

# **Nova Scotia Birds**

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



**Winter 2004**  
**(The Birds of Autumn)**



# 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 2005 issue: Dec. 7, 2004**

**Spring 2004 issue: Mar. 7, 2004**

**Summer 2004 issue: June 7, 2004**

**Fall 2004 issue: Aug. 7, 2004**

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- Sites of Nova Scotia
- Atlantic Bird Observatory Report
- Puffin of The Year Award
- Autumn Seasonal Reports
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Cover Photo: [This photo of a RED-TAILED HAWK "At Lunch" was an entry in the 1991 NSBS/PGNS Slide Competition. Photo Al Zinck]

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WINTER 2004

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Clearly I spoke too soon in my last editorial, wherein I hinted that we were beginning to catch up on the delayed publication of N.S. Birds. And, indeed, not only is this issue late, but two of the sections of the Seasonal Reports are missing, and will appear in the next issue. There are valid reasons for the absences, but we'll work hard to ensure such absences do not reoccur. In place of the missing segments I've included the preliminary rarities summaries that I prepared for "Birders' Journal," but these summaries are necessarily incomplete, do not include common species, and are written in a different format from N.S. Birds. Still, they provide a reasonable quick overview of the rarities found during the autumn.



As many of you know quite well, parking at or near the Nova Scotia Museum has become a concern for those wishing to attend the monthly Bird Society meetings. The public lot to the south of the museum now requires payment, even in the evenings. Are there any free alternatives? Bernice Moores has done a "reccy" on foot, and reports the following. Municipal on-street meters are not monitored after 6 p.m., but keep in mind this is not the case for meters on private property, e.g. The New Halifax Infirmary.

Summer Street meters from Bell Road to Spring Garden would be of interest to our members; note that the north end of Summer Street has far fewer meters than the section from Sackville Street to Spring Garden. Also there is an un-metered strip on the Summer Street side of The Wanderers' Grounds that will fit five or six vehicles, meaning you can park there for free after 6 p.m. Free parking is also available at The Community College at the corner of Bell Road and Trollope Street from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. weekdays, and all day on Saturdays and Sundays.

I typically park along one of the edges of the Public Gardens and walk, as the meters are not checked after 6 p.m.



I received a nice book as a Christmas present, and it's been such a revelation that I'm recommending it to you; "Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay," by Stuart Houston, Tim Ball, and Mary Houston, published by McGill-Queen's [ISBN 0-7735-2285-9]. At the time when Linnaeus was just proposing his binomial system, and interest in all things natural (and non-European) was sweeping Europe, employees of the Hudson Bay Company began an amateur scientific examination of the natural history of northern Canada. It's meteorological records are geographically and chronologically unrivaled, and Hudson Bay was second only to South Carolina as a source of specimens and data for plants and animals from North America. This fine book (thoroughly annotated and indexed) documents the men behind this achievement, and includes a series of illuminating appendices, including "Ten Year Cycles" (discovery of the Snowshoe Hare & Lynx cycles), "How the Canada Goose Got its Name Before There Was a Canada," and "Cree Names for Natural History Species" (the Cree name for Pectoral Sandpiper is Winnipeg-Apethashish, meaning "stagnant-water bird"). I'm learning something new and compelling every time I pick it up, and you can't ask more than that. Every naturalist with an interest in aspects boreal should own a copy. ☐



## Canada Goose Subspecies in Nova Scotia

By Ian McLaren

The following photos are meant to stir up a bit of interest in seeking and identifying subspecies of Canada Geese. Recent genetic work based on mitochondrial DNA, which is transmitted only by females, indicates that there are two genetically distinct kinds of these geese - a large-bodied and a small-bodied group of subspecies, the latter nesting characteristically on arctic tundra. The distinctions are maintained because female geese almost always return to breed on their natal grounds. Males from other populations, however, may be "chosen" by females on the wintering grounds, so that their genes tend to be spread more widely, even between large- and small-bodied subspecies. It also appears that the Hawaiian Goose arose from a large-bodied, and the Barnacle Goose from a small-bodied ancestor, long after the two groups of Canada Geese became separated. Despite this indication that two accepted species of geese are genetically more closely related to two different kinds of Canada Geese than the latter are to one another, the A.O.U. Checklist Committee, which decides these things, has not yet "split" the Canada Geese into two species.

Our regular and abundant Atlantic Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis Canadensis*, which nests mostly in Newfoundland and Labrador and eastern Ungava, is a readily identified, large-bodied subspecies as the following photo shows (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Atlantic Canada Geese at Chezzetcook, Apr. 12, 2003. The paleness of the breasts extends around the back of the neck on these large-bodied geese. This is a good subspecies mark to look for on geese in flight or with neck stretched out when feeding. [Photo Ian McLaren]

Some confusion may result from wide introductions, including in Nova Scotia, of the Giant Canada Goose, *B. c. maxima*, native of the middle of the continent. Some (most?) of our breeding, as opposed to migratory, Canada Geese may derive from such introductions. It is rather similar to the Atlantic Canada Goose, but larger and may be less pale-breasted.

Another large-bodied subspecies that can be expected here is Todd's, or Interior, Canada Goose, *B. c. interior*, which breeds from the Midwestern States to the Hudson Bay Lowlands and western Ungava, and beyond to Greenland. It is generally duskier in plumage, without a contrastingly pale breast, and often described and depicted as more "rangy," with a longer body and thinner, neck. It should be somewhat regular here, and I believe I've seen some (Fig. 2).



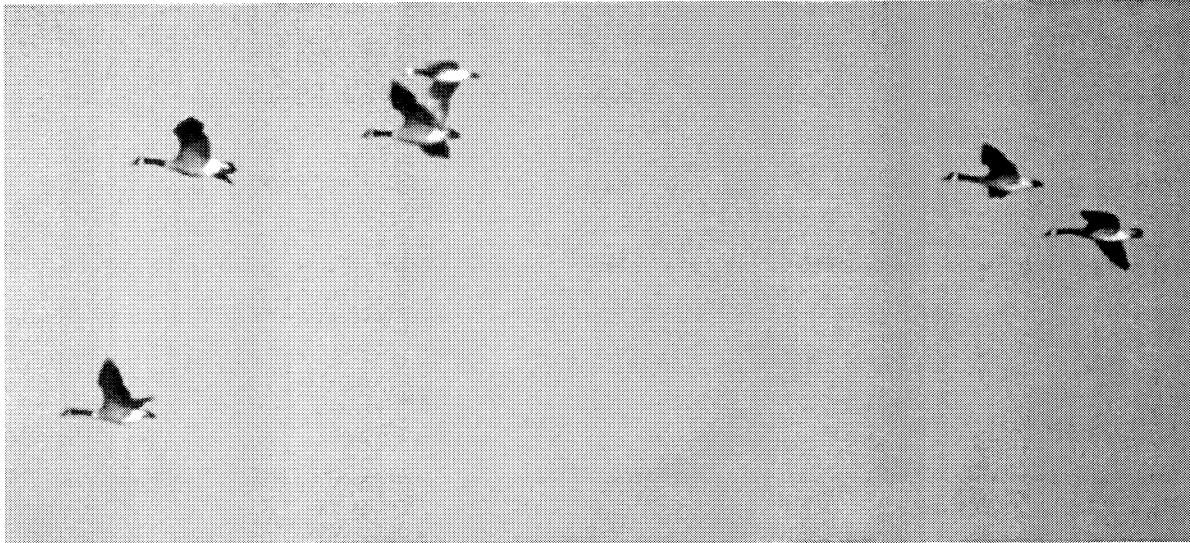


Fig. 2. This photo of a Barnacle Goose (topmost bird) with Canada Geese was taken at Kingsport, *Kings*, Nov. 19, 1989. The two geese at right are darker, lack pale breasts (obvious on the other three birds), and appear relatively slender-bodied and long-necked. Those are characteristics of the Todd's, or Interior, Canada Goose. Does the fact that this subspecies breeds to SW Greenland lend some credence to the wild origin of the Barnacle Goose? [Photo Ian McLaren]

Among the small-bodied Canada Goose subspecies, only the tiny Richardson's Goose, *B. c. hutchinsii*, is expected to occur here at least occasionally. It nests mostly on the islands and adjacent mainland tundras of Nunavut, from Baffin Island to the Mackenzie Delta. Although it has been recorded in Nova Scotia, but without specimen or photographic support. Ironically, a small Canada Goose wintering in Yarmouth in 1996-97 was identified in *Nova Scotia Birds* as a Lesser Canada Goose (see below). It appears, however, to have represented a first confirmed record of Richardson's Canada Goose (Fig. 3).

The subspecies most often misidentified as Richardson's Canada Goose in eastern North America is the Lesser Canada Goose, *B. c. parvipes*, a subspecies of the large-bodied group which nests largely below the treeline in the subarctic, from western Hudson Bay to Alaska. It is variable in plumage, size, and bill length, but is smaller than the other large-bodied subspecies in the eastern N. America, but not as tiny and stubby-billed as Richardson's. It is abundant, and I believe I have seen small numbers here in association with flocks of larger-bodied birds. In an earlier issue of *Nova Scotia Birds* (2000, Vol. 42, p. 36) a photograph of a small goose on Sable Island was captioned as a Richardson's Canada Goose, with its larger companions clearly of the usual Atlantic subspecies. Closer examination of that photograph shows that the smaller bird is swimming parallel but behind the row of larger Canadas, and accordingly appears smaller than it probably was. Furthermore, its bill is not sufficiently stubby, and it seems more probable that it is of the Lesser subspecies.

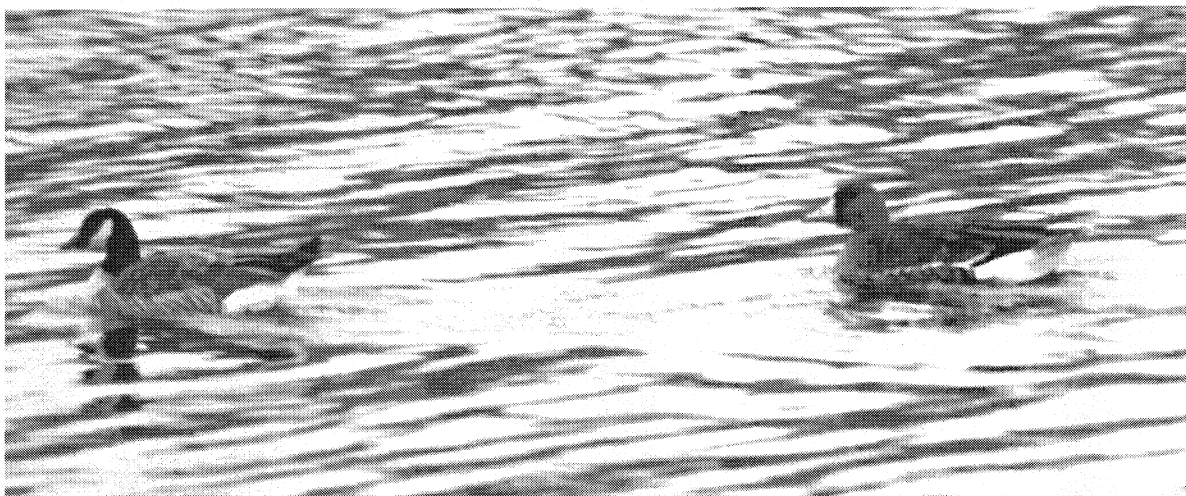


Fig. 3. This photo, taken in Yarmouth, Dec. 15, 1996, was captioned in *NS Birds*, 1997, Vol. 39(2), p. 45 as a Lesser Canada Goose with a White-fronted Goose companion, but that is incorrect. The small Canada has a short, thick neck, stubby bill, and pale breast, and is, if anything, slightly smaller than its companion. These are good features of Richardson's Canada Goose, the first of the small-bodied subspecies thus documented in Nova Scotia. [Photo Ian McLaren]

On 18 October 2003 I found a flock of 18 Canada Geese grazing on the Hartlen Point Golf Course, at the northeast corner of Halifax Harbour, NS. Three standing heads-above the others seemed to be the usual large, long-necked, pale-breasted Atlantic Canada Goose. The others were not as small, short-necked, or stubby-billed as the smallest subspecies of Canada Geese. They varied in plumage tones, but averaged darker breasted than a larger, apparent Atlantic Canada Goose with them, and I took them to be Lesser Canada Geese (*B. c. parvipes*). Next day, with Fulton Lavender and Richard Hatch, we refound, studied, and photographed them on a large lawn on Halifax Harbour in Eastern Passage (Fig. 4). In days prior to this occurrence, there was a strong westerly airflow (50+ knots at goose-flying heights) from the prairies to New England and Atlantic Canada.



Fig.4. A group of apparent Lesser Canada Geese at Eastern Passage, HRM, Oct. 18, 2003. Note the larger, longer-necked, paler-breasted, Atlantic Canada Goose at right. (Note also the small, dark bird in the foreground.) [Photo Ian McLaren]

Among the apparent Lesser Canada was one smaller, very dark-plumaged bird, with a dark throat (black gular strip) between the two white cheek patches. It resembled descriptions and depictions of Taverner's Canada Goose, *B. c. taverneri*, which is the largest of the small-bodied subspecies, and which nests on tundra from the Mackenzie Delta to western Alaska. (Fig. 5).



Fig.5. A possible Taverner's Canada Goose, with one of the larger, paler individuals of the flock of apparent Lesser Canada Geese, at Eastern Passage, HRM, 18 Oct. 2003. The insert shows the broad, black division between the narrower white cheek patches of the former bird. Note also in the insert, the apparently untapered bill from below. [Photo Ian McLaren]

There is a huge literature on Canada Geese, mostly by wildlife biologists, despite which the characteristics and breeding ranges of some Canada Geese populations remain uncertain, and controversial. This is especially true of Taverner's Canada Goose. For that reason I am still looking into its status and getting advice and input from numerous experts. Regardless of the outcome, I think it has been informative and fun to find out more about these beautiful birds. ☐

# Sites of Nova Scotia

by Blake Maybank

## ADVOCATE HARBOUR and CAPE D'OR, Cumberland County

**SUMMARY:** A very good year-round birding destination with high aesthetic value, featuring migrant passerines, breeding birds, shorebirds, and hiking opportunities. Time required = one half to a full day.

**DIRECTIONS:** Advocate Harbour and its surrounding villages of East Advocate, Advocate Harbour, and Point Hill, lie on Rte #209, 15 km south of Apple River, and 45 km west of Parrsboro. The side road to Cape d'Or runs south from the village of East Advocate. Take either of two exits on to Back Road off Rte #209 in the village; there should be signs as well indicating Cape d'Or and/or the Fundy Ecotour. The road to Cape d'Or lies 500 metres from the eastern junction for Back Road. Travel time from Parrsboro = 45 minutes, from Amherst = 2 hours, from Halifax = 2.5 hours.

## ADVOCATE HARBOUR

**HABITATS:** Harbour; Rocky Beach; Salt Marsh; Mudflats; Pastures; Residential Properties; Alder & Willow Thickets; Mixed-wood Forest; creeks.

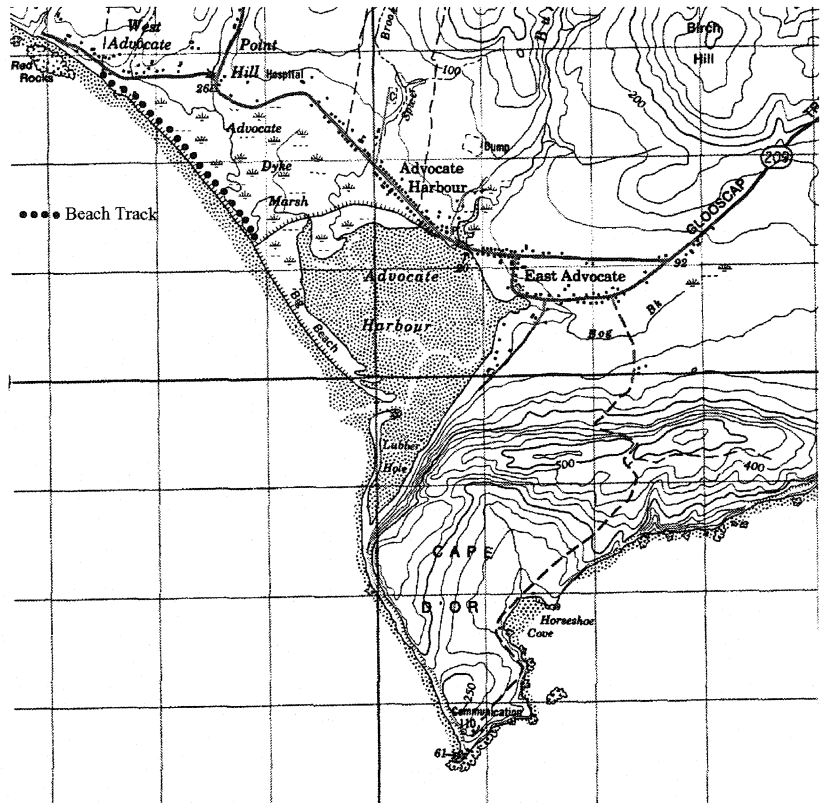
**NATURAL HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS:** extreme tides in Advocate Harbour; beach combing on Advocate Beach.

**BIRDING FEATURES:** There are three main areas to explore; the harbour with its mudflats and salt marsh, the dyked pastures and small fresh-water marshes to the NW of the harbour, and the long cobblestone beach that borders both harbour and dykelands.

The harbour is completely in view from the villages of Advocate Harbour and East Advocate, but as the harbour mouth is 1.5 km from the inner end at the bridge, a scope is essential. Orientation is straightforward, as the terrain is open and level around the harbour. To view the SE side of the harbour, take either of two exits on to Back Road off Rte #209, and exit Back Road on to McLellan St., a cul-de-sac, which runs part way along the SE harbour shoreline.

The inner harbour is best viewed from the bridge on Rte #209; the bridge spans the mouth of a short creek that enters the inner harbour. There is space immediately west of the bridge to stop and scan the marsh. At this point you may also choose to hike the two km dyke that extends west from the bridge to Advocate Beach. The area immediately south of the dyke is salt-marsh, not covered with every tide, while mudflats lie further out in the harbour. Shorebirding is best on a rising tide, as waters increasingly confine the feeding flocks to smaller areas close to the dyke. The rising tide will also reveal waterfowl, shorebirds, and herons that might have been feeding in the surprisingly deep channels that bisect the salt marsh.

The area NW of the dyke (called Dyke Marsh) is a drained salt marsh, bounded to the west by Advocate Beach and to the east by Rte #209, and is now given over to pasture, interspersed with a few small freshwater marshes. This "marsh" is perhaps best viewed from Rte #209 about one km west of the Hospital, where the road turns sharply north heading to Apple River. This bend in the road lies some seven metres above the marsh, allowing a reasonable view.



Advocate Beach is a marvel, a “high-energy beach” of small rounded rocks, extending five km NW/SE between Red Rocks at the western end of West Advocate to the northern mouth of Advocate Harbour. Prevailing winds and currents have tossed a remarkable amount of driftwood along the length of the beach, making it ideal for beach combing. The wave-strewn wood lies two metres wide and a metre deep, a remarkable barrier, so wend your way through with care. The SE end of the beach can be explored after hiking the Advocate Harbour dyke, but most of the beach can often be explored by automobile, as a track runs down the inner side of the cobblestone beach “wall,” with the Dyke Marsh lying on the inland side. To drive to the beach turn off Rte #209 on the paved access road (West Advocate Road) leading to the village of West Advocate. The unpaved side road to the beach lies a bit less than one km along, and although is unmarked, is unmistakable. The road’s condition varies seasonally, so use your best judgement. If you are unwilling to risk damage to your car then consider hiking as an option, as this is the best way to examine the Dyke Marsh. You should periodically climb the cobblestone beach to scan Fundy’s waters, as a few loons, alcids, or seaducks may be in evidence depending on the time of year. In autumn the beach is popular with American Pipits and wood collectors.

### CAPE D’OR

**HABITATS:** Coastal Coniferous Forest; Mixed-wood Forest; abandoned orchards; Alder & Willow Thickets; rocky shoreline; cliffs; coastal barrens; nearshore ocean waters.

**NATURAL HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS:** Rare arctic/alpine flora [*Spike Trisetum* *Trisetum spicatum*; Robbins' Milkvetch *Astragalus robbinsii* var. *minor*; Saint John River Oxytrope *Oxytropis campestris* var. *johannensis*]; breeding Peregrine Falcons; impressive ocean currents swirling around the Cape; rock-hounding.

**CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS:** Cape d’Or Lighthouse.

**BIRDING FEATURES:** The cliffs of Cape d’Or rise 152 metres, and are home to nesting Peregrine Falcons, with the rock rubble at their feet provide suitable nesting cavities for Black Guillemot. Cape d’Or is primarily basalt, resistant to erosion, and dominates the landscape for some distance around.

The Cape is privately owned, but the owners are not adverse to naturalists and hikers exploring the area. The road from East Advocate to the cape’s tip (five km) is all-weather and public, though it may not be quickly plowed in winter. Various impromptu trails and minor roads lead off from the main road, and all are best explored on foot. The forest is primarily Red and White Spruce, though there is some Eastern Hemlock, and lots of Red Maple. There is reasonable breeding bird diversity, but Cape d’Or is even more rewarding as a migrant trap, although it is visited more often by migrant birds than resident or visiting birders. The road descends to sea-level at Horseshoe Cove, one km shy of the tip. The cobble beach here is popular with rock hounds, and it’s a great picnic spot. The road continues on and up, ending at a small seasonal info centre, before making one last final descent to the automated lighthouse. The former light keepers house serves as a B&B and café.

From the info centre four trails radiate out along the cliff edge, providing stunning views. Much of the tip area (39 ha) is protected due to the rare arctic/alpine flora, and the area is also where passerine migrants often concentrate. ☒



This lovely portrait of a juvenile WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, Oct. 25 on Seal I., appears of our eastern, dark-lored subspecies *leucophrys*, although some of the more westerly, pale-lored *gambelii* were on the island at the time. [Photo Richard Stern]



## Book Review

***A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology After Audubon*, by Mark V. Barrow Jr., Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., U.S.A, 1998; 326 pages; U.S.\$22.95 (paper); U.S. \$90.00 (cloth).**

By 1889 the Carolina Parakeet was known to be near extinction. An expedition into the wilds of Florida was led that year by ornithologist Frank M. Chapman of the American Museum of Natural History. The party, encouraged by reports of parakeet sightings, searched diligently, and soon came upon a small group of the very rare birds. Immediately, shots were fired. Four of the last of its species lay dead. Two days later, five more of the colourful and now long-extinct birds fell under the gun of these scientists.

Today such carnage seems hardly imaginable, especially by people with an enduring fascination for birds, and most of us would probably “tsk-tsk” at the behaviour of Chapman and his hunting troupe, but the reality of the late nineteenth century was that most people with an “enduring fascination for birds” spent much of their available time killing them. This book chronicles how ornithology itself changed from the time of the death of the famous American ornithologist John James Audubon in 1851 through to “the years surrounding the Great Depression.”

It might have been more satisfying for the reader had the author attempted to bring the tale up to the present time because, as it is, today’s reader is likely to come away from a reading of this book with a feeling of a story incompletely told. Surely, there is much to add to the history of ornithology in the period between the Great Depression and the present. Nonetheless, this is a very interesting book that traces both the rise of professionalization within the field of ornithology, as well as those professionals’ relationship with the far larger amateur birding community, whose numbers continued to grow throughout the period in question here, as they have since.

This is a very academic book, as its 57 pages of footnotes, 43-page bibliography, and eleven-page index attest. I’m not a scientifically trained ornithologist, and so can’t presume to judge this as a professional might, and I doubly confess that I made little reference to the copious footnotes and none at all to the bibliography, although I found the index fairly useful in more ways than one. For example, it helped me trace the history of Christmas Bird Counts and part of their role in the evolution of the relationship between the amateur enthusiast and the professional ornithologist.

One of the book’s themes is the rise of professionalism in the field of ornithology. As with many other branches of science in the years before the mid-nineteenth century, much of the original research was undertaken by “gentlemen” of independent means whose wealth allowed them to pursue as a calling what we’d today describe as “hobbies.” Later, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century unfolded, opportunities for employment as ornithologists grew dramatically, as museum and university systems were put in place and expanded across the continent. Other postgraduate ornithologists found employment at the federal, state, and provincial levels of government on both sides of the border.

The book describes the tension and the fluctuating and “symbiotic” relationship between professionals and amateur enthusiasts, from the founding of the American Ornithological Union (AOU) in 1883 through the next several decades. One chapter on the nomenclature of birds raised my hope that I might learn why the purple finch – which is not at all purple – and the orange crowned warbler – which has nary a trace of orange on its head – got their names? I was sadly disappointed here: the chapter is a long discussion of the battle between taxonomic “binomialists” and “trinomialists,” essentially a recounting of the battle within the ornithological profession at the turn of the last century over whether subspecies would be given specific status, and hence a third Latin name. There is but one passing reference to “popular nomenclature.”

Other chapters were less disappointing. Those that dealt with collecting as it fell into disfavour, the faltering rise and eventual ascendancy of the conservation movement, and the struggles within the AOU over the relationship between “birdwatchers” and professional ornithologists, make fascinating reading.

The author makes several references to class and gender relationships in his telling of this tale. In the early years, the “ornithological club” was almost universally a male one, and this remains largely, but decreasingly so, as the narrative approaches the years around the Great Depression. But throughout the entire period – and although the author makes less mention of this fact in earlier than later chapters – both professional and amateurs in the field were almost exclusively of the middle and upper economic classes. Today, thankfully, this is less so, at least here in Nova Scotia: fishermen, foresters, and other “ordinary” people are among the most avid birding enthusiasts in the province.

This might not be the ideal book for the birding enthusiast in your family. It may not even be the ideal gift for the professional ornithologist. But it’s an interesting read nonetheless, particularly for its exploration of the terrain that both groups shared, and even contested, over the decades.

***Birding enthusiast Scott Milsom is Communications Officer for Nova Scotia’s Coastal Communities Network and Editor of its magazine, Coastal Communities News. For more information, go to <[www.coastalcommunities.na.ca](http://www.coastalcommunities.na.ca)>, or e-mail <[ccnews@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:ccnews@ns.sympatico.ca)>.***

## “Countable Lifers”

By Bernard Forsythe

Although some birders may not admit to it, most keep one or more birdlists. Mention Three-toed Woodpecker and birders claiming not to be listers will be able to relate any experience they have or haven't had with this species. They'll also likely have an opinion whether or not the experience is “countable.” Competitive listers tend to have rules regarding what sightings are countable, such as how much time has to pass before a released bird may be added to a list. The more casual lister, however, may be inclined to bend a rule slightly to suit his or her birding enjoyment.

On the road to Brier Island's North Light I once spotted a streaked bird with a white eye line that looked like an oversized female Purple Finch. I later thought it could have been a female Lark Bunting but because the sighting was very brief I didn't add it to my life list. Another time a neighbour phoned informing me a Black-billed Cuckoo had just struck his window. At that time this species was new to me. As I picked the bird up it took its last few breaths and died. Should I count it? Two weeks later the problem was solved when another Black-billed Cuckoo flew to an exposed perch beside me long enough for excellent viewing.

In 1988 a weak Black Vulture was brought to Cyril Coldwell's rehabilitation centre at Gaspereau. It soon recovered and I was asked to enter the pen, catch the bird with a net, and help Cyril place a band on its leg. The vulture was released and flew strongly southward. Two weeks later I received a phone call from someone near Sunken Lake; a vulture was walking around a farm yard among a flock of chickens. When I arrived I saw Cyril's banded Black Vulture trying to blend in with the nervous chickens. The nearby barn doors were open so in no time the vulture and most of the chickens were herded inside, and the doors shut.

Two large workhorses were also in the barn. It would have been nice to have a film of what happened next. I began pursuing the vulture with a net, while it raced around and between the horses' legs. Feathers from flying, squawking chickens filled the air while I tried my best to avoid the horses' hooves. I finally pinned my target with the net, but while transferring the bird to a cage I learned an important lesson about vultures – watch their heads. I didn't, and the bird regurgitated its vile-smelling, repulsive-looking semi-liquid stomach contents over my clothes. [Back at Cyril's we removed a few porcupine quills from the bird's head, and released it a couple of weeks later.]

It is probably safe to say that few Nova Scotia birders have banded a Black Vulture and had the experience of dealing with vulture vomit. There is a red check-mark beside Black Vulture on my Nova Scotia birdlist. ☒



BLACK VULTURE [Photo Bernard Forsythe]



# AUTUMN BIRD REPORTS

## Loons through Grebes

(Birders' Journal rarities summary) A **PACIFIC LOON** was well-described off Cook's Beach, Pinkney Point, *Yarmouth*, September 16, by observers familiar with the species (Bill McCormick, Henry Barnett). ☐

## Tubenoses Through Cormorants

By Eric Mills

On December 1, CAH wrote from Brier Island that "I was out lobstering today west of the island and noted hundreds if not thousands of fulmars, many of them dark phase. Also Kittiwakes in large numbers with lesser amounts of razorbills and dovebies. A few jaegers. There must be some feed around for there to be so many seabirds. A few greater shearwaters and loons." An abundance of seabirds so late in the season has been typical of this reporting season, as this section and the later one on Skuas through Alcids will show.

Although abundant in late fall well offshore of Brier I (*fide* CAH), N **FULMARS** were reported only twice elsewhere, nine dark phase birds off Schooner Pond, Aug 2 (FLL) and two off Louisburg, Sept 5 (BLM). Typical of the offshore slope water and Gulf Stream warm-core rings, 10+ **CORY'S SHEARWATERS** were observed Sept 5-6 on the Scotian Shelf during a cruise between Louisburg and Lunenburg, most of them seaward of Halifax (BLM). **GREATER SHEARWATERS**, abundant and widespread in summer and early autumn, remained in local waters until the end of November in limited numbers, as judged from shore. LAL and PAC estimated 1000+ off Brier I, Aug 25. Several thousands passed Northern Pt, Brier I, Oct 2 (ELM, IAM) in a westerly gale, and RBS reported 1000+ there Oct 11. During a vicious westerly gale Nov 30, at least 150 passed by the same place heading rapidly southwest (ELM). Abundant offshore all summer and into the autumn, LAL and PAC estimated

100+ **SOOTY SHEARWATERS** off Brier I, Aug 25, noting that this was a "higher ratio of Sootys to Greaters than usually seen off Brier." Only one was recorded by BLM southwest of Louisburg, Sept 5, and 50 passed Brier I, Oct 3 among Greaters (ELM, IAM). Eight days later RBS saw the last, two off Northern Pt., Brier I. Regularly observed in small numbers from whale cruises off Brier I all summer, a **MANX SHEARWATER** was off Louisburg, Sept 5 (BLM). The last off Brier I were there Oct 11 (RBS). Nine off Schooner Pond, Aug 9 were notable for their location (FLL, DOU).

The shearwater event of the season (indeed of many seasons!) was the documented sighting of three **LITTLE SHEARWATERS** southwest of Sable I, Sept 23 (Bruce Mactavish). The only previous confirmed record for the Province is a specimen obtained on Sable I in September 1896. A write-up

is to appear in *Birders Journal* in the near future.

Storm-Petrel records were scanty, despite the presence of abundant Wilson's and reasonable numbers of Leach's off Brier I and elsewhere during the summer and autumn. LAL and PAC recorded 150+ **WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS** off Brier I, Aug 25, and the last seen there were 11, Oct 2 (NSBS, FLL). A single **LEACH'S STORM-PETREL** was, unexpectedly, at Dominion Beach, *Cape Breton*, Aug 8 (LEL, DBM), and BLM had two southwest of Louisburg, Sept 5. The NSBS group on BPI, Aug 29 - Sept 1 noted a few remaining there from the breeding season (JCZ, PLC). Twelve off Brier I, Oct 3 were the last of the season (NSBS, FLL).

Typical of the past decade or so, N **GANNETS** lingered late into the autumn, even into early winter.



The **MANX SHEARWATER** was one of the "regular rarities" sought and found during last Thanksgiving weekend's pelagic tour. [Photo Richard Stern]

Migrants moving southwest passed the Louisburg area, at the rate of four/minute Oct 20 (SEM). From Oct 28-31 there was a constant passage past Northern Pt, Brier I, peaking at 200+, Oct 30 (ELM). "Several hundred" were off Sheet Hbr, HRM, Nov 2 (KJM), and as late as Nov 30, in a westerly gale, 300+ passed the northern tip of Brier I during a massive movement of seabirds out of the Bay of Fundy (ELM). Elsewhere, large numbers fed off Ogdens Pond, Antigonish, beginning in early October, peaking in early November, and again late in the month when they began to feed actively in this

wonderful coastal salt-pond (RFL). A juv, undoubtedly in distress as a result of the great westerly gale that day, appeared in Sullivan's Nov 30 "looking confused and weirdly out of place" (PLC, JEH, Bill Billington, Eileen Billington).

Both cormorants were well reported. The details show the replacement along the coasts of DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS by wintering Greats by the first half of October, and JCT's careful records showed significant numbers in inland Kings throughout much of October. As late as Nov 15,

there were still four at Crystal Crescent PP, HRM (PLC). As ever, a few Double-crests lingered into winter in the southwest of the province. A GREAT CORMORANT in Canard Pond, Kings, Sept 29, after Hurricane Juan, was unusual at that location (RBS). A few still lingered on their breeding cliffs at Crystal Cliffs, Antigonish, Oct 12 (RFL). Migrants arriving from the north, 100+ flew into St Marys Bay, Digby, Oct 31, and by Nov 30, all the birds feeding at sea off Brier I were Greats (ELM). ☐

## Herons Through Vultures

By Ulli Höger



SNOWY EGRETS are frequent autumn visitors to saltmarsh ponds around CSI. The palish legs of this one mark it as a juvenile. [Photo Grant Milroy]

This fall AM BITTERN were seen and reported from a number of locations. Two were found Aug 19 at Three Fathom Hbr, HRM (CSS, FLL). A single bittern was seen Oct 12 by RBS in Annapolis Royal's Ducks Unlimited Marsh, Annapolis. During the NSBS "Brier Island Thanksgiving extravaganza" RSM and ULH added one to the trip's species list with their observation in Pond Cove Oct 12. Maybe the same bird was seen there Oct 28 by ELM? One location with reports

for this species throughout the fall was CSI, outlining the importance of this hotspot and the intensity of birding in the area by local and visiting birders.

During fall GREAT BLUE HERONS are still a common sight in NS and the numerous reports received reflect the abundance of local and migrating individuals in suitable habitat.

This fall we had a significant influx of GREAT EGRETS into the province.

Over time at least 18 were reported, mainly from the northern parts of the province. TEP's record for this species in NS was five in one day, Nov 2, HRM. After only a few reports in early fall (Aug 1, CSI, FLL *et al.*; Sept 2, Pinkneys Pt, PRG & RSD), numbers increased in late October and early November. Several spent time in Cow Bay, HRM and were enjoyed by many birders after Henk Kwindt reported them initially Oct 26. Single individuals were seen at Conrad's in the same time frame (RHL *et al.*), Antigonish Landing, Antigonish (Oct 27, RFL), and North Aspy River, Victoria (Nov 6, FMC). JAH reported individuals from Back Hbr, Lunenburg, throughout November. More reports came from Canso, Guysborough (*fide* BLM), and CBI including two in Glace Bay (JUM).

SNOWY EGRETS were reported less frequently. TEP found one Oct 4 at Conrad's, and one was reported Oct 11, Argyle Hd, Yarmouth (RSD). Birding hotspot CSI had one visiting Oct 22-26 (MUN). An egret at Spencers I, Cumberland, Oct 29, left KFS a bit puzzled at first but her detailed description indicates that it was a Snowy. Late reports for this species came from East Chezzetcook, HRM, Nov 2 (IAM), and from New Glasgow, Pictou, Nov 30.

LITTLE BLUE HERONS are a more uncommon sight, but there were plenty



of reports this fall and once again CSI was the most productive location. The majority were imm birds and are migrants from the south as breeding of the species in NS is unlikely. The first imm was reported Aug 10 from CSI, *Shelburne* (FLL *et al.*) and the presence of an ad and an imm Little Blue Heron on CSI, Aug 13-15, was later confirmed by MUN. Birder and videographer Dennis Jones captured an imm bird on video Aug 17 at Cow Bay Beach, *HRM*, and documented the sighting and identification later on his website. Two more imms were present in Melbourne, *Yarmouth* from Aug 26-Sept 1 (PRG, RSD) and an ad stayed Sept 6-10 on CSI. The only report of this species for October also came from CSI, Oct 10 (MUN).

CATTLE EGRETS were only reported from northern NS. One stayed in Canso, *Guysborough* from Oct 29-Nov 6. Other reports came from Louisburg, *Cape Breton* (SEM, Oct 23) and River John, *Pictou* (*fide* KJM, Nov 4).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS, both ad and imm birds, were reported from CSI throughout the fall. Sightings of **YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS** are more of a highlight and several were reported this fall. The first reported was an ad observed Aug 15 over Annapolis Royal Marsh, *Annapolis* (Sharon Hawboldt). PLC found one Sept 3 in Ketch Hbr, *HRM*, likely the same bird HAT reported Sept 1 from the same area. A Yellow-crowned stayed on Seal I,

*Yarmouth*, throughout September (ABO) and an imm was seen flying over Wolfville Oct 6 (BLF). This late sighting was surpassed by one that garnered the named "Jane". It lingered at River Bourgeois, *Richmond*, Sept 25-Oct 18 (GED).

TURKEY VULTURES are frequently reported in NS, especially from Digby Neck and Brier I. Though the species is present year round, numbers increase in fall during migration. Despite frequent and sometimes numerous sightings during the breeding season, nesting or young subad evidence of local offspring is not documented for NS. The breeding status of this species in NS thus remains unclear. ☐

## Geese, Swans and Ducks

(Birders' Journal rarities summary)

There was a modest autumn flight of **Snow Goose** including 11 Greaters at Brier I. October 25 (nine lingering through November 9), three in *Pictou* November 19-23, and two rare Lessers in November, a blue phase at Canso on the 17<sup>th</sup> (TOK), and a white phase in Dartmouth November 30 (IAM).

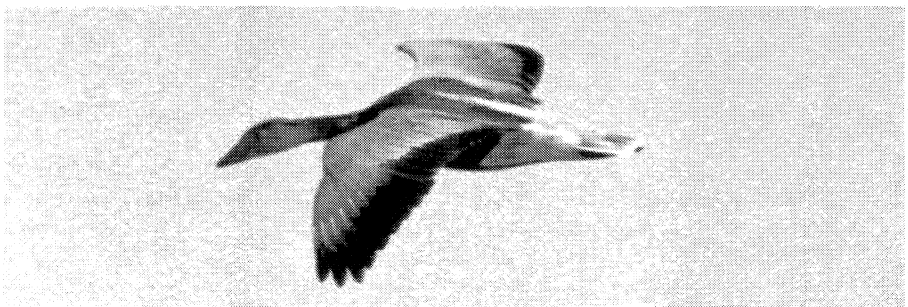
A **BARNACLE GOOSE** of possible wild origin was with migrant Canada Geese at Waterside P.P., *Pictou*, October 27 (Harry & Jean Brennan).

There were two November sightings of **Eurasian Wigeon** in the southern tri-counties, and there were two male **Redhead** reported, one at Freeport, *Digby*, October 12-15 (Terry Paquet, *et al.*), the other on Cape Sable I. November 13 (JON). The only **Tufted Duck** just made it into the report November 30 at New Glasgow (KJM).

An unexpectedly early **Harlequin Duck** was at Sandy Cove, *HRM*, September 28 (ELMs, *et al.*). A single **Ruddy Duck** was on Seal I. October 10 (ABO) and two others were at Schooner Pond, *Cape Breton*, October 26 (JUM). ☐



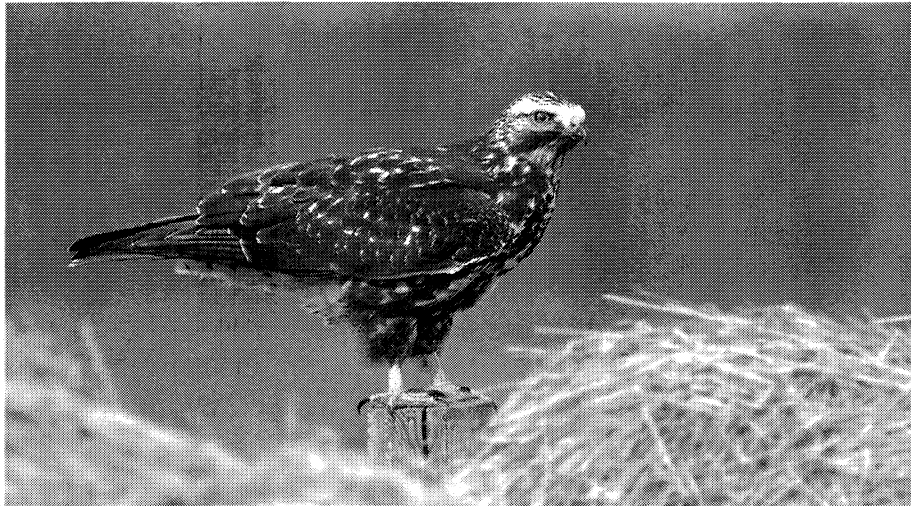
In the crisp morning air of late autumn, this female N. SHOVELER at Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth, seemed to be showing off her enormous bill. [Photo Bernard Burke]



This dark goose posed a bit of a puzzle near Canso, Nov. 17. The photo reveals the pale wing coverts, dark flight feathers, and wedge of gray extending up the back - all features that are diagnostic of a juvenile **BLUE (SNOW) GOOSE**. It is probably from a Lesser Snow Goose population, as the blue morph is rare among Greater Snow Geese. [Photo Tom Kavanagh]

# Diurnal Raptors, Galliformes, Rail and Cranes

By Ulli Höger



In mid-September, nature photographer Scott Leslie came across this dark buteo near the Belleisle Marsh, *Annapolis*. It was bouncing between haystacks, possibly in search of prey, and seemed a little stressed. He obtained close-up photos, and posted this one on a photographic web site. There it was recognized by Calvin Brennan as a young, dark-phase **SWAINSON'S HAWK**, one of only a few found in the province, and surely the most beautifully portrayed. [Photo Scott Leslie]

Hurricane "Juan" struck Nova Scotia in the dark hours of September 28 & 29. In its path nature sustained heavy damage. Parks, forests and islands lost many of their mature trees and we will have to wait and see what the impact of this loss on local breeding populations of osprey, eagles and hawks will be in the near future. Many lost their traditional nesting sites and will have to find new ones.

Despite "Juan", **OSPREY** were abundant well into mid fall. In October the number of sightings decreased as expected. A late, but not unusually late, report came Oct 25 from Lawrencetown, *HRM* (DMW).

The situation was similar with **BALD EAGLE** reports. Sighting of one or more of these raptors on a field trip in NS is almost guaranteed, especially in late summer and fall when ad and imm birds are still in the province and these locals are mixed with arriving migrants.

Brier I is NS's hawk migration hotspot. In late September and early October, **SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS** are the dominating bird species on Brier I, forcing passerines to stay low and in

cover. In mid Oct RBS reported "hundreds" from the island, an estimate shared by participants of the NSBS fieldtrip during the Thanksgiving weekend. Other parts of the province also had their share of "Sharpies", but unlike the migrating ones on Brier I, these were mostly local birds, mainly visible when raiding backyard feeders. On one such occasion a Blue Jay was caught by a Sharp-shinned Hawk at a feeder in Wolfville, *Kings*, Oct 12, but the hawk was disturbed and dropped it. Shaken but otherwise unharmed this Blue Jay got away as JCT's report stated.

This fall several **COOPER'S HAWKS** were reported. A well described individual was seen Sept 3 over Pennant Pt, *HRM* (HAT). A few days earlier, one was seen on BPI (NSBS *fide* JCZ). "Coops" were repeatedly reported from Brier I (NSBS Thanksgiving weekend), with possibly several individuals on both Brier I and BPI (Oct 10, ABO). During the Sept meeting of the NSBS a presentation by FLL sharpened birders awareness for this species, which is often mistaken for a Sharp-shinned Hawk or vice versa.

Brier I also produced several **N GOSHAWKS**, Oct 11-12 (RBS). Additional reports for this species came from Fairmont, *Antigonish* (Nov 2, RFL & MZG), Hartlen Pt., *HRM* (Nov 13, FLL), and Hebron, *Yarmouth* (Sept 7, three imms, PRG). MUN reported them Aug 14 and Oct 25 from CSI, and Aug 11 an imm chased a Rock Pigeon through HAT's backyard in Portuguese Cove, *HRM*. Evidence for the breeding success of a pair he sighted earlier in the year in this area?

Several hundred **BROAD-WINGED HAWKS** soared over Brier I during migration time in early October, gaining altitude in the thermals over the island. Kettle size ranged from a dozen to 150 individuals. From other parts of the province came scattered reports of single individuals.

The first hawk highlight of the fall was discovered only after some delay. CGB identified the subject of a photo taken by Scott Leslie in mid-September at Belleisle Marsh, *Annapolis*, as a **SWAINSON'S HAWK**. This was the fifth occurrence of this species in NS (BLM). Birders didn't have to wait long for the sixth record as one more time Brier I affirmed its reputation as a hawk watching bonanza. This time the identification was on location and immediate with the bird in sight. Excellent close-up views of the imm, intermediate dark phase Swainson's Hawk were enjoyed by three birders, Oct 11, when the bird first soared just a dozen feet above the dirt road, offering ventral and dorsal impressions in flight (FLL *et al.*). Later it perched in a nearby tree and was further studied in detail. The following day birders visiting Brier I for the NSBS Thanksgiving fieldtrip had more or less good views of this bird.

Reports of **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS**, a typical winter bird for NS, began in late fall. Seven were reported Nov 2 from Hartlen Pt, *HRM* (FLL, Karen March). From New Ross, *Lunenburg*, a bird was sighted Nov 19

(JAH) and Nov 21, JWW *et al.* saw one at Grand Pré, *Kings*.

AMERICAN KESTRELS were reported Aug 20 & 21 from Windsor, *Hants* and Grand Pré, *Kings* (JCT). September 7 one caused great excitement among Blue Jays in Sonia Drive, *HRM*, even if Blue Jays are certainly not a kestrel's prime target (PLC). Kestrels were also part of the migration movement on Brier I, with several sightings throughout the month of October.

MERLINS were reported frequently during the summer and so, as expected, they were around in similar numbers during early the fall. Hardly any birder visited a shorebird beach without sighting one or more patrolling the area.

A falcon flying over Seal I, *Yarmouth*, was puzzling. Upon sighting it Oct 11, birders BLM, ELM, and IAM first called it a dark-phased Gyrfalcon, but some details in colouration and pattern did not fit and left the experienced observers with some doubt. Later that day the bird was seen again by BLM, and something appeared dangling from its legs. This detail opened the possibility of an escaped bird from a falconer. Under this assumption, exotic species and hybrids became legitimate suspects. After studying the literature IAM felt strongly that this could have been a SAKER FALCON, a Eurasian species popular amongst falconers.

GYRFALCONS were seen several times on CSI during the month of October. In all reports (MUN & JON) the falcon sighted was described as a grey phase bird, so there is a good possibility that the same individual stayed on CSI for almost three weeks (Oct 4-22).

Often the sighting of Merlins over a beach was accompanied by the sighting of PEREGRINE FALCONS. Both species were seen at Evangeline Beach, *Kings*, Windsor, *Hants*, and Pennant Pt Park or Conrad's, both *HRM*. From Brier I came several reports during the main migration movement in October. One observer (ELM) identified a peregrine found in Pond Cove Oct 2 as a *tundrius* like bird.

Very few RING-NECKED PHEASANTS were reported this fall, and noteworthy is the report given by a bird lover of a different kind. Ed Coleman, a pheasant hunter, wrote in his Kentville Advertiser column from Nov 12 (forwarded by JCT) about the 2003 pheasant hunting season in *Kings*, and concluded that it would be a disappointing one from the hunter's viewpoint. Already early in the season he and fellow woodsmen had noticed a sharp decline in pheasant numbers compared to previous years. Likely a result of the last winter's extensive and prolonged snow cover, hunters reported their "harvest" to be down at least 50% compared with the previous season.

SPRUCE GROUSE were reported Aug 25 from the Skyline Trail, CBHNP, *Inverness* (RFL), and Nov 10 (KFS) from New Shulie, *Cumberland*. RUFFED GROUSE were seen Oct 7 and Oct 26 at Hartlen Pt., *HRM* (FLL & RHL). One was hit and killed by a car Oct 27 on the road at New Salem, *Cumberland* (KFS).

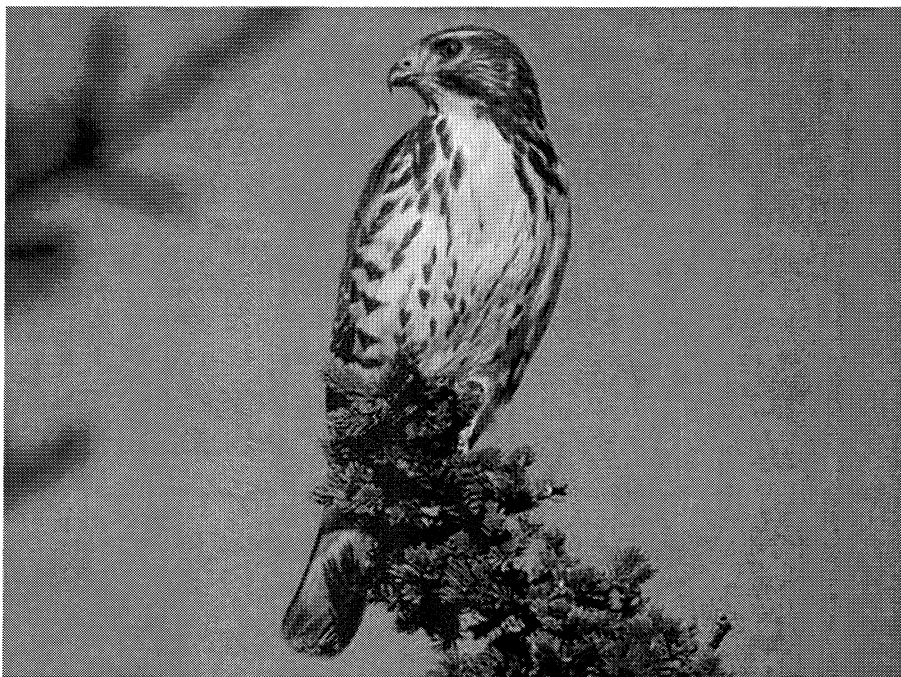
Earlier in October Ed Coleman also addressed the "WILD" TURKEY issue in the Kentville Advertiser, and didn't spare hunting enthusiasts from harsh criticism. There are no wild turkeys in NS.

However, a hunting organization recently submitted a proposal to the government to introduce the species for hunting purposes. A number of organizations, NSBS was one of them, expressed concern about such a plan and possible negative consequences for native fauna, flora, and outdoors activities if introduction of a non-native species would be permitted. Wild Turkeys frequently seen in *Kings* or on Seal I are domestic or game farm turkeys that have escaped or were illegally released. Ed Coleman compares such actions with stocking chain pickerel and small mouth bass into trout lakes. It is just irresponsible, and can result in disaster for native species!

SORAS were sighted Aug 3 at Apple R, *Cumberland* (KFS), and JCT reported an ad from Canard Pond, *Kings*, Sept 8. October 11 RFL and MZG saw one in the perimeter of the floating bog at Frasers Mills, *Antigonish*.

The only other rallids sighted were AM COOT. One ad was seen on Brier I Oct 31 (ELM) and several were reported throughout November from Bissett Lake in Cole Hbr, *HRM*.

Last but not least, JWW reported a possible SANDHILL CRANE flying over Canning, *Kings*, Aug 12. ☐



BROAD-WINGED HAWKS, like this young bird (easily recognized by its slight structure, lightly streaking below, dark malar "moustache," and pale "eyebrow"), were one of the bird spectacles on Brier I. last Thanksgiving weekend. [Photo Richard Stern]

# The Shorebirds

By Sylvia Fullerton

Shorebirds were abundant but there were only a few unusual finds: A Whimbrel of the European subspecies, Marbled Godwit, and Ruff. Good weather probably contributed to the numbers of birds that were present late in the season and the low numbers of offshore migrants. No doubt it was also the cause of the excellent observer turnout. I appreciate the detailed reports, all of which helped contribute to the overall picture of what is going on with this always-fascinating group of birds.

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** were widespread and present in excellent numbers into October and November. Regular surveys by JCT & RBS at sites in *Hants* and *Kings* produced good results: 200, Windsor Causeway, Aug 21; 400, Wolfville Hbr, Sept 1; 500, Windsor sewage ponds, Sept 1 & 3. CSI also had respectable numbers, 400, Sept 25 & Oct 26 (BJS, SIS, JON). The CB peak, 208, Sept 25, was as usual at Morien Bar (SEM). Crescent Beach had a high count, 165, Aug 30 (JSC), Sable I's numbers rose to 155, Aug 17 (ZOL), and Goose Creek, *Yarmouth* produced 100+, Aug 31 (PRG). Story Hd managed a count of 90, Sept 27 (NSBS). Regular surveys at Rainbow Haven and Conrad's, August through November, produced mostly single digits (RHL, DHY). Elsewhere along the coast numbers were low. By Nov 17 a small flock was still lingering at CSI and two at Cherry Hill.

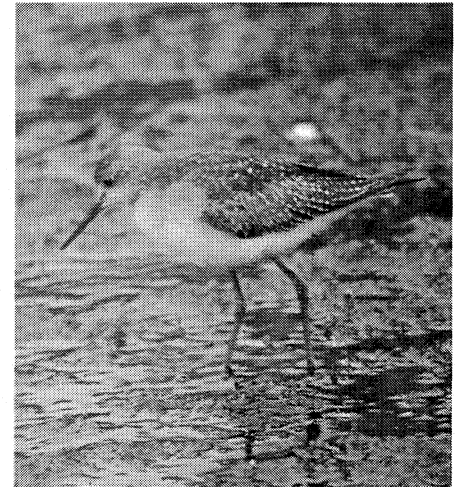
The first AM **GOLDEN PLOVER** touched down at Rainbow Haven Aug 11 (ROW); another was at Seal I, Aug 29-Sept 1 (PLC). Mid-September saw the bulk of the migrants, but no longer approaching the numbers seen in the 1980s. The largest gatherings were: 40-50, Windsor sewage ponds, Sept 1 (JCT); 15, Sydney Airport, Sept 14 (DBM); 25, Sable I, Sept 19 (ZOL). Many singles were still being spotted into November; last to be noted was a juv, Hartlen Pt, Nov 10 (FLL).

Good news! **SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** are indeed still nesting on Sable I, but borderline at "fewer than

ten pairs" (ZOL's webpage: greenhorsesociety.com). Fall migration continued to indicate a healthy population, with continuing high counts at traditional sites. Up to 1000 were on the early side, Windsor Causeway, Aug 7 & 8 (RBS, JCT). Peaks as usual were mid-month and record-highs were established: 4200, CSI, Aug 14; 1000 still there, Oct 26 (BJS, SIS, JON); 605, Morien Bar, Aug 17 (SEM). Lockeport's Crescent Beach had a good count, 300+ in early Sept, and returning to its former glory days, Cooks Beach produced 1500, Aug 17 (RSD, PRG). Numbers were average at other sites: 300, Evangeline Beach, Aug 22 (JCT); 500, Brier I, Aug 12; first juv appeared Aug 14 (ELM); 422, Cherry Hill Beach, Aug 24 (SJF). *HRM's* best tallies were low with 270, Story Hd, Sept 27 (NSBS) being the high. Perhaps this was reflection of observers not being at the right beach at the right tide. Numbers are always lower in the N and they were about average this season. The last bird seen was a single at Melbourne, *Yarmouth*, Nov 17 (PRG, RSD).

Late nesting **PIPING PLOVER** were common on a number of beaches in August. A second nesting at Lockeport's Crescent Beach produced three fledglings by Aug 10, being attended as usual by the male. JAH found one ad and seven juv at Keji Seaside Adjunct, *Queens*, Aug 22. One of two juvs present at Cherry Hill for most of August lingered until Sept 4 (var. obs.).

There were no large post-breeding gatherings of **KILLDEER**, just small family groups, such as the three to five, Brier I, Aug 11-15 (ELM). Six were at Wolfville Hbr, Aug 21, "always a nice surprise to see this strange "shorebird" on a shore" (JWW). Five were at Silversands Beach, Cow Bay, *HRM*, Aug 15 (Henk Kwindt). Twos and threes were scattered from Sable I to Seal I; one lingered at The Hawk, CSI until Nov 27 (GRM).



This shorebird, dashing about a small sphagnum-filled pond on Seal Island Aug. 30, was a brief puzzle because of its dull, olive-coloured legs. Otherwise, it was a perfectly ordinary young **LESSER YELLOWLEGS**. [Photo Ian McLaren]

The nesting pair of **AM OYSTERCATCHERS**, accompanied by two juvs and a second ad pair, slipped away on schedule from CSI sometime around Sept 7 (MUN). Surely next year MUN will get his wish of a second nesting pair.

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** passed through in modest numbers, continuing the trend set in July. Numbers at each of the Valley hotspots, Wolfville Hbr, Ridge Road, and Windsor sewage ponds averaged 25+ from Aug 18 to Oct 11 (JCT, RBS, JWW). Peaks were average at other sites: 35, Crescent Beach, Aug 16 (JSC); 44, CSI, Sept 8 (BJS, SIS); 20, Brier I, Aug 12 (ELM); 12, Conrad's, Oct 6 (DMW). The Province's major staging area, Morien Bar, reached 251, Aug 17, down from the last two years (SEM). Two were still at Mahoneys Beach, Nov 22 (NSBS).

Unusually high tallies at many sites were the norm for **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** as the large influx that began in July continued into early August. A record-breaking 159 was the peak at Morien Bar, Aug 2 (SEM). The extraordinary high tally of 2000 attained



by a survey from Cole Hbr to West Chezzetcook, *HRM*, Aug 4 (FLL, DOU) was unprecedented since the early 1980s. Some beaches did not attract them and counts were low on shorebird surveys at Crescent Beach (13), Cherry Hill (6), and CSI (11). However, on the late date of Oct 1 MUN found a record-breaking 150 at The Hawk, CSI, perhaps staging for departure. Delaying their leave taking were two, Morien Bar, Oct 19 (SEM).

SOLITARY SANDPIPERS were ubiquitous, 30+ tallied around the Province, but, oddly, not a single report from CB. Early birds, Aug 2, were two, Pubnico Golf Course (JON), and three, Sable I (ZOE). *Hants* and *Kings* found about 15, including four at Wolfville Ridge, Sept 29 (JCT). MUN, PRG, and RSD seemed to find them wherever they went in *Shelburne* and *Yarmouth*. Of the 11 or so in *HRM*, five were on the Chebucto peninsula, Aug 5 (FLL, Richard Hatch). Two at CSI (JON) and a single at Spryfield, *HRM* (FLL) lingered until Oct 4.

Most of the WILLETS had already departed the scene by the beginning of the report period and remaining juvs were mostly gone by mid-August. August assemblages were: 96, including two ads, Morien Bar, Aug 2 (SEM); 42, Crescent Beach, Aug 9 (JSC); 77, CSI, Aug 14 (BJS, SIS). Brier I, Windsor sewage ponds, and Conrad's held 20+ each up to mid-month. A few hung on into September, and one until Oct 10, Marsh Dyke Road, *Digby* (FLL *et al.*).

Twenty or so POTTEDSANDPIPERS, "mostly in breeding plumage," were tallied along the Fundy shore between Baxters Hbr and Bennetts Bay, *Kings*, Aug 9 & 16 (RBS, while kayaking). Sewage ponds seem to attract these birds and RBS and JCT found them at most "ponds" in *Kings* and *Hants* up to Oct 20. Perhaps it was too early for the annual September-post-breeding gathering on Seal I, as only three were there, Aug 29 (PLC). Bon Portage claimed eight, Aug 28-Sept 1 (NSBS). RHL was surprised to find one at Russell Lake, *HRM*, after Hurricane Juan had passed. Late were one at Lyons Brook, *Pictou* (HAB, JEB) and

four, Taylors Hd, *HRM*, both Oct 31 (TEP)

It is always stirring to see and/or hear UPLAND SANDPIPERS as they pause here on their long journey to the pampas of South America. True to form the two visiting this season were on offshore islands. Sharp-eared FLL heard the distinctive calls of one, Seal I, Aug 29 and another, a juv, was seen on Brier I, Oct 13, again by FLL, GDE *et al.*

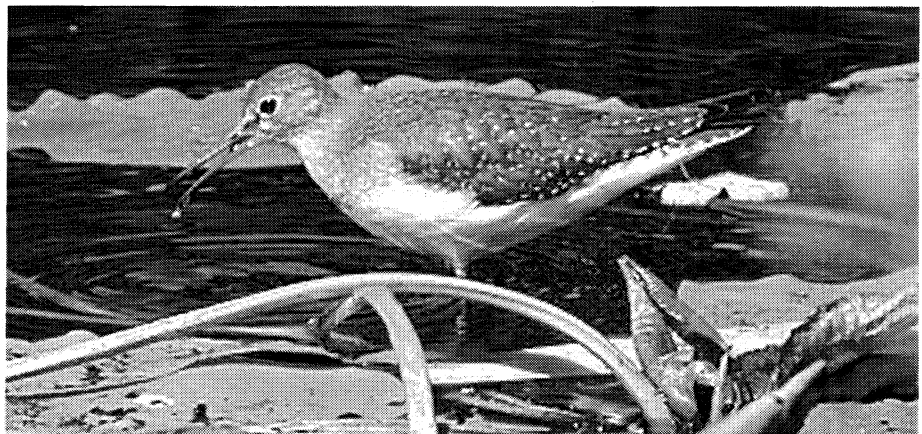
Two early WHIMBRELS arrived at Morien Bar, Aug 2 and on Sable I, Aug 4 (SEM, ZOL). The 26 at Point Michaud, *Richmond*, Aug 17 (GED, SDI) are indicative of the average numbers at their preferred sites in CB with 15 still at the Sydney Airport, Sept 14 (DBM). Small numbers were scattered along the coast from Aug 12 to Sept 16, with ones and twos visiting headlands and beaches from Brier I to *Antigonish*. Not one appeared in *Lunenburg* or *Queens* however. An **Eur Whimbrel**, subspecies *phaeopus*, put in an appearance at Daniels Hd, CSI, Aug 31 in company with our subspecies, *hudsonicus*. Its lighter colour, white rump, back, and tail were well seen and described, the underwings could not be seen (ELM). Another was well studied at Hartlen, Oct 17, as it came in to roost (FLL, CSS). A belated sighting came to light when these reports were being discussed. GRM discovered that he had photographed a Eur Whimbrel, May 3, 2003. His excellent photos make this the third confirmation, although there have been about ten records. IAM repeats AAM's reminder to "life-listers" that

European authorities have split these subspecies and so should be "banked" for the day the AOU does the same!

Visiting HUDSONIAN GODWITS were in low numbers, no doubt due to continuing fair weather. Eighteen, The Hawk, CSI, Aug 1 & 3 (MUN) were probably holdovers from the 35 present in July. A single bird, Ogdens Pond, *Antigonish*, Aug 13, provided a first record for the County (RFL, David Chiasson). Morien Bar produced 13, two being juv, Aug 17 (SEM). Four found the now famous Windsor sewage ponds, Sept 27 (JCT, JWW). Late were three at both Conrad's (DAC) and CSI, Nov 3 (BJS, SIS).

MARbled GODWITS do not make annual appearances, the last sighting being September 2001, so the one that was found roosting among the shorebirds at Windsor sewage ponds, Sept 3, was a welcome sight. Spotted by RBS and AAM, well described and photographed, it stayed until Sept 23 and was "ticked" by many. Most sightings in recent years have been at CSI or on the N shore; this one produced the first County record and the first for the Fundy shore.

Numbers of RUDDY TURNSTONES remained low and occurrences were erratic. CSI provided 75, the seasonal high, Oct 1 (MUN). Among the few good counts were: 36, BPI, Aug 29-Sept 1 (NSBS); 50, mostly ad, Brier I, Aug 12 (ELM); 40, Devils I, *HRM*, Sept 2 (ULH, by kayak). Two were lingering at CSI, Nov 3.



This SOLITARY SANDPIPER was characteristically feeding quietly Aug. 29 at a small, lily-padded pond on CSI. [Photo Grant Milroy]

RED KNOTS were average at Morien Bar, but continued in low numbers elsewhere. Highs included: 42, 40 being juv, Morien Bar, Sept 6 with good numbers (35) continuing to move through up to Nov 7 (SEM); 31, CSI, Sept 8 (BJS, SIS); 13, Windsor sewage ponds, Sept 22 (JWW); 11, Brule Pt, Colchester, Aug 3 (KJM). Only handfuls appeared elsewhere. Three of the 11 visiting Brule Pt and one at Morien Bar, Aug 2, were colour-coded, but we do not yet know where they were banded. Continuing declines are discouraging, but at least hearings are ongoing this fall before the governmental agencies involved in furthering the conservation of the horseshoe crab and migratory shorebird populations in and around Delaware Bay. This area has been the major staging and refuelling stop for knots, and commercial harvesting of these crabs may be one of the major factors in their decline.

SANDERLING numbers were high on a few beaches and unusually low on others. Setting another record-high were 5000+, CSI, Oct 26 (JON, SIS). Average counts were: 600, Sable I, Oct 10 (ZOL); 350, Evangeline Beach, Oct 11 (JCT). Peaks at Cherry Hill (150), Crescent Beach (113), and Lockeport's Crescent Beach (52) were all well below average.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS made an excellent showing. It is difficult to establish firm numbers of roving, mixed flocks of "peeps" in the Minas Basin, but JCT was able to make the following estimates: 20,000, mostly Semipalmated, Windsor sewage ponds, Aug 7 & 22; 14,000, Windsor Causeway, Aug 8; 20,000, Evangeline Beach, Aug 22. Continuing July's trend, record-breaking peaks were established: 1321, a 30-year high, Cherry Hill, Aug. 9 (SJF); 1000+, holding only a handful of juvs, Brier I, Aug 11-12 (ELM). A similar high count of 1000+ was obtained on BPI, Aug 29-Sept 1 (NSBS). Other good tallies included: 3500, CSI, Aug 14, with 1095 lingering until Nov 3 (JON, BJS, SIS), 550, Crescent Beach, Sept 14 (JSC), 230, Morien Bar, Aug 17 (SEM), and 300, Story Hd, Sept 27 (NSBS).

Three separate W SANDPIPERS were reported: one, unaged, Crescent Beach, Sept 6 (JSC); one, basic plumage, Martinique Beach, HRM (FLL); one, unaged, feeding with Pectorals, The Hawk, CSI, Oct 17 & 19 (MUN).

Fall migration of LEAST SANDPIPERS peaked in early August, but with a few exceptions, numbers were low. Highs were 88 at Morien Bar, Aug 5 (SEM), and 500, including only one juv, Cherry Hill, Aug 1 (ELM, AHM). Aug 12, the 500+ at Brier I contained 40% juv. By Aug 13, a flock of 500 contained almost all juv, indicating a one-day turnover and showing once again how instructive aging birds can be. Birds did not dally, by Aug 17 only 36 remained on Brier (LAL, PAC). CSI's peak came later, 184, Sept 8 (BJS, SIS). Elsewhere numbers were low. Last to be noted were 24, CSI, Oct 11 (BJS, SIS).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS began arriving on most of our beaches in early August, but numbers were modest throughout the period, perhaps benign weather kept them on the move. Among the better counts were: 171, Morien Bar, Aug 17 (SEM); 57, Cherry Hill, Aug 24 (SJF); 50, all ad, Brier I, Aug 12 with the first juv seen there Oct 28 (ELM); 20, ad in basic plumage, Evangeline Beach, Aug 10 (RBS). HRM's high count was 15, Story Hd, Sept 27 (NSBS) and CSI reached a high of only 16 by Nov 15 (MUN). Birds were sparse on most beaches, with ones and twos being the average.

About 15 BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS visited this season. Earliest was on The Cape, CSI, Aug 16 (JCZ), with two there, Aug 25 (BJS, SIS). Brier I was a popular spot, where three were found Aug 30 (LAL, PAC, ADL) and up to five the following day (MUN). In CB, two were at Morien Bar, Sept 6; a record-late bird also there, Oct 25. Ones and twos were reported from other beaches in Cape Breton, Shelburne, Lunenburg, and Pictou.

PECTORIAL SANDPIPERS were widely distributed, but with a few exceptions numbers rarely exceeded doubt digits. One appeared at Cherry Hill, Aug 3, with a seasonal high of 40, Oct 19 (SJF). Respectable counts included: 20, Sydney Airport, Sept 7 & 14 (SEM, DBM) and 18, Cooks Beach, Sept 28 (PRG, RSD). Ten was the norm at most other beaches, with only singles at Seal I and South Hbr, Victoria.

An early PURPLE SANDPIPER was spotted at Caribou I, Pictou, Oct 28 (HAB, JEB) and three were in the vanguard for their winter stay at Port George, Kings, Nov 20 (AAM).

A single DUNLIN arrived on the early side at CSI, Aug 14 (BJS, SIS) and another at Cherry Hill, Sept 4. The bulk of the migrants, however, arrived on schedule in late September and peaked in late October. Good counts included: 1200, CSI, Oct 26 (JON, SIS); 207, Morien Bar, Oct 27 (SEM); 150, Evangeline Beach, Oct 11 and 170, Windsor Causeway, Oct 25 (JCT); 125,



This MARBLED GODWIT, sitting prettily among other shorebirds and ducks, was discovered by AAM and RBS Sept. 3 at the Windsor Sewage Pond. It remained to delight many observers through mid-September. [Photo Richard Stern]

Melbourne, Nov 17 (PRG, RSD). Other traditional sites produced low counts: 36, Cherry Hill; 8, Crescent Beach; 9, Conrad's. A handful remained to the end of the period, hanging on no doubt for the CBCs.

STILT SANDPIPERS interrupted their long journey to southern South America and stopped here in good numbers. Up to three were seen off and on at CSI from Aug 10 to Nov 2 (JON, FLL *et al.*). Typically, five were associating with dowitchers, Brier I, Aug 11-12 (ELM). For the third year one attended the Point Michaud field trip (DBM). It was only a matter of time before one discovered a favoured habitat, the Windsor sewage ponds, Sept 22 & 27 (JWW, JCT).

Another long-distant migrant, about 12 BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS graced our upper beaches in September. Six were tallied on The Cape, CSI, Sept 8, three still being reported to Sept 25 (MUN, BJS, SIS). Peter Hope made the only other sighting on the South Shore, Crescent Beach, Sept 10; seen by var. obs. to Sept 15. Two, Hartlen Pt, Sept 11, were relaxing in the grass and about to sleep (IAM, FLL). As usual, three stopped over at Sydney Airport, Sept 14 (DBM).

The only RUFF of the season was found feeding with Sanderling on a Sable I beach, Sept 29 (ZOE).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS peaked in late July on CSI, and by Aug

14 only 1100 were tallied there (BJS, SIS). Elsewhere peaks occurred later: 200, Brier I, Aug 12-13 (ELM) and 170 ads, Morien Bar, Aug 2 (SEM). Up to 4000, approximating counts made in the late 1990s, were tallied from Cole Hbr to West Chezzetcook, Aug 4 (FLL, DOU). Counts from other sites were disappointing: 100, Windsor Causeway, Aug 8; 130, Crescent Beach, Sept 6; 100, Wolfville dyke, Sept 3; 32, Cherry Hill. There were only two sightings of the late-arriving LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER: Daniels Hd, CSI, Sept 18 & Oct 26 (MUN) and two, Morien Bar, Oct 19, with one seen again Oct 25 (SEM).

I don't recall anyone counting WILSON'S SNIBE at the APBS before but it paid off for FLL *et al.* with an amazing 178, Aug 21. Now we know where they all are! A good count of seven was achieved at Brier I, Oct 11-13 (FLL *et al.*). MUN found four in Hebron, Yarmouth, Oct 5. The latest reports were of singles: Hartlen, Nov 1 (FLL, John Longaphy) and Sunrise Valley, Victoria, Nov 8 (FMC).

A few AM WOODCOCK were out and about in Antigonish, at Dagger Woods Marsh, Aug 8 and another, Fairmount, Nov 1 (RFL, Ivan Cozzi). FLL found

one at Hartlen, Oct 7 and MUN did not miss the one at CSI, Nov 12.

Encouraging are the sightings of WILSON'S PHALAROPE which have become annual in the last few years. Three were seen: a juv, Brier I, Aug 14 (ELM); CSI, Aug 21-24 (TEC *et al.*); Point Michaud, Aug 24 (NSBS, DBM).

Storm-driven RED-NECKED PHALAROPE were the norm this year instead of the usual Reds. One in basic plumage, Morien Bar, Aug 17, was swimming and roosting on shore; 20 were there, Sept 20 (SEM). One added variety to the CB field trip at L'Ardoise, Richmond, Aug 24 and two were at West Baccaro, Sept 21 (MUN).

John Chardine, CWS, is continuing his investigation into movements, numbers and ratios of Red-necked and Red Phalarope off Brier I and Long I, and is trying to figure out what is happening to their fluctuating food supply, a small copepod, *Calanus finmarchicus*. An interesting reversal took place this season. Last year the ratio of Red-necked to Red was 1:3 (NS BIRDS, Winter 2003, pg 22), this year the overwhelming majority were Red-necked. See Table. Anyone having pertinent observations, past and present, should forward them to Dr. Chardine. ☐

	Red-necked	Red	Observers
Aug 11	5000	400	FLL, DOU
Aug 25	2000+	20+	LAL, PAC
Aug 25-29	1000s	30	John Chardine

## Skuas Through Alcids

By Eric Mills

POMARINE JAEGERS appear to be lingering later in our waters, especially in the Bay of Fundy off Brier I: one to three Oct 1-3 (ELM, IAM); one ad Oct 11 (FLL); two Oct 28 (ELM); two light-phase, Oct 31 (ELM); one dark phase ad with vestigial tail feathers, Nov 29 (ELM, AHM); and 18 in two hours, part of a huge seabird flypast in a westerly gale, Nov 30 (ELM). In contrast to the Pomarines, which appeared to be accompanying Kittiwake flocks,

PARASITIC JAEGERS seem to accompany the terns and become scarce when they leave our waters: a subad Aug 9, off Schooner Pond (FLL, DOU, Richard Hatch); one first year off Brier I Oct 11 (FLL, MUN); and one off Northern Pt, Brier I, Oct 28 (ELM).

Regular late-summer wanderers to NS, LAUGHING GULLS appear to have been scarce this season: an ad off Schooner Pond Aug 9 (FLL, DOU,

Richard Hatch); one on CSI, Sept 11 (*fide* MUN); and an ad at the Antigonish Mall (!), Antigonish, Sept 19 (FLL). Very early BLACK-HEADED GULLS (one-14) were reported in the Conrad's-Lawrencetown area, HRM, Aug 1-10 (RHL) and at Dominion Beach, Cape Breton, Aug 7 (where there was another Nov 10) (LEL). An ad was at Mahoneys Beach, Antigonish, Sept 16 (FLL). By mid November at least 20 were in the Conrad's, HRM, area (DMW). The first

of the season in Lunenburg Hbr, Nov 2, was soon joined by a few others (maximum seven among more abundant Bonaparte's), which commuted to the low-tide flats of the Back Hbr throughout the month (JAH, ELM). Two were at Big Pond, Florence, *Cape Breton*, Nov 27 (DBM). Significant numbers in Industrial CBI and Halifax Hbr late in the season went unreported. BONAPARTE'S GULLS appear to have been more abundant than usual outside their normal haunts in *Pictou* this autumn. For example, in the Back Hbr, numbers at low tide increased from five, Nov 6, to 67, Nov 9. Fifty-three remained Nov 27 (ELM, JAH). Four were reported by RHL at Rocky Run and Terminal Beach, *HRM*, Aug 1. Other early records include a group of six+ at Dominion Beach, *Cape Breton*, Aug 8 (LEL, DBM), followed by 16 at Ogdens Pond, *Antigonish*, Aug 13 (where there were a few hundred at the end of October) (RFL, David Chaisson). KJM's records show "hundreds" in *Pictou* coastal waterways from the East and Middle Rivers to Big I (Mereigomish) throughout October, decreasing in the last days of November. RBS reported 50+ in Digby harbour, *Digby*, where they are usually scarce, Nov 21. At the end of the reporting period, Bonies were still being reported in significant numbers from CB through *Lunenburg*.

A lone MEW (COMMON) GULL was reported from Mahone Bay, *Lunenburg*, Oct 8 (JAH). Still only a pre- and post-breeding and winter resident, especially from the Eastern Shore southwestward, and not a breeder, RING-BILLED GULLS continue to increase in all seasons. How long will it be until some renegade New Brunswick Ring-bills breed in this province? The first post-breeding wanderers (or non-breeders) appeared at Rainbow Haven, *HRM*, Aug 1 (RHL) and at Dominion Beach, *Cape Breton*, Aug 8 (LEL, DBM), followed by two to ten (including one juvenile) in Pond Cove, Brier I, Aug 12-14 (ELM). By Aug 22 there were six and, by Sept 1, 100+, mostly ad, in the Wolfville, *Kings*, sewage ponds area (JCT, RBS) and significant numbers along the Eastern Shore, east of Halifax (RHL, DMW). Few other records came in

except for 70-150 at Mahoneys Beach, *Antigonish*, 16-18 Sept (FLL).

HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS were ignored by most, but not all, observers. It would be helpful to monitor abundances of these common, ubiquitous, species, particularly the proportion of imm through the seasons and years, to see the effects of fisheries collapses, the cleanup of fish plants, and the closing of landfill sites.

An unusually early ICELAND GULL was at Cape George, *Antigonish*, Sept 21 (FLL), and another at Mahone Bay, *Lunenburg*, Oct 3 (JAH), but it was late October before others began to appear: an imm at Seal I, *Yarmouth*, Oct 24 (NSBS *vide* BLM), and one at Waterside PP, *Pictou*, Oct 28 (HAB, JEB). Numbers thereafter seem to have been a bit below normal until the end of the reporting period, the largest number 15 in a gale-driven seabird flypast of Northern Pt, Brier I, Nov 30 (ELM).

The first LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL ever recorded on BPI appeared there Sept 23 (Mike Peckford *vide* JN). At least two ads and a second-winter individual were in favoured sites in eastern *Kings* between Aug 15 and Oct 18 (RBS). Other records of this increasingly regular Northeastern Atlantic species included two ads at the Windsor, *Hants*, sewage ponds, a first winter at Canard Pond, *Kings*, Oct 4 (both FLL, John Longaphy); and an ad at Big I (Merigomish), *Pictou*, Oct 26 (HAB, JEB). Only one GLAUCOUS GULL report came in, an individual seen at Dominion Beach, *Cape Breton*, Nov 10 (LEL).

Finally, among the regular seasonal gulls, BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES appeared in abundance in near-shore waters in October and later (following one at Hartlen Pt, *HRM*, Sept 13 - FLL, RHL, NSBS), for example, 500+ in a westerly gale off Northern Pt, Brier I, Oct 3 (ELM, IAM); a similar number there Nov 29 (ELM, AHM); and an estimated 20,000 there in two hours during the great gale the next day (ELM). Probably reflecting an abundance of food nearby, 100 to

350+ sat on the water at the north end of Grand Passage, Brier I, Oct 28-31, while hundreds more went by offshore.

More CASPIAN TERNS than usual occurred this autumn away from the west coast of CB (where they are regular, although little-reported): two in Pond Cove, Brier I, Sept 8 (DHH *et al.*); three at BPI, Sept 13 (ABO *vide* JN); and two over Westport and subsequently Pond Cove, Brier I, Oct 3 (ELM, IAM). LEL had the good fortune to see the year's only ROYAL TERNS (two) at Dominion Beach, *Cape Breton*, Aug 4-7.

Common and Arctic Terns leave early. Arctics especially are only sparsely reported after the end of August most years. COMMON TERNS were abundant at Dominion Beach, *Cape Breton*, Aug 8 (LEL, DBM). August 10 RBS noted one in Minas Basin off Grand Pré, *Kings*, where the species is rare; and by Aug 17-24 only three or four were seen all week off Brier I (RBS). On Sept 16, the 17 found at Mahoneys Beach, *Antigonish*, and the 110, Sept 18, were unusual numbers (FLL). Four Commons at the Caribou ferry terminal, *Pictou*, were the last reported (KJM). An imm ARCTIC TERN at Mahoneys Beach, *Antigonish*, Sept 16, was the only one reported during the autumn (FLL). Seen by many from Nov 9 through the end of the month (when one remained), and photographed (GRM), two FORSTER'S TERNS on CSI appear to have been the only ones of the season (MUN *et al.*).

When DOVEKIES leave the Arctic they winter far offshore, mainly at the edge of the continental shelf in the warmer slope water, and appear inshore mainly as a result of storms. This year the records were few, probably due to quiet weather, before the great gale of Nov 30: one off Chebucto Head, *HRM*, Oct 20 (HAT, Laura Elliott); 12 off Cherry Hill Beach, *Lunenburg*, Nov 17 (Richard Peckham *vide* BLM); seven during a Baccaro Pt sea-watch, Nov 23, and others off The Hawk, CSI Nov 26 (MUN); four at Wild Cove and 10 at Kennington Cove, Louisburg, *Cape Breton*, Nov 28 (SEM). ELM estimated



more than 500 during a two hour sea-watch at Northern Pt, Brier I, during the westerly gale Nov 30, and DJC found a freshly dead carcass at Crescent Beach, Lockeport, *Shelburne* the same day.

Three COM MURRES, six THICK-BILLED MURRES, and 65 Murre sp. were counted by MUN Nov 30 off Baccaro, during the same gale, which he described as "blowing the paint off the car," but, in general, Murre numbers appeared to be down compared to other years at the same time. The same could not be said of RAZORBILLS, however. One was off Chebucto Hd, *HRM*, Nov

19 (FLL), 100+ passed Northern Pt, Brier I, in a southerly gale Nov 29 (ELM, AHM) and an estimated 5000 were observed in two hours at the same place the next day during the great gale (ELM). Nov 29, SEM noted two in Kennington Cove, Louisburg, *Cape Breton*, far to the north of the main wintering area in the Bay of Fundy.

By late November our local breeding BLACK GUILLEMOTS have been replaced by migrants from farther north, which normally begin to arrive in October. LAL and PAC counted a peak of 48, probably a post-breeding

gathering of residents, at Western Light, Brier I, during the last week of August. Wintering populations may be indicated by 40 off Sober I, *HRM*, Nov 2 (KJM); 76 during a sea-watch at Baccaro, Nov 23 (MUN); 20+ off Northern Pt, Brier I, Nov 29 (ELM, AHM); and a estimated 100 there during the gale on Nov 30 (ELM).

Autumn gatherings of ATLANTIC PUFFINS from nearby breeding areas are indicated by 20+ off Brier I, Aug 18 (RBS), eight a week later (LAL, PAC), and 100+ there Oct 11 (RBS). ♀

## Doves Through Woodpeckers

By Ian McLaren

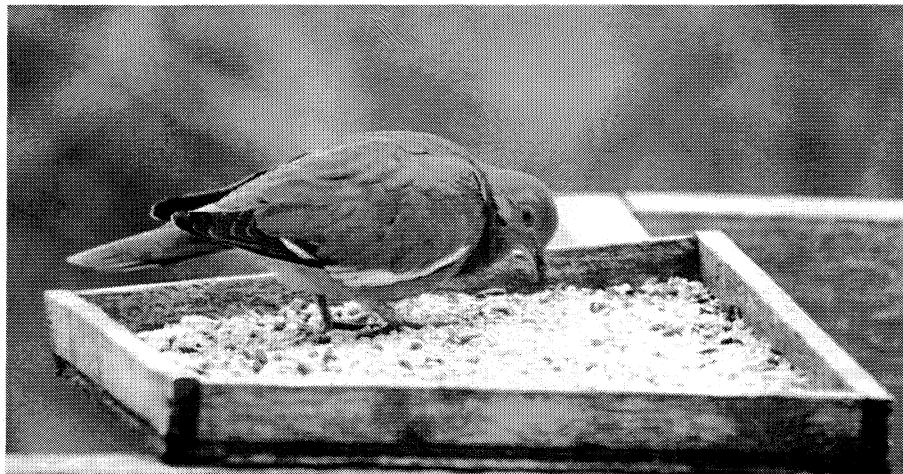
Our familiar ROCK PIGEON (this new, "official" name makes more sense) went almost unnoticed, but this fall one caught the attention of FMC in relatively pigeon-free Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*. It was a tourist, having been banded in Oakville, ON. More exciting were three WHITE-WINGED DOVES, our 23<sup>rd</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup> on record. JON discovered the first at his CSI feeder Aug 23. It lingered until Aug 26, long enough for ELM to judge it as darker than those he has seen in SW USA, and diagnose it as probably of the more easterly race *asiatica*. Sable I's third occurrence of this vagrant was from Sept 2-7 (ZOL). Finally, TOK had one at his Canso feeder Oct 17-24.

Interestingly, NS has more reports of this species than any other province or northern state. MOURNING DOVES turned to feeders as usual, with the largest reported peaks on CSI, where there were 40 at JON's and 70+ at MUN's by early November.

Three reports of exotic parrots deserve brief mention. One at Kingsburg, *Lunenburg*, in mid-August, as described to JAH, may have been the same bird seen at Chester Basin Aug 30, and diagnosed by Ron Arsenault as a probable GOLDEN CONURE, a native of East Africa. Another in Fairview, HRM, Sept 16, was thought to be a PEACH-FACED LOVEBIRD of

Australia (*fide* DAM). "Wild" individuals of the latter are sometimes found in southern USA, but the only parrot that might establish itself here (especially with a little more global warming) is the Monk Parakeet, which has colonies as close as Connecticut.

The only reported BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO was a single wanderer on Sable I, Oct 6 (ZOL). In contrast, at least 18 YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS (with corrections for probable "repeats") staged their usual "reverse migrations" this fall. The earliest was Sept 13 at Hartlen Pt (CLS *et al.*), and the latest stayed until Nov 9 at Broad Cove (SJF). Five even reached remote Sable I during October (ZOL).



A WHITE-WINGED DOVE in Canso Town in late October was the 25<sup>th</sup> to appear in the province. There are recent indications that this species is expanding its normal breeding range; might they some day be as regular here as Mourning Doves? [Photo Tom Kavanagh]

Eight reports of GREAT-HORNED OWLS included four noted on BPI during the NSBS field trip, Aug 29-Sept 1 (have they displaced the former Long-eareds?), and a dueting pair that serenaded RFL Nov 10 at Fairmont, *Antigonish*. Joe Kerekes and family observed a Great Horned consuming an Am. Bittern, Aug 25 in Keji NP. PEH adds that he thinks of this owl as a bird of waterways within the park. This perhaps makes somewhat more plausible a report to KJM of three Great Blue Heron carcasses on Big I, *Pictou*, thought to be the work of these fierce predators. A meagre winter for SNOWY OWLS was heralded by two at



This charmer, a SAW-WHET OWL found 1 Nov. in downtown Halifax, was brought to the attention of photographer Chris Lambie, and accordingly was featured next day in the "Daily News."

the Cape Light, CSI, Nov 2 (*fide* MUN) and another "uncertain" one near Shulie, Cumberland, Nov 15 (KFS). BARRED OWLS were surprisingly scarce, or more likely underreported, with a mere three mentions.

A LONG-EARED OWL out of habitat at Dan's Hd, CSI, Nov 30 (JON), was the only notice of this retiring species. Other poor showings of owls included a SHORT-EARED OWL flushed Nov 21 near Evangeline Beach, Kings (JCT), another (?) at nearby Wellington Dyke Nov 30 (*fide* JWW), and a single N SAW-WHET OWL photographed Nov 1 by Chris Lambie in downtown Halifax, to become featured in the next day's "Daily News." Of course, this is not the season for vocalizing owls.

## Flycatchers Through Thrushes

By Andy Horn

Reports of migrant OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS started Aug. 14 at Brier (ELM), then ran as usual through late August and early September, ending Sept. 11 at BPI (ABO). The highest count, of three at Quinon, Yarmouth, Aug. 24 (RSD), was tempered with the comment: "The abundance of this bird has decreased

Among 11 reports of COM NIGHTHAWKS, most were of one-six birds, between Aug 3 and Sept 30 (a late one at Sheet Hbr.; HAB). There were good flights of 28 over Sydney Aug 10 (LEL), on which day they also "filled the air" around Schooner Pond (JUM), and 77 over Wallace River, Cumberland, Aug 14 (JAH).

CHIMNEY SWIFTS as usual frequented the chimney at Wolfville's Robie Tufts Centre chimney, with up to 73 on a hot, calm evening Aug 12 (JWW), but were down to three by Aug 24 (JCT *et al.*). Small numbers were seen elsewhere, with the latest threesome reported over Spryfield, HRM, Sept 1 (FLL).

About 25 reports (some sequential) of RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS were submitted or on NatureNS. One property on the Noel Shore, Hants, had up to 15 at four feeders in early August – apparently the products of three nests found in the area (*fide* MUN). Sightings, often of twos and threes at feeders, were widespread from mid-August to early September, suggesting major movements during that period. Last sightings of presumed residents were at four feeders Sept 6, but hummers continued to visit some feeders until mid-September, with the latest one at Hubbards, HRM, Sept 28 (Peter Stowe). A possible vagrant (unconfirmed) this season was a hummer in mid-August near Middleton, Annapolis, which seemed to have some features of a fem or young male Rufous Hummingbird (*fide* Pat Giffin).

There were the usual reports of BELTED KINGFISHERS from the length of the province to the end of the report period. Certifiable migrants were on Seal I from Labour Day weekend to Oct 25 (var obs) and on Sable I from Sept 9 to Oct 10 (ZOL).

somewhat since I've been birding." Reports of EASTERN WOOD PEWEES, as usual, showed roughly similar timing, starting with two migrants arriving Aug. 15 on Brier (ELM), and ending Sept. 3, with five at Brier (LAL, PAC, ADL) and two on Seal I. (PLC).

The season's RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS included one on BPI Sept 5 (ABO), one (unconfirmed) in Halifax Oct 1-2, and another at North Aspy Nov 2-3 (Dave Algar *fide* FMC). Its congener, the RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, mounted what may be its biggest overwintering incursion ever. Even allowing for plausible "repeats," there were at least 11 individuals, mostly at feeders, from Sydney to Yarmouth and Pubnico. The earliest was a young male Oct 11 on Brier I (NSBS), but most first appeared in late October and early November.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS, presumably migrants, were first noted Sept 30, a juv at Hantsport, Hants (Doug Linzey). A minor flurry of four scattered birds was noted Oct 3-10, and a latish one was at New Ross, Lunenburg, Nov 21 (JAH).

Little can be said about our familiar DOWNY and HAIRY WOODPECKERS, with some observers evidently reporting all their sightings, and others none. We'll get insights from our spring censuses and CBCs.

A few BLACK-BLACKED WOODPECKERS were reported to NatureNS. These were: a pair near Tantallon, HRM, Aug 3 (MUN), the usual ones at Uniake Estate, HRM, Sept 22 (John Longaphy), and one out of habitat near Bedford, HRM, Sept 30 (AAM). Peak arrivals of N FLICKERS were noted (ELM) on Brier I Oct 2 (25+) and Oct 3 (35+), but next weekend there were only about 10 on that island (NSBS), and Seal I only mustered a half-dozen. As usual, some remained for winter. Six reports of 14 PILEATED WOODPECKERS were about par. ☼

A wave of *Empidonax* Aug. 31 on Seal I. included six YELLOW-BELLIED, 17 ALDER, and 21 LEAST FLYCATCHERS (IAM, PLC). The latest birds reported were an Alder Flycatcher Sept. 19 at Mahoneys Beach, Antigonish (FLL) and a Least Flycatcher Sept. 7 at the Chebucto Peninsula, Halifax, where three were

seen (FLL, Richard Hatch), well within the usual range of dates. Individuals of the latter species arrived (i.e., were absent for a couple of days, then appeared) Aug. 15 at Brier (ELM) and Aug. 27 (IAM) on Seal I. Spicing up these fairly average reports was an imm. **WILLOW FLYCATCHER** at Martinique Beach, *Halifax*, Sept. 6 (FLL, Mike and Ann Almon).

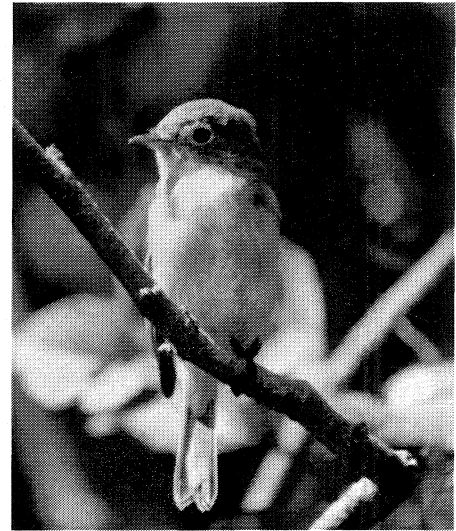
**EASTERN PHOEBES** usually appear as late as October; this year on Brier four did so Oct. 11 (FLL et al.) and two more did Oct. 31 (ELM, AHM), when one was also on CSI (MUN). An imm. **GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** must have been a nice cap to a great weekend of birding on Brier, Sept. 3 (LAL, PAC, ADL). Another individual seen Nov. 22 in Little Harbour, *Shelburne* was examined carefully: "Seen in good light at about 40 feet. Very yellow belly, rather dark grey chest/throat. Much rusty colour in wings and tail. Size right, crest apparent (DHY)."

Four **WESTERN KINGBIRDS** make up a respectable total for any fall, and they're worth listing in full: Sept 25-30 on Seal I. (ABO), Oct 12 at Schooner Pond (JUM), Oct. 31 on Brier Island (ELM, AHM), and Nov. 15-20 in Canso (Harry and Rose-Ann Delorys). **EASTERN KINGBIRD** migrants in batches of one to four were seen from mid-August to Sept. 1 (var. obs.), and no unusually high numbers were reported. The latest report came from Portuguese Cove, *Halifax*, Oct. 13 (HAT). Last but by no means least

among the flycatcher records is a **SAY'S PHOEBE** from BPI, Oct. 15 (ABO), only the 16<sup>th</sup> record for the province (*vide* BLM).

Seven **NORTHERN SHRIKE** records for the fall is a reasonably good total for this species. Immatures were at Duncan's Cove, *Halifax*, Oct. 26 (AZV, DAC), and Fairmont, *Antigonish*, Nov. 8-11. Other individuals, of unspecified age, were at Lower Sackville, *Halifax*, Nov. 15 (Lois Codling), Apple River, *Cumberland*, Nov. 16-28 (KFS), Portuguese Cove, *Halifax*, Nov. 19 (Laura Elliott), Crousetown, *Lunenburg*, Nov. 20 (NSN), and Duncans Cove, *Halifax*, Nov. 26 (IAM, FLL).

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREOS** are seen most but not every fall, so one at Wilson Rd., near Tusket, *Yarmouth*, Sept. 6 (NSBS), and another at BPI Sept. 9 (ABO) are notable. Yet another at North Aspy River, *Victoria*, photographed feeding in alders (FMC) takes the cake, though, given the scarcity of reports from Cape Breton. **BLUE-HEADED VIREOS** at Sandy Cove, *Halifax*, Oct. 13 (TEP), Argyle Head, *Yarmouth*, Oct. 19 (PRG), and particularly the one at Crystal Crescent Beach, *Halifax*, Nov. 19 (HAT), were especially late; other reports trailed off by mid-Sept. This fall yielded a more than the usual number of **WARBLING VIREOS**. Seal I. was particularly productive, with sightings Sept. 12, 22 (two individuals), and 24 (ABO). BPI was a close second, with sightings of three Aug. 29-Sept. 1 (NSBS) and one Oct. 17 (ABO). Individuals on Big



Of course **LEAST FLYCATCHERS** in summer are readily identified by their loud "che-bek," but in this photo the stubby bill, distinct eyering, short primary projection, and slightly notched tail are all distinctions from the equally regular **ALDER FLYCATCHER**. [Photo Elizabeth Doull]

Tancook I., Sept. 25 (BLM) and at Schooner Pond, Oct. 26 (JUM) round out the list. Five **PHILADELPHIA VIREOS** is the most we can hope for in an average fall, and their details are also worth listing: Brier, Sept. 6 (LAL, PAC, ADL), Baccaro, *Shelburne*, Sept. 6 (CLS), Sambro Hd., *Halifax*, Sept. 7 (an imm.; FLL, Richard Hatch), Hartlen, Sept. 21 (TEP et al.), and Big Tancook I., *Lunenburg*, Sept. 25 (BLM).

One **RED-EYED VIREO** singing daily at Sandy Bottom Lake, *Annapolis*, was aptly dubbed "Ole Faithful (MCN)." A sudden appearance of four on Seal I. Aug. 31 clearly indicated a movement, since none had been seen since Aug. 25 (IAM). Six were still in HRM in the first week of October: one each in Fleming Park and Conrose Field in Halifax (PLC) and four at Hartlen (FLL), one of which (or a replacement) persisted until Oct. 19 (TEP). The latest lingerers were individuals in Halifax (RBS) and Dartmouth (FLL), Nov. 7. **WHITE-EYED VIREOS** do not show up every fall, but this year one did at Duncans Cove, Oct. 9-13 (IAM).

There were the usual smattering of sightings of the ubiquitous but spottily spotted **GRAY JAY**. Flocks of up to 20 **BLUE JAYS** were seen early-mid Sept.



This spanking **YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** was a late-season surprise, Nov. 5, in the alder thickets along the North Aspy R., *Victoria*. [Photo Fritz McEvoy]

(var. obs.), though reports were few and the only large total was "hundreds" obviously migrating at Brier, Oct. 11-12 (RBS). A leucistic individual in Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*, Nov. 3, was of normal color in its rear half, but got paler toward its head, so its head's top was only spotted blue and front was white, with the black lines of the head and face "only very faint lines (FMC)." Migrant AM. CROWS were seen at Brier, including flocks of 40 Oct. 28, of 100 Oct. 30, and of 100 Oct. 31, the latter including one flock of 20 "arriving from off the sea at Lighthouse Hill (ELM, AHM)." Partially white individuals of this species are often seen, but a pure white albino at Blockhouse, *Lunenburg*, Aug. 14 (JAH) was a more unusual find. COMMON RAVENS are indeed common, but Hartlen was an unusual place to see 50, Oct. 7 (FLL).

Mixed flocks of swallows were widely reported, as usual, from the last week of August to the first week of September. The sole PURPLE MARTIN report comes from a reliable place: Amherst, *Cumberland*, Aug. 14 (JAH). High counts of other swallows were of TREE SWALLOWS, with over 100 on Brier, Aug. 26 (LAL, PAC), and of BANK SWALLOWS, with 80 at Grand Pre, *Lunenburg*, and 69 at Second Peninsula, *Lunenburg* (JAH). The highest count of CLIFF SWALLOWS, if you call four high, was also at the latter location, Aug. 1 (JAH). The latest swallows were two unidentified birds off Pinkney's Pt., Sept. 16 (PRG), a Barn Swallow in Yarmouth, Sept. 18, and Bank, Tree, and Cliff Swallows at CSI, Oct. 14 (JON), where 60 Bank and Tree Swallows were seen as late as Oct. 29 (MUN).

One observer enumerated the BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES he'd seen as "+++", commenting that they were "ubiquitous everywhere I have been in NS" (RBS). Another was thrilled to have one in his backyard feed out of his hand for the first time (RFL, MZG). BOREAL CHICKADEES were widely reported, but there were no big migratory movements of either species. RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES, on the other hand, moved through Brier in the hundreds Aug. 17-24, peaking Aug.



This BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER was one of several prizes in this autumn's bird bonanza around Tom Kavanaugh's property in Canso. [Photo Terry Paquet]

17-20, when the "trees on the Island were full of them (RBS, LAL, PAC)." Another observer might have been lucky enough to see the start of all this at Northern Pt. on the island, where six arrived Aug. 14 and over a hundred arrived Aug. 15 (ELM). Seal I. had over 40 Aug. 29-Sept. 1 (PLC), and "an appearance of a small wave at the feeders" was noted Sept. 8-12 in Bedford (Joyce and Garth Chalmers). Maybe their populations dip, which many observers commented on, is nearing its end.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES continue to consolidate their hold on the province, with most reports from *Kings*, *Annapolis*, and *Halifax*, though the most impressive were the northernmost. These included one at Mahoney's Beach, *Antigonish*, Sept. 16 (FLL), a first for a feeder at Canso, Oct. 21 (TOK), an individual in Louisbourg, *Cape Breton*, Nov. 14 (Gerry LaLonde) and a female in Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*, that stayed throughout November (FMC). BROWN CREEPERS yielded the usual dribble of sightings, perhaps belying their true abundance, though CBC totals will give a better indication.

HOUSE WRENS were reported much more than usual, thanks partly to renewed reporting by ABO, from both Seal I., Oct. 9 and 17, and BPI, Oct. 1 and 10. Seal I. also produced an imm. Oct. 25 (FLL et al.). An apparently western adult was at Kidston Farm, Spyfield, HRM, from Nov. 11 to beyond deadline, ultimately seen by

many (FLL). The usual dribble of WINTER WRENS included one Sept. 1, Brier (LAL, PAC, ADL), one Sept. 6, CSI (NSBS), three Aug. 29-Sept. 3, Seal I. (PLC), one that was "silent except for an occasional, barely audible chirp as it foraged over fallen trees," Pinkneys Pt., Yar. Co. (RSD), one Oct. 19, CSI (JON), and an imm. Nov. 15, HRM (FLL, CRS),.

Seal I. yielded this fall's sole SEDGE WREN, an adult, Oct. 25 (FLL et al.). Five MARSH WRENS were seen at one of the likeliest locations for this species, Amherst Pt., *Cumberland*, Aug. 21 (FLL et al.). Other sightings were at Sandhills, *Shelburne*, Oct. 14 (JON), Sydney, Nov. 2-13 (John MacInnis), and CSI, Nov. 16 and 21 (MUN).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS continue to be scarce, if the mere half dozen or so reports is any indication; the Christmas Count totals will be interesting. RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS fared better, appearing at Hartlen, Sept. 13 (NSBS) and Nov. 10 (two individuals; FLL), Brier, Oct. 28, when 15 were seen and "virtually no other land birds (ELM)," CSI, Oct. 29 (three birds; MUN), Pennant Pt., *Halifax*, Oct. 31 (HAT), CSI, Nov. 6 (BJS, SIS), and Brier, Nov. 9-10 (PLC).

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS are a great surprise for the lucky (and skilled); this fall there were individuals at Seal I. Sept. 21-25 (ABO), Hartlen, Oct. 7-14 (FLL, PLC, Jean Hartley), Schooner Pd., Oct. 26 (JUM), and Canso, Nov. 22-30 (TOK).



The second niftiest sightings of this section must be the **NORTHERN WHEATEARS** found at Medway Hbr., SW Cove, *Queens*, Sept 18 (NSN *et al.*) and Sable I., Oct. 1 (ZOL). Two **EASTERN BLUEBIRDS** at CSI, Oct. 12 (MUN) and one at Port Joli, Oct. 30 (AND) were the only ones reported. **VEERIES** were vocal at Margaretsville, *Annapolis*, Aug. 8-10 (PLC) and Seal I., Sept. 1 (FLL), which we must hope explains why so few other sightings were reported. **GREY-CHEEKED THRUSHES** sightings were all on Seal and Brier: two, "probable *minimus*" (PLC) from Seal, Aug. 31-Sept. 3 (FLL, PLC, *et al.*) and two from Brier, Oct. 10, which built up to 10 the next day (FLL *et al.*). **BICKNELLS THRUSHES** were on the move at Seal

I., where two were found Aug. 30-Sept. 1 (FLL *et al.*), Mahoney's Beach, *Antigonish*, Sept. 18 (FLL), and Brier, Oct. 11 (FLL). The last fall sighting near the north tip of the province, Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*, was, interestingly, as late as Sept. 26 (FMC). The next and last late date was Oct. 1, in Dartmouth, "one of the few little surprises after Juan (RHL)." Reports of **HERMIT THRUSH** seemed low this fall. The last included one at Fairview Cemetery, HRM, Nov. 7, with "very cold gray back and wings -- ? a western bird (RBS)," three at Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*, Nov. 12-13 (FMC), two at the Keji Seaside Adjunct, Nov. 17 (GRM), one at CSI, Nov. 23 (MUN), and one in Dartmouth, Nov. 30 (FLL). Migration of **AM. ROBINS** was already starting

Aug. 15, when six juveniles were seen arriving at the north end of Brier (ELM). Waves of migrants were noted Sept. 12, Kentville, *Kings* (RBS), Oct. 23-26, coastal *Lunenburg* (ELM, AHM), and Oct. 31 across the south of the province, at Brier (ELM, AHM), CSI (GRM) and Barrington (RMC). The high count throughout the fall, by a long shot, was a modest 200. Gratifyingly, though, this total was reached in order from south to north: CSI, Oct. 31 (GRM), Sandy Cove, HRM, Nov. 1 (FLL), R. Bourgeois, *Lunenburg*, Nov. 8 (BID), and along the highway to Mabou from the Canso Causeway, Nov. 9 (RFL). Call me pathetic, but that's the kind of thing that really makes a seasonal editor's day. ☐

## Starlings Through Warblers

By Ken McKenna

**GRAY CATBIRDS** were most visible during September and all reports were from *HRM* and south. **RBS** noted three to four at Duncans Cove Sept 21. **IAM** had the late sighting of one at this same location Oct 9, but no doubt a few continued later than this. Only a handful of **N MOCKINGBIRDS** were noted. A juv at the feeder of *ELM & AHM* in Rose Bay, *Lunenburg*, was the first there for several years. Other reports were from Freeport, Digby, Brier I, (JUS, FLL, GDE) and Little Hbr, *Shelburne* (DHY). **BROWN THRASHERS** were noted Oct 1 on Seal

I by the ABO and Oct 26 at Schooner Pond (JUM).

A handful of early **AM PIPITS** found their way to Cherry Hill Sept 6 (CLS) and to Big I, *Pictou*, Sept 14 (KJM). Groups of 20-50 were seen in many mainland locations through October and November with 44 still at the Hawk Beach in mid-November (MUN).

**BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS** did not seem to be present this fall but **CEDAR WAXWINGS** were well observed. **HAT** noted nesting activity Aug 20

along Duncans Cove Rd. **RBS** had hundreds on Brier I Aug 17-24 and hundreds were observed by **KJM** and Robert Reid on a trip through the Liscomb Game Sanctuary to the Eastern Shore near Sheet Hbr Sept 7. A flock at Pennant Peninsula Oct 17 consisted of first year birds (HAT). Sandy Cove, *HRM*, hosted a flock of 100 Nov 1 and it is likely that numbers will stay over-winter this year as long as berry supplies hold.

Warblers were, in general, few in number on Brier I Aug 17-24, with small flocks of regular breeders trickling through all week (RBS). Good warbler movements were noted at Oakland, *Lunenburg* (JAH) and Hartlen Pt Sept 1 (TEP), on Brier I Sept 3 (LAL) and on both sides of Halifax Hbr Sept 20 (IAM, TEP).

A bright male **BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** was sorted out of a mixed flock in Halifax Sept 1 (AGH). A second was seen in Jollimore, *HRM*, Oct 7 (FCG). Once again **TENNESSEE WARBLERS** appear to be non-existent. A single report of one was received from **MUN** from Roberts I, *Yarmouth*, Sept 6. The first of 16 reports of **ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER**



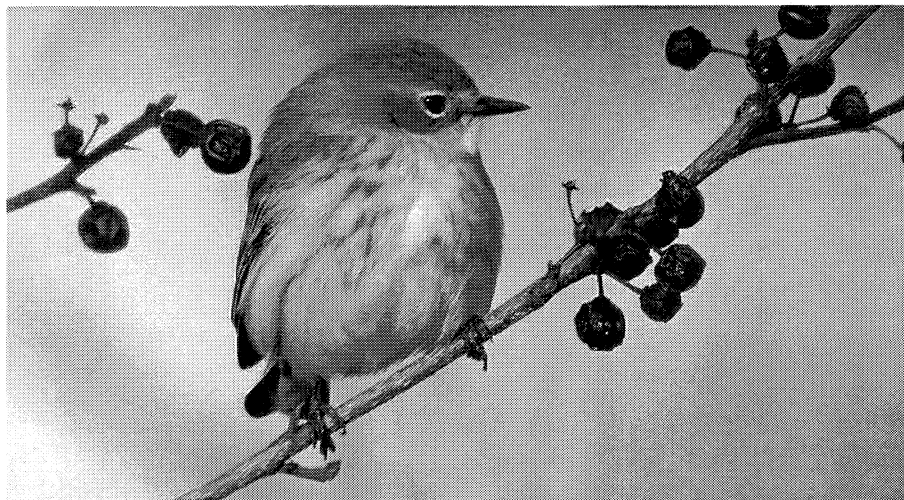
This female **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** is more adept at searching for prey on bark and stumps than at gleaning foliage like most other wood warblers. [Photo Elizabeth Doull]

was by IAM Sept 20 at Duncans Cove, *HRM*. Two reports were noted in October, but the bulk of sightings were in November throughout *HRM* from Sheet Hbr, Sober I, Hartlen Pt, Spryfield and Halifax city as well as Starrs Rd., *Lunenburg*, and Kenney Rd., *CSI*. NASHVILLE WARBLERS seem to be under-reported. KJM noted five at Caribou, *Pictou*, Aug 25 and another five at Big I, *Pictou*, Sept 6. Similar numbers were at Duncans Cove Sept 20-21 (IAM, RBS). The only report after that date was a single bird also at Duncans Cove Oct 13 (TEP). NORTHERN PARULAS were on the move Sept 1 with JAH noting three at Oakland, *Lunenburg* and AAM reporting five at Palmeto Woods, *Kings*. Eight were found by KJM Sept 6 on Big I. FLL noted an imm male in Spryfield, *HRM*, Oct 31 and a tardy male there Nov 30 (FLL *et al.*).

Ten YELLOW WARBLERS were noted on BPI on the Labour Day weekend (NSBS) and a few were noted by AAM at Palmeto Woods, *Kings*, Sept 1. The latest report were two on Sober I, *HRM*, Sept 7 (KJM). The few observations of CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER clustered around the last of August to the first week of September. RSD had his latest sighting Sept 21 at Pubnico Pt, *Yarmouth*. JUS on Brier I had an extremely late sighting Nov 17. There were very few reports of the MAGNOLIA WARBLER: five, Sept 1, Oakland, *Lunenburg* (JAH); seven, Big I, *Pictou*, Sept 6 (KJM) and five on Brier I Sept 16 (JUS). Only a single

CAPE MAY WARBLER was reported and that at the North Pt, Brier I, Aug 15 (ELM). Interestingly, there were no late summer reports of BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, but fall sightings were noted by MUN at Cape Forchu Oct 19, by AGH at the Fairview Cemetery, *HRM*, Oct 27 and by FLL, an ad fem at Rosemount Dr, Halifax, Nov 11. YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS which were absent all week on Brier I suddenly appeared in large numbers after the passing of a cold front and on NW winds Aug 22 (RBS). He also found 100+ in basic plumage at the Annapolis Royal Marsh Sept 16 and a few were still present there Nov 26. Numbers were still moving in mid-October with 50 Oct 27 at Pennant Pt (HAT) and "good numbers" Oct 26 at Brier I (TEP). A juv bird hanging around the yard of FMC in Sunrise Valley, *Victoria* for much of November was last seen Nov 28. BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS sprinkled the province with numbers peaking the last week of September and the first week of October. A late observation was one seen by EAM the last weekend of October on Brier I. BLACKBURNIAN WARBLERS were noted in ones and twos from the last of August to Sept 20 when TEP had the late report of one at Hartlen Pt, *HRM*. There were two reports of YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER this fall. At Westport, Brier I, TEP found one catching flies from window screens, sun-porches and the road Oct 26. One month later, TOK found a Yellow-throated Warbler in his yard in Canso.

The nine reports of eight PINE WARBLERS is about average although there were no August sightings. Pine Warblers were discovered on BPI Sept 17 & Oct 22 and Seal I Sept 18 (ABO). HAT reported an ad male at Pennant Peninsula Sept 25, but the remaining birds were discovered in late November in varied locations such as Eastern Passage (AGH), Canso (TOK), Great Village, *Colchester* (FLS), and south end Halifax (FLL, PLC). The 16 PRAIRIE WARBLERS were all noted from locations close to the Atlantic coast. The earliest Prairie was an imm male discovered at the Hawk, *CSI*, Aug 29 (FLL *et al.*) followed closely by another imm male on Seal I Sept 1 (FLL, GDE) and one on BPI, Labour Day weekend. Four were noted on BPI Sept 15-21 (ABO) and two from Schooner Pond Sept 14 (DBM) and Sept 20 (SEM). An imm fem was located at Sambro Head, *HRM*, Sept 25 (FLL, Richard Hatch). On BPI, single birds were noted on Oct 2, 3, & 9. Late sightings were at Taylor Hd Oct 31 (TEP), Sober I Nov 2 (KJM) and in the yard of DAM in Halifax Nov 25. Eastern PALM WARBLER migration seemed to pass relatively unnoticed. The Trafalgar area of Pictou Co. had about 24 Palms Sept 7 (KJM & Robert Reid). At Duncans Cove, *HRM*, RBS had five yellow eastern birds Sept 21. A couple of eastern Palms were still present in the Antigonish area Nov 2 (RFL, MZG) and at Northwest Arm Dr, *HRM*, Nov 11 (FLL, Eileen & Bill Billington). Early reports show western Palms were on Big Tancook I Sept 25 (BLM & ELM) and Seal I Sept 30 (ABO). By mid-October, western Palms were being reported at Grand Pré (RBS). In the latter half of October there were 10+ at Seal I. There were a number of November observations from Crystal Crescent, Lower Prospect, Sober I, Northwest Dr (all in *HRM*) and Jordan Bay, *Shelburne*. A single BAY-BREASTED WARBLER was seen Aug 15 at North Pt, Brier I (ELM), the only note of this species for this reporting period. BLACKPOLL WARBLER migration was quite evident Sept 19-27 with reports of 10-20 birds at various locations on the Atlantic coast such as Duncans Cove (IAM, RBS), Sambro Head and Pennant Point Park, *HRM*



A first-autumn YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER perched among shrivelled berries, looks prepared to stay the winter. [Photo Richard Stern]

(FLL, Richard Hatch), Pubnico Pt, *Yarmouth* (RSD), Hartlen Pt (TEP), Fauxburg and Starrs Rd Trails, *Lunenburg* (JAH) and Annapolis Royal (JOB). Many of these observers said that the Blackpoll was the predominant warbler during this period. A late Blackpoll sighting was by PLC on Brier I Nov 13. A young male **CERULEAN WARBLER** was photographed on BPI Sep. 5 by the ABO group. A second Cerulean, this time a fem, was seen by JON the next day at Roberts I, *Yarmouth*.

Peak comments on **BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER** migration occurred around the Labour Day weekend. JAH noted six at Oakland, *Lunenburg*, Sept 1 and another six were tallied on BPI the same weekend (NSBS). On Big I, *Pictou*, KJM reported seven Sept 6 but only two a week later. There were late sightings Oct 27 Hartlen Pt (AGH), Crystal Crescent Beach, *HRM*, Nov 3 (AGH) and the Frog Pd *HRM*, Nov 5 (PLC). There were no comments about **AM REDSTART** migration, but a couple of birds lingered to be observed by FLL in *HRM*, one at Keating Dr, Halifax, Nov 11 and an ad fem in *Spryfield* until Nov 28. On Sable I, ZOL discovered a **WORM-EATING WARBLER** Sept 24.

Only a few **OVENBIRD** reports were received, mostly in September. Late birds were noted at Hartlen Pt Oct 27 (AGH) and one near Flinn Park Nov 21 (SUB). A **N WATERTHRUSH** was a welcome visitor at the feeder of FMC in the Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*, Aug 13. One described as a pale race was seen by FLL in the east Village, Seal I, Sept 1. Good numbers were also noted passing through Brier I the first week of September (LAL). The latest report was Sept 19 at Annapolis Royal (JOB).

A single **CONNECTICUT WARBLER** was noted on Brier I the first week of September (LAL). Four reports of five **MOURNING WARBLERS** seem a little low, but this bird is often overlooked especially in fall. The latest report was of two ads Sept 25 at Sandy Cove, *HRM* (FLL, Richard Hatch). Some of a nice group of ten **COM YELLOWTHROATS** were found eating blackberries Sept 1 at Palmetter Woods, *Kings* (AAM). An equal number were found Labour Day weekend on BPI (NSBS). Sept 13 was an unlucky day for one, which thumped into a window of the Wolfville area residence of JCT however after a few hours it recovered from the stunning bump and was able to fly away. Common Yellowthroats were seen into late November at Duncans Cove,

Annapolis Royal, CSI, and *Spryfield*. One male **HOODED WARBLER** was observed Oct 1 at the station on Sable I (ZOL) and on Seal I two different Hooded Warblers were found by the ABO staff Oct 2 & 14.

**WILSON'S WARBLERS** seem to have arrived in two waves. The first group started to be noticed in the last week of August and into September. LAL noted larger than expected numbers of Wilson's on Brier I the first week of September but then no reports were received until four reports in mid-November, the latest was a first year male in Wolfville (JWW). There were six reports of seven **CANADA WARBLERS**, all in the last week of August and into mid-September. The latest sighting was of two on Brier I Sept 17 (JUS). It was an average **YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT** season with 16 reports of 20 birds with the ABO sites on BPI and Seal I accounting for 13 of the birds. Peak numbers at the Seal I observatory were three Sept 22 and two Sept 23. Other sightings were at Portuguese Cove, *HRM*, Oct 13 (DAC), Point Michaud, *Richmond*, Nov 17 (*fide* GED), Dartmouth, Nov 18 (TEP), Port Williams, *Kings*, Nov 19 (GWT) and Crousetown, *Lunenburg*, Nov 20 (NSN). ☐

## Tanagers Through House Sparrows

(Birders' Journal rarities summary)

Nova Scotia must be the most reliable location in Canada to see **Summer Tanagers**. One suddenly appeared at a Greenwich, *Kings*, feeder November 29, and was still present the next day (BF, m.obs.). The date is not unprecedented, but the inland locale is unusual. There were three **Scarlet Tanagers**; Bon Portage I. September 14 (ABO), October 26 in Ketch Hbr (DAC), and October 25-26 on Cape Sable I. (MUN). A female **Eastern Towhee** was found near Lower Barney's River, *Pictou*, August 2 (CGB, KJM); this is unseasonably early for a vagrant, and one wonders if this bird spent the summer in the area. Four arrived later

in the autumn, with birds on BPI October 17 (ABO), Schooner Pond October 26 (JUM), and two different birds at HAT's feeder in Portuguese Cove, *HRM*, November 2-3 and November 14.

**Clay-colored Sparrows** were widely distributed; October 7 Hartlen Point, October 28 Brier I., November 13-30 Canso (two birds, TOK), and November 22 *Antigonish*. JON's feeder in Lower Clark's Harbour, Cape Sable I., enjoyed a visit from a **Field Sparrow** September 6 Three later **Field Sparrows** were all at coastal locations, October 14 Seal I., October 31 Taylor Head, and November 12 Halifax. JON's feeder also hosted a **Lark Sparrow** September 1-11; the

latter bird was joined by a second Lark Sparrow September 10. This was the start of a flood of sightings; Bon Portage I. September 6 (ABO), Seal I. September 11 and 24 (ABO), October 4 Cape Sable I. (MN), October 10 Seal I. (ABO), October 29-November 13 Canso (TK), November 11 Cape Sable I. (JN), and November 25 Burnside, *HRM* (DOE).

An immature **Blue Grosbeak** frequented Hartlen Point September 20 through the end of the period (TEP, var. obs.), while another stayed a shorter time on Seal I., September 21-25 (ABO). Later in autumn there were six **Blue Grosbeaks** at scattered locales, including two birds October 15-17 at



One of three **PAINTED BUNTINGS** that appeared during late summer, was this lovely male at a Sydney feeder Aug. 20-23. [Photo Irene Campbell]

distant Sunrise Valley (FMC) and a long-staying bird in Canso November 9-26 (TOK). There was a major influx of **Indigo Buntings**, mirrored in their arrival by the aforementioned Blue Grosbeaks, but much more numerous. More than 40 birds were counted province-wide, with multiple sightings as follows: seven on BPI October 3-16; two at Portuguese Cove October 17-20; two in Halifax October 20; 10 in Canso October 24-November 6; two+ on Cape Sable I. October 25; seven on Seal I. October 25-26; three at Schooner Pond

October 26, and two at Sunrise Valley November 8-12. There were, quite remarkably, three **PAINTED BUNTINGS**, sightings not just rare but also seasonally unusual, as this species is "typically" found in winter or late spring-early summer. The first was a female at Marriot's Cove, *Lunenburg*, August 13 (DOM); the house owners unfortunately would not tolerate visits by birders. The second was a male August 20-22 at a feeder in Sydney, *Cape Breton*, and the home owners were more cooperative (Irene Campbell,

SUM). The third, another male, was also at cooperative home-owners, at DeBaie's Cove, HRM, but the bird only stayed a part of the morning of September 11 (Elaine and Larry McWha). These are the eleventh through thirteenth provincial records. A **Dickcissel** was on Seal I. September 14 (ABO), while another visited a Doctor's Cove, *Shelburne*, feeder August 22 (TEC). Many more showed up later in the autumn, making it one of the busiest Dickcissel autumns in memory. At least 20 were reported, with the following multiples: three on Seal I. October 1-5; three at Schooner Pond October 12; two at Sunrise Valley October 13-17; and eight (sic) in Canso October 29-November 30 (TOK). This latter concentration may be unprecedented anywhere in autumn north of Mexico. There were but two **Eastern Meadowlarks** found, October 18 on Cape Sable I. (MN) and November 26 at Portuguese Cove (IM). A cooperative **Yellow-headed Blackbird** frequented a feeder in Freeport, October 12-23 (fide JCT), while another spent a couple of days in Canso November 5-6 (TOK). The only **Orchard Oriole** was in Bridgewater, *Lunenburg*, November 11-6 (fide JAH). ☞



**DICKCISSELS** are "routine rarities" on our southern islands in autumn, but rarely permit such a fine portrait. This one lurked among lobster traps on Seal I. Oct. 24-26. [Photo Ian McLaren]



Far from routine were a couple of **DICKCISSELS** from the Midwest and four **BLUE GROSBEAKS** from the South that appeared this fall at feeders in Sunrise Valley, *Victoria*, near the tip of CB. Here is one of each posed for its portrait. [Photo Fritz McEvoy]

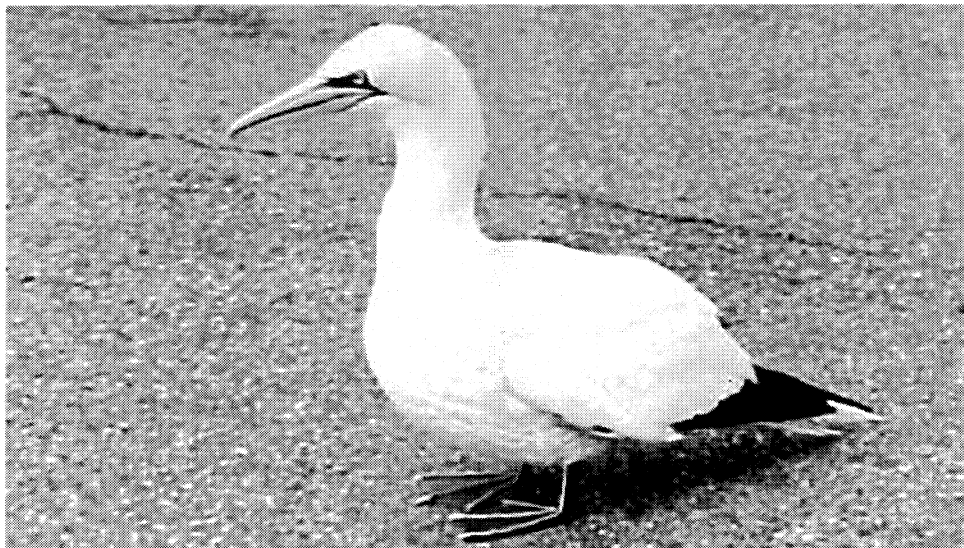


# List of Contributors

Thanks to all of our contributors, including:

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This N. GANNET was literally a traffic stopper on the main road in River Bourgeois last fall. Some thought it injured, so called NS DNR, but it flew off to the harbour before they arrived. [Photo Gerry Fougere]



## Autumn Weather, 2003

By Larry Bogan

Table 1: Monthly Averages for the Autumn of 2003 Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Centre Kentville, N.S.

	Temperature (C)	Mean Rainfall (mm)	Bright Sunshine (hours)
<b>September</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>228</b>
5 yr avg	16.2	132	197
42 yr avg	14.6	175	190
<b>October</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>161</b>
5 yr avg	8.9	146	164
42 yr avg	9.1	106	140
<b>November</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>88</b>
5 yr avg	4.1	114	70
42 yr avg	3.9	118	81
<b>Season</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>477</b>
5 yr avg	9.7	392	431
42 yr avg	9.2	399	411

Sunny, dry and warm.... Those are the words I have for Autumn of 2003. Of course there is more to our weather than that.

Every month this fall was sunnier than the long term normals. The last five years have been sunnier than average but 2003 was even 'better' than that. September was the outstanding month for sunshine by providing nearly half of all we received for the season. But that is usually the case because not only are the days getting shorter as we go into October and November but the cloudiness increases in these later months. Typically 1/3 of the days in the summer are cloudy in the Annapolis Valley but that reverses in the winter when only 1/3 of them are sunny.

Everyone remembers November of 2002 when the snow fell early in the month and stayed for the rest of the winter. Normally we get 13 cm of snow in November but last year it was 46 cm. This year we had none and no one, that I know, complained. We seemed to have some very rainy days this fall and I would have guessed that except for November, we had a wet autumn. This is obviously not the case when we look at the table above. This year we received only 2/3 of the normal rainfall. Every month this autumn was drier than the 5 year average. In general the autumns during last five years have had the normal rainfalls. The only trend appears to be a shift of more rain in October and less in September.

My mistaken feeling about the wetness of the season comes from the fact that we had 38 days of measureable rain during the season. Only in mid-September did we have a full week without a drop of rain. The day before that dry week we had 60 mm of rain drop on us.

Sunshine and dry weather implies warm days and that was true of the Autumn of 2003. The whole season was a full 1.2 C above the long term average temperature. The warmest month was September which averaged 2.0 C above the average of September

temperatures for the last 42 years. But this is a trend because the Septembers during the last five years have been 1.6 C above that average. It is just that this year is more extreme than the last five. In September the minimum never touched 0 C and in October it just barely reached that benchmark twice. It was only in November that the Kentville Agricultural Centre received a heavy freeze. That is very late for this area. It of course varied dramatically with location in the Valley. Our garden in Cambridge was frosted out on the night of the 3rd of October.

One other weather factor of interest this autumn was the wind. Halifax and east had very high winds from Hurricane Juan but the information I have shows only the Annapolis Valley. Most of us in the Valley slept through the onslaught of Juan. We had very little wind. In fact the peak in winds on Sept 28-29 is small compared with the larger winds that we had in October and November.

**Editor's note:** even though Valley residents were fortunate to miss the storm, Juan did impact many NS Birds readers, and indeed the eye of the hurricane passed over the editor's home. For a full account of this memorable weather event, go to the Environment Canada Hurricane Juan web site: <http://www.atl.ec.gc.ca/weather/hurricane/juan/>

## **Voluntary Planning Task Force – Off-Highway Vehicles Nova Scotia Bird Society Submission Notes**

**By Blake Maybank, Editor, Nova Scotia Birds, 20 November 2003**

- Off-Highway Vehicles. The key word is “vehicles.” Off-Highway Vehicles (hereafter OHVs) should not be treated differently to On-Highway Vehicles. The latter operate within a long-standing, and generally effective, framework of regulations. The vehicles must be registered and insured, with registration and renewal status clearly displayed. They must be annually inspected, and meet certain standards of road-worthiness, engine emissions, and safety. Their drivers must have passed proficiency examinations, be older than 15 years, be licensed, and insured. They may not operate the vehicles in an unsafe manner, nor be under the influence of alcohol. These regulations and laws are enforced, and the costs of enforcement are paid for by taxes, supplemented in part by the licence and registration fees, and the penalties incurred when the laws are broken.
- Submissions have been made to this Task Force advocating that Off-Highway Vehicles not be regulated, and that existing users can self-regulate OHV use and the activities of their operators. If self-regulation was a viable option, then On-Highway Vehicles would presumably not require the existing laws and regulations that currently govern their use. But those laws do exist, and with good reason. Any student of human nature understands that self-regulation is an impossibility, notwithstanding that only a small percentage of current OHV users currently belong to established OHV clubs, and that a much larger percentage of machines currently in use are unregistered. Regulation of OHVs is essential, and should be modeled after the current framework used for road vehicles.
- Assuming that regulation is a requirement, how should it be approached? The existing regulations for on-road vehicles can serve as a model, but in one key respect OHVs differ, in that they can access so many different physical spaces. It's harder to define where they can and cannot operate, whereas On-road vehicles are restricted to established, legally defined roads. OHVs currently can, and do, go just about anywhere in the province, and regulating that current anarchy is the greatest challenge faced by the Task Force.
- Many submissions have been made that attempt to describe the areas from which OHVs should be banned. The N.S. Bird Society believes it is easier to frame regulations from a reverse perspective: OHV regulations should state the OHVs may only be operated on designated trails and sites, and nowhere else. In other words, rather than taking the entire province (currently the playground of OHVs) and attempting to exclude and protect certain select areas, instead start from the precept that OHVs are not allowed anywhere in the province except where designated. Then you can commence the procedure of defining the qualities of an acceptable route or site for OHV use. ☐

## Puffin of the Year Award

By Andy Horn

It's always an honour to be entrusted with choosing the recipient of the Puffin of the Year Award, though, at the same time, it's never too easy. So many people contribute so much to birds and the Society that every year there's any number of deserving recipients, that each year must be pared down to one.

This year's recipient stood out all the same. He's made sustained contributions to birding, not only within the Society's own activities, but also in parallel efforts throughout the province and beyond. His crack birding skills, broad interests, and excellent speaking and writing skills have made him one of Nova Scotia's best known birders within and outside the province. He readily shares his ideas, often stimulating the kind of debate that ultimately energizes a Society like ours and drives it forward.

To make all this more concrete, a fairly recent initiate to birding was able to list these recent contributions of this year's recipient, right off the top of her head:

- He's led innumerable professional field trips.
- He's served for years as a seasonal editor to our magazine and as our region's editor for *North American Birds*.
- He served for eight years as Canada's voice on the board of the American Birding Association, and wrote its Code of Birding Ethics.
- He's introduced Nova Scotia to many birders from the U.S. and elsewhere.
- He's promoted winter birding through his web site.
- He conceived of and ran the Chat Line for years, then started the Rare Bird Alert.
- He took on the editorship of *Nova Scotia Birds*, armed with skills he had previously brought to other publications.
- He promoted birding and the Society through his weekly newspaper column.

I could go on to list his many other contributions, both in his volunteer and professional work, but this brief list is certainly evidence enough. So, for his many contributions to birding in this province over the years, I'd like to award the Puffin of the Year to Blake Maybank. ☞

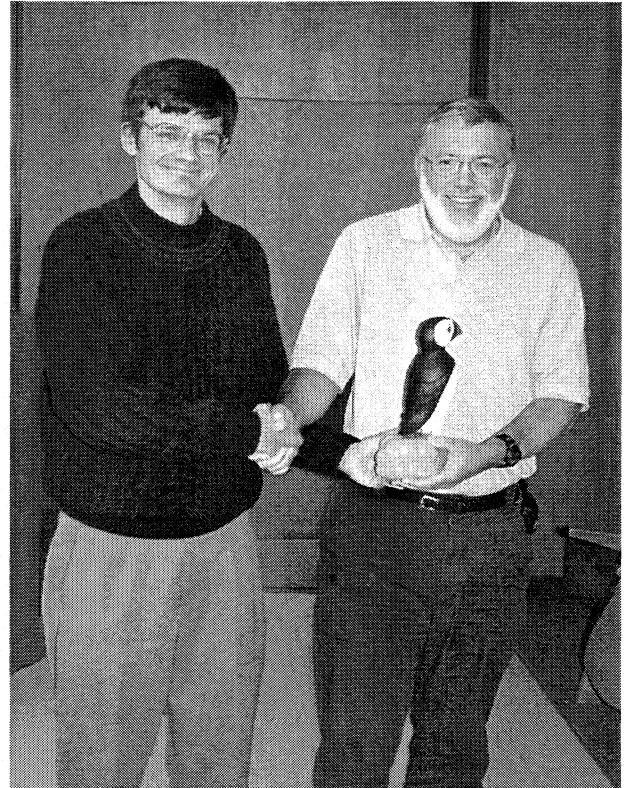
## President's Report

By Andy Horn

I thought this had been a relatively quiet year for the executive of the Society. It wasn't until I prepared this report that I realized how much we've actually done. I'll start with conservation.

The piping plover guardian program was, once again, by far our biggest effort in conservation. This year it was generously funded by the Habitat Stewardship Program of CWS, along with various other government sources and the World Wildlife Fund. Anna McCarron once again did a brilliant job of running the guardian program, and this year Sean LeMoine joined her to run a parallel program measuring plover nesting success. Thanks to them and front-line guardians across the province, the program has become one of Nova Scotia's best known conservation efforts.

Dave Currie again served as our point man for the program, and Bernice Moores handled its exquisitely intricate finances. The program has been a great feather in our cap, thanks particularly to Anna, Dave, and Bernice. At the same time, though, it has required so much volunteer administrative time, that, in future, we will be exploring other ways to help the program, besides actually handling its finances.



NSBS President Andy Horn (L) presenting the Puffin of the Year award to Blake Maybank. [Photo S. Levy]



We've also been involved in several conservation efforts on a smaller scale. Our financial support of the Cape Sable Island Important Bird Area, where terrific conservation and educational things are happening, continues. We fired off several letters on various issues, to HRM decrying the cutting of brush at Sullivan's Pond (that one worked fast!), to the Coast Guard supporting their proposed restrictions on fast watercraft near shore, and, thanks to Anna McCarron's efforts, to the province demanding a clamp down on ATV use in plover nesting habitat.

ATVs were indeed a hot issue this year. We tried unsuccessfully to get a Society representative on the provincial task force on ATVs, though we'll still be represented indirectly through the FNSN, and will be formally addressing the task force next month. We also joined a particularly cooperative ATV club president for a media event aimed at keeping ATVs off the bank swallow colony Bowater posted several years ago with our help.

Addressing these various issues that arise is good, but we need overall conservation goals, too. To that end, we have formed a Conservation Committee that is drafting guidelines for what issues we should and shouldn't get involved in. In the meantime, thankfully, SSTF continues to keep our eye on the long view, looking after the Society's properties and funding worthy projects, as Ken and Dave outlined in their reports.

The Conservation Committee is just one of the ways that we have been studying how we can improve connections within and beyond the Society. Last spring, some of us attended a workshop on how Bird Studies Canada can best expand its programs in our region. Both there and in later correspondence, all were enthusiastic about BSC programs, though still unclear on whether BSC will best work through societies like ours, or instead should recruit individuals directly. On a still large scale, Joan Czapalay and Blake Maybank represented the Society at a workshop funded and run by the Canadian Nature Federation in Ottawa that explored ways to improve education and membership in societies like ours. Together with other naturalists, Joan also landed funding from a private foundation for a conference this fall on organizing naturalist groups in the Atlantic region, which Sterling Levy and Suzanne Borkowski will attend next month on our behalf.

Closer to home, graduate students from the School of Environmental and Resource Studies at Dalhousie -- Libby Dean, Jen Gerrits, and Xiaojing Jian -- produced a comprehensive study of what the Society could do to maintain a large and active membership through the coming years. They conducted surveys and interviews of members and non-members, studied how similar groups from Scotland to Washington state handled similar issues, and even studied how birds fit in to Nova Scotia's school curriculum. Their report is a treasure trove of useful ideas on how we can improve and develop new strengths that we will be organizing and putting into action this year. I highly recommend that you have a look at their report; they did a terrific job.

Speaking of education, Mary McLaren, together with Catherine Earley, Lisa Tay, Bill Billington, and Anna McCarron, organized a workshop on bird diets at the museum. Birds from Beaks to Bellies was well attended, especially by younger impressionable types. The workshop was followed by an outstanding series of talks jointly sponsored by the Society and the Museum, loosely organized around the theme of bird diets, featuring Trish Cole, Dave McCorquodale, Randy Lauff, and Hope Swinimer. We continue to appreciate our partnership with the Nova Scotia Museum, especially their \$2000 per year funding of our magazine (which is not official yet but looks promising) and welcome ideas on programs we can join forces on.

Once again, members gave educational programs at schools and community groups too numerous to mention, and we had booths at a wildlife week held in Truro by DNR, at the annual Wildlife Festival in Eastern Passage, and at the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists' A.G.M.

Our magazine is both one of our best educational tools and one of the best benefits of membership. With his characteristic enthusiasm, approachability, and energy, Randy Lauff led his editorial team to produce another year of one of the finest publications of its kind in North America. He has now asked for a well deserved rest, and we're very thankful that Blake Maybank has enthusiastically taken up the torch, so that the magazine will be able to continue to thrive without interruption.

Special thanks also to Sterling Levy, who has served as the voice-of-the-editor on the executive and continues to be curator of what I guess we now have to call not just our slide, but image collection. Again, this year, another outstanding contribution to that collection was made by Lorris Keizer, who again took first place in the bird photography competition of the Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia, ably judged this year by Ian McLaren.

Other outstanding contributions to the magazine and in general continue to be made by David Currie, who compiles the Christmas Bird Counts, and Judy Tufts, who co ordnates the North American Migration Count. Their hard work is invaluable, not only for enhancing these red-letter dates in the birding calendar, but also for providing invaluable data that's being used more and more in bird conservation.

As we approach the close of this report, I must say how pleased I am that probably the best stuff we've done all year has been our continued improvements to the core of our activities: the monthly meetings and, most of all, our field trips. Suzanne Borkowski conceived of and organized a series of identification workshops, which last year preceded the usual monthly talks and this year, by popular demand, dominate the monthly program. Suzanne has also done an outstanding job of increasing and enriching our program of field trips. Thanks to the Society's long tradition of field trips and Suzanne's boundless enthusiasm, we continue to have among the best field trip programs on the continent.

Our celebration of that long tradition is not far away: next year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the bird society. Planning the celebration will be one of our major focuses in the coming year: Gisèle d'Entremont is heading a celebration committee that will be meeting again later this fall, and the more help she gets, the better the year will be.

The executive over the last several years has been a team of people with complementary talents who work well together and enjoy each others' company. We were therefore especially saddened this past year by the loss of Peter Ackerman, who sat right here beside me last year at this time and was a voice of reason, intelligence, and good humour on the executive. We miss him a great deal, and hope that we continue to maintain the atmosphere on the executive to which he contributed so much.

It's impossible to thank everyone who has contributed to the Society over the last year, but I can at least mention a few. Harold Forsythe served as our Honorary Auditor, and Tony Robinson as our Honorary Solicitor. We actually put them to considerable use as we sorted out some thorny issues related to the plover program, so we especially thank them this year. Inez and Harry Roberts, after providing refreshments at meetings for many years, have now stepped down, so we're grateful to Louise and Dave Currie for taking up the torch. Peter Payzant continues to maintain our website, and Mary McLaren fielded questions referred to the society from the website and elsewhere. Peter LeBlanc, working closely with Bill and Eileen Billington, continues to handle our mailings.

For tonight, Ralph MacLean once again carved a beautiful Puffin of the Year award, and Eileen and Bill Billington came up with a grand array of cheeses. Special thanks this year go to Doug Roy, who, after organizing tonight's refreshments, in the end was unfortunately unable to attend to enjoy the fruits of his labour. ☘

## **North American Migration Count (NAMC) - MAY 8, 2004**

Spring is the time when our neo-tropical visitors are heading northward, heralding the annual migration movement of birds returning to our shores or passing through. Picture robins running around on lawns hunting for worms, waterfowl flocking to ponds, swallows swooping overhead, large waders and small shorebirds scattered along beaches; thrushes, warblers and flycatchers teasing us with glimpses here and there among burgeoning leaves while avian songs echo through the woodlands once again. How about a tiny hummingbird daring to arrive early to claim its territory or your garden.... maybe even sighting of a rarity or two!

Then remember this important date. The thirteenth annual Spring North American Migration Count (N.A.M.C.) falls on Saturday, May 8 (the second Saturday in May). Please mark it on your calendar if you are planning to participate. The Spring count is one way to monitor the movement and distribution of the neo-tropical migrants as they arrive in our province. Are they in trouble? Are their numbers declining more and more each year? If you have not participated before please take time to consider helping out this year in this very worthwhile project. There is NO fee involved, just enthusiasm required!!

It is important that all those wishing to participate contact local coordinators or area 'reps.' in their counties, to prevent overlaps of areas being surveyed and to help the coverage to be as widespread and thorough as possible. Should you not know who your local coordinators /area 'reps' are, or you wish to 'count' in other counties than the one in which you live, please contact me. I will be happy to help with any queries.

Judy Tufts ( NAMC Prov. Coordinator )  
PO Box 1313  
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# Autumn Migration at the Atlantic Bird Observatory

By Michael Peckford and Trina Fitzgerald

## General Summary

August 15 marked the beginning of fall migration-monitoring at the Atlantic Bird Observatory (ABO). The Bon Portage Island (BP) field station opened first, followed by the Seal Island (SI) station on September 10, and we continued our efforts until the end of October. Through a combination of banding, standardized census, and casual observations, 203 species (including subspecies) were detected and 1765 individuals were banded (70 species), totals very similar to fall 2002 (187 species detected and 1687 individuals (72 species) banded). The lack of a pronounced wave of migrants probably created a “feel” that the season was slow. Throughout the season, birds trickled through, likely due to a very warm fall with light winds. Taking advantage of the weather, migrants probably had less reason to stopover on the islands.

A total of 1433 individuals (68 species) were banded and 183 species were detected on BP. The crew at the SI station banded 332 birds comprising 42 species and detected a total of 147 species. The top ten species banded at each site are listed in Tables 1 & 2 along with the corresponding day their numbers peaked. Banding totals for the past three years are also presented for comparison (Tables 1 & 2). SI migration-monitoring efforts commenced later in the season, therefore we expected to see fewer species and band fewer individuals than the BP station. However, the extremely low banding numbers on SI are likely due to reduced habitat quality (i.e. very little understory to attract birds) on most of the island and around our nets. Therefore, some migrant species spend their time feeding high in the canopy where food may be more plentiful. To assess if we could improve our banding effort, we deployed several new nets in areas that appeared to have somewhat better habitat. As expected, we increased the overall number of migrants banded, and we also targeted prime habitat used by Blackpoll Warblers (*Dendroica striata*) (Table 2). Next season, we will continue to assess other areas to determine if modifying our net placements will enhance our migration-monitoring efforts.

In spite of what appeared to be a slow season, numerous vagrants were banded and spotted on both islands (Table 3 & 4). Interesting highlights included banding four Prairie Warblers (*Dendroica discolor*) in a span of one week during mid August. Six Yellow-breasted Chats (*Icteria virens*) banded on Seal Island in late September / early October were also noteworthy. The sighting of a young male Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) on a cold, foggy, and rainy day was a treat shared by all at the field station (see photo).

There were a few ‘firsts’ for the ABO this season. On September 22 the first Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) was banded on SI. BP station captured its first Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) (Aug 29), Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) (Sep 01), and Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) (Oct 25). The most unusual bird trapped this season was an American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) that was captured October 8 on SI. The bird was released without a band.

## Recaptures

A total of 167 birds (34 species) were recaptured (birds previously banded) on BP. On SI, 28 birds were recaptured (11 species). Typically, all recaptures at the ABO are birds we have previously banded. However on August 20 and again on September 6 a Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*) was captured wearing a band that was not a station band. This bird could possibly represent the first time that a foreign bird (previously banded at another banding station) has been captured by the ABO. However, banding has occurred by other researchers on both islands prior to the establishment of the ABO, so we are not getting too excited just yet. A request has been submitted to the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory regarding the bird’s origin and results will be posted on our website [address further along] – so please check back with us. Another interesting recapture occurred, however, this one was more close to home. A male Blackpoll Warbler, which was originally banded the summer of 1996, was captured on August 23. This is the oldest Blackpoll Warbler on record at the ABO (at least 7yrs and 2 mo) and possibly the oldest record in North America (Klimkiewicz, 2002).

## RADAR monitoring added to ABO program

This past fall we began using RADAR to monitor the passage of migrants as they flew over BP. Previous research using RADAR in the early 1970’s (Richardson 1985) provided the first assessment of migratory patterns in our region and our goal is to build upon this work to help provide a better understanding of migratory movements in the southwestern region of Nova Scotia and enhance the current migration-monitoring efforts conducted on the ground. To date, data analysis is still in initial stages. However, preliminary summaries have been conducted. For all nights during which we observed large movements of birds (Fig. 1), winds were light (average 16 kph) and predominantly northerly. Our initial numbers show that RADAR monitoring has great promise as an additional tool to migration-monitoring for the ABO. We are excited to have initiated and be involved in this research.

For more details concerning observations and bandings we invite you to visit our web site: <http://landscape.acadiau.ca/abo/>

## References

Richardson, W.J. 1985. The influence of weather on orientation and numbers of avian migrants over eastern Canada: a review. *Contributions in Marine Science (Suppl)* 27: 604-617.

Klimkiewicz, M. K. 2002. Longevity Records of North American Birds. Version 2002.1. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Bird Banding Laboratory. Laurel MD.

Table 1. Top ten species banded on Bon Portage Island and date of peak movement for fall 2003. (\* note that *Traill's Flycatcher* is the vernacular nomenclature used for being unable to distinguish between Alder and Willow Flycatcher in the hand - although the great majority captured on the islands are likely Alder Flycatchers).

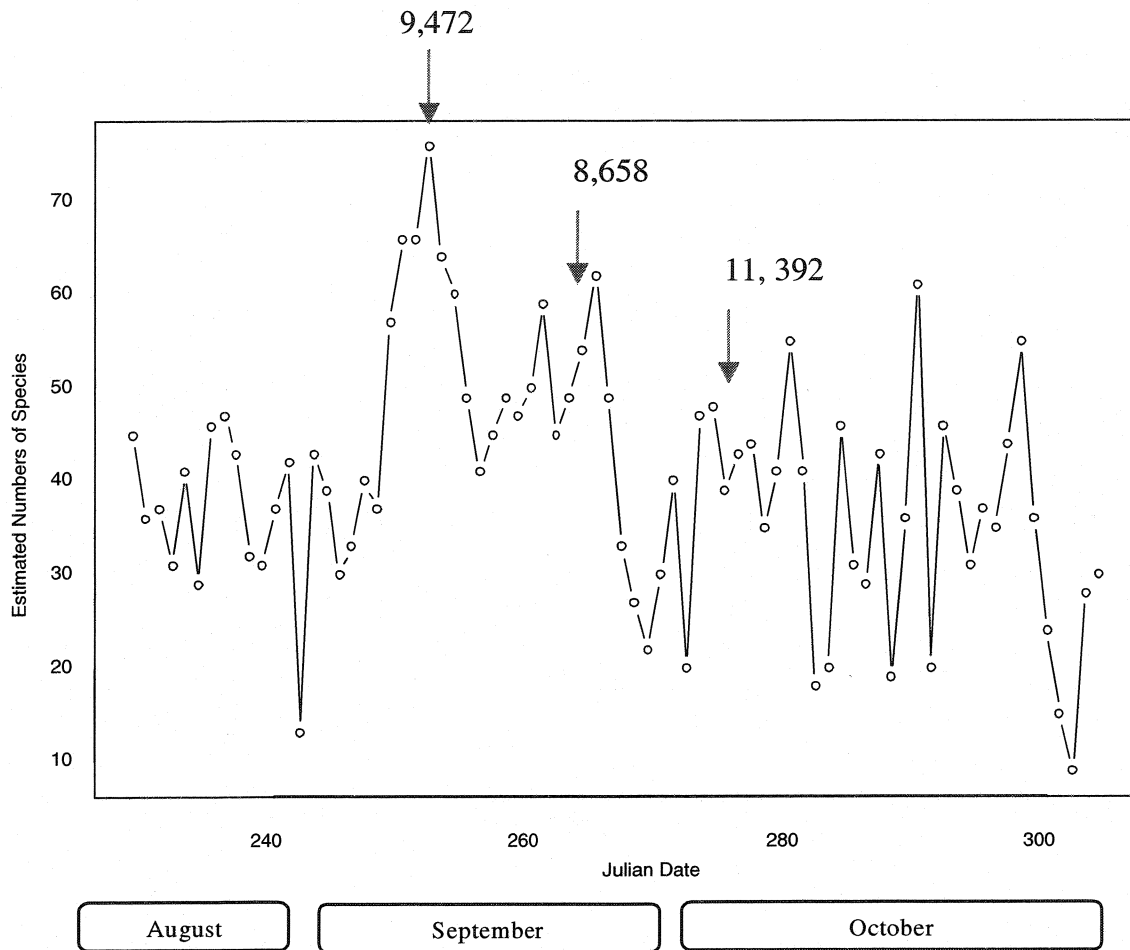
Bon Portage - Fall 2003				Past Years		
Rank	Species	Peak	Band	2002	2001	2000
1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Oct 07	129	392	378	490
2	Blackpoll Warbler	Sep 26	124	70	126	81
3	Traill's* Flycatcher	Sep 09	115	76	59	83
4	Northern Waterthrush	Sep 08	98	68	88	82
5	Red-eyed Vireo	Oct 01	97	73	111	74
6	Black-and-white Warbler	Sep 08	77	71	168	76
7	American Redstart	Sep 08	73	71	142	65
8	Common Yellowthroat	Aug 21	63	69	146	139
9	Song Sparrow	Sep 12/21	59	73	104	78
10	Yellow Warbler	Sep 08	57	46	122	68

Table 2. Top ten species banded on Seal Island and date of peak movement for fall 2003. (\* note that 10 additional nets were in place for a portion of the season).

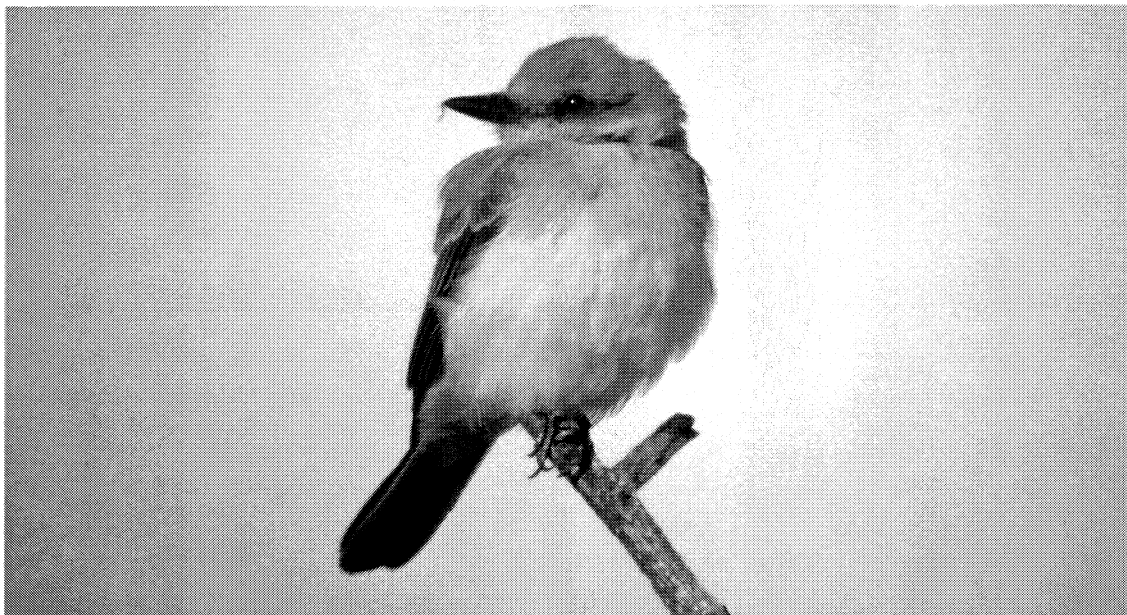
Seal Island - Fall - 2003				Past Years		
Rank	Species	Peak	Band*	2002	2001	2000
1	Blackpoll Warbler	Oct 10	95	19	11	9
2	Song Sparrow	Sep 18/Oct 10	29	9	18	21
3	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Oct 02	26	14	13	10
4	White-throated Sparrow	Oct 14	18	1	8	25
5	Northern Waterthrush	Sep 11	15	0	2	3
6	Common Yellowthroat	Sep 18	15	2	11	8
7	Brown Creeper	Oct 18	15	5	8	5
8	Slate-coloured Junco	Sep 11/Oct 08	14	2	19	13
9	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Oct 10	13	3	19	20
10	Red-eyed Vireo	Oct 02	12	1	4	2

Fig. 1: Daily estimated numbers of species observed throughout the fall season. Julian date 240 and 280 corresponds to August





28 and October 7 respectively. Arrows indicate estimates of birds counted by RADAR for the three largest nights during fall migration.



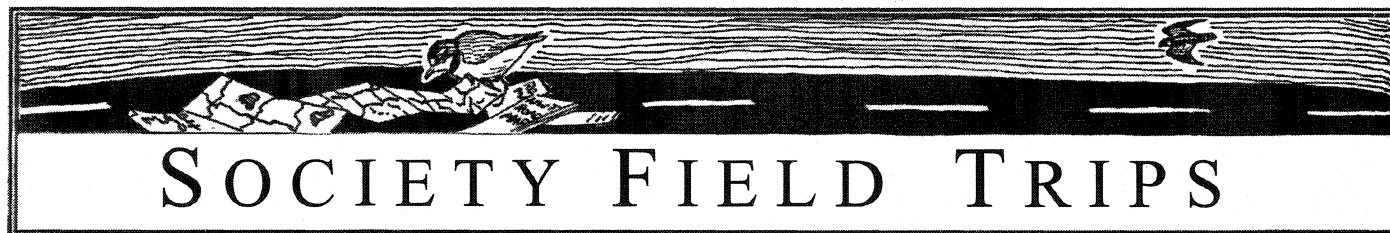
This handsome WESTERN KINGBIRD posed for the ABO banders on Seal I., 26 Sept. [Photo ABO]

Table 3. Vagrants detected on Bon Portage. Subscript indicates the number of individuals noted on the particular day. For individuals observed for consecutive days the first day seen is presented. Sex was unknown if not otherwise noted.

Species	Banded	Observed	Dates
Cooper's Hawk		1	Oct 11
Hudsonian Godwit		1	Sep 23
Lesser Black-backed Gull		1	Sep 22
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		6	Sep 21,23,26, Oct 01,07
Red-headed Woodpecker		1	Sep 05
Say's Phoebe		1	Oct 15
Yellow-throated Vireo		1	Sep 09
Warbling Vireo		1	Oct 17
House Wren		2	Oct 01, 10
Marsh Wren		1	Oct 01
Brown Thrasher		1	Sep 30
Cerulean Warbler		1♂	Sep 05
Prairie Warbler	3♂, 2	2	Aug 15,18,19,21, Oct 02,03,09
Pine Warbler	1	1	Sep 19, Oct 22
Western Palm Warbler		9	Oct 06 <sub>(2)</sub> , 14, 16 <sub>(3)</sub> , 17, 24, 31
Yellow-breasted Chat	1	3	Sep 07, 21, 30, Oct 01
Eastern Towhee		1	Oct 17
Lark Sparrow		3	Sep 06
Indigo Bunting	2	5	Oct 03 <sub>(2)</sub> , 06, 07, 08, 14, 16

Table 4. Vagrants detected on Seal Island. Subscript indicates the number of individuals noted on the particular day. For individuals observed for consecutive days the first day seen is presented. Sex was unknown if not otherwise noted.

Species	Banded	Observed	Dates
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron		1	Sep 10
Ruddy Duck		1	Oct 04
Gyr Falcon		1	Oct 12
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		2	Oct 02, 14
Western Kingbird		1	Sep 26
Warbling Vireo	1	2	Sep 12, 22 <sub>(2)</sub> , 24
House Wren		3	Sep 11, Oct 09, 17
Blue-grey Gnatcatcher		1	Sep 14
Northern Mockingbird		1	Sep 19
Brown Thrasher		1	Oct 01
Prairie Warbler		1	Sep 23
Pine Warbler		1	Sep 18
Western Palm Warbler		11	Sep 11, 21, 30 <sub>(2)</sub> , Oct 03, 04, 06, 07, 14, 15
Hooded Warbler	1♂, 1♀		Oct 02, 14
Yellow-breasted Chat	3♂, 3	3	Sep 16, 18, 21, 22, 23 <sub>(2)</sub> , Oct 01, 02, 07
Field Sparrow		1	Oct 14
Lark Sparrow		3	Sep 11, 24, Oct 10
Dickcissel		4	Sep 14, Oct 01, 04, 05
Blue Grosbeak		1	Sep 21
Indigo Bunting	1♂, 1		Oct 08, 14



## Field Trip Leaders Recognized

By Suzanne M. Borkowski – Vice-president, NSBS

As Field Trip Co-ordinator I have the distinct pleasure of passing along a huge thank-you from all the members of the Bird Society to our Field Trip Leaders who organized and offered the following super trips in 2003.

NSBS Sewer Stroll I	Terry Paquet
Cape Breton Seabirds	Susann Myers
NSBS Sewer Stroll II	Blake Maybank
Along the Fundy Shore	Richard Stern
Baccaro and Blanche Peninsula	Donna Ensor
Martinique Beach	Ian McLaren
Wolfville Area	Jim Wolford
Cape Sable Island	Murray Newell
Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary (May 4 <sup>th</sup> )	Al Smith
Bon Portage Island (May)	Claire Diggins
Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary (May 17 <sup>th</sup> )	Terry Paquet
Taylor Head Provincial Park	Karl Tay
Kejimikujik Seaside Adjunct	Gary Hartlen & Peter Davies
Hfx. Co. Early Morning Warbler Walk	Fred Dobson
The Mountain & the Marsh	Sharon Hawboldt
Shubenacadie Area	Roslyn McPhee
Pennant Point	Hans Toom
Victoria County, Cape Breton	Bethsheila Kent
Warbler Walk Cape Breton	Dave McCorquodale
Canso and Area	Randy Lauff & Steve Bushell
Eastern Shore (June)	Bob Lindsay
Dawn Chorus at Porters Lake	Cindy Staicer
Warbler Walk Portugese Cove	Hans Toom
Pockwock Watershed: Birds&Butterflies	Suzanne Borkowski
Pictou County	Ken McKenna
Mahone Bay	James Hirtle
Point Michaud, Cape Breton	George & Billy Digout
Bon Portage Island (Aug.)	Joan Czapalay
Yarmouth County	Murray Newell
Shorebirds of Sydney Area	Susann Myers
Hartlen Point	Bob Lindsay
Wallace Bay	Paul MacDonald
Eastern Shore (Sept.)	Peter Richard
Brier Island Extravaganza	James Hirtle, Terry Paquet, Carl Haycock, Peter Richard, June Swift, Jeff Ogden and Fulton Lavender
Sandy Lake, Tantallon	Suzanne Borkowski
Antigonish Coastal Waters	Randy Lauff
Metro "Hot Spot" Birding	Terry Paquet
CSI and Shelburne Area	Joan Czapalay

## **Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary**

**Leader: Terry Paquet**

On Saturday, May 17, a small group gathered for a NSBS field trip to Amherst Point. We found that migration was definitely behind schedule, and were only able to tally 7 species of warblers, including a few Cape Mays. Only two Black Terns had returned, more to follow. Only a handful of swallows were seen. Sora were heard and waterfowl were about as expected.

A highlight for the few that stayed for a walk to the John Lusby Salt Marsh was a trio of Peregrine Falcons. Not just the sighting but the behaviour was interesting. They were seen team hunting. Together, they were taking turns chasing and diving at a yellowlegs, which soon lost out to these "pack hunters". All three and their kill disappeared behind an embankment. A flock of yellowlegs scattered. One of the Peregrines came up after a minute and gave us some good looks while it continued hunting the marsh.

## **Mahone Bay**

**3 August 2003, Leader: James R. Hirtle**

Having postponed the outing on Saturday due to rain, I rescheduled it to Sunday which was supposed to be clear. It wasn't. The day included quite heavy fog and the weather was damp, and it did not clear until after the outing was over. We finished with 63 species and I probably missed a few that others may have seen.

Highlights for the area were a female Blue-winged Teal with young. We had six types of shorebirds without having gone to Crescent Beach or Cherry Hill. We had four types of flycatchers and I saw another after the outing, the highlight being an Olive-sided Flycatcher which, believe it or not, was a lifer for me. We also had a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. We all had great looks at a Pileated Woodpecker, and in terms of warblers we had ten species, one of which was a female Black-throated Blue. We also had a good look at a Roseate Tern.

Places that I had pre-scouted where birds had been prevalent during the week were quiet, while the areas I was considering bypassing contained many species and were quite active. The swallows that had been present at Second Peninsula on Friday were absent or gone, and we only saw a few, and only briefly in the fog so that a positive ID could not be obtained. In all I believe that everyone had a good day.

## **Point Michaud, Cape Breton**

**23 August 2003, Leaders: George & Billy Digout**

It was a windy, cloudy and occasionally misty day for the Digouts' NSBS field trip to Point Michaud. Despite the weather no one complained too loudly to George.

Few birds were seen on the walk from Morrow's out along the beach to the ponds at the point: a kestrel, Savannah Sparrow, a few Herring Gulls, a Great Black-backed Gull and a Ring-billed Gull, a few dozen Common Terns and Double-crested Cormorants. Usually there are a few gannets offshore. Well, there may have been; we just couldn't see them through the fog.

After walking along the beach towards the ponds we started to see a few shorebirds: Semipalmated Plover, Sanderling, Black-bellied Plover, and a few Ruddy Turnstones. At the creek crossing a couple of Least Sandpipers were feeding. The highlight was working through the dozens of shorebirds in the shelter of the pond with the scopes. Once they were identified then the task was to get as many of the 18 birders as possible to see them well. The variety was impressive. Lots of Lesser Yellowlegs, a few Greater Yellowlegs, some Short-billed Dowitchers, Semipalmated and White-rumped Sandpipers, and a Semipalmated Plover.

Two birds stood out, a Wilson's Phalarope actively feeding and then a Stilt Sandpiper resting with its head under its wing. Once it started feeding we could see yellowish legs, light rump, long bill with a little droop and prominent eye line. This was the first time a Stilt Sandpiper had been seen on this trip.

A small group of Canada Geese, a couple of Belted Kingfishers, a few Bank Swallows, a Great Blue Heron, and a Northern Harrier kept the birders – at least those who were not picking gooseberries and blueberries – entertained when all the scopes were in use. As we walked back along the beach, with the wind at our back this time, a few Northern Gannets cruised off the point. By the time the stragglers caught up, however, the fog had rolled in again and the gannets could not be seen.



On the way back to St Peters the ponds in L'Ardoise held a few ducks: Blue and Green-winged Teal, a lone female Ring-necked Duck, several American Black Ducks, some Mallards and some hybrids. There were a few shorebirds in the ponds as well, more Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers and more yellowlegs. One bird flew over, a Red-necked Phalarope that had probably been blown in from the nearby ocean with the strong southerlies.

As we peered intently into the reeds, the clouds rolled in and the rain started, and it was a very wet drive to River Bourgeois. As always lunch was superb and enjoyed by all, even those who were teased about their eating habits. The rain did let up, but the story telling continued long into the afternoon.

Thanks to the George, Sharon and Billy for another successful trip.

David McCorquodale

## Bon Portage Island

29 August - 01 September 2004, Leader: Joan Czapalay

Bon Portage is an island I approach with excitement and anticipation. Excitement, because I know that there will be Leach's Storm Petrels - lots of them - about 50 000 nesting pairs on the island; and anticipation because I know there will be surprise avian visitors during migration season. I know that the birds we see will, for the most part, be up close and personal.

I arrived on the island around noon on Friday, and found the camps clean and tidy. There was gravity fed running water from rain barrels mounted on the camp roofs, and a new doorstep on each bunk house. Plenty of drinking water was available in large jugs, and there were dishes, pots and pans and a small propane stove for cooking.

Claire Diggins from Middleton, Sheila McCurdy and Chris Toplack from Wolfville, and Jeffrey White from Windsor arrived on Friday evening, as did the fog. We visited with the bird banders, who now have a new and very well run banding shed in the clearing above the slip. Treena Fitzgerald heads up the station, assisted by Mike Peckford and a team of volunteers for the Atlantic Bird Observatory. All are extremely conscientious in the net monitoring, extraction, and data recording. N. Waterthrush were moving through, but no major migration as yet. The highlight of the weekend was a **Great Crested Flycatcher** which we were able to see banded and photographed on Monday morning.

The weather was variable. I arrived Friday in sunshine but fog closed in and Saturday was cool and damp. Sunday was clear and sunny again with some wind. Some of us enjoyed a quick swim at the slip after the island walk-about. Monday was cloudy again.

Here is our trip list:

Leach's Storm Petrel - (there did not seem to be as many as other years. I wonder if the wet summer may have caused a decline in survival of chicks? )

Double crested Cormorants - 40

Great Blue Heron -1

**Black crowned Night Heron** -1

Green winged Teal -10

Blue winged Teal - 4

Am Black Duck - 8

Common Eider - 18

Osprey - 1

N. Harrier - 3 ( 1 male 1 female 1 juvenile)

Sharp-shinned Hawk - 3

**Cooper's Hawk** - 1 (seen in relation to a Sharpie)

Merlin - 3

**Peregrine** - 3 Black-bellied Plover - 1

Semi-palmated Plover 100

Greater Yellowlegs - 12

Lesser Yellowlegs - 4

Willet - 8

Spotted Sandpiper - 8 (4+4)

Ruddy Turnstone - 36

Sanderling - 1

Semi-palmated Sandpipers - **1000** (+ or - 100)

Least Sandpiper - 24

White-rumped Sandpiper - 1

**Baird's Sandpiper** - 2

S-B Dowitcher - 30

Herring Gull - many

Greater Black-backed Gull - many

Common Tern - 6

Great Horned Owl - 4

Ruby Throated Hummingbird - 4

Trail's Flycatcher - 48-50 (Sunday a.m. fallout by Garron's field)

Least Flycatcher - 2

Eastern Wood Peewee - 1

Barn Swallow - 1 (flying north)

Am Crow - 25

N.Raven - 6

Black capped Chickadee - 6

Boreal Chickadee - 40

Red-breasted Nuthatch - 75 (Sunday am)

Golden crowned Kinglet - 4  
 Hermit Thrush - 1  
**Warbling Vireo - 3** (all seen at close range; one definitely not banded )  
 Yellow Warbler - 10  
 Chesnut-sided Warbler - 2  
 Myrtle Warbler - 5  
 Black-throated Green Warbler - 7  
 Blackburnian Warbler - 1  
 Bay-breasted Warbler - 1  
 Black and White Warbler - 6  
 Am. Redstart - 4

Common Yellowthroat - 10  
**Prairie Warbler -1** (confirmed, possibly 2 others)  
 Savannah Sparrow 15  
 Fox Sparrow - 5  
 Song Sparrow - 20  
 Lincoln Sparrow - 1  
 Swamp Sparrow - 1 (+2 juveniles) Junco - 1  
**Baltimore Oriole - 2** ( 1male and 1 female seen together)

There were a number of deer on the island, as well as hare, shrew, voles, and a **Garter Snake** by the cabin door, 12 inches long. ☼

## Yarmouth County

**06 September 2003, Leader: Murray R. Newell**

First of all, thanks to the 31 friendly birders for making a lovely day better. We started at Wilson Road, in the morning, which produced a few interesting birds. One of the best was a Yellow-throated Vireo. We then birded Roberts Island where Johnny Nickerson had a Cerulean warbler, a Mourning Warbler, a Tennessee Warbler, and four Wilson's Warblers.

After a lunch at the park in Glenwood we went to Cape Island and visited Johnny's feeder which had a Lark Sparrow and a Field Sparrow. Some of the birders kept going till late afternoon. The last bird we found was a Savannah Sparrow which made 100 species for the day including 16 species of warblers. Not bad! ☼

## Shorebirds Of Sydney Area – Cape Breton

**07 September 2003, Leader Susann Myers**

We had terrific weather for the Shorebirds field trip in the Sydney area on Sunday, September 7. Clear skies and light winds, combined with 25 friendly birders as well as some great looks at birds, made for a memorable day.

We met at Sydney Airport where we were escorted onto the airfield by Greg Robertson of the Sydney Airport Authority. Concerns about safety and incoming planes had Greg keeping us tightly bunched, but with his generous help we were able to see large numbers of Black-bellied and American Golden Plovers, Killdeer and Whimbrel. The highlight was a group of 20 Pectoral Sandpipers that continued to feed quietly in the grass while we approached to within 30 feet, with a pair of Whimbrel wheeling overhead and a Northern Harrier visible in the distance.

We continued on to catch the falling tide at Morien Bar where we were treated to close looks at a good variety of shorebirds: Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, a single Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderlings, Semipalmated, Least and White-rumped Sandpipers, and Short-billed Dowitchers. A single Willet was heard calling from the mudflats, but the Baird's Sandpipers seen here the previous day did not appear for us. We were fortunate enough, however, to witness a dramatic encounter between an Osprey and a Bald Eagle directly overhead. As usual, the Eagle got the fish! Overall, we recorded 15 species of shorebirds at the two locations and 24 other bird species, including a Red-tailed Hawk and a single Barn Swallow.

The morning's birding was followed by a potluck picnic lunch, where a bountiful supply of great food resulted in many complaints of overeating. The balmy weather and nearby shorebirds were so enjoyable that the visiting continued till mid-afternoon. Many thanks to all the birders who made this such a great day, from the oldest (Murdoch Digout of St. Peters, who turned 90 this year) to the youngest (a position of some contention during the day)!

## Hartlen Point

**13 September 2003, Leader: Bob Lindsay**

We began with a party of seventeen birders, a few of whom had to leave before the day was over. The weather was very pleasant and there were no known cases of heat prostration or sunburn.

We started in the parking lot of the golf course and headed along the road leading past the Osprey tower and eventually down to Back Cove. Before we reached Back Cove highlights included a common loon and a Northern Harrier that has spent all fall on the cranberry barren by the ocean.

Peeps and larger shorebirds seen for the day included: White-rumped Sandpiper, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Semi. Sandpiper, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling.

Warblers seen were Yellow-rumped, Yellow, Blackpoll, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Black & White, Common Yellowthroat, Bay-breasted, and Palm, while raptors were Bald Eagle, Osprey, and the Northern Harrier mentioned earlier.

Without a doubt the highlights of the day were the Cuckoo (sp) seen by Clarence Stevens, Sr., and the two Black-legged Kittiwake seen out beyond Devil's Island spotted by Fulton Lavender. We were very fortunate to have these two excellent birders with us. Later observations at this location suggest that the Cuckoo may have been a Yellow-billed.

Our species total was 48.

## **Brier Island Extravaganza**

### **Thanksgiving Weekend 2003**

Although no owls were found on Friday night's owl quest a Gray-cheeked Thrush was heard and approximately 20 birders got to meet, mingle, and share their anticipations for the weekend.

On Saturday morning Terry Paquet showed us the North Light area and guided us through the village. Highlights were Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Eastern Phoebe, and Red-bellied Woodpecker.

On Saturday afternoon about 40 birders went on the pelagic cruise with Carl Haycock and Mariner Cruises. This trip was exceptional offering close-up views of Greater, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters, Red-necked Phalaropes, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers as well as a marvelous show of "dancing dolphins". Some people couldn't get on this trip as it was fully booked. A few went the next day. Some that stayed behind were treated to a rare sighting of a Swainson's Hawk!

On Saturday night a potluck supper was held at the Hostel which 34 birders attended; all of whom were able to sit down and enjoy a fantastic Thanksgiving meal. This feat was accomplished by the super organizational skills of Joan Czapalay and Claire Diggins and by many pairs of helping hands.

On Sunday morning, Peter Richard took a group on a stroll of the Dartmouth Cove waterfront on Long Island. The exciting find here was a Redhead! A Northern Mockingbird was also added to the list.

On Sunday afternoon Jeff Ogden led a small group to Pond Cove in search of butterflies, dragonflies, and other late-season insects. These proved to be few and far between, but the walk was pleasant and June Swift was able to point out some late-blooming wildflowers. Others who missed the boat trip on Saturday went on this cruise on Sunday and were lucky enough to see almost all of the same species. Still others chose to take campstools and blankets to the top of Hawk Hill and stretch out and enjoy the kettle of hawks that was circling above the Island all weekend. Part of the beauty of a trip like this is the choice of following the scheduled events or exploring on your own.

Fulton Lavender finished up the weekend on Monday by doing a sweep of the Island which produced good looks at a Peregrine Falcon flushing an Upland Sandpiper. This group also got to see the elusive Yellow-billed Cuckoo which brought the total of birds seen on the weekend to an impressive 122 species. ☐

## **Sandy Lake, Tantallon**

### **25 October 2003, Leader: Suzanne M. Borkowski**

Birds were few and far between at Sandy Lake. The few we had were interesting, though.

A BARRED OWL was spotted by Dominic Cormier sitting on a branch close to the road. Everyone got excellent views of it, once it turned its head and opened its eyes, thereby distinguishing itself from the nearby tree trunks! Several GRAY JAYS (Canada Jays) were seen by all and heard vocalizing loudly.

Also seen were Boreal Chickadees, White-winged Crossbills, a Hooded Merganser (seen by Chris Field), a family of Eagles, loads of RB Nuthatches, Chickadees, Juncos, and GC Kinglets. Liz and Shane Gidney saw a Ruffed Grouse, and another grouse, possibly a Spruce Grouse, was spotted by Carol Klar.

Despite getting the group lost on the Island Lake Trail (I'm really bad at this!) everyone assured me they had a great day. Many thanks to Jonathan Porter who co-led this trip and provided us with background information on Bowater Mersey forestry practices.

## Eastern Shore

27 September 2003, Leader: Peter Richard

The weather was very pleasant for the time of year - and, as it turned out, very warm and sunny in the afternoon.

A group of four started at Storey Head with a few brief observations before heading off to Misener's beach to look for shorebirds. The first thing of note we saw was not birds but 53 seals sunning themselves and cavorting in the water just off the Storey Head approach road parking area.

Even though the tide was still rather high there was an abundance of shorebirds. Sightings included both Semipalmated Sandpipers and Plovers, both Yellowlegs, and Black-bellied Plovers. We also saw Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. Raptors included Merlin, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, and Peregrine Falcon.

After lunch the tide was low enough that we could walk out to Storey Head. As it turned out this would complete our day. The huge flocks of shorebirds were impressive to behold and we could only guess at numbers of the various species. The following are our shorebird estimates:

800 - 1000 shorebirds, of 10 species, with estimates as follows:

- 35 % Semipalmated Sandpiper
- 30% Semipalmated Plover
- 10% Black-bellied Plover
- 10% Sanderling
- 5% Dunlin
- 10% Other species: White-rumped Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs  
Short-billed Dowitcher, and Ruddy Turnstone.

Many common fall visitors appeared to be absent and there were no other particularly noteworthy species. Chickadees, nuthatches, some sparrows, gulls, ducks were all represented. Our species total was 33.

Just at noon or a little later, we noticed gathering high cloud in the sky, although it was still very sunny and warm, and it was easy to get a sunburn. One of us did. Anyone listening to forecasts would know there was a tropical storm on its way. Some 36 hours later, Juan made landfall in Nova Scotia, and the rest is history.

Bob Lindsay

## NSBS Executive - 2004



(L to R) Bernice Moores, Bill Billington, Eileen Billington, Andy Horn, Gisèle d'Entremont, Suzanne Borkowski, Jennifer Gerrits & Blake Maybank. Absent, Joan Czapalay, Libby Dean, Barbars Hinds. [Photo S. Levy]



## NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

### BALANCE SHEET

As at September 30, 2003

(With comparative figures as at September 30, 2002)

	<u>2002/03</u>	<u>2001/02</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current assets</b>		
Bank accounts	23,031	21,159
Term deposits	<u>5,000</u>	<u>16,816</u>
Total cash	28,031	37,975
Accounts receivable	15,655	1,590
Accumulated interest	-	17
Prepaid expense	<u>469</u>	<u>324</u>
Total current assets	<u>44,155</u>	<u>39,906</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	44,155	39,906
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	7,448	9,492
Deferred revenue	2,721	
Coastal Guardian Programme	<u>-</u>	<u>51</u>
Total liabilities	10,169	9,543
<b>Reserve</b>	5,100	5,100
<b>Members' equity</b>		
Opening balance	25,263	23,985
Excess revenue over expense	<u>3,624</u>	<u>1,278</u>
Total members' equity	<u>28,886</u>	<u>25,263</u>
<b>Liabilities and equity</b>	44,155	39,906

A. G. Horn, President

B. Moores, Treasurer

H. Forsyth, Auditor

## NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

### INCOME STATEMENT

For the year ended September 30, 2003  
(With comparative figures for the year ended September 30, 2002)

	<u>2002/03</u>	<u>2001/02</u>
<b>Revenue</b>		
Memberships	5,365	5,618
Sale of publications, etc.	1,103	541
Nova Scotia Museum grant	2,000	2,000
Donations	245	369
Interest	320	711
Foreign exchange	182	175
	<u>9,215</u>	<u>9,414</u>
FNSN-AGM income	404	475
Piping Plover projects	<u>71,081</u>	<u>62,695</u>
<b>Total revenue</b>	<u>80,700</u>	<u>72,584</u>
<b>Expense</b>		
Cost of items for sale	70	535
Nova Scotia Birds	3,893	5,310
Committees	108	817
Printing and stationery	72	-
Promotion	1,594	1,007
Insurance	200	275
Amortization	-	142
Miscellaneous expense	<u>59</u>	<u>85</u>
	5,996	8,171
CNF-IBA - Brothers Islands interpretive panel	-	440
Habitat stewardship programme	<u>71,081</u>	<u>62,695</u>
<b>Total expense</b>	<u>77,077</u>	<u>71,306</u>
Excess revenue over expense	3,623	1,278

(Continued from page 4)

**Sat 29 May 2004 – Belleisle Marsh**

Leader: Sharon Hawboldt 665-4105

E-mail: [s.hawboldt@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:s.hawboldt@ns.sympatico.ca)

Meet at the home of Sharon and Stephen Hawboldt, 6601 Hwy #1 (between Bridgetown and Annapolis Royal) in Belleisle at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, fly repellent and wear comfortable footwear. No rain date.

**Sun 30 May 2004 – Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary**

Leader: Terry Paquet 452-3622 E-mail: [terrypaquet@hotmail.com](mailto:terrypaquet@hotmail.com)

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the APBS parking lot. Take exit #3 from Hwy #104 at the Wandlyn Inn and proceed a few km toward Nappan. Watch for the entrance on the left. Wear appropriate footwear for wet conditions and bring a lunch.

**Wed 02 June 2004 – BLT Trail Walk**

Leader: Suzanne Borkowski 445-2922

E-mail: [sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca)

**Pre-registration is necessary!**

Meet at 6:00 a.m. at Tim Horton's in Lakeside/Timberlea on Hwy #3. We'll take half the vehicles to exit #4 (Hwy #3 & #103) and walk the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Trail back to Tim Horton's. We'll take a short break and for those who are interested we'll continue to the end of the trail in Lakeside Industrial Park. Easy walking but loads of black flies! Duration: three to four hours.

**Sat 05 June 2004 – Canso and Area**

Leader: Steve Bushell 366-2527

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Chapel Gully Trail parking lot. Come down Main Street, turn right onto Union, pass the Marina and take the next right onto Wilmot. The parking lot is at the top of the hill. We will be walking a number of habitats from Jack Pine woods to the coastal barrens of Louse Harbour. Rain date: Sun, June 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Sun 06 June 2004 – Chebucto Peninsula Bird Tour**

Leader: Hans Toom 868-1862 E-mail: [htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca)

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the gates of Crystal Crescent Beach Provincial Park. We'll walk the coastal trail to Island Rock Head and return on the old service road, about an 8 km loop. Lunch will be in our backyard in Portuguese Cove followed by a warbler walk on the trails behind Portuguese Cove Lake. Bring a lunch. No rain date.

**Sat 12 June 2004 – Dawn Chorus on the Salt Marsh Trail**

Leader: Cindy Staicer 494-3533 E-mail: [cindy.staicer@dal.ca](mailto:cindy.staicer@dal.ca)

Meet at 4:30 a.m. in the parking lot for the Cole Harbor Salt Marsh Trail on Bissett Road. We'll spend several hours walking the trail and learning to identify warblers by sound. Bring appropriate footwear and insect repellent. Rain date: Sun June 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Sat 19 June to Sun 20 June 2004 – FNSN Conference**

Contacts: Joan Czapalay 422-6858 E-mail: [joancz@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:joancz@ns.sympatico.ca) or Marie Moverley E-mail: [mariemoverley@yahoo.ca](mailto:mariemoverley@yahoo.ca)

The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists will hold their 2004 AGM at the Wandlyn Inn, Amherst, N.S. An FNSN rate is available at the motel for Friday night for those who wish to arrive early. Field trips include Fulton Lavender's NSBS trip which can be joined at 7:00 a.m. in Wentworth Park or 1:00 p.m. in the parking lot of the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary; an afternoon bug trip with Jeff Ogden or a choice of butterfly, botany or geology trips. There will be a Saturday evening banquet and a Sunday morning buffet followed by the AGM. Cost per person, based on double occupancy, for Saturday accommodations, events, banquet and Sunday breakfast will be \$89.00 **before May 20th**. Call 1-866-823-9330 and ask for Debbie at the Wandlyn Inn to book your room.

**Sat 19 June 2004 – Cumberland County**

Leader: Fulton Lavender 455-4966

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the entrance to Wentworth Provincial Park, Hwy #4, near the intersection of Rte #246. Take exit #11 off Hwy #104 and drive past Folly Mountain and Wentworth Valley. Park is on the left. We'll explore different habitats between Wentworth and Amherst. Bring lunch, boots and fly repellent. Rain date: Sun June 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Sat 26 June 2004 – Lewis Lake Warbler Walk**

Leader: Hans Toom 868-1862 E-mail: [htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca)

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the St. Margaret's Bay Trailhead on Hwy #3, Lake of the Woods s/d, Hubley. (Exit #4, Hwy #103) This is the point where the BLT Trail ends and the St. Margaret's Bay Trail starts. We'll walk the trail to Lewis Lake, do a circuit of the Park, then continue along the trail to Hubley Mill Lake. I'll arrange to have vehicles waiting at the trail's end to take drivers back to the morning's start location. We should be done by noon. No rain date.

**Sun 27 June 2004 – Eastern Shore**

Leader: Bob Lindsay 434-3438

E-mail: [rhindsay@accesswave.ca](mailto:rhindsay@accesswave.ca)

Meet at 6:00 a.m. in the Zellers Parking lot in Colby Plaza, just behind the Esso Station on Cole Harbour Road. Visit several sites along the Eastern Shore from Dartmouth to Lawrencetown – one of the best areas around for seeing migrants. Bring proper footwear and a lunch. Rain date: Sun June 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Sun 11 July 2004 – Wallace Bay**

Leader: Paul MacDonald 627-2568

E-mail: [paulrita2001@yahoo.com](mailto:paulrita2001@yahoo.com)

Meet at the Wallace Wharf at 8:30 a.m. Primary points of interest are the impoundments at the Wallace Bay National Wildlife Area. The morning will consist of a three-hour walk along a woodland trail, so come prepared with sturdy footwear, water and a lunch. No rain date. ☺

# 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 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 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.

## Sat 01 May 2004 – Cape Sable Island

Leader: Murray Newell 745-3340 E-mail: [murcar@klis.com](mailto:murcar@klis.com)  
Meet at Tim Horton's in Barrington Passage at 7:45 a.m. We will bird the Cape Sable Island hot spots for spring migrants. Bring proper footwear and a lunch. No rain date.

## Sat 08 May 2004 – North American Migration Count

Provincial Co-ordinator: Judy Tufts 542-7800  
E-mail: [tandove@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:tandove@ns.sympatico.ca)  
The thirteenth annual North American Migration Count will take place this spring on Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>. This event is always held on the second Saturday in May. Anyone wishing to participate should contact their local county co-ordinator, area representative or Judy Tufts for more information. All are welcome. No fee involved.

## Sun 16 May 2004 – Mersey Connector and Kaiser Meadow

Leaders: Chris Field 422-9500 E-mail: [field@mathstat.dal.ca](mailto:field@mathstat.dal.ca)  
and Bill & Eileen Billington 857-3128 E-mail: [billeen2@aol.com](mailto:billeen2@aol.com)  
Meet at 6:00 a.m. in the parking area at exit #7 off highway #103 (Chester, Blandford exit). We'll explore the woods roads off Highway #3 between Hubbards and East River looking for warblers and other spring woodland birds. We'll make our way into the Kaiser Meadow area from the Mersey Connector Road. Bring proper footwear, a hat, sunblock, etc., and a lunch. No rain date.

## Wed 19 May 2004 – The Fred Dobson Warbler Walk

Leader: Joan Waldron 477-4273 E-mail: [waldrojo@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:waldrojo@ns.sympatico.ca)  
**Pre-registration is necessary!**  
Meet at 6:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the junction of Prospect Road (Rte #333) and St. Margaret's Bay Road in Halifax. (Near exit #2, Hwy #103) Duration: two to three hours. Waterproof footwear and fly repellent are recommended.

## Fri 21 May to Mon 24 May 2004 – Bon Portage Island

Leader: Claire Diggins 825-6152  
E-mail: [claire\\_diggins@hotmail.com](mailto:claire_diggins@hotmail.com)  
**Pre-registration is necessary!**  
Depart 6:00 p.m. on Friday from Prospect Point Wharf, Shelburne County. Bring food, drinking water, warm clothing, footwear suitable for rough (sometimes wet) terrain, a flashlight, mattress sheet and sleeping bag. Carry gear in waterproof bags or containers. Field guides are available on the island, as are cooking pans, dishes and utensils. There is a charge of \$45 for NSBS members for three nights accommodation, plus a donation for the boat trip.

## Sat 22 May 2004 – Conquerall Mills

Leader: James Hirtle 624-0893 E-mail: [jrhbirder@hotmail.com](mailto:jrhbirder@hotmail.com)  
Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the dam area of the Petite Riviere, near the intersection of Conquerall Mills and the Crousetown Road. Turn left off Hwy #103 at Hebb's Cross just past exit #14. Drive two to three km along this road towards Conquerall Mills. We'll be exploring Fitch Road and Dagley Road along Publicover Lake, as well as Brown Branch Brook, Mount Pleasant and Hebb Mills. In the afternoon we can check out Station Road, Fauxburg, Long Hill and Oakland. Bring a lunch, proper footwear and sunblock. Rain date: Sunday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## Mon 24 May 2004 - Kejimikujik Seaside Adjunct

Leaders: Gary C. Hartlen 354-7250 E-mail: [garych@eastlink.ca](mailto:garych@eastlink.ca)  
and Peter Davies.  
Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot for the Seaside Adjunct. Please be advised a small entrance fee is now being charged. Take Hwy #103 to exit #22 (unmarked) and drive approx six km down the St. Catherine's River Road to the Park. There are washroom facilities on site and coffee is available at the Port Joli General Store, one km past exit #22. We will be walking from the parking lot to the ocean where Piping Plover will be nesting. Expect warbler species in full breeding plumage and nesting shorebirds on the trail to the headland. Wear waterproof footwear, long pants (wood ticks abound at this time of year) and bring a lunch. No rain date.

## Thu 27 May 2004 – Meeting & Skills Workshop

NSMNH, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, 7:30 p.m.  
"Comparing Spring and Fall Warblers" Presenter: Ian McLaren

## Thu 27 May to Sun 30 2004 – Canadian Nature Federation Conference

Hosted by Club d'Ornithologie du Madawaska, Edmunston N.B.  
Contact: Pierrette Mercier (506) 735-6872 E-mail: [petem@nb.sympatico.ca](mailto:petem@nb.sympatico.ca) This four-day conference offers a wine and cheese reception, a banquet, a BBQ, a silent auction, workshops and 19 different field trips. For further info and registration details visit their website at: [www.umce.ca/com1](http://www.umce.ca/com1)

(Continued on inside back cover)