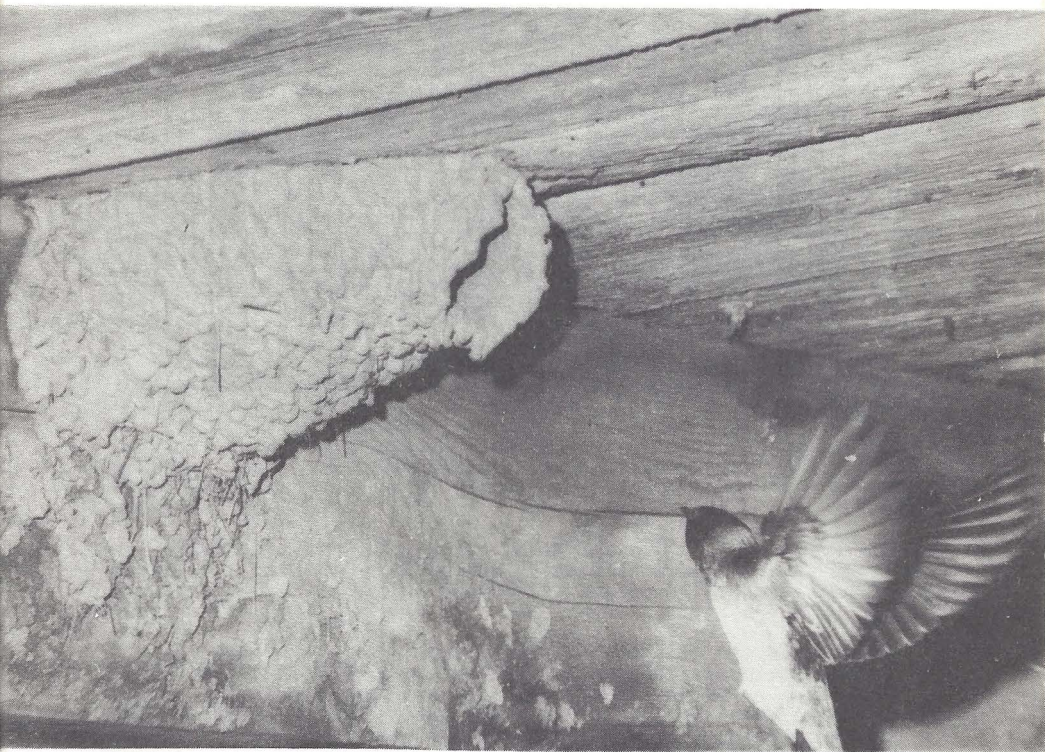


*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

Vol. 7, No. 2

JULY, 1965

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD

1	D	O	2	D	O	3	S	4	W	I	L	L	5	E	T	6	C	A	7	W						
	O		O		O											8	W	9	O	10	R	11			R	
	W		12	V	I	R	E	O		13	S		14	G		15	A	V	I	A	N				E	
16	I	C	E		A	17	D	U	C	K					18	B	R	A	N	T					N	
	T								A				19	J	B			20	G	E	N	U	S			
21	C	A	22	T		23	W	24	L				25	R	A	I	L		B							
	H					26	O	27	S	P	R	E	Y					28	I	29	B	I	30	S		
	E					31	C	32	R	O	W						33	R		U	L	E		I		
34	R	U	35	F	F		36	A	N	I			37	S	W	A	N	S		38	L	E	A	S	T	
																				39	C				K	
	40	S	N	I	P	E			41	T	42	E	R	N		43	C						44	T	I	T
															45	G	Y	R	F	A	L	C	O	N		
	46	T	H	R	U	S	H																			

Cover photograph, Cliff Swallow approaching nest. By Thomas W.H. Harrison.

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

Incorporated 1957

c/o Nova Scotia Museum
Spring Garden Road
Halifax, N.S., Canada

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 7, Number 2

July, 1965

SPRING, 1965

Spring in Nova Scotia is usually a season of hope deferred, and this year our patience was stretched to the utmost. Gulf ice drifted down and packed around the coast, adding nothing to an amelioration of temperature; so that the thermometer crept from the thirties in March to the forties in April, the fifties in May and finally achieved the sixties in June.

Members of the Bird Society, muffled to the ears, roamed the barren countryside, searching shorelines and treetops through binoculars held in mittened hands, hopeful of a sight of spring-returning birds, for a discouragingly long time before their efforts were rewarded.

We had a good finch population during the late winter, with the possible exception of Redpolls; and about the middle of March, the Purple Finches began to sing. Shortly they were joined by our over-wintering Song Sparrows and Robins, but the true migrants of these species didn't arrive in numbers until nearly the middle of April. Last year Robins and Song Sparrows were abundant by March 31, this year not until April 12, generally, all over the province.

This co-incided with the arrival, pretty much on time, of the swallows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and presently the warblers; thrushes and flycatchers; so that quite suddenly the countryside was re-populated with birds of all sorts. The delightful thing was that they were plainly visible. The trees, chilled to their marrow, didn't leaf out until well on in the first week of June. After our long wait, we were amply rewarded by the best spring season on record.

In the summary of reports to follow, it is plain that water birds were less affected by the weather than land birds, and the backward season caused no noticeable lag in their normal activities.

Common Loons appeared in spring plumage in St. Margaret's Bay on April 11, according to Mr. and Mrs. Norman Bird. Five Horned Grebes, winter residents, were noted to be in summer plumage at Cole Harbor, Halifax Co., by Gillian Rose, on April 7. One of our members observed a Pied-billed Grebe on its nest on June 6, at Brooklyn, Hants Co. (Although these grebes have long been known to nest in Nova Scotia, very few actual nest records exist.) The first of the spring Gannets flew past Cape Sable April 8, seen by Sidney Smith. The earliest Great Blue Heron reported was on March 28, at Cole Harbor (G. Rose), and Mrs. Rose said they were coming in fast April 12 to 22. Dr. A. J. Erskine noted one early migrant heron on April 3 at Amherst Point, Cumberland Co. Captain Holdway reports the main migrants (herons) in the Northumberland Strait by May 3. The first American Bittern arrived at Cape Sable April 19 (S. Smith).

Brant reached their peak of 1,000 birds off Brier Island by March 15 (the Lents). A Snow Goose, seen in the Grand Pre region by a number of people around April 1, was reported by Dr. C. S. MacDonald, and a Blue Goose was reported by the Lents off Brier Island May 16. Few people would include the Greater Scaup among spring birds; but on the bays and estuaries immediately east of Halifax, it is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, indication of the returning season. A few may be found here and there all winter; but in February, close-packed flocks begin to appear. On February 6 this year, the first sighting was of a flock of 40 at Three Fathom Harbor; by the 20th, it had increased to 100, at which size it stayed for about a month. On March 24 this flock had grown to over 200, and other smaller flocks were at Cole Harbor and Wedge Island.

The Common Scoter appeared in flocks of unusual size at Little Bass River, Colchester Co., 500 being seen there on April 25 by the Hemeons. To quote from their report: "for the past eight years only a handful of Common Scoters has been observed at this place. Many Surf Scoters are seen every year, but this spring only a very few Surf Scoters are noted - mixed with these large flocks of Common Scoters." One Surf Scoter caused a lot of argument when it was sighted on a fresh water lake near Centre Burlington, Hants Co., on our May 29 Field Trip. It was hard to believe our eyes; but with the aid of two telescopes, we finally came to agreement on the identification.

Broad-winged Hawks were seen on two occasions by C. R. K. Allen, one at Chezzetcook, Halifax Co., on April 15, and the other at Centre Rawdon, Hants Co., on June 6. A late Rough-legged Hawk was seen near Amherst on April 12 (A. J. Erskine). An early Marsh Hawk was reported on April 5 at Wolfville by Eric Mullen, and another on the same date by the Lents at Brier Island. The first Ospreys flew over Cole Harbor (Sylvia Fullerton and Barbara Hinds), Halifax City (P. Dobson), and Seabright (D. and N. Bird) on April 17. Two Ospreys were observed on nest near Dartmouth May 2 (E. Topple). A Gyrfalcon (grey phase) was reported by Dr. C.S. MacDonald as seen by the Gaspereaux River, Kings Co., April 7. The Roses at Cole Harbor had a pair of Ruffed Grouse, very tame, near the house, from April 17 on. The male was displaying at intervals, practically on the doorstep, and this went on for some days, to the great delight of the family.

An early Black-bellied Plover was seen at Cole Harbor April 24 (A. Fullerton and B. Hinds), 24 were seen at Starr's Point, Kings Co., May 22 (W. P. Neily) and approximately 30 were at Cape Sable May 22 (S. Smith). Two nests of Common Snipe were discovered in a marsh beside the Cogmagun River on the May 29 Field Trip. The parent birds put on a dramatic "broken-wing" act. A Spotted Sandpiper's nest, containing 4 eggs, was found at Middle Stewiacke on June 5 (C.R.K. Allen). A. J. Erskine reports 2 Willetts at Antigonish, May 29, which behaved like a breeding pair, and remarks that this is the first time he has seen more than one there in spring. In the nest of a pair of Willets at Villagedale, Mrs. Evelyn Richardson discovered the first egg on May 17 (reported in the Shelburne Coastguard). A Greater Yellowlegs arrived early on Cape Sable, April 21 (S. Smith), but the first to appear near Halifax were on May 8 (S. Fullerton and B. Hinds), and Sara MacLean reports a flock of 7 or 8 at Glace Bay May 9. Eric Holdway has added to the few spring records of Northern Phalarope with 4 on May 22, 3 on May 28, in weedy patches on a calm sea, Northumberland Strait. Common Terns arrived early, May 12, at Cape Sable (S. Smith).

We have nine spring records of Mourning Doves: 1, March 12, Yarmouth (G. Higby); 1, April 20, White Point, Queen's Co., (Mrs. W.H. Doggett); 1, April 20, Point Pleasant Park, Halifax (S. Fullerton and B. Hinds); 1, May 2, Cole Harbor (G. Rose); 1, May 26,

Seabright (D. and N. Bird); 2, apparently a mated pair, at Gasper-eaux, Kings Co., May 12, and 3 at Kentville, May 17 and 22 (C. Coldwell and W. Neily); a pair at Brier Island May 22 (the Lents); and 1, in Dartmouth, June 6 (J. Lorrimer).

An early Black-billed Cuckoo, May 10, was reported from Cape Sable (S. Smith).

The last sighting of a Snowy Owl from our winter invasion was on May 12, by the Lents on Brier Island.

Whip-poor-wills, at Bedford and at Jollimore, Halifax Co., are reported as being six days early, having been heard this year on May 16 (A. Chisholm and D. Ward).

Chimney Swifts seem to be here in exceptional numbers this spring. The earliest date we have is of 15 seen flying over Round Hill, Annapolis Co. (W. Whitehead) on May 12; and C. R. K. Allen reported flocks at frequent intervals, seen on a trip through Halifax - Colchester on June 5. He also reported "the air thick with hummingbirds", which is an almost pardonable exaggeration. Ruby-throated Hummingbird reports, the earliest May 10 from Shelburne Co., came in from all over the province from that date on for the next two weeks. This is not unusual, except that instead of single birds, 2 or 3 were usually mentioned; and on field trips around Halifax Co. in early June, two or three sightings of hummingbirds whizzing by became the rule instead of the usual single sighting.

An early date for the Yellow-shafted Flicker is April 8, seen at Wolfville by R.W. Tufts. Flickers arrived in numbers on Brier Island, April 12 (the Lents), and one on Cape Sable April 15, where there were 20 by the 18th. (S. Smith). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, recorded as abundant last year, appears to be keeping up its numbers, according to reports received. One report of a Black-backed, Three-toed Woodpecker has been noted, from Mrs. D. Robertson of Lower Ohio, Shelburne Co., May 8 (H.F. Lewis, in the Shelburne Coastguard).

Flycatchers arrived on schedule, and a good variety is reported as well distributed about the province. Three early Eastern Phoebe reports are of 2, Shelburne Co., April 21 (Mrs. M. Allen); 1, Cape Sable, April 26 (S. Smith); and 1, Cole Harbor, April 27 (G. Rose). Dr. Ian Hardie reported a Phoebe in his Halifax garden, rather an unusual sight, on June 3. The Empidonax flycatchers, the Yellow-bellied, Traill's, and Least, and the Eastern Wood Pewee have all been reported as present in northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, by A.J. Erskine, and in the Valley by W.P. Neily and W. E. Whitehead. All four were heard singing, 2 or 3 of each, on June 12, in a 2-hour period, along the Stillwater Siding road, Hants Co., by C.R.K. Allen. Also noted there at the same time was an Olive-sided Flycatcher.

The earliest date for the Tree Swallow was April 5, at Lunenburg (F. Rudolph) and at Brier Island (the Lents). A.J. Erskine reports "huge flocks of Tree Swallows, presumably migrants, over shallow coastal bays and lagoons" in parts of Cape Breton, late May and early June, and also "large flocks" of Bank Swallows at Margaree Harbor and Judique North, during the same period. An early date for a Barn Swallow is April 27, at Wolfville, seen by Eric Mullen, but the main stream of these swallows came during the following week. At Cape Sable, one of these birds was seen on April 30 (B.J. Smith), 6 birds on May 1 (S. Smith). Cliff Swallows remain present but scarce, in their usual nesting colonies, mostly in Cumberland Co., according to reports received. On the other hand, aside from the usual arrivals at Amherst and Oxford, a pair of Purple Martins appeared at St. Peter's Richmond Co., May 10 th 17 (M.H. Digout), and another was spotted by Stewart Whitman, on Brier Island, May 23.

Red-breasted Nuthatches continue very scarce. There were no winter reports of them, and only two this spring, of 2 birds, seen at Pictou, April 2 (E. Holdway), and of 2 birds, the same date, at Brier Island (J. Lorrimer).

As noted above, Robins were late in arriving this year. Two appeared on Cape Sable March 29 (S. Smith) and Mrs. Doggett at White Point, Queen's Co., saw a flock of 15 the same day. On April 2, a flock of 50 arrived at Cole Harbor, Halifax Co., but they stayed only one day, and all disappeared. On April 5, the Lents reported 100+ on Brier Island; on April 8, the Birds reported robins "all around the garden", at Seabright, Halifax Co.; on April 12 a flock of 100+ was reported at Lower Ohio, Shelburne Co. (Mrs. E. Harris); and a "large flock" at Middle Ohio, Shelburne Co. (Mrs. E. MacKay), as noted by Dr. H.F. Lewis in the Shelburne Coastguard; on April 13, 30 to 40 birds were at Round Hill, Annapolis Co. (first report of robins by W. E. Whitehead). The absence of robins emphasized more than anything else the bleakness of our early spring days.

Cedar Waxwings have been sighted in sizable flocks: 20 at Bear River, Digby Co. on May 26 (J. MacKay); 6 near Pigott's Lake, Hants Co. on May 29 (Field Trip); 6 in Halifax May 29 (D. Ward and H. Eldridge); 10-11 at Glace Bay, June 2 (S. MacLean); and "some" at Seabright, June 2 (D. and N. Bird). On June 11, Willett Mills said there were 4 Cedar Waxwings enjoying the bird bath in his Halifax garden; on June 12, the Hemeons had 20+ in their garden, Quinn Street, Halifax; and there have been verbal reports of flocks at Point Pleasant Park, Armdale, and the Dutch Village Road, Halifax.

One of the really impressive aspects of the spring migration was the variety of Wood Warblers seen. They started appearing in April. Our earliest dates are March 28, one Yellow Warbler, Brier Island (the Lents) and April 2, one Myrtle Warbler, Cole Harbor (the Roses); but only a few showed up then. Miss Daley spotted a Palm Warbler on April 19 at Digby and 6 were found dead at the light at Brier Island April 26 (the Lents). The Lents also reported a Magnolia Warbler on May 1. Mrs. Jones reported a Red-start at Parrsboro May 7, and Mrs. Topple a Parula on May 9 at Dartmouth. We picked up the Black and White on our May 12 Field Trip in Halifax Co. and the Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, and Yellowthroat the following week; but the vast majority of dates of arrival run from May 13 to June 4, with the greatest concentration the last week in May. This is, of course, quite normal, the surprising thing is the unusual distribution of these little woods birds, as evidenced by the appearance of a Tennessee Warbler singing, in Halifax City June 1 (P. Dobson), Blackpolls, Chestnut-sided, Yellow, Myrtle, Magnolia and Nashville Warblers seen in Halifax (May 29), and Blackpolls in and near villages (May 29 Field Trip) (reports from A. Raymond, Smith's Cove, S. MacLean, Glace Bay); Northern Waterthrushes singing in parts of Halifax and Hants Counties where we have not heard them before; 4 Mourning Warblers seen and heard on the Stillwater Siding road, Hants Co., June 12 (G.R.K. Allen). In Cape Breton during late May and early June, Dr. Erskine found Tennessee, Nashville and Chestnut-sided Warblers more numerous than in any year since 1960. Twenty-three varieties of warblers have been reported so far from round about the province, a full roll-call plus one very unusual visitor, the Orange-crowned Warbler. One of these was seen by W. J. Mills in his Halifax garden, on May 29, the same day on which he observed the number and variety of warblers mentioned above. (See Rarities section.)

Last year we noted that Bobolinks appeared to be nesting in Shelburne and Queens Counties. This year they have returned, to

White Point, Queen's Co., at any rate, where there were 5 singing males by May 25 (Mrs. Doggett). Arrival dates were normal for Red-winged Blackbirds, Rusty Blackbirds, and the Common Grackle, most reports ranging between March 28 and April 12. Grackles are particularly conspicuous in Halifax, where they appear to have moved in to nest, in considerable numbers.

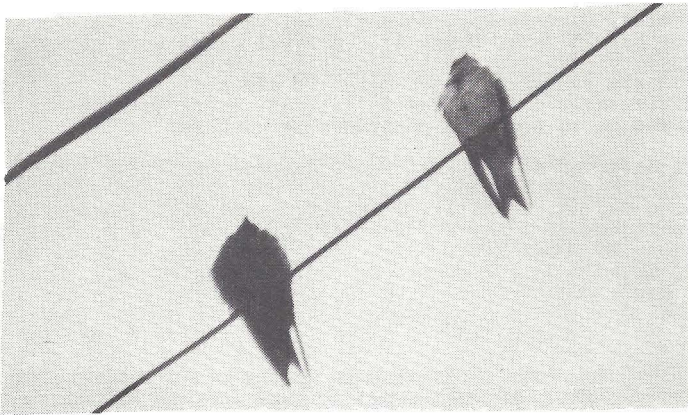
We have, as we had last year, quite a number of reports of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 1 female May 12, Clark's Harbor, Shelburne Co. (B. Coffill); 1 May 20, Round Hill, Annapolis Co. (W.E. Whitehead); 1 May 22, Tremont, King's Co. (W.P. Neily); 1 male May 26, Bear River, Digby Co. (J. McKay); 3 males May 28, Milton, Queen's Co.; 1 female May 29, Antigonish (A.J. Erskine); and 2, Hants County Field Trip (Society members). In his article, Numerical Changes in Bird Populations in Nova Scotia (Newsletter, Vol. 7, No. 1, March, 1965), Robie Tufts predicted that the Evening Grosbeak would become a permanent resident in the not too distant future. Our evidence this spring would indicate that he is already right. A curious report came in from Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson, via Mrs. Cardoza, of a huge flock of Grosbeaks, 1,000+, milling about on the North Mountain, Annapolis County, the week of April 12; and all gone by the 19th. A hint of where they may have gone came with W.E. Whitehead's report of 100+, moving slowly eastward, April 13 and 14; a flock of 100+ observed by Ward and Phyllis Hemeon at Bass River, Colchester Co., April 13; and the appearance of a small flock (10 or 12, males and females) in the garden of Mrs. A. N. Jones, Parrsboro, April 18. These birds stayed only twenty minutes. Further evidence of a movement at that time is the report from Mrs. M.C. Slauenwhite, Dartmouth, that her winter flock of about 40 Evening Grosbeaks left on April 15. However, since that time, we have had a number of reports of these birds, evidently settled here for the summer. The Topples had a pair near their home in Dartmouth May 9. Frances Brown reports 2 pairs, males bright, at her summer home on the South Mountain, April 21, seen there until May 24. W.E. Whitehead reports a pair (male and female) at Centralea, Annapolis Co., May 18. C.R.K. Allen saw 6 birds, males bright, on a trip through Colchester County, May 23. On June 13, upwards of 30 Evening Grosbeaks were noted along the roadside on Route 4, through Marsby Hope and Barney's River (reported by Dr. S. Macfarlane).

One bird was conspicuous by its absence this spring, the Fox Sparrow. Except for 40 birds reported at Brier Island by the Lents on April 5, less than a dozen of these birds were reported in Nova Scotia, and no one seems to have seen more than 2 at a time. Even the lynx-eyed John Comer saw none at all in the Cole Harbor-Chezetcook area. Dr. Harrison Lewis has suggested that for some reason Fox Sparrows altered their usual migration route, and cut across the narrower northeast end of the Bay of Fundy on their way to Newfoundland and Labrador.

CORRECTION

Captain Tom Morland has sent in the following correction of our report of a "first" for Cape Breton:

Reference Newsletter, Vol. 7:1, p. 20, on record for RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE in Cape Breton; Dr. A.J. Erskine reported one was seen at the feeding station of Mrs. M. MacRae, Baddeck, C.B., from 29 Dec. 1960 to 2 Jan. 1961. He saw no reason to question this record, which he published in Canadian Field Naturalist, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp 89/92, Apr./June 1964.



PURPLE MARTINS

by

Evelyn E. Lowerison

It would appear that most of us have a favourite Spring migrant, and neither the calendar nor the weatherman can convince us it is here until the moment we hear a certain song, or see a bird of our choice appear for the first time. Then we can finally say to ourselves, "Spring is really here."

My favourite is the Purple Martin, which arrives at approximately the same time each year, April 29, and this year was no exception. There are now five places in Amherst and two in Oxford where they are known to nest.

It is not known definitely when the Martins first came to Amherst, but I was informed by Mr. Hugh Tennant that his father had a house for Martins in 1924. He is now owner of the late Mr. Percy Black's home and is very interested in keeping this colony alive. There are four houses there, but the Martins are only using one this year; the others have been taken over by Starlings and English Sparrows. A local carpenter also told me he built new houses for Mr. Black in 1933 to replace some older ones. I have also spoken to Mrs. Lunn in Oxford, and she told me all of her late husband's houses are being used this year. She had given one to a near neighbour, who was better able to take care of the Sparrows and Starlings than herself.

Perhaps I should mention something of the habits of the Martins. They are about the nesting boxes early in the morning and then they disappear for many hours. But I have been them wheeling about over the Amherst marshes, far better deterrants than insecticides in ridding us of mosquitoes. Just about an hour before dark they return to the vicinity of the Martin house and enter the different compartments to sing their distinctive warble. Sometimes the male and female are in the same compartment, which must be very crowded, as the compartment measures 6 inches by 6 inches! Nest building got underway this summer on June 8, when the females were seen carrying in nesting material. This consists of dry grass, twigs, string and feathers. When the houses were cleaned this spring, they were found to be infested with fleas, which were then becoming quite active. Once the young have hatched, the parent birds are extremely busy, and can be seen about all day. As soon as the young are fed, the fecal sacs are carried out and deposited a short distance away from the box. The first time that feeding was noted this year was on July 6.

In Mr. Tuft's book, "The Birds of Nova Scotia", he mentions the survey of 1958, in which 10 pairs were noted at Mr. Black's and approximately 30 pairs at Mr. Lunn's in Oxford. I think it would be safe to say that a present survey would find the population to be much increased, but it requires almost constant vigilance against Sparrows and Starlings.

If anyone would like to see any of the colonies in Amherst, I would be very pleased to take them on a tour, if they would let me know by letter or telephone of their intention to visit. If not, they will miss seeing a most delightful bird and one which needs our protection.



THE ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST

Peter Iden, Editor of the Ontario Field Biologist, has asked us to acquaint our membership with the aims of this publication. His letter states:

"The ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST is not just another Club magazine with contents of purely local interest. We publish scientific papers on AMATEUR research in all branches of Natural History. The high standards which are maintained in the presentation of the published material have made the ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST an internationally recognized publication, often quoted by Scientists, Conservationists and Naturalists. Copies of this magazine are kept in many major University and Public Libraries all over North America. A few copies even find their way into overseas libraries. We have subscribers in several European countries. It is published in December of each year, at a price of 50¢ per issue. Back copies are available at 25¢ each, from No. 10 on, or for \$2.00 per set of 9 issues (10 to 18). Orders for the 1964 edition and for back copies should be sent to the Editor, accompanied by cash or money order.

Contributions of short papers and general notes on Natural Science subjects are invited."

Dr. Leslie M. Tuck, Wildlife Biologist with the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, has given us permission to quote from his recent paper "On the Life History of the Common Snipe" which was presented at the Northeast Wildlife Conference, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, January 1965. Dr. Tuck says that he is writing a monograph on snipe and would appreciate any information on this species which our readers might be able to give him. He is especially interested in migration data (spring and fall) and nesting data from Nova Scotia. The nesting data would be most useful if the contributor also provided a short description of the nest site.

Excerpts from

"On the Life History of the COMMON SNIPE"

In order to obtain precise information on the spring migration of snipe, some 400 observers were organized in Canada..... The first arrivals among the snipe are males, followed about ten days later by females. Snipe continue to arrive on the northern breeding grounds for the next four to six weeks. The latest arrivals are yearlings which will also breed.

A single male ranges widely for the first several days after its arrival on the bog. When another or several other males arrive, each tends to favour particular parts of the bog over which it will concentrate its winnowing. A few days before the females arrive the territory of each male seems fairly well defined, although considerably larger, and more overlapping, than it will be eventually. At this time and for the next few weeks, the males are very easily caught by enticing them close with a tape recorder play-back of their calls.

The arrival of one or more females on the bogs triggers the first of several remarkable activities of which intense winnowing is but one. In the process of pair-formation birds in two's and three's, of which one in each group is a female, perform aerial chases, and for the first time in the season, the male performs his beautiful "arched-wing" display. In his most intense moments of excitement, the male may loop-the-loop, perform aerial flips and do other amazing aerobatics. Mating does not always take place within the territory established by the winnowing display. I am not convinced that the pair-bond is very strong in the common snipe. Once the eggs are deposited and incubation (by the female) has commenced, the male, apart from regular winnowing over the area, seems to be mainly concerned with keeping the female "on the nest". To the casual observer, her movements at this time most frequently encounter hostile behaviour by the male.

.....Only the female incubates but the male remains near by, ready to lead away part of the brood as soon as the chicks are hatched.

.....There is a time lag in the hatching of the chicks. They are mobile within one hour of hatching. The male takes away the first two chicks. Thereafter, both adults take care of their chicks independently, feeding them for the first few days and brooding them under their wings. This sharing of the brood may contribute greatly to the survival of the chicks since they must be brooded quite frequently during the first week or 10 days. The wings of snipe develop rapidly: they are fully developed by the thirty-sixth day, and sufficiently developed for sustained flight by the eighteenth day. Their bills are much slower in growth and do not attain their maximum length until the sixtieth day.

.....The juvenile birds, beginning in late July, tend to flock together rather loosely in choice feeding localities. The adults, which are still in prebasic moult, are rather solitary. The juveniles migrate ahead of the adults but I am not certain that they reach their wintering grounds first. On the wintering grounds the males complete their winter moult ahead of the females. This moult is only partial, it includes most contour feathers and the tail but not the primaries. Migration takes place during moonlit nights. Only stragglers are left in Northern Canada by the October full moon.

.....I am convinced that the best wintering regions in North America are the rice fields and coastal marshes of Louisiana. By and large, snipe breed in bogs and winter in marshes.



NOTES ON BIRD BEHAVIOUR

One afternoon in late May I heard a great commotion among the birds, and discovered that it came from the big oak, where some starlings, half a dozen sparrows and a robin were collected. All were chirping loudly, and with feathers ruffled were jumping about from branch to branch in great excitement. Below them in the grass a big male grackle was occupied in some pursuit, which turned out to be the death of an English sparrow.

After killing the bird, the grackle proceeded to demolish it. It took about half-an-hour, at the end of which time he flew away, leaving nothing but feathers and a few of the larger bones. This surprised me very much, but on going to the literature, I found that mention is made of grackles eating sparrows. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it can't be too common a characteristic, as the next afternoon the total bird population usually in the yard was once more present, pecking about peaceably together, the grackle among them, apparently not regarded with fear by sparrows or any of the others. (Ed.)

A short but much pleasanter note on bird behaviour comes from Gillian Rose: "Last July 26 we saw something which we had read about but had never seen before, which we found quite fascinating. We watched a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker boring a ring of holes in an old apple tree. This was interesting, but what held us entranced was to see it followed closely by a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird, which poked her little needle bill into every hole that the Sapsucker had made."

The Annual Field Trip of the Nova Scotia Bird Society will be held on August 22nd, at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg County. Notices have been sent to members; but in case yours has not reached you, directions for finding the rendezvous are as follows: From Route 3, north from Liverpool, drive to Petite Riviere, either via Vogler's Cove or Italy Cross. From Route 3, south from Bridgewater, drive to Petite Riviere via LaHave, or Italy Cross. At Petite Riviere, if approaching from Vogler's Cove or Italy Cross, cross the iron bridge, and proceed 3 miles to Crescent Beach.

There is plenty of room to park at the beach. If planning an overnight trip, accommodations are available in or near either Liverpool or Bridgewater, but it might be wise to make advance reservations.



Eighth Record of the Glossy Ibis for Nova Scotia.

Probably the first traveller from Florida to open the Nova Scotia tourist season this year was a Glossy Ibis, which was seen in a shallow weedy pond in Elmsdale, Hants Co., on May 22nd., and subsequently on the 23rd. and 26th. by members of the Society.

When first observed, the big, dark, curve-billed wader was wading about feeding busily on some sedentary form of pond life, possibly pond snails (*Lymnaea* or *Physa*), which are abundant in this area.

This bird was undoubtedly an "outrider" from a considerable number of its species which wandered or were storm driven into the North-eastern States and maritime Provinces.

Nature News, Vol. XVI (No. 2), published by the Natural Science Department of the New Brunswick Museum, carries a report by W.A. Squires of two Glossy Ibises which were seen at St. Andrews on April 25th or 26th.

A letter from Aaron Bagg mentions five other sightings in the Saint John and Lancaster areas, and reports at least 49 birds of this species seen in the New England States between April 17 and May 27.

According to R. W. Tufts in "Birds of Nova Scotia", there have been seven previous records of the Glossy Ibis' occurrence in this province, two of these from Pictou County and one each from Yarmouth, Shelburne, Queens, Kings and Cumberland Counties. Four of these records are for the month of May and one for April. The two Pictou County records are old ones and no date is given. It would appear then that one may look for Glossy Ibises almost anywhere in mainland Nova Scotia, but one's chances of a sighting of these rare stragglers are better in the spring.

LIST OF RARITIES

- EASTERN GLOSSY IBIS (1) May 22, 1965 Elmsdale, C.R.K. Allen
Hants Co.
- KILLDEER (3) Apr. 2, 1965 Brier Is., the Lents
Digby Co.
- (2) Apr. 3, 1965 Cape Sable, the Smiths
Shel. Co.
- (1) May 29, 1965 Elmsdale, Phyllis Hemeon
Hants Co. and other mem-
bers of the
Bird Society
- GOLDEN PLOVER (1) May 23, 1965 Brier Is., the Lents
Digby Co.
- BLACK TERN (1) June 2, 1965 Mahone Bay, T.F.T. Morland
Lun. Co.
- Captain Morland writes: "Whilst inspecting a tern
nesting colony on Westhaver Island, Mahone Bay, I
noticed a dark colored tern flying around with the
other birds I had put up. I had excellent obser-
vation for several minutes with my binoculars at
distances of around 100 feet and it was undoubtedly
a Black Tern (Chlidonias niger)".
- YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (1) May 1, 1965 Cape Sable, the Smiths
Shel. Co.
- (1) June 12, 1965 Halifax D. Ward
(city)
- GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER
(1) May 10, 1965 near Seal A. Wickens
Island
- Dr. H.F. Lewis reports in the Shelburne Coastguard:
"...while Arthur Wickens' boat was in thick fog well
off Seal Island, a Crested Flycatcher came aboard".
This bird remained on board until the boat reached
Bear Point wharf.
- LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN (1) Apr. 26, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
- MOCKINGBIRD (1) Apr. 5 & 12, Halifax the Hemeons
May 5 city
- A Mockingbird was present at the Hemeon's throughout
most of January and seen in February and March. It
is only an assumption that this is the same bird.
- (1) Apr. 8 to 15 Tusket, Mrs.H.Hurlburt
Yar. Co. & Mrs.A.Hurlburt
- (1) June 11 & 13 Brier Is. the Lents
- BROWN THRASHER (1) Apr. 24, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
- (1) May 23, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
- (2) May 25, 1965 Cape Sable the Smiths
- WOOD THRUSH (1) May 13, 1965 Clark's B. Coffill
Harbor
- First seen on the 12th, and killed by a cat the
following day.

- EASTERN BLUEBIRD (2) Apr. 29, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
 (1) May 23, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
 (6) June 6, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
- ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER
 (1) May 29, 1965 Halifax W.J. Mills
 (city)
 In song. Mr. Mills is familiar with this species in Florida.
- MEADOWLARK (1) Apr. 27, 1965 Centrelea, W.E. Whitman
 Anna. Co.
 (1) May 5, 1965 Lawrence- C.R.K. Allen
 town, Hfx.
 Co.
- BALTIMORE ORIOLE (1) May 10, 1965 Cape Sable the Smiths
 (1) May 10 & 12 Clark's B. Coffill
 Harbor
 (2) May 22, 1965 Kentville W.P. Neily
 (1) June 1, 1965 Glace Bay E. Chant
 (1) June 2, 9 Halifax D. Ward
 Mr. Ward's bird, a male, was joined by a
 female on June 9.
 (1) June 3, 1965 Halifax R.H. Helpard
- SCARLET TANAGER (1) May 19, 1965 Brier Is. S. Whitman
 (1) May 27, 1965 King's Univ. Ursula
 campus, Hfx. Newman
- RED CROSSBILL (1) May 10, 1965 Villagedale, E. Richardson
 Shel. Co.
 (1) May 27, 1965 Rawdon, C.R.K. Allen
 Hants Co.
 This bird was in the middle of the highway,
 scraping salt from the pavement.
 (2) Apr. 19, 1965 Maitland, the Atkinsons
 Anna. Co.
- RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE (1) Apr. 22, 1965 Cape Sable the Smiths
 (1) Apr. 25, 1965 Brier Is. the Lents
- WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (1) May 23, 1965 Brier Is. S. Whitman &
 the Lents
 (1) May 10 & 25 White Point Mrs. W. H.
 Beach, Doggett
 Queen's Co.
 (1) May 26, 1965 Glace Bay S. MacLean
 (1) May 27, 1965 Pictou E. Holdway
 (2) May 10, 1965 Cape Sable the Smiths
 (1) May 21, 1965 Glace Bay E. Chant

Excerpts from THE MARITIMES NEST RECORDS SCHEME

Fifth Annual Report - 1964 Season

All mail and cards to be sent to:

Maritimes Nest Records Scheme
c/o Canadian Wildlife Service
P. O. Box 180, Sackville, New Brunswick.

The Maritimes Nest Records Scheme continued assembling bird nesting records in 1964. The total number of nest record cards on file is now over 3600.

In 1964 we received several requests for use of data in our files. The nicest "pat on the back" came from Chandler S. Robbins, who was assembling egg dates for the Fringillidae (Finches, Grosbeaks, and Sparrows) volumes of the well-known Bent Life Histories series.

Harold Prince, a graduate student at the University of New Brunswick, made extensive use of our files of waterfowl nest records for his thesis on tree-nesting ducks. A. J. Erskine of the Canadian Wildlife Service, Sackville, N. B., regularly uses cards from the Scheme in preparing his reports on studies of Cape Breton waterfowl and of mergansers. W. J. Hamilton III, of the University of California, made use of our records for the Starling and Black-billed Cuckoo. As our files grew in size, and as information on data available in nest record schemes is more widely distributed, we may anticipate wider use of our records.

In 1964, 58 persons sent in nest record cards, and several others shared in the observations reported. Thirty-three people sent in cards for New Brunswick, twenty-two for Nova Scotia, and five for Prince Edward Island. Three persons sent in cards for more than one province.

In all, 1251 cards were received for 1964, only 16 less than the record total in 1963. A number of observers, notably Joseph Johnson and Cyril Coldwell in Nova Scotia, and Jim Wilson and Gregory Hope in New Brunswick, greatly increased their contributions in 1964. We are always happy to see more participants, whether they contribute one card or 50.

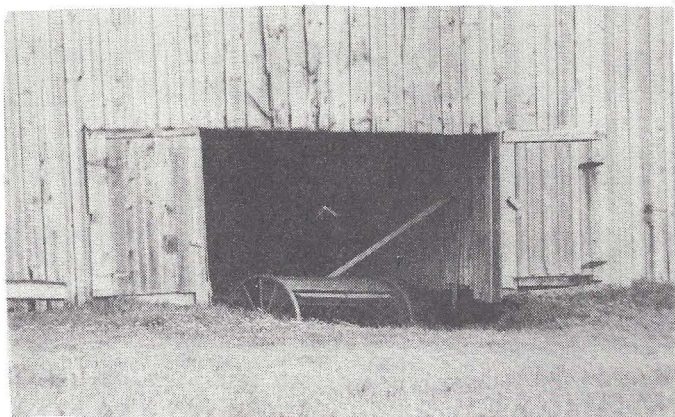
We are slowly learning more about the distribution of Purple Martins in the Maritimes. Roy Hunter circulated questionnaires to all persons in N.B. known to have martin colonies, while Miss Evelyn Lowerison found two colonies in Amherst in addition to the three known there previously. It would be interesting to know if any more of the former martin colonies in northern Nova Scotia still exist. That in Oxford was said to have been active as recently as 1960. Reports of Cliff Swallow colonies were also more numerous in 1964. That species too has become scarce in recent decades.

We thank all persons who have sent in nest cards or otherwise shown their interest in this project. We hope that you will continue to support the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme in the future. Good luck with nest-finding.

A. J. Erskine
for Maritime Nest Records Scheme

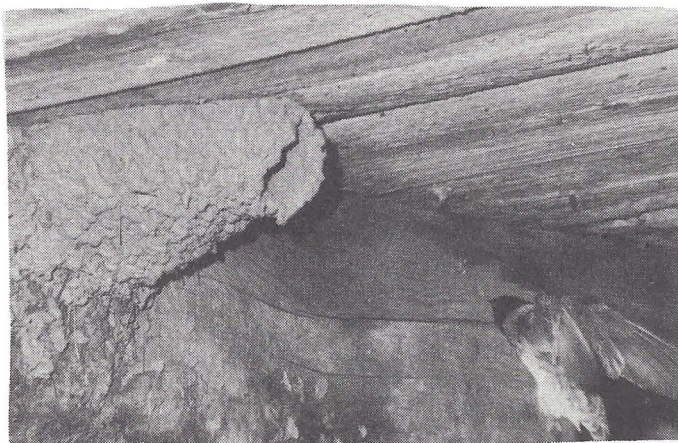
NORTHERN CLIFF SWALLOW

The generic name of the cliff swallow, Petrochelidon, is derived from the Greek petra, a rock, and chelidon, a swallow, and its specific name is from the Latin albus, white, and frons, forehead: hence a rock swallow with a white forehead.

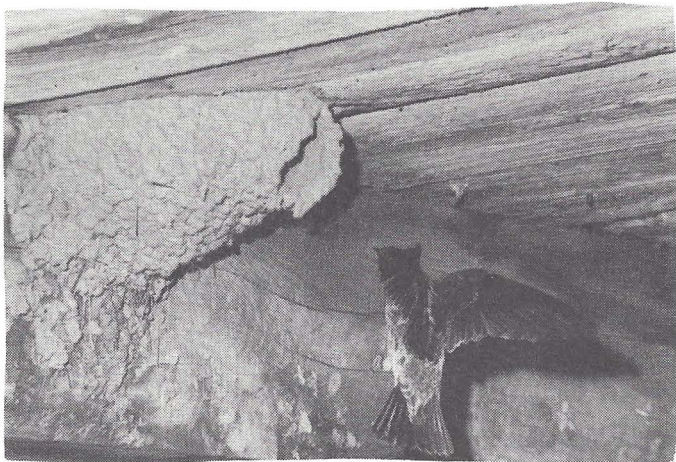


There are two common names of this swallow alluding to its nesting site that vie with each other for popularity; they are cliff swallow and eaves swallow. The former, although less appropriate in many sections of its nesting range today, is the one adopted by American ornithologists.

As the land of New England was cleared for fields and pastures, and as barns with wide eaves were erected, the cliff swallows, finding an abundance of food and sheltered places for their nests, left their primitive environment of isolated cliffs to come in close association with man.



In more recent years the prosperity of the cliff swallows in their newly acquired environment has suffered. Such factors as the invasion of English sparrows, the improvement and painting of barns, and the desire of owners to rid their buildings of the mud nests have affected the local fluctuations in the number of these valuable and attractive birds.



Upon the approach of spring, bringing with it the impulse to start northward, the swallows begin their journey by a flight of several hundred miles westward to Panama. Thence they move leisurely along the western shore of the Caribbean Sea to Mexico, and as if to avoid a long trip over water, go completely around the western side of the Gulf of Mexico. By making this long circuitous flight, swallows that nest in Nova Scotia add more than 2,000 miles to the length of their migratory journey. The swallow is a day migrant and catches each day's ration of flying insects during a few hours of aerial evolutions, which at the same time carry it slowly in the proper direction.

The arrival of the cliff swallows at the colony located on the walls and arches of the old San Juan Capistrano Mission in southern California has been given great publicity and in recent years has even been the subject of radio broadcasts. It has been claimed that the birds never vary from March 19; even the hour of their arrival has been said to be constant. Ornithologists who have checked these assumptions have found that the swallows are not infallible to such extravagant claims.





The activities about a colony of cliff swallows during the time of nest building are fascinating. We may chance to see a circle of them gathered around the margin of the pool, insecurely balanced on their tiny feet tilting their tails and ducking their heads to pick up little "gobs" of mud. These are rolled round in their mouths till tempered, and made like a quid into globular form, with a curious working of their jaws; then off go the birds, and stick the pellet against the wall, as carefully as ever a sailor, about to spin a yarn, deposited his chew on the mantel-piece. The birds work indefatigably; they are busy as bees, and a steady stream flows back and forth for several hours a day, with intervals for rest and refreshment, when the Swallows swarm about promiscuously a-flycatching.

Brown (1910) made observations of the feeding activities at colonies of cliff swallows. He counted the number of visits of the adults and, finding that they carried on an average of three insects each trip, estimated that 900 insects were destroyed on an average for each day the young were in the nests. Such figures should convey a distinct meaning to those who may be ignorant of or doubt the value of the cliff swallow in its relations to the farmer on whose buildings it seeks a nesting site.





The above account of the Cliff Swallow is quoted from Arthur Cleveland Bent's Life Histories. We are greatly indebted to Mr. Thomas W. H. Harrison who took the beautiful and amazing pictures of the Cliff Swallow entering its nest at Southampton, Cumberland County, and contributed them to the Newsletter.

