

Nova Scotia Birds

A Quarterly Publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society



Spring Season 2013

Volume 55, Issue 3



NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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Formed in 1955, the Nova Scotia Bird Society is a member of Nature Nova Scotia and Nature Canada. The activities of the Society are centred on the observation, study and protection of the birds of the province and preservation of their habitats.

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Inside This Issue

Special Points of Interest:

Full colour-illustrated report on spring birds; Nova Scotia Migration Count; discoveries of Crested Caracara, two Red Crossbill “call types”, and Sprague’s Pipit; Close-nesting raptors 19th Century newspaper account of birds. And more.



Cover: This spring’s **CRESTED CARACARA** was surely one of our most startling birds ever, and attracted wide publicity, including use of this image in the press. [Photo Frank Gummett]

	Page
Bird Society News	4
Message from the President	4
Winter Bird Reports	5
Waterfowl	5
Galliformes	10
Loons, Grebes	10
Tubenoses through Cormorants	12
Hérons	12
Diurnal Raptors	14
Rallids, Cranes	16
Shorebirds	16
Gulls through Alcids	20
Pigeons through Woodpeckers	23
Flycatchers through Thrushes	25
Mimids through Wood Warblers	28
Sparrows through House Sparrow	32
List of Contributors	39
Field Trip Reports	40
Other Reports	43
NS Migration Counts, 2013	43
Nova Scotia’s first Crested Caracara	45
Close-nesting raptors	49
Red Crossbill Call Types	50
Sight record of Sprague’s Pipit	51
Birds in our past	52
Upcoming Events	53
Corrections, Vol. 55, Issue 2	54

Vol. 55, Issue 3*Addresses below***Production Assistants***Vacant***Records Editor***Lance Laviolette***Events Editor***Kate Steele***Seasonal Bird Reports***Chris Field**Nic Fieldsend**Ross Hall**Ulli Hoeger**Ken McKenna**Ian McLaren**Eric Mills**Susann Myers**Rick Whitman***Banner Artist & Line Art***Trevor Herriot***Other Help***Ulli Hoeger**Eric Mills**Chris Pepper***Bird Reports to:***Lance Laviolette**RR # 1, Glen Robertson, ON,**KOB 1H0**Lance.laviolette@Imco.com***Photo submissions to:***Ian McLaren, Photo Editor**Address below***Other Items for publication to:***Ian McLaren, Acting Editor**Nova Scotia Birds, 1755 Cambridge St.,**Halifax, B3H 4A8**iamclar@dal.ca*

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Forward from the Acting Editor

The season began with a relatively balmy March and our first CRESTED CARACARA at month's end. Then came a less pleasant April, with lower average temperatures and more snow than in March. This was presumably responsible for the delayed and reduced migrations mentioned by a number of our section editors. The month's highlight was a lingering LITTLE EGRET in late April. May was more seasonably warm, but quite rainy, and again the impression was of reduced activity of our summering birds. It remains to be seen if the effects of this poor weather will be evident in this summer's Breeding Bird Surveys and affect breeding success.

This issue is perhaps timely enough for members and others to relive their own spring experiences. We thank all who submitted their observations for summary and analysis by our section editors – we depend on you



My choice (as photo editor) is possibly biased, but I'd like to think that the "IPSWICH" SPARROW, here Mar 31 on CSI, not the robin, is our true harbinger of spring. [Photo Ronnie d'Entremont]

Cost of this publication is partly provided by the Nova Scotia Museum



Notes from the President, David A. Currie

It's been a fairly busy time for members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society. Although birds seem fewer and song not nearly what it used to be, we are seeing a renewed interest in education and awareness of birds in our environment. The Provincial Parks people, through Department of Natural Resources, have been recruiting NSBS members to lead educational bird walks in its many camping and wilderness sites throughout the province. This program will continue, so any members wanting to undertake this next year should let us know so that we can put you in touch with the appropriate people.

Our June "Out-of-Town" meeting was held in Yarmouth this year and was a great success. Many thanks to the Yarmouth County Museum for the wonderful venue, our speaker, well known naturalist Jim Wilson, and our field trip leaders for all making it such a fun time. At our meeting we were so pleased to present Sid and Betty-June Smith with a lifetime membership to the Nova Scotia Bird Society and a very well-deserved NSBS Certificate of Appreciation went to Claire Diggins for all she does for organizing the regular Bon Portage Island Birding Weekends.

We congratulate Bernard Forsythe for being recognized for his outstanding commitment to conservation and being awarded the 2013 Canadian Wildlife Federation's *Stan Hodgkiss Canadian Outdoorsmen of the Year Award*, which was presented to him in British Columbia. This follows last year's award recipient, Helene van Doninck, for her tireless pursuits of bettering the environment. We are so honoured to have you both within our ranks.

The Blomidon Naturalists Society spearheaded a "Swift Night Out" in Wolfville sponsored in part by Bird Studies Canada and The Nova Scotia Bird Society. This one-evening event attracted 65 people to the lecture given by Alison Manthorne, and then over 100 people attended the nightly arrival of the swifts to the chimney at the Robie Tufts Centre.

As noted in last edition, we can now say that all back issues of *Nova Scotia Birds* have been digitized. About 210 issues are now scanned and ready to make public. Stay tuned as we get closer to on-line availability to not only view these magazines, but to search the contents

Lastly, The Nova Scotia Bird Society has purchased very attractive T-shirts and Hats with the distinctive new embroidered logo. The first order included 72 high quality hats and 72 light green unisex T-shirts. Within the first 24 hours of showing them off on our Facebook page, we sold 46 of those! (See back cover.) New embroidered patches are available as well and special NSBS 4GB Memory sticks that you can order with or without the full digitized collection of *Nova Scotia Birds*.

Important Agenda Item for Next Annual General Meeting

In order to comply with recent changes to the Canadian Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (CNCA) and the Societies Act of Nova Scotia, the existing "Constitution and By-Laws" had to be converted/amended to a "Memorandum of Association and By-Laws". This was done with the assistance of the legal counsel of our honorary solicitor. The "Memorandum of Association" and the "By-Laws" each require a "special resolution" to be passed by the membership at the next Special/Annual General Meeting. Another terminology/technical change is that the "Executive Committee" is now a "Board of Directors" and all are elected as "directors" at the AGM. Also a few adjustments have been made and updates added to reflect modern realities, such as electronic notification, websites, etc. A copy of the "Memorandum of Association and By-Laws" will be available on our website or you can request an electronic or paper copy from the President.



SPRING BIRD REPORTS

NOTE: The following are frequently used abbreviations and acronyms, especially to save space in tables and text. In addition, months and most county names are abbreviated (except when stand-alone), and the latter are always in *italics* to distinguish them from towns with the same names. Well known cities and towns, even some small ones, are spelled out in full, without their counties or municipalities. Cardinal and ordinal directions may be abbreviated (as w., n.e., etc.) and capitalized only when part of a place name.

General terms

Ad. = adult
 BBS – Breeding Bird Survey
 Bch., bch. = Beach, beach
 Brk. = Brook
ca. = approximately
 CBC = Christmas Bird Count
 DU = Ducks Unlimited wetland
 f. = female
fide = on the authority of
 Hbr. = Harbour
 Hway(s) = Highway(s) usually numbered
 I. = Island (pl. Is.)
 imm. = immature
 incl. = including
 juv. = juvenile (first post-nestling plumage)
 Lr. = Lower
 m. = male
 m. obs. = many observers
 n.d. = no details (unsupported by documentation)
 no. = number
 nr. = geographically near
 NSMC = Nova Scotia [Spring] Migration Count
 obs., as in '2 obs.' = observer(s), *not* observation(s)
 Pk. = Park
 Pen. = Peninsula
 ph. = photographed
 PP = Provincial Park

Pt. = Point (*not* Port)
 pr. = pair
 R. = River
 Rd. = Road
 rept(s). = report(s)
 Sanc. = Sanctuary, as in several Game Sanctuaries
 spec. = specimen
 thr. = through a season, as in 'thr. summer'
 var. obs. = various observers
 WMA – Wildlife Management Area
 yng. = young
 + or ++ with numbers = more; with dates = later
 <, > = less (or fewer) than, greater (or more) than
Geographical locations
 APBS = Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary, *Cumb*
 BPI = Bon Portage (Outer) I. *Shel.*
 Brier I. = Brier Island, *Digby*
 CBI = Cape Breton Island
 CBHNP = Cape Breton Highlands National Park
 CBRM = Cape Breton Regional Municipality
 Hbr., hbr. = Harbour, harbour
 HRM = Halifax Regional Municipality
 Keji. NP = Kejimikujik National Park
 Keji. Seaside NP = Kejimikujik NP Seaside Adjunct
 PPP. Halifax = Point Pleasant Park, Halifax
 Seal I. = Seal Island, Outer Tusket Is., *Yar.*
 Uniacke Pk. = Uniacke Estate Museum Park, *Hants*

Note: The NSMC as totals from all counties, are given in this issue, and are only partly reviewed in the following reports (generally as counts from particular localities).

Waterfowl

By Ross Hall

Among the four seasons covered by “*Nova Scotia Birds*”, spring is the season of population renewal. We see handsome waterfowl pairs in their best matrimonial plumage. There then follows the appearance of fluffy lines of ducklings. For some waterfowl, Nova Scotia is only a winter refuge or a migration stop on their way to breed further north. Two of the SNOW

GEESE (2 ad. and 1 imm.) that wintered with CANADA GEESE at Lockport were still there in mid-March. Also in March, CANADA GEESE were leaving southern coastal shores. Bill Crosby reports the Lockport winter population declining from 400 to 70 by Mar 18. Many stopped to feed on farm fields in the Annapolis Valley and near Truro. By late April and May there were reports of numerous nesting pairs of CANADA GEESE throughout Nova Scotia. One, May 27 at Churchvale, *Pict*, had “been on its nest in a beaver pond for some time” (KJM). One odd Canada among three, Mar 19 at Brooklyn, *Queens*, had white on back of its head (ROH). BRANT had returned in February (see last issue) and were reported to early May, with most sightings from CSI and Brier I.



A CANADA GOOSE brooding its goslings on the nest at a DU marsh in Brookefield, *Pict*, makes an appealing image [Photo Cliff Sandeson]

There were no March reports of WOOD DUCK, but sightings increased markedly from mid-April through May as migrants returned. Kate Steele at Annapolis Royal Marsh May 31 noted interesting large broods of 23 and 17 young with accompanying WOOD DUCK hens. References say that the normal clutch size for a female WOOD DUCK is about 12. Other hen Wood Duck, unable to locate their own suitable nesting cavity, will “dump” their eggs in an occupied nest. Biologists use the term “intraspecific parasitism” for this “give-up-for-adoption” behaviour. There are a few reports of GADWALL wintering in Nova Scotia. The 14 GADWALL reported by Kate Steele May 31 at Annapolis Royal Marsh presumably had arrived as spring migrants. EURASIAN WIGEON were a guaranteed sighting during March for birders visiting Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth, but the two male Eurasian May 14 at Little Dyke Marsh, *Col.*, were less expected. Among the many reports of AMERICAN WIGEON, Scott Penton reported the highest number – see table below.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK is always widely reported across the province. It nests early, and sometimes far from water. Continuing the theme of clutch size, a hen Black Duck will lay her body weight in egg mass, so she must be in good laying condition, and a second brood, if necessary, is smaller. MALLARD is also widely reported. They have more urban preferences, such as Sullivans Pond or Kiwanis Pond in Truro. As pairs disperse from Kiwanis Pond, every available pond near Truro becomes a Mallard nesting territory. Often now in recent years the Mallards share their ponds with a pairs of Canada Geese.

Reports of BLUE-WINGED TEAL began mostly in late April. Our Dept. of Natural Resources has a general status list for Nova Scotia wildlife with Blue-winged Teal, NORTHERN PINTAIL, NORTHERN SHOVELER and Gadwall as “Maybe at Risk”. One reason for this higher concern is a declining trend in the species population. Belleisle and the Annapolis Royal Marshes were the locations to see lots of Shoveler this spring, and on May 20 Cliff Sandeson saw “maybe as many as 20 pairs” of them at the former marsh. Small numbers of Pintail were reported throughout the province through spring. The GREEN-WINGED TEAL, although small, is a hardy duck. However, except in the warmer waters at the NSPC outflow at Trenton, there were few March reports of it, although there were many reports in April and May.

RING-NECKED DUCKS were mostly absent in March but present in April and May. Most of the observations were at the shallow and permanent wetlands created by Ducks Unlimited. An exception was a flock of 100 RING-NECKED DUCK seen Mar 21 at Lakeview, *HRM*, by Shelly Gillet, who commented on their beautiful eyes. Ken McKenna had the pleasure of

seeing the only TUFTED DUCK this spring at Lyons Brook, *Pict.* Kevin Lantz and James Hirtle reported good numbers of GREATER SCAUP in *Lunenburg* during March. On March 9 Ken McKenna had 2000 GREATER SCAUP at the Pictou Causeway. The Pictou Causeway is perhaps one man-made development with a benefit to waterfowl. The tide passing under the causeway keeps winter ice from forming and seemingly promotes a good food culture of shellfish. Ken did have two Greater Scaup lingering in *Pictou* until May 17. There was speculation during the second Breeding Bird Atlas that lingering Greater Scaup might breed in that county, but no evidence of this was found. They do breed in the lower Saint John River in New Brunswick. There were few reports of LESSER SCAUP this spring; the female that overwintered on Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth, had a notable wound on her face in mid-March (BBU, ph.).

Hundreds of COMMON EIDER nest along Nova Scotia's coasts in April and May. On coastal islands their nests are hidden amongst raspberry and under boughs of softwood. Eggs are laid on a cushion of eider down that the hen plucks from her breast. A hen will carefully cover and hide the eggs from gulls with down if she must take a break from the nest. Male COMMON EIDER when no longer finding interested females will begin to form bachelor groups. Ian McLaren reported a hatched brood of eight May 26 at Hartlen Pt., *HRM*, "in a curious crèche, consisting of 3 other adult female, and perhaps 8-10 first-summer females." While most of our COMMON EIDER nest on islands on our Eastern and South Shores, it is interesting to know that they also nest along the Bay of Fundy at such locations as Cape d'Or and Five Islands. Once entering those waters, new hatchlings have a terrific ride and are moved many miles from their nest sites by tides. Among the diving ducks, HARLEQUIN DUCK and BARROW'S GOLDENEYE are listed "At Risk" by NS Natural Resources. There were various March-April reports of HARLEQUIN DUCK. Although they do not nest in Nova Scotia, there were also reports of late-staying Harlequins in May at Country Hbr., *Guys*, and in *Richmond* and *CBRM*.

SURF SCOTER, WHITE-WINGED SCOTER, BLACK SCOTER and LONG-TAILED DUCK, which winter here, were regularly seen on Nova Scotia coastlines in March and early April. The group sizes were usually small. Ken McKenna reported a very large flock of Surf Scoter May 28 off Big I., *Pict.* and Kate Steele and James Hirtle found large numbers of Black Scoter May 18 off Cape Split, *Kings*, and May 1 at Rose Bay, *Lun*, respectively (see table below). Such larger flocks are migrating through, as the majority of these four sea-duck species do not stay here but overwinter further south along the US Atlantic seaboard in such places as off Nantucket. There is a huge spring migration of scoters into the Gulf of Maine, whence birds pass over New Brunswick or Nova Scotia to the Northumberland Strait. It is said that residents of Memramcook, NB, hear the birds passing over at night. Google is a great search tool and questions about sea duck migration return good references. One is a 2012 progress report, *Atlantic and Great Lakes Sea Duck Migration Study* by the Sea Duck Joint Venture Partnership. Much is being discovered with the use of radio telemetry. Check it out:

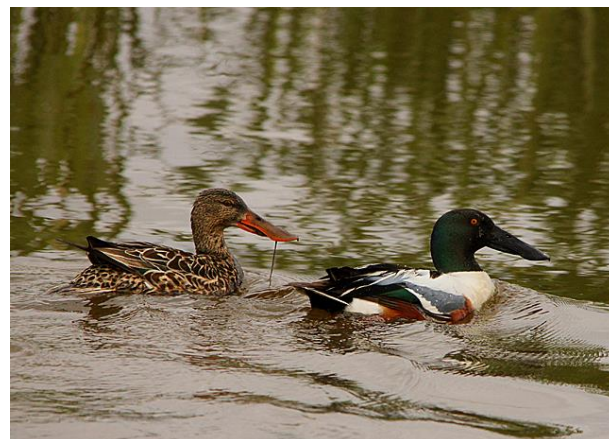
http://seaduckjv.org/atlantic_migration_study/atlantic_grlakes_sea_duck_rpt_november2012_compressed.pdf

BUFFLEHEAD is another waterfowl species that winters, but not does nest, in Nova Scotia. These small ducks are delight to watch in protected estuaries around the province. A sampling of observations is listed in the tables. Most observations were in March and April. Of the May 11 NSMC provincial total, almost all (61) were in *Annapolis* and were most likely newly arrived migrants rather than lingering, although Sylvia Fullerton commented on one lingering NSMC Bufflehead at Cherry Hill Bch, *Lun*. COMMON GOLDENEYE is well reported, particularly in *Lunenburg*, *Halifax* and *Pictou*. Most were in observed in March, but not all depart for more northern nesting locations. The 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas does have a few breeding records for Nova Scotia and many in New Brunswick. BARROW'S GOLDENEYE was reported at five locations in March, almost on the Northumberland Strait. Neither the 1st nor 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas found evidence of their nesting here. All three merganser species were well reported from around the province. A sample of these observations from reporting counties are listed from around the province in the tables. Ken McKenna reported much the largest concentration of COMMON MERGANSERS in late March at the outflow from the Trenton Power Station. He stated that this was not an unusual large number for this location. Diminished reports in May indicate that these mergansers were moving to nesting locations on larger rivers and lakes. One female May 1 at Gold R. Lake, *Kings*, "flew directly into a nest location in a broken-off, very large white pine" (RIW). HOODED MERGANSERS often use nest boxes built for Wood Duck, and their broods are often seen in smaller wetlands with mucky bottoms. We may guess that, they eat a few leaches then as well as small fish. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER, as the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas indicated, shows a preference for more coastal wetlands and has its broods in quiet brackish bays and estuaries.

Snow Goose							
Mar 17, 18	Matthews L., <i>Shel</i>	1 imm., 1 ad.	ELM, R. Crosby	Mar 11, 14	E. Apple R., <i>Cumb</i>	90, 40	KFS
Canada Goose				Mar 12	Keji. NP, <i>Anna</i>	80 flying	M. Crowley
thr. spring	<i>HRM</i>	many repts.	var. obs.	Mar 18	Lockport, <i>Shel</i>	70 (earlier >400)	R. Crosby
Mar 3	Oxners Beach, <i>Lun</i>	335	JAH	Mar 19	Brooklyn, <i>Queens</i>	3	ROH
				Apr 7	R. Bourgeois, <i>Rich</i>	2	RIV

Apr 18	McElmond Pond WMA, <i>Col</i>	70	ROH
Apr 18	Central Onslow, <i>Col</i>	240	ROH
Mar 24	Shubenacadie, <i>Hants</i>	100s	HAT
Mar 22	Canning, <i>Kings</i>	600 + 240	Paul Mateuchy
May	<i>Kings</i>	nesting prs.	var. obs.
May 24	Ann Royal Marsh, <i>Ann</i>	20 (incl. yng.)	RSM
May 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Ann</i>	161 (incl. yng.)	KST
May 27	Churchville, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
Brant			
Mar 17	CSI	150	KEL
Mar 22	Brier I.	55	ELM
Apr 5	Church Pt., <i>Digby</i>	3	K. Barnard
Apr 17	Brier I.	20+	RBS
Apr 21, 26	CSI	150, 40	AAD, DMC
May 4	CSI	21	Paul ' Mateuchy
Wood Duck			
Mar 23, & thr. May	Miner's Marsh, <i>Kings</i>	2-4	RBS, var. obs.
Apr 5	E. Apple R.	3 m	KFS
Apr 12, May 1	Martin Rd. pond, <i>Queens</i>	1 m, 2 m	Brad Toms
Apr 16	Coalburn, <i>Pict</i>	4 m, 2 f	KJM
Apr 16, May 3	Willard Fraser Rd., <i>Pict</i>	6	KJM, CHK
Apr 28	Cornwallis, <i>Anna</i>	1	Andrea Drake
May 1	Sisketch Bk., <i>Queens</i>	4 m, 1 f	N. & M. Dowd
May 2	Stewiacke, <i>Col</i>	2	H. Kennedy
May 4	Grafton, <i>Queens</i>	1	Cindy. Staicer
May 5	Pictou, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
May 11	Little Dyke Marsh, <i>Col</i>	2	ROH
May 15	Mud L., <i>Kings</i>	2	RIW
May 18	Brier I.	9	ELM
May 23	Selma Marsh, <i>Hants</i>	4	ROH
May 24, 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	12	RSM
May 28	Alma, <i>Pict</i>	pr.	KJM
May 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	52 (incl. yng.)	KST
Gadwall			
Mar 1	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	5	CHP
Mar 25	Goat L., <i>Lun</i>	1	CHP
Mar 29	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM
Apr 11	Trenton, <i>Pict</i>	4	KJM
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	8	KJM
Apr 18, 25	First South, <i>Lun</i>	2, 2	KEL
Apr 21	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
Apr 25	First South, <i>Lun</i>	2	KEL
May 3	Canard, <i>Kings</i>	5	RIW
May 24, 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	8, 14	RSM, KST
Eurasian Wigeon			
May 14	Little Dyke, <i>Col</i>	2 m	ROH
March	Sullivan's Pond, <i>HRM</i>	3-5 m, 1 f	var. obs
Mar 5	Bedford, <i>HRM</i>	2	Paul Mateuchy
Mar 17	Birch Cove Park, Dartmouth	1	MZE
American Widgeon			
Apr 15	R. Hebert, <i>Cum</i>	4	KFS
Apr 18, May 11	Little. Dyke Marsh, <i>Col</i>	15, 10	ROH
May 5	Miner's Marsh, <i>Kings</i>	2	TEB
May 24	Annapolis Royal Marsh	4	RSM
Mar 24	<i>Lunenburg</i>	2	Paul Mateuchy
Mar 3	Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth	50	S. Penton
thr, spring	<i>Pict</i>	7+ repts.	KJM
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	2	KJM
American Black Duck			
thr, spring	Thr. province	many repts.	var. obs.
Mallard			
thr. spring	Thr. province	many repts.	var. obs.
Blue-winged Teal			
Apr 10	Miner's Marsh, <i>Kings</i>	2	RBS
Apr 30	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1 m	Mark Field
Apr 27	Waterside PP	2	KJM
May 1	Kingsburg, <i>Lun</i>	1	JAH
May 20	Tidnish, <i>Cumb</i>	2	D. Gorman
May 20	Loch Broom, <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM, CHK
May 23	Selma Marsh, <i>Hants</i>	pr.	ROH

May 27	Tyndall Rd. Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	pr.	D. Gorman
May 28	APBS	x	K. Burton
May 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	2	KST
May 31	Anna. Royal Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	7	KST
Northern Shoveller			
Apr 15	R. Hebert, <i>Cumb</i>	3 m, 3 f	KFS
Apr 27	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1 m	HAT
Apr 27	Annapolis Royal Marsh	2	Brad Toms
May 13	Grand Desert, <i>HRM</i>	2	C. Owen
May 20	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	40	C. Sandeson
May 24	Annapolis Royal Marsh	8	RSM
May 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	4	KST
May 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	20	KST



A pair of NORTHERN SHOVELER, May 19 at Belleisle Marsh, *Anna*, offered a nice portrait. [Photo Cliff Sandeson]

Northern Pintail			
Mar 3	McNabs I., <i>HRM</i>	3 m, 3 f	DMC
Mar 24	First South, <i>Lun</i>	1	KEL
Mar 29	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	2	KJM
Apr 15	River Hebert, <i>Cumb</i>	1 m	KFS
Apr 16	Lyons Bk., <i>Pict</i>	3	KJM
Apr 21	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
May 28	APBS	present	K. Burton
Green-winged Teal			
Mar 2	Regatta Pt., <i>HRM</i>	1	Paul Mateuchy
Mar 21	NSPC outflow, Trenton	6	KJM
Apr, May	Thr. province	many repts.	var. obs.
Ring-necked Duck			
March	Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth	1 m.	var. obs.
Mar 26	Lakeview, <i>HRM</i>	100	Shelly Gillet
Apr 11	E. Apple R. DU Marsh, <i>Cum</i>	10 m, 2 f	KFS
Apr 13	Sand Pt. DU Marsh, <i>Col</i>	11	JOK
Apr 18	Little Dyke DU Marsh, <i>Col</i>	100	ROH
May 11	Little Dyke DU marsh, <i>Col</i>	12	ROH
May 23	Maitland DU Marsh, <i>Hants</i>	15	ROH
Tufted Duck			
Apr 18	Lyons Br., <i>Pict</i>	Ad. m	KJM
Greater Scaup			
Mar 8-Apr 5	PPP, Halifax	4-40	var. obs.
Mar 9	Pictou Causeway	2000	KJM
Mar 9 -21	Trenton	20-70	KJM
Mar 11	Quarry I. Rd., <i>Pict</i>	400	KJM
Mar 18-28	First South, <i>Lun</i>	100-150	KEL
Mar 21, 29	Corkums I., <i>Lun</i>	300, 101	KEL. JAH
Mar 22, 25	Guys. Hbr., Mulgrave, <i>Guys</i>	1, 2	GRW
Mar 30	Baccaro, <i>Shel</i>	1	JAH, KEL
Apr 8	Cow Bay, <i>HRM</i>	71	DMC
Apr 16	Lyons Brk., <i>Pict</i>	98	KJM

May 17	Haliburton Gut, <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM
Lesser Scaup			
Mar 9	Pictou Causeway	1	KJM
Mar 1-23 +?	Sullivan's pond, <i>HRM</i>	1	var. obs.
Mar 18-29	First South, <i>Lun</i>	1-6	JAH, KEL
Apr 8	Cow Bay, <i>HRM</i>	3	DMC
Common Eider			
Mar 4, 28	Margaretsville, <i>Kings</i>	30, 38	WPN
Apr 17	Brier I.	50	RBS
May 11	Margaretsville, <i>Kings</i>	3	WPN
May 18	Cape Split, <i>Kings</i>	24	KST
May 24	Apple R., <i>Cumb</i>	5 m, 6 f	KFS
thr. spring	<i>Yar, Shel, Queens, Lun</i>	many repts.	var. obs.
Apr 26	CSI	400	DMC
Apr 22	Tancook Is., <i>Lun</i>	42	Paul Mateuchy
thr. spring	<i>HRM</i>	80+ repts.	var. obs.
Mar 30	Shad Bay Hd., <i>HRM</i>	42	SMB
Apr 7	Lawrencetown area, <i>HRM</i>	88	Paul Mateuchy
Mar 24	Clam Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	40	SAB
Mar 31	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	37	KJM
May 29	Taylor Head PP, <i>HRM</i>	48	C. Mosher
thr. Spring	CBI	only 1 rept.!	RIV
thr. Spring	Gulf Shore	no repts!	
May 11	<i>Digby, HRM, Rich, CBRM</i>	100, 333, 114, 63	NAMC
Harlequin Duck			
Mar 3	Sandy Cove, <i>Digby</i>	12	K. Bernard
Mar 17	Hemeon Hd., <i>Shel</i>	7	ELM
Mar 28	Prospect area, <i>HRM</i>	24	BLM
Mar 30	Indian Point Rd. <i>Lun</i>	11	GDE
Mar 31	CSI	6	AAD
Apr 6	Duncans Cove, <i>HRM</i>	1	D. Gusset
Apr 27	Round I., <i>Yar</i>	20	AAD
May 11	<i>Rich, CBRM</i>	4.8	NAMC
May 5- 20	Country Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	2 - 11	B. Obermayer



Among scoters, WHITE-WINGED, here Apr 13 at E. Passage, *HRM* is the most readily identified at a distance. [Photo Paul Murray]

Surf Scoter			
Mar 24	Apple River, <i>Cumb</i>	1 m	KFS
Mar 28	Margaretsville, <i>Kings</i>	4	WPN
May 11	Margaretsville, <i>Kings</i>	20	WPN
Mar 30	Baccaro, <i>Shel</i>	12	KEL
Mar 19	Beach Meadows, <i>Queens</i>	10	ROH
Mar 21	Corkums I., <i>Lun</i>	8	KEL
Apr 15	E. LaHave, <i>Lun</i>	20	JAH
Mar 23	PPP, Halifax	22	Paul Mateuchy
Apr 9	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	12	WPN
Mar 31	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	10	KJM
Apr 11	Cooks Cove, <i>Guys</i>	5	JOK
Apr 21, 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	63, 58	KJM

May 28	Big I. <i>Pict</i>	310	KJM, CHK
May 11	Annapolis, Tatamagouche, <i>Col</i>	20, 52	NAMC
White-winged Scoter			
thr. spring	<i>Kings, Digby, Lun, HRM</i>	15 + repts.	var. obs.
Black Scoter			
May 18	Cape Split, <i>Kings</i>	100	KST
Apr 12	Morden, <i>Kings</i>	12	RIW
Mar 30	Blanche, <i>Lun</i>	13	JAH
May 1	Rose Bay, <i>Lun</i>	70	JAH
Apr 10	PPP, Halifax	32	DMC
May 11, 20	Country Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	4, 9	B. Obermayer
Apr 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	4	KJM
Long-tailed Duck			
Mar 4	Margaretsville, <i>Anna</i>	1	WPN
Mar 3	Brier I., <i>Digby</i>	20	K. Bernard
Mar 17	CSI	25	KEL
Mar 19	Beach Meadows, <i>Queens</i>	16	ROH
Mar 10	Lunenburg, <i>Lun</i>	41	JAH
Apr 7	Garden Lots, <i>Lun</i>	19	KEL
May 1	Kingsburg, <i>Lun</i>	5	JAH
Mar 10	PPP, Halifax	10	DMC
Mar 3	McNab's I., <i>HRM</i>	50	DMC
Mar 31	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	31	KJM
Mar 31	Beaver Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	30	KJM
Mar 30	Gull I. & light, <i>Pict</i>	30	KJM
Apr 16	Malagash Pt., <i>Cumb</i>	25	JOK
Bufflehead			
May 24	Annapolis Royal Marsh	4	RSM
Apr 27	Annapolis Royal Marsh	40	Brad Toms
Mar 19	Beach Meadows, <i>Queens</i>	6	ROH
May 11	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1	SJF
Mar 2, Apr 6	Broad Cove, <i>Lun</i>	13, 2	JAH
Mar 24	Kingsburg Beach, <i>Lun</i>	11	Paul 'O M
Mar, Apr	Mahone Bay, <i>Lun</i>	14, 16, 4	Paul 'O M
Mar 2	McNabs I., <i>HRM</i>	2	DMC
Mar 17	Fisherman's Reserve, <i>HRM</i>	18	Paul Mateuchy
Mar 31	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	13	KJM
Mar 25	Mulgrave, <i>Guys</i>	2	GRW
Mar, Apr	Abercrombie, <i>Pict</i>	12, 8, 30	KJM
May 11	Annapolis, <i>CBRM</i>	61, 7	NAMC
Common Goldeneye			
March	<i>HRM</i>	many repts.	var. obs.
March	<i>Lunenburg</i>	many repts.	var. obs.
Mar 10	Brier I.	120	K. Barnard
Mar 30	Baccaro, <i>Shel</i>	15	KEL
Mar 19	Beach Meadows, <i>Queens</i>	9	ROH
Mar 24	Cook's Cove, <i>Guys</i>	15	GRW.
Apr 6	R. Bourgeois, <i>Rich</i>	14	RIV
Mar 31	Christmas I., <i>CBRM</i>	20	DBM
March April	<i>Pictou</i>	many repts.	KJM
Mar 21	Trenton	160	KJM
Mar 29	Tatamagouche, <i>Col</i>	40	JOK
Mar 16	Malagash Pt., <i>Cumb</i>	16	JOK
Barrow's Goldeneye			
Mar 2, 15	Barrachois Hbr, <i>Col</i>	1	JOK
Mar 11	Waterside PP, <i>Pict</i>	3	KJM
Mar 11	Quarry I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
Mar 11	Melmerby Bch., <i>Pict</i>	Ad. m	KJM
Mar 25	Salt Marsh Tr., <i>HRM</i>	no.?	MZE.
Hooded Merganser			
March	NSPC Outflow, <i>Pict</i>	4-23	KJM
Mar 3	Corkums I., <i>Lun</i>	6	KEL
Mar 22	Miner's Marsh, Kentville	2	JLC
Mar 29	Sutherlands R., <i>Pict</i>	22	KJM
Mar 31	W. Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	4	Paul Mateuchy
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	2	KJM
Apr 14	E. Apple R. Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	1 m, 2 f	KFS
Apr 24	Lacey L., <i>Hants</i>	1	T. & A. Hall
May 11	Camp L. Torment, <i>Kings</i>	2	N. & M. Dowd
May 17	Haliburton Gut, <i>Pict</i>	17	KJM

Common Merganser

March	<i>Pictou</i>	many repts.	KJM
March, April	Horton Landing, <i>Hants</i>	1 – 13	RIW
Mar 2	Barrachois Hbr., <i>Col</i>	5	JOK
Mar 12	Edgetts R. Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	1 m, 4 f	KFS
Mar 21	Trenton, <i>Pict</i>	160	KJM
Mar 31	Christmas I., <i>CBRM</i>	60	DBM
Apr 7	R. Bourgeois, <i>Rich</i>	4	RIV
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	2	KJM
Apr 15	Rhodes Corner, <i>Lun</i>	7	JAH
Apr 16	Lunenburg	27	KEL
Apr 18	Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth	7	Paul O M
Apr 19	Ogdens Pond, <i>Ant</i>	30	L. Jewkes
Apr 27	North R., <i>Col</i>	2	ROH
Apr 29	St. Marys L., <i>Guy</i>	2	KJM
May 1	Gold River L., <i>Kings</i>	1 f	RIW
May 4	CSI	4	Paul Mateuchy
May 6	MacLeans L., <i>Ant</i>	1	RFL
Red-breasted Merganser			
Thr. March	<i>HRM</i>	75+ repts	var. obs
Mar - May	Big I., <i>Pic</i>	11-122	KJM

Mar, Apr	Pictou area	12+ repts	KJM
Mar, Apr	Caribou I., area, <i>Pitc</i>	10+ repts	KJM
Mar 3- 30	<i>Shel., Queens, Lun</i>	16+ repts	var. obs.
Mar 12	Apple R., <i>Cumb</i>	2	KFS
Mar 10	Sandy Cove bch., <i>Digby</i>	8	K. Barnard
Mar 16	Malagash Pt., <i>Cumb</i>	1	JOK
Mar 24	Chapel Gully Trail, <i>Guys</i>	3	GRW
Mar 24	Cook's Cove, <i>Guys</i>	6	GRW
Mar 25	Eddy Pt., <i>Guys</i>	4	GRW.
Mar 28	Margaretsville, <i>Kings</i>	1m, 1 f	WPN
Mar 29	Habitant, <i>Kings</i>	2	T & A Hall
Mar 31	Christmas I., <i>CBRM</i>	24	DBM
April	<i>Shel., Queens, Lun.</i>	4+ repts	var. obs
Apr 5	Church Pt., <i>Digby</i>	1	K. Bernard
Apr 5-14	Apple R., <i>Cumb</i>	1	KFS
Apr 6	R. Bourgeois, <i>Rich</i>	12	RIV
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	2	KJM
Apr 17	French Basin Trail, <i>Ann</i>	2	RBS
Apr 18	Canso, <i>Guys</i>	2	JOK
Apr 18, 27	North River, <i>Col</i>	1, 4	ROH
May 28	Maloney's Corner, <i>Cumb</i>	1	T. & A. Hall

Galliformes**By Rick Whitman**

For this spring quarter, we again see no reports of **GRAY PARTRIDGE**. There were two social-media reports of **NORTHERN BOBWHITE**. No doubt these were escaped birds, but surely were pleasant experiences for the observers. **SPRUCE GROUSE** continues to be under-reported but *Colchester* reported 10 of the 14 birds on the NSMC. The eBird reports were within the central counties. For all species tabulated below, the counties named indicate the complete geographic limits of eBird reports.

Northern Bobwhite

Apr 9	Paradise, <i>Anna</i>	1 m.	John Stacey
May 19	Bear River, <i>Anna</i>	1 m.	Faye Salsman

Ring-necked Pheasant

Mar-May	<i>Yar, Cumb, Pict, HRM</i> , 200 repts., 1-7 birds	eBird
Mar 15	Lr. Sackville, <i>HRM</i>	1 RIV, APO
Apr-May	Tremont, <i>Kings</i>	1 SLH

Spruce Grouse

Mar-May	<i>Kings-Cumb-HRM</i> , 10 repts., 1-4 birds	eBird
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Apr 3	Sheffield L., <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
Apr 10, 12	Aylesford, <i>Kings</i>	2,4	SLH
Apr 16	Berwick, <i>Kings</i>	1	SLH
Ruffed Grouse			
Mar-May	<i>Shel-Cumb-Inv-Rich</i> , 94 repts., 1-7 birds	eBird	
Apr 16	Greenwood, <i>Kings</i>	1	SLH
Apr 29	Petpeswick, <i>HRM</i>	1	DOU
May 11	Avondale, <i>Pict</i>	1	DOU

Loons and Grebes**By Ross Hall**

RED-THROATED LOON was reported from March to May but only in small numbers. **COMMON LOON**, on the other hand, were frequently reported. They appeared inland as soon as the lakes became ice-free, and it is a good guess that most we see along our coastlines in early March are waiting to move onto our lakes. If we knew more, some might further impress us by having a long migration to nest on some far-distant Nunavut lake. The United States Geological Service (USGS) is promoting interesting research on **COMMON LOON** migration. At the following website one can watch the migration routes and dates of **COMMON LOON** between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. Shorter routes are also illustrated of loons migrating from lakes in interior Maine to its coastline:

http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/terrestrial/migratory_birds/loons/main.html

Also, *Bird Studies Canada* has made available a summary of the 1981-2012 . . . *Canadian Lakes Loon Survey*. Compliments to those participating in this citizen science. A conclusion is that lakes in eastern Canada, especially smaller lakes, have lower pH, higher methylmercury, and lower Common Loon reproductive success. Good reproductive success is considered at least one young every other year (equivalent to at least 0.48 six-week-old young per pair each year). See summary at:

<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cils/resources/CLLSsummary.pdf>



A COMMON LOON in first-cycle (less than one year old) plumage was photographed Mar 11 off the Saltmarsh Tr., HRM, and as often seen in our estuarine waters, has captured a crab. [Photo Paul Murray]

There were fewer than a dozen spring reports PIED-BILLED GREBE had, yet they do show that it arrives late and hurriedly sets about nesting. Managed DU wetlands are favoured habitats. As the Pied-billed Grebe is arriving, the HORNED GREBE is leaving to nest on lakes in w. Canada. Both Joyce Allen and Eric Mills noted Horned Grebes in breeding plumage at the end of April. What a remarkable contrast these birds have from winter to summer, both in plumage and habitat. Most coastal observations of RED-NECKED GREBE were in March; however a few remained for the NSMC. Red-necked Grebe also lives a double life – winter on the ocean and in summer on the prairies. In late March, two in Margaretsville, Anna, were still in “Basic plumage” (WPN), whereas the latest reported (Apr 28) was “still moulting into breeding plumage” (Mark Field). A Red-necked Grebe in full breeding plumage, at say Turtle Mountain PP in Manitoba, is a surprise for eastern birders.

Red-necked Loon

thr, spring	Horton Landing, <i>Hants</i>	1	RIW
May 11	Brier I.	2	ELM
Mar 10	Bedford Basin, <i>HRM</i>	1	R. Peckham
Mar 3	McNab’s I., <i>HRM</i>	1	DMC
Apr 8	Cow Bay, <i>HRM</i>	1	DMC
Apr 30	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	6	Mark Field
Apr 16, May 11	Martinique Bch PP	1	DMC
May 5	Country Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	2	B. Obermayer

Common Loon

thr, spring Coastal & inland many repts. var. obs.

Pied-billed Grebe

Apr 18	Grants Lake, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
May 11	Little Dyke Marsh, <i>Col</i>	1	ROH
May 16	Miller Lake, <i>HRM</i>	2	B. Sabourin
May 24	Annapolis Royal Marsh	2 (nesting)	RSM
May 26	Pugwash, <i>Cumb</i>	present	JUO
May 28	APBS	present	K. Burton
May 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	2	KST

Horned Grebe

March, April	<i>HRM</i>	5+ repts.	var. obs
Mar 4, 28	Margaretsville, <i>Anna</i>	1, 3	WPN
Mar 10	Brier I.	6	K. Barnard
Mar 10	Second Pen., <i>Lun</i>	6	JAH
Mar 17	CSI, <i>Shel</i>	3	KEL
Mar 21	Corkum’s I., <i>Lun</i>	7	KEL
Mar 25	First South, <i>Lun</i>	12	KEL
Mar 31	CSI, <i>Shel</i>	1	AAD
Mar 31	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	6	KJM
Apr 18	Graves I. PP, <i>Lun</i>	22	Paul Mateuchy
Apr 27	West Berlin, <i>Queens</i>	1	ELM
Apr 29	Port Joli, <i>Shel</i>	present.	JOA
May 1	Cherry Hill Bch, <i>Queens</i>	2	Mark Field



This RED-NECKED GREBE, Mar 17 at Little Hbr., *Rich*, has no hint of breeding (Alternate) plumage. [Photo Brian Simpson]

Red-necked Grebe

Mar, Apr	<i>HRM</i>	12+ repts	var. obs.
Mar 10	Sandy Cove, <i>Digby</i>	11	K. Barnard
Mar 10	Second Pen., <i>Lun</i>	1	JAH
Mar 17	CSI	5	KEL
Mar 28	Margaretsville, <i>Anna</i>	2	WPN
Mar 30	Blanche, <i>Shel</i>	11	JAH
Apr 23	E Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1	Mark Field

Tubenoses through Cormorants

By Eric Mills

SOOTY SHEARWATER comes to our waters mainly in May, but Coral d'Entremont's report of one in early April from a fishing boat well offshore of SW Nova Scotia suggests that some, likely failed breeders or non-breeders, may arrive much earlier.

There have been anecdotal reports for several months of high NORTHERN GANNET mortality to our south of our waters where they winter, including Florida and the U.S. Gulf Coast, but numbers of returning birds, summarized below, seemed to be normal, and the peak of passage, beginning in the last few days of April, shows well in the numbers.

Also well shown in the numbers below is the changing of the guard among cormorants: a steep drop in GREAT CORMORANTS in early April, coinciding with the arrival of the first DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS and their rapid build-up by the second week of the month. Of course some Greats do breed along the south coast of the province, although sparsely, also more abundantly in Cape Breton, accounting for at least some reports in May.

Sooty Shearwater

Apr 9 S of German Bank, *Yar* 1 Coral d'Entremont

Northern Gannet

Apr 17 Off Chebucto Hd. *HRM* 10/min HAT, LAE
 Apr 27 Off Western Hd., *Queens* 3 ad. ELM
 Apr 28 Tusket Is., *Yar* ca. 20 AAD et al.
 Apr 28 Eastern Passage, *HRM* 50 DAC et al.
 Apr 29 Crystal Crescent, *HRM* 120 fl. NW Paolo
 Matteucci
 Apr 30 Off Lawrencetown L., *HRM* 30 Mark Field
 May 1 Lwr. W. Pubnico, *Yar* 2 Mark Field, TCD
 May 2 Off Northern Pt., Brier I. 1 ad. ELM
 May 11 Brier I. 90 NSMC
 May 18 Big I., *Pict* 15 KJM
 May 19 Brier I. 20 ELM

Also 20+ similar reports on eBird mainly from Atlantic coast locations.

Great Cormorant

Mar 10 Sandy Cove, *Digby* 10 Kathy Barnard
 Mar 19 Brooklyn area, *Queens* 13 ROH
 Mar 22 Brier I. 10 ELM
 Mar 31 Sober I., *HRM* 13 KJM
 Apr 5 E.Passage, *HRM* 4 DAC

Apr 26 CSI 6 DMC
 May 2 Western Light, Brier I. 1 imm. ELM
 May 11 Brier I. 3 NSMC
 May 18-19 Brier I. 3-6 ELM

Also ca.30 similar eBird reports, mainly from *HRM* and S.Shore areas.

Double-crested Cormorant

Mar 31 Pictou area 4 arrivals KJM
 Apr 1 Tusket R., *Yar* 1 arrival RDE
 Apr 14 Wallace, *Cumb* 40 KJM
 Apr 19 Ogdens Pond, *Ant* 50 Lloyd Jewkes
 Apr 26 Lunenburg area 29 KEL
 Apr 26 CSI 70 DMC
 Apr 27 Coastal *Queens* 50+ ELM
 Apr 27 North R., *Col* 50 ROH
 Apr 28 E. Passage, *HRM* 45 DAC et al.
 May 1 Windsor causeway, *Hants* 35-40 JCT
 May 2 Nesting colony, Brier I. ca. 40 ELM
 May 11 Brier I. 50 NSMC
 May 18-19 Brier I. 20-30+ ELM
 May 20 Pictou causeway 800 on colony KJM, CHK
 Also 110+ similar eBird reports, mainly from *HRM* and S. Shore areas.

Hérons

By Ulli Hoeger

According to the ABA "rules" dead birds don't count for life and other kinds of birding lists. However, here we report a road-killed AMERICAN BITTERN on Hwy 224 (see table below). In our part of the world road-killed wildlife sometimes supplies a first indication and confirmation of the presence of a species previously unknown in the region, replacing the collection of museum specimens in earlier years, still sometimes obtained in bush-meat markets in more exotic parts of the world. In the past, we've had a few examples where rare species were discovered along highways. For example, a few years ago, a Least Bittern was found dead along the side of a road around Thanksgiving Day in the Hubbards area. Another roadside American Bittern was reported by Rob Wood, but this one was very much alive and in the "you can't see me" posture. This undoubtedly a very efficient way to blend in with reeds and cattails, but it wasn't working too well along the dusty roadside. There are reasons other than safety to keep your eyes on and along the road when driving.

With the breakup of ice in early April, GREAT BLUE HERON started to reappear in Nova Scotia. Along with them there arrived a few egrets and a Little Blue Heron. In April a LITTLE EGRET, only our 16th on record, was almost missed when initially dismissed as its more common cousin, the Snowy Egret. Mike King, who learned from the initial observers about the presence of the egret at roadside pond in Eastern Passage, *HRM*, went for a closer look and correctly identified it. It was subsequently seen and enjoyed by local residents and many birders.



It was hard to choose from among the many fine photos of the LITTLE EGRET, but these (left, among the first taken, Apr 21) and right (among the last, Apr 26) show its diagnostic blue-gray lores (yellow in Snowy) and its snarrow neck plumes (one of the two is truncated) vs. many shaggy plumes in Snowy. [Photos: left, Rita Viau, right Richard Stern]

On May 11, many birders participated in the Spring Migration count (NSMC), and the total numbers of herons seen by them are tabulated elsewhere (p. 43).

American Bittern			
May 11	W. Pubnico, <i>Yar.</i>	11	KJM
May 29,	Middle Musquodobit, <i>HRM</i>	1 (dead)	Bertha Jeffers
May 29	Georgefield, <i>Hants</i>	1	ROW
Great Blue Heron			
By mid April common in suitable habitat			
April 14	Yarmouth, <i>Yar.</i>	14	MUN
May 19	Lunenburg Back Harbour, <i>Lun.</i>	11	JAH, DAW
Great Egret			
April 15	L'Ardoise, <i>Rich.</i>	1	JSH
May 6, 12	CSI	1	MUN, CST
May 15	Pickney's Point, <i>Yar.</i>	1	RAS
Snowy Egret			
May 22	Shag Hbr., <i>Shel.</i>	1	MUN
May 24	Lockeport, <i>Shel.</i>	1	Mike Drenth
LITTLE EGRET			
April 21-27	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1	MIK + m. obs.
Little Blue Heron			
April 8-12	Cow Bay Marsh, <i>HRM</i>	1	DMC
Cattle Egret			
May 21	Walden, <i>Lun.</i>	1 (ph.)	Mandy Eisenhauer
Black-crowned Night-Heron			
Apr 5	CSI	1	NSBS
April 21	CSI	4	AAD



The season's only reported CATTLE EGRET, in full breeding regalia, was photo-documented in mid-April near Walden, *Lun.* [Photo Mandy Eisenhauer]

Diurnal Raptors

By Rick Whitman

There were three exciting Raptors seen this spring, but **CRESTED CARACARA** stands head and shoulders above the other two. As a new species record for the province and one of a handful from n.e North America, the Lawrencetown individual was a very special bird seen by numerous birders. An excellent article elsewhere in this issue, by the original finder Frank Gummett, describes this great birding experience and puts the find in context. Suffice it to say, a new birder can find a rare bird and a camera can be a great tool if this happens. The **CRESTED CARACARA** seen by AAD in Middle West Pubnico appears to be a different bird. Photos and related analysis of various sightings of this species will continue in the next issue and the Monastery report (below) may be relevant if and when details become available.

Many photos were obtained by birders alerted to the Caracara by Frank Gummett, whose images grace the cover and appear in his account beginning p. 45. Below is a selection of images of this smashing bird by other photographers, along with a “record shot” of the fleeting W. Pubnico bird.



Images of the Lawrencetown **CRESTED CARACARA** were obtained Mar 30 by Elizabeth Doull (top left) and Bob MacDonald (top middle), next day by Hans Toom (top right) and Bernard Burke (bottom left), and Apr 2 by Ian Murray, Bottom right, for the record, is the Caracara May 4 at Middle W. Pubnico by Alix d'Entremont just before it disappeared.

Other reports of a juvenile **GOLDEN EAGLE** at Shubenacadie by HAT and a white phase **GYRFALCON** near Avonport by JSI are also rare observations. The encounter with the Gyr Falcon was described in excellent detail.

The more migratory raptors like **OSPREY**, **BROAD-WINGED HAWK** and **AMERICAN KESTREL** arrived in April with the exception of one social media report of a Broad-winged Hawk on March 31. No rare diurnal raptors were found on the NS Migration Count, and the provincial totals for all resident species show no surprises.

For all species, the counties named below indicate the complete geographic limits of the eBird reports

Turkey Vulture

Mar 16-May	<i>Yar, Hants, Guys,</i>	17 repts.	1-5 birds	eBird
Mar-May	Bridgetown, <i>Anna</i>		up to 6	MCR
Mar 9	<i>e. Kings</i>	1		BID
Mar 14	Annapolis Royal	1		RBS
Mar 16	Bedford, <i>HRM</i>	2	Jacques Boudreau	
Mar 29	Kentville	1		RBS
Mar 29	Granville Ferry, <i>Anna</i>	8		GAM
Apr 10	<i>Yarmouth</i>	8		MUN
Apr 16	L'Ardoise, <i>Rich</i>	1		<i>fide</i> BID
Apr 17	Upper Granville, <i>Anna</i>	3		RBS
Apr 17	Sackville, <i>HRM</i>	3	Brian Coxhead	
Apr 18	Bridgewater	1		JAH
Apr 18	Dartmouth	3		<i>fide</i> AGH
Apr 21	Head of St. Margarets Bay	4	Gwen Keddy	
May 2	Pond Cove, Brier I.	6		ELM
May 7	Mosher's Corner, <i>Anna</i>	1		PBG
May 16	Kentville	1		JCT
May 19	Pond Cove, Brier I.	7		ELM



Seven TURKEY VULTURES (count them; one is almost hidden), Apr 24 in a pine near Annapolis Royal, illustrate their ubiquity in that corner of the province. [Photo Davis Sandeson]

Osprey

Apr 6-May	<i>Anna, Shel, Cumb, HRM, Pict,</i>	118 repts.	1-5 birds	eBird
Apr 3	Surettes I., <i>Yar</i>	1		RDE
Apr 4	Belleville, <i>Yar</i>	1		RDE
Apr 7	Cameron L., <i>Queens</i>	1		<i>fide</i> JAH
Apr 8	Lilydale, <i>Lun</i>	1		<i>fide</i> JAH
Apr 9	Bridgewater	1		<i>fide</i> JAH
Apr 11	Halifax	1		AGH
Apr 12	<i>Yarmouth</i>	1		MUN
Apr 14	L. Echo, Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1,1		PMC, SEM
Apr 16	Bedford, <i>HRM</i>	1		DHU
Apr 16	Cow Bay, <i>HRM</i>	1	Paul Lindgreen	
Apr 17	Beaverbank, <i>HRM</i>	1		GMU
Apr 17	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1		PMU
Apr 17	Kentville	1		RBS
Apr 17	Centrelea, <i>Anna</i>	2 on nest		MCR
Apr 18	Hwys 107,7, <i>HRM</i>	all nests occupied		IAM
May 11, 30	Middle. Musquodoboit, <i>HRM</i>	1		VJH
May 23	Annapolis Royal	1		RBS

Bald Eagle

Mar-May	<i>Shel, Digby, Inv, Rich,</i>	196 repts..	1-54 birds	eBird
Apr 18	Lr. Debert Bch., <i>Col</i>	40		ROH
Apr 18	Little Dyke Bch., <i>Col</i>	66		ROH
Apr 19	Halifax	3		S. Musoke
Apr 28	Mud I., <i>Yar</i>	3		AAD, var.obs.
May 13	Bridgetown, <i>Anna</i>	3		MCR
May 11	Cobequid Bay, <i>Col</i>	76		ROH

Northern Harrier

Mar-May	<i>Yar, Col, Pict, Guys,</i>	22 repts.	1-4 birds	eBird
Apr 27	Ragged Harbour, <i>Queens</i>	1		JAH

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Mar-May	<i>Shel, Cumb, HRM,</i>	19 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
Mar 19	Halifax	1	ALD <i>fide</i> DOU	
Mar 22	Lr. Sackville, <i>HRM</i>	1		RIV, APO
Mar 27	Wolfville, <i>Kings</i>	1		JCT
Apr 1, 12	Tremont, <i>Kings</i>	1		SLH
Apr 27	Oakhill, <i>Lun</i>	1		JAH

Northern Goshawk

Mar-May	<i>Kings, Lun,</i>	5 diff. repts.	1	eBird
Apr 26	Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	1		MUN

Broad-winged Hawk

Apr 30-May	<i>Queens, Kings, Pict, HRM,</i>	8 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
Mar 31	Upper Tantallon, <i>HRM</i>	1		Rob Cogswell
Apr 28	Lapland, <i>Lun</i>	1		SJF, JSC
Apr 29	Kentville	1		RBS
May 2	Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	1		MUN
May 5	West Springhill, <i>Anna</i>	1		MCR

Red-tailed Hawk

Mar-May	<i>Queens, Digby, HRM, Inv</i>	61 repts.	1-5 birds	eBird
May 7	Kingston, <i>Kings</i>	1		PBG
May 19	Windsor	1		Paul Lindgreen

Rough-legged Hawk

Mar-Apr 3	<i>Anna, Cumb, Col,</i>	3 repts.	1	eBird
Mar 9	<i>e. Kings</i>	2		BID
May 1	St. Croix, <i>Hants</i>	1		JCT

GOLDEN EAGLE

Mar 24	Shubenacadie, <i>Col</i>	1 juv.		HAT
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CRESTED CARACARA

Mar 30	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1		Frank Gummett
Mar 30-Apr 7	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1		m. obs.
May 4	Middle W. Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	1		AAD
May 7	nr. Monastery, <i>Ant</i>	1		Wade Casey

American Kestrel

Apr 13-May	<i>Lun, Kings, Cumb, Pict, HRM,</i>	13 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
Apr 27	Eagle Head Bch., <i>Queens</i>	1 f. from sea		ELM
May 17	Western Light, Brier I.	1		ELM
May 23	Churchville, <i>Pict</i>	1 at nest		KJM

Merlin

Apr 5-May	<i>Lun-Anna-Cumb-Pict-Guys,</i>	16 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
Mar 20, 25	Bridgetown, <i>Anna</i>	1		MCR
Apr 10	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1		Chip Weseloh
Apr 11	Halifax	2		AGH
Apr 17	Halifax	1		Jeff MacLeod
Apr 17	Beaverbank, <i>HRM</i>	2		GMU
Apr 25, 30	Wolfville	2 at nest		JCT
Apr 27	Kentville	1		JLC
May 7	Mosher's Corner, <i>Anna</i>	1		PBG
May 19	Brier I.	1		ELM

Peregrine Falcon

Mar-May	<i>Lun, Kings, Cumb, Pict, HRM,</i>	6 repts.	singles	eBird
Mar 5	Halifax	1		Chris Davey
Apr 24	Greenfield, <i>Col</i>	1		M & J Thomson

May 10	W. Light, Brier I.	1 ad. <i>anatum</i>	ELM
May 12	Kentville	1	RBS
May 17	Yarmouth	1	MUN
May 18	Cape Split, <i>Kings</i>	1	JWW

GYRFALCON

Mar 16	Avonport, <i>Kings</i>	1 wh. Phase	JSI, with details
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Rallids, Cranes**By Ulli Hoeger**

A very probable and also very early VIRGINIA RAIL was seen in late March and convincingly described by a Brier I. resident (*vide* ELM). AMERICAN COOTS were sparsely reported. Despite good numbers reported in December, few were noted through winter, and those found outside HRM in spring have probably migrated here to nest. On May 11 many birders participated in the Spring Migration count (NSMC), and turned up a SANDHILL CRANE in *Hants* (presumably the same one present May 1) and several additional rallids (see p. 43).

Virginia Rail

Mar. 20	Brier I., <i>Digby</i>	1	Lisa Clark
May 11	W. Pubnico, <i>Yar.</i>	heard	KJM
Apr 17	Miners Marsh, Kentville	1 heard	AND
May 5	Central Caribou, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
May 22	Willard Fraser Rd., Churchvale, <i>Pict.</i>	1, 1	CHK, KJM
May 23	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	1	Don Gorham
May 28	APBS	1	KST

May 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	1	KST
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American Coot

Mar 5	Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth	no.?	PMC
Apr 13	R. Hebert, <i>Cumb</i>	1	KFS
May 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	1	KST

Sandhill Crane

Apr 39, May 1	Falmouth, <i>Hants</i>	1	Ryan Harvey
May 29	W. Pubnico, <i>Yar.</i>	1	Coral d'Entremont

Shorebirds**By Susann Myers**

With harsh winter conditions January to March, few wintering shorebirds lingered into spring, but spring migrants were numerous at CSI by mid-May, with flocks of 250 and more noted by JON and SAN. Migrants arrived generally on schedule, with exceptions noted below. The only rarities of the season were a "WESTERN" WILLET and a group of four WILSON'S PHALAROPES.

Shorebirds found on the NSMC May 11 totaled 10 species and 603 individual birds (see p. 48), far below the 10-year averages of 17 species and 890 individuals. Numbers of observers were more than 30% lower than in 2011, however, and there were no observers in four counties, including *Shelburne*, where spring shorebirds are found in the largest numbers. Heavy coastal fog also made shorebirds difficult to find in many areas.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER were unusually scarce this spring, and none was found on the NSMC for the first time since 1992. The single AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER and SEMIPALMATED PLOVER were typical of their scarcity in spring. The first PIPING PLOVER were noted April 8, six days later than average, in *Shelburne*, including one found by BJS and SIS at Crow Neck Bch. Numbers at Crow Neck Bch. increased to four pairs by June 4, presaging another busy breeding season there. No Piping Plover was reported in HRM this season; Martinique and Conrad Beaches appear to have lost their breeding populations for the present. Few KILLDEER were reported this season, all singletons except for a flock of several spotted by DHU flying past his office window on Joseph Howe Drive, Halifax. Those found on the NSMC were widely distributed on the mainland, but two in CBRM were the only ones reported from CBI. The first pair of AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER arrived on CSI on schedule Apr 10, and numbers increased to six individuals by mid-May for another breeding season, successful there since 1999. The first SPOTTED SANDPIPER were reported on the NSMC May 11, eight days later than average. They were widely distributed in small numbers on the NSMC, including two each in *Inverness* and *Richmond*. A remarkable eight pairs were found by DOU May 19 at Hardwood Lands, *Hants*.

Fifty-nine of the 67 GREATER YELLOWLEGS found on the NSMC were in northern counties (*CBRM*, *Richmond* and *Pictou*), with only scattered small numbers elsewhere. WILLET arrival may have seemed late this spring, with warm temperatures suggesting they should have been on territory sooner, but in fact the first report April 15 was right on schedule. The 178 found on the NSMC were widely distributed in coastal areas with saltmarsh habitat, but well below the 10-year average of 301. Only one Willet was found in *Digby* on May 11, but it was a "WESTERN" WILLET spotted at Brier I. and well described by ELM and photographed by IAM. They noted its large size; long-legged appearance; long, straight narrow-

tipped bill; attenuated rather than stocky body; and light colouring with rather pale barring. This is only the second spring sighting in NS of a Willet of this western *inornatus* subspecies; the first was on Sable I., 2 Apr 1972, and was identified from its photograph by IAM. Breeding in the prairies from s. Alberta and Manitoba to n. California and Colorado, and wintering from South America to New Jersey and very rarely here, the “Western” Willet seldom occurs on the N. Atlantic coast in spring. LESSER YELLOWLEGS is an uncommon spring migrant in NS, with most of the eastern population reaching their breeding grounds in the James Bay area through the interior of the continent. So a group of three that swelled to eight in Three Fathom Hbr., *HRM*, Apr 27 was unusual, as were the 18 in *Colchester* on the NSMC, the only ones found that day



This heavily cropped image of a distant WILLET, May 11 on Brier I., shows features of a “Western” Willet of the subspecies *inornatus*, very rare here in spring. [Photo Ian McLaren]

Migrating mostly at night and often offshore, WHIMBREL are infrequently seen on spring migration. Their route then to their Hudson Bay breeding grounds is primarily over the mid-Atlantic states and the Great Lakes, so they are very scarce here, with sightings of single birds, most often at CSI, the norm for the season. Hans Toom spotted two at Duncan Reef April 18, and DAM observed flocks totaling 59, an unprecedented concentration for spring, passing overhead in the Taylor Head / Debaie’s Cove area during the NSMC.



Remarkable action shots were obtained of two of our breeding shorebirds. At left, two male WILLETS are locked in seemingly dangerous combat May 13 at Cow Bay, *HRM*. At right, a presumed male

SPOTTED SANDPIPER on display May 30 at W. Pubnico, *Yar*, looks like a beautiful porcelain figurine, but its expression seems decidedly hostile. [Photos: left, David Waterfield; right, Ronnie d'Entremont]

Thirty-four RUDDY TURNSTONE migrants, a very good number for recent years, were reported by JON at CSI May 5. RED KNOT numbers continued low, with a total of three reported for the season, all on CSI and the adjacent sandy Cape Sable. SANDERLING were also reported in very low numbers, with a seasonal total of only 38 and none on the NSMC, a sad decline from the high NSMC count of 361 in 2001.

Peeps were spotted in their usual small spring numbers. Eleven SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER were a nice find by CST at CSI April 13. The only LEAST SANDPIPER of the season were four found by RIW May 20 at n Grand Pré.

PURPLE SANDPIPER were reported in only small numbers for March, but larger flocks, presumably boosted by migrants, were seen in mid- and late April. Numbers lingered to May 11 for the NSMC, all found in the southern half of the province. DUNLIN were also scarce. A flock of 31 at Martinique Beach April 14 had presumably overwintered locally. Numbers at CSI built up to 75 by May 5 (JON) but none were reported on the NSMC, for the first time since 1996. SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER is uncommon here in spring; the only one of the season was spotted by JAH at Oxners Bch., *Lun* (ph. KEL).

The first WILSON'S SNIPE was a full three weeks later than average, Apr. 21. The NSMC total of 67 was only 17% below the 10-year average, but was a good number considering the reduced observation effort. The NSMC sightings were widespread, including a total of 16 on CBI. The first AMERICAN WOODCOCK, by contrast, were heard three days ahead of schedule, March 13, at the Drummond Mine site, *Pict*, as usual. A flurry of sightings followed in late March, many of the birds seen in deep snow. The NSMC total of 115 was 35% above the 10-year average, thanks in large part to efforts in *Pictou*, where a total of 42 was found. They were widespread elsewhere in smaller numbers, including a total of 22 on CBI. DOU's keen eyes spotted an adult with four juveniles May 19 at Hardwood Lands, *Hants*, while Laura Saunders heard three still displaying May 29 during an owl survey along the Stirling Rd., *Richmond*.

The season's other rarity was found by CIN and MUN, who spotted four WILSON'S PHALAROPE at The Hawk, CSI, May 4, providing the earliest spring sighting for the province. This species is an uncommon transient that has been found in the province almost annually since 1969 in ones and twos. It is less common in spring, however; there have been only 15 previous spring sightings, all single birds and all from May 13 and later.

shorebird species

May 14, 16 The Hawk, CSI 250, 300+ JON, SAN

Black-bellied Plover

Mar 31; Apr 21 Cape Sable, *Shel* 3, 15 AAD, RDE

Apr 10, 27 The Hawk, CSI 21; 48 CST; DMC

Apr 28 Garden Lots, *Lun* 1 JAH

May 5, 16 The Hawk, CSI 53, 80 JON

May 13 N. Grand Pre, *Kings* 5 RIW

May 15 Pinkneys Pt., *Yar* noted RAS

May 18 Pond Cove, Brier I. 4 ELM

May 26 Crescent Bch., *Lun* 8 NSBS, JAH

American-Golden Plover

Apr 27 The Hawk, CSI 1 DMC

Semipalmated Plover

May 20 N. Grand Pre, *Kings* 1 RIW

Piping Plover

Apr 8 beaches, *Shel* present *fide* SAB

Apr 22 Cherry Hill Bch., *Lun* 3 SJF

Apr 27 Ragged Hbr., *Queens* 2 JAH

May 2 Cherry Hill Bch., *Lun* 2 SJF

May 11 *Pict*, *Lun* 3, 1 NSMC

May 14 Daniels Head, CSI 2 pr. B. Atkinson, *fide* JON

Killdeer

Mar 16 W. Pennant, *HRM* 1 DAM

Apr 12 Middle Musquodoboit, *HRM* 1 VJH

Apr 16 Halifax 5-6 DHU

May 1 Rhodes Corner, *Lun* 1 JAH

May 11 *Hants*, *E*, *Kings*, *Pict* 17, 11, 7 NSMC

American Oystercatcher

Apr 10 The Hawk, CSI 2 JON, SAN, RDE

Apr 27; May 5 The Hawk, CSI 2 DMC; JON

May 13 The Hawk, CSI 6 JON

Spotted Sandpiper

May 11 *Pict*, *Kings* 13, 9 NSMC

May 18 R. Bourgeois, *Rich* 3 RIV

May 19 Hardwood Lands, *Hants* 8 pr. DOU

Greater Yellowlegs

Apr 12 Cow Bay marsh, *HRM* 1 DOU

Apr 14 W. Chezzetcook, *HRM* 1 PMC, SEM

Apr 17 Broad Cove, *Lun* 1 SJF

Apr 19 St. Peter's, *Rich* 1 BID

Apr 21 Cape Sable, *Shel* 2 AAD, RDE

Apr 21 Oxner's Bch., *Lun* 5 JAH

Apr 22-May 8 9 mainland sites 28 total var. obs

May 11 *CBRM*, *Pict*, *Rich* 36, 14, 9 NSMC

May 26 Crescent Bch., *Lun* 1 NSBS, JAH

Willet

Apr 15 Lwr. Rose Bay, *Lun* 3 AHM

Apr 23 The Hawk, CSI 2 CIN, MUN

Apr 27-30 6 mainland sites ca. 20 total var. obs.

May 5 The Hawk, CSI 5 JON

May 11 Brier I. 1 "Western" ELM, IAM

May 11 *Lun*, *HRM*, *Rich* 62, 39, 32 NSMC

other May 4 mainland sites 16 total var. obs.

Lesser Yellowlegs

Apr 15 Grand Desert, *HRM* 1 DAM, CRM

Apr 27 3 Fathom Hbr., *HRM* 3, 8 HAT; PMU

Apr 28 Garden Lots, *Lun* 1 JAH

May 1 Lwr. Rose Bay, *Lun* 1 JAH, DAW

May 11 *Colchester* 18 NSMC

Whimbrel

Apr 18 Duncan Reef, *HRM* 2 HAT

Ruddy Turnstone DMC; JON

May 5 The Hawk, CSI 34 JON

May 18	Pond Cove, Brier I.	1 ad.	ELM	Apr 27	The Hawk, CSI	50	DMC
May 26	Crescent Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1	NSBS, JAH	May 5	The Hawk, CSI	75	JON
Red Knot							
Mar 31	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	1, ph.	AAD, RDE	Short-billed Dowitcher			
Apr 27	The Hawk, CSI	2	DMC	Apr 21	Oxners Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1	JAH
Sanderling							
Mar 29; Apr 14	Martinique Bch., <i>HRM</i>	3, 15	PMC, SEM	Wilson's Snipe			
Apr 22	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	2	SJF	Apr 21	W. Dalhousie, <i>Kings</i>	1	N. Dowd
May 5	The Hawk, CSI	21	JON	Apr 29-30	2 owl surveys, CBI	9 total	var. obs.
Semipalmated Sandpiper							
Apr 13	The Hawk, CSI	11	CST	May 3-27	3 mainland sites	singles	var. obs.
Least Sandpiper							
May 20	N. Grand Pre, <i>Kings</i>	4	RIW	May 4	Earltown area, <i>Col</i>	3	PMC, SEM
Purple Sandpiper							
Mar 10	Pt. Pleasant Park, <i>HRM</i>	noted	DMC	May 11	<i>Hants E, Pict</i>	21, 18	NSMC
Mar 22	Pond Cove, Brier I.	13	ELM	May 22-29	3 owl surveys, CBI	5 total	var. obs.
Mar 27-28	Duncan Reef, <i>HRM</i>	ca. 12	HAT	American Woodcock			
Apr 17	Brier I.	1	RBS	Mar 13	Drummond mine, <i>Pict</i>	2	RFE
Apr 18	Duncan Reef, <i>HRM</i>	30+	HAT	Mar 22-29	7 locations, widespread	singles	var. obs.
Apr 27	Ragged Hbr., <i>Queens</i>	40	JAH	April	3 locations, widespread	4 total	var. obs.
Dunlin							
Mar 31	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	a few	AAD, RDE	Apr 29-30	2 owl surveys, CBI	singles	var. obs.
Apr 14	Martinique Bch., <i>HRM</i>	31	PMC, SEM	May 3	North R. Rd., <i>Kings</i>	3	JLC
				May 4-8	4 owl surveys, mainland	7 total	var. obs.
				May 11	<i>Pict, Hants E, Col</i>	42, 21, 15	NSMC
				May 19	Hardwood Lands, <i>Hants</i>	1 ad., 4 juv.	DOU
				May 29	owl survey, <i>Rich</i>	3	L. Saunders
				WILSON'S PHALAROPE			
				May 4	The Hawk, CSI	4	CIN, MUN



The unusual pose of this SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, Apr 21 at Oxners Bch., *Lun*, demonstrates a long-known, but seldom-used, field mark distinguishing it from Long-billed – the narrower black than white barring on its tail. [Photo Kevin Lantz]

Gulls through Alcids

By Eric Mills

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE reports were sparse despite the presence of breeders at a couple of sites in s.w. Nova Scotia, on The Wolves north of Grand Manan, and on Whitehorse Island (officially White Horse Island), off the entrance to Passamaquoddy Bay, NB – the last occupied again this year.



Two small, black-headed gulls are readily distinguished, especially in spring. The BONAPARTE'S at left (Mar 10 along the Salt Marsh Tr., *HRM*) has a very black hood and a delicate black bill. The BLACK-HEADED at right (Apr 10 at W. Lawrencetown, *HRM*) has a paler, brown-chocolate-brown hood and stouter, often red-tinged bill. In flight at a distance they differ in the latter's distinctly blackish outer primaries. [Photos: left, Paul Murray; right, Richard Stern]

Evidence continues to accumulate on the travels of HERRING and RING-BILLED GULLS. A Herring Gull bearing a solar-powered satellite tag that was placed in July 2009 on Kent Island, NB (Grand Manan archipelago) as of early March was still wintering in the New York City area (follow the links at <<http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking>>), likely along with birds from Nova Scotia colonies. A Ring-billed Gull found Apr 22 by Ken McKenna in the Aberdeen Business Centre, New Glasgow, had a wing tag and leg band indicating that it had been banded Feb 26 at a supermarket in Revere, MA, and was seen again Mar 15 at Revere Beach, MA, before making its way to New Glasgow, perhaps with the main influx of migrants during the first two weeks of April documented in the table below.

One (or possibly two) of the MEW (COMMON) GULLS discussed in the winter 2012-2013 issue of *Nova Scotia Birds* lingered to the end of March in Halifax Hbr., but there were no reports thereafter.

A lone second-winter THAYER'S GULL was well documented in photographs taken Mar 11 at Tufts Cove, Dartmouth (see next page).

An immature gull, likely in its first winter, that had plumage features fitting hybrid HERRING X LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL was photographed Mar 8 in the Tufts Cove area of Dartmouth (BBU). We can expect more of these puzzlers as the abundance of Lesser Black-backed Gulls continues to increase in eastern North America.



The most interesting gull this spring was our first diagnostically photographed (Mar 11) immature THAYER'S GULL (2nd cycle: note incoming gray mantle feathering, pale, dark-ripped bill). Identifying features include its rounded head and small bill relative to the nearby Herring Gull, and especially the gray inner shafts of the outer primaries from above (not spread enough here), and silvery gray, dark-tipped primaries from below. [Photos Bernard Burke]

A remarkable string of rare tern sightings occurred on CSI between May 4 and 13: a **LEAST TERN** May 4-6; a **GULL-BILLED TERN** May 6 and 13 (probably, but not certainly, the same bird); and a **SANDWICH TERN** May 4 and 6. Of these, only the Gull-billed Tern was photographed; documentation of the others is lacking. Among the regular species, **COMMON TERNS** returned to a traditional nesting site in Bedford Basin after an absence of perhaps two years.

There were four reports of Jaegers on shore between Apr 28 and May 18. Of these, three were certainly adult or near-adult **POMARINE JAEGER**S (photographed) and the fourth was reported as a **PARASITIC JAEGER**, although without documentation.

A few **DOVEKIES** remained from this winter's invasion, but most were gone before mid-April. **THICK-BILLED MURRE**S, dead and alive, were evident during roughly the same period, notably during the second week of March after a south-easterly gale. An unusual and very noteworthy southward movement of **RAZORBILLS** took place during the winter of 2012-2013 (see the winter issue of *Nova Scotia Birds*), but the fate of these birds, some of which made it to Florida and even Alabama, is unknown. There were only three reports of wintering birds here, the last in mid-April, after which resident breeders began to appear.

Black-legged Kittiwake

May 11	Off Northern Pt., Brier I.	3	NSMC
May 19	Off Northern Pt., Brier I.	1 ad.	ELM

Bonaparte's Gull

Mar 16	Lunenburg	1	KEL
Mar 18	Lunenburg area	5	KEL
Mar 24	First South, Lun	2	KEL
Mar 29	Corkums I., Lun	11	JAH
Apr 7	Garden Lots, Lun	8	KEL
Apr 19	Ogdens Pond, Ant	50	Lloyd Jewkes
Apr 30	Cole Hbr., HRM	11	Mark Field
May 3	Pictou causeway	30	KJM
May 5	Pictou causeway	15	KJM
May 11	Caribou, Pict	2 ad.	KJM
May 29	Yarmouth	1 ph.	CIN, MUN

Black-headed Gull

Mar 17	Mathews L., Shel	1, 1 st -w.	ELM
May 17	Lawrenceton L. area, HRM	4	Paolo
Mar 21-29	New Glasgow, Pict	1 wintering	KJM

Mar 24	Upper Soth Cove, Lun	1	Paolo
Mar 31	Conrads Bch., HRM	2	Paolo
Mar 29	Corkums I., Lun	3	JAH
Apr 7	Lawrencetown, HRM	5	Paolo
Apr 8	Cole Hbr., HRM	1	DMC
Apr 9	Lawrencetown, HRM	1	WPN, Frances Lourie
Ring-billed Gull			
Mar. 17	Mathews L. Shel	20+	ELM
Mar 22-30	Sullivans Pond, Dartmouth	10-20	MZE
Mar 26	Bras d'Or, CBRM	1 ad., 1 st of spring	CAM, ALM
Mar 29	Tatamagouche area, Col	2	JOK
Apr 2	Crescent Bch., Lun	15	KEL
Apr 3	Sullivans Pond., Dartmouth	22	DMC
Apr 4	E. Apple R., Cumb	29	KFS
Apr 9	Cole Hbr., HRM	11	Paolo Matteucci
Apr 10	Onslow, Col	250+	ELM
Apr 10	Starrs Pt., Kings	ca. 100	GFO
Apr 14	Horton Ldg., Kings	38	RIW

Apr 14	River John, <i>Pict</i>	100	KJM
Apr 16	Lyons Brk., <i>Pict</i>	40	KJM
Apr 19	Ogdens Pond, <i>Ant</i>	30	Lloyd Jewkes
Apr 21	New Glasgow, <i>Pict</i>	67	KJM
Apr 24	Sullivans Pond., Dartmouth	11	MZE
Apr 25	Three Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	5	KST
Apr 29	New Glasgow, <i>Pict</i>	28	KJM
Apr 29	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	13	KJM
May 1-24	Birch Cove, Dartmouth	2-5	MZE
May 18	Lwr. Barneys R., <i>Pict</i>	10	KJM

Plus 100+ other reports on eBird mainly from n mainland

MEW (COMMON) GULL

Mar 10	Purdys Wharf, Halifax	1 ad.	DMC
Mar 29	Tufts Cove, Dartmouth	1 ad.	DGA

Iceland Gull

Mar 3	McNab's I., <i>HRM</i>	6	DMC
Mar. 17	Liverpool	4	ELM
Mar 22	Northern Pt., Brier I.	1, 1 st -w.	ELM
Mar 25	Mulgrave, <i>Gufs</i>	6	Glynn Williams
Mar 31	Pier C, Pictou	3-4	KJM
Apr 6-8	Eastern Passage, <i>HRM</i>	10-20	DMC
Apr 10	Starrs Pt., <i>Kings</i>	1, 1 st -w.	GFO
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	6	KJM
Apr 28	Eastern Passage, <i>HRM</i>	10-12	DAC, TEB
May 1	Kingsburg Pond, <i>Lun</i>	2 imm.	JAH, DAW
May 11	Caribou, <i>Pict</i>	12	KJM
May 13	Lismore, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM, CHK, RFE
May 18	Lismore, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM

Plus ca. 40 other reports on eBird mainly from *HRM*.

THAYER'S GULL

Mar 11	Tufts Cove, Dartmouth	1, 2 nd -w., ph.	BBU
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Glaucous Gull

Mar 3	Glace Bay, <i>CBRM</i>	1, 1 st -w.	CAM, ALM
Mar 22	Miners Marsh, Kentville	1	JLC

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Mar-Apr 14	Beacon St. dam, Glace Bay	1, 2 nd -w.	CAM, ALM
Mar 5	E River of Pictou	1 ad.	KJM
Mar 25	Dartmouth Crossing	1 ad. <i>graellsii</i> , ph.	BBU
Apr 10	Starrs Pt., <i>Kings</i>	3 ad.	GFO
Apr 14	Linden, <i>Cumb</i>	1 ad.	KJM
Apr 14	Horton Ldg., <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
May 18	Schooner Pond bch., <i>CBRM</i>	1	CAM, ALM

Lesser Black-backed x Herring Gull

Mar 8	Shannon Pk., Dartmouth	1, probable 2 nd w., ph.	BBU
May 20	nr, Canning, <i>Kings</i>	1	RBS

LEAST TERN

May 4-6	Daniels Hd., CSI	1 (n.d.)	JON, CST, CIN, MUN
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Common Tern

Apr 25	Port Joli, <i>Queens</i>	1	JOA
May 11	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	2	SJF
May 13	Moirs Pd., Bedford, <i>HRM</i>	2	Paul Lindgreen
May 14	Conrads I., Rose Bay, <i>Lun</i>	4+	AHM
May 18	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	14	KJM
May 20	Bills I., Bedford Basin, <i>HRM</i>	20+ on colony	Dusan Soudek

Plus 17 reports on eBird from mid- to late May mainly from *HRM*.

Arctic Tern

May 11	Off Northern Pt., Brier I.	9	NSMC
May 25	W. Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	present	CIN, MUN

Roseate Tern

May 25	W. Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	?	CIN, MUN
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GULL-BILLED TERN

May 6	Daniels Head, CSI	1 ad., ph.	AAD
May 13	Daniels Head, CSI	1 (n.d.)	JON

SANDWICH TERN

May 4, 6	Daniels Hd., CSI	1 (n.d.)	JON, CST, CIN, MUN
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Caspian Tern

May 13	Galt Pond, <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM, CHK, RFE
May 13	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM, CHK, RFE

Pomarine Jaeger

May 1	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1, ph.	D. O'Corragain
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May 6	Lawrencetown L., <i>HRM</i>	1, ph.	KST et al.
May 18	Wellington Dyke, <i>Kings</i>	1 ad. ph.	S. Bondrup-Nielsen
Jaeger sp.			
Apr 28	Lawrencetown Hd., <i>HRM</i>	1	GDE, Bruce Doucette

Dovekie

Mar 2	Regatta Pt., Halifax	1	Paolo
Mar 3	Horseshoe Pk., Halifax	1	Paolo
Mar 24	Kingsburg Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1	Paolo
Apr 7	Chebucto Hd., <i>HRM</i>	1	HAT
Apr 9	Northwest Arm, Halifax	1	Ray Staszko
Apr 11	nr Duncans Cove, <i>HRM</i>	1	HAT
May 7	Morien Hbr., <i>CBRM</i>	1	CAM, ALM

Thick-billed Murre

Mar 3	McNab's I., <i>HRM</i>	1	DMC
Mar 9	Martins Brk., Mahone Bay	3	ELM
Mar 10	PPP, Halifax	1	DMC
Mar 10	Martins Brk., <i>Lun</i>	1	JAH, KEL
Mar 14	Halifax hbr.	1, ph.	RIB
Mar 13	Duncans Cove, <i>HRM</i>	1	DGU
Mar 16	Halifax Hbr.	1 dead	JBD
Mar 16	Terrance Bay, <i>HRM</i>	1	TEB
Mar 23	Garden Lots, <i>Lun</i>	1	JAH
Apr 6	Martinique Bch. <i>HRM</i>	1	BLM

Razorbill

Feb 13	Halifax Hbr.	1, ph.	RIB
Mar 30-31	Sandy Cove, <i>Digby</i>	2 dead	<i>fide</i> JWW
Apr 10	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1	C. & L. Weseloh
Apr 28	Tusket Is., <i>Yar</i>	10	AAD et al.
May 11	Off Northern Pt. Brier I.	10	NSMC
May 19	Off Northern Pt. Brier I.	5	ELM



This fine photo, May 6 on CSI, nicely documents the **GULL-BILLED TERN** among the three rare terns reported from CSI this spring. Note the curious molt pattern of terns, in which two different molt cycles overlap: inner primaries 2, 3, 4 have been replaced by Alternate moult, but P 1 is old and P 5 (largely hidden) is just coming in; P9 and 10 (paler) are new by Basic moult, and 6-8 are old. [Photo Alix d'Entremont]

Black Guillemot

Mar 3	McNabs I., <i>HRM</i>	6	DMC
Mar 10	PPP, Halifax	15	DMC

Mar 11	Halifax Hbr.	12+	RIB	May 2	Sandy Cove, <i>HRM</i>	4	Mark Field
Mar 16	Lunenburg	5	KEL	May 2	Crystal Crescent Bch., <i>HRM</i>	4	Mark Field
Mar 22	Brier I.	4	ELM	May 11	Brier I.	2	ELM
Mar 28	Margaretsville, <i>Anna</i>	6 in Alt. plumage.	WPN	May 18	Off Northern Pt., Brier I.	10	ELM
Mar 30/31	Sandy Cove, <i>Digby</i>	6 dead	<i>fide</i> JWW	Plus more than 30 reports on eBird mainly from <i>HRM</i> .			
Apr 10	E. Passage, <i>HRM</i>	2-3	C. & L. Weseloh	Atlantic Puffin			
Apr 22	Big Tancook, <i>Lun</i>	9	Paolo Matteucci	Apr 28	Tusket Is., <i>Yar</i>		



Three grounded adult POMARINE JAEGERS this spring may suggest something happened offshore. The first (left) was found Apr 20 in E. Passage, *HRM*; the next (middle) May 6 at E. Lawrencetown, *HRM*, and the third along Wellington Dyke Rd., Kings. The left bird shows the characteristic white-shafted primaries, the middle the black cap extending below the gape, but only the one at right displays the typical broad, twisted central tail feathers. [Photos from left to right: D. O’Corragain, Chris Pepper, Soren Bondrup-Nielsen]

Pigeon through Woodpeckers

By Chris Field

The spring migration count gives us a glimpse of the numbers of each species present in early May. By looking at the reports for the past 4 years, it is noteworthy that the numbers for many of the species in this group are quite stable even among some migrants. For instance we’ve had between 128 and 132 YELLOW- BELLIED SAPSUCKERS and between 48 and 60 PILEATED WOODPECKERS. As an exception the numbers of RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS varies from 27 to 229 and clearly depends on the early spring weather. Owl numbers are a little more variable but I suspect this is a reflection of effort rather than dramatic changes in populations.

The only real rarity of the season occurred on the last day of May when John Nickerson reported a **WHITE-WINGED DOVE** on CSI. A second White-winged Dove was reported in the migration count from *Pictou* Co. but no details were given. Sue Westby reported a **BOREAL OWL** in Northwest Cove and gave a careful description which I quote: “I was only 10 feet away from it at eye level and was able to identify it by its larger size (than a Saw-Whet), dark brown base colour with white spotting on the forehead and wings, pale facial disc with dark edging and brown streaked breast. The overall look was of contrasting light and dark brown plumage with brilliant yellow eyes staring at me.” I searched for it a couple of days later with Sue but it had apparently moved on. Another **BOREAL OWL** was reported on the migration count in *Colchester* Co. but again no details were provided.

Detailed records of CHIMNEY SWIFT sightings were provided by Jim Wolford. The first report was of nine swifts on May 5 in New Glasgow. There were reports of over 500 in both Middleton and New Glasgow later in the month. Other reports were from 10 sites, primarily from Pictou westward away from the Atlantic coast. A **RED-HEADED WOODPECKER** found in *Yarmouth* by MUN was a rare find; they have been greatly outnumbered by RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER in recent decades, the reverse of the situation 40-50 year ago. Indeed, we had more evidence of Red-bellied breeding in NS when Alan Springer observed copulation May 8 in south-end Halifax.

Rock Pigeon				WHITE-WINGED DOVE			
Mar-May	province-wide	270	ebird	May 31	CSI	1	JON, RDE (ph.)

Mourning Dove			
Mar-May	province-wide	311	ebird
Yellow-billed Cuckoo			
May 13	L.Argyle, <i>Yar</i>	1	R Donaldson
Great Horned Owl			
Mar-May	<i>Col, Cumb ,HRM, Kings</i>	11	ebird
Barred Owl			
Mar-May	12 counties	24	ebird
Short-eared Owl			
Mar	<i>Kings</i>	4	ebird
BOREAL OWL			
May 8	Northwest Cove, <i>Lun</i>	1	S. Westby
Northern Saw-whet Owl			
May	<i>Hants</i>	3	ebird
Common Nighthawk			
May 27	Springfield, <i>Queens</i>	1	ebird
Chimney Swift			
May 5-31	New Glasgow	up to 558	KJM, RFE
May 6-31	McGowan L., <i>Queens</i>	up to 129	B. Toms, A. Belliveau.
May 7-31	RTNC, <i>Hants</i>	up to 78	JWW
May 11-31	Middleton, <i>Kings</i>	up to 536	CLD ,B.Johnson
May 19-31	St.Bernards, <i>Digby</i>	up to 93	P. Potter, E. & D. Turner
May 22-31	Upper Falmouth, <i>Hants</i>	up to 300	C. Rutledge, JOB
May 22	Oxford, <i>Cumb</i>	up to 20	
May 23	Truro, <i>Col</i>	12	JBO
May 29	Jollimore, <i>HRM</i>	5+	PLC
May 30	Bible Hill, <i>Col.</i>	52	LHA



A **WHITE-WINGED DOVE**, which has become an almost routine vagrant, appeared May 30 at the feeders of JON and SAN on CSI [Photo Ronnie d'Entremont]



A **NORTHERN FLICKER**, Mar 22 at a feeder in Truro, displays its subspecies name, "YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER" [Photo Kate Messer]

Ruby Throated Hummingbird			
May 11-31	8 counties	75	ebird
Belted Kingfisher			
Mar-May	province-wide	57	ebird
Red-bellied Woodpecker			
Mar-Apr	<i>HRM, Kings</i>	4	ebird
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER			
Apr 20	<i>Yarmouth</i>	1	MUN
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
Apr15-May31	8 counties	68	ebird
Downy Woodpecker			
Mar-May	province-wide	129	ebird
Hairy Woodpecker			
Mar-May	province-wide	109	ebird
Black-backed Woodpecker			

Apr18	<i>HRM</i>	1	ebird	Mar-May	province-wide	51	ebird
Northern Flicker							
Mar-May	province-wide	193	ebird				
Pileated Woodpecker							

Flycatchers through Thrushes (Spring 2013)

Nic Fieldsend

One of the great pleasures of the arrival of spring is the return of bird song to the woods, and the orations of flycatchers are always sure sign that winter has finally passed. The added benefit with a family as similarly plumaged as *Empidonax* flycatchers is that these distinctive songs - “free-beer”, “che-bek”, “pee-a-wee” - are usually the easiest way to determine identification.

By late May, OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS were reported, with singles May 28 at Port Mouton, *Queens* (Alain Belliveau) and May 31 at Glasgow Head, *Guys* (JOK), as well as sightings of individual EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE May 28 at Oakhill/Dayspring, *Lun* (JAH), and May 30 at Grafton Lake, *Queens* (Megan Crowley). Few ALDER FLYCATCHERS were noted during the NSMC, low numbers being found in many species, perhaps owing to the general later arrival of spring migrants following the extended cold-weather period. By month’s end, sightings were more widespread, KST having several multiple counts: six at Cole Hbr. Heritage Pk., *HRM* May 30, then next day four at Annapolis Royal Marsh, and five at Belleisle Marsh, *Anna*.

LEAST FLYCATCHER is usually the earliest flycatcher to return, and was certainly the most abundant during the NSMC although that total was less than half of the 2012 one. Following the trend of other species, by late May, that distinctive “che-bek” was certainly echoing through Palmetter Woods, *Kings* where RBS had six May 29, and the NSNT visit to Gold River Lake, *Lun* May 31 yielded seven birds (RIW). There was one report by Chase Mosher of an unidentified *Empidonax* species May 28 in Taylor Head PP, *HRM*, but with no details that might aid identification.

EASTERN PHOEBE – another early returner – was up in numbers seen during the NSMC, 10 more than the average from the previous two years. On Apr 16, JQA reported an individual that came “winging in over the ocean from the east around 10 am, picked up a few insects off the shrubs and continued on west”, an uncommon sighting in the W. Head/Lockeport, *Shel*. area. Two weeks later, KJM and CHK had a count of four birds Apr 30 along the Willard Fraser Rd. in Pictou.

James Churchill’s morning was enlivened May 29 when the singing of a GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER came through his office window in Kentville. They nested in the Forest Hill Rd. neighborhood in 2012, and while at least one of their previous attempts was not successful, it was encouraging to hear them return. Another identification from indoors occurred when FMC enjoyed a brief view of an EASTERN KINGBIRD May 23 on his garden fence in Sunrise Valley, *Vic*. Sadly there was no time to gather photos. Two between Grand Pré and Evangeline Beach, *Kings* on May 24 (JOL) and three at Glasgow Head, *Guys* on May 3 (JOK) were welcome sightings of this seemingly less frequent species.

Ronnie d’Entremont reported a stubborn adult NORTHERN SHRIKE Mar 7 on the Blanche Pen., *Shel*, steadfastly gripping the tip of a small tree in one of the many swamps, trying to ride out a chilly gale that characterized the early spring weather. Other singles reported including one Apr 12 at Westchester Station, *Cumb* (JLC) “perched and hunting at the edge of Hwy 104 beside and a young coniferous forest”. Only one bird, reported from *Richmond*, made it as late as the NSMC.

While the tendency was for lower counts across the board during the NSMC, BLUE-HEADED VIREO was a notable exception, showing a continuing upward trend in sightings, among them 23 were during the count at Butler Road, *Kings* (RIW) and nine near camp at L. Torment, *Kings* (NAD & Mike Dowd). The later-returning RED-EYED VIREO on the NSMC was somewhat below recent totals, but by month’s end, sightings had increased, with nine seen at Gold River L., *Lun* (RIW for NS Nature Trust) and seven in Bridgewater (JAH), both May 31.

One of the spring highlights was a WARBLING VIREO May 31 in a front yard on Belcher Street, Port Williams, *Kings*. Taking advantage of driving slowly through the new 30 km/h school-zone limit, JLC heard it sing with the “really typical Mr Roboto . . . pattern which separates it from Purple Finch”, but he couldn’t quite get a view of it. Returning later in the day, he confirmed the identification, noting that it was very vocal, singing in the maple canopy with vireo-esque squeaks among the regular song, but very secretive. An intriguing record of a single PHILADELPHIA VIREO, uncommon in spring, was reported on the NSMC in *Colchester*, but no details were submitted.

GRAY JAY sightings were on par with recent years, the most notable being a group of six found Mar 11 by CHP at Conrads Settlement, *HRM*, while DAM had a single May 17 at Sandy Cove, *HRM*, that sat on top of a tree, “looking very much like a shrike”. Kathleen MacAuley noted a BLUE JAY, more known for its vocal impersonations, doing a creditable imitation of a Bald Eagle Mar 30 at Milford Station, *Hants*, while according to NAD, the birds on Corkums I., *Lun*, favour mimicking Osprey calls, but only after the latter have returned to the area. A regular group of 15 at Birch Cove Pk., Dartmouth, was first reported Mar 10 (MZE), and the largest single count of the season numbered 22 at Bridgewater, *Lun* Mar 12 (Charity Fraser).

Corvid numbers appeared to remain consistent, with the AMERICAN CROW total the NSMC on par with the preceding two years. Paolo Matteucci must receive credit for his diligent reporting of crow counts, notably 36 at Fishermans Reserve, *HRM*, Mar 17, and 35 at Lower Rose Bay, *Lun*, Mar 24. Notable COMMON RAVEN flocks included 20 at the Wolfville Watershed Nature Preserve Apr 17 (RIW) and 13 eagerly feeding on the carcass of a Harbour Seal Apr 8 at Hartlen Pt., *HRM* (DMC).

Rick Whitman maintained a careful eye on the remaining HORNED LARKS along the coast between Horton Landing and East Pt., *Kings*, submitting eight counts between Mar 5 and Apr 23, the largest being 33 on that first date. Providing regular species counts from consistent locations is vital for understanding seasonal and long-term trends, as well as giving the rewards of favourite-patch birding.

At least two PURPLE MARTIN were heard Apr 28 in Kentville (JLC). According to eBird reports, they were moving northeast as far as Bangor, Maine and Trois Rivières, Québec at that time. A single female was reported May 15 at Sunrise Valley, *Vic*, the third sighting at this location since a male in July 2001 and a female in May 2008 (FMC). It was accompanied by a pair of Barn Swallows and stayed for about an hour. Wendy Whynot photographed another martin May 26 at Rosette Rd., *Queens*.

The first TREE SWALLOWS were found Apr 2 in *Yarmouth*, a single at Goose Creek Marsh (JKD) and two at Pubnico Head (SMA). Eighteen were over Miners Marsh, Kentville, Apr 10 (RIW), and they were more widely reported thereafter. The warmer weather of early May heralded good numbers, with estimated counts of 100 at Dauphanees Pond, *HRM*, during the NSMC (TEB) and May 23 along French Basin Tr., Annapolis Royal (RBS). Megan Crowley enjoyed a couple of moments that demonstrated how habituated this species is with human encroachment on the environment: one was sitting on her clothes line on West Caledonia Rd., *Queens* (Apr 25) and another in a nest box on a power pole at Pleasant Hill Farm, *Queens* (May 29).

The earliest reported BANK SWALLOWS were late: 50 at Selma, *Hants*, May 23 (ROH). More were reported before month's end, including 150 in the Avonport, *Kings*, area May 30 (RIW). However, numbers were down again this year, as were all swallow species well below the NSMC counts from 2011 and 2012. A single CLIFF SWALLOW was seen May 20 at a nest site on the side of a barn at Pleasant Hill Farm, *Queens* (Megan Crowley), and two more were seen that day in Pictou. An abnormally early (overshooting?) BARN SWALLOW was noted Mar 29 at Scots Bay, *Kings*, by BLM, who also reported the next, timelier one, Apr 18 at Tantallon, *HRM*. Good numbers appeared after Apr 25.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE remains widespread and abundant, ever resourceful and less impacted than the long-distance migrants by seasonal fluctuations in weather patterns. Single location counts of 40 at the Mersey-Tobeatic Research Institute, *Queens* (DMC, Mar 27) and 20 on the NSBS field trip to Shubie Canal, *HRM* (CHP & KST, Mar 23) were noted, and KFS' regular records from her feeder in E. Apple River, *Cumb* showed a maximum of 17 during Apr 2. If you were looking for a spring BOREAL CHICKADEE, Bellefontaine Road, *HRM*, proved a reliable location with regular sightings of one to three birds from Mar 3 to May 28 (CHP & KST) and there were double digit counts of 11 at Rocky Lake, *HRM*, Mar 19, and 10 at Anti Dam, *HRM*, Apr 16 (both CHP).

A high count of 12 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH was made at Grafton, *Queens* on May 4 by CDS, who also had the highest reported count of WHITE-BREASTED, a half-dozen, and also in Grafton.

BROWN CREEPER provided vocal entertainment for Megan Crowley at the Keji NP Visitor Centre, on May 9 as she was getting a flat tire changed! WINTER WREN and both kinglets (RUBY-CROWNED beginning with several singles Apr 19-25) were widely reported in small numbers from mainland counties through the season.



The BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE largely leaves our feeders in spring and goes about its true profession of catching caterpillars for the young, sometimes to our benefit as well. [Photo Alix d'Entremont]

A single EASTERN BLUEBIRD was reported in *Richmond* during the NSMC, a male was at Hartlen Pt., *HRM*, May 13 (David Waterfield), and a third individual at Hatchet L., *HRM*, May 18 (Richard Hamilton). VEERY sightings were made in five counties between May 5-31, with a high count of four in Palmetter Woods, *Kings* (RBS, May 29). Following the eight SWAINSON'S THRUSH during the NSMC, singles were found on May 26 at Amherst Pt., *Cumb*, and May 28 in Halifax (both Ken Burton), with Chase Moser adding two more May 29 at Taylor Head PP. HERMIT THRUSH was widespread across the province following arrivals of ones and twos Apr 18-25 (var. obs.), with RIW reporting a high NSMC of 13 at Butler Rd., *Kings*. A solitary WOOD THRUSH was reported on the *Annapolis* NSMC.



Two EASTERN BLUEBIRDS in *HRM* (this one May 18 at Hartlen Pt.), and especially the NSMC bird in *Richmond*, were outside their usual s.w.-mainland breeding range. [Photo David Waterfield]

Their presence through March makes it difficult to gauge arrivals of AMERICAN ROBIN, but large concentrations were reported Mar 31 at both Waugh's River, *Col* (50, JOK) and Pictou (100, KJM). Dorothy Cameron's VARIED THRUSH at Woods Hbr., *Shel* (photograph in the last issue), continued to make daily visits until at least Mar 12

In the variable month of March robins, like this male Mar 21 along Wyman Rd. in Yarmouth, sometimes turn to less favoured food, like these hawthorn berries. [Photo Ronnie d'Entremont]



Mimic-Thrushes through Warblers

By Ken McKenna

All three Mimidae were tallied for this spring's report. Earliest reports of GRAY CATBIRD were from the *Shelburne-Yarmouth* area with two from Mud I., *Yar*, Apr 28 (AAD *et al.*) and one from The Hawk, CSI, May 4 (MUN, CIN). There were no other reports from the mainland until the NSMC, when the few noted (four of them in *Hants*), were well below the average of the past two years, although effort was not as great this year. The only Cape Breton report was May 10 from Oban Rd., *Rich* (Tony Burke *vide* BID). Migration accelerated in the last two weeks of May with ten reports of 21 catbirds, including seven in *Lunenburg* May 19 (JAH). Over-wintering NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS continued to be reported: Mar 3 in Wolfville (RIW); Mar 4 at Broad Cove, *Lun* (SJF); Mar 19 on the Kentville trail. - drinking from the Cornwallis R. (JLC); Apr 10, Miners Marsh, Kentville (RBS); and Apr 21, Port Hawkesbury (DJO). On May 10, RBS noted a pair between Kentville and Port Williams, and another was seen May 15 at Clarks Harbour, CSI (MUN, CIN). Early BROWN THRASHER were singles on CSI Apr 21 at Cape Sable (AAD, RDE) and Apr 28 at The Hawk (CST). On May 20, in RIF had a thrasher singing in his yard in Westville, *Pict.*. It was present to at least May 25 and neighbours thought a pair might be present, so this might have been a breeding attempt. There were no reports of mockingbirds or thrashers for the NSMC

There were over 530 eBird reports of EUROPEAN STARLING, with the largest count submitted of 300 at Grand Pré, *Kings*, Mar 16 (RIW). On May 1, Paul Steele observed starlings taking over active nest holes of Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Flicker (*vide* JWW). The number recorded on the NSMC this year (3697) was on par with the past two years. AMERICAN PIPITS are never detected here in spring in great numbers, but this year they almost slipped through undetected, with just two reports: Mar 22, eight on Brier I. (ELM) and the only migrant pipit on the NSMC was at Big I., *Pict* (Robert Lange *vide* DOU).

Wintering BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS lingered through March into the first two weeks of April, with all reports from *HRM*, *Cumberland*, *Kings* and *Lunenburg*. About a dozen eBird reports of just under 500 birds and nine other reports of 150 give an

idea of the numbers observed in the province in late winter through early spring. The season's latest report came from SLH, who observed 30+ on Apr 9 at Canning. Not many CEDAR WAXWINGS overwintered this year, with three reports of up to ten birds in March and April in *Kings* (RIW, Tim and Ann Hall). A shut-out on the NSMC was barely avoided with the sighting of one in *Richmond*. First apparent spring migrants were noted in Halifax May 24 and reports of 2-20 birds totaling fewer than 50 birds were received for the last few days of May, but only from the mainland.

All three LAPLAND LONGSPUR reports were from *Kings*: one Mar 12 on the Grand Pré dyke-lands (DOU), and two on Mar 25 and three on Apr 4 between Horton Landing and East Pt. (RIW). Unlike spring 2011, when thousands of SNOW BUNTINGS were detected on their northward migration to breed on the arctic tundra, this year there were only four spring reports: four at Crescent Bch., *Lun*, Mar 2 (JAH); two at Louisdale, *Rich*, Mar 11 (BID); three at Melmerby, *Pict*, Mar 11 (KJM), and the largest group of 50 flying over a field n. of Kentville, Mar 26 (RBS).

Warbler migration seemed a little late this year, with no reports of wayward southern or western species, although all but one of our 22 breeding species were noted. I am now including PINE WARBLER as a breeding warbler, given good records for the last three years. Some of our early-arriving warbler species had one or two early records, and then there was a gap before others were seen. Unfavourable migration weather patterns may have been a factor. On the NSMC, 19 species were detected with less effort in the field than in previous years.

OVENBIRD is generally among the late arrivals, with the earliest noted May 7 at Keji NP (Megan Crowley). The next were on the NSMC, when the total was only about a third of the previous two-year average. Numbers picked up thereafter with about 60 eBird reports of about 250. On the other hand, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH numbers were average, with earliest reports May 4 at Grafton, *Queens* (Cindy Staicer), and Coldbrook, *Kings* (AAM). On the NSMC, two counties reported the bulk of the sightings: *Pictou* with 26 and *Kings* with 22. Those locations correspond nicely to probability-of-observation maps for this species in the second Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas (on-line and soon to be published). *Antigonish* and northern CBI are also hotspots for this species, although not reflected in the NSMC results. By month's end there were about 30 reports of 50 birds, all from the mainland. BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER is another early migrant, and the first sighting of spring was by JOA, Apr 29, at Port Joli, *Queens*. This was followed by May 1 sightings in *Kings*, at E. Dalhousie (NAD) and Atlanta (*vide* JWW). Overall the NSMC total was 60% of the average of the previous two years, about 20% of them from *Hants East*. Migration likely peaked just after mid-May, with accounts like that from PLC who heard 14+ singing as she hiked around the Frog Pond trails at Jollimore, *HRM*, May 20. There were over 100 eBird reports representing more than 200 birds, with only one report from CBI at R. Bourgeois, *Rich*, May 19 (RIV). TENNESSEE WARBLERS are sometimes detected later in the spring so maybe the measly three reports will BE expanded in the summer report, but in general this species continues to be observed in very low numbers. Singles were reported from n.e. Dartmouth May 20 (Lynn Karchewski) in Upper Tantallon, *HRM*, May 26 (Dan Logue), and at L. Torment, *King*, May 30 (NAD and Mike Dowd). NASHVILLE WARBLER is another early migrant, and there was an early report of one Apr 29 at E. LaHave (DWA *vide* JAH). There was, however, only one other report between then and the NSMC, when expected numbers were noted, with the largest county total of 56 from *Pictou*. Most of the 30+ eBird reports were of about 60 birds in the last two weeks of May.

No reports of MOURNING WARBLER were received, and no COMMON YELLOWTHROATS were reported prior to May 11, when the NSMC total was only about one-quarter of the three-year average, and almost 2/3 of that total was from *Hants*. Sightings increased in the last two weeks of May, with over 60 eBird reports of 115 birds, all from mainland locations. There was a similar pattern of arrival of AMERICAN REDSTART, with no reports prior to the NSMC, when more than 1/3 of the total were in *Annapolis*. Reports increased after mid-May, and on May 19, JAH had ten in Lunenburg. In addition there were about 50 reports on eBird of about 120 birds, again only in mainland locations. Like the Tennessee Warbler, CAPE MAY WARBLERS were so few they almost did not make this report. The one seen on the NSMC was in *Richmond*, and another May 28 was in relatively reliable APBS (Ken Burton). The spring's first NORTHERN PARULA was a single Apr 26 at Pubnico Pt., *Yar* (RDE, SMA). Another early sighting was Apr 29 at Miller Pt., *Lun* (JAH). Numbers increased into the first week of May, and by May 4 Cindy Staicer tallied 16 at Grafton, *Queens*. The NSMC total was 70% of the average of the previous two years, with almost 1/3 (96) from *Kings*. The species was widely reported, only from the mainland, with 114 eBird reports of 325 birds.



Spring Warblers are the delight of birders and a challenge for photographers, and it was hard to choose from the many beautiful examples available this spring. These are shown above in taxonomic order. They are also perhaps in increasingly spectacular order with the dullest first; but it's also the most challenging to see and photograph. [Photos: above and below left, Bill Crosby; above middle David Currie below, middle, Alix d'Entremont; above right Richard Stern; below right, Frank Gummett]

There was only a single direct report of a MAGNOLIA WARBLER prior to the NSMC was from Halifax May 9 (Lynn Karchewski), although there was a second-hand report of one seen on a canoe trip to Keji-Tobeatic around May 2 (*vide* NAD). The NSMC total was only ca. 1/5 of last year's, with 2/3 of those in *Hants East*.. Again, this probably reflects later migration this year. Most of the 50 eBird reports of about 140 birds were from the 3rd week of May. The only CBI reports were of singles May 11 in *CBRM* and May 18 at R. Bourgeois, *Rich* (JWM). First reports of BAY-BREASTED WARBLER were two in *Kings* on the NSMC, the only ones observed for that count. Other reports were of singles May 19 at Myra Run, *HRM* (CHP) and May 27 at Mt. William, *Pict* (KJM), and of small numbers seen May 28 at Old Annapolis Royal tr. (HAT, Ray Staszko).

There were three reports of BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER prior to the NSMC, when a fair number were recorded. One Apr 29 at Peace Park, *Lun* (JAH) seems very early, with May 3 as the earliest date in "*All the Birds of Nova Scotia*" (McLaren 2012). At the Kentville ravine, JLC noted one May 11, but nine by May 17. On May 20, PLC saw one at Jollimore, *HRM* "at eye level at 5 feet - stunning to watch him sing so close". Among 30 eBird reports of 75 birds, CHP noted 26 at Myra Run, *HRM*, May 29. The first reported YELLOW WARBLER was on May 10, when one was heard during a drive between Kentville and Port Williams (RBS). The next day, the NSMC total of 35 was largely from county highs of 11 in *Inverness* and 12 in *Kings*. That total was well below the previous two years' tallies, again indicating delayed migration. By the third week of May, they were widespread, with about 70 reports of 185 birds on eBird, including .20 seen on a walk on the French Basin Tr., Annapolis Royal (RBS), among No CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER was noted before the NSMC, and the seven on that count were about 10% of last year's total. There were over 20 eBird reports of 30+ birds thereafter, nearly all from *Kings* and *Pictou*. Both *Richmond* and *Hants East* reported four BLACKPOLL WARBLERS representing eight of the nine

observed on the NSMC, and the first spring records. There were no other reports until a movement was detected starting May 18 with one singing on Brier I. (ELM), followed by five at Jerry Lawrence PP May 19 (KST), and a nice group of 18+ singing at the Frog Pond in Jollimore May 20 (PLC). There were only seven reports of 17 birds on eBird, likely reflecting few visits to coastal or highland breeding areas. BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER is often among the early-arriving warblers, and one was singing May 1 at Black River L., *Kings* (RIW). However, no more were noted until May 9, when two were found along an un-named *Queens* road (Alain Belliveau). Only four were noted on the NSMC, three of them in *Kings*. There seemed to be a bit of an arrival May 16-20 with nine reports of 20, including a singing male at the s. end of Nichol L., *HRM*, found by BLM, who felt this might be a new breeding location in the Chebucto Pen. Most of the 18 eBird reports of 50 birds were after May 20.

As one of our two very early spring warblers, the first PALM WARBLER was sighted Apr 14 along the Clyde R. loop, *Shel* (RDE, SMA), and the next one Apr 16 in Keji NP (Megan Crowley). Reports were widespread after that date. On May 1, JLC noted his first “yard” Palm singing at dawn in Kentville. He felt its song was unusual, a “less buzzy song in timbre and more variable in pitch and similar to Chestnut-sided Warbler late in the breeding season. The plumage suggested a western Palm and streaky on the belly and sides with greyish wings. Later after dawn the song became more typical.” The NSMC total was about 65% of the previous two years, and about 1/4 of those were in *HRM*. There were over 80 eBird reports of 200 birds.

Most if not all the early reports of PINE WARBLER were likely of over-wintering birds. By Mar 7, there was some singing from the three successfully overwintered Pine Warblers in Lr. Sackville, *HRM* (LOC). The last of them was observed Mar 30. Another over-wintering bird in Mahone Bay disappeared Mar 20, but reappeared Apr 3 (JOA). On Mar 29, RBS had one singing near Port Williams, *Kings* (see photo). On Apr 1, AAD photographed one at a feeder in Middle W. Pubnico. Robert Cumming noted one in Bedford Apr 3. Suet was the preferred food for the Pine Warbler at the Lr. Sackville feeder of DHU and SHU on its visits Apr 7 and 16. There were only a couple of May reports. One was found May 28 at Miller Peace Pk., Lunenburg (JAH). At the end of May, Pine Warblers were photographed in Oakfield Park, *HRM* by HAT and RIH. Further evidence of breeding of Pine Warbler in NS was that in this location in 2012, FLL had observed an adult with fledgling (*vide* HAT).



A number of PINE WARBLERS that had overwintered were singing in early spring. This one was a pleasant surprise Mar 29 in Richard Stern's backyard near Port Williams, *Kings*. [Photo Richard Stern]

It is always a little difficult to determine when YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER migrates to Nova Scotia. Certainly single “Myrtles” seen in *Pictou*, on Big I. Mar 29 and on Caribou I. Mar 30 (KJM), as well as 15 at Rainbow Haven, *HRM*, Apr 4 (DMC) had successfully overwintered. Likely first migrants were Apr 15 in Spryfield (HAT, Ray Staszko) and reports

flooded in after that. This was the most common warbler species on the NSMC, and one of very few warblers to be reported in numbers similar to those of the previous two years. This species was also the most common warbler on eBird, with 270 reports of about 900 birds.

The first reported BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER was May 3 at Rhodes Corner, *Lun* (Mandy Eisenhauer, *vide* JAH). Although almost 300 were listed on the NSMC, almost a third from *Hants East*, that total was only about half the average of the last two years. By May 18, migration was in full swing with 30+ described as a big arrival on Brier I. (ELM), and 49 next day at Myra Run, *HRM* (CHP). About 90 reports of over 200 birds were submitted to eBird. As it is not known as an early-arriving warbler, a heard-only CANADA WARBLER, May 6 on the St Margarets Bay Tr., *HRM*, was unusual. The only NSMC reports were of two in *Annapolis* and one in *Hants East*. More timely arrivals were a single May 18 on CSI (MUN) and one singing May 19 at Brier I. (ELM). By the end of May, 21 more were reported from *HRM*, *Kings*, *Lunenburg* and *Pictou*, with 12+ along the BLT trail near Timberlea, *HRM*, May 31 (FLL, *vide* HAT), and three, also on May 31, along the proposed Heritage Gas corridor between Mt. William and Granton, *Pict* (KJM). All WILSON'S WARBLER reports were from the n. mainland – May 20 at Loch Broom and White Hill, both in *Pictou* (CHK, KJM), and May 28 at APBS. None were seen on the NSMC.

Sparrows to House Sparrow

By Ian McLaren

This section covers many species and many reports, overwhelmingly on eBird. Of course, some records deserve full attribution, but I have tried to summarize reports of our common species generally without naming observers. First, much redundancy within eBird and between eBird and other reports has to be accounted for, and then patterns can be sought in the arrival or passage through of migrants, or the spreading out (e.g. from feeders) and departure of wintering species. In the summaries by two-week periods, I have included the largest count from regularly monitored localities (mostly feeders). The complete NSMC totals are given elsewhere (p. 43).

A singing m. **EASTERN TOWHEE** Apr 17 along French Basin Tr., Annapolis Royal, was thought to be the same one found there last December (RBS). Another male photographed mid-March at a feeder in Yarmouth (Leslie Robinson) was also believed by EBR to have overwintered in the area. Another male that appeared Apr 12 in Fairview, Halifax (Helen Watt) and another on May 19 at The Hawk, CSI (CIN, MUN), were presumably overshooting migrants.

Departure of the wintering AMERICAN TREE SPARROW was fairly evident, but with an odd apparent decline (scattering or departure?) in later March and recovery (through migrants?) in early April. The latest was one noted Apr 30 at Plymouth, *Pict* (KJM).

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW, Spring 2013

Dates	No. of localities	No. of birds
Mar 1-15	14	78
Mar 16-31	11	39
Apr 1-15	14	69
Apr 16-30	7	16

The arrival of CHIPPING SPARROW was also well monitored; two appearing Mar 17 in Ann and Tim Hall's backyard in Habitant, *Kings*, might have spent winter in the area, but others did not appear until after mid-April: the first one Apr 18 at Bible Hill, *Col* (ROH), five more singles by month's end, and about 40 through May. A **LARK SPARROW**, rare in spring, turned up Apr 4 at feeders in Portuguese Cove, *HRM* (HAT). VESPER SPARROW has decreased throughout its range, most sharply in the East. So a dozen on the NSMC were surprising, eight of them singing in their traditional sandy fields along Highway 101 in *Kings* (WPN), and apparently some are still to be found elsewhere in the Kinston area (Larry Bogen). One SAVANNAH SPARROW Mar 25 near Horton Landing, *Kings* (RIW, ph.), may have been an early arrival, but another Mar 30 on Conrads Bch, *HRM*, might have overwintered. Five reports Apr.8-10 in coastal areas, totaling 15 individuals, might have included some "Ipswiches", but one Savannah was singing on territory as early as Apr 10 at Wellington Dykes, *Kings* (GFO), and 51 more at ten locations between 16 Apr and month's end were timely. "IPSWICH" SPARROW" is one of our spring specialties, and now arrives marginally earlier than it did 30-40 years ago (table below). Again, some navigational digression is suggested by an individual May 31 at Horton Landing, *Kings* (ph. by RIW, who found another or the same bird

Apr 26), and the even more surprising twosome found Apr. 28 at Big I., *Pict*, the latest to be reported (KJM). There were no reports of the late-migrating NELSON'S SPARROW; we'll expect them in early June.

SAVANNAH ("IPSWICH") SPARROW, Spring 2013

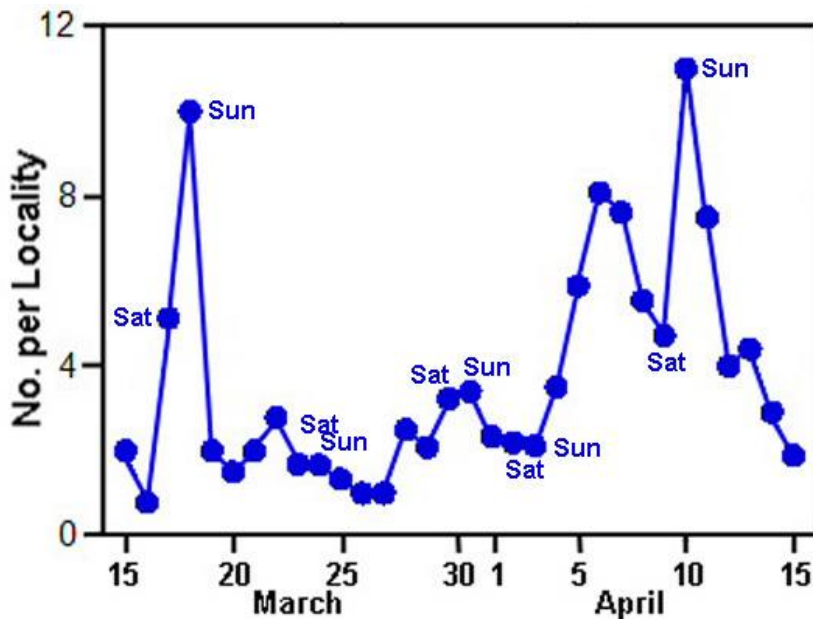
Date	Localities	No. of birds	Observers
Mar 31	Lawrencetown Bch, <i>HRM</i>	1	KST, CHP
Mar 31	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	1	KJM
Mar 31	Near Horton Landing, <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
Apr 1	Hartlen Pt., <i>HRM</i>	3	DOU
Apr 1	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	3	KJM
Apr 2	CSI	3	AAD, RDE
Apr 2	Near Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	4	CHP, KST
Apr 5-15	6 coastal locs, <i>HRM</i>	8	Var. obs.
Apr 16-30	9 locs, Brier I., <i>HRM, Lun</i>	20	Var. obs

FOX SPARROW is another good marker of spring, since few overwinter. First arrivals, mostly at feeders, are tabulated below. Four present Apr 28 on Mud I., *Yar* (AAD) were presumably on territory.

FOX SPARROW, Spring 2013

Date	Localities	No. of birds	Observers
Mar 30	Portuguese Cove, <i>HRM</i>	1	HAT
Mar 31	Bullet Rd. & Rockingham, <i>HRM</i>	1, 1	JEH, CHP
Apr 1	E. Apple River, <i>Cumb</i>	1	KFS
Apr. 1	Tremont, <i>Kings</i>	2	SLH
Apr. 2	Torbrook, <i>Anna</i>	1	Ronda Cormier
Apr 3	Tremont, Wolfville, <i>Kings</i> , Mahone Bay, <i>HRM</i>	1,1,2	WPN, JWV, JOA
Apr. 4	Halifax, Portuguese Cove, <i>HRM</i> , Whiteside, <i>Rich</i>	1, 1(new), 1	DMC, HAT, BID
Apr 5-20	Widely, <i>Anna</i> to <i>Rich</i>	ca. 30 total	eBird + var. obs.

Over-wintering SONG SPARROWS need to be considered in identifying spring arrivals. The graph below shows combined counts per locality surveyed (eBird + other submissions) of these sparrows between Mar 15 and Apr 15.



The SONG SPARROW peak immediately after mid-March was from a weekend survey by MZE of Birch Cove Pk., Dartmouth (the only eBird report of the species that Sunday), where several nearby feeders sustain roaming individuals and groups of sparrows through winter. The increase beginning about Apr 5, on the other hand, seems to represent a real influx of migrants. Interestingly, although we think of Song Sparrow as an early, if partial, migrant this peak was a little later than the first arrivals of the "Ipswich" and Fox Sparrows (above). After Apr. 15, there were over 425 reports of more than 1650 Song Sparrows.

LINCOLN'S is among our later-arriving sparrows, and one appearing May 7 in Lr. Sackville, *HRM* (Bryan Sabourin), was well ahead of three others noted May 24-30 in *HRM* and *Kings* (CHP, KFS, NAD). Mid-to-late April is timely for SWAMP SPARROW, as shown in the following table of first arrivals. After this there were almost 70 reports of more than 125 birds.

SWAMP SPARROW, Spring 2013

Date	Localities	No. of birds	Observers
Apr 16	Lilydale, Lun	1	KEL
Apr 18	Bellefontaine Rd., <i>HRM</i>	1	KST, CHP
Apr 18	Willard Fraser Rd, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
Apr 19	Bellefontaine Rd., <i>HRM</i>	3	KST, CHP
Apr 20	Lr. Rose Bay, <i>Lun</i>	2	ELM
Apr 21	<i>HRM</i>	1	NSBS trip
Apr. 21	Falmouth, <i>Hants</i>	6	RIW, RBS
Apr 25	3 locs., <i>HRM, Kings, Pict</i>	2, 2, 2	KJM, KST, RIW,

Spring migrant WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS are difficult to sort out. They were widely reported in winter and individuals and flocks (which wander and break up in spring) were repeatedly reported on eBird at some locations (mostly backyard feeders) into May. Signs of arrival might be a "spike" of 22 on Apr 6 at Bird Cove Park, Dartmouth, where counts of 2-10 had been made in March and earlier April (MZE), and a "new" visitor Apr 7 at a feeder in Bible Hill, *Col* (ROH). However, other pulses or new feeder birds did not occur widely until after Apr 10 (mostly eBird). It would be helpful if new feeder arrivals were more systematically reported.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW always receives more attention, especially in spring, and all reports are given below.

WHITE-CROWND SPARROW, Spring 2013

Date	Locality	No. of birds	Observers
May 4	CSI	1	NSBS field trip
May 6	Lr. Sackville, <i>HRM</i>	1	Bryan Sabourin
May 8	Limerock, <i>Pict</i>	1	ROH
May 10	Country I., <i>Pict</i>	1	Brennan Obermeyer
May 10	Nr. Rockdale, <i>Rich</i>	1	BID
May 14	Lr. Clarks Hbr, CSI	4	JON
May 14	Central Caribou, <i>Pict</i>	1	D. & J. Panting
Mid-May	Rockdale, <i>Rich</i>	1	Leah Jeffrey
May 19	Newellton, CSI	3	CIN, MUN
May 20	River Bourgeois, <i>Rich</i>	1	RIV
May 21	near Pictou	1	Peggy Scanlon
Late May	Upper Economy. <i>Cumb</i>	1	KJM

DARK-EYED JUNCO in March, like Song and White-throated Sparrow, were clearly mostly repeats of overwintered birds and mostly at feeders sometimes appearing in "new" flocks (e.g., 30 at JCT's Wolfville Ridge feeders, Mar 7). On Mar 31 a total of ca. 30 in the Liscombe Game Sanct., *Guys* (KJM), probably represented arrivals, as did a "spike" of 10 next day at E. Apple River, *Cumb* (1-2 previously, KFS). Through the rest of spring they were widely reported. One was carrying food to nestlings May 31 near Pictou (KJM).



Among our moe handsome sparrows, are the SWAMP (Apr 21 on the NSBS field trip) and the (uncommon in spring) WHITE-CROWNED (May 20 at R. Bourgeois, Rich). [Photos: left, Frank Gummett; right, Rita Viau]

An early male SCARLET TANAGER, Apr 22 at Martinique Bch. PP, had probably come in from the sea, and was restoring its energy with beach flies (DMC). Another reached DOC's feeders May 16-18 at Woods Hbr., *Shel*, and a third male "in poor condition" was found (ph.) May 26 on Hirtles Bch, *Lun* (*fide* AGH). Less commonplace were 1st-spring m. **SUMMER TANAGERS** mid-May at Lr. Economy, *Cumb* (*fide* KJM) and May 27 on Brier I. (ph., Russel Crosby), and a female 28 May on Big Tamcook I., *Lun* (ph., Hilary Dionne) NORTHERN CARDINAL was reported only from mainland counties (*Anna*, *HRM*, *Kings*, *Lun*, *HRM*, *Shel*) – a total of 62, including singing males and apparent pairs, but only one was noted as nesting (on eggs? Kentville, May 5, JCH). The overwintered ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK in Wolfville was alive and well in mid-March (RBS, RIW) and beginning to develop its m. breeding plumage. A male 25 Apr in Lunenburg (ph; *fide* JAH), and a female 27 Apr at White Pt., *Queens* (MMI) were not far ahead of schedule. The half dozen on the NSMC heralded more by mid-May: two males. and a female May 14, a male and a female May16 (the latter near their northern breeding-range limits at Sunrise Valley, *Vic*, FMC), and another 26 birds between May 18 month's end. A pair coming to JCT's feeders on Wolfville Ridge gave hope that they would again nest nearby. The male INDIGO BUNTING at Rose Bay, *Lun* (AAM and ELM), and the female at SUM's property in Halifax, both made it through winter; the former was moulting into breeding finery by Apr 1, and the latter stayed until at least Apr 22. There were no major "fallouts" in spring (table below), and along with the above tanagers and single **BLUE GROSBEAKS** May 15 at Melbourne, *Yar* (RAS), and May 30 on CSI (JON, SAN), they added up to a generally modest season for overshooting "reds and blues".

INDIGO BUNTING, Spring 2013

Date	Locality	No. of birds	Observers
Apr 11	The Hawk, CSI	1 m.	JON, SAN
Apr 25	Louisbourg area, <i>CBRM</i>	1	<i>fide</i> BUS
Apr 25-25	Ketch Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1 m.	H. G. King
May 1-31	<i>Yar-Shel</i> to <i>Vic</i>	ca. 23 birds.	Var. obs. including NSMC



This photo illustrates, not only a rare beauty, but also the **SUMMER TANAGER'S** known taste for bees, wasps and hornets. This first-spring male, 27 May on Brier I., is eying its intended meal cautiously, probably with good reason. [Photo Russel Crosby]

DICKCISSEL is especially rare in spring, but one arrived Apr 5 at Portuguese Cove, *HRM*, and stayed around HAT's feeders until mid-month. The first reported **BOBOLINKS** were on the NSMC, followed by two at The Hawk, *CSI*, May 14, a few next day on Wolfville Ridge (*JCT*), and ten reports of 40+ thereafter. Flocks of **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS** may have been wandering in the region in late February (see last issue), and a flock of 21 on Mar 7 at Back Centre, *Lun* (*KEL*), may have been one of those. Otherwise, arrivals were widely claimed after mid-March, starting with single males Mar 17 at Stellerton (*KJM*), Torbrook, *Anna* (Ronda Gouchie), and Woods Hbr., *Shel* (*KEL*), and one next day at Waughs R., *Col* (*JOK*). Then 20 reports of almost 50 birds, as singles and small groups of up to nine, occurred to month's end and ca. 110 reports of over 550 birds thereafter. The earliest reported f. was at BLM's feeder Mar 23. One was carrying nest material May 1 at Miners Marsh, Kentville (*AND*). The **RUSTY BLACKBIRD** continues to decline, as reflected in our scanty reports of a few birds (Table below), in addition to the mere 17 on the NSMC (including 13 at feeder[s] in *CBRM*, with n.d.).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD, Spring 2013

Date	Locality	No. of birds	Observers
Apr 18	Spinney Gully, <i>Guys</i>	1	JOK
Apr 23	Higginsville, <i>HRM</i>	1 "singing"	KST
May 5	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1	Brennan Obermayer
May 16	Sunken L. area, <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
May 27	Sable R., <i>Shel</i>	2	David Osborn

When do **COMMON GRACKLES** arrive? Five at Oxners Bch, *Lun* (*JAH*) Mar 3 might have wintered regionally, and two were on Big I., *Pict*, Mar 10 (K. MacLeod), where at least one overwintered (per *KJM*). A flock of ca. 80 in flight Mar 11 over Port Williams, *Kings* (*GFO*), and a smaller flock Mar 13 at Waterside PP (*CHK*) seem pretty convincing. Over 90 were reported Mar 17-31 from ca. 25 localities, mostly on eBird, and one reached Glace Bay May 25 (*BEC*). They were legion in Apr-May; do we really want to know how many and where? Better to let the BBS track any population trends. A pair was feeding young May 28 at Bridgetown, *Anna* (*MCR*). A probable first migrant male **BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** appeared Apr 2 at the Thexton feeder in e. Wolfville, another next day near Front Centre, *Lun* (*KRL*), and two more singles were noted Apr 8 in Halifax (Colleen Owen) and in Apple River, *Cumb* (*KFS*). This relative scarcity continued, with only 13 more reported between mid-Apr and mid-May.

The only reported **ORCHARD ORIOLE** male was a one-day-wonder, May 18 at Woods Hbr., *Shel* (DOC). An interesting sighting comes from DOU who described a male (first spring?) **BULLOCK'S ORIOLE** found May 26 near Broad Cove, *Lun*, noting its "light orange" underparts, "long black bib" and "long white wing bar", the last feature eliminating other possibilities. Only two of 13 documented past records of the species here have been in spring. Of two **BALTIMORE ORIOLES** nurtured through winter, the one at Lr. Sackville, *HRM*, was snatched by a Sharp-shin in late March (LOC). There were few in spring. One of the three on the NSMC had reached *CBRM*, and a singing male May 15 was on last year's breeding territory north of Kentville (RBS). Two on Brier I. May 18 (ELM), three (2 m., 1 f.) that day at Woods Hbr, *Shel* (DOC), and three on CSI May 20 (MUN, CIN) were presumably on the move. Individuals reached *Pictou* May 20 and May 27 respectively (CHK, KJM).

Resident **PINE GROSBEAK** populations have crashed in Nova Scotia (BBS), and there were only three early-spring reports, all on Mar 11: two at Conrads Settlement, *HRM* (CHP), a dozen in the MacLennans Camp Rd. area, *Pict* (KJM), and six flying over Louisdale, *Rich* (BID). Was this a wide migration "front" to their now more restricted boreal breeding range? (I wonder about the four on the NSMC listed as yard birds in *Lunenburg* and two in *Annapolis*, as the species is very rarely at feeders.) **PURPLE FINCH** was sparse in March: one at Conquerall Bank, *Lun*, Mar 8, three in Dartmouth Mar 17 (MZE), and up to three from that date to the end of March at Habitant, *Kings* (Ann & Tim Hall). More arrived beginning Apr 17: 65+ at 24 locations in April and 170+ at 77 localities in May. There was **no HOUSE FINCH** on the NSMC and only three other reports from Halifax: several near Conrose Pk. (incl. 2 ad. m.) on Mar 14 and one or more in early Apr (PLC) and another Apr 5 at the corner of Robie and Quinpool (DHU). Admittedly arrived in the East as escaped cage birds, but they were pleasant to have around.

Both crossbills were scarce this spring, but much interesting information on **RED CROSSBILL** "call types" comes from Rick Whitman. His close observations and recordings revealed that one flock of up to eight Type 1 crossbills frequented his feeders at White Rock, *Kings*, through much of Apr, that one Type 10 female visited briefly Apr 27, and that a another Type 1 group of two f. and one m., briefly with a juvenile, visited in early May. (See his article p. 61.) Otherwise, in addition to those on the NSMC (*ca.* half in *Lun*), there were reports of only 11 birds plus "a small flock" May 22 in Truro (WIK). In addition to the **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS** on the NSMC of (*again ca.* half in *Lun*), the only reports were of one on McNabs I., *HRM*, Mar 3 (DMC) and four at Durham, *Pict*, Mar 9 (KJM), and one in Truro Apr 27 (WIK). The over 80 reports of **COMMON REDPOLL** (mostly eBird) included many repeated counts at feeders. The following Table gives peak seasonal counts (only those > 50 included) at regularly monitored locations as possible indicators of major movements through the province in mid-March, later March, and mid-April.

COMMON REDPOLL, Spring 2013

Date	Locality	No. of birds	Observer(s)
Mar 10	Birch Cove Pk, Dartmouth	100	MZE
Mar 13	Habitant, <i>Kings</i>	200	Tim & Ann Hall
Mar 13	Waughs R., <i>Col</i>	240	JOK
Mar 20	Woods Hbr., <i>Shel</i>	70	DOC
Mar 24	Doug Smith Dr., Halifax	150	DMC
Mar 28	Rockingham, <i>HRM</i>	60+	JEH
Mar 29	White Pt, <i>Queens</i>	200	MMI
Apr 1	Wolfville Ridge	150	JCT
Apr 10	Lr Sackville, <i>HRM</i>	300+	LOC
Apr 11	Kingston	100+	AND

Following mid-April there were still good counts (25+) throughout the mainland, among which the largest flock reported was of 50 at a Timberlea, *HRM*, feeder Apr 22 (Debbie Stoddart-Pageau), and the latest were on the NSCM. Following good numbers in winter, a few spring **HOARY REDPOLL** were not surprising, although the near synchrony of most is interesting. One *exilipes* was at Lr. Rose Bay, *Lun*, Mar 6; another that day at E. Apple River, *Col*, and (another?) there Mar 19-20 (KFS, ph); a "probable *hornemanni*" Mar 22 at Waughs R., *Col* (JOK); an *exilipes* at Fall R., *HRM*, Mar 23 (D. Waterfield, ph), and two that day on the Prospect Rd, *Kings* (Rachel Juteau). No details were given on the three NSMC Hoaries in *Pictou*. Of interest was a leucistic Common Redpoll masquerading as a Hoary (KJM, see photo below). **PINE SISKIN** was the least common regular finch: Only 35+ were recorded in 15 mainland localities through the season, and they were particularly scanty on the NSMC (all 3 in *Pictou*). A "green morph" was interesting (see image below). **AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** was

widespread in small numbers, totalling over 635 individuals at more than 140 localities (mostly eBird, and ignoring many reports of unstated numbers on NatureNS). This total was greatly exceeded by the NSMC. EVENING GROSBEAK continued to delight us, with over 165 reported from 35 localities throughout the season, a total again exceeded by the NSMC.

Only about 50 HOUSE SPARROWS at 15 localities, all of them in Halifax or Dartmouth, were reported on eBird. The NSMC count probably gives a more useful measure, and they were reported in larger numbers and more widely than in the previous two years, including four in *Annapolis*, and 68(!) in *CBRM*. Yet, Susann Meyers in Halifax writes that after “a very successful breeding season in 2012, the wintering flock [of 20] was less than half the size of the previous winter’s flock.”



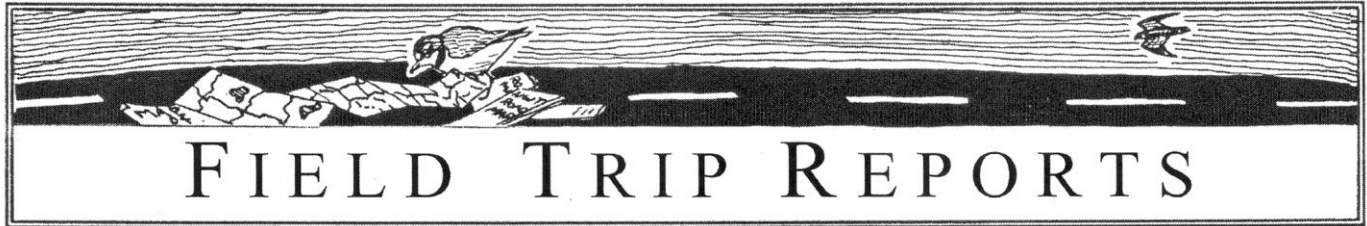
Two finches with odd plumages were photographed this spring. At left is a ‘green morph’ PINE SISKIN May 21 at Barr Settlement, *E. Hants*. This occur as one in many hundreds of the population, and was first described in 1989 (McLaren *et al.*, *Am. Birds*, vol. 43, pp. 1286-1289, 1381) It may be an “atavistic” male plumage, and in some ways resembles the Eurasian Siskin, but differs in a number of ways. The two birds below, at a feeder in Plymouth, *Pict*, might be taken as COMMON and HOARY REDPOLL respectively, except the “Hoary” is not quite right – note its broad, but pale, streaking and the similar body and bill sizes of both birds. The ‘Hoary’ was recognized by its finder as a melanin-deficient Common Redpoll, which have been noted as an i.d. pitfall in some recent publications. [Photos: left, Lou-Anne Bidal; below, Ken McKenna]



List of Contributors Represented by Initials.

Names of other contributors named in the seasonal reports and photo captions are spelled out. Thanks to all, including others not mentioned (especially many eBird reporters) but whose records are included in overall numbers and analyses.

AAD	d'Entremont, Alix A.	DPO	Poole, Dorothy	MCR	Rice, Maggie
AAM	MacLean, Angus	EBR	Ruff, Eric B.	MIK	King, Michael
ABM	Moores, Bernice	EIL	Lindsey, Eleanor	MMI	Millard, Margaret
ACO	Covert, Alan	ELM	Mills, Eric L.	MUN	Newell, Murray
AGH	Horn, Andrew	FLL	Lavender, Fulton L.	MZE	Zelenietz, Marty
ALD	Doull, Ann	FMC	McEvoy, Fritz	NAD	Dowd, Nancy
APO	Pouliot, Anita	GAM	MacLean, Gayle	PBG	Giffin, Patrick, Barbara
AHM	Mills, Anne	GDE	D'Entremont, Giselle	PEL	Peter Leblanc
AHU	Hughes, Anne	GFO	Forsythe, George	PLC	Chalmers, Patricia L.
ALM	Murrant, Allan	GRW	Williams, Graham	PMC	McKay, Pat
AND	Dean, Andy	HAT	Toom, Hans	PMU	Murray, Paul
BBU	Burke, Bernard	IAM	McLaren, Ian	RAS	Smith, Rachel
BEC	Crowell, Beverly	JAH	Hirtle, James	RBS	Stern, Richard
BID	Digout, Billy	JCT	Tufts Judy C.	RDE	d'Entremont, Ron
BJS	Smith, Betty-June	JCZ	Czapalay, Joan	RFE	Ferguson, Rick
BLF	Forsythe, Bernard	JED	Edsall, Jim	RFL	Lauff, Randy F.
BLM	Maybank, Blake	JEH	Hartley, Jean	RIB	Ballard, Rick
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CDS	Spicer, Cindy D.	JLC	Churchill, James	RIW	Whitman, Rick
CHK	Kendell, Charlie	JOA	Allen, Joyce	ROH	Hall, Ross
CIN	Newell, Cindy	JOK	Kearney, John	ROW	Woods, Robert
CJF	Field, Chris J.	JOL	Loch, John	RSM	McDonald, Robert S.
CHP	Pepper, Chris	JON	Nickerson, John	SAB	Abbot, Sue
CSS	Stevens, Clarence, Sr.	JOS	Sollows, John	SAN	Nickerson, Sandra
CST	Stoddard, Clyde	JQA	Alexander, Jane	SEM	Myers, Susann
DAC	Currie, David	JSC	Cohrs, J. Shirley	SHU	Hughes, Shirley
DAM	MacNeill, Don	JSI	Simpson, James	SIS	Smith, Sid
DAW	Walmark, David	JUO	Obrien, Judy	SJF	Fullerton, Sylvia
DBM	McCorquodale, David	JWM	John W. MacInnis	SLH	Hulford, Sheila
DCO	Codling, Don	JWW	Wolford, Jim	SMA	Marler, Sharron
DGA	Garratt, Dennis	KAM	MacAuley, Kathleen	SMB	Borkowski, Suzanne
DGU	Gusett, Dominique	KEL	Lantz, Kevin	TCD	D'Eon, Ted
DHU	Hughes, David	KFS	Spicer, Kathleen	TEB	Boswell, Terry
DJC	Crosby, Donna J.	KJM	McKenna, Ken J.	VJH	Higgins, Verna
DMC	Cormier, Dominic	KST	Steele, Kate	WIK	Kettleson, Win
DMW	Welch, Dottie M.K.	LAE	Elliot, Laura	WPN	Neily, Wayne
DOC	Cameron, Dorothy	LHA	Hall, Linda		
DOU	Doull, Elizabeth	LOC	Codling, Lois		



All submitted reports of the Society's regular spring field trips are published here, although bird sightings of those not submitted are incorporated in seasonal reports. In addition to the spring field trips described below, an exciting pelagic field trip from last August (to be repeated this year in late August) heads off the accounts.

Pelagic Birds off Sambro, August 18, 2012

By David Currie

This was the very first "official" Nova Scotia Bird Society Pelagic trip we've attempted from Sambro, *HRM*, and it was a great success. Storms are frequent at this time of year, and waves and wind that sometimes force cancellation of such trips. The forecast for that Saturday was for early morning fog that would clear before noon, and light winds from 10-15 knots, so our group of 18 was eager to set out at 7:00 a.m. from the Government Wharf at Sambro, *HRM*.

Our Captain, Patrick Gray, and his forty-foot Cape Islander boat, *Pic! Pocket*, were ready to go and, contrary to the weather report, there was no fog in Sambro! Once everyone arrived and gear was aboard, we steamed past Sambro I., with its oldest operating North American lighthouse to begin our seven-hour adventure.

Not long past Sambro Island, fog banks appeared, but we had great hopes as the first pelagic birds – Northern Gannets, Great Shearwaters and phalaropes – began to fly by. There was hardly a breeze and the water was calm, so fog or no fog, we sailed for an hour more until we reached an undersea ridge about 20 km s.e. of our harbor. We had lots of cut mackerel to toss overboard, and along with fish oil and frozen chum in a perforated bucket, we knew we had the perfect recipe for luring exciting birds. At our range limit, the boat stopped, the bucket went over, fish oil got sprinkled, and we waited as the smelly oil and other "secret stuff" dispersed into the water and made a slick in our drifting wake. We waited about five minutes before the first storm-petrels were spotted approaching low from the east and pausing briefly over the slick of oil behind the boat. These were Wilson's and this was the real beginning. Soon the Great Shearwaters arrived and liked our offerings, so they stayed and squabbled, and attracted more elusive birds. Although the fog was relentless, sharp eyes picked out great birds at a distance enabling many to see these birds as they came closer then disappeared again. In pelagic birding, the birds often make a quick fly-by to investigate and then disappear faster than they appeared. **Cory's Shearwater**, of which three lingered, were lifers for some.

The fog never did lift that day but once the list was tallied, we had counted ten pelagic bird species and nine other species during the trip. The company was wonderful and we will be doing it again. Thank you to Mike King for his fog penetrating vision and expert fish cutting abilities!

Species List: Common Eider 2; **Cory's Shearwater** 3; Great Shearwater 60; Sooty Shearwater 2; Manx Shearwater 1; Wilson's Storm-petrel 10; Leach's Storm-petrel 1; Northern Gannet 20; Double-crested Cormorant 1; Great Cormorant 1; Great Blue Heron 1; Red-necked Phalarope 16; Red Phalarope 3; Herring Gull 4; Great Black-backed Gull 3; Common Tern 2; Arctic Tern 2; **Pomarine Jaeger** 2; Belted Kingfisher 1.

Valley Birding. March 10, 2013

by Patrick Kelly

This joint field trip of the Blomidon Naturalists and Nova Scotia Bird Society usually draws few participants, likely due to the time of year. We started with seven people besides myself: From BNS we had John Belbin and Bernard Forsythe, and making the trip out from Halifax was Paolo Matteucci (who joined the Bird Society last month and is hooked!), Clarence

Stevens Sr. and his wife, and a younger couple who had been on this trip before. Last year we only managed 20 species in four hours, this year we got that up to 26 plus two species that were quickly seen but not identified.

Bernard had family commitments, and was only able to lead us all to the first stop, a GREAT HORNED OWL sitting on a nest on Middle Dyke Road near Richard Stern's house (Richard had located the nest.) What a way to start! From there the rest of us headed east on Church St, and stopped where an active RED-TAILED HAWK nest had been spotted on last year's trip. Initially, the nest seemed inactive, but we did see one hawk some distance away on the other side of the road. The nearby house had a big feeder with a small flock of COMMON REDPOLLS and the only juncos of the day. Our attention was also engaged by a dozen BALD EAGLES that were active around a house about 500 m behind the one at which we had stopped. A number of dead chickens in front of the house were attracting eagles as well as crows and ravens. At this point, the Red-tailed Hawk came back with some moss-like material in its beak, landed in the nest, called and then flew around, still carrying it. A NORTHERN FLICKER was also seen here.

Continuing east on Church Street, we crossed Highway 358 and came upon an active eagle nest in a roadside tree. The male was perched on a nearby tree, while the head of the female could be seen in the middle of the nest. The next stop was the Starrs Pt. Loop and, while there were about a dozen BLUE JAYS in trees near the water, the only waterbirds seen were AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS. That was also the case at both the Wellington Dyke and the Canning Aboiteau, but at the latter, we did hit pay dirt with gulls! Around 300 flew in and landed on the water, but even with Clarence's spotting scope, all we saw were HERRING and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS. At the park in Canning about another hundred of the same mix were on the field opposite the river. We did find the expected COMMON MERGANSER there (about 10), and upstream there were about 15 MALLARDS with about the same number of black ducks. From here, the plan had been to head back to the Irving station in Greenwich for a pit stop, and then go to Grand Pré. While going past Wilma Gibson's house, I did keep my eyes open for NORTHERN CARDINAL and seeing none continued on, and a bit later noticed I was the only car on the road so I pulled over thinking I must have missed a good bird. Eventually the "Case of Vanishing Birders" was solved. I had missed not one, but a pair of PILEATED WOODPECKERS, as I learned when the others eventually filled me in when they caught up. That's what happens when you try to keep your eyes on the road ahead!

In Grand Pré, we found another eagle nest; both eagles were perched in the tree, at times interacting, and. I wondered if the female was still not quite ready to lay. We stopped at a house on the Grand Pré Rd. with lots of feeders and heard two cardinals singing in the woods opposite, but could not get a look at them. We then went out the E. Long I. Road while the tide was quite high and, despite walking part of the dyke, didn't see any new species. We were a bit surprised when a small flock of Mallards came along close the shore and just off the water. Given how muddy the road was out on the dyke, we made that the last stop for the day, and I think that all had enjoyed themselves.

Beginner Birder's Field Trip, Shubie Park, Dartmouth, March 23, 2013

By Chris Pepper and Kate Steele

It was a beautiful Saturday for a walk in the park when 12 people gathered at Shubie Canal in Dartmouth. The highlights for many were a first-of-the-year Robin before even entering the trail system at the park, and a hand-feeding frenzy of Black-capped Chickadees and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. A complete list of species observed is below:

MALLARD, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, HERRING GULL, ROCK PIGEON, MOURNING DOVE, DOWNY WOODPECKER, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, COMMON RAVEN, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET, AMERICAN ROBIN, EUROPEAN STARLING, SONG SPARROW, DARK-EYED JUNCO.



Participants in the Beginning Birders Field Trip, Mar 23, at Shubie Park were, from left to right: Sidney and Shelley Drew Robertson, Frank Gummett, Kate Steele (joint leader), Lindsay Russell, Patricia Lane, Paolo Matteucci, Chris Pepper (joint leader). And Ansgar Gruver. [Photo David Currie]

Port Clyde, Blanche and Bacarro Peninsulas, March 30, 2013

By James Hirtle

The Society's field trip to this bird-rich area was a success with 14 participants on a nice day, and ending with about 43 species. At Port Clyde some of us heard our first Wood Frogs for the season. I heard a Spring Peeper far out on the Blanche Peninsula and the two Clarence Stevens saw a Question Mark Butterfly. There appeared to be a movement of TURKEY VULTURES; we saw two at Port Clyde and Sandy Hiltz reported to us that three had been seen there. Out along the Blanche Peninsula three more vultures were observed. The Stevens, who continued on to Barrington and CSI saw six more. I had another near the Liverpool exit when I was heading back toward Bridgewater. That would make 13 Turkey Vultures in total. Also interesting were 80 or so RED-NECKED GREBES. It should be noted that it was very hard to show people the waterfowl present – I've never seen them so skittish. The moment we approached no matter how far away or what species were present, they flew right away. Highlights of other birds only seen by a few of us were a EURASIAN WIGEON and a LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL.

Hartlen Point, April 28, 2013

By Dave Currie

Eighteen people showed for this close-to Metro morning walk in really fine weather. The **LITTLE EGRET** was not seen at its favoured pond as we went by on the way to our destination at 8:00 a.m., but was there for us when we finished the trip in late morning. Although there were very few early migrants, we did have MERLIN, OSPREY, numbers of "IPSWICH" SPARROWS, PURPLE FINCH, WILLET, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, both BARN and TREE SWALLOW plus NORTHERN FLICKER, to name . . . almost all!

Historic Hants County Field Trip. May 20, 2013

By Suzanne Borkowski

Eight people showed up on this holiday Monday, for this long-standing annual NSBS field trip. The weather was terrible: cold, windy, with the forecasted rain starting around noon.

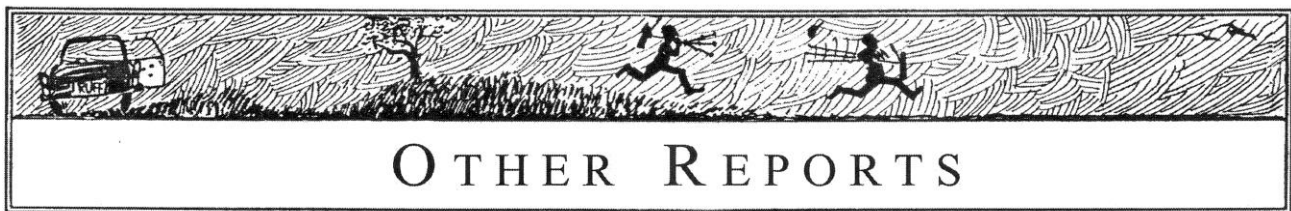
We spent the first hour at Mount Uniacke, walking the trails close to the House. Best bird there was a PILEATED WOODPECKER. We had a pair of WOOD DUCKS on the lake just past Hwy #202 (at the foot of Coles Road), as well as TREE and BARN SWALLOWS. On Elliott Road we picked up NASHVILLE WARBLERS, a few MAGNOLIAS, BLACK & WHITE, YELLOW-RUMPED and BLACK-THROATED GREEN. At the last stop before Smiley's Prov. Park we got our usual BOBOLINKS and were treated to an aerial display from a couple of calling WILSON'S SNIPE.

We ate lunch at a picnic table under a canopy at Smiley's and took turns darting out into the rain to get looks at AMERICAN REDSTARTS. By this time we had tallied 42 species - a record low for this trip - and I called it a day.

Conquerall Mills, Crescent Beach, *Lun*, May 26, 2013

By James Hirtle

It was an extremely windy day with about 40 km/hr winds. Only two other people showed up on this outing, and we managed to tally 39 species despite the wind. There were a number of LEAST FLYCATCHERS and we both heard and saw our first ALDER FLYCATCHER. At Crescent Beach there were eight BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS, a single GREATER YELLOWLEGS and a RUDDY TURNSTONE. Among the warblers, a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH was a good find, but overall, nine warbler species was far fewer than normal. In fact, there were about 20 fewer of all species than usual. I believe that this is the lowest number recorded on this outing; hopefully, the wind was the determining factor.



Summary of Nova Scotia Migration Count (NSMC) for Spring 2011, 2012, and 2013

From compilation by Chris Pepper

The 2011 and 2012 totals and effort data are also given here for comparison with those the spring 2013 NSMC. The “Nt.” (night) counts, included many “day” species heard or seen after dark and are therefore included in the “regular” (i.e., generally daytime) column preceded by a + sign. In addition to feeder birds, “Yard” includes many sightings off property by feeder-watchers. (Note: the systematic order of species on this list has not been updated to conform with the current AOU list as used otherwise in the seasonal accounts.)

YEAR	2011	2012	2013
Total Indivs.	88,033	57,005	49,741
Total Species	186	189	176
Earliest start	00:00	00:00	0:00
Latest finish	23:10	18:36	21:00
No. reg. obs.	192	172	131
Total reg. hrs.	733.5	658	454
Reg. car km	5073	4646	3032
Reg. ft. km	451.2	469	299
Owling obs.	8	18	8
Owling hrs.	10	22	8
Owling km	65	205	50
Feeder obs.	330	251	174
Feeder hrs.		912	540

Year	2011		2012		2013	
	Reg. + Nt.	Yard	Reg. + Nt.	Yard	Reg. + Nt.	Yard
Brant	10		3		10	
Canada Goose	755	33	489	138	431+4	89
Wood Duck	40	3	36		66	
Gr.-winged Teal	123		95		96	
Gadwall	4		9		8	
Am.Wigeon	77		75	3	66	1
Eur. Wigeon	4		3		4	
Am. Black Duck	821	23	666+3.	35	683+2	44
Mallard	458	69	674	31	630	20
Northern Pintail			6			
Bl.-Winged Teal	25		25		15	
N. Shoveler			10			
Redhead			4			
Ring-nec. Duck	377	2	168	5	254	
Greater Scaup	19	2	4		20	
Lesser Scaup			11		5	
Common Eider	6883		837	2	617	
Harlequin Duck	27	2	9		12	
L.-tailed Duck	36		31		18	
Black Scoter	6276		825		37	
Surf Scoter	417		123		82	
Wh.-w'ed Scoter	440		32			
Scoter species	523		523			
Com. Goldeneye	11		2		7	
Bufflehead	251		3		73	
Hooded Merg.	60		14		322	
Common Merg.	179	3	113		163	6
Red-br. Merg.	970	2	348	7	382	
Duck species	33		43-	1	65	2
Ring-n'd Pheas.	281	51	238	37	377+3	50
Spruce Grouse	9	1	21		13	1
Ruffed Grouse	114 + 1	4	132	9	152	9
Red-thr. Loon	5		2		10	
Common Loon	328		103+ 2	115	120	5
Pied-b. Grebe	17		21		5	
Red-neck. Grebe	13				6	
Horned Grebe	1					
Sooty Sh'water			1			
Leach's S-Petrel ¹	100000					
N.Gannet	1078		316		370	
Gr. Cormorant	95	-	27		22+10	.
D.-cr. Corm'nt	3488	18	1991	21	1725	
Am. Bittern	34+1	1	19+1		13+10	
Gr. Blue Heron	214	3	147	15	127	10
Great Egret	5		4			
Lit. Blue Heron	1		4			
Green Heron					1	
Bl.-cr. N.- Heron	3					
Turkey Vulture	17		12		3.	2
Osprey	65	7	78	2	76.	4
Bald Eagle	275	53	177	27	266	20
N. Harrier	31	1	28	1	23	3
Sh.-shin. Hawk	16	6	14	2	10	4
.Cooper's Hawk	.	.	1			
N. Goshawk	4		3		6	
Red-sh.. Hawk	1					
Br'd-winged H.	5		10		10	
Red-tailed Hawk	48	10	25	11	33	2
R.-Legged Hawk						
Buteo species	2				.2	
Am. Kestrel	36	1	13		15	1
Merlin	28		12	3	13	2
Peregrine Falcon	4		4		3	
Raptor species	4		14		2	
Virginia Rail	1				2+1	.
Sora	18 + 1		32+ 1	2	15+3	
American Coot	1				2	
Sandhill Crane			1		1	
Bl.-bell.Plover	52		19			
Piping Plover	9		4		4	
Killdeer	34	2	41	4	37	5

Gr.Yellowlegs	102		59		69	
Les. Yellowlegs	13		7		19	
Sol. Sandpiper	3					
Willet	249		185	2	176	3
Spottrd Sandpiper	32		37		31	1
R. Turnstone			2			
Whimbrel					59	
Red Knot			1			
Least Sandpiper	12		1			
Purp.Sandpiper	30				19	3
Dunlin	9		7			
Wilson's. Snipe	52+23		40+38	4	42+21	5
Am. Woodcock	33+50.		50+64		42+70	4
Shorebird sp.	-		4		3	
Pomarine Jaeger	1					
Black-head. Gull	38	2	1			4
Bonaparte's Gull	10	-	28		6	
Ring-Billed Gull	129	6	35		136	
Herring Gull	10271	78	4883	150	3266	92
Iceland Gull	44		17	1	32	
L. B.-back. Gull	2				3	
Glaucous Gull	2		1		2	
G. B.-back. Gull	5154	4	1970	149	2224	28
Bl-leg. Kittiwake	85				3	
Gull species	785	12	124	6	57	31
Common Tern	102	2	103		153	
Arctic Tern			4		11	
Dovekie	1				1	
Common Murre	3					
Razorbill	2		25		10	
Black Guillemot	76		9		28	
Atlantic Puffin					8	
Rock Pigeon	700	289	530	218	797	186
Wh.-wing.Dove				1		1
Mourning Dove	1016+1	633	759 +3	590	904+8	533
Gr. Horned Owl	20	-	4+4 ..	-	5+2	
Barred Owl	30+ 10	5	42+11	11	34+16	6
Boreal Owl					1	
N. Saw-wh. Owl	2		4	4	4+3	
Chimney Swift	211		230	1	237	10
Ru.-thr. H'bird	38	106	64	165	14	14
Bel.Kingfisher	139	12	127	7	131	12
Red-b. W'pecker	3		3	3	1	2
Yel.-bell. Saps.	123	9	100+7	15	110+2	10
Dow. W'pecker	179	196	127	147	155	145
Hairy W'pecker	148	125	89	114	94	102
Bl.-b. W'pecker	2	1	2		3	
Northern Flicker	621	38	413	34	457	62
Pil. Woodpecker	49	6	37	22	57	18
Woodpecker sp.	4		12	2	19	1
E. Wo.-Pewee	3					
Yel.-bell. Flyc'er	1		1			
Alder Flycatcher	18		1		2	2
Will. Flycatcher	1					
Least Flycatcher	29		79	10	35	2
Flycatcher sp/	2		8		6	
Eastern Phoebe	22	2	23	4	34	4
Eastern K'bird	16		5	3	2	1
Northern Shrike	1				1 n.d.	
Blue-head.Vireo	336		394	7	477+1	4
Phila.Vireo					1	
Red-eyed Vireo	25	1	12	6	15	
Vireo species	10					
Horned Lark	2					
Tree Swallow	1145	68	944	61	936+2	105
Bank Swallow	21	2	46	7	12	
Cliff Swallow	20	12	17	10	17	
Barn Swallow	477	65	403	39	168	16
Gray Jay	26	7	20	10	21	14
Blue Jay	905	536	740	570	819	464
American Crow	2680	593	2302+3	555.	2445+4	447
Common Raven	454	85	360	61	406+2	42
Bl.-cap. Ch'dee	1754	973	1257+2	703	1531+13	537
Bor. Chickadee	52	4	57		30	3

Chickadee sp.	27	3				
Red-br.Nuthatch	111	100	102 + 1	66	56	105
W.-br. Nuthatch	23	63	10	46	19	51
Brown Creeper	36		24 + 1		24	
Winter Wren	72		128	1	86	1
Gold.-cr. Kinglet	94		193+5	2	128+3	1
Rub.-cr. Kinglet	451	1	415	4	434+1	8
E. Bluebird				1	1	
Veery	12	1	5	2	2	1
Swainson's Thr.	16		15	-	8	
Hermit Thrush	354	15	487+47	9	362+11	1
Wood Thrush					1	
Thrush species			15	6		
American Robin	3629+72	387	2909+9		3042+38	408
Gray Catbird	25	1	24		6	1
N. Mockingbird	1	2		1		
Brown Thrasher			1	1		
American Pipit					1	
Boh. Waxwing	15					
Cedar Waxwing	11		89	17	1	
Eur.n Starling	3155	735	3040	770	3255+2	556
Tennessee Warb.				1		
Or.-cr. Warb.			1			
Nashville Warb.	177 + 2		142		129+3	3
Northern Parula	423 + 2	3	429+ 3.	23	312	13
Yellow Warbler	199		125	39	34	2
Ch.-sid. Warb.	28		77	3	7	-
Magnolia Warb.	64		160	3	32	1
C. May Warb.	3		2		1	
Bl.-th. Bl. Warb.	18		10		4	
Yell.-rum.Warb.	1292	14	1435+ 6	41	1428+2	23
Bl.-th.Gr. Warb.	430	1	560	11	282	4
Bl'burn. Warb.	9		28		16	
Palm Warbler	204		208 + 3		136+1	5
Bay-br. Warbler			6		2	
Blpoll Warbler	1		5		9	
Bl.-&-W. Warb.	424	1	405 + 2	13	251	7
Am.Redstart	20		67	9	18	
Ovenbird	444+2	4	482 + 3	30	141	6
N. Waterthrush	75+1	-	51		55+2	
Com. Yellthr.	71	5	79 + 6		19	3
Wilson's Warb.			3			
Canada Warbler			1		3	
Warbler species					13	
Am. Tr. Sparr.	8	3	6	8	6	1
Chipping Sparr.	163	37	133+1.	50	170+1	39

Vesper Sparrow	4		1		12	
Savannah Sparr.	338+2	28	306+1	33	331 +3	24
Nelson's Sparr.	1					
Fox Sparrow	4	19	3 + 9.	12	8	9
Song Sparrow	1844	245	1658+26	251	1713+7	355
Linc. Sparrow	6		8			
Swamp Sparrow	155		180 + 5		164+18	5
White-th. Sparr.	1212	108	980+45.	80	969+28	93
White-cr. Sparr.	4	4	3	5	3	3
Dark-eyed Junco	934	480	640 + 8	246	864+1	497
Sparrow species	15	8	37	45	37	10
Sum. Tanager	3	1				
Scarlet Tanager	1					
N. Cardinal	71	27	40	24	40	34
R.-br. Grosbeak	39	11	36	47	6.	12
Blue Grosbeak	1		1	1		
Indigo Bunting	1	3	12	4	1	4
Bobolink	10	1	19	2	4	1
R.-wing. B-bird	1387+2	258	1050	338	1197+2	279
E. Meadowlark				1		
Rusty Blackbird	4	14	13	24	2	15
Com. Grackle	2734	675	1521+2	617	1795+1	423
Br.-h. Cowbird	30	14	13	35	4	34
blackbird sp.	2	9				
Orchard Oriole			4			
Baltimore Oriole	1		9	2	3	
Pine Grosbeak	4	14	2	7		6
Purple Finch	823	922	414 + 4	603	513	644
House Finch	3	10	1	1		1
Red Crossbill	21	23	29	14	10	12
Wh. w'ed Cr'bill	59	17	33		3	16
Com.Redpoll	-	6		8	31	18
Pine Siskin	39	137	148	287	28	67
Hoary Redpoll					0+3	
Am. Goldfinch	1649	1236	1605+1	1874	1112	978
Eve. Grosbeak	176	204	60	198	139	181
Finch species	2		12	14		
House Sparrow	198	171	104	63	136	68
Unid. species	24	1				

¹ The estimate of Leach's Storm Petrel nesting on BPI is not included on the 2011 total.

First record of Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) in Nova Scotia

By Frank Gummert

It all began at Lawrencetown Beach, *HRM*, on Saturday Mar 30, 2013, at 12:42 p.m. As I later said in a CBC interview with Colleen Jones, “it was pure happenstance” – I was in the right place at the right time. I was only in my first year of formal birding, and was not expecting to see much of anything that weekend. It felt “between seasons”, when the winter visitors had mostly left and the spring arrivals were not yet on the horizon.

I'd spent the morning at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, *Col*; at least there I was guaranteed to see some critters. Although I hesitate to photograph birds behind bars, I find that the mature trees and ready food supply there often bring in wild birds. That day it proved to be not enough birding “fix” for me, so I determined on the way home to visit the old railway track-bed that runs from Lawrencetown Bch. PP west toward Cole Harbour. I parked and walked a little way along the beach; nothing. Then I crossed the road to the saltmarsh side and headed towards the rail-bed trail.

Suddenly a couple of crows lifted off a deer carcass just down the embankment off the road, plus a larger bird with black back and wings, but a white tail and wing tips, and with primaries spread into “fingers”. At first all I saw was its back as it flew away from me a short distance I ran through a rapid checklist in my head.

Gull? No... flared primaries and looks more like a raptor. Bald Eagle? No... not big enough and the tail has a black band at the end. What the heck?!? At the same time I had swung up my camera, which I habitually carry slung ready over my shoulder, and was firing off a series of shots; almost literally shooting “from the hip” (image at right).



It turned and landed a short distance from the marsh waters beyond. Almost as soon as I saw it from the front I knew what it was but could not quite believe it! (Images below.)



You see, I am very keen on raptors – is that a guy thing, a new-birder thing, or is it just because they are such awe-inspiring creatures? So the raptor section of my Sibley’s (Eastern) Field Guide is well-thumbed, and there on page 112 is the Crested Caracara, along with a range map showing that they aren’t seen in Nova Scotia – ever. It is the national bird of Mexico, with most of its range in Central and South America, breeding north into s. Arizona and Texas, with a small and threatened population in Florida. It doesn’t normally migrate even within its usual range, so this was exceptional indeed. [Range map courtesy of Wikipedia, freely licensed under Creative Commons]

The date was close enough for an April fool’s joke, but there it was. I double-checked with the iBird app on my cell-phone and, while that includes the helpful feature of offering similar species to help prevent misidentification, in this case there was no similar species. It had no bands on its legs and did not seem comfortable with me around, so was unlikely to be an escapee. A long way from home though!

Although part of the Falcon family (Order Falconiformes, Family Falconidae) it looks and behaves more like a vulture or other scavenger. Apparently it is at home on foot and tends to fly low, looking for carrion like the deer carcass, which in this occasion may have been recently unfrozen Winter road-kill. I tried not to spook it but as I moved to try for a closer photo it flew again, this time into the top of a tree across the small pond left of the rail-bed trail. It stayed in view, although too far away for my camera to do it justice. Its white head and neck were very bright and distinctive. The crows were not happy with this interloper and left no doubt as to its location.

With my heart in my mouth my next thought was to get the word out, as I knew others might be keen to share in this find. But how? I recalled that Blake Maybank moderated the NS Rare Bird Alert, but I had not yet subscribed. All I could find on my phone was an e-mail from him regarding his recent expedition to Africa. I replied to that with: “Crested Caracara at Lawrencetown Beach... just surprised it by the road on a deer carcass... will post photos later!” and shortly after followed up with “I am 100% sure of ID... could not be anything else! I and it are still here... it is up a tree just off the old railway tracks (over the first pond on the Left) being harassed by crows.” Fortunately he checked his e-mails, as I had neglected to change the subject heading, so for all he knew I was responding on the topic of his Ghana trip!

I managed to work my way around the back of the pond and very cautiously, inched slowly closer. By the time I took the next half-decent photos, I was literally on one knee in the marsh at the edge of the pond; I guess such regal birds demand due deference! Shortly after, it lifted off, back towards the deer carcass, which gave me the photo that graced the front page of the Chronicle Herald later that week (see cover photo of this issue).



By the time I worked my way back to the carcass it was off again further down the marsh but it was time for me to head home anyway. I had a memory card of photos that needed to be post-processed and shared. I had passed my cell-phone number onto Blake, but without a reply to my e-mail, I was not even sure the word was out yet. As I was driving home my cell-phone started ringing with excited birders looking for directions. I understand there was a flurry of activity that afternoon with someone even driving hot-foot back from New Brunswick!



Next morning I was back on site before dawn but Bird Society President David Currie had already beaten me there. Shortly followed by an exceptionally large gathering of twitchers, including experienced birders like Ian McLaren and Eric Mills (image below). All were dragged away from their families on a brisk Easter Sunday morning; so pressure was on me to deliver the bird! (For anyone concerned about our eternal souls: our spiritual needs were met by an early-morning open-air service on the boardwalk, courtesy of a local congregation.)

It was a cold March morning, so not too surprisingly the Crested Caracara did not show up at first light. We were mostly waiting in the car park directly across from the deer carcass. Later some of the group broke off to try their luck up the hill at the nearby MacDonald House Tea-room. For me the perceived pressure was growing such that I went off for a walk along the rail-bed by myself. I was trying to plan an escape but cunningly placed spotting-scopes behind my car, meant that I couldn't slip away unnoticed. As I recall we waited that day from around 7a.m. until it finally put in an appearance at around 10:30 a.m. Phew! At one stage, it flew right in front of us, at head height and I thought for a moment it was planning to land at the carcass, but I fear the combined intakes of breath from such a large gathering was enough to spook it. It perched further down the salt marsh, and spotting-scopes were carried over to get a closer look.

Next week was somewhat surreal, especially for me, with the news and attention, which left me feeling very uncomfortable. On the other hand I was thrilled that so many had a chance to see it, as it stayed in that same vicinity and was observed on

most days over the next week. But it was a wild bird, so no guarantees, and sadly not everyone who tried, spotted it. Of course there was concern about how a bird from so far south could survive our cold spring nights, but its normal range includes parts of the Andes, and even many desert regions that can fall below freezing at night. And as our spring unfolded (albeit slowly this year) the feeling was that there would be no shortage of food for it hereabouts. It was an adult though, so finding a mate would prove a little tricky.

The last report I am aware of it in the Lawrencetown Beach area, was late in the same week, and then nothing until Alix d'Entremont spotted and photographed a Crested Caracara at 1:30pm on May 4 over the Miniques Hill Rd. in Middle W. Pubnico, *Yarmouth*. It was flying away, about 75 feet above the road, in a n.e. direction. There was a deer carcass alongside the 103 (roughly n.e. of the sighting) but despite several checks that day, the bird was not observed in the area again. Finally, as this was being written on July 7, Ronnie d'Entremont found and photographed a Crested Caracara feeding on a porcupine carcass at the side of the Dover Road in Canso.

Intuitively it would seem more likely that these sightings were all of the the same bird. After all, what are the odds of more than one such vagrant so far from home? To that end Ian McLaren has started some detective work, including comparisons of the distinctive primary feathers using available photos from the Lawrencetown Beach sightings along with some photos of probably at least three vagrant caracaras in New Jersey from fall 2012 through spring 2013, courtesy of several photographers. The technique relies on comparing the patterns of light and dark on the primaries at the end of the wing; so unfortunately is limited to those photos where these feathers are visible and flared. Images of perched birds with the wings folded aren't useful. There is also the question of moulting, which again can throw a wrench in the works. Although comparisons can be made between the barring and streaking on the primaries from below, their patterns are often obscured by overlaps of similarly marked and mobile primary coverts. On the other hand, the primary coverts on the upper wing do not overlap the dark bases of the primaries, so the patterns can be more readily compared. A preliminary look at some upper wingtips is shown below, courtesy of Ian McLaren, who notes that his comparisons are far from finished. Nonetheless, it does appear that the individual that was photographed in January in two or more sites near Cape May, NJ, was the one that later turned up about six weeks later in Nova Scotia. It also seems clear that the individual (apparently in a state of primary moult) in September 2012 in W. Windsor, more than 150 km to the north, and another in late February in Salem Co., some 75 km to the northwest, were not the same as either the Cape May or Lawrencetown birds. Unfortunately, the West Pubnico bird was photographed (see p.14 in this issue) as it departed at a distance, making interpretation of its primary patterns difficult or impossible. The characteristics of the individual in Canso have yet to be analyzed.



Rotated and cropped images of the upper left wingtips (4 panels at left) and upper right (4 panels at right) of Crested Caracaras from three separate locations and dates in New Jersey and the individual at E. Lawrencetown, *HRM*. The arrows point to markings that appear to be the same, given the different perspectives and feather positions. [Photos: from W. Windsor, left Tom Reed, right Tom Johnson; from Cape May, left Mike Crewe, right Larry Scacchetti; Salem Co., NJ. Left and right Josh Provo; Nova Scotia, left Ian Manning, right Bernard Burke]

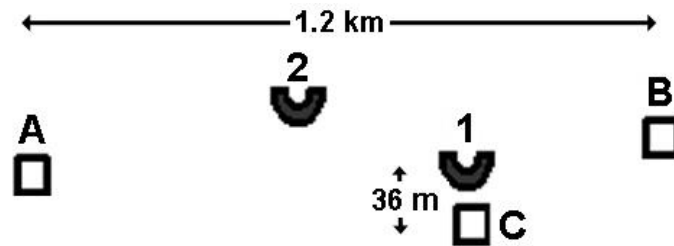
The closest reported Canadian observation of Crested Caracara was of a first-year bird in mid-October 2002, on the Acadian Peninsula near Tracadie-Sheila, 75 km North-East of Miramichi, NB. Given the spate of recent occurrences, older reports from the northern USA and southern Canada, often dismissed as pertaining to escapes, may need rethinking. Indeed I was told by a fellow birder here (I thought, in all seriousness) that perhaps some four or five years ago he had seen one or possibly two birds he took to be Crested Caracaras, but lacking confirmation or proof, he had quietly forgotten such an unbelievable observation.

In preparing this account, I made use of several field guides, and an article by C.J. Dove and R.C. Banks [1999. A taxonomic study of Crested Caracaras (Falconidae). *Wilson Bull.* 111: 330-339]. I am grateful to Ian McLaren for giving me his preliminary analyses of the photos indicating possible origin of our Caracara.

Close Nesting Raptors

By Bernard Forsythe

Even after more than 35 years of recording Barred Owl breeding cycles, something new comes up most years. Usually their occupied nest boxes are two or more kilometers apart. An exception is on the south side of White Rock Pond, *Kings*, where two pairs of Barred Owls have nested since the early 1980s in boxes that are about one km from each other. Over this period, a pair of Northern Goshawks has been nesting between these two owl families. A major change occurred in 2012 when the old Goshawk stick nest was taken over by a third pair of Barred Owls. I found the Goshawks in a new stick nest, almost in a straight line with the other nests within the roughly one-km stretch (see sketch map below). All four pairs successfully fledged young.



In 2012, Barred Owl nested in old boxes A and B and in (old Goshawk) stick nest 1, and Goshawks nested in new stick nest 2. In 2013, Goshawks returned to stick nest 1, and Barred Owls returned to boxes A and B and nested anew in box C.

Barred Owls only use a stick nest if no cavities are available. In September of 2012, I installed another nest box 36 m. south of the old Goshawk stick nest (1) that the owls had occupied in spring. In March 2013, the Goshawks moved back to stick nest (1) and Barred Owls returned to box (A) and (B). No raptors occupied stick nest (2). However when I checked nest box (C) it had a female Barred Owl incubating two eggs only a short distance from the Goshawks in the original stick nest (1).

This area has old and second growth mixed species trees, between the Gaspereau River and farm fields. Obviously the varied habitat contains a great variety of birds, small mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and insects to support so many large raptors in such a small area.



Left: One of Bernard Forsythe's backyard nest-box owls makes an appealing stand-in for the forest nesters described in Bernard's account. [Photo Richard Stern]

Identification of Red Crossbills Types Using Video

By Rick Whitman

April 3, 2013 was a first-class birding day for me. In woods near Sheffield Lake, Kings County, I obtained photos of a female Spruce Grouse that exceeded my personal expectations. I would have said at that point that the day was superb. However, when I returned home I was amazed to find a flock of seven Red Crossbills eating black oil sunflower seeds in my backyard. This was the first time I had seen this species in three years and the first time at my feeders since the winter of 1997-98. I posted a note Apr 5 on NatureNS to the effect that the Red Crossbills had been present each day since Apr 3. Andy Horn contacted me and asked if I had tried to obtain any audio. I had not, but I was aware of the “Type” concept in Red Crossbills. Their taxonomy is complicated and evolving with ten Types currently recognized in North America. Apparently, at least some of these Types may be separate subspecies, while others may be valid species. There are morphological differences but the only reliable way to separate the Types is through their flight calls. Matthew Young of Cornell University is a recognized expert on Red Crossbills and wrote a great article reviewing the ten Types, referenced below. Using my little superzoom camera I obtained video of the flock on April 8, 11 and 25 and processed it using iMovie. The video sequences were virtually random over many minutes, but with no seemingly useful audio whatsoever. It was impossible to predict when the birds would call, and the best clips selected were only 3-5 seconds in length. With Andy’s assistance these were sent to Matt Young and were identified as definite “Type 1”. This flock of 7-8 birds was present April 3-8, 11-17, and 25-26. It was clearly a single flock, as the three males were uniquely marked and always present.

On April 27 a single female appeared once in the yard and I obtained good video with her calls. Matt Young identified her as a definite “Type 10”. I had noted that her calls reminded me of White-winged Crossbill and this is mentioned in Matt’s description of Type 10. On May 3 a flock of four Red Crossbills appeared in the yard. Originally there was one male, two females and one juvenile. The juvenile was only present for two days while the other three birds were present to May 10. This flock was also identified as “Type 1” by Matt Young. Ian McLaren discusses the possible Types that might occur in Nova Scotia in his recent book. Here is what Matt Young says about Types 1 and 10.

Type 1 is the “Appalachian Crossbill” and occurs “primarily in the Appalachians from s. New York to Georgia [and is] occasional in Adirondack Mts., NY, and central Mass northward into New England, and perhaps Great Lakes, Maritimes, and s. Ontario”. Young states that Type 1 is “perhaps the most genetically distinct of all the Types ... and might warrant species status.” Type 10 is the “Sitka Spruce Crossbill” and occurs “Primarily [in] the coastal Pacific Northwest of northern California to central Oregon, but [is] uncommon year-round in the Northeastern U.S. and southeastern Canada”. Type 10 is moderately irruptive and some remain in the Northeast, when they reach here.

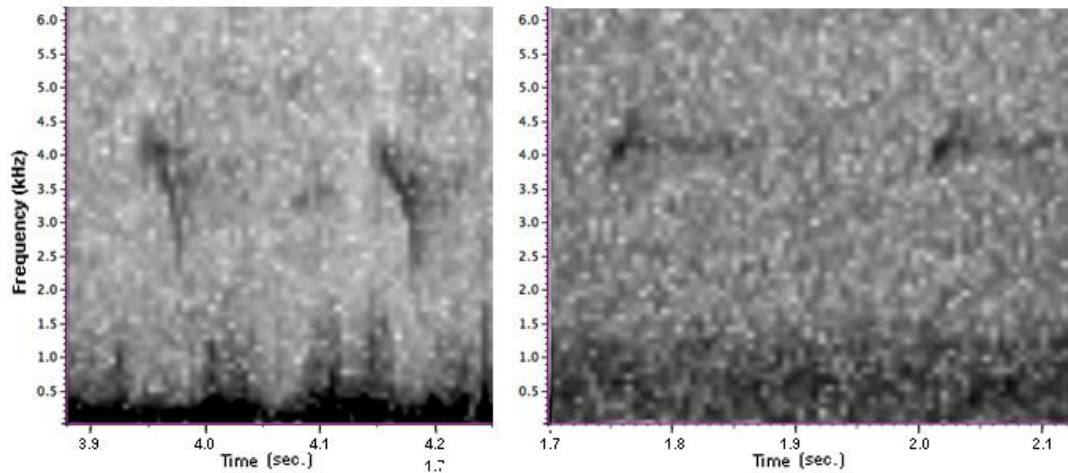
The images on the next page show Type 1 birds at my feeder and two spectrograms made from my videos by Matt Young.



The male Red Crossbill at left and the female at right were identified from their calls as Type 1; whether or not this might be at least hinted at by their appearance is a remaining issue [Photos Rick Whitman]



Type 1 Red Crossbills in a caged feeder. [Photo Rick Whitman]



Spectrograms of Red Crossbill calls: left, Type 1; right, Type 10

There is much more information on all ten Types, including downloadable sound clips, in an article dated Oct 8, 2012, by Matt Young, and published on eBird. The direct link is: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/?p=262>. Matt Young has been very enthusiastic about my efforts and provides prompt replies. He can be reached at <may6@cornell.edu>

Sight Record of a Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus sprageii*) in Nova Scotia

By Lise Bell

My daughter, Olivia Bell and I were walking on Crescent Beach, Lun., Mar. 31 2012 at around 10:30 a.m., a half-hour before high tide, when I noticed a small, pale bird about 40 m away. I studied the bird with 8 X 40 binoculars and noted the following field marks.

The bird was very pale, the colour of winter dune grass. It had “scaly” feathering on the back that brought to mind a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. I noted white outer tail feathers even when the bird was not in flight. The bird was white below with dark streaks that were washed out on the upper part of the breast. The legs were light pink, and it had a dark upper mandible with the lower mandible the same colour as the legs. The bird was flipping over seaweed apparently looking for insects. It did not pump its tail and did not hop, but rather walked across the seaweed in a manner similar to the “Ipswich” Sparrow. My daughter flushed the bird and it flew without vocalizing perhaps 10 m along the beach.

I handed my binoculars to my daughter and had her note its field marks. When I arrived at my nearby home, I showed her the two-page spread of pipits in the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America with the maps and text covered, and she picked out Sprague’s Pipit. I am completely confident that is the bird we observed.

[Acting Editor’s comment. This is the first documented sight record of this species in Nova Scotia. It breeds uncommonly on the Great Plains where its population has decreased to about half its 1960s level (BBS). It is very rare in the East, mostly in the s.e. and mid-Atlantic states up to Virginia. There is a sight record for n. New Hampshire, three accepted records for Massachusetts, and a “hypothetical” sighting for Maine, all in recent decades, but none previously in Canada e. of Ontario]

Birds in Our Past

More 19th Century items have again been garnered by Eric Ruff from the archives of the “Yarmouth Herald”. Birders who visit the outer Tusket Islands (Mud I. less often than Seal I.) can sympathize with those trying to eke out a living on the islands, but it would be interesting to know species of eagle involved – or was it (at “night”) a Great Horned Owl. The once-widespread sale of stuffed owls as household decorations remains deplorable. The “English” (now House) Sparrow was far from popular in the years following its introduction; we are now beginning to miss it.

Dec 29, 1886

—Twenty-two snowy Arctic owls have been killed near Biddeford, Maine, this season, and sold to taxidermists at \$3 each.

July 6, 1887

—Capt. Joseph Pitman recently shot on Mud Island a large grey eagle that had been for some time preying on his sheep. His predatory visits were made during the night, resulting in the destruction of 40 lambs.

Aug 24, 1887

The Prolific Sparrow.

Some 30 years ago the inch worm became such a nuisance, especially in the parks of large cities, that a gentleman living in Brooklyn sent for a pair of English sparrows from which to raise a progeny for the destruction of the worms. This pair was liberated on Columbia heights. Another pair were placed in Madison square, New York, and afterwards large numbers were brought over. They have spread all over the country in such numbers that it is now questionable which would be preferable, the sparrows or the inch worm.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Autumn Field Trips, Nova Scotia Bird Society

Saturday September 7 2013 – Cape Breton Shorebirds, CBRM. Leader: Susann Myers 431-9123

Email: myerss@eastlink.ca .Meet at the Sydney Airport (at the fence to the right of the terminal building) at 9:00 a.m. Experience a great variety of species, both shorebirds and others, at Sydney Airport and nearby sites. This is our annual opportunity to get out on the airport runways and see good numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers, American Golden-Plovers and others in the company of birding friends. This trip is designed so that the birds can be seen right next to the car and requires little to no walking, if one chooses. Terrain is level pavement and level sandy beach. Bring a lunch for an optional picnic afterwards. No storm date for this trip.

Sunday September 8 2013 - Martinique Beach, HRM.

Leaders: Chris Pepper 483-6693 and Kate Steele 476-2883 Email: katefstele@gmail.com. Meet at the easternmost parking lot at 8:00am. We will walk the beach looking for shorebirds and anything else that might be present. Trip should take 2-3 hours. Light rain showers will be tolerated. Call ahead if unsure about weather. No storm date.

Sunday September 8 2013 – Taylor Head Provincial Park, HRM –Early Fall Migrants.

Leaders: Jim Cameron 885-2970 Email: jim.cameron@ns.sympatico.ca and Warren Parsons 772-2207 Email: rosalieeast@ns.sympatico.ca. Time 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Meet by the kiosk at the last parking lot. This activity will be along the Spry Bay and Headland Trails which will take about four hours to complete. It should be good photo opportunity for early fall landbird migrants and for waders. You will encounter rugged terrain so should wear hiking boots. Bring snacks or lunch and water, and don't forget your binoculars and camera. No storm date..

Tuesday September 17 2013 - Big Tancook Island, Lunenburg Co.

Leader: Blake Maybank 852-2077 Email: bmaybank@gmail.com Pre-registration is required for this trip! We'll spend the day on foot exploring the fields, shorelines, and forests on this splendid island migrant trap. Meet at the Chester ferry wharf at 0645 a.m. for the 0700 a.m. ferry; we'll return on the 1330 ferry from Big Tancook (though if you wish to linger there are later ferries at 1630 and 1830). We must explore the island on foot, using roads or good quality trails. Bring a lunch and drinking water. The ferry is for foot passengers only, and there is a \$5 fee for the round-trip. No storm date.

Sunday October 20 2013 - Lawrencetown, HRM.

Leaders: Chris Pepper 483-6693 and Kate Steele 476-2883. Email: katefstele@gmail.com. Meet at 8:00a.m. at the Lawrencetown Beach parking lot near the interpretive signs. We will walk 3 "rails to trails" sections and then carpool back to meeting area (approx. 3 km on level, gravel ground). Participants can also walk back if they choose (6 km). Walk will take approx. 3 hours. A variety of bird species should be present. Light rain showers will be tolerated. Call ahead if unsure about weather. No storm date.

Sunday October 20 2013 – Taylor Head Provincial Park, HRM. Late Fall Migrants,.

Leaders: Jim Cameron 885-2970 Email: jim.cameron@ns.sympatico.ca and Warren Parsons 772-2207 Email: rosalieeast@ns.sympatico.ca. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Meet at the information kiosk at the last parking lot. This activity will be along the Spry Bay and Headland trails which will take about four hours to complete. This should be good photo opportunity to see shorebirds, juvenile ducks, cormorants, and migrating gannets. There's no rain date because we pretty much plan for anything and everything when hiking on the Eastern Shore, but there's no severe storm date.

Sunday November 24 2013 – Taylor Head Provincial Park–Winter Birds, HRM.

Leaders: Jim Cameron 885-2970 Email: jim.cameron@ns.sympatico.ca and Warren Parsons 772-2207 Email: rosalieeast@ns.sympatico.ca. Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Meet at the kiosk at the last parking lot. This will be a leisurely walk to the Headland Trail. Expect to see lots of Eiders, Grebes, Scoters, Dovekies, Guillemots, Mergansers, Harlequin Ducks, Long-tailed Ducks, and Purple Sandpipers. Depending on weather conditions lunch may be eaten at the Headland. Bring waterproof boots, warm clothing, snacks and lunch, and a hot drink. This should be a good warm-up to the Christmas Bird Count. Bring your binoculars. We'll tolerate light rain, but there is no storm date for this trip.

Corrections, Autumn Season, Vol. 55, Issue 1

The most serious mistake in the issue (ignoring some decipherable typos) is a wrong image in the article by Bernard Burke on wintering MEW (COMMON GULLS). P. 69-70. This has been corrected on the on-line colour version, but the first image in the printed grayscale version is a repeat of the third image in of the article. The correct first image is included as an insert in the printed version of the present issue, and if desired this image can be cut out and pasted over the incorrect image on p. 69 of the last issue.

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