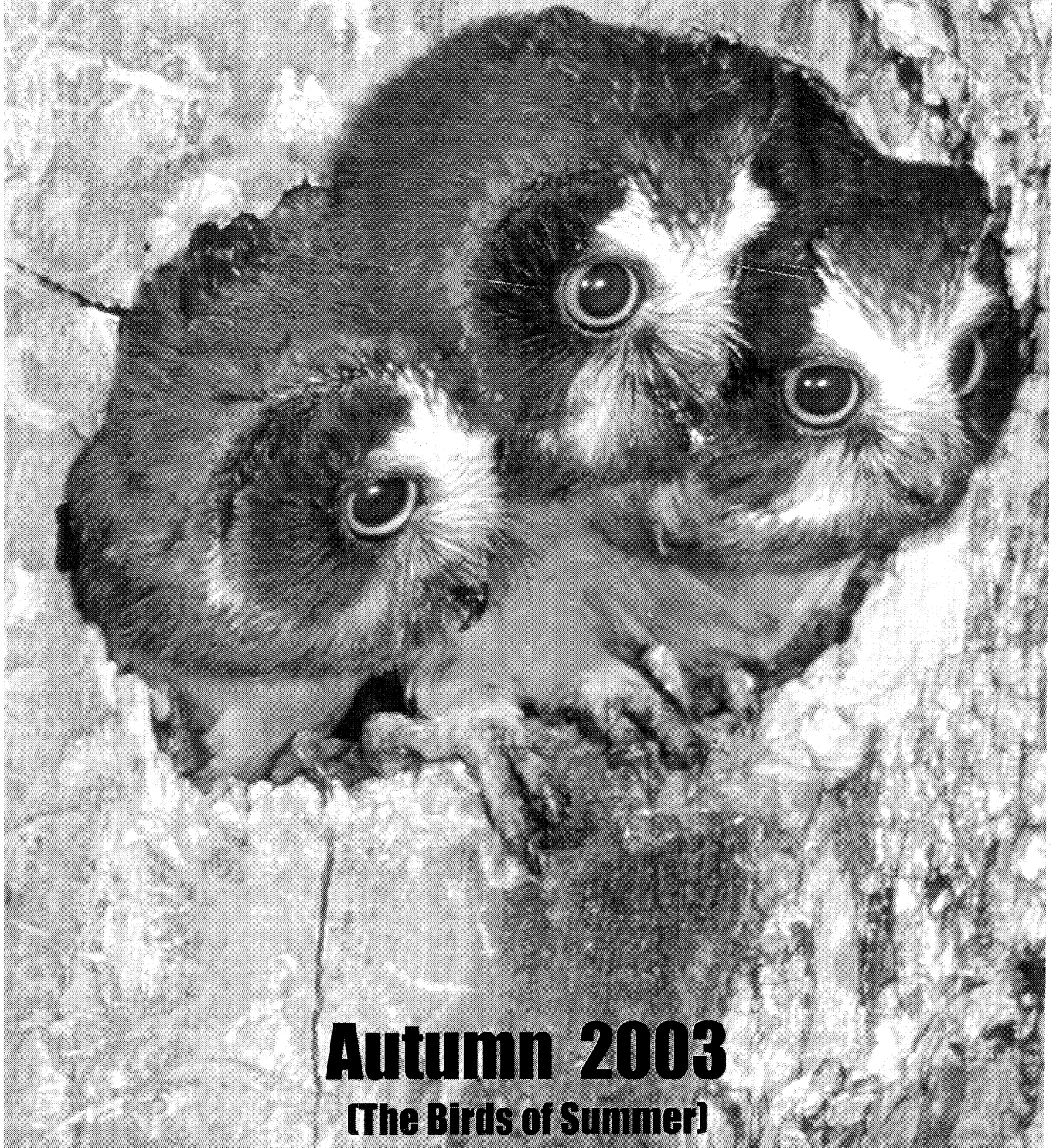


# **Nova Scotia Birds**

**A Quarterly Publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society**



**Autumn 2003**  
**(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 2004 issue: Dec. 7, 2003  
 Spring 2004 issue: Mar. 7, 2004

Summer 2004 issue: June 7, 2004  
 Fall 2003 issue: Aug. 7, 2004

## Inside This Issue

**Special points of interest:**

- 2003 NS Piping Plover results
- Birding Sites of Nova Scotia
- Spring Seasonal Reports
- Trip Reports
- New Books

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Cover Photo: [This N. SAW-WHET family portrait was an entry in the 2002 PGNS/NSBS Slide Competition. [Photo Lorris Keizer]

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AUTUMN 2003

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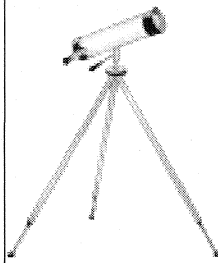
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# The Spotting Scope



Another late issue, but not as late as last issue, so things are looking up.

Ian McLaren has asked me to forward a short note, explaining why the Autumn issue, the "Birds of Summer," deals with just a short season. "The short summer season, traditionally defined as June 1 to July 31 by the publication "Audubon Field Notes" (now "North American Birds"), certainly doesn't do full justice to the "breeding" season in Nova Scotia, but we've stuck with it in order to give our records more meaning within the wider context of birds and birding in North America." The Editor of NAB is examining the possibility of changing the season to three months, and if that change is made, we'll follow suit.

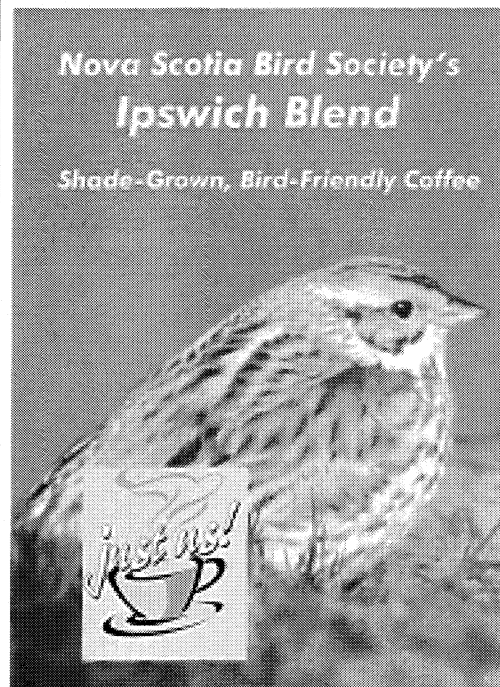
The following originally appeared as part of my "Nature Nova Scotia" column in the Halifax Herald.

"A cup of coffee is evolving beyond the morning's energy boost. But how is one to navigate the maze of mochaccinos, lattes, and corretos, with or without foam? Your coffee selection could help the environment, migrating songbirds, your conscience, your tastebuds, and the coffee growers themselves. All this is possible simply by choosing shade-grown, fair-trade coffee. Tropical deforestation is a serious environmental issue, with forests being ravaged for timber and agriculture. In response many migrant songbirds, whose original wintering forests were clear-cut, have switched to shade-grown coffee plantations. The Coffee Tree is really a tall shrub, and traditionally grows beneath tall trees providing a shade canopy. In the absence of traditional rainforests, many species have managed to survive using shady coffee plantations, including howler monkeys, iguanas, ocelots, tree-frogs, and many species of resident and migrant birds. Furthermore, shade-grown coffee requires fewer fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, which is why organic coffee is almost invariably shade-grown.

In recent decades new sun-tolerant coffee varieties have been developed. In the short term they produce higher yields with less labour, but at the cost of soil erosion, nutrient depletion, and the requirement of large amounts of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. In contrast to shade coffee plantations, the sun coffee fields are biological deserts. And they are invariably owned by large corporations, who have bought out small landowners who can't afford the switch to "modern" coffee-growing methods. (For more details, visit [www.songbird.org](http://www.songbird.org).) With such large-scale operations, corporations are able to offer North Americans cheaper coffee, albeit coffee that is less flavourable, at the cost of ruined countryside, impoverished farmers, and beleaguered plants and animals.

For a North American naturalist one easy way to help offset this crisis is to drink only shade-grown coffee, preferably Fair Trade coffee, a demarcation guaranteeing the grower received a fair price. But where can Nova Scotians get such coffee?"

The Nova Scotia Bird Society has the answer. We're selling coffee as a fund-raiser, a variety called "Ipswich Blend," supplied from JustUs Coffee in Wolfville. The coffee is a medium Mexican roast, and is fair trade, shade-grown, and therefore bird-friendly. At the moment we are only offering one choice for our blend, and that is whole beans and caffeinated. Birders need caffeine, after all. Each bag is 227 gms, and will sell for \$7.00, no tax. They'll be sold at Bird Society meetings, and perhaps on some field trips. More details will appear in future issues as this initiative develops.



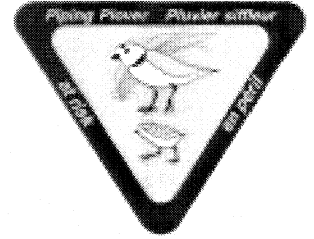
It is wonderful to have so much bird information within the pages of this newsletter: Seasonal Reports; the Spring Migration Count; Atlantic Bird Observatory Reports; Piping Plover Monitoring Results; Christmas Bird Counts; and more. However, I'd like to balance this information with some articles that simply recount your personal bird experiences. This could be a trip report, a significant bird encounter, a life-affirming moment. One such article is in this issue ("Nighthawk at Noon" by Dennis Jones) and I've another in hand from Bernard Forsythe for the next issue. But I'd like more, so feel free to send your story to me by e-mail (preferably) or snail mail. And photos, as ever, are welcome, though send the latter to Ian McLaren.

The Nova Scotia Winter Birding Web Site is: [www3.ns.sympatico.ca/maybank/other/nswinter](http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/maybank/other/nswinter).

Have a great winter's birding.

# News from the Nova Scotia Coastal Guardian Program

By Anna McCarron  
Program Co-ordinator



Although fewer Piping plovers returned to Nova Scotia to breed this year, (total breeding pairs were down by 5 from last year—see chart below) the success rate i.e., fledglings per pair, rose by 17% from last year, almost on par with the success rate of 2001. This is good news and should result in more birds coming home to nest next year.

Legend: Total A – Total Adults; #F – Number fledged; F/P – Fledglings per pair.

Nova Scotia Counties supporting nesting PIPLs	Pairs			Singles			Total A			#F			F/P		
	'03	'02	'01	'03	'02	'01	'03	'02	'01	'03	'02	'01	'03	'02	'01
Shelburne County	27	28	28	0	1	3	54	57	59	25	20	30	0.93	0.71	1.07
Queens County	5	9	9	5	1	2	12	19	20	6	7	9	1.20	1.33	1.00
Lunenburg County	2	3	4	1	1	4	5	7	9	3	6	10	1.50	2.00	2.50
Halifax County	3	3	2	3	0	1	9	6	5	8	8	4	2.67	2.50	4.00
Pictou County	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	3	1	1.00	1.50	1.00
Antigonish County	6	1	5	1	0	2	13	2	12	14	15	14	2.33	2.50	2.80
Victoria County	1	1	2	3	0	0	5	2	4	3	3	4	3.00	3.00	2.00
Inverness County	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	4.00	n/a	n/a
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1.39</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>1.41</b>

There is still a lot of work to be done, however, to establish an increase in success rates. Tremendous public education efforts from guardians and the concerned public, and protection efforts of the South Shore Monitoring program (who erect symbolic fencing, exclosures, keep track of breeding, and help to educate the public on the South Shore), played a significant role in helping to protect these birds. But it's likely that fog, particularly on the South Shore, was also a significant factor in protecting the breeding birds this year, as it helped to minimize disturbance through human recreational activities, and predators such as gulls and crows have a difficult time finding nests.

By contrast, in 2002 the frequent rain and storm tides in May and June contributed to a significant loss of nests, and predation also was a huge factor. One DNR employee speculated that avian predators could zero in on nests better in wet weather, as when the birds leave the nests either during routine nest exchanges or when flushed, the contrast between the wet surroundings and the dry nesting area provides a target for predators. Fog may prevent this.

The Piping Plover breeding season got off to a very poor start this year. Two nests were lost due to beach vehicular traffic, one adjacent to private land in Shelburne County and one in Antigonish County. On the Shelburne there were initially two nesting pairs. Early in the season before signs and fencing were erected, a youth on an ATV run over one of the nests. The adult Piping Plovers, with three of the four eggs crushed, quickly cleaned the broken shells from the nest, flew to the water's edge, broke up the shells into smaller pieces and ate them, eliminating anything that might attract predators. Then they resumed incubation of the remaining egg. Sadly, the ATVs returned, and the constant noise and disturbance caused *both* pairs of nesting Piping Plovers to abandon their nests.

After the incident the landowners in the area were on high alert for ATV activity and one landowner has become a guardian, and this cooperation contributed to the subsequent nesting success on this beach, when one pair returned a week or so later, and successfully fledged two chicks.

To report violations please call your local Department of Natural Resources office or the general conservation office hot line number **1-800-565-2224**. These calls are very important. The more calls for a particular area, the more enforcement attention will be placed there.



Youth were big benefactors of the guardian program this year. On Cape Sable Island (CSI) two weekly children's nature camps were developed by the CSI Guardian staff; Tiffany Comley, Rachel Cossaboom, Joyce Milroy, and Emma Nickerson. Two dozen children played games, created wood duck boxes, dug in the sand looking for PIPL food, and dipped nets in ponds to explore nature's wonders. The children's parents also hopefully learned more about the value of nature. Photos of these activities can be viewed on Grant Milroy's website at <http://users.auracom.com/gmilroy/>.

In the Musquodoboit Harbour area about 175 youth also benefited from various public education projects about the Piping Plover. The 1<sup>st</sup> Musquodoboit Harbour Cubs designed and hand-painted six beautiful signs depicting the sensitive habitat of the beach, with reminders to watch out for Piping Plover chicks and keep pets on leashes.

Most of the youth educated this year came from the Martinique beach area, thanks to the cancellation stamp that was created for the Musquodoboit Harbour post office. In honour of the stamp the students at Robert Jamieson Elementary School participated in a story contest, to write a fictional and/or a true story about the Piping Plover. The winners of the contest were: Jodie Zoe Fox, Isaac Foley, Allissa Falkenham, Ashley Fahie, Nicole Bay and Jacob Myers.

I have included one of the winning entries here for your enjoyment. Apart from the reference to Hawaii (where Piping Plovers are not known to migrate) the following story is quite realistic and really captures many of the challenges facing Piping Plovers in the breeding season. Enjoy...

**Joey's First Nest**  
**by Jodie Zoe Fox**

*One day in March, Joey the Piping Plover was flying home from Hawaii. Joey was born the year before. He remembered the very beautiful beach called Martinique with the wonderful tall grasses and the most delicious worms. That is where he wanted to build his very first nest. Joey was talking to his best friend named Buddy. Buddy said to Joey:*

*"Why don't you come and meet my parents first? They live in Yarmouth."*

*"Okay" replied Joey, "but not for long, because I want to find a perfect nesting area on Martinique Beach". So they went to Yarmouth. Joey and Buddy had a great time together. They played tag, hide-and-go-seek and many more things that young birds like to play.*

*Now it was time for Joey to leave. When Joey arrived at Martinique Beach he saw the most beautiful Piping Plover. She had a very special feather. The pattern on the feather looked like a daisy. He slowly walked over to her.*

*"Hi, my name is Joey. What is your name?" he asked very shyly.*

*Hi, my name is Daisy," she said. Then they went for a long walk along the water's edge and they told each other about their families. They really liked each other and decided to be a pair. The two started to look for a good spot to nest, so they flew around for a little while. The first spot they found was behind a log, which would have been a good protection, but it was already taken. They flew on. The second spot a little further North had the most beautiful grasses, which Joey loved so much, but there were too many seagulls. Seagulls are very dangerous for the Piping Plovers, because they eat their chicks. So quickly they flew on. Then they came to a spot, which was nice and flat, but it was too close to the ocean. If there would be a big wave it would wash away their nest and eggs. They flew on. The fourth spot, which looked very comfortable from a distance, turned out to have lots of garbage. They flew on. By this time it was getting quite dark and they were both getting really tired and hungry. But they could not give up now. When they flew around the next crescent, they discovered the perfect spot, finally. It was nice and flat, above the high tide line and sheltered. There was beautiful tall green grass and there were no signs of danger. They quickly ate some juicy worms and then they went to sleep.*

*Early the next morning Joey built four nests. He made small depressions in the sand and then lined the holes with beautiful pieces of shells. Then he called Daisy so she could pick her favourite one. She chose the one with the sand dollar and the bits of shiny shells. Later Daisy started to lay her eggs. It was the most exciting moment of Joey's entire life. The first egg was lying in the nest. It was the nicest egg he could imagine.*

*Then came a second, a third and a fourth egg, each one marvellous with little grey specks. For the next 28 days Daisy and Joey took turns sitting on the eggs. When the eggs finally hatched Joey was delighted. He had his first bunch of chicks. Joey and Daisy named their chicks. The names were Sandy, Puffs, Googler and Pipe. The first thing that the chicks did was eat. They followed their parents to find yummy worms and insects in the sand.*

*All of a sudden Joey, Daisy and the four chicks heard a very loud sound. Daisy and the chicks ran into the dunes and squatted down to blend in with their surroundings. They had to sit absolutely still, otherwise they would be eaten. Joey knew that he was strong and could protect his family. Joey saw the thing that had made the loud noise. It was a dog with three humans. Joey had seen dogs and humans once before when he was a little Piping Plover chick. He was very nervous. Joey had seen his father lead a dog and humans away from the nest. He did the same thing that his father had done. First Joey pretended that he had a hurt wing in order to attract the attention of the people, then he slowly led them away from his nest, and then he quickly flew back to his nest and told his family that they were safe again.*

*The rest of the summer was safe and happy. The chicks had lots of fun learning how to fly. In early August they flew back to Hawaii.*

Many people, including hired staff guardian volunteers, did a great deal of work educating hundreds of people across the province. Detailed records were kept, special thanks to Lauren Venedam who went above and beyond the call of duty to develop a database to keep track of all this information, and to Joyce Milroy for creating more user-friendly spreadsheets.

The guardian program was fortunate to benefit from the expertise and enthusiasm of some rookie guardians: Anne Lambert [Queens and Shelburne County]; Carol McKnight [Queens County]; Natasha Poirier [Shelburne County]; and Alice Reed and Bob Bancroft [Antigonish County]. The Lifeguards in Cape Breton were also new to the programme, and, along with their counterparts in Antigonish County, distributed information to one of the "new" beaches there this season.

A special thanks goes to all the "old" standby guardians from years past; Grant Milroy, Sid and Betty June Smith, June Smith, Roland McCormick, Autumn Fiske, Christina Monahan, Jane Alexander, Jordan Roy, Sandy Brown, Joyce Allen, Bill and Eileen Billington, Rick and Bev Chataway, Peter Davies, Gary Hartlen, James Hirtle, Gertrude Pitcher, Bruce and Anne Raymond, Barbara Shaw, Suzanne Borkowski, Terry Paquet, Bob and Wendy McDonald, Dave Shuman, Ken McKenna, May Bouchard, Kevin and Sandra O'Brien, Mary Jo Dorion, Claire and Marc Fawcett, Sarah and Luc Venedam, Mike and Pearl Yetman, and Joan Czapalay. Your support in all aspects of the program, whether it is walking the beach, tending displays and/or conducting presentations, is greatly appreciated!

I extend my deepest sympathies to the guardian program's mentor, Etta Parker, on the passing of her mother this summer. I know Etta would have been out on the beaches more had she not been tending to her mother in her last days. Our thoughts are with you Etta.

We're most grateful to have received funding this year from: The Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk; the World Wildlife Fund; Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada through the Endangered Species Recovery Fund; and through BirdLife International by the Community Action Fund of the Canadian Important Bird Areas Program, a joint initiative of the Canadian Nature Federation and Bird Studies Canada. I also thank the Department of Natural Resources staff who are always supportive and ready to provide in-kind resources and guidance, particularly Alan Jackson. The guardian staff have benefited from the generous in-kind use of two cell phones from *Aliant* during the past three field seasons, and to the Nova Scotia Museum for their public information support system. Special thanks are due the Nova Scotia Bird Society for acting as a funding conduit, particularly Bernice Moores and David Currie, who worked many unpaid hours administering the project's funds.

Remember, in your travels this winter, please report any banded Piping Plover bird sightings to: Diane Amirault, Canadian Wildlife Service P.O. Box 6227, Sackville, N.B. E4L 1G6, phone (506) 364-5060 or fax: (506) 364-5062 or email: [diane.amirault@gc.ca](mailto:diane.amirault@gc.ca).

If you are interested in getting involved with the guardian program, have any questions, or know of a school class, community group or organization that is interested in a presentation about the Piping Plover and/or Species at Risk, please call (902) 860-1263 or email: [plover@istar.ca](mailto:plover@istar.ca). ☒

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## Field Trip Report

### Canso and Area

**06 June 2003, Leaders: Randy Lauff, Steve Bushell**

What a gorgeous day! The participants decided to head out first to Louse Harbour, but on the way we stopped to view the Sandhill Crane just outside of Canso. This bird had been there for several weeks and was keeping company with domestic waterfowl. Just prior to getting to the trailhead, we had great roadside views of a Snowy Egret feeding in a bog pond.

We continued to the parking area for the unofficial coastal trail to Louse Harbour and spent time there scoping out a few birds including Eastern Wood-Pee-wee and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. On the trail itself, we had many of the typical boreal forest and scrubby barren birds, including a Black-backed Woodpecker. Raptors were scarce, but twelve species of warblers and six of sparrows kept up their songs so participants had good opportunities to learn them. Thanks are extended to Ken McKenna for once again helping out in this respect.

We tallied 75 bird species on the trip and found a cluster of hatching Yellow-spotted Salamander eggs as a bonus. ☒

# Nighthawk At Noon

By Dennis F. Jones

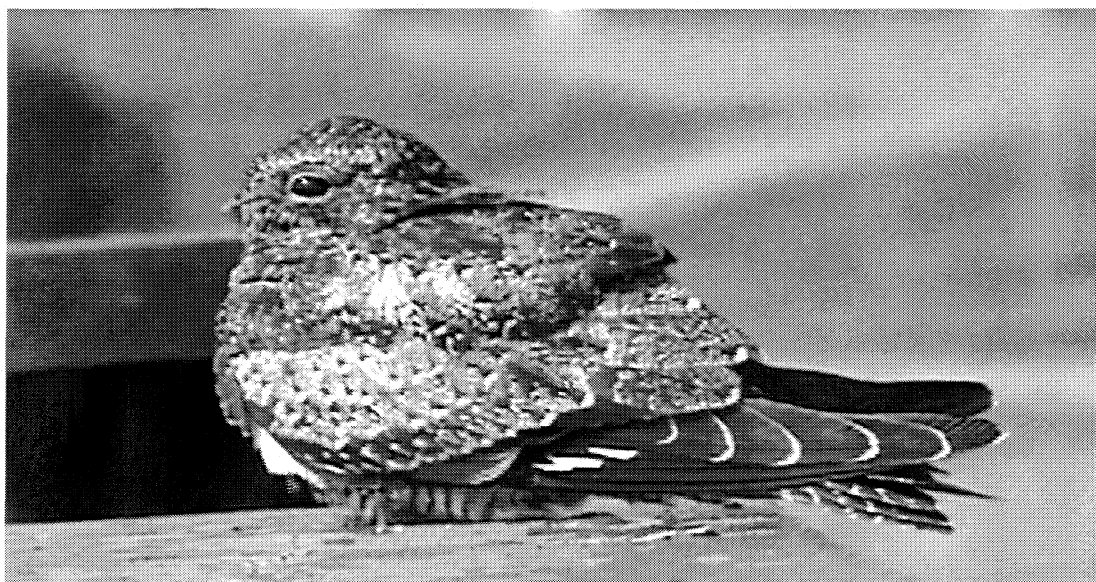
It was a beautiful fall day, the last one of September 2002. The blue morning sky and warm sunshine promised perfect conditions for our regular midday pick-up soccer match at Shannon Park in Dartmouth. In my opinion soccer in Nova Scotia is most enjoyable in the autumn, when the climate is comfortable and most of the players are in town. As noon approached, we made our way to the pitch. There were the usual characters scattered about the grassy fields upon our arrival. Dozens of Ring-Billed Gulls interspersed with crows and pigeons, and hundreds of children from a nearby school enjoyed their lunchtime activities.

As I was lacing up my soccer boots, I noticed an American Golden-Plover foraging in the grass and moving with some difficulty. The poor bird had lost the lower part of its right leg and was surviving on whatever nourishment the fields had to offer. Suddenly I caught a glimpse of a bird with bright white bars on its wings flying low and quite erratically. I knew immediately that I had not seen this species before; I'd only started birding in June 2001. The soccer game began, and I kept one eye on the ball, the other on the bird, and dearly hoped the latter would remain nearby until the end of the game. As my soccer friends are not exactly the sort that would engage in a discussion on the finer points of birding, I kept quiet about the bird for fear of future torment. At the end of the match I loitered about until I was alone. Having retrieved my digital video camera from the car, I set out to find the bird with white bars.

I found it at rest, alone, on the top seat of a set of bleachers on the sidelines of the soccer pitch. I was able to approach to within ten feet and, with the sun favourably at my back, videotaped what I now recognized from field guide pictures, a Common Nighthawk. After several minutes the nighthawk launched itself skyward and appeared to be chasing flying insects. The bird next came to rest on the oval racetrack surrounding the pitch, so I wandered over and sat in the grass nearby to study its movements. Bees would alight on yellow dandelions within a meter or two of the nighthawk but the bird simply swivelled its head and watched them without much interest. From time to time the nighthawk would waddle forward or execute a wing-assisted hop but at no time could I see its legs or feet. Eventually the nighthawk took to flight to chase more insects and landed again on the bleachers.

Later that evening I reviewed my video at home. By advancing the film one frame at a time I managed a clear view of the nighthawk's small bill. Its frail, light grey legs and feet were also visible when it hopped on the ground and took off from the bleachers. Needless to say I was delighted with this fortuitous avian event and rank it as exciting as my close encounters with a singing Carolina Wren (April 2002), a foraging Great Egret (May 2002), an animated Marsh Wren (September 2002), and an unexpected Ruff (December 2002).

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia  
Email: [dfj@accesswave.ca](mailto:dfj@accesswave.ca)



Nighthawk resting on the bleachers in Shannon Park, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (30 September 2002). [Photo by Dennis Jones]

# Sites of Nova Scotia

By Blake Maybank

## SOBER ISLAND, Halifax Regional Municipality



**Summary:** A very good year-round birding destination with high aesthetic value, featuring migrant passerines, breeding birds, seabirds, and hiking opportunities. Time required = 2-6 hours.

**Directions:** Sober Island is on the eastern shore of Halifax Regional Municipality, and lies south of Hwy #7 just east of the town of Sheet Harbour. To reach the island turn south off Hwy #7 either at the marked road (Sunset Road) 2.5 km E of the bridge over East River Sheet Harbour, or at the village of Beaver Harbour further to the east (Beaver Harbour Road). These are the ends of a loop road leading to the community of Sheet Harbour Passage. A causeway to Sober Island branches off this loop road about 1 km west of Sheet Harbour Passage. Travel time from Halifax = 1 hour 45 minutes, from New Glasgow = 1 hour 15 minutes, from Sheet Harbour = 15 minutes.

**Habitats:** Coastal Coniferous Forest; Alder & Willow Thickets; Rocky Shorelines; Coastal Barrens; Barrachois; Bays and Coves; Offshore Ocean (Pelagic).

**Natural History Highlights:** Passerine migrants, Purple Sandpipers, Red-necked Grebes.

**Birding Features:** Sober Island, linked by a causeway to the mainland, provides one of the few year-round opportunities to easily access a point of land extending well into the Atlantic. It's "cool" nature is revealed by the presence of breeding Fox Sparrows and Blackpoll Warblers. The island is roughly 4 km by 2 km, with much of its "center" occupied by Sober Island Pond, a brackish barrachois.

The road over the causeway to the island is paved, and once on the island it parallels the horseshoe-shaped shoreline of Sheet Harbour Passage, lying between the island and the mainland. The paved road ends in 2.5 km. Birding along the paved road can be quite good, especially in the lush vegetation that surrounds some of the houses, particularly near the eastern end of the road.

There are two main gravel roads branching to the right off the paved road. The first, 750 meters past the end of the causeway, crosses a few hundred meters to Salmon Cove on the island's west side. This road is not great for birding, but flocks of migrant birds can be encountered. The second gravel road, 1.5 km after the causeway, heads south. (A third short gravel road to the right is a "short-cut" between the paved road and the second gravel road.) This second gravel road initially runs down a narrow strip of land between the east side of Sober Island Pond and the eastern shore of the island. Birds often funnel down this stretch of terrain, and it is worthwhile checking the small patches of conifers and alders for any migrants. Any birds on the pond are rarely visible from this vantage point, but the beach along the shore is worth checking for shorebirds, especially if there is any kelp accumulation. The bay should also be checked for birds.

At the south end of the beach the road turns "inland," and immediately a short road branches off to the left, quickly ending at a closed wooden gate. The landowners are attempting to block access, but the road is a legal right-of-way, and you can walk down it to the seashore. The alders along this road can be very productive in migration.

The main gravel road continues for another kilometre, passing through coniferous forest and alders, before terminating at Geddes Cove, where there is a fishing storage shed and a small pier, and plenty of room to turn around your car [GPS = N 44°



49° 52.1", W 62° 27' 35.3"]. Should you wish you may hike to the southern tip of the island from here. There is a metal gate, with the words "No motorised vehicles;" this is the start of a fine path of a few hundred metres which leads through forest and alders, and skirts a nice small bog, to the west side of the island. The alders are thick and high, and shelter many migrants, especially after W or NW winds. Once on the west side, you should scan the waters of the outer reaches of Sheet Harbour. This is traditionally a good spot for Red-necked Grebes between late September and April. From here the trail continues SE along the shoreline to the southern tip of the island, crossing some fine coastal barrens. Whimbrel feed here during southbound migration, and Purple Sandpipers are regular along the shoreline in winter. Seawatching from the tip is best in E or SE winds. The trail is not a loop; you must retrace your steps back to Geddes Cove.

Sober Island's other productive trail passes through the woods a bit inland of the north shore of Sober Island Pond. The start of this trail is virtually invisible. Go to house #310 on the south side of the paved road, roughly 1 km from the causeway [GPS = N 44° 50' 52.3", W 62° 28' 26.2"]. The number is placed on the garbage box at the foot of the driveway. Walk up the driveway of house #310 for 20 feet, and you'll see the driveway split into two; take the right hand fork, which quickly disappears into the forest. This public track is wide and easy to follow, and continues for nearly 1 km, first through forest, then above and overlooking the north side of the pond, ending on the west side of the island at one of the most impressive "high energy" rocky beaches in Nova Scotia. The sound of the waves on the rocks is most soothing, and the dull roar is frequently audible (and sensible) from some distance. A couple of tracks lead north off the trail up a hill which rises to a height of 75+ metres, offering a fine view of Sober Island Pond and Sheet Harbour.

[Supplemental Birding Note: When you drive south from the village of Beaver Harbour in the direction of Sheet Harbour Passage heading to the Sober Island causeway, a side road branches off to the left at the 1.5 km mark, and continues along the shoreline, before ending on the Beaver Point Peninsula. 300 metres past the intersection [GPS = N 44° 53' 6.8 ", W 62° 25' 12.7"], this side road looks down on a rocky spit, Hawboldt Point, which is a tern colony, containing both Common and Arctic Terns.] ☞

## New Books for Review

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

Please contact Randy Lauff if you would like to review one of the following books. The review is due one month after receiving the book and will be subject to editing. Please submit all requests for books and the reviews to Randy Lauff at: rlauff@stfx.ca or Department of Biology, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, NS B2G 2W5.

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

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

**Field Guide to Advanced Birding** By K. Kaufman. Houghton Mifflin.

**Hummingbirds of North America** By S.L. Williamson. Houghton Mifflin

**Birding Across North America – A Naturalist's Observations.** By P.E. Keenan. Timber Press.

**Pipits and Wagtails.** By Per Alström and Krister Mild

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

# Spring Weather 2003 - Nova Scotia

By Larry Bogan

The summer of 2003 was a great year for plant growth and fruit production. We had more than adequate rainfall, nearly normal sunshine, and above average temperatures. My highbush blueberries had their most productive year, and our lawn, which grows on the droughty, sandy soils of the Cambridge sand plains and is usually brown most of the summer, was actually green, and required cutting throughout the summer.

## Monthly Weather Statistics Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Centre, Kentville, N.S. June, July, August 2003

		Monthly Averages		Month	Total	
		Max T °C	Min T °C	Mean T °C	Rainfall (mm)	Sunshine (hours)
<b>June</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>214</b>
	42 yr	21.9	10.2	16.1	67	211.3
	5 yr	22.6	11	16.8	49.2	209.8
<b>July</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>243.3</b>
	42 yr	25	13.5	19.3	68.8	233
	5 yr	25.6	13.9	19.7	42.6	246.6
<b>August</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>165.3</b>	<b>164</b>
	42 yr	24.3	13.2	18.7	88.2	218.1
	5 yr	25.7	14.2	20	54.5	241.5
<b>Season</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>310.1</b>	<b>621.3</b>
	42 yr	23.8	12.3	18.1	224	662.4
	5 yr	24.7	13.1	18.9	146.3	697.9

You will note that the table of monthly weather statistics has more numbers in it this issue. I have included all the 5 year averages as well as the 42 year averages and added mean minimum and maximum temperatures for the months. The 2003 numbers are in a bold font.

### Temperatures

In the last few years we have been experiencing warmer than average temperatures during the summer and this year continued that trend. Overall the season was 1.2°C above the 42 year average but only 0.4°C above the average of the last five years. July was by far the warmest month ( 2°C above normal) because we had both the minimum and maximum temperatures above the averages. In comparison August had normal maximums but the minimums temperatures were higher so the mean temperature was up. Note also that August had well below average sunshine hours due to more cloudiness. Since the lowest temperatures for a day occurs at night, this cloud reduced the radiational cooling then and contributed to the warm month. The night-time cloudiness did not please naturalists who like to observe the stars and planets.

### Sunshine Hours

June and July had pretty normal amounts of sunshine. The season ended with slightly below average sunshine hours because of the low values in August. You may remember the first half of August as a very cloudy period that seemed to never end.

### Rainfall

As one would expect, the cloudiness in August produced above average rainfall for that month. That month got twice its long-term average rainfall. The last five years have seen consistently dry summers and by comparison this year has been blessed with more than adequate rain. Note in the table above, that the 5 year average of the season rainfall is 65% of the 42 year average. This year we received twice the rainfall for the summer that the previous five years averaged. That was about 40% more than expected according the 42 year averages. Most of that excess rainfall occurred in the period in early August when 118 mm fell

during August 4th through 9th (103 mm of that descended on the 4th and 5th). I have included the rainfall graph to show you how evenly distributed the rest of rainfall was throughout the season.

The autumn continues the warmer than usual trend. Although we have had a little cool weather, September through mid-October had a warm period with many areas in Nova Scotia having no frost. Enjoy. ☼

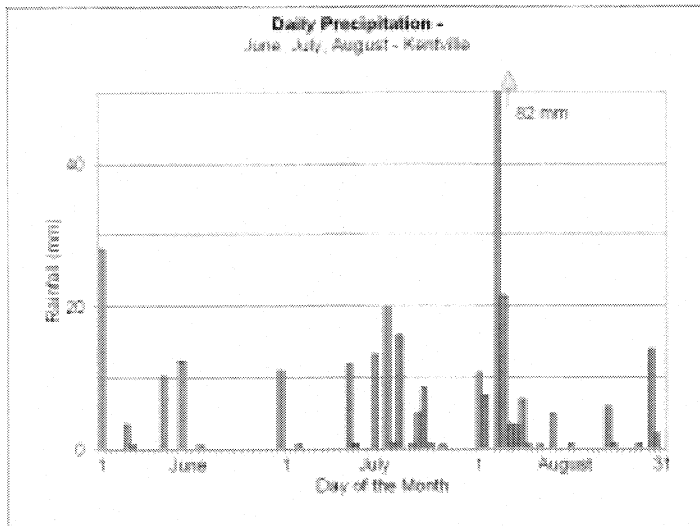


Figure 1. Daily precipitation at Kentville NS.

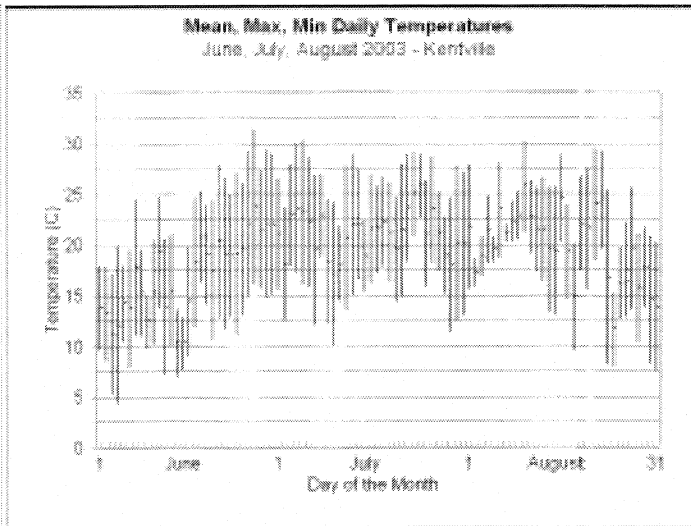


Figure 2. Daily temperatures recorded at Kentville NS.

## Seasonal Reports

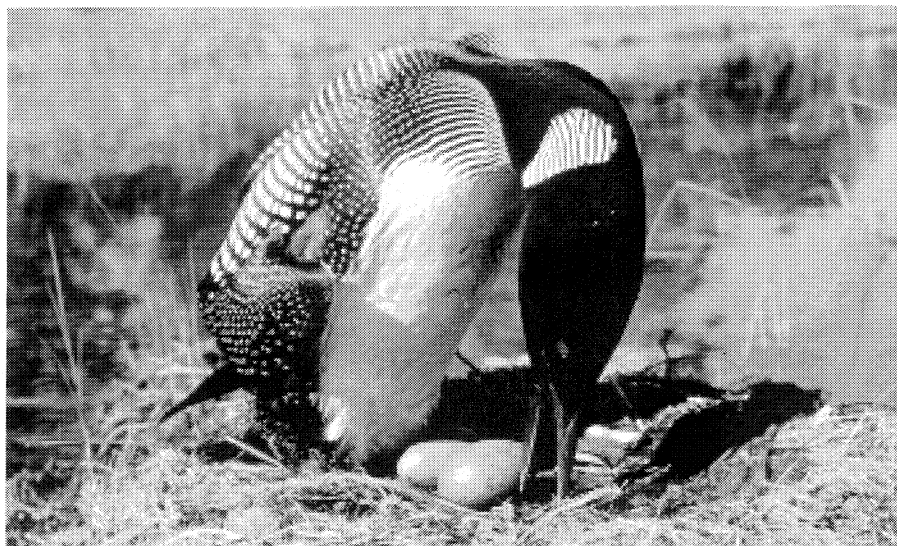
### Loons through Grebes

By Jim Wolford

COMMON LOON reports as usual came from both salt and fresh waters through and after May. Two were duetting in mid-June and mid-July at

Sandy Bottom Lake, Anna. Co., and only adults (3-4) were seen there in mid-July and early Aug. (MCN). On June 26 PLC heard a flying individual

from downtown Halifax (unusual). Other reports of adults in June and July came from Brier Is. (ELM), St. Ann's Bay, Vict. Co. (BSK), Lewis Lake and Porter's Lake Provincial Parks, HRM (RHL), Florence Beach, Vict. Co. (BSK), Amherst Pt. B.S., Cumb. Co. (RHL), and Dominion Beach, C.B. Co. (BSK). In King's County Sunken Lake a cottage nest-platform has been used for at least a few years; on June 28 an adult was on the nest, and on July 4 the nest was empty and an adult had 2 small young about 200 m. from the nest (BLF).



This COMMON LOON photo was an entry in the 1992 PGNS/NSBS Slide Competition. [Photo Lorris Keizer]

In late April single PIED-BILLED GREBES were in Harris' Pond, Canning, King's Co. (JCT), and in Frog Pond, HRM (PLC). PRG found a brood at Goose Creek Marsh, Shel. Co., on July 29. ☼

## Tubenoses Through Cormorants

By Eric Mills

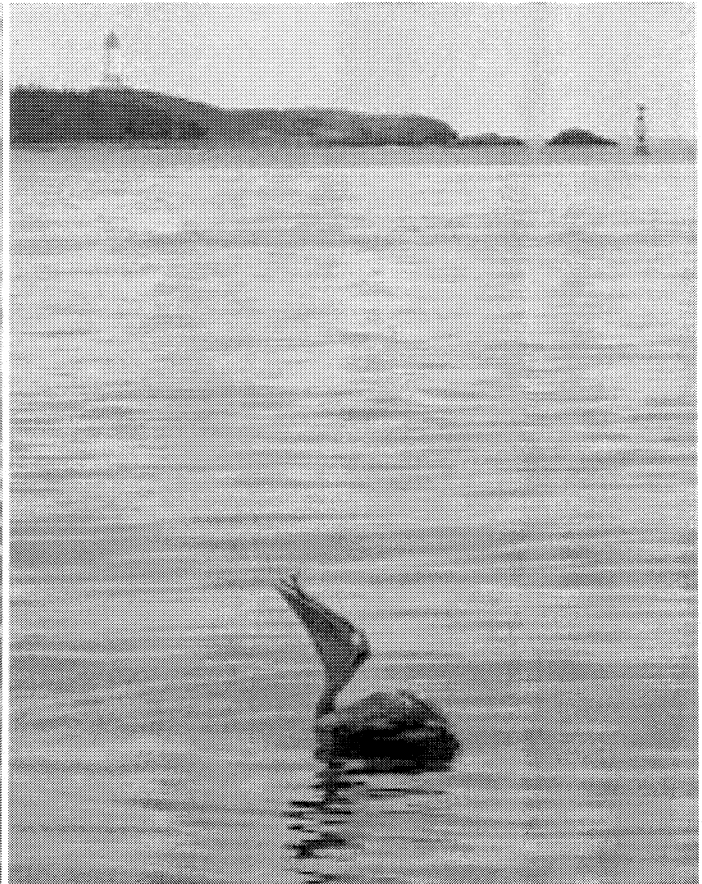
**GREATER SHEARWATERS** were abundant on shelf waters S of the Province and in the Bay of Fundy but sparsely reported. Maximum numbers from land were 20+ off Northern Pt., Brier I. July 7 (ELM), and 800 at sea June 17, 10-16 kilometres off SW Guys. Co. (BLM). At the latter location and date BLM also reported 40 **SOOTY SHEARWATERS**. A few **MANX SHEARWATERS** were reported anecdotally from the Bay of Fundy whale cruises but were not documented. Both common species of storm-petrels were frequently seen from whale-watching cruises but not documented. In addition, BLM found one **WILSON'S STORM-PETREL** and one **LEACH'S STORM-PETREL** off SW Guys. Co. June 17.

Summering N. **GANNETS** remained in Fundy and southern shelf waters throughout the reporting period. Nineteen passed Northern Pt., Brier I., in an hour June 2 and there were similar numbers July 7 (ELM). Elsewhere, BLM noted 300 (all subads.) off SW Guys. Co., June 17 and there were late June and late July records off Black Brook, Vic. Co. and Cap Rouge, Inv. Co. (BSK).

A striking highlight of the season was an imm. **BROWN PELICAN** first seen July 3 at Fourchu, Rich. Co. and photographed in Louisbourg Hbr. July 8-9 (Carleton Lunn). Possibly the same bird was seen flying past Western Shore, Lun. Co., about July 10 (PMA). This appears to be only the second

documented provincial record for the past 20 years, the other being in April 1999 in the Lun. and Shel. Co. areas. Could this have been the same bird as the imm. seen on Lamèque I., NB June 28-29? Certainly at least two, possibly three, visited the Atlantic Provinces this summer, for there was another imm. on the S coast of Newfoundland July 8-21+.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS** appear to have thrived everywhere, but **GREAT CORMORANTS** were little noted, despite their presence as breeders at a few South Shore locations and elsewhere. A few non-breeders and post-breeding ads. of the latter began to appear at Brier I. by the end of July (ELM). ☒



On July 3, Carlton Lunn came across this hungry **BROWN PELICAN** when he was lobstering in Louisbourg Hr. He writes "It was about 1:30 pm and it was a bit shy. It would not come up to me and take fish from my hand but went after a piece thrown to it. Because the fish was the back half of a mackerel, the pelican kept throwing it in the air and catching it to swallow. But it was not sliding down its gullet as a fish normally would, so it took a number of tries before success was achieved." There are a dozen older records of this rare vagrant in Tufts, but only two photo'd and two found dead since 1985. [Photo Carlton Lunn]



## Hérons Through Vultures

By Ulli Höger

The summer came late in 2003, but it came with a few interesting heron sightings for Nova Scotia's birding community.

As expected, GREAT BLUE HERONS were abundant in all suitable habitat. On June 9 JAH, alerted by locals, was able to track down and confirm a single GREAT EGRET near Martins Point in Lun. Co. A second report of a Great Egret came June 14 from Daniels Head, CSI, Yar. Co. (MUN). Several SNOWY EGRETS were reported during the summer; one stayed from June 5 -18 in Little Dover, Guys. Co. (KJM *et al.*), another was reported from Canso, Guys. Co. (NSBS *fide* RFL), and a third hung out from June 19 -21 in the Barrington Passage area in Yar. Co.. A few days later MUN spotted a fourth bird at Daniels Head, CSI. The Great Blue Herons's cousin, the less common

LITTLE BLUE HERON, was observed flying overhead by Liz and Shane Gidney at Belleisle Marsh, Anna. Co., June 28. Late summer and early fall should bring quite a few more sightings of both ad. and juv. Little Blue Herons in our province, but this will be covered in the fall issue. A **TRICOLORED HERON**, a rare visitor to the province, lingered from June 18 -20 on CSI, Yar. Co. (*fide* MUN) and was seen by several birders.

June reports of GREEN HERON are noteworthy. Tom Crane found an ad. near Canso, Guys. Co., June 11, and Bernard Burke reported another individual of this elusive species in early June from Malagash Pt., Cum. Co.. It may be stretching the facts a bit, but as a species in the process of expanding its range further north in recent years, the future possibility of

breeding Green Herons in Nova Scotia can be anticipated.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS breed on CSI, where they are regularly sighted. On June 18 MUN estimated a total number of 12 to be present. A YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON was reported from CSI in late May and it stayed there till June 4, much to the delight of several birders.

Some people suspect TURKEY VULTURES already breed in NS, but poof is still pending. In early June ELM observed several individuals in Digby Co., though none on Brier I.. However, June 7 JUS reported several individuals from the island. There were other frequent sightings from Apple R., Cum. Co. (KFS). ☞

## Geese, Swans and Ducks

By Jim Wolford

The Daily News provided June 11 and June 18 stories concerning the Bedford Basin MUTE SWANS. "Snowball" (11 yrs. old) was found freshly dead in Bedford Basin on June 10; Doug Beattie still feeds Snowball's daughter, "Junior", who is 6 yrs. old, nesting every year since 1995; she appeared first in 1992, after having escaped from a Harrietsfield wildlife reserve; Beattie became her guardian and daily food-provider; another Shore Road resident, Leila Kovacevic, brought Snowball a mate, "Ziggy", in 1995; Ziggy was accidentally fatally strangled on some fishing line in 1997, but not before he and Snowball had 6 cygnets; the "runt" of the brood, "Twiggy", died during a botched sterilization attempt in 1998; the Daily News doesn't mention any young swans in 1995 or 1996.

An autopsy of Snowball's corpse apparently indicated that she died from bacterial poisoning from salt-water mud, which caused lesions on her heart;

Beattie wondered whether Junior was at a similar risk, from feeding in the same Basin areas; Beattie also said she seemed OK in mid-June, but 'lonely'.

[If any readers have corrections or additional information for this story, please contact the Editors.]

[This incident, which began in 1992, should never have been allowed to escalate to the point of these alien swans producing youngsters that could disperse and perhaps begin to establish a feral population in N.S. These swans were so well known that someone in the Canadian Wildlife Service and/or N.S. Wildlife Division of Dept. of Nat. Resources should have become aware of this and talked to Mr. Beattie and others about why the breeding should not have happened. Such consultation should still occur before Mr. Beattie or someone else produces a mate for Junior. [JW]]

Nesting CANADA GEESE were reported as follows: at Miller Lake (which one?), HRM, in June, as in the last few years (DHH); a brood of 5 goslings at Harris' Pond, King's Co., on June 7 (JCT); and a brood of 6 at Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary, Cumb. Co., on July 6 (RHL).

On her June 13 Breeding Bird Survey, Sylvia Fullerton found 5 WOOD DUCKS near Larry's River, Antig. Co. A brood of 12 juveniles were at Goose Creek Marsh, Shel. Co., July 29 (PRG).

There were only two reports of GADWALLS; 2m/1f at Amherst Pt. B. S. on June 11 (ROH); and unspecified numbers at Schooner Pond, C.B.Co., July 26 (BSK).

Three AMERICAN WIGEONS were at Conrad Marsh, Lawrencetown, HRM, on June 7 (DMW). And unspecified numbers were near Lawrencetown Beach



Young broods of COM. EIDERS, like these along the surf line at Hartlen Pt. in early June, benefit from "crèches" for protection from preying gulls. [Photo Ian McLaren]

June 14 (RHL), and at Rocky Run, Terminal Beach area, HRM, June 19 (RHL).

The earliest reported brood of AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS was of 4 ducklings on June 1 at Lewis Lake Prov. Park, HRM (PLC). Only adults (4) were at Bayer's Lake, HRM, June 2 (PLC). On June 7 a brood of 11 was at Canso, Guys.

Small numbers of MALLARDS were reported for Conrad's Beach Marsh on June 7 (RHL, DMW). A brood of 10 ducklings was at Bissett Lake, HRM, June 14 (RHL), and unspecified numbers were in the Sydney area all summer (BSK).

BLUE-WINGED TEALS were reported only twice. Two separate males were near Canning and in Canard Pond, King's Co., June 7 (JCT), and a pair was at Bissett Lake, HRM, June 11 (RHL). No summer NORTHERN SHOVELERS were reported.

Unspecified numbers of NORTHERN PINTAILS were at Jersey Cove, Vict. Co., June 23 (BSK). Sylvia Fullerton saw 3 GREEN-WINGS River B.B.S.,

Antig. Co., and has seen them on this route only a few times over her 25 years of coverage.

Small numbers of RING-NECKED DUCKS after June 2 were at Bayer's Lake (PLC), Chezzetcook (RHL), and Rocky Run, Terminal Beach area, HRM (fide RHL). Unspecified numbers were at Nyanza, Vict. Co., onward from June 25 (BSK) and at Amherst Pt. B.S. July 6 (RHL). The only brood reported was at Goose Creek Marsh, Shel. Co., July 29 (PRG).

Fifteen GREATER SCAUPS were at Mason's Beach Lake, Lun. Co., as late as July 11 (JAH), and no LESSER SCAUPS were reported.

Several reports of unspecified numbers of COMMON EIDERS through June and early July in HRM were from Fisherman's Reserve (?), Sellar's Head, Silver Sands Beach/Cow Bay, Conrad's Beach, and Rocky Run/Terminal Beach area (RHL). On June 18 Jean Timpa saw a total of 250 at Parker's Cove and Margaretsville, Anna. Co. (fide JCT). Some were seen July 16 at Black Brook Cove, Vict. Co. (BSK).

On June 2 a single female BLACK SCOTER was at Pond Cove, Brier Is. (ELM). In Mira Bay, C.B. Co., all three SCOTER species were seen on June 22 (BSK).

BSK saw unspecified numbers of LONG-TAILED DUCKS at Black Brook Cove, Vict. Co., June 8. No BUFFLEHEADS nor GOLDENEYES were reported.

Five HOODED MERGANSERS were at Bayer's Lake, Bayer's L. Industrial Park, HRM, on June 2 (1 ad. male, 1 first spring male, 1 ad. female, and possibly 2 first spring females)(PLC) BSK reports broods of COMMON MERGANSERS by June 8 at St. Ann's Bay and St. Ann's Harbour, Vict. Co. At Black River Lake, King's Co., a nest-box held 11 eggs on June 22; by July 12, 10 ducklings had hatched and departed, leaving one infertile egg (BLF). PRG found a female RED-BREASTED MERGANSER with a brood of 3 young July 26 at Lac-a-Pic s. of Quinan, Yar. Co. ☐

# Diurnal Raptors, Galliformes, Rail and Cranes

By Ulli Höger

OSPREYS are likely the most visible bird of prey in NS during the summer months. They were seen in all suitable habitats diving for fish, often successfully. A similar situation exists for the BALD EAGLE. The accumulations we have in winter and early spring thin out as soon as the birds spread out and migrate north into their breeding territories, but they are still a common summer sight all over the province.

On June 3 PLC observed a male N. HARRIER hunting and consuming his prey in Duncan's Cove, HRM. Another male was seen June 4 near Pubnico Pt., Yar. Co. (RFL, MZG). Female-coloured individuals were frequently seen at Hartlen Pt., HRM, Brier I. and along the Eastern Shore. Other reports came from Canso, Guys. Co., June 7 (NSBS *vide* RFL) and St. Ann's, Vic. Co., June 16 (BSK).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS were seen at feeders now and then in various places. These were most likely our "local" breeders. No doubt that in late summer and fall sightings of these little hawks will become more frequent during their annual migration, and in the winter their feeder raids will get birders' attention. An imm. N. GOSHAWK was observed July 30 by GWT at White Rock, Kings Co., the only report for the summer. A single BROAD-WINGED HAWK was seen by RHL from Bisset Rd. near Eastern Passage, HRM, July 16. MUN reported five individuals July 6 from Carleton, Yar. Co., and one July 13 soaring over APBS, Cum. Co..

RED-TAILED HAWKS were a common sight and the number of known breeding sites reflected this. June 10 JCT reported one fledgling at Starr's Pt., Kings Co., sitting in a tree 50 feet away from the nest and begging for food. Two weeks later there was another bird in the same location, possibly a second fledgling from the nearby nest. On June 24 RFL observed an ad. bird guarding a single chick in a nest in Pinevale, Ant. Co.. How did the famous

Acadia University redtails do this year? Early in the season JWW expressed some concern about the couple's breeding success when the chick seemed to have disappeared. However, June 20 he reported a young bird sitting nearby the nesting site on campus. Another sighting from July 31 in the same neighbourhood could have been a young Acadia redtail as well.

BSK reported AMERICAN KESTRELS throughout the period from North Gut, St. Ann's, Vic. Co.. Possibly two individuals were frequently seen near Apple R./New Salem/Advocate, Cum. Co. by KFS. As soon as fall migration starts, sightings of these little falcons will increase.

A begging MERLIN indicated the presence of a nest on Milne Ave. in New Minas, Kings Co., June 18, but JCT couldn't locate the nest itself in the hillside woods. An ad. Merlin defended the nest and youngsters against harassing crows in Halls Hbr., Kings Co., July 10, again witnessed by JCT. Other locations with regular Merlin sightings were at known Chimney Swift

roosts. With dusk's arrival came the swifts followed closely by the Merlins looking for supper. During the month of June JWW reported up to two Merlins hunting swifts at the Wolfville Nature Center. In Middleton, Kings Co., breeding Merlins put a lot of predation pressure on the swift colony in the local high school. John Belbin witnessed a Merlin taking three swifts on the evening of June 19, two within five minutes. The nest with hungry offspring couldn't have been far away.

While watching for shorebirds at Evangeline Beach, Kings Co., July 30, JCT, JET, and Donald Sam witnessed a PEREGRINE FALCON taking a sandpiper out of a large flock of peeps. Shortly after the kill a second individual joined the bird. A Peregrine was seen June 7 on Conrad's Beach, HRM (RHL).

SLH had a male RING-NECKED PHEASANT for most of June at feeders in Tremont, Anna. Co.. Another male was calling at Duncan's Cove, HRM, June 3 (PLC). A RUFFED GROUSE hen with her offspring was seen



Two adults tended the young on a now traditional BALD EAGLE nest near Canning, Kings Co.. [Photo Richard Stern]

throughout July in Fairmont, Ant. Co. (RFL, MZG). Other families were seen in Big Baddeck, Vic. Co., July 9 (BSK), Lawrencetown, HRM, July 1 (RHL), and Sunken L., Kings Co. (BLF). In addition, KFS reported five family groups from Apple R., Cum. Co.. ROH observed a SPRUCE GROUSE hen with its chicks on Frog L., Cobequid Hills, Col. Co., July 29. A male put on a show June 12 in Ben Eoin, CB Co. (NSBS *vide* DBM).

During the NSBS Dawn Chorus Field trip June 21 at Rocky Run Terminal Beach, HRM, Cindy Staicer *et al.* heard a VIRGINIA RAIL calling (*vide* RHL). On that same outing SORA were also very vocal. July 6 RHL heard Sora calling in the APBS, Cum. Co., and PRG reported one June 2 from Goose Creek Marsh, Shel. Co..

On an expedition to APBS July 13 "to escape the fog on the Cape," MUN observed a pair of COMMON MOORHEN with their five chicks. Subsequently he spotted seven more individuals in the area.



It's hard to resist another fine portrait of SPRUCE GROUSE. Most of us seldom find them, and even more rarely are privileged to see the strutting display of an adult male. [Photo Bernard Burke]

A SANDHILL CRANE June 7 at Canso, Guys. Co., was one of the season's highlights (NSBS, *vide* RFL). Terri Crane reported that the Canso bird had been in the area since May 5. A

few days earlier, June 1, one was seen by GEC and BES (*vide* JCT) at Schooner Pond, CB. Co., and left GEC wondering if it was the same individual seen by JUM a few days earlier.☐

## The Shorebirds

By Sylvia Fullerton

Northbound migrants, our breeding birds, and the first half of the southbound migrants, undisturbed by extremes of weather, gave all indications of a successful season. Numbers were good, and in fact, some species peaked early in above average numbers.

I'd like to remind observers once again that it is instructive when birds are aged, particularly when they are out of season, so please continue to add these notes to your reports. As well, adding numbers seen to reports contributes to the overall picture of relative abundance, so please take the time to tally what you saw.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS were seen in small numbers in early June and may, in fact, have been holdovers from the spring, such as: 13, Freeport Cove,

Digby Co., June 3 (ELM); nine, Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co., June 5; three, Grand Pré, June 5 (JCT). Forty, "some in handsome breeding plumage", at the Windsor Causeway June 5, may have been a mix of tardy northbound breeders and non-breeders (JCT). A single, in first-year plumage, Morien Bar, CB Co., mid to late June, was probably a tarrying non-breeder (SEM). Regular southbound migrants were in average numbers in late July: 18, Morien Bar, July 26 (SEM); 28, The Hawk, CSI, July 29 (JON); 70, the seasonal high, Windsor Sewage Ponds, July 30 (JCT, JET).

Breeding SEMIPALMATED PLOVER continue to struggle with the only reported toehold being a single pair at The Cape, CSI. Apparently the pair showed all the signs of nesting but as of

July 8 no chicks were seen (GRM, MUN). Early June sightings of indeterminate birds included singles at Pond Cove, Brier I., June 2-3 (ELM) and Conrads Beach, HRM, June 7 (RHL). S outhbound outliers in early July included eight, The Hawk, CSI, July 7 (BJS, SIS) and an ad., Pond Cove, Brier I., July 8 (ELM, AHM). By mid-July the migration was well underway: 100, Anthony Park, Noel Shore, Hants Co., July 17 (RHL); nine, Big I., Pict. Co., July 20 (KJM); 21, Ogdens Pond, Ant. Co., July 29 (John Kearney). Late month peaks at traditional stop-over areas were average: 123, Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM); 100, Evangeline Beach, Kings Co., July 28 (JCT); 150, Cherry Hill Beach, July 29; 26, Conrad Marsh, Lawrencetown, HRM, July 31 (DMW). Birds peaked early at The Hawk and



The Cape, CSI, reaching 4000, July 29, and establishing a record-high for so early in the season (BJS, SIS, JON).

Anna McCarron, the Coordinator of the NS Piping Plover Program, has good news on the PIPING PLOVER front, the season's final tally being: 46 nesting pairs, down by five from the last two years; 13 single birds; 64 fledglings, achieving a success rate of 1.39/pair, up by 17% from last year. See her encouraging report in this issue. As usual some beaches had greater success than others. Cherry Hill Beach hosted only one pair but fledged three young and juvs. were doing well as of July 29. As is often the case, five ads., probably failed nesters from other beaches, joined this group, June 17, and stayed until the end of July (JAH *et al.*). For the second year a pair produced three young, South Hbr. Beach, near Dingwall, Vic. Co., June 22 (FMC, DAA). Good success was also attained at Pomquet Beach, Ant. Co., where three pairs and 11 juvs. were tallied June 21 (JWW).

In spite of low numbers reported in spring, KILLDEER were well distributed. For the second year in a row two pairs nested successfully at Pond Cove, Brier I. and by July 7 11 were present, representing these ads. and their offspring (ELM). Twelve were at

Ogdens Pond, July 22, perhaps also a combined family unit (John Kearney). Birds thrived in Yar. Co. with 15 present at Pinkneys Pt., July 14 (PRG). Otherwise, several pairs and single birds were noted throughout.

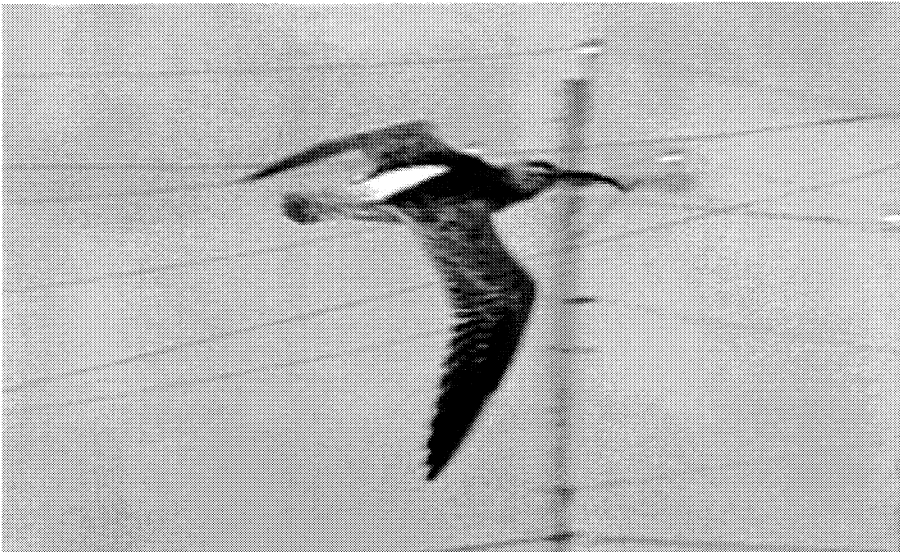
This is the fourth year of successful nesting of the A.M. OYSTERCATCHER on CSI. Once again the pair produced three young and by June 12 the two-week old chicks were already feeding on clams served up by the ads. (MUN). Sadly, it appears that one juv. suffered a mishap, as on July 30 only two juvs. were seen in flight with the ads. The good news is that a second pair appeared July 5 and optimistic MUN hopes one of the pair might be from a previous CSI nesting. They could also be a pair of failed nesters from New England. Interesting, as well, was the sighting of an oystercatcher, "likely an American," which flew in out of the fog at Peggys Cove, June 28 (visiting birder, *fide ELM*).

The best shorebird of the season was undoubtedly the **BLACK-NECKED STILT**, a good find for ULH while kayaking the mouth of Wolfville Hbr. June 21. It lingered at least until July 1, giving pleasure to many observers. The species is becoming almost regular now,

and this bird provided the seventh record for the Province.

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** lingering into June, if not in the northern part of the Province, are likely to be non-breeders, such as a single, Pond Cove, Brier I., June 2 (ELM) and two, Windsor Causeway, June 4 (JCT). Birds seen by BSK in Vic. Co. from June 19 on were problematic; if not on territory, they could just be summering. The first migrants were probably the 14 which appeared at Morien Bar, July 2 (SEM). With one exception numbers remained low throughout the period: 15+, Annapolis Marsh, July 19 (AAM); 19, CSI, July 29 (BJS, SIS); 13, Windsor Sewage Ponds, July 30 (JCT, TET). A tally of 184, Morien Bar, July 26 (SEM) provided another record-breaker for this staging area. **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** were in unprecedented numbers this season and much more abundant than greaters. An early harbinger was at St. Anns, Vic. Co., June 11 (BSK), followed by 11, Three Fathom Hbr., HRM, June 27 (IAM, Roger Foxall). Among several good counts were: 30, Cow Bay Pond, HRM, July 13 (ELM, IAM); 40, CSI, July 21 (JON); 20, Ogdens Pond, July 22 (John Kearney); 49, Big I., Pict. Co., (KJM); 24, Hortonville, Kings Co., July 30 (JCT, JET). The peak count was 151, Morien Bar, July 26 (SEM). Although usually late migrants, there were five early sightings of **SOLITARY SANDPIPERS**. Most birds were singles: Annapolis Marsh, July 19 (AAM); Big I., Pict. Co., July 20 (KJM); Hortonville, July 24 (JCT); White Rock, Kings Co., July 30 (GWT). And not so solitary were four, Sandhills PP, Shel. Co., July 30 (GRM).

Two ad. **WILLETS** and two chicks provided BID with a first sighting of a family group, Pondville Beach, Isle Madame, Rich. Co., July 1. Although breeding Willets and young were widely reported, few noted build-up of flocks prior to migration. Peaks reached at traditional staging areas included: 250, CSI, July 14 (JON, MUN, BJS, SIS); 54, Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., July 26 (JSC); 282, Morien Bar, July 26 (SEM).



On May 3, Grant Milroy flushed a WHIMBREL from Dan's Head, CSI, and, recognizing it as unseasonable, took two hasty digital shots. Later, he noted on the image its white rump and lower back, and realized that he had photographically confirmed one of our very few records of the European form of this magnificent shorebird. Authorities in Europe (including U.K.) now class this as a separate species from our Whimbrel, although the A.O.U. has not done so yet.



Adult shorebirds, like this SEMIPALMATED PLOVER at Grand Pré Beach in July, begin their journeys south before the first juveniles appear here. [Photo Richard Stern]

Only eight sightings of SPOTTED SANDPIPERS were received, surely underreported. Five ads. at Wild Cove, CB Co., June 30, "behaving quite amicably," perplexed SEM. As the female spotted is polyandrous and often mates with more than one male it could be that the group held one female and four attending males!

Few WHIMBRELS were noted. Seven set down at CSI, July 5, with 28 there July 21 (MUN, BJS, SIS). Singles were at Big I., Pict. Co., 20 July (KJM), Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM), and three at Pond Cove, Brier I., July 30 (JUS).

Perhaps due to fair weather, HUDSONIAN GODWITS may have adhered to their off-shore migratory route as they stopped at only three locations: four, Morien Bar, July 26 (SEM); 35, CSI, July 29 (MUN, JON, BJS, SIS); "some," Cole Hbr., HRM, July 30 (FLL).

RUDDY TURNSTONES usually start turning up toward the end of July. A singleton, probably summering, was at Conrads Beach, HRM, June 9 (ROW). Two were in the vanguard, CSI, July 2, reaching 34, a record-high, by July 29 (BJS, SIS). Ones and twos brightened traditional sites by the end of July.

Single RED KNOTS, S Hbr. Beach, Vic. Co., June 1 (FMC, DAA), Pond Cove, Brier I., June 2 (ELM), and five, Cherry Hill Beach, June 5, were all in alternate plumage, perhaps failed nesters, southward-bound. CSI hosted 13 migrants, July 21 (BJS, SIS) and Morien Bar, six, July 26 (SEM).

The status of six SANDERLINGS, Cherry Hill Beach, June 5 was perplexing, having been more or less absent from the area in the spring period. The first migrant was at Jersey Cove, Vic. Co., July 24 (BSK), followed by 18, Morien Bar, July 26 (SEM). By July 29, 31 had arrived at Cherry Hill Beach and by July 29, 360 at CSI (BJS, SIS).

It is unusual to see SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS in early June, but two appeared, June 5, Pond Cove, Brier I. (ELM) and two, in alternate plumage, Cherry Hill Beach (SJF). A small flock at the mouth of Wolfville Hbr., July 5, were "the vanguard of the big flocks to come" (RBS). By the third week of July they were widespread. "Peeps," at Evangeline Beach and Windsor Causeway, were still down in numbers compared to several years ago, perhaps some having moved to other staging areas. Presuming most of these were

Semipalmated Sandpipers, numbers for the early period were respectable, July 30: 10,000 Windsor Causeway; 14,000, Evangeline Beach (JCT, JET). Two Peregrine Falcons harassing the flocks at the latter location, of course, did not contribute to an easy or accurate census. It must have been thrilling for JCT *et al.*, however, to come face to face, within 20 feet, with a perched Peregrine, and be able to study it for a few seconds before it rose and retook its freshly-downed prey. Inexplicably, numbers at Cherry Hill Beach increased ten-fold over previous years' averages: 825, July 27 (SJF). CSI produced a record-high, 5250, July 29 (BJS, SIS). CB's high was a respectable 88, Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM).

Two W. SANDPIPERS at Cherry Hill Beach, June 5 (SJF) were unexpected and provided a first spring record for the Province. They were in alternate plumage, sporting bright rufous ear coverts and lower scapulars, with some rufous on the crown. The breast streakings and chevrons on chest and flanks were distinctive. Their bills were not overly long, or drooped, perhaps indicating males. They were feeding on the beach side with Semipalmated Sandpipers, providing close, comparative study. I believe their spring migratory route is not fully known, but they are very rare on the NE coast in spring. Another stood out from 2675 Semipalmated on The Cape, CSI, July 21 (BJS, SIS).

LEAST SANDPIPERS were present in average numbers, although I suspect many go overlooked in the marshes, unless flushed. A very early ad. appeared at Pond Cove, Brier I., July 7, followed by 19 ads. the next day (ELM). By mid-month they were widely reported and good numbers were seen late in the month. Peaks included: 155, CSI, July 29 (BJS, SIS, JON); 135, Cherry Hill Beach, July 29 (SJF).

A single WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER slipped in before the end of the period at Evangeline Beach, July 28 (JCT). The late-migrating BAIRD'S SANDPIPER seldom arrives by the end of July, but two were reported. One was at Schooner Pond, CB Co. (BSK)

and the other was at Big I., Pict. Co. (ALD). PECTORAL SANDPIPERS likewise are uncommon in July but wanderers were in three locations: two, Three Fathom Hbr., HRM, July 13 (TEP); one, Cherry Hill Beach, July 21 (SJF); one, Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM). Sharp-eyed BLF found his first breeding-plumaged STILT SANDPIPER at Cherry Hill Beach, July 27, which this observer had failed to see an hour before! Typically, it was feeding with Short-billed Dowitchers. Another was at CSI, July 29 (JON, MUN).

A good find was a male RUFF at New Hbr., Guys. Co., June 30, by a visiting birder from the Netherlands, Han Buckx. It was a dark-plumaged bird, feeding with Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs.

An out-of-season SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER was at S Hbr. Beach, Vic. Co., June 1 (FMC, DAA). It was not until June 29, however, when seven arrived at The Hawk, CSI, that MUN & JON "announced the official opening of the shorebird migration." Four ads. were on schedule, Pond Cove, Brier I., July 7 and 23, Cow Bay Pond, HRM., July 13 (ELM, IAM). The latter group included at least two of the race *hendersoni*. ELM noted that *hendersoni* appears to be a very early migrant and that it would be interesting to know the proportion of these in our early arrivals, a challenge for those of us who are afield next year. Among average peaks reached at the end of the month were: 350, Melbourne, Yar. Co., July 21 (PRG); 81, Cherry Hill Beach, July 27; 104, Morien Bar, July 27 (SEM); 100+, Windsor Sewage Ponds, July 30 (JCT, JET); 30, Conrads Marsh,

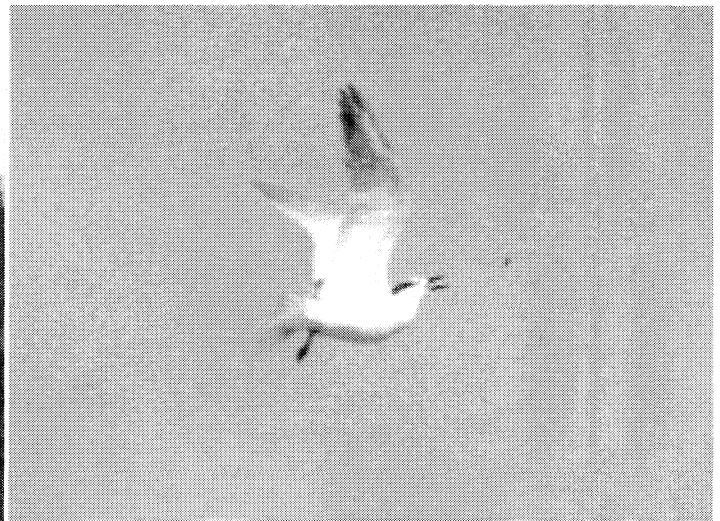
Lawrencetown, July 31 (DMW). The mother lode, as usual, was found on The Cape, CSI, July 29, where BJS & SIS estimated 5700, a notable count.

WILSON'S SNIPE must be very secretive, indeed, as only three random reports were received, two in flight in Kings Co. and one in W Lawrencetown Marsh in early June (JCT, RHL). MUN was lucky to see a pair with young, Carleton, Yar. Co., June 22. Likewise, it must have been an unexpected treat to see a family of AM. WOODCOCK in the parking lot at the Cole Hbr. Salt Marsh Trail, on the evening of June 25 (ROW).

Small numbers of southbound RED-NECKED and RED PHALAROPES, still in alternate plumage, were beginning to show up off Brier I. by July 8 (CAH). ☐

## Skuas Through Alcids

By Eric Mills and Blake Maybank



The obliging SANDWICH TERN at Eastern Passage and Cow Bay in June, was only the third (plus one "possible") ever recorded here. It posed for its fine portrait on June 12. [Photo (L) Richard Stern]. The day before, it was caught in a less attractive pose - snatching a large insect (evidently a moth) from the air. [Photo (R) Ian McLaren]. All terns sometimes turn to flycatching for snacks.

LAUGHING GULLS, never truly rare but always noteworthy, were more abundant than usual, with seven reports of eight birds in June: Hartlen Pt., HRM, June 1 (TEP); CSI, June 3 (MUN); Cherry Hill Beach, Lun. Co., June 13 (a second summer bird) (JAH, CLS); Two at Crescent Beach, Lun. Co., June 18 (JSC); Little Dover, Guys. Co., June 18 (HAB, JEB); Cow Bay,

HRM, June 21 (IAM); and Chance Harbour, Pict. Co., June 28 (STV, Amber Goodwin). Another appears to have spent some of July at Big Island (Merigomish), Pict. Co. (ALD *vide* DOU).

Three BLACK-HEADED GULLS, scarce in mid summer, were reported at Conrad's Beach Marsh, HRM, July 31

(DMW). Preceding the late summer influx, a BONAPARTE'S GULL was seen from the Salt Marsh Trail, Cole Harbour, HRM, June 26 (RHL), and a breeding plumaged ad. and a second summer bird were in Westport Hbr., Brier I., July 6 (CAH, ELM). RING-BILLED GULLS appeared to summer in CBI at South Gut, St. Ann's (from June 13) and Jersey Cove, Vic. Co.

(from July 7) (BSK). They also showed up along the Eastern Shore through June and July (RHL), but the first apparent post-breeding ad. arrived at Pond Cove, Brier I., July 7 (ELM). Usually scarce in summer, except possibly in E NS where breeding has occurred, five **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES** were seen during a cruise a few kilometres off St. Mary's Municipality, Guys. Co., June 17 (BLM).

A **CASPIAN TERN** was reported from the Englishtown Ferry area, Jersey Cove, CB Co., June 26, June 29 and July 17 (BSK). The Province's third **SANDWICH TERN** was found and photographed by IAM June 3 at Eastern

Passage, HRM. It remained in the area, commuting to and from nearby Cow Bay, until June 12 (var. obs.). At very close range this bird appeared to have some juv. characteristics, including a faint brownish wash on some central mantle feathers (although not the brownish scalloping of a bird of the year) and a faint greyish bar across the ends of the secondaries (ELM). One of the Province's most endangered species, the **ROSEATE TERN**, suffered a disaster when a mink wiped out this year's nests on The Brothers Is., Pubnico, Yar. Co. (*vide* TCD). A **BLACK TERN** reappeared for its third summer in the Com. Tern colony at Three Fathom Hbr., HRM (DOU,

RHL), while in the Black Tern's usual breeding area in Cum. Co., in June, ROH estimated six or more birds nesting in an area of bur reed in the APBS impoundment.

Quite unexpectedly, two **DOVEKIES** were found summering off Brier I., July 17 (CAH). There have been only a few summer records since the first in June 1957. Among our breeding alcids, BLM found four **RAZORBILLS** among other seabirds off SW Guys. Co., June 17, and toward the end of the reporting period a few **ATLANTIC PUFFINS**, dispersing from their breeding area on Machias Seal I., began to appear off Brier I. (*vide* CAH). ☞

## Doves Through Woodpeckers

By Ian McLaren

**MOURNING DOVES** produced no surprises. Their status is summed up by RHL as "commonly seen anywhere, anytime," but SJF notes, with a sense of history, that they are "now ubiquitous . . . but previously absent . . ." on her BBS routes in Ant. and Guys. Co.



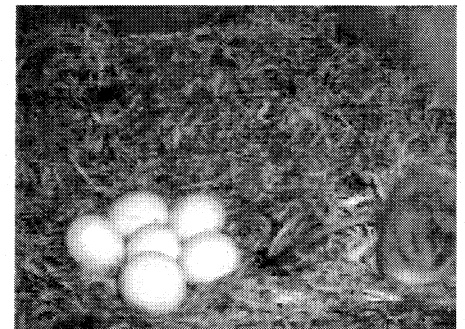
This is the first "wild" nest ever found by RFL during his research on Saw-whet Owls, all others have been in nest boxes. Unlike many female Saw-whets, this one tolerated quite close approach, to the extent of letting the pole-top camera in behind her. The camera was used to quickly monitor the status of the nest. [Photo Randy Lauff]

Two **BLACK-BILLED CUCKCOOS** June 1, a migrant at "The Hole," CSI, and another calling near Clyde River, Shel. Co. (MUN), were the first to be reported this spring, although the latter may have settled earlier. Another was heard calling June 13 by SJF on her BBS route near Atherton, Ant. Co., about 2.5 km from where she heard one last year. They have been declining on BBS surveys in eastern North America during recent years, and Nova Scotia is no exception.

Reports on owls were a bit thin this summer, so it is good to see the 2002 Report on the Atlantic Canada Nocturnal Owl Survey by Becky Whittam, CWS. From it, it appears that **BARRED OWLS** on mainland NS (CB not included) were most frequent in Hfx. Co. and in northernmost Cumberland Co., and that **GREAT HORNED** and **N. SAW-WHET OWLS** were more evenly distributed. Only a single **LONG-EARED OWL** was detected. I hope that the two **BOREAL OWLS** heard in N. Cumberland Co. were well documented or taped. We look forward to this year's report. As usual BLF summarized status of Barred Owls in Kings Co., where all 14-nest of his boxes fledged young, of which 38 were banded.

A nest in a barn at Woodside, Kings Co., provided much entertainment for birders. By June 8, two of the three young became "branchers," leaving one "runt" in the barn for further parental nurturing until at least 12 June (JET et al.). A nest box set by RFL for N. Saw Whet Owl near the Ant.-Guys. Co. line contained six eggs, which is extremely late, indicating "a second nest . . . though a re-nesting cannot be ruled out." At least five eggs hatched and three chicks were still alive at the end of the reporting period. Prey in the box included deer mice, shrews, and a headless Canada Warbler. All of RLF's other 49 boxes were empty or occupied by Red Squirrels.

**COM. NIGHTHAWKS** were still flocking in during early June, for example: 5-6 near Up. Sackville June 3



The small clutch of eggs in the Saw Whet Owl nest in the previous photo. [Photo Randy Lauff]





This chick was the only nestling to hatch from the small clutch of eggs at the nest in Antigonish County (same nest as previous photos). The first egg (from which this chick hatched) was laid around the 6<sup>th</sup> of June...a date so late it suggests a second nest for this female. [Photo Randy Lauff]

(Lois Codling) and a surprising "feeding frenzy of about 20" in Mid. Sackville 6 June (Gerry Lunn). Afterwards, there were the usual scattered individuals or pairs. No reports were received of WHIP-POOR-WILLS, although I heard indirectly that they may have nested in the land behind Long Pond, further back than in the past.

Three slightly tardy CHIMNEY SWIFT migrants were over Brier I. June 2 (ELM). As usual, there were extensive reports on swifts entering large, inactive chimneys, of which highlights can be given here. There is a grander story here that I hope can be given some time by Jim Wolford, who is behind much of the enthusiasm for these wondrous birds. This season's record evening counts were: an astonishing 674 at Temperance Street, New Glasgow, June 6 (KJM); 397 at the Middleton High School June 9 (J. Verreault); 514 at Bear River, Dig. Co., June 13 (JET); 460+ at the Agricultural College, Truro, June 15 (RSM); and 250 at the Robie Tufts Centre in Wolfville June 16 (JWW et al.). On some nights, many fewer birds entered one or another chimney. Bad

weather seemed to reduce some counts, but where do they go then? One has to wonder to what extent the flocks roam widely and enter different chimneys on different nights, thus swelling the combined peak totals for all chimneys. However, synchronous counts are impressive enough: 930 at three chimneys June 4, and 977 at three chimneys June 16. Merlins were pestiferous in Middleton (Jocelyn Verreault) and Wolfville (JWW), the latter suggesting that the much more unpredictable timing of departures of swifts in the morning (when they're easier to catch) may be "a strategy to keep the Merlins guessing." One Merlin actually entered the chimney in Wolfville June 17 and emerged without a swift; as JWW writes, "good trick!" Another amusing story comes from John Belbin. A Starling tried to mimic a swift entering his home chimney, using "the same approach and a surprisingly good copy of the flight style. However, when faced with dropping into that hole it clearly scared itself and flew off in a panic."

R U B Y - T H R O A T E D HUMMINGBIRDS were reported widely through the period, most at garden flowers and feeders. On June 3, RFL and MZG were delighted by "what surely must have been nuptial dances of a pair [that] would spin around each other and end up mating in the air or on the ground . . . thrilling in a voyeuristic sort of way." A query by JAH about the healthiness for Downy Woodpeckers using a hummingbird feeder led to an exchange on NatureNS of examples of woodpeckers and other birds doing this. The informed consensus was this was neither unusual nor harmful.

Nothing unusual seems to have noted about our breeding BELTED KINGFISHERS, of which there was only a handful of reports.

The spring reports from the NAMC had suggested that YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS were down in numbers, but SJF thought



Typical and atypical prey for a Saw-whet Owl in Guysborough County. Voles, like the Red-backed Vole on the right, are often the mainstay of the diet; the Canada Warbler is much less typical. It was later found that shrews bones dominated the assemblage of prey remains in the nest material. [Photo Randy Lauff]

they were "recovering well" on her Roman Valley BBS route, and BLM found six on his Londonderry route. There were a few reports from the length of the province, and none of nesting. About a dozen each of reports of both DOWNY and HAIRY WOODPECKERS, including some continuing to come to backyard suet were about as usual. John Belbin reported on the "juvenile delinquency" of a family of Downy Woodpeckers in his Kingston backyard. Their antics included chasing each other around and sticking their beaks into everything, demolishing a suet cake, trying to break into a seed feeder, and commandeering a hummingbird feeder from the usually aggressive hummers. A late Hairy Woodpecker nest June 22 on Wolfville Ridge had three well-feathered young (BLF). The usual numbers of nesting-season N. FLICKERS were (under) reported. John Belbin commented July 28, on seeing a group of eight on his Kingston lawn, that they "seem to have bred well this summer" and that "as we are suffering an ant invasion [also noted by others on NatureNS this summer] I hope they keep coming back." Among a half-dozen reports of PILEATED WOODPECKERS this summer, were two adults with 4 juvs. at North Gut, Vic. Co. (BSK), and an apparent family group of three at Uniacke Estate Park (PLC). ☞

## Flycatchers Through Thrushes

By Andy Horn

Summer reports are always thin, making it hard to judge patterns in the expected summer species, so I've only mentioned such species if correspondents have noted trends or if particular records stood out in some way.

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS** were particularly well reported, and a total of 12 on BBS routes in Larrys R., Ant. Co. and Roman Valley, Ant. Co. and Guys. Co., June 13 and 14, was a high count for those routes (SJF). A total of 57 **ALDER FLYCATCHERS** would seem healthy by comparison, yet that total was low, "down about 25 % from previous years" (SJF). One can perhaps hope that a shift in singing season, rather than change in numbers, might have something to do with the low count; Alder Flycatchers apparently first arrived on Brier I., June 3, later than usual (ELM), so maybe they got off to a late start everywhere. No one is surprised though, when only two **GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHERS** are reported. This year, two were present at least through the first two weeks of June in White Rock, Kings Co. (BLF).

**WARBLING VIREOS** teased birders for weeks, starting June 10, at Starrs Pt., Kings Co., where a singing male and a quieter bird, presumably a female, never quite let anyone confirm what would have been a second nesting record for the province (BLF, JCT). **RED-EYED VIREOS** singing June 5 in Halifax struck PLC as slightly late. A singing bird at Westport, Brier I., July 7, is notable because, surprisingly, this species isn't known to breed on the island (ELM).

**PURPLE MARTINS** are barely part of our avifauna now; only one male appeared at the Oxford, Cum. Co. colony, and the Amherst colony consisted of only about 14 birds (ROH). Three were in Barrington Passage, June 20 (MUN), and another in Hilden, Col. Co., June 11 (AAM). A mixed flock of swallows over Pond Cove, Brier I., June



This juvenile **SWAINSON'S THRUSH** was an unusual house guest on a back deck in Bridgewater. [Photo Joyce Allen]

2-3, presumably consisted of at least some migrant or at least non-breeders, because it included not only **TREE**, but also **BANK** and **BARN SWALLOWS**, the latter two of which do not breed regularly on the island (ELM). At the Wolfville Sewage Ponds, Grand Pré, Kings Co., July 28, JCT drove into a scene worthy of Hitchcock: "I suddenly found my car almost encircled by swooping swallows. I was afraid of hitting them so stopped the car and realized the road ahead was dotted with 'resting' Bank Swallows lying in the road, with at least one Barn Swallow among them. Once on the ground, the birds just lay there in the road dust, not moving." More than 100 birds were there having a tough time with the high winds, especially since some may have been fledglings from the Evangeline Beach colony nearby. Up to 40 **CLIFF SWALLOW** nests may have survived Halifax International Airport's attempts to drive the birds away, although no one knows whether they fledged any young (DHH). Barn Swallows on SJF's BBS routes (times and locations above), at two to four individuals, were well below

the 15-20 characteristic of the late 80s and early 90s (SJF).

A belated May 24 report of a **RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** carrying food in and out of a nest cavity in Lumsden Pond, Kings Co., seems unremarkable until you know that there was an active Barred Owl nest box about 25 feet away (BLF)! On Brier I., **WINTER WRENS** apparently have worked their way out of a slump in numbers that lasted many years (ELM). A recovery would be consistent with the good number of reports everywhere for this and the previous issue. **GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS**, however, have had a low year indeed. SJF notes that "although never plentiful on [my] BBSs ... not a single bird was heard on either route; also rare in Lun. Co.". BLM, who found none on his BBS, commented they were "scarce this year". **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS** were also down in numbers on SJF's routes, by half, as well as "virtually absent" from Lun. Co., though they were "common throughout [the] reporting period" in the St. Ann's area, Vic. Co. (BSK).

A N. **WHEATEAR** was well observed feeding on flies at Martinique Beach, HRM, June 8 (TEP). **EASTERN BLUEBIRDS** that were reported included a male, June-July at New Salem, Cum. Co. (KFS), a fem. tending a nestbox at White Rock Mtn., Kings Co., June 28 (BLF), a bird in Petite Rivière June 21 (JAH), and a male June 3 at Sunrise Valley, CB Co., that only lingered a few days and never nested (FMC). Many of us enjoyed the reports of successful nesting at that

northernmost site in previous years, so it was heartening to hear of another sighting, at least, from as far north as Murray Rd., North R., Vic. Co., June 11 (Murray Hannem *fide* BSK).

**VEERY** reports, always scarce, were not alarmingly so this year. Of our two reports of "Gray-cheeked Thrush," presumably both of the **BICKNELLS THRUSH** population, the one from the Skyline Trail, CBHNP, June 18, is expected, but the other, from N. Gut St.

Anns, Vic. Co., June 18 (BSK), being outside the species' highland stronghold, would be interesting to follow up. **SWAINSONS THRUSHES** were down by half on SJF's BBS routes, June 13 and 14, though **ELM** noted on Brier I. that though they weren't singing in early June, they were by early July. Likewise, **HERMIT THRUSHES** arrived late on Brier I., and "numbers on territory appear[ed] to be unusually low" (ELM). ☒

## Starlings Through Warblers

By Ken McKenna

**EUROPEAN STARLINGS** have been successful in their invasion of North America because of their ingenuity in finding nesting cavities. A somewhat late nest with eggs at Sunken Lake, Kings Co., July 20, in a roadside mailbox was treated with sympathy by the human owners who erected a second mailbox over the first so as not to disturb the nest (*fide* BLF). There were not many reports of mimic thrushes for this period. JAH spotted a few **GRAY CATBIRDS** at Starr's Rd. trail and Blockhouse in Lun. Co.. There were no reports of Mockingbirds, but a **BROWN THRASHER** was noted at a feeder in Portuguese Cove, HRM June 24 (HAT).

For the second year in a row there was a report of June **BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS** in Inv. Co., this time from Whycocomagh PP June 15 (BSK). **CEDAR WAXWINGS** were widely reported and with the general good fruit supply should continue to be abundant into the autumn.

A good number of warbler reports were received with mixed reviews given on the status of our breeding warblers. Although BBS data has been entered into the system it is not available for analysis for this reporting period, which is regrettable, as this would give a better indication of warbler breeding in NS for this year. In the BBS routes of SFF in Antigonish and Guys Co's, she felt that warblers were present in almost identical numbers to those counted in the late 80's through to the 90's. BLM

usually averages 17 species of warbler on his Londonderry BBS route, but on June 7 this year he had only 14 species, and four of these had the lowest numbers of individuals he has recorded (noted further on).

There were no reports of **TENNESSEE WARBLERS**, but in Pictou Co. they appeared in their usual breeding territories (KJM). **NASHVILLE WARBLERS** only garnered two reports, but there were widespread reports of both **NORTHERN PARULA** and **YELLOW WARBLER**. BLM had 11 Parula Warblers on his Londonderry route, the lowest total in nine years of doing the route. Pat and Joe Clifford and JCT spotted a nice movement of

**CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** in Greenwich, Kings Co., June 6. Other reports were from HRM. BLM noted **MAGNOLIA WARBLER** numbers were the lowest in nine years of the Londonderry BBS. No one mentioned **CAPE MAY WARBLERS**, a likely tribute to low breeding numbers. **BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS** tend to be reported more so than many other warblers and reports were received from Lewis L. PP, North Gut, St Ann's Vic. Co., East R., Lun. Co., Blomidon PP, Eigg Mt., Ant. Co., and Quinin, Yar. Co.

Many of the **YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** reports were from HRM. PLC on June 13 at Flemming Park was



Warblers (Common Yellowthroat) that are very distinctive in later plumages, can be rather messy and obscure in their fresh juvenal plumages in summer. [Photo Bernard Burke]





This N. WATERTHRUSH, was bobbing and teetering in a waterlogged thicket, typical of their summer territories. [Photo Bernard Burke]

never out of earshot of one the whole way around the lake. Even though the eight BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS heard by BLM on the Londonderry BBS were statistically the lowest totals in the nine years of his running this route, there were many sightings of this warbler from N. Gut St. Ann's in Vic. Co., and many areas of Col. and HRM's. Although only four reports of BLACKBURNIAN WARBLERS were received, BSK found them common in North and South Guts, St Ann's, Vic. Co.. Despite all reports of PALM WARBLERS coming from HRM, no doubt large numbers of breeding pairs occupied the boggy areas of the province. BSK noted a BAY-BREASTED WARBLER June 16 at North Gut, St Ann's, Vic. Co.. KJM had several on breeding territory in the Centredale area of Pict. Co. June 8. The dawn chorus field trip by the NSBS led by Cindy Staicer had some BLACKPOLL WARBLERS in the Rocky Run-Terminal Beach area of HRM (*fide* RHL). BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS seemed to be commonplace in South Haven, Vic. Co. and in HRM, but a male in a plum tree in the yard of MUN on CSI was an unusual yard bird for him.

JCT was encouraged to see a mini-invasion of AMERICAN REDSTART in a Greenwich orchard, Kings Co., June 6. BLF found a female in a nest with four eggs at Blomidon P.P.. This was June 22 and was just under 3 m. in a chokecherry. A few OVENBIRDS were reported from scattered areas of

the province, with JCT finding the singing males abundant at Wolfville Ridge in early June. No one took the time to report

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, but they appeared to be in normal numbers on the James R. BBS (KJM). MOURNING WARBLERS were heard from Blomidon PP by GWT, JCT and BLF with four singing males in early July. This seemed to be a good time to search for this late arriving migrant as KJM heard about a dozen while exploring the new proposed Eigg Mt.-James R. protected area in Ant. Co., also in early July. The COMMON YELLOWTHROAT was probably the most reported warbler, thus living up to its name. Most reports were from various parks in HRM but BLM noted low numbers on the Londonderry BBS, June 7. The three WILSON'S WARBLERS June 1 at the Caribou I. Lighthouse, Pict. Co. were migrants forced down by off shore fog. Other breeding Wilson's Warblers were found in the usual territories near the Pict.-Guys. Co. line at Trafalgar (KJM). A number of people noted CANADA WARBLERS at Lewis L. P.P. in HRM and JCZ noted one at Port Gravelle, Cumb. Co. July 16. ☐



Obscure young YELLOW WARBLERS, like this one at River Bourgeois this summer, can be identified from their distinct eye-ring in an otherwise rather blank face. [Photo Bernard Burke]



# Tanagers Through House Sparrows

By Joan Waldron



In early summer, our SAVANNAH SPARROWS are known to gather food for generally two, and sometimes three, successive broods. This one was hard at work near Annapolis Royal in June. [Photo Richard Stern]

It was a foggy summer, but a couple of colourful strays found their way to the south shore but did not hang around. A male **SUMMER TANAGER** was seen at the south Ohio exit of highway 103 in Yar. Co. in late July [no details]. The saga of the Wolfville Ridge, Anna. Co. **SCARLET TANAGER** continues. Last year, after extensive observing and excellent detective work JCT & GWT, with the help of BLF and the photographic skills of RBS, found and recorded a breeding pair (two males were seen; perhaps it was a ménage a trois). JCT sends the following report dated June 7 this year:

“The male's song awoke me shortly after 7 a.m.. He sang from a very heavily foliated, mature oak tree in our back yard, remaining well hidden, and within about ten minutes he disappeared. This is the same garden where our 2002 breeding pair was located. Subsequently, a male (presumably the same one) was heard again singing briefly in the same area on June 15 (9:15 a.m.) right around the old 2002 nest site; on June 18 (7:30 a.m.),

and June 28 (at 7:15a.m. and again at 7:45 a.m.). The bird proved elusive and was never seen (even with careful searches) in these first four visits, only heard, not unexpected with a Scarlet Tanager. After the initial arrival, these all too brief and intermittent re-visits from the male were spent near the old nest site in the thick foliage of our woods, singing from several perches, then he would move quickly out of the area. After last year's thrill of having a Scarlet Tanager nest on our property we were hopeful again but it was not to be. Sadly we drew the conclusion that the male came searching for the female but something had happened to his 2002 mate and he was unable to find a replacement. Imagine Gordon's and my pleasure when he turned up again in our backyard on July 27 (about the same time the young were fledging in 2002) and stayed for about an hour mid-morning, enchanting us with wonderfully close views and beautiful serenades. This time we were able to photograph and record his presence. Judy noted the male appeared to have some signs of moulting on his belly

area. Makes one wonder after all these weeks went by just where he was in the intervening weeks.” A **W. TANAGER** was reported by MUN along the Clyde R. Loop, Shel. Co. in late July.

**CHIPPING SPARROWS** were reported from Brier I. to CB from early June onwards. John Belbin of Anna. Co. reported three of them in fighting form when they protested his lawn mowing chores near a woodpecker's nest. **SAVANNAH SPARROWS** were reported from their usual summer beach and waterside hangouts: Florence Beach, Port Hood, and Dominion Beach (BSK); Conrad Beach (DMW & RHL); Lawrencetown Trail, (ROW); and the meadows at Powells Beach, (RMC) and Pennant Pt., HRM (HAT). The ‘fat in the hot pan’ sound of **NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS** is the sign that summer is really on its way, and was heard close to beaches throughout the province. The earliest was reported at Pennant Pt., May 31 (NSBS, HAT *et al.*), but most were reported during the first two weeks of June with reports continuing through July. **FOX SPARROWS** were reported from Pennant Pt. May 31 (HAT *et al.*), and three were seen at Louisburg June 24 (SEM). HAT reported June 24 from Portuguese Cove, HRM that “there are lots of Fox Sparrows in the area this year, so many that they are a backyard bird. They first arrived in significant numbers Mar. 28. Their singing is continuous, robust and welcome.”

**SONG SPARROWS** seemed as common as ever, being reported wherever there were birders. PLC reported three at Bayers L. Industrial Park HRM June 2. **LINCOLN'S SPARROWS** were seen June 13 & 14. SJF reported 12 on each on her BBS counts in Ant. and Guys. Cos. She comments that numbers have remained consistent over the thirty years or so of doing the routes. Lincoln's were also reported from Vic. Co. (BSK), Sunrise Valley, CB (FMC), Porters L. PP (NSBS, Cindy Stacer *et al.*), Pennant Pt. (HAT *et al.*) at Caribou I., Pict. Co.

(KJM) and at Duncans Cove, HRM where a male was still singing brightly at 8:45 pm (PLC). Singing SWAMP SPARROWS were reported from Brier I. to CB from early June on, as were WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS. DARK-EYED JUNCOS were reported both from feeders and the woods. PLC reported a pair feeding young June 1 and felt it was early. A non-birder in suburban HRM reported nests in two hanging feeders all summer and thought there were three fledgings of young.

NORTHERN CARDINALS were active throughout the months. Singing birds were reported from Brier I. (ELM), Conrose Field, HRM (PLC), Annapolis Historic Gardens and Sullivans Pond (Liz & Shane Gidney), Clam Pt., CSI (MUN), a resident pair in Kentville (RBS), and Paul McDonald on the Western Shore reported a male with a fledgling July 19. ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS delighted observers from Brier I. to CB in early June. CAH of Brier I. reported a fem. Rose-breasted being chased by two males June 1. Only one BLUE GROSBEAK was noted - Loretta Crocker saw it on Brier I. in the early part of June. INDIGO BUNTINGS were reported

from Yar., Shel. and Cum. Cos. by var. obs.

A discussion on the numbers of BOBOLINKS that were seen or not seen prompted reports from many locations. Observers agreed numbers were down compared to the good old days. Perhaps one of the reasons is answered by DBM's report from the Big Pond, Ben Eoin June 12 (NSBS). He says "despite standing within earshot of the fields for more than half an hour no Bobolink sang. Then a tape of their song was played once, twice and there he was, looking for the intruder." Perhaps the Bobolinks are snuggled down doing their thing waiting for those birders to pish off! That other sign of warm weather, the RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, was reported from all areas of the province. Again there were few reports of RUSTY BLACKBIRDS. Four were reported by SJF on her Roman Valley Ant. Co. BBS route. COMMON GRACKLES were common during the reporting period. DBM commented on the remarkable sight of C. Grackle nests, on the side of Jack McNeill's barn at Big Pond, set amongst the

ivy. Thank goodness there were few reports of BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS. Two males and two fems. were seen in June in Anna. Co. (SJH). DAM and FLL saw lots in the Middleton ravine in July. Colourful birds get noticed and BALTIMORE ORIOLES were no exception. They were seen in Kings Co., Vic. Co., in HRM, and on CSI. DAM and FLL at Middleton Ravine saw fourteen orioles with a nest in full view.

A few PINE GROSBEAKS were observed in HRM, in CB, and Economy Falls, Col. Co.. PURPLE FINCHES were abundant throughout the province both at feeders and other locations. HAT saw 50 plus birds at Anthony Park, Hants Co. including lots of young. HOUSE FINCHES were reported only from Halifax, at Conrose Field and singing (a birdy hymn perhaps) at the grounds of Trinity Church corner of Cogswell and Brunswick Street. Two RED CROSSBILLS were observed at the Oliver Ross feeder on CSI July 5 (MUN), and FLL saw some fly over at the Uniacke end of Pockwock HRM, July 5. Only one report of WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS was noted by BSK in St. Anns, Vic. Co., July 11. PINE SISKINS appeared to be scarce during the reporting period although some were reported from feeders. BSK notes they were common in St. Ann's CB in June and July. AMERICAN GOLDFICHES were common, especially along the eastern shore of HRM. EVENING GROSBEAKS were not common though observers did note birds at feeders in CB and JAH reported that some arrived at his feeder July 11.

Now, after all the reports of the colourful birds of summer, we are left with that infamous brown job, the HOUSE SPARROW. Not a single report! I know for sure they have moved into Bayers L. Industrial Park and Shopping Centre, HRM, where the crumbs are abundant. ☘



Young sparrows, like this SONG SPARROW photographed near Annapolis Royal in June, can be particularly obscure, and often must be identified by size, "jizz," habitat and association with adults. [Photo Richard Stern]

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Thanks to all of our contributors, including:

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☼☼☼

## Field Trip Report

### Along the Fundy Shore

**16 March 2003, Leader: Richard Stern**

A surprisingly large group of birders, from as far away as Metro Halifax and Cape Sable Island, met in Kentville. As we were about to leave a young Bald Eagle flew low over the parking lot, and later a beautiful adult sat in a tree against the blue sky at Lakeville.

We formed a convoy and drove along the Fundy Shore, making stops at Black Rock, Margaretsville, Port George, Cottage Cove, Hampton, and Parker's Cove. We then drove inland to the Annapolis Royal Tidal Power Plant. The weather could not have cooperated better, offering clear blue skies with light winds, and by the time we reached Annapolis Royal there was even a little warmth in the sun.

The birds were also very cooperative. A small group of Purple Sandpipers were feeding near to us on the rocks at Pt. George, and all saw them well; they were "lifers" for some. Then as we started to eat our lunch at Cottage Cove, five Harlequin Ducks flew by. Another drake Harlequin was "scoped" a bit farther along the coast, and a group of five more that flew by the bridge at Parker's Cove was seen by some of us. Along the way we managed good looks at sizeable flocks of Surf and White-winged Scoters along with smaller numbers of other sea ducks, Common Loons, and Horned and Red-necked Grebes. A Dovekie was seen by a select few. Land birds, as expected for the time of year, were few and far between.

We finished up at the Annapolis River by the Tidal power plant, where the warm sun and memorable birds made a great final stop. There were two groups of Hooded Mergansers, several Red-breasted Mergansers, five Barrow's Goldeneyes, several Common Goldeneyes, and a flock of Greater Scaup, all showing brilliantly in the sun. ☼

## Book Review

### Finches & Sparrows

Peter Clement, 1999, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, List \$29.95 (US)

500 pages. Soft Cover. ISBN # 0-691-04878-9

Readers be warned: this book is mis-titled, particularly from a North American perspective. It should be called "True Finches and Old World Sparrows," since it deals only with two bird families, the true finches (Fringillidae) and Old World sparrows (Passeridae), and therefore does not include the New World Sparrows most familiar to readers of *Nova Scotia Birds*. "Our" sparrows are in the family Emberizidae, a very large family that includes buntings and seedeaters as well as those sparrows familiar to us.

This detailed guide to the true finches and Old World sparrows is structured very much like the popular Houghton Mifflin guides to *Seabirds* (Harrison 1985), *Shorebirds* (Hayman *et al.* 1986), and *Waterfowl* (Madge and Burn 1988). Each species is described in great detail, with expertly rendered colour plates. Because of these qualities, if a person were interested in the finer points of these two families of birds, I would recommend this book.

However, even within the restricted scope of this book there are omissions and peculiarities in their descriptions. For species that have wider distributions that include North America, only European common names are offered on the plates. So, if you are looking for White-winged Crossbill, you had better look up "Two-barred Crossbill" instead. Search for Lesser Goldfinch, and you will have to find "Dark-backed Goldfinch".

For those of us who would like to flip through the book despite its Eurocentric bias, it is worth some time. Where else would you find incredibly detailed descriptions of the wonderfully alliterative Saffron Siskin? The artistic rendering of this richly coloured Ecuadorian endemic is eye-catching. For my part, I now long to observe such spectacular sights as the azure Cordonbleus of central Africa, or the colourful explosion of any of the Parrotfinches in the south Pacific and Indonesia, all species that I was unaware of prior to reading this book.

Some readers with an interest in cage birds may also find this book appealing. Many popular cage birds, such as Zebra Finches, Silverbills, and various Canaries, are detailed in species treatments for their wild counterparts. The sections on behaviour and geographic distribution may enlighten pet owners or enthusiasts. At a minimum, it may foster a greater appreciation of those species and their origins.

Overall, the book provides great detail on the world's True finches and Old World sparrows, with sections on identification, description, voice, status, habitat and behaviour, distribution, and measurements. It will be a wonderful source for North American readers who are interested in learning more about Old World sparrows and finches, or for those planning on birding abroad. For them, I would not recommend it as a field guide but more as a "leave in your car because it's too heavy" guide. With good notes in hand, you can always look up the subtle plumage differences between a female Red-eared Firetail and a Beautiful Firetail when you get back.

Joe Nocera

## Field Trip Reports

### Warbler Walk – Cape Breton

7 June 2003, Leader: David McCorquodale

A beautiful day greeted the fun group of birders who met at Ben Eoin Picnic Park. A lot of birds were singing in this location and many of them provided excellent views as well: Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireo, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. A Pine Grosbeak was a bit of a surprise was calling on the edge of the hardwoods. A Least Flycatcher and a couple of Hermit Thrushes sang but did not show off in front of the group.

As the morning wore on the number of singing birds dropped off. It warmed up slightly and bug juice was needed by the unhooded, but a little refreshment reinvigorated the group and prepared them for the next stage.

From Ben Eoin we headed to Big Pond and up the Glengarry Road. Last year, as leader of this trip, I had guaranteed a Spruce Grouse, having seen one only a few days before on the Glengarry Road; but I failed, instead offering only bugs. This year, having remembering my failure, I played down the possibility – "Yes, we are going to a place where they have been seen



before. Yes, they can be very secretive." We split up into scouting parties and traipsed into the woods to look for the shy, retiring Spruce Grouse. Within a few minutes a displaying male captured our attention. We marshaled everyone together to watch as the grouse strutted and displayed.

Once back in our cars we headed down the hill to Jack MacNeill's home, and his feeders. Here Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, American Goldfinches, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds kept our attention, while we traded stories about where the birds have been this winter, last summer, and over the past 20 years. Our group had lots of experience and everyone listened and learned from the others. Jack had some fascinating stories of birds on his property and in the Big Pond area through the years.

Eventually we drifted down to the pond to admire a Yellow Warbler, an Alder Flycatcher, and a very sedate Eastern Kingbird. In the distance, in a big pine on the side of the hill, a Bald Eagle sat beside its nest. Several Tree Swallows darted around us picking a few mosquitoes and black flies out of the air. The big fields nearby have been home to Bobolinks for years, although not as many now as 20 years ago. Despite standing within earshot of the fields for more than half an hour, no Bobolinks sang. Finally, we twice played a tape of their song and there he was, checking us out, wondering why a rival would call disappear. While we watched a female Bobolink arrived and they were last seen, him following her, into the grass.

A remarkable sight at Jack's is the assortment of Common Grackle nests on the side of the barn, set in amongst the ivy. A Common Raven flew over and about a dozen grackles quickly reacted to the alarm and escorted it away.

By lunch the sun had warmed things, the birds had quieted down, and we dispersed to various parts of Cape Breton.

## Eastern Shore

**14 June 2003, Leader: Bob Lindsay**

A small but dedicated group (the group called 'Intrepid' - five in all, including a visiting couple from California) met at 7:30 a.m. at Colby Village Plaza for what turned out to be a rather chilly & breezy day of birding. At the plaza the highlights were a Swamp Sparrow in the trail between the ball field and the northern tip of the lake, and a female Mallard swimming in the lake with about ten ducklings trailing along behind.

Our next stop was Lawlors Point, which juts out into Cole Harbour not too far along Highway #207 from Bissett Road. This required a bit of a walk from the road, but is a delightful place. There is a lot of second growth, with alder bushes and other deciduous trees, and enough prickly bramble to discourage anyone from leaving the path. Here we saw Common Yellowthroat, and an old apple tree which we believe was the site for a Hairy Woodpecker nest. A Bald Eagle was spotted on a rock in Cole Harbour Marsh.

We proceeded to Mines Road, a 5.0 km dirt road that connects, East Chezzetcook with West Petpeswick. It provides a variety of habitat - marsh, lake, and mature forest, but there was nothing very interesting this today and, curiously, no warblers, perhaps because of the the weather, which was definitely cool with a brisk breeze. Willets were nesting, and we saw several in trees.

The other locations we visited, including Story Head, Miseners Beach, Grand Desert, and Fishermen's Reserve, were generally not spectacular either, although the Common Eider we saw were lifers for the couple from California. We hoped to see some interesting terns at Fishermen's Reserve, but we could identify only Common Terns. One problem was that the wind was so brisk it was hard to hold binoculars motionless. A Red-breasted Merganser was seen here, and an American Wigeon was spotted in the marshes opposite Lawrencetown Beach on the way home. Total: 30 species

## Dawn Chorus at Porters Lake

**21 June 2003, Leader: Cindy Staicer.**

**Report By Bob Lindsay and Suzanne Borkowski**

Participants began arriving at the gate of the Provincial Park as early as 4:15 a.m.. It was still quite dark at about 4:45 when we began to head out for our walk. This trip was organized specifically to hear the "chorus" of birds that peaks just before sunrise and to compare it with later morning vocalizations. Many will remember, from Cindy's presentation at the NSBS April meeting that wood warblers have two different songs—one is heard before sunrise, and the more typical one is heard afterwards. On this morning we got to hear some of these vocalizations, and practiced recognizing birds by their songs.

We spent the next two or three hours in and around Porters Lake Park. Highlights include the following species, some of which were identified by sound only: Lincoln's Sparrow, Boreal and Black-capped Chickadee, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireo, Cedar

Waxwing, Alder Flycatcher, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, and several species of warbler – Magnolia, Yellow-Rumped, Yellow, Palm, Common Yellowthroat, Black-and-White, Black-throated Green, and Nashville.

When we had finished at Porters Lake Park we drove to Rocky Run. This is always a great place for seeing birds, and today was no exception. We followed the path west along the rail-trail, over the trestle bridge at Rocky Run, and along the extensive marsh where Red-winged Blackbirds abound, to the bluffs at Terminal Beach where we saw Bank Swallows. The two highlights of this location were a Blackpoll Warbler and a Sora.

We spent several minutes trying to track down the unique trill of the Blackpoll, which kept continually relocating as the bird skulked through spruce and alders, and were finally rewarded with looks at an adult breeding male. At the Marsh, on the way out, we heard the Sora first, which is usually the case, but we waited around, clicking rocks, and just being generally observant, until it got curious and flew across an open pool a few times. We heard Virginia Rails as well, but didn't spot them. A family of Ring-necked Ducks was also seen here. It was a great learning experience and a great day. Many thanks go to Cindy Staicer, our trip leader.

## Pockwock Watershed; Birds and Butterflies

**5 July 2003, Leader: Suzanne Borkowski**

Eighteen birders joined me on Saturday morning, July 5<sup>th</sup> for my trip into the Pockwock Watershed. This area consists of a dirt road, with forest trails running off it, encircling Pockwock Lake, the habitat mainly mixed woods, small bogs, a swampy area, and some grassy fields. We drove and walked through this mostly undisturbed woodland for several hours before continuing on to Mount Uniacke for an Halifax Field Naturalists Butterfly trip that afternoon.

We started with sightings of Killdeer and the sound of Ruffed Grouse drumming. Our first warbler was a Common Yellowthroat, followed by Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Northern Parula, Black & White, Yellow, Ovenbird, and American Redstart. Lots of Winter Wrens were singing (we couldn't see them, though). Loads of Hermit Thrushes were seen and heard, as well as Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees, Ruby-Crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Tree Swallows, Swamp Sparrows, and a Northern Flicker.

A pair of nesting Swainson's Thrushes (seen by most), a male Bay-breasted Warbler in breeding plumage (seen by some), and an Olive-sided Flycatcher (heard by all, glimpsed by one or two) were special treats. By the bridge near the exit to Highway #101 three Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were seen as well as a Canada Warbler. Some Red Crossbills were spotted flying overhead and one person saw an entire family of Gray Jays.

In the afternoon Linda and Peter Payzant were on hand to identify butterflies for us, and there were plenty of them to see: Harris' Checkerspot, Northern Pearl Crescent, White Admiral, Ringlet, Dreamy Duskywing, European Skipper, Tawny-edged Skipper, Long Dash, Hobomok Skipper, Canadian Tiger Swallowtail, Pink-edged Sulphur, Atlantis Fritillary, and Silver-bordered Fritillary. The outing was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

## Pictou County

**26 July 2003, Leader: Ken McKenna**

Sixteen people gathered at the Heather Motel to take in a day of birding, but very hot and windy conditions resulted in a somewhat slow day of birding in Pictou County. Our first stop was at the Egerton Ducks Unlimited pond, and among the pond life was a brood of Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, and Wood Ducks. A Merlin was closely examined through scopes as it perched on the limb of an elm, and a small group of Cliff Swallows and a Common Loon flew overhead. On a short walk up the rail-road tracks both Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Veery were noted, as well as Yellow, Chestnut-sided, and Black-and-white Warblers. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker provided an additional thrill for many in the group.

In Merigomish we walked the road along the French River. As the river here is predominantly salt-marsh we were able to add Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows and Willets to the list, and a pair of Broad-winged Hawks was spotted circling in the thermals. Another Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was viewed at very close range and an Eastern Kingbird was noted on the way back to the cars. In the Lower Barney's River area both Chipping Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco were singing, providing an opportunity to compare their similar songs.

At our last destination on Big Island there were lots of Bonaparte's Gulls sporting dapper hoods. The shorebirds present included Semipalmated Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Willet, and Spotted Sandpiper. There were about thirty Common Terns and a nice number of Great Blue Herons present as well. Bank Swallows were still attending their nests in the cliffs overlooking the mouth of the harbour with about a hundred nests counted. All in all it was a pleasant day despite the heat, and when the birding was slow we supplemented the trip with berry picking, Lep, Ode, and Herp observations. ☘

# Field Trip Reports

## Cape Breton Seabirds

**25 January 2003, Leader Susann Myers**

Birding was difficult and birds scarce on the Cape Breton Seabirds field trip due to cold temperatures, strong north winds, and a wind chill factor of -27 degrees. Nevertheless, eight hardy birders braved the elements and checked out harbours and bays between Sydney River and Louisbourg. We saw 35 species on the trip, and one participant, Jr. Metcalfe, spotted a Northern Mockingbird in Glace Bay earlier in the day.

The highlight of the trip was our stop at the narrow fishing harbour in Glace Bay; which was still partly ice-free, and where we could obtain wonderfully close looks at a good concentration of ducks and seabirds. Greater Scaup (206) and Black Ducks (46) were the most numerous species in this location, and there were smaller numbers of Mallards, Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes and Red-breasted Mergansers, as well as a single female Gadwall. A Northern Gannet was spotted, and Great Cormorants, Common Eiders and Common Mergansers were seen just outside the harbour.

At harbours and bays further along the coast, we saw Common Loons, Black Guillemots, Snow Buntings, large numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers, and a Bald Eagle at a seal carcass. Scoters were notable by their absence - the only ones spotted were 2 White-winged at Main-a-Dieu, barely identifiable in the wind and waves. Despite challenging conditions this was a most enjoyable day with fellow-birders. Congratulations to all who left warm firesides and endured.

## The Mountain and the Marsh – Annapolis Royal/Belleisle

**24 May 2003, Leader: Sharon Hawboldt**

Thirteen birders from various locations, including the Annapolis Valley, the South Shore, and the Halifax area, gathered in Belleisle, Annapolis County, early on the morning of May 24<sup>th</sup>. The sky was overcast and the air cool as we climbed the North Mountain by car. We then walked along a woods road across from a small lake where we were serenaded by a chorus of thrushes and White-throated Sparrows. A little further along we passed some old brush piles where we heard several Winter Wrens in full song. Warblers were present but not very vocal nor active. We were, however, rewarded with a fleeting glimpse of a Canada Warbler and the song of a Mourning Warbler.

From there we headed part way down the mountain slope and hiked along a trail through a hardwood stand where we had better sightings of warblers and flycatchers. Ovenbirds were calling in many spots and we had a good look at one agitated male displaying his orange crown. A Dark-eyed Junco lifted from her nest as we passed, giving us a quick peek at her young.

After the morning exercise we were all ready for a lunch break during which we were greatly entertained by all the activity at the feeders. The best sighting here was a handsome male Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

The afternoon was spent on the Belleisle Marsh. Highlights included the many Soras calling, the singing Bobolinks, the large number of Tree and Bank Swallows, and the two Ospreys circling around the nesting platform. Duck species included Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, both Blue and Green-winged Teal, Common and Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck, Mallard, and American Black Duck. Two American Bitterns and three Great Blue Herons flew overhead.

It was a full and enjoyable day with a group of friendly, enthusiastic birders. Our final species total for the day was 82.

# Upcoming Events



Field trips are open to non-members as well as members. Feel free to phone or email the field trip leader or contact person ahead of time to obtain further information (e.g. directions). 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](mailto:sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca)

## **Sat 10 Jan 2004 – Sewer Stroll I, Halifax/Dartmouth Area.**

Leader: Bob McDonald 443-5051  
E-mail: [bobathome@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:bobathome@hfx.eastlink.ca)

Meet in the parking lot of McCormack's Beach Provincial Park, next to the Boondocks Restaurant in Eastern Passage 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 11 Jan..

## **Sat 17 Jan 2004 – Cape Breton Seabirds.**

Leader: Susann Myers (902) 733-2805 (evenings).  
E-mail: [susann.myers@pc.gc.ca](mailto:susann.myers@pc.gc.ca)

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Tim Hortons in the Sydney River Shopping Centre, Sydney, for a morning tour by car of harbours and coves between Sydney and Louisbourg. This is a good way to become familiar with some Cape Breton birding spots while adding to your winter list. Expected species include Great Cormorant, Barrows Goldeneye, Purple Sandpiper, Glaucous Gull and Dovekie. Dress warmly and bring a lunch. Hot drinks provided.

## **Thu 22 Jan 2004 – Skills Workshop & Members' Slide Night,**

NSMNH, Summer Street, Halifax, 7:30 p.m..  
"Recognizing Eagles & Large Raptors" – Jim Wolford.

Bring along 10 – 15 of your favourite slides related to birding. We'll be enjoying them right after Jim's workshop.

## **Sat 24 Jan 2004 – HFN Sewer Stroll, Halifax/Dartmouth Area.**

Leaders: Linda & Peter Payzant 861-1607 (evenings)  
E-mail: [aa095@chebucto.ns.ca](mailto:aa095@chebucto.ns.ca)

Meet at 9:15 a.m. in the parking lot behind the Boondocks Restaurant, Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage. Storm date: Sun 25 Jan.. Dress warmly and bring a lunch, binoculars, field guides and telescope (if you have one).

## **Sat 14 Feb 2004 – Sewer Stroll II, Halifax/Dartmouth Area.**

Leader: Fulton Lavender 455-4966

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of McCormack's Beach Provincial Park, just past the Boondocks Restaurant in Eastern Passage. Dress warmly and bring a lunch. Storm dates: Sun 15 Feb., Sat 21 Feb., and Sun 22 Feb..

## **Thu 26 Feb 2004 – Regular Meeting,**

NSMNH, Summer Street, Halifax, 7:30 p.m..  
"Exploring the Sounds Around Us" – Guest Speaker: Dennis Jones

## **Sat 28 Feb 2004 – Beginning Birders Field Trip & Orientation.**

Leader: Suzanne Borkowski 445-2922  
E-mail: [sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca)

Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the parking lot of Tim Hortons, 153 Wyse Road (across from the Dartmouth Shopping Centre). Bring binoculars, a field guide and wear warm clothing. We'll spend a couple of hours identifying birds in and around Sullivans Pond and in the shrubbery across the street. Storm date: Sun 29 Feb.. **Pre-registration is necessary!**

## **Sun 21 Mar 2004 – Along the Fundy Shore.**

Leader: Richard Stern (902) 678-1975  
E-mail: [rbstern@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:rbstern@ns.sympatico.ca)

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Tim Hortons, Main Street, Middleton. We'll be visiting various spots along the Bay and spending some time at the Annapolis Marsh. Bring a lunch and dress warmly. No storm date.

## **Thu 25 Mar 2004 – Meeting & Skills Workshop,**

NSMNH, Summer Street, Halifax, 7:30 p.m..  
"Identifying Gulls – Part II." Presenter: Richard Stern.

## **Sat 27 Mar 2004 – Baccaro and Blanche Peninsula.**

Leader: Donna Ensor (902) 875-4269 E-mail: [ensorg@auracom.com](mailto: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, 28 March.

## **Sat 10 Apr 2004 – Martinique Beach.**

Leader: Ian McLaren 429-7024 E-mail: [iamclar@is.dal.ca](mailto: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.

## **Sun 25 Apr 2004 – Wolfville Area.**

Leader: Jim Wolford (902) 542-9204  
E-mail: [jww.triv@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:jww.triv@ns.sympatico.ca)

Pond hopping for ducks and early migrants. Meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front Street, Wolfville at 10:00 a.m. This will be a joint field trip with the Blomidon Naturalists Society. Bring a lunch. .

**Fri 30 Apr 2004 – Annual Out-of-town Meeting.** This year's meeting will be held on Cape Sable Island with a field trip on Saturday. Details to follow. **Please note there will be no meeting at the Museum on Thursday, 22 Apr 2004.**