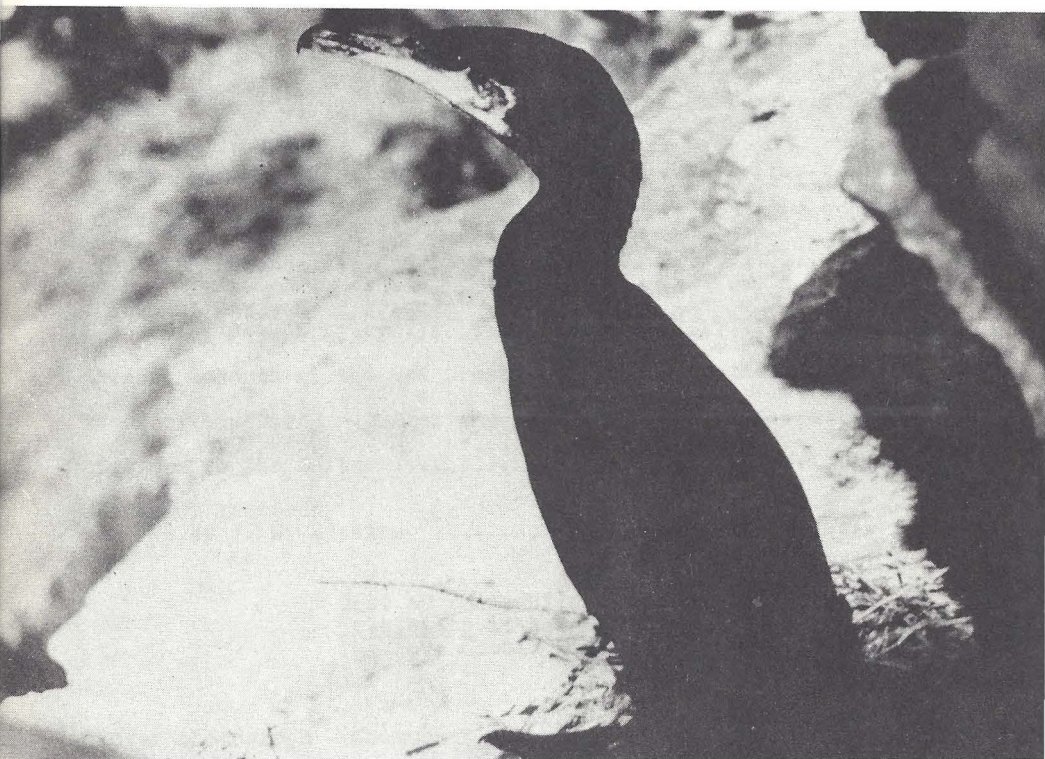


*Nova Scotia
Bird Society*



Newsletter

Volume 8, No. 3

November, 1966

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Volume 8, Number 3

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Cover photograph - Cormorant - Jeheber

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 3

November, 1966

SUMMER COUNTS - 1966

Seventeen reports were received from members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society taking part in our first "Summer Count". Fifteen of these complied with the requirement that the counts be taken in an area encompassed by a circle of one mile in radius. The other two counts made important observations and will be commented upon later.

In the 15 counts analysed, 106 species were reported. One might conclude from these counts that the commonest and most widespread species in Nova Scotia in June (those occurring on more than 10 counts) were the following: Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Robin, Swainson's Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Starling, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Redwinged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Slate-colored Junco, White-throated Sparrow and Song Sparrow - 25 species in all. The last species, incidentally, was the only one reported on all counts.

There are some startling omissions from the above list - Nighthawk, Hummingbird, Downy Woodpecker, Raven, Red-eyed Vireo and House Sparrow come to mind immediately, and certainly many Flycatchers and other Warblers are so widespread in June that it is hard to imagine their being absent from inland count areas.

Probably the list reflects unfamiliarity with certain rather common species and, to some extent, the wide variety of habitat chosen for count areas. In one respect it is surprising to find Swainson's Thrush on the list. It is a hard bird to see and to be able to identify it by song alone is not a widespread accomplishment. One wonders if it is a commoner bird than the Hermit Thrush, which was reported on only 6 counts, or rather, has Swainson's, in some instances, been incorrectly identified. On the other hand, it is a day singer and not many counts recorded here included evening or early morning hours when the Hermit most usually sings.

The least common (or most infrequently reported) species, if such is a conclusion that can be drawn from the counts, are listed below. The list includes both some real rarities and some surprisingly common and widely distributed species. The species

on this list (40) were reported on one or two only of the 15 counts examined. Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Ruffed Grouse, Sora, Woodcock, Greater Yellowlegs, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Black-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Phoebe, Cliff Swallow, Boreal Chickadee, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Solitary Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Tennessee, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Palm Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Rusty Blackbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak and Fox Sparrow. The notable observations are underlined, but it is hard to think of Loon, Cormorant, Teal, Ruffed Grouse, Woodcock, Sapsucker, Kingbird, Boreal Chickadee, Solitary Vireo and Rusty Blackbird as "rare" birds in Nova Scotia.

The Bras d'Or count of Hedley Hopkins on June 18 covered too wide a territory but was important in recording the numbers of the unique seabirds of the Bird Islands, namely, Common Puffin, 30, and Razorbill, 40.

Martin McNally's count of 93 species on June 4 in the Truro area and surrounding countryside, records what must certainly be the greatest number of species ever observed in a single day in Nova Scotia, either by an individual or a group. It was a noteworthy piece of work.

Altogether, the summer counts were worthwhile. Most of the species that could reasonably be expected to be seen were reported but not too many conclusions should be drawn about relative numbers of each. It is undoubtedly fun to try to pick a territory that contains varied habitats and likely, therefore, more species. However, the project would be more valuable if purer habitat areas could be chosen, such as areas consisting mainly of evergreens, or of open farmland, of salt marsh, of predominantly hardwood forest, of black spruce bog, etc., etc. Maybe only a few species would be found, but the numbers in such areas would make a start in gathering significant information for the purpose of making some bird population estimates in our province.

- L. B. Macpherson

Only those counts are listed where the regulation sized area was explored. We very much regret not being able to include four others, from Bras d'Or, Karsdale, Annapolis and Truro. They were splendid counts, but in fairness to the others, and to keep the record straight for the future, we have decided to stick strictly to the rules.

GLACE BAY SANCTUARY, Cape Breton County, June 6, 1966.

Great Cormorant, 1; Great Blue Heron, 6; Black Duck, 11; Piping Plover, 2; Spotted Sandpiper, 8; Sandpiper (unidentified), 7; Willet, 8; Greater Yellowlegs, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 54; Herring Gull, 77; Common Tern, 75; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Least Flycatcher, 6; Barn Swallow, 1; Blue Jay, 2; Common Raven, 6; Common Crow, 8; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Robin, 10; Hermit Thrush, 1; Swainson's Thrush, 10; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 8; Starling, 1; Red-eyed Vireo, 5; Black-and-White Warbler, 2; Nashville Warbler, 1; Parula Warbler, 1; Yellow Warbler, 3; Magnolia Warbler, 14; Myrtle Warbler, 2; Ovenbird, 4; Yellowthroat, 10; American Redstart, 14; Common Grackle, 1; Purple Finch, 8; American Goldfinch, 1; Savannah Sparrow, 4; Slate-colored Junco, 10; White-throated Sparrow, 17; Fox Sparrow, 1; Swamp Sparrow, 3; Song Sparrow, 3.

Totals: 43 species; about 412 individuals.

Observers: (4½ party hours) Ford Alward (compiler),
Allan MacCormack.

BADDECK, Victoria County, June 10, 1966.

Common Loon, 2; Double-crested Cormorant, 3; Great Blue Heron, 5; Black Duck, 2; Bald Eagle, 3; Osprey, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Common Snipe, 2; Spotted Sandpiper, 4; Great Black-backed Gull, 3; Herring Gull, 7; Common Tern, 7; Barred Owl, 1; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 3; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Tree Swallow, 5; Blue Jay, 1; Common Raven, 3; Common Crow, 5; Robin, 3; Swainson's Thrush, 1; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 1; Starling, 5; Solitary Vireo, 1; Parula Warbler, 2; Magnolia Warbler, 3; Myrtle Warbler, 2; American Redstart, 2; Bobolink, 1; Redwinged Blackbird, 3; Common Grackle, 2; American Goldfinch, 6; Slate-colored Junco, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 1.

Totals: 37 species; about 100 individuals.

Observers: (12 party hours) Frank Akers, Gerry Akers
(compiler).

PICTOU, Pictou County, June 5, 1966.

Great Blue Heron, 9; Green-winged Teal, 2; Black Duck, 4; Ring-necked Duck, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Spotted Sandpiper, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 2; Herring Gull, 22; Common Tern, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 2; Eastern Kingbird, 1; Least Flycatcher, 5; Tree Swallow, 3; Bank Swallow, 150; Barn Swallow, 4; Common Crow, 6; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Winter Wren, 1; Catbird, 1; Robin, 21; Swainson's Thrush, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 1; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2; Red-eyed Vireo, 4; Black-and-White Warbler, 2; Nashville Warbler, 2; Parula Warbler, 3; Yellow Warbler, 4; Magnolia Warbler, 16; Myrtle Warbler, 7; Black-throated Green Warbler, 2; Blackburnian Warbler, 3; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 4;

Northern Waterthrush, 1; Yellowthroat, 8; American Redstart, 6; Bobolink, 6; Redwinged Blackbird, 19; Common Grackle, 17; Brown-headed Cowbird, 5; Purple Finch, 1; American Goldfinch, 8; Savannah Sparrow, 2; Chipping Sparrow, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 7; Swamp Sparrow, 3; Song Sparrow, 9.

Totals: 47 species; about 384 individuals.

Observer: (5½ party hours) E. Holdway (compiler).

SHUBENACADIE, Hants County, June 4, 1966.

Great Blue Heron, 1; Black Duck, 2; Blue-winged Teal, 2; Sora, 1; Common Snipe, 2; Spotted Sandpiper, 2; Great Black-backed Gull, 1; Common Nighthawk, 2; Chimney Swift, 4; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 1; Traill's Flycatcher, 4; Least Flycatcher, 8; Eastern Wood Pewee, 4; Tree Swallow, 6; Bank Swallow, 1; Barn Swallow, 31; Common Raven, 6; Common Crow, 12; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; Robin, 18; Hermit Thrush, 1; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2; Starling, 20; Red-eyed Vireo, 1; Yellow Warbler, 19; Magnolia Warbler, 1; Myrtle Warbler, 3; Black-throated Green Warbler, 2; Yellowthroat, 6; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1; American Redstart, 8; House Sparrow, 8; Bobolink, 32; Redwinged Blackbird, 17; Common Grackle, 39; Purple Finch, 1; Pine Siskin, 5; American Goldfinch, 10; Savannah Sparrow, 6; Chipping Sparrow, 4; White-throated Sparrow, 7; Song Sparrow, 16.

Totals: 43 species; about 341 individuals.

Observers: (9 party hours) Mary Geddes, Roslyn MacPhee (compiler).

KINSAC, Halifax County, June 5, 1966.

Broad-winged Hawk, 1; Osprey, 1; American Woodcock, 5; Spotted Sandpiper, 2; Great Black-backed Gull, 1; Common Tern, 1; Common Nighthawk, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 3; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 5; Traill's Flycatcher, 2; Least Flycatcher, 3; Eastern Wood Pewee, 3; Tree Swallow, 9; Bank Swallow, 1; Barn Swallow, 3; Blue Jay, 2; Common Raven, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Robin, 8; Hermit Thrush, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 3; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2; Starling, 6; Red-eyed Vireo, 5; Black-and-White Warbler, 2; Parula Warbler, 5; Yellow Warbler, 3; Myrtle Warbler, 1; Black-throated Green Warbler, 2; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 5; Ovenbird, 5; Northern Waterthrush, 2; Yellowthroat, 5; Canada Warbler, 2; American Redstart, 8; House Sparrow, 11; Redwinged Blackbird, 10; Common Grackle, 11; Purple Finch, 1; American Goldfinch, 2; Slate-colored Junco, 6; White-throated Sparrow, 2; Song Sparrow, 7.

Totals: 43 species; about 164 individuals.

Observer: (7½ party hours) Ethel Crathorne (compiler).

BRIDGETOWN, Annapolis County, June 10, 1966.

Sparrow Hawk, 1; Herring Gull, 2; Rock Dove, 9; Common Nighthawk, 2; Chimney Swift, 4; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Eastern Kingbird, 3; Traill's Flycatcher, 3; Least Flycatcher, 1; Eastern Wood Pewee, 1; Tree Swallow, 2; Barn Swallow, 3; Bank Swallow, 13; Cliff Swallow, 2; Blue Jay, 1; Common Raven, 2; Common Crow, 12; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; Robin, 23; Hermit Thrush, 2; Veery, 3; Swainson's Thrush, 1; Starling, 19; Red-eyed Vireo, 3; Warbling Vireo, 1; Yellow Warbler, 3; Magnolia Warbler, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 1; Ovenbird, 5; Yellowthroat, 4; American Redstart, 3; House Sparrow, 18; Bobolink, 2; Baltimore Oriole, 1; Common Grackle, 9; Brown-headed Cowbird, 5; Redwinged Blackbird, 2; Dickcissel, 1; Purple Finch, 5; American Goldfinch, 16; Savannah Sparrow, 7; Slate-colored Junco, 6; Chipping Sparrow, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 4; Lincoln's Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 20.

Totals: 49 species; about 238 individuals.

Observer: (6 party hours) Calder Fraser (compiler).

INDIAN HARBOR, Halifax County, June 12, 1966.

Osprey, 1; Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; Spotted Sandpiper, 2; Great Black-backed Gull, 14; Herring Gull, 100; Common Tern, 8; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 7; Traill's Flycatcher, 2; Least Flycatcher, 5; Tree Swallow, 10; Bank Swallow, 11; Barn Swallow, 6; Blue Jay, 6; Common Crow, 8; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Catbird, 2; Robin, 8; Swainson's Thrush, 7; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 5; Starling, 11; Parula Warbler, 1; Yellow Warbler, 2; Magnolia Warbler, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 4; Black-throated Green Warbler, 3; Yellowthroat, 7; American Redstart, 7; House Sparrow, 2; Redwinged Blackbird, 1; Common Grackle, 5; Brown-headed Cowbird, 3; Purple Finch, 13; American Goldfinch, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 8; Chipping Sparrow, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 7; Song Sparrow, 6.

Totals: 37 species; about 291 individuals.

Observer: (12½ party hours) Miriam Wetmore (compiler).

ALBANY, Annapolis County, June 7, 1966.

Chimney Swift, 12; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2; Tree Swallow, 7; Barn Swallow, 3; Gray Jay, 3; Common Crow, 1; Robin, 5; Hermit Thrush, 1; Veery, 1; Cedar Waxwing, 12; Starling, 6; Red-eyed Vireo, 1; Black-and-White Warbler, 2; Nashville Warbler, 1; Parula Warbler, 1; Black-throated Blue Warbler, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 1; Black-throated Green Warbler, 1; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1; Yellowthroat, 3; Canada Warbler, 1; House Sparrow, 4; Common Grackle, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 4; Song Sparrow, 2.

Totals: 25 species; about 78 individuals.

Observers: (5 party hours) Thelma Hawkins (compiler), Winnie Zwicker.

EAST RIVER POINT, Lunenburg County, June 12, 1966.

Canada Goose, 8; Mallard, 7; American Widgeon, 2; Wood Duck, 1; Marsh Hawk, 1; Osprey, 1; Spotted Sandpiper, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 37; Herring Gull, 7; Common Tern, 1; Common Nighthawk, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 2; Traill's Flycatcher, 3; Least Flycatcher, 1; Wood Pewee, 1; Olive-sided Flycatcher, 1; Bank Swallow, 1; Barn Swallow, 1; Blue Jay, 1; Common Raven, 3; Common Crow, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; Winter Wren, 1; Robin, 4; Hermit Thrush, 3; Swainson's Thrush, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 1; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 3; Starling, 3; Red-eyed Vireo, 7; Black-and-White Warbler, 2; Tennessee Warbler, 1; Nashville Warbler, 1; Parula Warbler, 4; Yellow Warbler, 2; Magnolia Warbler, 9; Myrtle Warbler, 10; Black-throated Green Warbler, 3; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 5; Palm Warbler, 2; Yellowthroat, 13; Canada Warbler, 5; American Redstart, 9; House Sparrow, 2; Redwinged Blackbird, 2; Common Grackle, 1; Brown-headed Cowbird, 7; Purple Finch, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 1; American Goldfinch, 2; Slate-colored Junco, 4; White-throated Sparrow, 7; Swamp Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 8.

Totals: 54 species; about 211 individuals.

Observer: (9 party hours) Wayne Neily (compiler).

CANSO, Guysborough County, June 12, 1966.

Double-crested Cormorant, 1; Spotted Sandpiper, 1; Herring Gull, 20; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 4; Eastern Phoebe, 1; Eastern Wood Pewee, 4; Olive-sided Flycatcher, 1; Tree Swallow, 5; Gray Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 5; Common Crow, 8; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Catbird, 1; Brown Thrasher, 1; Robin, 8; Swainson's Thrush, 2; Starling, 2; Yellow Warbler, 6; Magnolia Warbler, 3; Myrtle Warbler, 5; Blackpoll Warbler, 1; Palm Warbler, 1; Yellowthroat, 1; American Redstart, 10; American Goldfinch, 6; Slate-colored Junco, 5; Chipping Sparrow, 1; White-throated Sparrow, 6; Swamp Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 2.

Totals: 31 species; about 125 individuals.

Observers: (6 party hours) June Jarvis (compiler),
Eileen Armsworthy.

The summer program, 1966, of the Nova Scotia Bird Society was completed successfully with the trip to Brier Island. Forty people were able to attend, and gathered at the Lighthouse at 10:00 a.m. on August 20. It was a fine clear day, and birds were in abundance. The morning was spent at North Point, for the most part among newly arrived migrating warblers. Here also were seen Mourning Doves, a Mockingbird, and one interesting sea bird, a Black Guillemot, fishing off the point.

In the afternoon, after a picnic lunch, Pond Cove was visited, to look at shore birds. Here Mr. Wickerson Lent was able to join the party, and assisted in the identification of

11 species, including a probable Stilt Sandpiper, which some of the observers tried hard but unsuccessfully to turn into a Curlew Sandpiper.

Sparrow Hawks were definitely on the move. Mr. Lent reported at least 15, arrived the day before, and numbers were seen on the approaches to the island by party members on their way to Brier Island.

Eleven species of warblers, 11 species of shore birds, and 62 species in all were seen.

Among those able to attend this (our last) Field Day were: Miss Barbara Hinds, Mr. Wickerson Lent and sons, Mr. and Mrs. Delaney, Mr. and Mrs. C. Chipman, Mr. and Mrs. D. Findlay, Mr. and Mrs. Cardoza, Mr. and Mrs. A. Coffill, Mrs. A. Hurlburt, Mrs. T.A.M. Kirk, Miss Marion Hilton, Mrs. M. MacIntyre, Miss Sylvia Hilton, Miss Hazel Carmichael, Miss Ethel Crathorne, Mrs. Norman and party, Mr. Joe Ternan, Dr. and Mrs. Lemnitzer, Mr. and Mrs. W. Hemeon, Mr. Patrick Anketell-Jones, Captain M. Anketell-Jones, Mr. John Lorrimer, Mrs. J. W. Dobson, Mr. Wayne Neily, Mr. C.R.K. Allen, Mr. Joseph Johnson and Master Brian Billard.

THE SUMMER'S BIRDS

A feature of this summer has been the abundance of cowbirds. Twenty years ago they were comparatively rare summer visitors; then in 1950 they began to appear in flocks in winter, usually disappearing again before January; last winter they remained until spring and continued painfully frequent through early summer. We had about ten pairs of small birds nesting around our garden, and of these the chipping sparrow and robin were cowbirdized. If such a proportion has been general, the effect upon the smaller birds of the open must have been serious. On the other side of the ledger, friends have told us of house sparrows and starlings which had been victimized, and one can only wish the cowbird good luck in this direction. June is a constant battle to maintain tree-swallow nests against house sparrows, while the starlings have driven flickers back into the woods and have eliminated bluebirds completely.

Last summer evening grosbeaks remained with us, usually flocking winter-fashion in groups chiefly of one sex. This year flocks of them were seen in all counties from Queens to Inverness, and occasionally these were separated into pairs, though I saw none with the territorial behaviour associated with nesting. Seemingly the patterns of most of them still lack the local triggers to shift them into full nesting behaviour. A friend at New Canaan reported that last year a pair of mourning doves had spent the summer on his farm, but they had continued to feed

together throughout the summer which had suggested to him that they had not nested.

The summer produced a few rarities. In exploring a breeding-bird count route near Shelburne, I frightened from a post a brown bird which flew across a market-garden field in the rain. From the back view his pointed, downward-curved wings and fluttering flight made him look like a slender meadowlark, so I circled the field and waded through wet alfalfa for a better view. He did not allow that. He and a similar bird rose from the edge of the cultivated ground and flew back across the field, where one alighted for a moment and showed himself to be a large sandpiper. I returned twice to that field in later days, but I did not see them again and can only guess that they were upland plover.

Near the Forest Home sluice-gate on Gaspereau Lake, Kings County, on the 17th of August, an immature little blue heron was wading, outlined snowy white against the black bank of decayed sawdust, where a sludgy brook flowed through temporary meadows of tiny spike-rush and patches of water-lilies and arrowheads flowering on the dried crust of the quagmire. Three killdeer flew overhead, crying their familiar note, and in the distance willet were clamouring disapproval of trespassers. I first saw willet west of Annapolis in 1940. In 1956 the great expansion began and carried them to nest at Grand Pre and on Isle Madame, and now they are to be heard on the whole shore and even on inland lakes. During the same period, killdeer have built up their status from rare migrants to occasional breeders. It may be that what birding loses to starlings and house sparrows is being offset by the invasion of new species.

- J. S. Erskine

The Cape Breton Branch of the Nova Scotia Bird Society started off the season with a meeting at the James McConnell Memorial Library, Sydney, on October 14. At this meeting, Dr. A. J. Erskine, Wildlife Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service, Sackville, N.B., presented a program, with visual aids on "Water-fowl". Mr. John Lunn, Louisbourg, was also a guest speaker, on the winter feeding of birds, and the Christmas Bird Census.

Plans for drawing up a Constitution are in preparation. Twenty-five to thirty people were able to attend.

The next meeting is to be held on Friday, November 25. Anyone interested is invited to attend.

- F. Alward

THE BIRD ISLANDS FIELD TRIP - 1966

The July 9 Bird Islands meeting off Big Bras d'Or was a day of sunshine and invigorating breezes. So many members of the Society and friends turned out that when the writer and family arrived at 9:30 A.M. for the boat trip at 10:00 A.M., it was to find Dick Ahle with a group of early risers already out at the Islands. The two hour wait for the boat with the breeze freshening was a time of apprehension, and when Captain Ahle returned, shaking his head and saying that he didn't think the weather was right for another trip, and that in any case he would have to stay to the east of the Islands, there was a brief period of some gloom.

But at last we were off, with a Bald Eagle swinging across the sky as we left the channel, the boat dipping and spray flying as we hit the chop in the bay, and the first alcids skittering by as we neared the cliffs.



Puffin at Bird Islands

Jeheber

For those of us who rarely see alcids in any numbers, and virtually never close to, the next hour was a delight, with the boat nosing in just as near to the cliffs as a boat can go, not once, but time and again. Besides the birds, we were interested to see two of the most active members of the N.S.B.S. who had landed for just such a survey on the previous evening and were happily and, incidentally, most decoratively, basking in the sun on the rocks by the lighthouse when we arrived.

In retrospect, it was an educational trip for the writer, who has now learned that 8mm movies of highly mobile subjects from a boat is a significant waste of film. The only possible projection commentary seems to be "Well, you see that blob going up and down in the distance - well, that's a puffin." Faith is a wonderful thing.

- John Lunn

Bird Islands off Big Bras d'Or provide a nesting place for Leach's Petrels, the Double-Crested Cormorant, Herring and Black-backed Gulls, Razorbill, Black Guillemot and Common Puffin. Besides these, the following small birds were seen there on the N.S.B.S. Field Trip: 1 Yellow-breasted Chat (dead), 1 White-winged Crossbill, and about 10 pairs of Savannah Sparrows, nesting, according to Sylvia Fullerton and Barbara Hinds, who "got aboard".



Razorbills at Bird Islands

Jeheber

NATIONAL PARKS NEED FRIENDS

by Jack Brayley

Our National Parks with their last remaining wilderness areas desperately need dedicated, understanding and vocal friends if they are to withstand the great and growing pressures of our times. And if only for practical self-interest, groups like the Nova Scotia Bird Society should keep a vigilant eye and a sensitive ear on the conservation scene so that they may let their views be known in time to stop further inroads into these great shrines of natural beauty and havens of wildlife.

Fortunately there is a growing realization of the vital place of the parks in our environment and no longer is the voice of conservation weak and no longer do the commercial interests go unchallenged. But even at that the recent controversy over the use of Banff for the next winter olympics was definitely weighted on the side of the sports promoters and we were treated to a display of thoughtless vindictiveness on the part of national and even local sports commentators. They described the people who blocked the use of the park as "a bunch of misguided bird-watchers". And few pointed out the principles and stakes involved. The condemnation of the conservationists made the headlines but their replies were back on page 32 under a one-column head. And few readers ever found out that the commercial sports promoters are interested only in short-term profits.

For instance, I recently heard on the CBC national network a tape interview with a high-priced public relations type who glibly gave the commercial promoters side of the park picture - these are the gentlemen who want to install everything from merry-go-rounds to hot dog stands in these last sanctuaries of quiet and beauty.

And the program also interviewed a parks official from Ottawa who was in a tough spot and who couldn't speak dispassionately because of his position. Instead he seemed to be giving a government apology for the tough steps that had to be taken to carry out the inherent policy governing the parks and he spent most of his time explaining.

This, of course, meant that the real park champions - the conservationists groups - have still not been represented in any CBC forum.

Meantime, the fact that Banff is in a National Park would probably have been fatal to Canada's case apart from any other consideration. The issue of conservation may not be regarded as important by Canadians who have not yet seen their natural heritage gradually eaten away by the encroachment of civilization but it is taken very seriously indeed by those of other nations who have learned to cherish what little is left to them of unspoiled virgin land and wildlife. Although some of the Banff delegation evidently did not realize it, many winter sports enthusiasts, including some members of the International Committee, are themselves conservationists and even without intervention of conser-

vation organizations, it is doubtful if Banff's case would have been received favorably.

Canada is a large country with plenty of mountains and an abundance of snow. There are areas outside National Parks even more suitable for winter sports than Banff, both in Eastern and Western Canada. Garibaldi Provincial Recreational Park in the west, close to the population centres of Vancouver and Seattle, would be an ideal site and equally attractive areas could be found in the Laurentians in the east.

If we get to work now, select a site outside a National Park, and develop our arguments for its choice, there is every chance that next time the International Committee will pick Canada as host for the Winter Olympic Games.

The Calgary group, which gets such powerful support from the sports commentators, is actually out to convert our parks into great sports promotions and there's no doubt about it.

They have already stampeded the government into slashing beautiful mountain slopes to make ski runs, etc.

Now, I spent my holidays in the Alpine area of Europe in June and July and even the tidy Swiss and Austrians, who have covered their mountain scars with grass, admitted to me that they had despoiled the natural beauty that was there before the ski lifts, cog railways and aerial tramways.

Now that we are on the threshold of an outdoor recreation boom that staggers the imagination, the idea of preserving wilderness in the largest parks like Banff and Jasper is intensely annoying to promoters who see these parks as potential gold mines for their private benefit.

The question is often asked why we need so much wilderness, when the vast majority of park users seem to prefer automobile travel, motel living, or huddling together in crowded campgrounds.

It is true, of course, that primitive wilderness travel accounts for a very small percentage of park use, but what critics of wilderness fail to appreciate is that the number of people who actually penetrate the hinterland of our large parks is no indication whatever of the value of wilderness.

To picture the wilderness in our parks, as some do, as just so much empty space that is valueless unless it can be used intensively by people, or developed in some way to make money, is dinosaur thinking in the kind of world in which we now live. Wilderness is a valid category of land use in itself on several grounds and more people appreciate this fact than statistics on wilderness travel might suggest.

Judging by worldwide and growing support for wilderness conservation, just to know that the wilderness exists is probably what counts for most park visitors, whether or not they themselves can, or ever will, leave the beaten track and head off into it on their own.

There are sound practical reasons for conserving wilderness, but above all it is the moral conviction that it is right that motivates conservation thinking. Fundamentally, it is an ethical matter. As David Brower, Executive Director of the Sierra Club has stated:

"The conservation force demonstrates the pressure of man's conscience, of his innate knowledge that there are certain things he may not ethically do to the only world he will ever have, and to the strictly rationed resources of natural beauty which still exist in the world."

So I would like to make this point: The wilderness that now remains is all there will ever be.

It has been forecast that while the population of North America will double by the year 2000 - only 34 years away - outdoor recreation demand will have tripled. What chance will there be of saving any wilderness at all in the face of this pressure unless adequate opportunities are provided outside of our parks for the many kinds of recreation that are detrimental to values but which people want, need, and have a right to expect?

Meanwhile, a recent trailer trip and one of my longest, took me 12,000 miles through the spectacular canyons of the American southwest. The trip covered 36 days and took in a lot of territory that is scarred, bruised and contracted by thoughtless and careless man. On this trip we crossed the continent diagonally with our first stop at Carlsbad Caverns and we took in spectacular natural features including White Sands, Death Valley, Zion, Bryce and Grand Canyon and Mesa Verde and the man-made features of Disneyland and the New York World's Fair. And I got back home with two lasting impressions:

- (1) The great threats to the beauty of the land.
- (2) The great pressures of tourism that must be firmly dealt with by an enlightened policy of conservation.

Such a policy is going to demand both guidance and some sacrifice on the part of North America's explosive numbers of campers.

All along my route I saw hard-pressed facilities expanded to their utmost and I heard demands for even more.

But we must stop soon because the great areas blocked out for campsites are already scarring our national sanctuaries of wilderness so they are threatened with losing the very reason for their existence. Let the campers (and bird watchers) as pioneer champions in the field of preservation of the outdoors, get in first with an offer of co-operation which will not only support the custodians of our great public domains but which will win us friends among the commercial interests who sometimes seem to be our worst enemies.

I think - after watching the erosion and inroads in the United States and Canada in 15 years of camping - that the time has come for park authorities to stop developing further facilities. Instead, official encouragement should be given to private interests to launch a program for efficient, convenient and clean camp and trailer sites at reasonable fees but outside the limits of our national, state and provincial parks, forests and historic sites.

Such a policy must be made effective soon.



RECENT RECORDS OF THE RED CROSSBILL IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Red Crossbill was, until the early '20's, a regular and common visitor to Nova Scotia. About 1922, however, its numbers decreased sharply (Tufts: Birds of Nova Scotia) and since then the sighting of an individual or flock has been an event in the bird-watcher's year.

We have no information on its occurrence in the province from the early '20's to early '60's, but with the establishment of communication between birders through the medium of the Newsletter, we do now have at least a hint as to its recent status. For the five year period beginning July 1961, there have been 24 reported sightings of Red Crossbills in Nova Scotia; 20 of these are from the western half of the province and include 194 of the 209 birds seen.

If any conclusions can be drawn from the very skimpy statistics in hand, the best "bet" for finding Red Crossbills is in the counties of Lunenburg, Queens and Hants, during the months of April, May, July or September, as these are the localities and times of most observations.

It may be, of course, that the picture is a distorted one - that in some areas this species is so regular in its occurrence correspondents have not thought it worth reporting. If this is true, we should like to hear about it.

NEWS OF THE BIRDS, SUMMER AND EARLY FALL, 1966

The first fall record for RED-NECKED GREBES was 1, at Morien, October 24 (Alward). HORNEED GREBES appeared along the Northumberland Strait shore in mid-October: 3 at Dunn's Beach, Ant. Co.; 4 at Wallace, Cumb. Co., on October 12 (Erskine); and 1 at Pictou on October 15 (Holdway). The number of reports of PIED-BILLED GREBES for October suggests a movement during this month; most reports were of single individuals, but 6 were seen at River Denys, Rich. Co., on October 15 (Erskine), and 3 at Porter's Lake, Hfx. Co., October 22 (Allen).

Reports of migrating GANNETS are scanty: 1 was seen at Cape Sable September 15 (B.F. Smith), 1 between Bon Portage and Seal Island September 23 (N.S.B.S. party), 50+ on October 6 and again on October 7 at Cape Sable "flying west in two's and three's" (B.F. Smith). Numbers of breeding DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS in the Baddeck area seem to have increased markedly during the past ten years (Erskine). Brown reports about 75 pairs at Toothbrush Island near Baddeck, and approximately 100 pairs at Bird Island, Cape Breton.

Five heron stragglers were reported during July, August and September: a COMMON EGRET near Sherbrooke, Guys. Co., July 16 (Norman); a LITTLE BLUE HERON, immature, at Gaspereau Lake, Kings Co., August 17 (J.S. Erskine); another, a fully adult Little Blue Heron that stayed around the barachois near the Fortress at Louisbourg for the whole afternoon of June 11 (J. and G. Lunn); a GREEN HERON (immature), Cape Sable, August 24 (Cunningham); and a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (immature), Seal Island, September 25 (N.S.B.S. party).

Five BLUE-WINGED TEAL at Morien Bay October 9 (Alward), and 1 at Glace Bay Sanctuary October 14 (Alward and Erskine), were somewhat tardy migrants, as was a WOOD DUCK at Baddeck River October 16 (Erskine). First reported OLDSQUAW were 3 in Northumberland Strait October 16 (Holdway), and 1 at Port Hood October 17 (Erskine). Erskine, reporting the behaviour of a flock of COMMON EIDER in the Strait of Canso on October 13 gives a clue to the effect of the Causeway on migrating ducks; this flock, on encountering the Causeway, turned and followed it across the Strait to the opposite shore, then climbed several hundred feet before crossing it, "with seeming reluctance". The first flocks of migrating SCOTERS were seen at Cape Sable on August 20 (Cunningham); a HOODED MERGANSER was at Pleasant Lake, Yar. Co. on September 11, and a pair of this species at Central Argyle, Yar. Co., on the following day. (Allen and Morland) Summer surveys suggest that control of COMMON MERGANSERS on the Margaree River is not affecting the numbers which breed on other rivers in the area (Erskine).

A RED-SHOULDERED HAWK, a species with only hypothetical status on the list of Nova Scotia birds, was seen at Wallace, Cumb. Co. on July 14, by Dennis Rupert of Sarnia, Ontario. To quote from Mr. Rupert's report: "Near Wallace (about 3-5 miles E), a large hawk appeared almost directly overhead. We raced ahead a short distance, stopped, and got out to observe the approaching

hawk, obviously a buteo type by shape and manner of soaring. When almost overhead, the wing 'windows' and banded tail were clearly seen. During some of its circles, the brownish upper wing and back could also be seen. The banded black-and-white tail (narrow white bands) plus the size and wing 'windows', were sufficient to distinguish this bird from the smaller Broad-winged Hawk..... I believe my comment was 'It's just a Red-shouldered Hawk'. It wasn't until we reached Fundy Park and talked to David Christie that we found out that this was a rare bird in Nova Scotia." This is the most convincing report that has so far been received of a sighting of this species. Two BROAD-WINGED HAWKS were reported during the summer: 1 near Brooklyn, Hants Co., July 16 (Allen) and 1 (immature) near Maccan, Cumb. Co., August 14 (Erskine). ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS have no business in Nova Scotia during the summer, but three reports from two widely separated localities have come in. Erskine reports two birds, a dark and a light phase, summering on the marshes between Amherst and Sackville, N.B., and another seen on the NW shore of Cape Breton on July 24. Another, possibly the same, was reported along the Cabot Trail on July 11 by Dennis Rupert. A number of reports of BALD EAGLES have come in, principally from Cape Breton, but only 1 was specified as an immature bird. This was reported by Ronald Dicks, who observed an adult capture a flounder, Osprey-fashion, at Cole Harbor on September 16, and share its catch with a bird in dark immature plumage. A very late OSPREY sighting on October 17 at Scotsville, Cape Breton is reported by Erskine. Two reports of PEREGRINE FALCONS, perhaps the same bird, are: 1 at Conrad's Beach October 22 (Comer), and 1 at nearby Wedge Island, Hfx. Co., October 23 (Helleiner). "Numerous" SPARROW HAWKS at Brier Island, Digby Co., on August 20 (N.S.B.S. Field party) and 15 in west Colchester Co. on August 21 (Macpherson) suggest an early movement of this species.

An AMERICAN COOT was seen at Seal Island, September 25, consorting with semi-domestic ducks (N.S.B.S. party); another was at Whycomagh October 15, and a third at Baddeck River October 16 (Erskine).

Earliest migrant SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER for the Cape Breton area were observed on August 1; late reports from the same area are: 2 at Port Morien, 6 at Glace Bay, and 2 at Lingan (Erskine). Reports of KILLDEER have been so numerous that this species' status as a rarity is now seriously threatened. They were seen at Cape Sable on August 8 (1), and October 4 (1), (B.J. Smith); 3 were at Gaspereau Lake August 17 (J.S. Erskine); 1 was recorded at Hirtle's Beach, Lun. Co., August 20 (Noble); and 1 at Brier Island August 31 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones); varying numbers appeared almost daily at a pond in Central Chebogue, Yar. Co., from September 1 to 19, the greatest number seen at once being 15 (Allen). The flight of GOLDEN PLOVER, according to reports, passed through Nova Scotia between August 8, when 1 was at Cape Sable (Smiths), and August 17, when they were last seen at Chebogue Point (Allen). A flock of 40 was seen at Cape Sable on August 22 (B.J. Smith) and one of 32 at Black Rock, Col. Co. on August 21 (Macpherson). Single birds were also reported at Brier Island on September 1 and 4 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones), and at Little Bass River, Cumb. Co., on September 10 (Hemeons). The

earliest BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER was reported at Bayhead, Col. Co., July 31, by Erskine, who also reported the first migrating RUDDY TURNSTONES on the same date.

The earliest WHIMBREL reported are 9 seen near Pictou on July 19 by Holdway, who also saw his first 3 WILLETS for that area on September 10. This date is interesting as the Willets had apparently left the Yarmouth area by early September. Three flocks, totalling 30-40 birds were seen on August 21 at Cape Sable flying south off-shore, and were not seen to return (B.J. Smith). A GREATER YELLOW-LEGS July 12 at Toothbrush Island, Baddeck (Brown) is the earliest date received for this species. A KNOT was reported at Louisbourg October 2 (Lunn), the first seen there. Fifteen PECTORAL SANDPIPERS at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., October 9 (Fullerton) is an unusual number for a bird which, in this area at least, seems to prefer to travel in three's and four's. BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS seldom make this Newsletter, but to make up for this two reports have come in for the current season: 3 at Pond Cove, Brier Island, September 4 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones), and 1 at Clam Harbor, Hfx. Co., October 2 (Clayden and Comer). Three DUNLIN were seen at Pictou October 11 (Holdway); 24 at Glace Bay Sanctuary October 22; 8 at the same place October 24; and 2 at Lingan also on October 24. (Alward) A STILT SANDPIPER still in breeding plumage was at Glace Bay on July 10 (Dennis Rupert), one was seen at Louisbourg August 7 (Lunn) and another at McNab's Island, Hfx. Co., on August 28 (N.S.B.S. party). On September 12 a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER was observed in company with a flock of Golden Plover at Chebogue Point, Yar. Co. (Allen and Morland), and was studied for about fifteen minutes at 100 yards through 40X telescope. Subsequent sightings on September 15 and 16 revealed that there were two of these birds, and both were studied at much closer range, and the field marks clearly seen.

The only reports of Phalaropes are from the Northumberland Strait between Cariboo and Wood Island (Holdway). Seventeen (in a brackish marsh) and 3 on September 12. These were all NORTHERN PHALAROPES.

Jaegers, like other oceanic birds, seldom appear in these notes, as most of our members apparently do not venture far from land. On September 18, however, a PARASITIC JAEGER was seen in Northumberland Strait (Holdway). First report of ICELAND GULLS was 72 seen at Glace Bay October 29 (Alward). A colony of 100-120 GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS was reported as breeding on Toothbrush Island by Brown during his visit there in July. He also reports a mixed colony, about 500 pairs of this species and HERRING GULLS, on Ciboux Island at the same time, the proportion being about 3 to 1 in favor of Black-backs.

First BONAPARTE'S GULLS for the season were 7 seen at Smith Point, Col. Co. on July 31 (Erskine); 40-60 of this species were also seen on the gulf shore of P.E.I. on August 3, suggesting that the "main wave" was not far behind (Allen). An early report for BLACK-HEADED GULLS is 1 on August 11 in Northumberland Strait (Holdway). Four more appeared in the same area on September 1 (Ibid), and 1 at Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. October 9 (Fullerton).

Seven LAUGHING GULLS were observed at Cape Sable on October 6 (N. Cunningham in "Coastguard"). It would be interesting to know whether these birds, whose species formerly bred in Nova Scotia, had attempted to stage a come-back, and, if so, what success they had had.

A colony of about 75 pairs of COMMON TERNS on Toothbrush Island, Baddeck, in July was reported by Brown. Erskine reported downy young of this species as late as July 31 at Merigomish. Late reports of common terns are: 2 at Port Philip, Cumb. Co. on October 18, and 2 at Conrad's Beach, Hfx. Co. on October 22. The latter were seen at a distance and could have been ARCTIC TERNS (N.S.B.S. party). Two or three ROSEATE TERNS near West Port 1 Hebert, Shel. Co. are reported in the Shelburne Coastguard. Reports of BLACK TERNS have been more numerous than usual; up to 5 were seen during the summer in the Missiguash Marsh and surrounding area, near the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border (Erskine et al); also, July 15 at Point Michaud Beach, Rich. Co. (M.D. Foote), and 1 at Cape Sable August 18 (G. Smith). Three CASPIAN TERNS at Stanhope Beach August 3 (Dicks) are of interest even though outside our territory, as this gives Nova Scotia birders some hint of when to watch for these rarities.

Reports on Alcids are scanty, the only one being an estimate of breeding pairs on Hertford and Ciboux Islands by Brown: 50 - 100 pairs of RAZORBILLS, 100+ pairs of BLACK GUILLEMOTS and approximately 100 pairs of PUFFINS.

Sightings of MOURNING DOVES are becoming almost commonplace and the comment, "Just another Mourning Dove" has been made on more than one Society field trip. At least 16 reports, including those quoted in the Shelburne Coastguard are in hand from Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne, Halifax, Hants and Cape Breton Counties. This list of counties probably indicates concentrations of letter-writing birders rather than of doves.

The number of reports of BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS (8 in all) gives no grounds for the fear expressed by some members that this species is becoming scarce. An unusually late report is of 1 seen in Karsdale, Anna. Co. October 9 (J. Johnson). The only YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO reported this year is one at Centreville, Shel. Co. October 16 (W. Smith).

Owls, to judge from our reports, are much rarer birds than Mourning Doves. ONE GREAT HORNED OWL was seen (or heard) at Marble Mountain road in July (M.B. Foote), 1 BARRED OWL was at Kedje July 1 (Brown), a LONG-EARED OWL was seen at Brier Island August 19 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones), and a SHORT-EARED OWL at Wedge Island, Hfx. Co. October 23 (Helleiner). The first breeding record for the SAW-WHET OWL in Cape Breton is reported at Whycocomagh where, on July 18 a fledgling and an adult were observed (J.S. and A.J. Erskine).

A late "singing" record for the WHIP-POOR-WILL was August 31 at Bedford, Hfx. Co. (Chisholm). Arrival dates for this species at Milton, Queens Co. during the past five years is reported as between May 15 and May 20. (T. Wentzell) An early

flight of 20-30 NIGHTHAWKS was reported near Port Mouton, July 20 (Allen), a large flight of 200 was observed between Annapolis Royal and Digby August 19 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones), and a rather late record was 1 at Dartmouth September 9 (Dicks).

Two reports from Annapolis County mention scarcity of RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS during the summer (Atkinson and Hawkins).

Two woodpecker reports of interest are: an immature RED-HEADED WOODPECKER observed by members of the N.S.B.S. at Seal Island on September 24, and a BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER at Armdale October 10 (Norman).

EASTERN KINGBIRDS were flocking near Scots Bay, Kings Co., where 15-20 were seen along a quarter to half mile stretch of road on August 20 (Brown). A WESTERN KINGBIRD stayed five days at Louisbourg October 4-8 (Lunn). A WOOD PEWEE stayed until October 6 in Lawrencetown, Annapolis Co. The outstanding rarity of the season was a SAY'S PHOEBE, seen and identified by C.W. Helleiner, and subsequently by others of the party on Seal Island, September 24. This bird was collected and has been presented as a first record for the Maritimes to the National Museum at Ottawa. EMPIDONAX FLYCATCHERS were present in numbers at Cape Forchu, Yar. Co., where 10 were seen in the woodside trees near the cape on September 9 (Allen).

The OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was reported as "not common, but heard oftener than in summer, 1965" (Erskine). HORNED LARKS appeared in great numbers at Port Morien, Glace Bay and Lingan, Cape Breton Co., "hundreds" all over the dunes and beaches, October 24 (Alward). As a sidelight on the adaptability of birds, Horned Larks have been noticed nesting at the edge of a runway at Shearwater Air Base, Hfx. Co., for the last two years, just beside the parking place of a helicopter. When the huge machine takes off or lands, a row of little heads pop up, but otherwise the birds seem undisturbed (Bowditch).

An enormous flock of TREE and BANK SWALLOWS (900-1000) was seen, sitting shoulder to shoulder along the telephone wires, at Belmont, Hants Co., August 7. The birds were apparently all immature, about three-quarters of them were Tree Swallows (Allen). On September 18, 300+ BARN SWALLOWS were seen in a flock at Chebogue Point, Yar. Co. (Allen). Only one out of three of the colonies of PURPLE MARTINS at Amherst was active this summer (Erskine).

The only MOCKINGBIRDS reported this summer were: 1 seen at Brier Island, Digby Co., August 20, on the N.S.B.S. Field Trip; 1, possibly the same one, seen there the following week (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones); 2 seen at Seal Island September 24-25 (N.S.B.S. party); and 1 reported in Dr. Lewis' column in the Shelburne Coastguard, as being present in Centreville, Shel. Co., October 13-17 (Mrs. W. Smith). BROWN THRASHERS scarcely deserve underlining,

so many have been seen this fall. On Seal Island at least a dozen were roaming about September 24-25 (N.S.B.S.) and from Cape Sable we have the following reports: 4, September 24 and 26, 1, October 3, "a number", October 5, and 1, October 7 (Smiths). One was also observed at Three-Fathom Harbor, Hfx. Co., October 8 (Comer, Clayden). The ROBIN was most abundant in the Glace Bay area from September 28 to October 10 (Alward); and 100-200 passed through Round Hill, Anna. Co., September 28 (Whitehead). Mr. Whitehead adds that large numbers of Robins have been feeding on haws in and around Round Hill through the third week of October.

The SWAINSON'S THRUSH was very numerous at Round Hill throughout September (Whitehead). (See comments on the Summer Count.) From the few trips possible this summer, my own impression is that Swainson's outnumbered the HERMIT THRUSH two to one. (Editor) An interesting observation on the VEERY was that it was heard more frequently in early summer at East River, Lun. Co., than formerly (Moffatt). The Veery is common in southwestern Nova Scotia, and far inland, but seldom heard elsewhere in the province.

Two new records of the BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER have come in this summer, both well authenticated. The first one was "called up" on McNab's Island, Halifax Harbor, on August 28, by a group of N.S.B.S. birders, and recognized by Patrick Anketell-Jones and Wayne Neily. It was in full sun, and "worked its way along one branch for 30 seconds, then moved twenty yards into another dead tree and was there for at least a full minute" according to Barbara Hinds, one of the group of seven people fortunate enough to get a good look at this delightful little bird. Almost the same thing happened on Seal Island, where several members of the group saw a Gnatcatcher, on a low branch of a tree, not far ahead and in good view, late afternoon of September 24, and again, not far away from the same spot, next morning.

A possible first date this year for the WATER PIPET is August 5, at Cape Sable Light (Smiths), and the possible peak of migration is October 22, when 100+ were seen in the Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co. area (Allen). CEDAR WAXWINGS were present at Lawrencetown, Anna. Co. in numbers ranging from 25 to 200, large numbers of which were young, September 13 to October 7 (Slauenwhite); a late one was seen at Pictou October 12 (Holdway), and another at McNab's Island, October 16 (N.S.B.S. party). An early NORTHERN SHRIKE was seen at Chebogue Point, Yar. Co., September 2 (Allen). A LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was seen on Brier Island September 4 (Lorrimer, Lent, Anketell-Jones) and another at Chebogue Point September 11 (Allen). Mr. Allen said he saw a Loggerhead Shrike, according to his records, in the exact same spot on October 9, 1965.

A SOLITARY VIREO near Dartmouth, October 22, was a late date for this bird (Comer). Another rarity to show up on Seal Island was a GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER, September 24 (Allen). A breeding record of the rather rare CAPE MAY WARBLER came from Bass River, Col. Co., where a female feeding young was seen July 30 (Hemeons). Evelyn Richardson reported 50 MYRTLE WARBLERS in the trees near her house October 13 (Shelburne Coastguard). A fall record, later than that given in Tufts, of the BAY-BREASTED WARBLER came from Barrington Passage, Shel. Co., September 18 (Johnson). "On the clear, cold, windy night of October 17-18..., 115 BLACKPOLL WARBLERS were found dead" at the foot of Cape Sable Light (Shelburne Coastguard). Among the other birds to meet their fate on this occasion was another Bay-Breasted Warbler giving us a still later date. PALM WARBLERS were very numerous on the Seal Island fall migration study trip, September 24-25. A late, unfortunate OVENBIRD was found dead, October 27, in Halifax city (Colpitts). One or more YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS were seen on Seal Island September 24-25 (N.S.B.S. party). A curious occurrence of the Yellow-breasted Chat was on Outer Bird Islands, Cape Breton, where one was found, dead, this July by Sylvia Fullerton and Barbara Hinds, on the Society Field Trip. Another Chat was seen at Bass River, September 4, (Hemeons), and at Cape Sable, 1 on September 18, 2 on October 3, and 1 (dead) on October 12 (Smiths). A HOODED WARBLER was another Seal Island "find", September 25 (Macpherson). On Brier Island, the WILSON'S WARBLER was not seen during the period August 31 to September 2. On September 3 one male appeared, and on September 4, 5 were seen. This migration note came from John Lorrimer and Patrick Anketell-Jones, who were camping there during that period. One AMERICAN REDSTART was seen near Donkin, Cape Breton Co., October 14, by A. J. Erskine, who says it was the "latest date ever" for him, for this bird.

BOBOLINKS were flocking in central Hants Co. (100+) by August 7 (Allen), and were heard migrating over the Light at Brier Island August 31. (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones). There were still large numbers (100+) at Chebogue Point September 10 (Allen). A YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD was seen and well characterized by William Noble and Nellie Snyder August 28, at Caledonia, Queens Co. This bird was in good view for a matter of hours, it's head was "a brilliant chrome yellow", and it was identified both by sight and sound. The REDWINGED BLACKBIRD has been reported scarce by many observers during the summer, 1966, but a flock (200+) was seen flying west over St. Andrew's, Ant. Co., October 18 (Erskine). The BALTIMORE ORIOLE is becoming our most reported bird. Among the 14 or more reports received this summer are: a nest with two young successfully reared, at Mill Village, Lun. Co., in July (Vogler); 35 present on Brier Island August 31 - September 1 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones); about as many on Seal Island September 24-25 (N.S.B.S.). It might be interesting to note here that 8 Baltimore Orioles were seen during September at Chebogue Point (Allen), but none were noted at Cape Sable during this period. The latest oriole date is October 8, outside Dartmouth (Comer, Clayden). A fairly late RUSTY BLACKBIRD is reported from Bedford October 11 (Chisholm). A flock of 300 COMMON GRACKLES was seen flying west near Hantsport October 7, also a flock of

400+ flying SW at River Denys, Richmond Co. (Erskine). Two more SCARLET TANAGERS were seen during June and July, where they appeared to be settled in the vicinity of Annapolis Royal (Atkinson).

The ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK was reported as present in most counties in Nova Scotia this summer, from Marble Mountain in Cape Breton Co. (Foote) to Brier Island in Digby Co. (Lorrimer) and 5 or 6 were still on Seal Island in September (N.S.B.S.). Two more BLUE GROSBEEKS were seen at Granite Beach, Canso, Guys. Co., by the S. K. Jarvises, Eileen Armsworthy, and two observers from the Buffalo Ornithologists Society, on September 19. Four to six DICKCISSELS were seen on the Seal Island trip September 24-25 (N.S.B.S. party), and were "singing" at this time. Two more Dickcissels visited Louisbourg, "an immature male on October 12, with Juncos, and a female in the same area October 26" (Lunn). EVENING GROSBEEKS have been reported as fairly common in Cape Breton Co. (Foote), Guysborough Co. (MacFarlane, Norman), Halifax Co. (Brown, MacKenzie, Rupert), Kings Co. (Erskine), Colchester Co. (McNally, Hemeons). Whitehead at Round Hill, Anna. Co., reports 9 on October 24, "the first seen since last spring". Two very interesting items concerning these Grosbeaks have come from Nellie Snyder at Italy Cross, Lun. Co., who saw one "feeding fuzzy young" on August 20; and similarly from Dr. Luther MacKenzie of Bedford, Hfx. Co., who saw an adult feeding a young bird cracked sun flower seed, on August 20.

A RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE was seen at Cape Sable on October 6 (S. Smith) and an IPSWICH SPARROW at Cape Sable August 5, rather an early date (B.J. Smith). Evidence of a migrating movement of the SAVANNAH SPARROW was a build-up to around 300 birds in the Chebogue Point - Kelley's Cove area, Yar. Co. during the first two weeks of September (Allen). By September 19, the number had dropped to around 50. Another GRASSHOPPER SPARROW was positively identified on Seal Island, September 25 (Macpherson). A VESPER SPARROW, casual in Cape Breton, was observed near Loch Lomond, Rich. Co., October 14 (Erskine). Two more LARK SPARROWS have been reported: 1 adult at Brier Island September 3 (Lorrimer and Anketell-Jones), and 1 at Three Fathom Harbor, Hfx. Co., October 15 (Fullerton). A FIELD SPARROW was found near the County Home, Hfx. Co., October 22 (Comer and Clayden), "observed at close range, as it made its way slowly along a hedgerow, the rusty cap and pink bill were clearly visible". Another Field Sparrow was identified on Seal Island September 24-25 (N.S.B.S.). On October 6, at Cape Sable, an immature WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW was observed, and another, an adult, on October 7 (Smiths). An immature White-crown was seen at the Dartmouth Piggery, Hfx. Co., on October 22 (Allen), and on the same day, another immature White-crowned Sparrow appeared, with some White-throats, at the Dockyard, in metropolitan Halifax (M. Anketell-Jones). More evidence has come to light about the nesting of the FOX SPARROW in Cape Breton. Singing Birds were heard, 1 near Glace Bay June 7 (Alward), 1 July 17 at Big Intervale (Helleiner), and 1 July 28

at the north tip of Cape Breton (Lunns, Erskine). Erskine also saw one at River Denys October 15, and 3 at Indian Brook October 16. It should be added here, since it was omitted from the report of the Eastern Shore Bird Sanctuary trip account in the last Newsletter, that 2 Fox Sparrows were seen on Middle Halibut Island, one carrying food into the underbrush (Hinds, Comer). During his visit there a few years ago, Dr. Harrison Lewis was convinced Fox Sparrows were nesting on the island. A last date for the SWAMP SPARROW at Pictou is September 18 (Holdway). The LAPLAND LONGSPUR has begun to appear again with 8 seen at Glace Bay October 24 (Alward), and the SNOW BUNTING has returned from the north, as one to two dozen were noted on Wedge Island, Hfx. Co., October 23 (Helleiner).



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

My trip to your country was most rewarding. The people, the country and the birds were all of the best. Most of my photographic efforts were with the movie camera and the 1000 feet of movie film taken on the island came out quite well. The Puffins were most obliging. Had it not been that I wanted to get some footage of the young Gannets at Bonaventure, I would have enjoyed staying the two weeks in Nova Scotia.....

Since I haven't settled on the area for next year's trip, you make it sound awfully enticing for a return go at, maybe, the Roseate Tern; and I still haven't seen any live Petrels. Besides, you people up that way have been so accomodating that I should go up just to meet some of you.

Again, thanks so much for your co-operation; and, if the birds you mention can be photographed, it won't take too much urging to get me up to your country again next season.

Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y.

PAUL JEHEBER

We are indebted to Mr. Jeheber for the pictures of Auks, Cormorants and Puffins taken at Bird Islands this summer and kindly sent to us for their present use in this Newsletter. (Editor)

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

I have a note taken from a magazine re birdhouse that may interest our members. Dr. Robert A. McCabe of Wisconsin University conducted a survey for 11 years on colors of bird houses and the effect it had on birds in choosing a home.

Wrens were given a choice of red, blue, yellow, white and green nest boxes. Over the 11 year period, 98 nests were constructed in the boxes. Here's a run down on the nest box use: red - 41 times; green - 31; blue - 6; yellow - 8; and white - 2 times.

Lunenburg, N.S.

F. M. RUDOLF

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

In answer to your letter Oct. 2 about Baltimore Orioles, this is all I can tell you.

On May 20 I saw the first one in back of the garage where I work, being attracted by its song. I had time to drive home for binoculars and back whereupon I examined it at close range. On Sunday morning, May 23, I saw 4 in different parts of town. Sunday afternoon I went to Wolfville and there talked with Mr. Robie Tufts and, upon arrival home, saw the first nest under construction.

This nest is across the street from where I work, in an elm tree directly above No. 1 Highway up about 35-40 feet. Construction continued in good view as the leaves were not fully out until June 1, when I presume laying began as the female was rarely seen. Judging from the many trips the male made to the nest, I would say he was feeding the female. Upon numerous occasions, I have seen the male drive starlings away from the nest; and, as he seemed to be a good defender, I believe they will have little difficulty with them in the future,

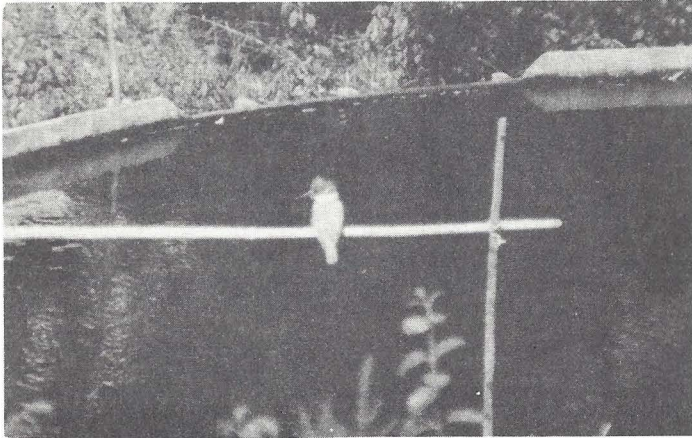
From the first of July on, I was extremely busy and had little time to watch. However, on July 28 in the afternoon I noticed both adults were behaving strangely in a chestnut under the elm. Upon investigation, I found three young were in the same tree. They must have just left the nest as they were barely able to fly. From that day on, they were never seen back at the nest.

The second nest is down the street about 600 feet in an elm about 20 feet up in back of a house. Talking with the people who had the privilege of watching from their livingroom window, I found that the dates I have given you for the first are about the same as the second. However, no young were seen.

I believe that there were more than two nests in town and I will let you know if I find more after the leaves have gone.

Lawrencetown
Anna. Co., N. S.

PAUL SLAUENWHITE



Kingfisher at the Ternan's
Annapolis Royal, N. S.

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

Speaking of Kingfishers, we have had a pair on our little pond for several years. During the summer I catch hundreds of minnows on our marshes and put them in the ponds, so life comes pretty easy in our welfare state. Anyway, a week or so ago, my couple brought in the new brood. Two hens and one cock. The old showed the young how to catch fish and for about a week they screeched from early morning until it was too late to see. I built a long perch out of a bean pole and the FIVE would sit there and 'operate'. I have never seen that many Kingfishers together before. Today the old cock left (I think) and the old man with three hens spent the evening sitting on the perch.

Annapolis Royal, N.S.

JOE B. TERNAN

Mr. Ternan mentioned the fact that the N.S.B.S. sent a formal protest to the Kedge Fish Hatchery concerning the use of inhumane traps for Kingfishers in use there. This was accompanied by a photograph of a bird caught in such a trap. The member who first sent in the complaint to the Society reports that these traps are no longer in use at the Hatchery, and wishes to thank the Society for its prompt action. (Editor)

Editor
NSBS Newsletter

I was amused, though a bit sceptical, over Charlie Allen's patent bird-calling method. But the other day I was in the woods near Mooseland, and when I heard something cheep I tried out a few tentative "swishes".

The result was startling. In next to no time I stood, like a sort of depraved St. Francis, surrounded by about 15 Blackpolls, Magnolias, Canadas and Parulas, with the odd Yellowthroat, Solitary Vireo and White-throated Sparrow flitting about on the sidelines.

Marvellous, you may think. But I've two complaints. No bird-watcher is ever completely convinced of his bird unless he's seen it properly, through binoculars. But try though I did, I couldn't get far enough away from this little lot to focus on them. Perhaps Charlie could invent a system which will keep the birds back a bit, within binocular range?

Secondly - and more important: Charlie's embarrassment at the Halifax County Mental Hospital was nothing compared with mine. You see, I was with a couple of psychologists!

Halifax, N.S.

DICK BROWN



Through the Binoculars -

Gordon Larkin

BIRDS OF YESTERDAY

by J. S. Erskine

We know remarkably little about the birds of former times, especially in Nova Scotia where we have bone-devouring soils. There is, however, one limited source of knowledge which seems not to have been exploited before, the prehistoric shell-heaps.

Indians have occupied parts of Nova Scotia probably since the first melting of the ice about 13,000 B.C., but they seem to have given all their attention to fish and big game and to have ignored the immense reserve of shellfish. About 500 B.C. a shell-fish exploiting culture spread into the province from the New England direction and reached its maximum extension in a very short time. Shell-heaps of the earliest period have been found in Pictou County, Annapolis County and Queens County, those of later date as far east as Halifax. Prince Edward Island was full of them, but they are not known from eastern mainland Nova Scotia or Cape Breton. The drying of clams, or preferably oysters where these were available, continued until about A.D. 1400 when it ceased as abruptly as it had arisen.

The lime in these tons of shells in a shell-heap satisfied the hunger of an acid soil, and the mixture of shell and beach sand with which wigwams were often carpeted helped to keep the sites well drained, and bones, even many fish-bones, have been preserved through two thousand years. When I began to dig in the shell-heaps with the aim of restoring the lost history of the province, I realized that every detail of the environment must have been important to people at the mercy of climate and a fluctuating food-supply and that these details could only be learned from every fragment remaining. So I gathered and preserved all bird bones.

My first efforts at getting bones identified were brushed off by very busy people. Earl Godfrey, prodded by R. W. Tufts, identified the humerus of a great auk, from which example I was able to name many others. At last Dr. Pierce Brodkorb of the University of Florida agreed to identify my specimens, and the result, for which we must be grateful to him and to Mr. Lowell Bernstein, is now available.

We cannot expect a complete avifauna of the province for 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500. These birds had been food, and therefore belonged to the larger species. Shell-heap sites were usually occupied in August and September when clams were free from eggs and when the runs of fish on the rivers had ceased. Along the South Shore and on the Annapolis Basin the same sites seem to have been used throughout the winter until the Little Ice Age following A.D. 1100 made this impracticable.

SITES:

Bear River #2 and #3; 500 B.C. - A.D. 300.

Common loon, red-throated loon, red-necked grebe, sooty

shearwater, double-crested cormorant, Canada goose, common eider, oldsquaw, razor-billed auk, common goldeneye, osprey, herring gull.

This confirms the evidence of deer antlers, human burials and fish bones that this site was used alternatively in winter and summer. The shearwater is a surprise.

Brighton, Digby County: confused by ploughing but old.

Common loon, Canada goose, black duck, common goldeneye, razor-billed auk.

This was a weir-fishing camp used in winter.

Port Joli #8; 100 B.C. - A.D. 1100.

Red-necked grebe, gannet, Canada goose, brant, black duck, common goldeneye, common eider, red-breasted merganser, thick-billed murre.

This was a remnant of a large site with a run of gaspereaux but also used in winter.

Port Joli #3, Queens County: A.D. 1-400 - A.D. 1400.

Common loon, great cormorant, Canada goose, brant, black duck, green-winged teal, common goldeneye, oldsquaw, common eider, common merganser, red-breasted merganser, ruffed grouse, thick-billed murre, black guillemot, passenger pigeon, raven, great auk.

The main site was an immense clam-drying complex overlying a one-wigwam fishing camp of a thousand years earlier. The range of birds suggests either a colder climate or an occupation later in the season than its use implies.

Whynacht Cove, Mahone Bay: A.D. 700 - 1100.

Common loon, red-necked grebe, horned grebe, gannet, Canada goose, black duck, common goldeneye, oldsquaw, common eider, red-breasted merganser, ruffed grouse, herring gull, great auk, razor-billed auk, thick-billed murre, black guillemot, great horned owl, red-throated loon.

Everything in this extensive list points to winter occupation before the Little Ice Age. The fuel of red oak confirms the season.

Port Joli #2: A.D. 900 - 1200.

Ruffed grouse.

Matthews Island, Yarmouth County: A.D. 1000 - 1300.

Gannet, double-crested cormorant, Canada goose, black duck, great auk, common puffin.

This was a seal-hunting camp, usually a winter activity.

St. Margaret's Bay, Halifax County: A.D. 1300.

Common loon, greater shearwater, Canada goose, common eider, red-breasted merganser, razor-billed auk, great auk, thick-billed murre, bald eagle.

This was a late site for sea fishing in late summer. The shearwater suggests more adventuring into open sea than we have other evidence of. The murre suggests that the climate was colder than today, but the bay has a good run of tom-cod in January which may have tempted winter occupation.

Waterside, Pictou County: A.D. 1500.

Canada goose.

This was a pocket in a large site of which the top, which showed contact with the French, had been ploughed out of existence. It seems to have been a fishing site.

To sum up the record, such as it is, we find an avifauna recognizably the same as it was before gunners set about exterminating our birds. It gives some shaky confirmation to an influence of the Little Ice Age upon the climate of the province but does not suggest drastic changes.

The comparative abundance of the species represented by the 118 individuals identified is also of interest: Canada goose 17; common eider 12; common loon 11; great auk 11; oldsquaw 8; black duck 7; brant 5; razor-billed auk 5; common goldeneye 5; red-breasted merganser 4; thick-billed murre 4; red-necked grebe 3; gannet 3; ruffed grouse 3; red-throated loon 2; double-crested cormorant 2; herring gull 2; black guillemot 2; horned grebe 1; greater shearwater 1; sooty shearwater 1; great cormorant 1; green-winged teal 1; common merganser 1; bald eagle 1; osprey 1; puffin 1; passenger pigeon 1; great horned owl 1; raven 1.

My impression is that many shore birds must have escaped identification, as well as herons which I thought I had identified among the bones, but, taking the list gratefully for what it contains, we have a picture of a very different pattern of waterfowl from that of today. Only two herring gulls and no other gulls have been identified out of 118 determinable individuals. As Fisher has pointed out, our immense gull population is a by-product of our fishing industry. In former days far more birds caught their own fish, far fewer depended upon human wastefulness.

This is a small glimpse into the past but perhaps better than none.