



*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

Volume 8, No. 1

April, 1966

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Volume 8, Number 1

April, 1966

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Cost of the publication of this
Newsletter is largely borne by
the Nova Scotia Museum.

Cover photograph - Scaup Duck by F. W. Dobson.

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

Incorporated 1957

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

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Phyllis R. Dobson

Volume 8, Number 1

April, 1966

CHRISTMAS COUNTS - 1965

Edited by L. B. Macpherson

It is gratifying to note that this year the greatest number of people (148) took part in the most counts (24) that have ever been made in Nova Scotia. Ninety-six species were reported. In the 10 years during which records have been kept, 139 species have been seen in this annual end-of-the-year inventory. (I reported 141 species, including last year, but since then a thorough re-check has shown that figure to have been quite in error.) The 101 species recorded in the 1960 counts remains the record for a single year.

Three species not previously recorded on the counts were added: Cooper's Hawk, Black-bellied Plover and Grasshopper Sparrow. The latter was a most noteworthy observation and the third record for the Province. It was made by Peter Anketell-Jones at West Lawrencetown, Halifax County (Halifax East Count). The Grasshopper Sparrow, in the winter, should be no closer to us than North Carolina. It was injured and in poor condition so that it was possible to confirm the identification in the hand a few days after it was first noted.

Particularly gratifying this year is the improvement in both quality and coverage. Many of the counts are of about the standard needed for publication in Audubon Field Notes and compilers should bear this in mind for next year. Any groups that can make all day coverage and can visit a good proportion of their count area should certainly consider this. Remember that although the length of the list and the rarities make this annual outing interesting, it is the degree of accurate coverage that is probably more important. A count of 10 or 12 species is a good number in some totally inland count circles. Those compilers or organizers who are interested should write (preferably now, or at least before October) for information and official count report forms to Miss Elizabeth S. Manning, National Audubon Society, 1130 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10028. Accepted counts are published in the April number of Audubon Field Notes. There were 723 counts in the 1965 issue, including 3 from Nova Scotia. The quality of our counts now warrants at least a dozen of them being given the wider publicity possible in that publication.

Coming back to our counts, there were a number of observations to which attention should be drawn. From the spectacular point of view the amazing total of 742 Iceland Gulls on the Glace Bay-Sydney count could hardly be bettered.

An important point is that the Bald Eagle was reported on 11 counts showing that here, at least, this threatened species seems to winter in some numbers. However, it is very important that maximum protection be given to nesting birds in the future and that this Society should be particularly alert to watch for any unrestricted, unreasonable or unnecessary insecticide spraying which seems now to be the main factor threatening the Bald Eagle and other raptors. Many modern insecticides, taken with the birds' food, reduce their fertility and are now known definitely to be compromising the future existence of these species.

The Gray (Hungarian) Partridge was seen on 4 counts so this introduced species is still holding on in the Province. The Mockingbird evokes in most of us pictures of the southland but it is becoming quite commonly reported in the fall, a few nest each year and some seem to survive the winter quite happily. They were reported on 5 counts. All, I think, were at feeding stations in towns where their aggressive and rather belligerent attitudes towards other birds does little to endear them to their hosts. This winter has also shown a modest invasion of the Northern Shrike both here and in New Brunswick. They were reported on 5 N. S. counts.

The Common Grackle and Fox Sparrow were noted much more commonly than in any year since count records have been kept. Each species was reported on 10 of the 24 counts. Until this winter, the Grackle averaged 1 in 5 counts and the Fox Sparrow only about 1 count in 15.

It seems to have been a reasonably good Finch winter. Of the 24 counts, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks were each reported on 14 counts, Redpolls and Goldfinches on 8 each, Purple Finches on 7, White-winged Crossbills on 6, but only 2 counts showed Pine Siskins.

The following species were reported on one count only: Mallard, Hooded Merganser, Snowy Owl, Yellow-Breasted Chat (Wolfville); Green-winged Teal, Hermit Thrush, Vesper Sparrow (Glace Bay-Sydney); Ruddy Turnstone (Catalone); Purple Sandpiper (Bridgetown); Rusty Blackbird (Canso); Red-throated Loon, Wood Duck, Cooper's Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Black-bellied Plover, Winter Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow (Halifax East); Dickcissel, Rufous-sided Towhee (Halifax West).

The species most frequently reported were Blue Jay (on all 24 counts), Crow and Starling (23 counts each), Black-capped Chickadee (22 counts), House Sparrow (21 counts), Herring Gull (20 counts), Great Black-backed Gull (19 counts), Slate-colored Junco (18 counts), Raven (17 counts) and Downy Woodpecker (15 counts).

Summaries of the 24 counts submitted are recorded below, more or less in a north to south order. The species' names bracketed are those seen in the count period but not on the count day.

CATALONE, Cape Breton County, January 2, 1966.

Great Cormorant, 3; Canada Goose, 250; Black Duck, 8; Common Goldeneye, 1; Oldsquaw, 32; White-winged Scoter, 39; Red-breasted Merganser, 4; Red-tailed Hawk, 2; Bald Eagle, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; (Virginia Rail); Ruddy Turnstone, 4; (Common Snipe); Glaucous Gull, 1; Iceland Gull, 12; Great Black-backed Gull, 250; Herring Gull, 800; Black-headed Gull, 1; Dovekie, 18; Black Guillemot, 6; (Hairy Woodpecker); (Downy Woodpecker); Gray Jay, 12; Blue Jay, 14; Raven, 24; Crow, 75; (Black-capped Chickadee) (Boreal Chickadee); Red-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Brown Creeper, 1; Starling, 105; House Sparrow, 42; (Evening Grosbeak); Pine Siskin, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 21; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Fox Sparrow, 2.

Totals: 30 species; about 1,734 individuals.

Observers: (8 party hours) Frances Hussey, Cecil Hussey, Gwendolen Lunn, John Lunn (compiler), Fred Shepard.

GLACE BAY-SYDNEY, Cape Breton County, December 28, 1965.

Canada Goose, 19; Green-winged Teal, 3; Black Duck, 305; Greater Scaup, 16; Common Goldeneye, 7; Bufflehead, 10; Oldsquaw, 15; (Common Eider); White-winged Scoter, 16; unidentified Scoters, 21; Common Merganser, 8; unidentified ducks, 221; Bald Eagle, 4; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Glaucous Gull, 1; Iceland Gull, 742; Great Black-backed Gull, 1492; Herring Gull, 1383; Black-headed Gull, 9; Dovekie, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; (Gray Jay); Blue Jay, 92; Raven, 35; Crow, 154; Black-capped Chickadee, 54; White-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Mockingbird, 2; Robin, 2; Hermit Thrush, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 1; Starling, 618; House Sparrow, 429; Baltimore Oriole, 1; Common Grackle, 13; Cowbird, 1; Evening Grosbeak, 125; (Pine Grosbeak); Common Redpoll, 11; Goldfinch, 2; Savannah Sparrow, 3; Vesper Sparrow, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 3; Fox Sparrow, 1.

Totals: 41 species; about 5,832 individuals.

Observers: (27 party hours) Ford Alward (compiler), Jean Alward, Mrs. John Anstey, Mrs. W.G. Chant, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Cosnick, Mrs. John Cunningham, Mrs. E.A. Curtis, Mrs. Harold Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Russel Hall, Hedley Hopkins, Allan MacCormick, H.A.W. McCoubrey, Mr. and Mrs. George MacLeod, Mrs. Edith MacLeod, Archie MacLean, Sarah MacLean, Donald MacDonald, Marge MacDonald, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis MacDonald, Robert McNeil, Mrs. E.G. Severance, Mrs. Watson Sodero, Mrs. Edgar Wolman.

BOULARDERIE, Cape Breton County, January 1, 1966.

Great Cormorant, 1; Black Duck, 15; Common Goldeneye, 45; Oldsquaw, 32; White-winged Scoter, 1; Red-breasted Merganser, 16; unidentified ducks, 78; Bald Eagle, 3; Iceland Gull, 127; Great Black-backed Gull, 248; Herring Gull, 745; Black Guillemot, 1; Blue Jay, 9; Raven, 6; Crow, 108;

Black-capped Chickadee, 4; Starling, 574; House Sparrow, 150; Pine Grosbeak, 2; Common Redpoll, 3; Slate-colored Junco, 6; Song Sparrow, 3.

Totals: 21 species; about 2,177 individuals.

Observers: (8 party hours) Ford Alward (compiler), David Burchell, Mrs. David Burchell, George Hay, Mary Hay, Hedley Hopkins, Hedley Hopkins Jr., Roy Salter.

NORTH SYDNEY--SYDNEY MINES, Cape Breton Co., December 31, 1965.

Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Bald Eagle, 1; Blue Jay, 8; Starling, 50; Common Grackle, 6; Evening Grosbeak, 8.

Totals: 6 species; about 74 individuals.

Observers: J. Hay, Roy Salter (compiler).

ST. PETERS, Rickmond County, December 26, 1965.

Common Goldeneye, 2; Bufflehead, 5; White-winged Scoter, 1; Red-breasted Merganser, 1; unidentified ducks, 3; Great Black-backed Gull, 7; Herring Gull, 41; Dovekie, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 1; (Hairy Woodpecker); (Downy Woodpecker); (Gray Jay); Blue Jay, 5; Raven, 15; Crow, 30; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; Mockingbird, 1; Starling, 40; House Sparrow, 60; Baltimore Oriole, 2; White-winged Crossbill, 1.

Totals: 17 species; about 224 individuals.

Observers: (4 party hours) Murdock Digout (compiler), W.J. Digout.

AMHERST, Cumberland County, December 28, 1965.

Unidentified Hawk, 1; Pheasant, 28; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 12; Crow, 24; Black-capped Chickadee, 19; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 1; Starling, 35; House Sparrow, 115; Pine Grosbeak, 3; Common Redpoll, 80; Slate-colored Junco, 3; Tree Sparrow, 3; (Fox Sparrow); Song Sparrow, 10.

Totals: 16 species; about 338 individuals.

Observers: (7 party hours) Mrs. Richard Airey, Mary Harrison, Evelyn Lowerison (compiler), Dora Myers, Lindsay Myers.

NORTHPORT, Cumberland County, January 1, 1966.

Common Loon, 5; Black Duck, 20; unidentified ducks, 85; unidentified hawk, 1; Pheasant, 1; Blue Jay, 9; Crow, 10; Starling, 3; House Sparrow, 2; Snow Bunting, 3.

Totals: 9 species; about 139 individuals.

Observers: (4 party hours) Robin MacNeil, Robert MacNeil.

BASS RIVER, Colchester County, December 26, 1965.

(Ruffed Grouse); Red-breasted Merganser, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 1; Herring Gull, 24; (Pileated Woodpecker); Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 4; (Raven); Crow, 11; Black-capped Chickadee, 12; (Red-breasted Nuthatch); Golden-crowned Kinglet, 7; Starling, 30; House Sparrow, 15; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Common Redpoll, 2; Slate-colored Junco, 1; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 1.

Totals: 16 species; about 119 individuals.

Observers: (6 party hours) Mr. and Mrs. Lee Gilbert, Phyllis Hemeon, Ward Hemeon (compiler).

TRURO, Colchester County, December 25, 1965.

Spruce Grouse, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Gray Partridge, 7; Pheasant, 2; Great Black-backed Gull, 9; Herring Gull, 300; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 4; Raven, 14; Crow, 50; Black-capped Chickadee, 9; Boreal Chickadee, 7; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 14; Starling, 60; House Sparrow, 40; Cowbird, 1; Evening Grosbeak, 11; Purple Finch, 1; Pine Siskin, 14; Goldfinch, 3; White-winged Crossbill, 11; Slate-colored Junco, 3.

Totals: 24 species; about 576 individuals.

Observer: (5 party hours) Martin G. McNally.

PICTOU, Pictou County, December 23, 1965.

(Black Duck); Common Goldeneye, 5; Oldsquaw, 19; Red-breasted Merganser, 5; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Iceland Gull, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 4; Herring Gull, 14; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 7; Crow, 62; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Robin, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 2; Starling, 35; House Sparrow, 120; Common Grackle, 2; Evening Grosbeak, 9; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Slate-colored Junco, 5; Tree Sparrow, 2.

Totals: 22 species; about 309 individuals.

Observer: (4 party hours) Eric Holdway.

SPRINGVILLE, Pictou County, January 1, 1966.

Black Duck, 2; Common Merganser, 14; Red-breasted Merganser, 2; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 2; (Bald Eagle); (Ruffed Grouse); Great Black-backed Gull, 24; Herring Gull, 155; (Pileated Woodpecker); Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 25; Raven, 4; Crow, 86; Black-capped Chickadee, 9; Boreal Chickadee, 1; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 4; (Northern Shrike); Starling, 219; House Sparrow, 59; Purple Finch, 15; Pine Grosbeak, 52; Slate-colored Junco, 4; (White-throated Sparrow).

Totals: 21 species; about 683 individuals.

Observers: (12 party hours) Harry Brennan, Jean Brennan, Kevin Brennan, Fred Kenney (compiler), Margaret Kenney, Neil Kenney.

COUNTRY HARBOUR, Guysborough County, December 30, 1965.

Black Duck, 200; Common Goldeneye, 150; Oldsquaw, 50; Common Merganser, 10; unidentified Ducks, 50; Bald Eagle, 2; Spruce Grouse, 10; Ruffed Grouse, 10; Pheasant, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 10; Herring Gull, 50; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 5; Blue Jay, 6; Raven, 5; Crow, 25; Black-capped Chickadee, 10; Boreal Chickadee, 5; Robin, 5; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 1; Starling, 50; House Sparrow, 20; Common Grackle, 1; Cowbird, 1; Evening Grosbeak, 5; (Pine Grosbeak); (White-winged Crossbill); Slate-colored Junco, 10; (Fox Sparrow).

Totals: 26 species; about 694 individuals.

Observers: (8 party hours) Gordon A. Cook, Alma Hodgson, A. Burns Hodgson (compiler).

CANSO, Guysborough County, December 30, 1965.

Unidentified Grebe, 1; (Common Snipe); Great Black-backed Gull, 3; Herring Gull, 67; Blue Jay, 6; Crow, 34; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; (Northern Shrike); Starling, 132; House Sparrow, 37; Rusty Blackbird, 1; Common Grackle, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 6.

Totals: 11 species; about 296 individuals.

Observer: (6 party hours) June N. Jarvis.

SHUBENACADIE, Hants County, December 30, 1965.

Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; (Gray Partridge); Herring Gull, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 1; Blue Jay, 4; Raven, 1; Crow, 12; Black-capped Chickadee, 17; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Starling, 138; House Sparrow, 98; Cowbird, 2; (Evening Grosbeak); Goldfinch, 2; (Fox Sparrow).

Totals: 13 species; about 299 individuals.

Observers: (5 party hours) Mrs. A. Gass, Mary Geddes, Roslyn MacPhee (compiler), Allen Milne, Mrs. E. Wallace.

WOLFVILLE, Kings County, December 29, 1965.

Canada Goose, 2; Mallard, 6; Black Duck, 307; Common Goldeneye, 19; Hooded Merganser, 5; Common Merganser, 13; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 2; Red-tailed Hawk, 3; Rough-legged Hawk, 3; Bald Eagle, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 3; Pheasant, 15; Common Snipe, 3; Great Black-backed Gull, 149; Herring Gull, 286; Snowy Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 6; Downy Woodpecker, 5; Horned Lark, 17; Blue Jay, 82; Raven, 30; Crow, 730; Black-capped Chickadee, 87; Boreal Chickadee, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 10; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Brown Creeper, 2; Mockingbird, 2; Robin, 9; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 35; Northern Shrike, 1; Starling, 438; (Yellow-breasted Chat); House Sparrow, 729; Common Grackle, 5; Cowbird, 385; Evening Grosbeak, 61; Purple Finch, 8; Pine Grosbeak, 46; Common Redpoll, 35; Goldfinch, 8; Savannah Sparrow, 22; Slate-colored Junco, 201; Tree Sparrow, 12; White-throated Sparrow, 9; Song Sparrow, 10; Snow Bunting, 25.

Totals: 47 species: about 3,837 individuals.

Observers: (33 party hours) S. Bleakney, C. Chipman, G. Colwell, R. Eagles, J.S. Erskine (compiler), R. Erskine, M. Forbes, E. Green, R. Green, C. MacDonald, S. MacDonald, W. Neilly, P. Smith, R.W. Tufts, R. Wassem.

HALIFAX (west), Halifax County, January 2, 1966.

Red-necked Grebe, 3; Great Cormorant, 24; Canada Goose, 50; Common Goldeneye, 2; Oldsquaw, 2; Common Scoter, 8; Red-breasted Merganser, 6; Bald Eagle, 2; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; Glaucous Gull, 2; Iceland Gull, 4; Great Black-backed Gull, 360; Herring Gull, 920; Ring-billed Gull, 7; Dovekie, 1; (Black Guillemot); Hairy Woodpecker, 7; Downy Woodpecker, 8; Gray Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 29; Raven, 11; Crow, 100; Black-capped Chickadee, 92; Boreal Chickadee, 17; White-breasted Nuthatch, 10; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Brown Creeper, 2; Robin, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 24; Northern Shrike, 1; Starling, 4000; House Sparrow, 1000; Common Grackle, 2; Brown-headed Cowbird, 150; (Dickcissel); Evening Grosbeak, 15; Purple Finch, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 3; American Goldfinch, 13; White-winged Crossbill, 1; (Rufous-sided Towhee); Slate-colored Junco, 45; Tree Sparrow, 5; White-throated Sparrow, 4; Fox Sparrow, 20; Song Sparrow, 7.

Totals: 45 species: about 6,971 individuals.

Observers: (22 party hours) Michael Ankatell-Jones, Patrick Ankatell-Jones, Mrs. Clarence Awalt, Shirley Baird, Mrs. Ernest Bell, Hazel Carmichael, Walter J. Chute, Molly Clayden, Mrs. Arthur Coffill, John Comer, Ethel Crathorne, Phyllis Dobson, Miss Alice Falkenham, Mrs. Ralph Hebb, Mrs. R.H. Helpard, Peter Hope-Simpson, Ernst Jansen, Willett J. Mills, H.P. Moffatt, Ian C. Robertson, Mrs. R.L. Stanfield, Mrs. C.L. Torey.

HALIFAX (east), Halifax County, December 27, 1965.

Common Loon, 2; Red-throated Loon, 1; Red-necked Grebe, 5; Horned Grebe, 3; Great Blue Heron, 1; Canada Goose, 250; Black Duck, 325; Greater Scaup, 11; Common Goldeneye, 38; Bufflehead, 5; Oldsquaw, 12; White-winged Scoter, 7; Common Scoter, 2; Common Merganser, 5; Red-breasted Merganser, 27; (Cooper's Hawk); Rough-legged Hawk, 2; Bald Eagle, 1; Gyrfalcon, 1; Pigeon Hawk, 1; (Ruffed Grouse); (Virginia Rail); Black-bellied Plover, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 65; Herring Gull, 815; Ring-billed Gull, 41; Black-headed Gull, 37; Dovekie, 6; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 4; Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, 1; Horned Lark, 1; Blue Jay, 8; Raven, 84; Crow, 190; Black-capped Chickadee, 15; Boreal Chickadee, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Brown Creeper, 1; Winter Wren, 1; (Robin); Golden-crowned Kinglet, 31; Starling, 310; House Sparrow, 231; (Eastern Meadowlark); Brown-headed Cowbird, 9; Evening Grosbeak, 13; Purple Finch, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 7; Common Redpoll, 19; American Goldfinch, 43; White-winged Crossbill, 8; Savannah Sparrow, 4; Grasshopper Sparrow, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 43; Tree Sparrow, 8; White-throated Sparrow, 33; Fox Sparrow, 8; Swamp Sparrow, 2; Song Sparrow, 8; Snow Bunting, 2.

Totals: 57 species; about 2,760 individuals.

Observers: (33 party hours) M.W. Ankatell-Jones, Patrick Ankatell-Jones, R.V. Bowditch, Hazel Carmichael, Molly Clayden, John Comer, Ethel Crathorne,

Phyllis Dobson, Sylvia Fullerton, Barbara Hinds, Peter Hope-Simpson, Ernst Jansen, John Lorimer, Willett J. Mills, Wayne Niely, Drina Smith, Betty Topple and Wesley Topple.

KINSAC, Halifax County, December 31, 1965.

(Bald Eagle); Blue Jay, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 31; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 7; Starling, 9; Crow, 1.

Totals: 5 species; about 49 individuals.

Observers: (4 party hours) Hazel Carmichael, Ethel Crathorne.

BRIDGETOWN, Annapolis County, January 1, 1966.

Common Loon, 2; Black Duck, 2; Common Goldeneye, 2; Oldsquaw, 7; Common Eider, 4; Common Scoter, 3; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; (Rough-legged Hawk); Pheasant, 3; (Gray Partridge); Purple Sandpiper, 46; Great Black-backed Gull, 28; Herring Gull, 210; (Dovekie); Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 3; (Gray Jay); Blue Jay, 18; Raven, 5; Crow, 56; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; White-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Brown Creeper, 1; Mockingbird, 1; Robin, 3; Starling, 235; House Sparrow, 490; Eastern Meadowlark, 1; (Red-winged Blackbird); Common Grackle, 2; Cowbird, 18; Purple Finch 2; (Goldfinch); Slate-colored Junco, 4; Tree Sparrow, 1; Fox Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 2.

Totals: 31 species; about 1,164 individuals.

Observers: (15 party hours) Calder Fraser (compiler), Walter Harlow, Terry Hyson, Margaret Lycett, Vivian Nickerson, Stewart Whitman.

KARSDALE, Annapolis County, December 28, 1965.

Black Duck, 150; Common Goldeneye, 2; Bufflehead, 31; (Rough-legged Hawk); unidentified Hawk, 1; (Ruffed Grouse); Pheasant, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 4; Herring Gull, 51; (Pileated Woodpecker); Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 8; Raven, 4; Crow, 35; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Boreal Chickadee, 4; Robin, 7; Starling, 37; House Sparrow, 15; Evening Grosbeak, 6; Pine Grosbeak, 30; Common Redpoll, 37; White-winged Crossbill, 3; unidentified finches, 58; Slate-colored Junco, 6; Tree Sparrow, 9.

Totals: 22 species; about 503 individuals.

Observer: (7 party hours) Joseph W. Johnson.

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, Annapolis County, January 2, 1966.

Common Loon, 2; Cormorant, 1; Great Blue Heron, 1; Black Duck, 62; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Pheasant, 7; Great Black-backed Gull, 12; Herring Gull, 37; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Blue Jay, 27; Raven, 2; Crow, 25; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Robin, 3; Starling, 60; House Sparrow, 150; Common Grackle, 5; Cowbird, 10; Evening Grosbeak, 4; Pine Grosbeak, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 5; White-throated Sparrow, 2; Song Sparrow, 2.

Totals: 25 species; about 431 individuals.

Observers: (10 party hours) Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Atkinson, Jean A. MacFarlane, Clair McKenna, Catherine McKenna, E.R. Terman, Joe B. Terman (compiler).

DIGBY, Digby County, December 28, 1965.

Common Loon, 1; Black Duck, 15; Greater Scaup, 500; Common Goldeneye, 1; Oldsquaw, 3; White-winged Scoter, 6; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 10; Herring Gull, 320; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 24; Raven, 1; Crow, 15; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; Robin, 4; Northern Shrike, 1; Starling, 60; House Sparrow, 439; Red-winged Blackbird, 1; Common Grackle, 17; Cowbird, 15; Evening Grosbeak, 40; Purple Finch, 2; Pine Grosbeak, 18; (Common Redpoll); (Goldfinch); Slate-colored Junco, 14; White-throated Sparrow, 6; Fox Sparrow, 2; Snow Bunting, 1.

Totals: 29 species; about 1,521 individuals.

Observers: (9 party hours) P. Armstrong, G. Cardoza, Eileen Cardoza (compiler), V. Cardoza, A. Crowe, L. Daley, Mr. and Mrs. M.C. Hoare, Mr. and Mrs. Barry McHugh and two daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Sulis; M. Tupper, Arthur Weir, Percy Weir.

GAVELTON, Yarmouth County, January 1, 1966.

Bald Eagle, 1; unidentified hawk, 1; Gray Partridge, 2; Great Black-backed Gull, 10; Herring Gull, 8; Gray Jay, 4; Blue Jay, 2; Crow, 10; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; Boreal Chickadee, 4; Brown Creeper, 1; Robin, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 3; Cowbird, 2; Pine Grosbeak, 5; White-throated Sparrow, 4.

Totals: 16 species; about 65 individuals.

Observer: (2 hours) Clive Andrews.

SABLE RIVER, Shelburne County, December 24, 1965.

Common Loon, 6; Red-necked Grebe, 2; Horned Grebe, 2; Great Cormorant, 40; Bufflehead, 7; Red-breasted Merganser, 5; Great Black-backed Gull, 27; Herring Gull, 126; Dovekie, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Horned Lark, 9; Gray Jay, 8; Blue Jay, 11; Raven, 5; Crow, 29; Black-capped Chickadee, 10; Boreal Chickadee, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; (Golden-crowned Kinglet); (Starling); House Sparrow, 35; (Evening Grosbeak); Slate-colored Junco, 1; Fox Sparrow, 1.

Totals: 21 species; about 329 individuals.

Observers: (8 party hours) Winston Freeman, Harrison F. Lewis(compiler).

NEW PROJECTS

FOR MANY OF OUR MEMBERS - MOSTLY THE HARDIER ONES - THE HIGH SPOT IN THEIR BIRD WATCHING CALENDAR HAS BEEN THE CHRISTMAS COUNT. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BIG DAY, CHOOSING THE TERRITORY, DIVIDING AND ASSIGNING PARTS OF IT TO GROUPS, THE PRE-DAWN BREAKFASTS, THE INTENSITY OF THE HUNT, ALL COMBINE TO MAKE A DAY LONG ANTICIPATED AND LONG REMEMBERED. THE ONE FLAW IS THAT, LIKE CHRISTMAS, IT COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR. BUT WHY RATION SUCH PLEASURE SO SEVERELY? WHY NOT A SUMMER COUNT? THE EXECUTIVE, FEELING THAT THIS MAY PROVE AS POPULAR AS THE WINTER EVENT, HAS DRAWN UP A SET OF REGULATIONS AND A REPORT FORM ADAPTED TO FIT THE SEASON, IN THE HOPE THAT YOU WILL TAKE IT FROM HERE.

During the fall and winter season the main topic of discussion at Executive meetings has been the formulation of a program of activities for the Nova Scotia Bird Society. The following list of projects has been drawn up, and is here presented for your consideration.

- (1) A Summer Count. (See above and enclosures.)
- (2) The establishment of bird lists for each county in Nova Scotia. A Compiler for each county is to be appointed, and the names and addresses of these Compilers will be published in a future issue of the Newsletter.
- (3) Definite population and reproduction data about Bald Eagles in Nova Scotia to be obtained. This is urgent.
- (4) The investigation of the nesting avifauna of the plateau of northern Cape Breton.
- (5) The carrying out of a bird banding operation on Scatari Island, year after year, as has been done on Brier Island. (Any migration study on Scatari is important.)
- (6) More definite and reliable information to be obtained about the supposed nesting of the Evening Grosbeak in Nova Scotia, especially in the Cobequid Mountains, north of Truro.
- (7) Investigation of the nesting birds of the New Tusket - Corberrie area, in the interior of Digby County, where the Prairie Warbler has been reported in the nesting season, and where the nesting of the Field Sparrow is a distinct possibility.
- (8) Migration studies from Sambro Lightship.
- (9) The discovery of the present condition of the nesting bird population on Sable Island.

- (10) To determine with certainty if any Murres nest at Bird Islands or elsewhere in Nova Scotia.
- (11) To determine, as accurately as possible, the breeding range of the Whip-poor-will, Veery, Crested Flycatcher, and Gray-cheeked Thrush in Nova Scotia.

This sounds like an ambitious program, and obviously will not be completed overnight. Some of these plans are ready to be carried out immediately, some are for long-term or for future action. Some are for individual experts, some require concerted effort, and are within the reach of all of us. This is a basic list, not in any sense a final one, and many other projects will doubtless be added from time to time. We suggest that the accomplishment of the projects listed above offers adventure combined with a real contribution to North American ornithology. The Executive invites comments and/or inquiries.

NEWS FROM CAPE BRETON

The value of concerted effort is already exemplified by recent events in Cape Breton. Due largely to the efforts of Reverend Ford Alward of Glace Bay, a group has been formed, made up of people in the vicinity who share a real interest in birds. A first meeting was held in Sydney on December 10, 1965, with an attendance of 50. Since then several other meetings have been held, for the purpose of listening to special speakers, viewing films, and planning projects for the coming spring and summer. Two mailings, with news of the group doings and announcements of new undertakings have been sent out since January. The Cape Breton bird list has accumulated 84 species recorded since December 1st...Four Christmas Counts were made, in various parts of the island, swelling the total number of Counts for the province to an all-time high in the 1965-66 season.

Formation of this keen active group is undoubtedly one of the best things that has happened to birding in Nova Scotia since it became popular back in 1955. Cape Breton is the principal breeding ground in this province for the Bald Eagle, a species whose continued existence in eastern North America is now threatened, and invaluable information on nesting success can be made by on-the-spot observers. Important also is the information to be gained during migration periods at this northeastern entry and exit point of the province.

Quite aside from such serious matters, everybody up there (down there? please correct me, Cape Breton), seems to be having a lot of fun. Long may it continue. Congratulations, Good Luck, and Good Birding!

W I N T E R S I G H T I N G S

LOONS (Common and Red-throated) and GREBES (Red-necked and Horned) were reported in their usual numbers about the coast of Nova Scotia during the winter. Grebes were particularly abundant in St. Margaret's Bay in February, where a rough estimate put one per every 100 square yards of inshore water, about 25% Red-necked, 75% Horned (C.R.K. Allen). A late PIED-BILLED GREBE was reported at Louisbourg, Dec. 9 (A.J. Erskine). A LEACH'S PETREL was found in a field near Dartmouth, Oct. 18, and rescued by Peter Cribbs, who conveyed it to Eastern Passage, and there released it. A FULMAR was noted 5 miles west of Cape Sable, Dec. 29 (N. Cunningham). GREATER CORMORANTS received their usual scanty mention, including a group of approximately 20 on the reefs off Northwest Cove, Lun. Co. At least 3 GREAT BLUE HERONS lingered on into December, 2 in the Eastern Shore region (E. Topple, D. Willis, R. Eaton), one near Barrington (E. Richardson). A BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was sighted at Lawrencetown, Halifax County, Nov. 22 (L. Topple).

A most unusual sighting missed the last Newsletter, and is inserted here: On Sept. 5, 1965, John Comer observed what he took to be a REDDISH EGRET feeding in a marsh at Clam Bay, Halifax County. He had the bird under observation for about three-quarters of an hour, first through telescope (x25) at 100 yards and later at 50 yards through binoculars.

On Sept. 6, Mr. Comer returned to Clam Bay with four other observers and found the bird again "on location", where it was studied by the party for between two and three hours. Noted were the typical field marks of a bird of this species: shaggy, dull brick-red head and neck, dark, slaty blue body, and restless shuffling and prancing motions "as though climbing through a wire fence".

Mr. Comer has seen the Reddish Egret in Florida, and Miss Ethel Crathorne, another member of the party, is familiar with the Little Blue Heron in adult plumage. Both are convinced that this bird was of the former species.

Both the CANADA GOOSE and BLACK DUCK were reported as scarce throughout the winter, particularly along the SW and E shore (H. Lewis, W. Lent, B.J. and S. Smith). Record or better numbers of both these species were noted by aerial survey migrating the latter part of October (A.J. Erskine), evidently leaving us fewer than usual winter residents. One hundred and ten PINTAIL, close inshore near Pictou, were noted on Jan. 10 (E. Holdway). Unusual were 2 reports of GREEN-WINGED TEAL, 2 near Three-Fathom Harbor, Feb. 19 (C.R.K. Allen) and 2 at Louisbourg, Feb. 24 (G. Lunn). One female WOOD DUCK wintered in the Dartmouth Park, among the tamer waterfowl resident there. GREATER SCAUP, a flock of 40, first appeared at Three-Fathom Harbor Feb. 5, and built up to about 200 by Mar. 24 (C.R.K. Allen). Two BARROW'S GOLDENEYE were noted Dec. 11 at Margaree Harbor (A.J. Erskine). Wickerson Lent wrote from Brier Island: "Ducks and waterfowl in general have been very scarce around here this winter, in fact it was the worst duck hunting season that I ever remember. I lay it to the open winter we have had. The birds have stayed in the head of the Bay of Fundy and St. Mary's Bay as there has been little or no ice to bother them. In the Annapolis Basin on several trips up that way I have seen huge flocks of EIDER, SCOTER and GOLDENEYE, and the same goes for the Head of St. Mary's Bay.....The first Eiders moving to amount to anything started on the 18th (Feb.). I was on duty in the fog alarm, we were having a west gale and light snow, and the first Eider started by here just after dawn. I made a rough count from then until noon and got around 3,500 birds. There probably were more as I no doubt missed a lot while attending to my motors." Large flocks of BUFFLEHEAD were also noted in the Annapolis Basin (A. Raymond) although they were scanty along the

Eastern Shore (C.R.K. Allen). Twelve to 15 HARLEQUIN DUCK were seen Mar. 6 off the Medway (W. Noble), and 4 RUDDY DUCK at Clam Bay, Nov. 11 (J. Comer, M. Clayden). The first spring report of COMMON MERGANSER was of several seen at Cole Harbor Mar. 14 (S. Fullerton, B. Hinds). Four winter reports of these Mergansers were: 8 birds seen on the Glace Bay-Sydney Christmas Count, 27 at Nyanza and Margaree Harbor early in Dec. (A.J. Erskine) and 18 at the Glace Bay Sanctuary (F. Alward, A. MacCormack, R. McNeil).

Hawks and Eagles were well represented generally throughout the province. One TURKEY VULTURE was caught in a baited trap at Lake LaRose, Anna. Co. Mar. 15, and submitted for identification by Garnet LeCain, game warden (W.E. Whitehead). A GOSHAWK was reported in Hant's County on Dec. 1 (C.R.K. Allen). SHARP-SHINNED, RED-TAILED, and AMERICAN ROUGH-LEGGED Hawks were less in evidence than during winter 1964-65, although Lent reported the latter plentiful on Brier Island. A well-authenticated GOLDEN EAGLE was reported at Louisbourg Sept. 28 (J. Lunn), and another Nov. 27, in Pictou Co. (Mrs. Walter MacInnis). No less than 20 BALD EAGLES have been reported, including those seen on the Christmas Counts. In this connection, a curious incident occurred at Pennant Point during the Halifax West Christmas Count Jan. 2. A Bald Eagle was observed attacking a Herring Gull, repeatedly diving from a height or coming in low over the water, to lift the gull, carry it, a few feet above water for about ten yards, and then drop it. Twice the eagle remained on the water, wings outspread, before rising again, with apparent difficulty. After 10 or 12 such attacks, the gull, very much bloodied, succumbed and sank, and the eagle flew away. It seemed strange to the on-lookers (only about 100 feet away) that the gull put up so little struggle, until it was observed that it was badly oiled (J. Lorrimer, P. Dobson).

Wintering MARSH HAWKS are rare, but at least 3 have been reported, 1 at Three Fathom Harbor Dec. 12 (D. Willis), 1 at Marion Bridge, Cape Breton, Jan. 9-10 (R. Cuyler) and 1 Feb. 4, at Glace Bay (S. MacLean). A very late OSPREY was seen at Conrad's Beach, Nov. 28 (E. Crathorne). The GYRFALCON seen at Conrad's Beach on the Halifax East Christmas Count should be noted. One PEREGRINE FALCON was seen by W.E. Whitehead at Round Hill, Feb. 8. Reports of both PIGEON HAWKS and SPARROW HAWKS, very unpopular at feeders, showed no unusual increase or decrease from last year.

RUFFED GROUSE and RING-NECKED PHEASANT were reported as rather more than usually plentiful in expectable habitat throughout the province. After a high wind on Jan. 24, a most surprising SPRUCE GROUSE showed up at Windsor Park, in the center of Halifax (Sergeant Forbes to W. Mills). A VIRGINIA RAIL is included in the Glace Bay region Christmas Count Dec. 27. An AMERICAN COOT was present in the Colliery Reservoir at Glace Bay Dec. 4-10 (F. Alward and others).

Real excitement was generated among bird watchers throughout the Maritime region by an invasion of LAPWINGS in January. The first hint of this reached us via Aaron Bagg, who wrote early in February asking if any had been sighted in Nova Scotia. The very next day, our first report came in from Murdock Digout of St. Peter's, Richmond County. He and several others had had a Lapwing under observation since Jan. 10 in that vicinity. Subsequently, 3 more Lapwings were reported in Nova Scotia, 2 seen Jan. 20 near Round Island, Mira Bay (reported to G. Spencer) and 1 heard Feb. 26 during the heavy snow storm, at Halifax (C. Helleiner). Dr. Helleiner had lived some years in England, and said the call was unmistakable. This brought the total to 26 Lapwings reported from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, the Province of Quebec, Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon. Doubtless other reports will

come in, possibly from Labrador, as time goes on, this having been the case in the previous invasion of Lapwings from England, in 1927. The birds are thought to have been caught up in a high wind, while en route from England to Ireland in search of food, and blown 2,000 miles across the Atlantic. They feed usually on bare pasture or plowed land, and it is to be feared none survived long after reaching the Maritimes. Should anyone hear of a surviving Lapwing, Air Canada has made a gallant offer to fly it back to England, compliments of the Company. Many thanks, Air Canada! Mr. Digout's bird froze to death, and is now part of Mrs. John Lunn's collection at the Fortress, Louisbourg.

We have one report of a KILLDEER, Mar. 6, at Cape Sable (B.J. Smith) and 2 of RUDDY TURNSTONES, one Dec. 30 (S. and B.J. Smith) and 11, Feb. 24 wintering again at Louisbourg (J. and G. Lunn). COMMON SNIPES and PURPLE SANDPIPERS have been present as expected. One last interesting report in this group should have gone in the last Newsletter. Three BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS got off course last fall, and were identified on Sept. 26 at Hartlan Point, Eastern Passage, Halifax Co. by Captain M. Anketell-Jones. According to Audubon Field Notes (Vol. 20, No. 1, Feb. 1966) 3 Buff-breasted Sandpipers were also seen in Maine and Massachusetts during Oct. and Nov., 1966.

The most startling report on gulls this year is the number of ICELAND GULLS recorded in 2 Cape Breton Christmas Counts - 742 from the Sydney-Glace Bay area and 127 from Boularderie, while Louisbourg reported only 12 and St. Peter's none. Whether or not these numbers are unusual for these localities will, we hope, be determined by further reports from the newly-formed Cape Breton group. BLACK-HEADED GULLS appeared in their customary select places at Glace Bay and Halifax, although in the latter area they seemed scarcer than usual. A few GLAUCOUS GULLS were seen as usual and DOVEKIES and the THICK-BILLED MURRE in coastal waters showed no special abundance or scarcity.

There seems little doubt that MOURNING DOVES are on the increase in the province, as regular observers report greater numbers each year. A lone male SNOWY OWL appeared near Wolfville on Dec. 29 (R.W. Tufts and W. Niely) as compared with 20 sightings in 1964-65. SAW-WHET OWLS were reported at Margaree Forks: (1) on Nov. 24 (A.J. Erskine) and at Chebogue (1) on Feb. 7 (M. Kenney). (Mist-netters noted quite a little flight of Saw-whet Owls south during the fall, according to a letter from Aaron Bagg.) A BELTED KINGFISHER wintered at Three-Fathom Harbor, Halifax Co. and was last seen Mar. 12 (S. Fullerton and B. Hinds).

PILEATED WOODPECKERS are reported in increasing numbers each year, but whether this indicates increasing numbers of this species or increasing numbers of bird-watchers, is hard to say. An immature RED-HEADED WOODPECKER seen at Indian Point, Lun. Co. on Nov. 1 (T.F.T. Morland) was the only rarity for the year in this family. HAIRY and DOWNY WOODPECKERS were included in about half of the feeder reports during the winter, patronizing suet bags. (In Evelyn Richardson's story in this Newsletter, some of the vicissitudes of maintaining a bird feeder are mentioned, respecting mammalian raiders. Mrs. Snyder of Italy Cross also had trouble with her suet feeder, which was emptied every day until she trapped not one, but two raccoons!) BLUE JAYS were mentioned in every feeder report this winter, and GRAY JAYS in about

half as many. Again, Wickerson Lent writes: "My Canada Jays are still around. I think that I wrote about them nesting here 2 years ago for the first time, and now we have a nice flock. When rabbit hunting I usually have at least 6 following me around, for when I shoot a rabbit I dress it out and give them the innards. I have had them eating from my hand." The COMMON CROW and the COMMON RAVEN still rate as the most often seen birds on winter field trips in most localities in Nova Scotia.

Observers report both species of Chickadees (BLACK-CAPPED and BOREAL) back to normal after the lean winter of 1964-65. WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES appeared at greater than usual numbers of feeders, while RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES showed no significant change. A WINTER WREN lived up to its name and spent the season on the edge of Dartmouth (J. Comer and S. Fullerton) and a LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN was seen at Pictou on Jan. 6 (E. Holdway). MOCKINGBIRDS appeared in 3 Christmas Counts and impartially over the province from Glace Bay to Yarmouth County. ROBINS, fantastically abundant during their fall migration, dwindled to their usual numbers as winter closed in. (In this connection, a note from R.S. Johnson mentioned that when he was at Coral Gables, Florida during the winter he had seen robins and warblers eating bread at a feeding station. He said he had had no luck in feeding robins previously, but planned to try fresh bread next winter.) One or more BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS appeared in Tusket, Yar. Co. on Dec. 27-28 (H. Hurlburt) and 3 in Halifax on Jan. 3 (S. Baird). NORTHERN SHRIKES appear to have staged an invasion in force this year. Three Christmas Counts reported 1 each, in addition to which there are 10 other sightings, all from the western half of the province. (According to A.C. Bent, when the English Sparrow was being introduced into this country and was consequently protected, men were employed on Boston Common to shoot Northern Shrikes. By his calculations, 6 shrikes each in 20 cities could account for 10,800 English Sparrows in 3 months. Would anyone care to start a shrike farm?)

Two extraordinary sightings of the BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER must be reported here, since they missed previous mention. One was on June 8, 1965, at New Germany (W. Noble, and one was Nov. 8-11, 1965 at Louisbourg (G. and J. Lunn).

Reports of MYRTLE WARBLERS show an increase of 100% this winter over 1964-65; 6 reports compared with 3 for last year. Milder winter or more bay-berries? A very late OVENBIRD was seen at Wolfville on Nov. 2 (W. Niely). Two YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS were reported: one at Dartmouth Nov. 15 (M. and E. Bishop) and one at Halifax Nov. 25 (M. Dumaresq). MEADOWLARK sightings are down this year - 4 on Cape Sable Nov. 25 (Smiths), 2 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. on Jan. 22 (B. Hinds) and 1 at Yarmouth Mar. 1 (Dr. V.K. Rideout). A small flock of RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS was seen in the Caspereau (King's Co.) area on Feb. 27 (W. Niely). The usual number of BALTIMORE ORIOLES was reported from Yarmouth to Sydney, from early November to Christmas Count time. Late RUSTY BLACKBIRD records are: a flock of 300 at New Germany on Nov. 22 (W. Noble), one Dec. 8 at Dartmouth (C.R.K. Allen), and 2 at Louisbourg Jan. 18-19 (G. Lunn).

Among grosbeaks and finches the biggest news is a male CARDINAL in song at Digby on Mar. 15 and 16 (L. Daley). A lone winter DICKCISSEL report is of one seen at Shelburne on Nov. 13 (Dr. Lewis's column in the "Shelburne Coastguard"). Records of EVENING GROSBEAKS have been spotty,

many feeder operators reporting that visits were sporadic and flocks small, while a few reported the usual numbers in faithful attendance. PURPLE FINCHES seem to have been relatively scarce this winter. Twenty-nine were reported from all the Christmas Counts and several at feeders in Yar. Co., but this was all. On the other hand, PINE GROSBEAKS, REDPOLLS, PINE SISKINS and GOLDFINCHES were reported somewhat more frequently than in 1964-65. CROSSBILLS were few, except on Brier Island (W. Lent), perhaps because of the cone failure. (An interesting note from Betty Topple of Dartmouth mentioned 14 Pine Grosbeaks feeding near her home on rhubarb leaves, dried up pea pods and beet tops. Evidently these birds are more resourceful than the Purple Finches and the White-winged Crossbills.)

Reports on wintering RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEES were scarcer than usual; at least one was seen in the vicinity of Yarmouth and Chebogue on Nov. 4 (V. Sollows and C. Higby). An IPSWICH SPARROW was seen at Cape Sable on Nov. 21 and Dec. 12 (Smiths). SAVANNAH SPARROWS were reported on 3 Christmas Counts, Wolfville leading with 22, trailed by Halifax East with 3 and Glace Bay-Sydney with 3. The latest report for this species is 2 at Chezzetcook on Feb. 6 (B. Hinds).

The GRASSHOPPER SPARROW seen at Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co. during the Halifax East Christmas Count period should receive special mention. It was identified in the field by Patrick Anketell-Jones, and subsequently collected, nearly frozen to death, by Lloyd Duncanson of the Museum staff. Robie Tufts has written: "I understand Mr. Anketell-Jones was the one who spotted it alive and told the others what he had seen. To him, if this be the case, I give great credit for his being able to identify so rare and non-self-identifying a species."

SLATE-COLORED JUNCOS were reported in normal numbers from widely-scattered points, and one OREGON JUNCO was observed at Martock, Hants Co. on Jan. 30 (J. Brayley). Reports on TREE SPARROWS, WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS, FOX SPARROWS and SONG SPARROWS did not vary significantly from other years, except that the Fox Sparrows were mentioned in almost all of the feeder reports received, for the first time. Only one winter report of LAPLAND LONGSPURS was received - 2 at Seaforth, Hfx. Co. on Feb. 5 (C.R.K. Allen). Two flocks of SNOW BUNTINGS spent most of the winter along the borders of the Bicentennial Drive in suburban Halifax, although what they found for food is anybody's guess!

A COLD SUNDAY IN DECEMBER

By J. S. Erskine

The night before, the thermometer had dropped to seven, but by afternoon it had risen to fifteen with a bright heatless sun and a light breeze from the north, a possible day for a walk but not too promising. Although thin snow covered the ground, young cattle were still in the pastures, economizing the scanty hay and water of a rainless summer.

A raven came flying low over the ridge, swaying like a small ship running along the swell. All at once an idea struck him and he wheeled, croaking loudly, to cross the spruce wood. During the last spring several pairs of crows had nested in that wood, and every evening two ravens, probably those whose nest was a mile along the ridge, had come sweeping up the slope, shouting notice of their arrival. The crows had risen in clamorous defence, though not fast enough to intercept the ravens, which swept on, croaking with a gurgle of amusement at the success of their baiting. None of our birds seem to share the raven's sense of fun. Many species, such as hawks and swallows, display their mastery of the air as part of their mating display, but the ravens love aerobatics for their own sake, and whole families go on coasting parties, gliding in single file into a rising current in order to be swept skyward, shouting joyously, and to slip down and do the turn again.

Juncoes were trickling through a thin windbreak of spruce, twittering softly and flashing white tailfeathers. A Junco winter is always welcome, but when the blizzards come and small grey bodies, pathetically light, are found in every corner of the barns, one could wish that they had gone farther south. The heart of the wood is empty, for this year boreal chickadees and red-breasted nuthatches are scarce and kinglets not common, and the black-capped chickadees are still finding food in the open, sometimes the blue-grey bayberries of the slopes. There had been many ruffed grouse when the hunting season opened, but now only a single line of cross-shaped tracks marred the snow. One heard only the thin whisper of the breeze in the spruce needles and the dry rustle of icy snow falling among the branches.

In the open blue jays were calling and a family of chickadees were talking in a clump of spruce. The marsh was silent, and for a time squeaks called forth no answer, and then a small sharp chirp and a wrenlike form flirted up into a willow tree, cocked its tail and turned to show a golden breast, an immature yellowthroat. This was the third that I had seen in different Decembers, and each sighting had been followed by a blizzard and no more yellowthroat. They are not built for these adventures. Myrtle warblers survive whole winters when the crop of bayberries is good, as it is this year, and in one mild winter palm warblers lasted through until spring, but even these run risks. One winter I could count on finding myrtles on a slope where the bushes were blue with bayberries, and then one day that slope was crackling like a rising bush-fire, and the illusion was continued by a flame of gold as a hundred evening grosbeaks rose on flash-

ing wings from among the shrubs. The next day the bushes had been stripped brown, and the myrtle warblers were gone. Probably a few in every species make the attempt to overwinter each year. Two years ago I met a yellow-bellied sapsucker hammering the frozen bark of an oak in early December. The majority repeat the patterns that have proved successful in the past; a minority diverge and usually perish, but in them is the seed of change.

Two weeks earlier there had been green-winged teal on the pond and snipe probing the mud of its banks, but today the ice was covered with noisy skaters. Only one robin remained in the orchard; the white-throated sparrows sifting through the underbrush, the fox sparrows whispering a thin parody of their tumbling spring song, these had all gone. Above the dyked land a swirl of crows clamoured around the pines beside the railway, and a red-tailed hawk disentangled himself from the confusion and flapped hurriedly away inland.

The tide was at its height, and the brown water was being whipped into white-capped wavelets by the breeze. A few herring gulls floated in the lee of the bank, and in the shelter of the dyke a larger flock of blackbacks sat waiting for the ebb. Twenty years ago it was exceptional to see a blackback on the river in winter. Downstream five black ducks rose from the salt marsh and wheeled away, the linings of their wings flashing silver. Somewhere larks were tinkling in the sky, but the breeze was so icy that eyes watered in the effort to pick them up. There are fewer small birds on the dyke than a few years ago. When the dykes were rebuilt after the neglect of wartime, oats were sown to hold the clay in place, and flocks of house sparrows spread out from the towns to harvest the grain. Since then they have kept up this autumnal visit and, more recently with the help of cowbirds, they soon exhaust this winter reserve of weed seed. The Savannah sparrows, snow buntings and lapland longspurs that used to monopolize the dyke in winter now must seek food elsewhere.

By the railway two brown birds flipped up, startled, and were joined by four more with long tails edged with white-mourning doves. The days of these adventurers, too, were numbered. Short legs and soft bills are not built to compete with snow, and they have been hunted so much that they dare not trust themselves to the charity of the towns.

Among the houses a clatter of sparrows and a single grackle were busy at a feeding table, and by a tall multiflora hedge a Bohemian waxwing was sitting on a branch. As I circled him to check his markings, a slim grey shadow with white-patched wings swooped down and drove him away, a mockingbird guarding his winter territory against intruders. There were few birds out today, but most of them were unexpectable.

BIRD WATCHING IN ENGLAND

By Barbara Hinds

Spring migration of birds northwards and people eastwards to Europe seems a timely moment to mention an excellent bird watching area in an unlikely sounding part of England.

The industrial city of Liverpool in Lancashire would seem to hold small promise of rich rewards for bird watchers. Yet it lies within 20 minutes by train or car from Hilbre Islands in Cheshire. Liverpool lies on the River Mersey banks. The Hilbre Islands lie in the River Dee, famed for salmon fishing in its upper reaches and celebrated in the poem, "Mary call the cattle home across the sands of Dee."

The islands are small. They lie green, verdant and inviting in the silting estuary of the river and are safely and easily approached by foot on a receding tide.

An active bird watching club has headquarters in West Kirby. West Kirby is the train stop and point of departure for watchers. The village itself is very attractive and once was a busy fishing port. Yachting is now its most popular sport, and some commercial shrimping is still carried on. There are plenty of hotels and cafes there. (A tea of potted shrimps and home made cakes will appeal after an excursion to the islands.)

Sir Wilfred Grenfell, the medical missionary to Newfoundland and Labrador was born nearby at Parkgate and went to the Tudor-looking school which dominates the seafront.

The walk over to the islands is pleasant, mostly on firm golden sand. The best route is to head for the landward end of the inner islet and then follow the track up the little cliff, along the turfy ridge to the seaward end of the outer island.

Do not be deterred by "Keep Off" notices. A bird watching station has been established in one of the few buildings on the outer island and visitors are likely to be shown the collection of birds taken in the area.

It is advisable to take food and drink if you propose staying the day. (The best time to go is early on a summer morning when high tide is around noon.) No refreshment is available on the island.

On a balmy summer day it can be a wonderful excursion. The rising waters drive flocks of oyster catchers, redshanks, green-shanks, sandpipers, plovers, curlews and gulls into close proximity.

The adjacent mudflats, which are pungent and avoided if you walk on the recommended route, provide rich feeding for the shore birds.

If the weather should turn poor, the bird watchers' observation station will probably provide shelter for travellers and

good conversation.

Anyone contemplating a business trip to England on the May Board of Trade flight, could combine it with a rewarding side journey to the Dee estuary. There are also extensive marshes on the river banks.

Trains leave from Liverpool's underground stations for West Kirby every 10 or 20 minutes. There are also bus services, but you would have to first cross the River Mersey by ferry boat and pick up the bus on the Cheshire side of the river.

The local secretary is J. C. Gittings, 17 Deva Road, West Kirby, Cheshire.



Seal Island

Sylvia Fullerton

REPORT ON THIRD SEAL ISLAND EXPEDITION

In mid-September, 1965, Dr. L. B. Macpherson and his group again carried out a migration study on Seal Island, Nova Scotia. This was the third in a series of fall trips to the island, the previous dates being August 21-31, 1963 and October 4-5, 1964.

As Dr. Macpherson pointed out in the Newsletter, November, 1963, Seal Island is the most south-westerly point in Nova Scotia, and serves as a last stopover for both land and water birds in migration. A glance at the following list of birds makes this obvious.

	29-31 Aug 1963	11-13 Sep 1965	4-5 Oct 1964
COMMON LOON	1	1	1
SOOTY SHEARWATER	-	-	1
GANNET	1	-	15
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	1	4	1
GREAT BLUE HERON	5	3	2
YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON	-	-	1
AMERICAN BITTERN	2	-	1
BLACK DUCK	1	12	-
PINTAIL	-	-	1
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	1	5	35
BLUE-WINGED TEAL	-	3	-
AMERICAN WIDGEON	-	-	1
COMMON EIDER	200	150	30
SCOTERS	-	50	-
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	-	15	3
COOPER'S HAWK	-	2	-
BALD EAGLE	-	1	-
MARSH HAWK	-	1	1
OSPREY	-	1	1
PEREGRINE FALCON	-	-	1
PIGEON HAWK	-	30	2
SPARROW HAWK	-	6	-
VIRGINIA RAIL	1	-	-
SORA	-	-	3
SEMIPALMATED PLOVER	250	10	8
KILLDEER	-	1	-
Am. GOLDEN PLOVER	2	-	1
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER	50	2	-
RUDDY TURNSTONE	100	-	-
AMERICAN WOODCOCK	-	1	-
COMMON SNIFE	-	1	15
WHIMBREL	2	1	-
SPOTTED SANDPIPER	50	5	1
SOLITARY SANDPIPER	2	2	-
GREATER YELLOWLEGS	100	11	11

LESSER YELLOWLEGS	10	-	-
KNOT	3	-	-
PECTORAL SANDPIPER	-	1	-
WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER	4	1	-
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER	-	1	-
LEAST SANDPIPER	250	1	-
DUNLIN	1	-	-
SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER	2	3	-
SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER	1000	50	-
HUDSONIAN GODWIT	1	2	-
RUFF	1	-	-
SANDERLING	100	7	-
RED PHALAROPE	200	-	2
NORTHERN PHALAROPE	200	-	2
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL	100	300	300
HERRING GULL	3000	2000	500
RING-BILLED GULL	-	-	3
ARCTIC OR COMMON TERN	10	1	-
ALCIDS	-	2	-
BLACK GUILLENOT	1	-	-
MOURNING DOVE	-	4	10
YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	-	-	3
BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO	2	1	10
CHIMNEY SWIFT	-	2	-
RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD	10	5	-
BELTED KINGFISHER	1	5	2
YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER	5	100	100
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER	-	-	2
HAIRY WOODPECKER	-	-	1
DOWNY WOODPECKER	8	1	3
BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER	-	-	1
EASTERN KINGBIRD	5	-	-
EASTERN PHOEBE	1	-	-
YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER	1	3*	-
WOOD PEWEE	2	2	-
OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER	1	2	-
HORNED LARK	-	-	2
TREE SWALLOW	-	3	-
BARN SWALLOW	-	3	-
BLUE JAY	-	-	5
COMMON RAVEN	1	7	2
COMMON CROW	10	20	25
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	1	-	-
BOREAL CHICKADEE	100	20	3
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	50	10*	-
BROWN CREEPER	10	1	5
WINTER WREN	2	-	-
. . . MARSH WREN	-	-	1
CATBIRD	1	3*	1
BROWN THRASHER	-	2	10
ROBIN	10	10*	-
SWAINSON'S THRUSH	-	1*	-
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	100	8	-
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	5	3	-
WATER PIPIT	1	-	15

CEDAR WAXWING	2	40*	3
STARLING	25	15	25
SOLITARY VIREO	-	3	2
RED-EYED VIREO	-	3*	1
BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER	-	5	1
NASHVILLE WARBLER	1	1	-
PARULA WARBLER	-	1	-
YELLOW WARBLER	5	4*	-
MAGNOLIA WARBLER	-	5*	-
CAPE MAY WARBLER	-	4*	-
MYRTLE WARBLER	50	20*	5
BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER	-	5	4
BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER	2	3	2
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER	1	-	-
BAY-BREASTED WARBLER	2	2	2
BLACKPOLL WARBLER	2	2	1
PALM WARBLER	1	2	1000
OVENBIRD	1	1*	1
NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH	3	6	1
YELLOWTHROAT	100	10	10
YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT	-	1	1
AM. REDSTART	50	2	3
BOBOLINK	3	15	5
EASTERN MEADOWLARK	-	-	3
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	-	2	-
BALTIMORE ORIOLE	7	50*	-
RUSTY BLACKBIRD	-	2	10
COMMON GRACKLE	-	4	-
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	4	3	-
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBILL	-	3*	-
INDIGO BUNTING	-	-	3
DICKCISSEL	5	-	-
PURPLE FINCH	-	6*	-
AM. GOLDFINCH	-	50	-
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL	2	-	-
RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE	-	-	15
SAVANNAH SPARROW	500	50	12
GRASSHOPPER SPARROW	-	-	1
SHARP-TAILED SPARROW	-	-	1
VESPER SPARROW	-	-	2
LARK SPARROW	3	-	5
SLATE-COLORED JUNCO	300	15*	25
CHIPPING SPARROW	-	1*	10
FIELD SPARROW	-	-	4
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	-	1	5

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	25	5*	5
FOX SPARROW	-	1	-
LINCOLN'S SPARROW	-	2*	-
SWAMP SPARROW	-	1	3
SONG SPARROW	500	100*	50

SPECIES IDENTIFIED EACH YEAR	79	98	78
TOTAL SPECIES, THREE YEARS		140	
SPECIES SEEN ALL THREE YEARS		35	

* ONE OR MORE OF THESE SPECIES BANDED.

It will be observed that in the above lists, the largest numbers of individuals, particularly among the shore birds, were seen during the August count, but the largest number of species were seen in September. It is tempting to make generalizations from this, and other features of the data, but it must be borne in mind that the weather and visibility were better during the September trip, and a larger party combed the Island. Further observations will be necessary to confirm these departure dates, and the use of this route from year to year by the birds so far noted.

In many respects Seal Island has been studied more thoroughly than most parts of the Province. It has attracted attention and comment since the days of Samuel Champlain, who first named it (Ile au Loups Marins). J. S. Erskine has described its geology and plant life in his study of the Tusket Islands, published in the Proceedings of the Nova Scotian Institute of Science (Vol. 24, 1956-57).

As early as 1884 Reverend J. Hibbert Langille described the birds resident on Seal Island in his book *Our Birds in Their Haunts*. But the value of the island, because of its strategic position, for migration studies, has been neglected up to now.

Dr. Macpherson hopes to continue his fall observations, and conduct other parties to Seal Island. This he is enabled to do through the kindness and courtesy of Mrs. Winifred Hamilton, owner of the island. Mrs. Hamilton still lives there, as her family has done, for many years. Her generous hospitality and sympathetic interest have made these expeditions particularly enjoyable for the members of the group, who have been given the freedom of her domain. Mrs. Hamilton's father was, among many other things, an ornithologist, and was instrumental in protecting the island birds against slaughter by trespassing hunters.

NOT STRICTLY FOR THE BIRDS

By A. J. Erskine

On the morning of 22 July 1965 my father and I clambered down into the fishing boat that was to take us to Margaree Island. This island, a low whale-back of sandstone about a mile long, lying three miles off Cape Breton Island, had intrigued me ever since I first looked down the coast from Margaree Harbor. Besides the lure of exploration held out by many offshore islands, this one had the added interest that to my knowledge no ornithologist had visited it in summer, so I had long planned a visit there. Dad had visited most of Nova Scotia's offshore islands, from St. Paul to Seal Island, from Sable to Isle Haute, but this one was new to him too as we set out from Broad Cove Marsh.

Over the sea the sky was clear, but a sharply-defined cloud front lay along the shore, slowly inching away to the east as the day wore on. A few terns beat leisurely around the cove, and gulls sailed over the northern headland. Among them a group of darker birds set their wings and started scaling slowly down against the southerly wind. The binoculars showed them to be Whimbrel, and soon they were down on the point, walking briskly among the grass, perhaps searching for grasshoppers. The din of the boat's engine drowned out any other sound as we pulled away from the shore.

Nova Scotia's inshore waters hold few sea-birds in summer, and we saw little during the 40-minute run to the island. A few Black Guillemots bobbed over the swell or took to the air, whirring inadequate-looking wings with striking white patches; and distant cormorants flapped briskly toward the island. Soon we were coming in to the slipway, where lobstermen haul up their gear, beside the shattered fragments of the old wharf. Here, in crannies near the top of the 30-foot cliff, the guillemots had nested, and now were carrying up beakfuls of fish, and plunging back down over the wharf. The island looked much bigger from close up, and higher too, with cliffs all round. The eastern, shoreward cliffs were topped by low spruces, but south from the dock a track ran up past the fish sheds towards the heath-covered southern tip. We left our gear in the grass by the last shed and started up the track.

Dad's object was to list the plants of the island, and mine was to note the birds, particularly those that might be breeding, so we were both soon busy with notebooks. Each pointed out things that the other might have missed, as we strolled along to the end of the island. The ground was carpeted with crowberry and creeping juniper, wind-cheating shrubs that hug the exposed shores around the Gulf, and here and there among the prostrate greenery were tern nests. A few still held eggs, but most had young more than half-grown. (So taken up was I with the enjoyment of exploration that it was several days later before it occurred to me that I had missed a good opportunity to band the young terns!) The young were still too small for certain identification, but all the adults overhead seemed to be Common Terns. The colony, if the scattered nests warrant such a designation, probably numbered no more than 50-60 pairs. It stretched around the southern tip of

the island and perhaps one-third of the way north along the western shore. The grassy and heath-covered slopes fell steeply away to low, sandstone cliffs, below which cormorants sunned themselves on the rocks. These were all European (Great) Cormorants, the common species of the northern coasts of Cape Breton Island, and farther north on the outer shore we found their colony. The nests were often under overhanging parts of the cliffs, which here were up to 50 feet high. We could see into two assemblages of nests each including ten or a dozen nests. Even this late in the season, there were eggs in some nests, but others had young up to half-grown. Probably breeding at this colony is delayed by lobster-trapping around the island, as by the time of our visit an undisturbed colony should have had young nearly ready to fly. Away to the north, and just barely visible, was the low outline of Cheticamp Island, home of the next northward cormorant colony, while to the south there is said to be a colony on the steep slopes near Sight Point. Colonies on the west shore of Cape Breton Island are about 20 miles apart, and only 30 miles of sea separate Sight Point from the colony at East Point of Prince Edward Island.

As we moved along the outer slope of the island gulls shrilled louder overhead, but we did not come upon their young until near the northern tip. Most of those overhead were Herring Gulls, but all the young that we found were definitely Great Black-backs. These were on the verge of flight, and one took wing from a projecting ledge as we approached. Though flapping vigorously it descended gradually towards the sea, and was finally forced down by a swooping Herring Gull, which did not follow up the attack, however. We herded another large and active gull chick into a corner to be photographed, but most were already hiding in nooks under clay banks and stunted spruces. The only nest sites we found were on top of the spruce clumps, which were so wind-cropped and compressed that one could walk on top of them. I noted only 17 chicks, and I doubt if there were more than 20-30 pairs of Black-backs nesting on the island.

The cliff-top along the western side was bare ground, perhaps washed clear by winter storms or trodden by gulls. Here and there subsidences had left clay banks, up to 10 feet high, set back some yards from the cliff, and here we found Bank Swallow holes. Most young swallows had probably left the nest by then, and only two or three birds were seen to enter or leave the burrows.

Along this stretch we saw few land birds. Savannah Sparrows flitted from the grass, and Song Sparrows sang from the shrubs. One flock of Whimbrel, 35 or so, flew up from the crowberry near the southern point and disappeared over the shoulder of the island, not to be seen again. As we turned back along the wooded, eastern slope, we hoped for more land birds, and for woodland plants too. My father's list was steadily growing. Already he had found star-flowers, stunted almost beyond recognition, far out on the heathland, a suggestion that once woods had covered more of the island. The eastern cliffs were birdless, except for a few Black Guillemots, so we concentrated on the woods. Even there we found little variety, as Song Sparrows seemed to have filled all the sparrow niches except that of the grassland Savannah Sparrow. We found no juncoes at all, and only two White-throated Sparrows, down in the

tallest (12-15') spruces by the trail back to the dock. There seemed to be no springs or other wet areas on top of the island, but a few Spotted Sandpipers did not seem out of place even without a shore. A Flicker was the only woodpecker, and it might have come across from the mainland to feed on the numerous ants, as there were no trees obviously suitable for nesting. Starlings were scattered around the island, but they may well be part of the cliff community here as at Cheticamp Island. They would find nowhere else suitable for nesting on this island, except perhaps in the buildings. Barn Swallows flitted around the sheds and may have nested there, though we saw no nests. There were a couple of Robins, and we saw an Olive-backed (Swainson's) Thrush. Boreal Chickadees too were expectable in the spruces, but we looked in vain for Golden-crowned Kinglets. The only warblers we saw were 3 Magnolias, a Myrtle, and two Yellowthroats. Warbler song had about ceased by then, and the middle of the day is not the best time to hear it anyway, but the habitat would not attract or hold many warbler species. The only blackbirds were Grackles, a likely breeding species in the low spruces.

Our bird list numbered 22 species in all, of which only the Whimbrel was undoubtedly transient. Considering the few habitats, the variety of birds was not unreasonably small. Dad found about 76 species of plants, shrubs and trees, also quite predictable. As one goes from a continent to a peninsula to a large island to a small island, one can expect the variety of birds and plants to decrease, both from lack of opportunity to colonize and from lack of habitats to accommodate the forms that do reach the more distant areas.

This was, of course, no untouched isle. Some people make it a base for fishing, and the Department of Transport maintains a light there to aid navigation on the Gulf. Man's activities there may disturb the breeding cormorants, but their buildings are probably responsible for Barn Swallows occurring on the island. Many of the plants Dad found were the commonest weeds, now found on every roadside and waste plot in North America and even on this lonely rock, though surely introduced from the Old World.

We gathered up our belongings and clambered down the trail, where fishermen were hauling up loads of lobster pots from the dock with a tractor. As we boarded the boat and the engine struck up its yammering roar, we looked back to the receding cliffs with the thought that no longer would this island hold for us quite the fascination of an unexplored isle. But though we ourselves might seem to have been mainly concerned with reducing the flora and fauna of the island to lists in a notebook or points on a distribution map, we chiefly remember that trip as a most agreeable day in the open, with pleasant surroundings, good company, and perfect weather. With such a memory, Margaree Island is not "strictly for the birds".

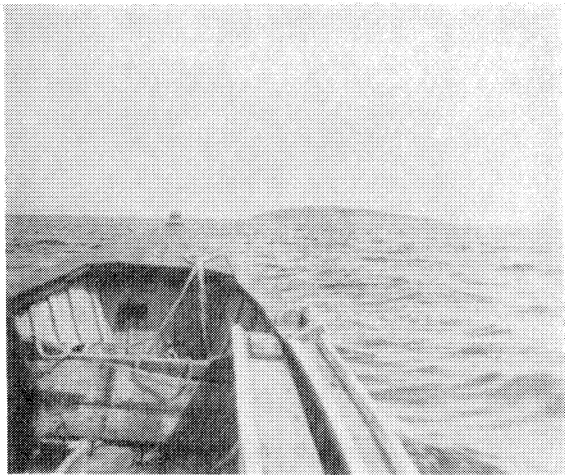


Plate 1. Approaching Margaree Island from the southeast - "a low whale-back of sandstone". (p.1)

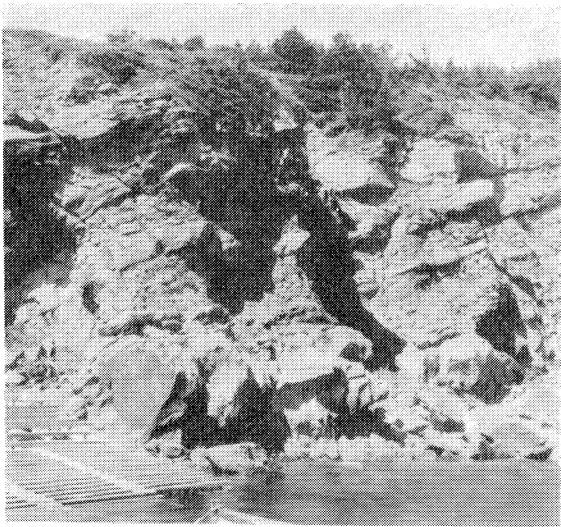


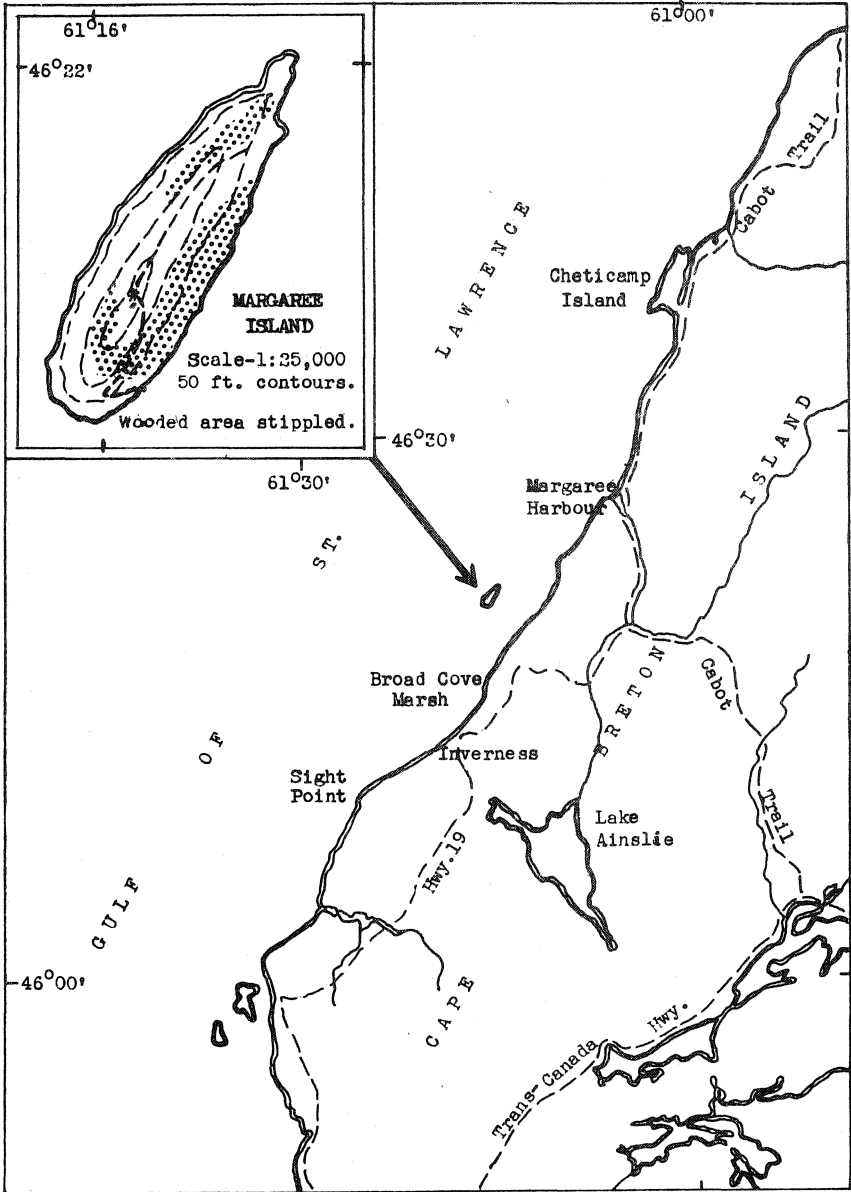
Plate 2. Cliffs above the slipway, Margaree Island - "here the (Black) Guillemots were nesting" (p.1)



Plate 3. Young Common Tern, Margaree Island -
"among the prostrate greenery were
tern nests... (with) young more than
half-grown" (p.1)



Plate 4. J.S. Erskine on seaward slope of
Margaree Island - "the grassy...
slopes fell steeply away to low
...cliffs" (p.2)



Birds seen on visit to Margaree Island, Inverness Co.,
Nova Scotia, 22 July 1965, by A. J. Erskine and J. S. Erskine.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Suggested Status</u>	<u>No. Noted</u>
Great Cormorant (<u>Phalacrocorax carbo</u>)	Breeding	45
Whimbrel (<u>Numenius phaeopus</u>)	Transient	37
Spotted Sandpiper (<u>Actitis macularia</u>)	Breeding (?)	3
Great Black-backed Gull (<u>Larus marinus</u>)	Breeding	20
Herring Gull (<u>Larus argentatus</u>)	Breeding (?)	125
Common Tern (<u>Sterna hirundo</u>)	Breeding	60
Black Guillemot (<u>Cepphus gyrlle</u>)	Breeding	5
Yellow-shafted Flicker (<u>Colaptes auratus</u>)	Summer Visitant (?)	1
Bank Swallow (<u>Riparia riparia</u>)	Breeding	30
Barn Swallow (<u>Hirundo rustica</u>)	Breeding (?)	2
Boreal Chickadee (<u>Parus hudsonicus</u>)	Breeding (?)	3
Robin (<u>Turdus migratorius</u>)	Breeding (?)	2
Swainson's Thrush (<u>Hylocichla ustulata</u>)	Breeding (?)	1
Starling (<u>Sturnus vulgaris</u>)	Breeding (?)	15
Magnolia Warbler (<u>Dendroica magnolia</u>)	Breeding (?)	3
Myrtle Warbler (<u>Dendroica coronata</u>)	Breeding (?)	1
Yellowthroat (<u>Geothlypis trichas</u>)	Breeding (?)	2
Common Grackle (<u>Quiscalus quiscula</u>)	Breeding (?)	9
Savannah Sparrow (<u>Passercus sandwichensis</u>)	Breeding (?)	25
White-throated Sparrow (<u>Zonotrichia albicollis</u>)	Breeding (?)	2
Song Sparrow (<u>Melospiza melodia</u>)	Breeding (?)	25

N.B. Godfrey (Can. Field-Nat., 72:7-27, 1958) noted that V.E. Gould collected one of 30 Common Eiders (Somateria mollissima) seen near Sea Wolf Island (Margaree Island) on 11 October 1935. No other species was mentioned for this locality.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

Our Christmas Counts here were quite successful. All the major counts set new records for numbers of species seen, although there were few large numbers of birds. Saint John got a record 54 species (including the Rock Dove). A Green-winged Teal, Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher and Swamp Sparrow were the most interesting. Actually, Fredericton had the bird, a Varied Thrush, present since November. Moncton had one Bohemian Waxwing. The Gray Jay, Pine Grosbeak and Redpoll were the species with more than usual numbers. Besides the Varied Thrush, Lapwings have caused a stir here recently. Henrik Deichman saw one at Belledune, Gloucester Co., Jan. 18-19, and several people have seen two at Red Head, St. John Co., Jan. 21 to at least Feb. 6. Have any showed up in your province?

Incidentally, how is the Goshawk and Red-tailed Hawk situation in N.S.? I have seen at least 8 of the former species and 5 of the latter this winter - this is unusual.

DAVID CHRISTIE

Alma, New Brunswick

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

It seems that I am the only member of the Nova Scotia Bird Society residing in Alberta at the present time. I thought you might be interested in the figures of the Bird Count in the Calgary area in December. The total was 15,857 individuals of 29 different species. The rarest was a Raven; the most plentiful, Bohemian Waxwings (4,380). They have come to the city in great numbers during the six weeks of extremely cold weather to eat the berries of the Mountain Ash.

MING HART

Calgary, Alberta
(Rec'd Jan., 1965, too late for publication)

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

It was interesting to read the various accounts of the birds you have in Nova Scotia, many of which, of course, are seen across Canada. In fact, of the 57 species identified on your last Christmas Census, 34 are common to the Victoria district also.

I thought you might find our Christmas Count of equal interest. It was held on January 2nd.

Our fifteen-mile diameter circle contains many miles of sea front, woods, farmlands, and the city area, and it is divided into twelve areas,

covered by 54 observers. Snow had been falling intermittently for the previous week, and on the day of the count it fell most of the time. We are not accustomed to much snow here, our winters being generally mild and wet, but the enthusiasm of the observers enabled them to record 124 species, with an additional 7 for the period. Some of the highlights were the thousands of ducks in the flooded fields; widgeon, 8244; mallard, 4268; pintail, 595; and green-winged teal, 890. The 41 whistling swans which came our way this year, the 4943 robins, and the 947 varied thrush were outstanding. The astonishing estimate of skylarks was 969. Aleutian (rock) sandpipers, surf birds, black oyster catchers, dunlin and black-bellied plover were seen on the nearly snow free edge of the tide.

At the end of the day the participants met at the house of one of the leaders. There, on the wall, was a large chart, with every possible bird given a space, and as the lists were brought in and entered on the chart the excitement grew intense. We had expected, owing to the weather conditions, a possible total of 100, or even less, but as the chart was gradually filled up it became evident we would exceed this. Refreshments were passed around, but most of us were too intent on the bird roll call to eat, and only when it was finally announced that the total was 124, equal to last year, could we relax. This is written to let our Atlantic friends know that we too consider birding to be the finest of outdoor hobbies.

A.R. DAVIDSON

Victoria, B.C.

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

Mrs. Carmichael and I saw a very good demonstration of crows plaguing a Great Horned Owl at Kinsac Lake, Halifax Co., about noon on Saturday, Sept. 25, 1965. We heard a commotion on the other side of the lake and saw half a dozen crows diving at something, and after considerable searching, noticed the owl sitting on a rock at the edge of the lake. The camouflage was perfect; it looked exactly like an old stump and if it hadn't raised its head as the crows went over, and showed its white throat, we would never have noticed it.

We rowed over so close to it that the crows left, and had a wonderful view - it was a beautiful specimen, the colours were very bright. It watched us intently for some time and then flew up near the top of a tree. While it was there, a raven flew over, and then landed in the same tree; however, the owl flew at it hissing, and it left quickly.

We watched it until it appeared to be settled for the day, but when we looked for it again a few hours later, it had gone.

ETHEL CRATHORNE

Dartmouth, N.S.

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

A white-headed Robin was first sighted at Bridgetown on the afternoon of October 28, 1965, at 2 o'clock. It was observed off and on until 4 o'clock, as it hopped about and fed. The bird appeared to stay away from other birds. It sat very erect and still, and settled down in places where it was very difficult to see. The bird had a very white head, the white extending down to the shoulders, under the wings, down, and across the tail. In the white on the head there were angled black stripes, and the back was gray in appearance.

The breast was also lighter in colour.

Bridgetown, N.S.

TERRANCE A. HYSON

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

Now since last November a resident of my native Sweden, it comes to my mind when reading Mrs. MacRae's letter in the November Newsletter that we had a completely white Robin around my home in West Bay, Inverness Co. (35 miles from Baddeck "as the Robins fly") last summer.

It was first observed on August 13 and stayed around for about one week but was not seen later. Maybe due to his light color he became the prey of the Goshawk that we saw zooming across from time to time.

JOHN WESLIEN

Säffle, Sweden

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

I get a great deal of pleasure and relaxation in photographing birds and also recording their songs. I use a Pentax 35 mm. reflex camera with a 135 mm. telephoto lens, also an electronic flash, regardless of the lighting. I record the song of the bird to be photographed, and then play back the song so the bird can hear it. In this way I got very close shots of a Hermit Thrush. The Song Sparrow also provided me with a great many variations of his song. The Meadowlark (last year, 1964) was very saucy after I recorded his song. I played it back and he came up to within 25 feet of my equipment. He also has two or three variations. Unfortunately I had no camera at the time.

This spring I photographed the first egg and then the four eggs of the Killdeer in a mill yard. After the eggs hatched I got a couple of shots of the four little ones. The flash was back in the car, so the pictures are not as good as I prefer them. The Killdeer has been nesting in this spot for the last few years.

I use a portable Uher tape recorder and a homemade dish reflector for gathering the songs into the mike. One recording of the Bobolink was made at over 400 yards. Others, like the Yellowthroat, were about 25 yards away. A good photograph of this one was obtained by playing it back.

I am enclosing a photo of a Downy Woodpecker that visited my suet many times.

DONALD M. BOWLEY

Middleton, N.S.

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

Just wanted to report that I have had a male Towhee at my cottage since Sunday morning (October, 1965). Manage to see about one a year. Hope he stays. His colors are very sharp for this time of year, I would think.

I had my cottage rented to some folks in the summer and two men were out on the lake fishing for small mouth bass. They fished for hours with no luck. Then all of a sudden a gull flies over and drops a live bass into the boat! Were they ever surprised! The cottage is on a fresh water lake but the Bay of Fundy is just over the hill and we get a lot of gulls on one end of the lake where it is shallow.

Then just recently I had some fruit and nut squares which had gotten extremely hard. I couldn't cut them with a knife, so put them out for the birds as they were. Along came a Canada Jay. He picked and picked at one until he got it on or into his beak somehow, and took off. About 6 feet in the air he dropped it and caught it with his feet and kept on going. Pretty clever birds we have in this part of the country!

ELIZABETH STUBBERT

Yarmouth, N.S.



Downy Woodpecker

Donald M. Bowlby

MAINLAND BIRD WATCHING

By Evelyn Richardson

When the time came for my husband to retire, we picked a mainland spot suitable for islanders, although bird watching possibilities didn't consciously affect our choice. Actually, the similarities between our present home and Bon Portage are qualified ones, in bird watching, as in all else. Instead of six or seven hundred sea-fenced acres, we now have six and one-half, with the whole Nova Scotia peninsula over which birds can spread, adjoining them. Small coves run in on either side of our point, but these are part of sheltered Barrington Bay, not of the open sea. Storms meet first the outer beaches and islands, and any birds their winds may have carried astray drop to earth before they come this far, so that even a hurricane lacks the exciting possibility of exotic strays. After the island's unbroken winds, we treasure the sheltering trees here, but these frustrate my island habits. On Bon Portage most birds moved among the outer edges of low, matted evergreen growth; here a bird in one of the tall open spruces is apt to flit to a hidden branch before I can get my binoculars up!

Many species that I knew well, I now see not at all. Our point is a ridge and lacks anything like a Savannah while the old homestead's fields have grown up in wild apple trees and bushes; therefore, I never see the flocks of Snow Buntings and Horned Larks that drifted across the frozen swamps and open fields of Bon Portage. As I write this, February 14, the Brant are doubtless at the Salt Water Pond, and diving ducks are sporting in the lee of the lighthouse point. Here I have seen seven Black Ducks on the ice-edge off shore, and in mid-March last year 150-200 Greater Scaups swam leisurely about, close enough for me to watch with binoculars. In May, three Red-breasted Mergansers played about the cove for a week. During my first summer here, three Common Loons swam the adjacent waters, and in the spring of 1965 I again saw three loons; but these left, or were destroyed, before summer arrived. (The happy noises of our grandsons and the neighbouring children who swam with them may have discouraged loons from what has been for many years an unpeopled shore.)

Foggy nights are empty without Petrels, and I would give much to hear their weird cries and see them ghosting across the light beams.

More shorebirds might visit our rocky shore if there were not so many excellent outer beaches. Three or four Dowitchers feed along the cove margins, and almost always a Great Blue Heron stands somewhere along tide-line. Most Bon Portage winters saw a solitary Great Blue Heron which had not joined the general move south, and last January 13th, a similar individual flew across this point. In October, 1964, following a storm, I entered my first "rare" in my mainland notebook - a Yellow-crowned Night Heron, disconsolately perched on a rock near shore. After a spring rain I found one Pectoral Sandpiper in a little mud-puddle beside our mail-box. Each summer, a few Spotted Sandpipers call from the shore and during our first spring here one nested and hatched young on our land.

Several pairs of Willets nest in the area; their flashing wings and incessant calls are part of our summer evenings. I was delighted when Morrill found a Willet's nest (last May 16th), with one egg, among the bayberry bushes lining a shore path. By May 21st there were four speckled eggs - surprisingly large, we thought. From then on the mother sat close on her nest; only her frightened eyes moved, the few times when I parted the bushes. On May 25th, I saw two egg shells on the path and found the nest empty, the mother gone. The shells had been picked on one side - we suspected a crow rather than a cat, squirrel or child.

I can't honestly say I miss the gulls for, despite their beauty in flight, they had become a considerable nuisance on Bon Portage. There are usually three or four in sight above the Bay and sizeable flocks sometimes pass over on their way to feast at the fish-meal plant a mile or so inland. These are mostly Herring Gulls, though a few Black-backs accompany them; they are always too high for me to tell if any are unusual, like the occasional Ring-billed, Laughing and Bonaparte's I saw on the island.

A few Song Sparrows are here during spring, summer and fall, but none stay to cheer my winter days. Understandably, we see no Savannah, Swamp or Sharp-tailed Sparrows and none of the rarer Lark and Field species. One White-crowned Sparrow was among a flock of White-throated, which are as numerous here as on Bon Portage - and very musical neighbours they are.

I'm surprised not to have even one Nuthatch among our trees.

Migrating Warblers pass through in small numbers, and a few of the commoner species nest here, but I never see the large flocks, nor the variety of species which were among the greatest pleasures of island bird watching.

And my Barn Swallows! Last spring and summer I saw three or four only, complete strangers, hurrying by overhead and uninterested in people who own no barns and old sheds and haven't a nest site to offer. Tree Swallows were somewhat more numerous and I hope this spring Morrill can find time to put up my birdhouse, and that we may have at least one pair of tenants.

Several Crows visit the garden, but of course I never see the large flocks which blackened the island's winter skies. Though I do not like Ravens, I could not but welcome the two which (last February 27th) were performing their light-hearted aerial acrobatics and uttering their spring cries high in the clear sky. I happily note only a few Starlings (knock on wood!) and no more than the few English Sparrows of Bon Portage. (However, driving through the village we see large flocks about lawns and feeders, and knocking on wood again is probably in order.) We have fewer Grackles and Cowbirds here, 20 Grackles and 6 Cowbirds last fall being my records. No Redwinged Blackbirds.

Last winter 12-15 Golden-crowned Kinglets visited our trees. I often heard them before a bright February sun brought them to the outer branches and into view. These were more than I usually saw on Bon Portage. In March, 20 White-winged Crossbills, with

at least three Red Crossbills, spent two days among our old apple trees near the house. This was one instance when our present home had advantages - I could watch them from the window and hear their songs when I stepped outdoors, whereas on Bon Portage I would see them only on a noon walk, and I never heard them sing.

I believe we see more Robins than on the island and many nest here. On October 14th, 1965, a flock of 400-500 flew over, more than I had ever seen together. Fully as many flickers visited us last spring as we ever saw. Juncoes, too, are plentiful, and friendly, although no large migratory flocks pause here.

Of the rarer Bon Portage species, I have recorded here a Veery, a Baltimore Oriole, a Wood Thrush and an Oregon Junco.

Then there are birds which I seldom, or never, saw on the island, and which I now enjoy: a Belted Kingfisher with ragged crest and long strong bill, rattling away from a tree near the cove, or darting down to skim the water; a nesting Hermit Thrush whose mellow runs come from our neighbour's trees and which visits our garden; Bluejays whose vivid coats against snow or conifer-green are beauty itself. At least one pair of Ruffed Grouse nest on our land; each spring I have seen six little ones scurrying through the grass and, later, on practice flights across the path. Each winter a few have occasionally come to the garden, and they beat through the driveway trees when we startle them. Last November 2nd, 15 Evening Grosbeaks visited the apple tree next to my feeder. I had no suitable food out and they didn't tarry, but I should be better prepared next fall.

One great advantage to mainland bird watching - I can have a feeder in view from my kitchen window. This feeder was given to me when I first became a bird watcher, but island storms were too much for it, while the house-yard there was too exposed for winter birds to frequent. It swings with the wind so that the open front is always in the lee and it is seldom without a visitor once fall weather worsens - not that a great variety of birds, or great numbers, use it, but I feel a close companionship with those which come to it regularly. The small visitors are mostly Juncoes, Black-capped Chickadees, Myrtle Warblers and a few White-throated Sparrows. Twice this winter, after storms, A Boreal Chickadee fed there, although Dr. Lewis tells me this species does not ordinarily visit feeders. In the winter of 1964-65, I had as many as 18 Myrtle Warblers; this winter the greatest number has been 8. (Dry 1965 meant bayberries are in short supply; perhaps fewer Myrtles wintered on this coast.)

We buy our beef by the quarter and have a goodly supply of suet put through the grinder for bird food. During the first winter here I put out a poultry mixture of grains, but found most of this was untouched; I now put out suet crumbs, table scraps and oatmeal.

Though the wind here offers no hazard, other feeding problems soon appeared. I liked to fill lobster-bait bags with chunks of meat and suet and tie them in the apple tree branches, then watch

the Chickadees and Myrtle Warblers clinging to the strings while they pecked with relish between the meshes. Bluejays, too, managed to cling and feed. But Crows, in the early dawn before we were stirring to frighten them away, tore the bags to bits or managed to work them free and carry them off. I put out bigger (onion) bags and tied them more securely. When a depth of snow was down, a huge dog found he could leap high enough to grab these and break the ties. I now have an onion-bag of suet pieces on my pulley line under my kitchen window, out of reach for all but the Chickadees and Myrtles which are a pleasure to watch as they flutter and cling and feed, four or five at a time, while others perch on the line awaiting their turn. A half-starved cat learned to crawl along an apple tree branch, drop to the feeder's top and then squirm inside, offering a great danger to winged visitors. Branches had to be shortened. A red squirrel also comes regularly to the feeder, but there is ample food for all and I have not considered denying him a share. (There was not a single squirrel on Bon Portage, and during my first weeks on the mainland a chatter in the trees would stop me short - "What kind of a bird is that?")

Last November 2nd Fox Sparrows visited the feeder for several days, and 2 Robins still appear intermittently to find tidbits on the ground beneath the feeder, and occasionally to enter the feeder itself. Four or five Bluejays, and the same number of Gray Jays, attended it until mid-winter, but I seldom see one now. By last March 3rd, only 3 Myrtle Warblers were coming for food and soon after that the feeder was deserted (although on March 23rd, a large flock of passing White-throated Sparrows made good use of it). During mild spells like the present one, the birds mostly forage further afield, and I suppose my enjoyment of the feeding birds is nearing its end for this season. But soon I shall be watching for the first spring migrants, and even a single bird (of most species) can be a delight - one of the most beautiful things Nature offers, either on island or mainland.

Living Island, by Evelyn Richardson, is a simple narrative of life on a small island, day by day, season by season; but it is much more than that. It is a prose poem, where both atmosphere and episode are brought so vividly into focus that they become actual experience.

If you like salt air and the sound of surf; strolling along the shore and scrambling over pebble ridges; watching birds and wondering about wild flowers - in short, if you are a true Nova Scotian, you must read Living Island.

Evelyn Richardson is a member of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, and has made many valuable contributions to the columns of the Newsletter. Her latest book, Living Island, is published by the Ryerson Press. The book is dedicated to Dr. Harrison Lewis, who, Mrs. Richardson says, introduced her to bird watching eleven years ago.

