

NOVA
SCOTIA



MUSEUM *of* SCIENCE



VOL. 1 NO. 4

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1956

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MINISTER
THE HON. R. M. FIELDING

MUSEUM BOARD OF GOVERNORS

DR. H. P. MOFFATT, Chairman

D. K. CROWDIS, Secretary

MEMBERS

C. R. K. ALLEN
DR. WILL R. BIRD
DR. A. E. CAMERON

F. W. DOYLE
T. P. LUSBY
N. D. PHINNEY
J. E. REARDON

DR. H. D. SMITH
HAROLD WEIR
DR. C. B. WELD

Director:
DONALD K. CROWDIS

Editor:
ELIZABETH WHEALY

EDITORIAL

An issue devoted to the subject of birds needs no apology. Of some interest to everyone, birds are of increasing interest to more and more of us. Most of us find ourselves impressed, attracted or fascinated by them, for reasons ranging from admiration at their ease in flight to gratitude at the sight of our unintentional allies skillfully sweeping up a hundred mosquitoes while we swat one.

Although our Province has been marked by its numbers of bird lovers, there has not been an organization devoted to the study and understanding of birds. There is now, however, and the first year enrolment in the Nova Scotia Bird Society has been quite amazing and the enthusiasm of its members boundless.

It is fitting then, that the first Special Number of the Museum's Newsletter should be at the service of the Society. Other Special Numbers will be devoted to stars, fishes and other specific interests, but the bird people have earned this first recognition.

Issued as a supplement to this number is a check list of Nova Scotian birds which is as up-to-date as it can be. It is hoped that this check list will stimulate observers to further records and that these observations will be reported to the author or to the Museum promptly. In other words, help us to put this list out of date as soon as possible.

D. K. CROWDIS

The Cover: — GREAT HORNED OWL

Photo by the late T. J. Courtney

Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Courtney

PUBLIC SENTIMENT TOWARD OUR SONG AND INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS YESTERDAY - TODAY - TOMORROW

By Robie W. Tufts

My interest in birds began farther back than I am able to recall. As a young lad, I roamed the outskirts of Wolfville after school and on Saturdays, with a gang of other outlaws bent on killing anything in feathers that came within range of our deadly catapults. Later I learned that this was common practice in many settled communities. This iniquitous destruction of beautiful and valuable birdlife was carried on openly. If we were violating any then existing Statute, nobody cared enough to bring the fact to our attention.

Nor was this wanton killing of birds in those days limited to youngsters with their primitive and comparatively ineffective sling-shots. I well recall going, during the 1890's, to the upland pastures above the town to watch a group of six or seven men shoot migrating nighthawks during July and August. They would take their respective stands a gun-shot or so apart and wait for the loose flocks to come by. Nighthawks were more plentiful in those days and often the flights would continue with but slight breaks for an entire afternoon. The erratic flight of these birds, as they darted about catching winged insects, made them difficult targets, I was told. We boys used to watch from the side-lines and pick up the dead birds for the shooters, whose skilled markmanship we greatly admired. What an example these men were setting for the rising generation! At the end of the afternoon the gunner whose pile of dead nighthawks numbered the greatest, was voted to be the best shot. The birds were invariably left on the ground to rot. These men were in no sense "low-brow", I can assure you. They were prominent in the business and social life of the town.

During the same period, when the sandpipers were swarming along our beaches in July and August, as they do today, it was common practice for grown men armed with shot-guns and carrying large bags or satchels, to visit regularly Evangeline Beach at North Grand Pre (Kings County), where they would fire their full broadsides from close range into the dense flocks. When they returned to town they would brag about how many hundreds they had killed. Many of the sparrow-sized victims would fall dead or wounded into the water and these were mostly left behind. I recall that on one occasion, the hunter — incidentally he was one of our town physicians — brought home his kill in a blood-soaked pillow-case. I was playing with his sons at the time, and, dumping the contents on the lawn, he told us to get busy and pluck them. I further recall how shocked I was, on this particular occasion, to see that some of the sandpipers were still alive and able to flop about.

In later years, while I was conversing with a sportsman in Prince Edward Island on this general topic, he told of his own boyhood activities in the Charlottetown area. It was when the swallows were congregating on the wires just prior to their departure in the autumn that

he and his gang indulged in their form of brutality. He told how he and his chums would take their fathers' shot-guns and, having manoeuvred so as to get the birds in line, would fire simultaneously at the count of "three." The birds that rained down would be carefully counted. This was done in order to determine the "score" — a figure they kept trying to exceed in subsequent bursts.

Or I could tell of the farmer and his son — and this happened more recently — who knew the location of an eagles' nest. Though it was far back in heavy timbered country, it was within reach by travel on foot. He told of having waited till he was sure the nest would contain young birds and then they proceeded with gun and axe to clean them up. The tree was felled and the young killed but the old birds were so wary that they got away, though one was wounded. When I asked him what he had against eagles, he replied — "Well — eagles are bad birds aren't they?" The foregoing are but a few of the many examples of wanton cruelty and excessive killing of wild birds that I remember from earlier days.

But that was YESTERDAY. What of TODAY? I am sure that my readers will agree that such practices as I have described are no longer commonplace. Doubtless there are isolated cases enacted in out-of-the-way places, but certainly not under the public eye for they would not now be tolerated. Today we read of the Canadian Government making a formal request to Washington not to establish a bomb-site near the wintering-grounds of the few surviving Whooping Cranes for fear of disturbing them. Why protect these birds? They are of no economic importance to mankind. And yet a Government takes time off to ask another Government in a formal manner not to do something which, if carried out, might well hasten the day of the bird's extinction.

When I was a boy, winter feeding-trays, bird-baths and nest-boxes for the use of our native wild birds were practically unknown. Today in Nova Scotia alone there are thousands of people who feed the birds regularly in winter and who look after their needs in summer too. Whether this artificial feeding is actually necessary from the birds' point of view, is aside from the point, but I am quite sure that vast numbers of them retire to their roosts at night with fuller stomachs than would be the case were such food withheld. Why do people go to all this bother and expense to do these things for the birds? They didn't do it YESTERDAY. The answer is simple. It is because these thousands of citizens have come to know more about birds — their names, their habits and general attractiveness — than did their forebears, and to know birds is to love them. I believe the trend is strong in the direction of more and more people becoming bird-conscious; the result of which is bound to be beneficial to the birds.

And what of TOMORROW? Before delving into the future it will be well to give some thought to the reasons for, or an explanation of, this favorable change in the public mind which so obviously has taken place. Having done this, we cannot escape the conclusion that it is a direct result of the campaign of education which has been, and is being, carried on in the press; over the radio and, more recently, television; by illustrated lectures; by teachers in the schools and by innumerable

books and magazines; all of which have contributed, singly and collectively, their quota to the vastly improved sentiment which exists today.

And if my assessment of the value of these combined forces is correct, is it not true that they are gradually being stepped-up? Certainly that is the present-day trend, resulting as it must, in the dispersal of more and more factual information regarding the value, economic as well as aesthetic, of our native wild birds. I believe therefore, that as far as their future welfare is dependent upon the sort of treatment they will henceforth receive from this kindly disposed public which is becoming more and more conscious of their value, all will be well with them for many years to come.

There is however, always the fear that as a direct result of man's ever-expanding economy, conditions with respect to environment may develop, slowly but inexorably, which will adversely affect the well-being of many valuable species. But this far-off possibility obviously lies outside and beyond the limited scope of this treatise.

EVENING GROSBEAKS



PHOTO BY THE LATE T. J. COURTNEY
COURTESY MRS. PEARL COURTNEY

BIRD SOCIETY FIELD TRIPS

By C. R. K. Allen

This brief account of the field trip programme carried out by members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society in the Halifax-Dartmouth area is given in the hope that it will be a guide and encouragement to groups in other parts of the Province.

Trips were taken once a week during the Spring migration period, that is, from the middle of April to late June. The "take-off" time for each walk was 6 a.m., which allowed about an hour and a half of bird-watching plus a little time changing clothes and gulping a cup of coffee before the daily grind.

The number of those who took part varied from two or three on cold rainy mornings to about twenty on the balmy days. Sexes were about evenly divided and members ranged in age from sub-debs to arterio-sclerotics.

The amount of organization and planning required was practically nil; interested members met in the late winter of 1955 and settled such details as the beginning date, starting time, and day of the week.

The small amount of direction required was supplied by those members who were most familiar with birds and good bird territory in the district, theirs being merely the job of deciding the locale of each trip and assistance to beginners in identification of the birds seen.

The numbers and kinds of birds recorded varied with the weather, the progress of the season, and the locality. Some places were consistently more productive than others, and these the group visited repeatedly and thus obtained an interesting picture of the changing bird population in one area as the season advanced.

The poorest trip in terms of birds seen was a raw Saturday afternoon in April 1955 when five or six hardy souls managed to flush one lone Flicker during a two hours' search. The most productive was probably the trip of April 30, 1956, when in two hours twenty-nine species were seen. The average trip yielded a "bag" of from fifteen to twenty-five species, and although no rarities were encountered, almost every day produced at least one bird which was new to some members of the group.

The Society members and their guests who took part in this field trip series benefited to varying degrees and in various ways; the tyros learned to identify new birds by sight and sound while the more experienced members renewed old acquaintances among the Spring migrants and frequently added a new observation to their stock. All shared equally however in the frustrating, exasperating, but always pleasurable experience of a Spring bird walk, and all look forward to a renewal of the series in 1957.

NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

EXPEDITION TO BRIER ISLAND

By Harrison F. Lewis, Compiler

A field party from the Nova Scotia Bird Society visited Brier Island, Digby County, from September 9 to 15, 1955, for the purpose of investigating bird migration. Members of the party were Willett J. Mills, Fred Helleiner and Harrison F. Lewis. Helleiner was obliged to leave the island on the morning of September 11 to keep another appointment. While the field party was formally authorized by the Society's Executive, it met its own expenses, without charge against Society funds.

Brier Island, the westernmost land in Nova Scotia, is situated in 44° 15' N. Latitude, 66° 23' W. Longitude. It is slightly more than 4 miles long and less than 2 miles wide. It is the southwestern extreme of the strip of trap rock that includes the North Mountain, Digby Neck and Long Island. It exhibits two parallel ridges, trending NE-SW, and an intervening swampy trough. Maximum elevation, which is on the northwestern ridge, is about 100 feet.

The village of Westport, with a population of about 500, is situated beside the harbour formed by a bight of Grand Passage, which separates Brier Island from Long Island. Good accommodation for visitors is available at the Denton House, in Westport, but reservations should be made in advance. The island is easily reached by car or bus, travelling via Route 17 from Digby and crossing two ferries. Short dirt roads on the island give access to the northern and western points and can be travelled by car. Much of the island is covered with scrubby mixed woods, but there are also extensive open fields, a large bog and two small ponds.

The principal lighthouse is at the western extreme of the island. A smaller lighthouse stands on North Point. Grand Manan, New Brunswick, is 38 miles northwest of Brier Island, from which it is visible in clear weather. Due west of Brier Island the coast of Maine is about 95 miles distant. Cape Cod is southwest of Brier Island and about 230 miles distant.

Details of weather conditions, recorded throughout each day, are here summarized. September 9 was fine and calm. The 10th was marked by light frost in the morning and a minor thunderstorm in the afternoon. September 11 was mild, sunny and hazy, with light showers before sunset. The 12th began with a strong wind from SSE and steady rain. The afternoon was foggy and calm, but at sunset SW wind brought showers, followed by clearing. The 13th and 14th were clear and cool, with light winds and no frost. September 15 was mild and mostly clear, with light S wind.

Observers took suitable stations, chiefly at the N and W light-houses, daily, at or before dawn, remaining until shortly after 8.00 a.m., ADST., and at about 6.15 p.m., remaining until nearly dark. In forenoon and afternoon, visits were made to various parts of the island where migratory birds were likely to be found.

The following observations of migration behaviour were made.

Sept. 9 (evening only). Voices of passerine migrants were heard overhead at 10.00 p.m.

Sept. 10. Between 7.10 and 8.10 a.m., Helleiner at North Point observed numerous small birds moving through scattered coniferous woods to northernmost trees, about 200 yards back of extreme of point. From there they customarily flew on about 100 yards toward the point, spiralled to gain altitude, then turned and flew SE the shore of the island that faces Grand Passage. Birds observed to participate in this movement were Myrtle Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-throat, unidentified warblers, American Pipit, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Chipping Sparrow, unidentified vireo. One Bobolink was seen to fly SW and one unidentified warbler was seen to fly NW. Many other birds remained concentrated in the woods at the Point.

Mills at W light saw a Pigeon Hawk, after one false start, fly W out of sight, and saw a group of 4 unidentified swallows fly SW out of sight.

Sept. 11. No observable migration. A freshly dead Yellow-breasted Chat picked up.

Sept. 12 and 13. No sign of migration at any hour.

Sept. 14. At 7.42 a.m., Lewis at North Point saw a group of 4 Bobolinks, at an elevation of about 100 feet, fly NE out of sight. This course would take them along the outer shore of Long Island, toward Digby Neck.

This investigation is in a very early stage and no conclusions concerning manner of migration to and from Brier Island are warranted at this time. Observations made suggest that, in September, migration is most evident immediately after exceptional low temperature, especially frost, has been experienced. Courses followed by strong fliers (swallows, Pigeon Hawk) were toward central Maine coast or more southern New England, by relatively long over-water flight, without northerly component. Weaker fliers migrate chiefly at night and when moving by day tend to follow land and keep over-water flight to a minimum, regardless of direction.

The party recorded 95 kinds of birds on Brier Island or over surrounding waters. Three additional species observed on the island in May by Lewis bring the Society's list of Brier Island birds to 98. A detailed list is filed with the Secretary. Members who observe birds on Brier Island are asked to report their observations to the Secretary, so that this list may be rounded out as rapidly as possible.

The following records deserve special mention.

Both the European Cormorant and the Double-crested Cormorant were present. In general, the former occurred on more open waters, the latter on more sheltered waters.

One Golden Plover was seen at Pond Cove on September 10.

A Black Tern was observed near North Point on September 9.

A freshly dead Yellow-breasted Chat was picked up, on September 11, from the road leading to cottages on the W side of Pond Cove. Cause of death was not apparent.

A Scarlet Tanager in yellowish-green plumage was seen at North Point in the concentration of small birds that occurred there on the morning of September 10.

A Dickcissel, not an adult male, was observed on the beach of Pond Cove on the afternoon of September 13. It was carefully studied, at close range and in good light, through a x25 telescope by Mills and Lewis and the usual characteristics were noted in detail.

A Lark Bunting was observed on the beach of Pond Cove, two or three hundred yards from the Dickcissel, on the afternoon of September 13. It was carefully studied, at close range and in good light, through x6 and x7 binoculars and a x25 telescope, for about half an hour, by Mills and Lewis. The large cream-coloured or off-white patch in each wing and other characteristics were clearly seen. This species has not previously been found in Nova Scotia.

It is to be expected that some species, when migrating out of Nova Scotia in autumn, will occur on Brier Island after they have left most or all other parts of the province. Some dates of occurrence that are interesting because of their lateness are:

Willet	September 12
Nighthawk	September 10
Chimney Swift	September 14
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	September 13
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	September 13
Tree Swallow	September 14
Cliff Swallow	September 14
Yellow Warbler	September 12
Oven-bird	September 10
Mourning Warbler	September 13
Wilson's Warbler	September 13
Bobolink	September 14

It is also of interest that the party did not observe on Brier Island any Mourning Dove, Hermit Thrush, Yellow Palm Warbler, Rusty Blackbird or Bronzed Grackle. Apparently migration of these species was not under way in that area during the period of the investigation.

By way of comparison, it may be stated that about 150 persons, taking part in the annual Cape Campout of the Massachusetts Audubon Society on Cape Cod, September 9-11, 1955, recorded 136 species of birds. Their list includes 1 Yellow Palm Warbler, 1 Yellow-breasted Chat, and 2 Dickcissels. The number of species that occur in both the list from Brier Island and the list from Cape Cod is 66.

Brier Island proves to be an interesting, important and convenient place for the study of migration and the discovery of casual and accidental species. The field party recommends that the Nova Scotia Bird Society continue its investigations there.

BIRD BANDING

By Willett J. Mills



PHOTO BY GORDON A. LARKIN

Bird Banding is one of the aids in obtaining information on the movements and natural history of birds, and in North America is carried out under the supervision of the Canadian Wildlife Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The bander may be granted a permit under the following conditions:

1. Applicants must be 18 years of age.
2. Applicants must be thoroughly competent to identify positively all the local species of birds.

3. The foregoing ability must be vouched for by two recognized ornithologists or banders.
4. It is a voluntary program, the bander donates his time and pays for his equipment and receives neither compensation nor reimbursement from the Government. The bander is provided at no cost with the bands, report forms and the franked envelopes.
5. Application blanks are obtainable from the Chief, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, Ontario.

My permit was granted in May, 1953, and the most frequent question asked me is "How do you catch them?" On January 2nd of this year I caught 32 birds by one quick pull of a cord. The cord was fastened to a stick which propped up the edge of a large cage. The stick is short and I waited of course until all the birds were well under and feeding quietly and then pulled very quickly so that without warning the cage fell; this was to insure that no birds were injured in any way. There were 23 Cowbirds, 7 Starlings, 1 Evening Grosbeak, and 1 English Sparrow. I banded them all except the last named, as English Sparrows are considered by bird banders to be pests. The cage in this case was baited with a plentiful supply of good quality bird seed with some ground-up suet mixed in it.

Warblers are caught in traps baited with water, preferably active water, such as a panful into which water drips from a tap. Other species that drink and bathe a lot are caught in this way too. Automatic traps, with a door that closes when the bird hops on to a hinged platform inside in order to get food that has been placed there, are also used.

Tree Swallows are very easily caught when they enter the nest box to feed their young. The entrance is quickly corked and a hinged top opened, the adult bird removed, banded, replaced inside and the cork removed again. It takes a Swallow about 20 minutes to forget this experience and the feeding is resumed. When the nestlings mature the parent birds do not stay in the nest box at night, and, about three nights before they are ready to fly, the box can be taken down, the young birds banded and the box rehung. This does not disrupt the normal daytime activities of the birds.

Last spring it was exciting to see (through a binocular) that the first Robin on my lawn was wearing a band, although I was unable to catch him to say positively that he was banded by me. Also, the first pair of Tree Swallows to come to my garden looking for a house were both banded. Later, when the time came to check the numbers on their bands, I found that one had nested in the same nesting box the year before, but that the partner had lived at that time with another Tree Swallow in a nesting box in my neighbor's garden; so you see this sort of thing goes on in the bird world too.

In the short time of less than three years I have banded, in my garden, 22 different species, and a total of 1146 birds. When the President of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, Robie W. Tufts, named me in his newspaper column "the number one bird bander in Nova Scotia," I was very pleased, even though there are only four in the Province who hold permits from our Canadian Wildlife Service.

PORT JOLI BIRD SANCTUARY

By Harrison F. Lewis

The wild clamour of Canada Geese and the sight of their V-shaped flocks winging steadily across the sky are familiar to most Canadians, for these birds are widely observed during their migration. Many think of them as a glad sign that spring is at hand; sportsmen are more likely to associate them with the fall and exciting hunts of that season. To relatively few in this country are they known as winter birds.

Bays and inlets along the southwestern coast of Nova Scotia are, however, a regular wintering ground for thousands of these splendid birds. In shallow tidal areas in Queens, Shelburne and Yarmouth Counties grow extensive stands of eel-grass, the rootstocks of which are excellent goose food. The comparatively mild winter climate that characterizes this coast combines with tidal currents to keep large feeding grounds free of ice, except on rare occasions. The geese arrive in the region in September and October and remain until March and April, though making frequent local flights. From time out of mind they have been eagerly sought here by gunners.

In 1915, before the adoption of the Migratory Birds Treaty by Canada and the United States, Nova Scotia took action to conserve and maintain this important wintering stock of geese. On March 11th of that year the Honourable O. T. Daniels, then Attorney-General, introduced in the provincial legislature a Bill to establish at Port Joli, Queens County, a sanctuary in which the hunting of geese should be prohibited at all times of the year. No doubt the provincial Game Commission, the members of which at that time were J. A. Knight, Charles R. Kelly and A. O. Pritchard, had taken an interest in bringing the matter to this point. The Bill passed third reading on April 6, 1915, and was sent to the Legislative Council. In due course it became law.

Through later amendment the sanctuary thus set up was extended to include parts of Port l'Hebert and a part of Sable River estuary and was altered in character so that it protected ducks as well as geese. It was a rational move to set up sanctuary areas on these three neighbouring arms of the sea, for the same flocks of geese frequent them all, moving back and forth according to whim or as conditions change. When there is little or no ice, the broad flats in the upper reaches of Port l'Hebert are commonly preferred, but when that area and much of Port Joli are frozen the geese in numbers turn to Sable River estuary, where strong currents delay ice formation.

In February, 1940, the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests requested the federal authorities to make the Port Joli Sanctuary, as then maintained by the Province, a sanctuary under the federal statute known as the Migratory Birds Convention Act. After extended correspondence, the desired action was taken on September 20, 1941. Thereafter the protection given by the sanctuary was applicable to all migratory birds, as defined in the Migratory Birds Treaty between Canada and the United States.

As time passed, there were a number of complaints to the effect that the sanctuary was too large and left too little of the local goose range open for hunting. The subject was carefully investigated at first hand and was discussed by the appropriate federal and provincial authorities until agreement was reached. The outcome was that, on October 25, 1950, by federal Order in Council, Port Joli Bird Sanctuary was substantially reduced in area. This reduction was distributed among all three of its component parts.

As it now stands, this sanctuary has a total area of about four square miles. The part in Port Joli is in Queens County, the part in Sable River estuary is in Shelburne County, and the part in Port l'Hebert is on the boundary between the two counties.

The number of Canada Geese for which this sanctuary provides protection varies from winter to winter, and from day to day during any one winter. An investigation made in February, 1921, by Hoyes Lloyd, Robie W. Tufts and others showed that about 6,100 geese were present. Some old timers report much larger numbers, all the way up to 500,000, as having been present in the "good old days", but the area could not have provided food for anything like that number. It is believed that in the autumn of 1953 as many as 10,000 geese may have been present, chiefly at Port l'Hebert, for a short period, but that the usual goose population in recent winters is from 2,000 to 3,000.

The writer lives beside the Sable River part of the sanctuary and has thus been in a position to observe it in detail and at close range for more than three years. There can be no doubt that this sanctuary area is an important aid to providing good and well sustained goose shooting in this locality. The geese make much use of the sanctuary but do not remain in it for long periods. Their natural tendency is to scatter to various other good feeding grounds within a few miles. On these non-sanctuary areas they may be lawfully hunted in open season. With the present combination of efficient firearms and ammunition, general distribution of automobiles, a network of roads kept open throughout the winter, and widespread adoption of the five-day work-week, hunting pressure on geese on the open areas is well maintained and is often heavy. It is interesting to see the geese head for the sanctuary when they get into trouble. Were no such closed area available to them in the vicinity, they would be harried from pillar to post and there is little doubt that most of them would soon be driven out of the country. As it is, their frequent flights to and from the sanctuary provide plenty of opportunities for wing shooting.

Port Joli Bird Sanctuary would be even more beneficial to both hunter and naturalist if it were better respected. Most local hunters realize this, but there is a percentage of gunners, largely from other places, who infringe on the sanctuary area from time to time. Many of them have limited time at their disposal and apparently want to get some birds *now*, by hook or by crook, with no regard for tomorrow or for the interests of sportsmen in general. The caretaker, who lives at Port Joli, can scarcely be expected to be at all three parts of the sanctuary at once, as the poachers are well aware.

The second most important game bird in this sanctuary is the Black Duck, which frequents it regularly through the winter and often num-

bers locally between 1,000 and 2,000. Other ducks that the present writer has observed in the sanctuary area are Greater Scaup, American Golden-eye, Buffle-head, Pintail, Mallard, Baldpate, and American and Hooded Mergansers. Occasionally a few Snow Geese mingle with the Canada Geese present.

Other water birds in season add much of interest to the reserved area. Herring Gulls are common, especially when small fish are running, and a few Great Black-backed Gulls are generally present. Common Terns, Common Loons and Double-crested Cormorants are often seen in the Sable River part of the sanctuary, but apparently Arctic Terns, Red-throated Loons and European Cormorants, all common coastal birds at some season, prefer not to venture so far up the estuary.

Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfishers and Ospreys fish in the sanctuary, each species in its own way. Bald Eagles are seen there chiefly in winter, when they search for dead and crippled waterfowl.

In late summer and early fall, a variety of shorebirds, including Turnstones, Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs, Black-bellied and Golden Plover, Dowitcher, and Least, Semipalmated and Spotted Sandpipers, are to be found within the confines of the sanctuary. Killdeer and Solitary Sandpiper occur rarely.

The outstanding shorebird of this sanctuary, however, is the big, noisy, flashy Willet, which nests commonly around its borders. This interesting wader is present here from late April till late August, though less conspicuous after mid-July, when its young begin to fly. Indeed, the year at Port Joli Bird Sanctuary is naturally divided into a cool sector dominated by the Canada Goose and a warm sector dominated by the Willet. Seldom do the two overlap.

This sanctuary area is unique in Nova Scotia and, in fact, in eastern Canada. Its blue-and-silver arms of the ocean, framed by rocky, forest-clad ridges, have a charm not easily forgotten. It can provide rewarding experiences for any visitor interested in birds.



GROSBEAKS IN BASKET

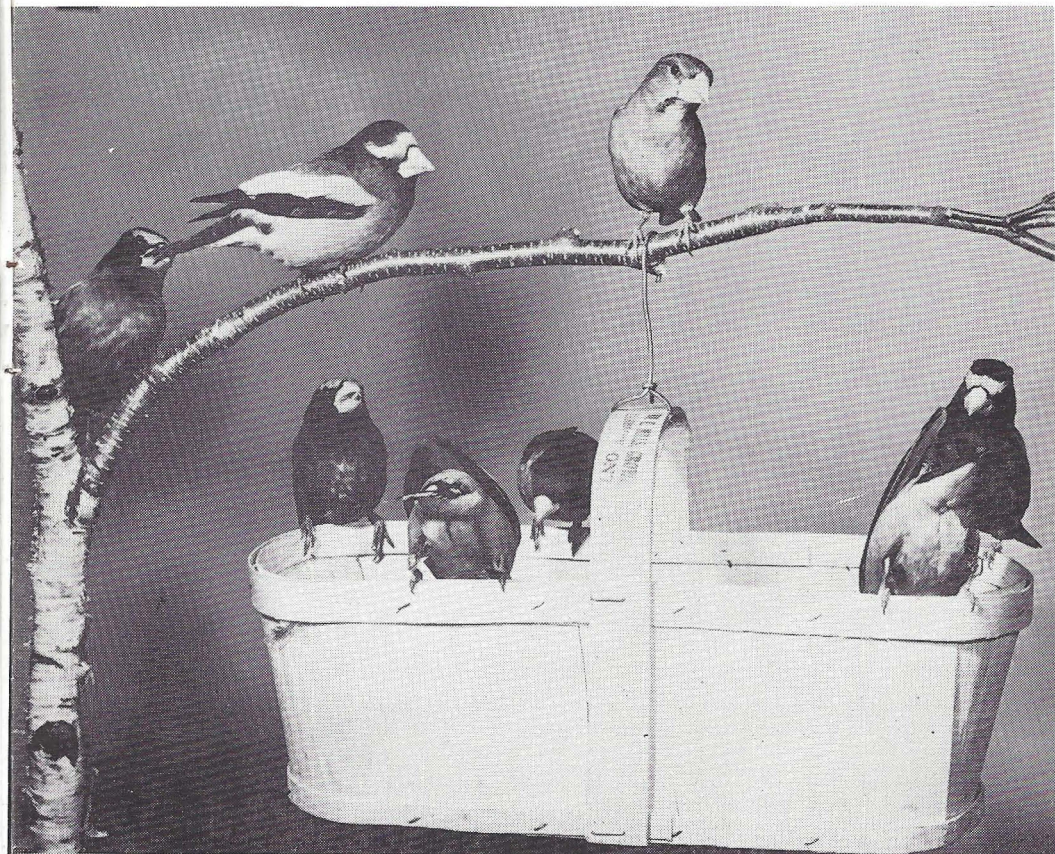


PHOTO BY THE LATE T. J. COURTNEY
COURTESY MRS. PEARL COURTNEY

On November 12, Mr. Albert Welch, a member of our Society and Keeper of Brier Island Light, mailed in a Snow Bunting which had been picked up dead. It arrived in Halifax in perfect condition and will be added to the collection of birds at the Nova Scotia Museum of Science. Thank you, Mr. Welch!

REPORT ON THE BIRD SOCIETY'S FALL MIGRATION PROJECT

Twenty-one members reported on this project. They were Alvin L. Chipman, Ethel A. Crathorne, W. A. Dennis, Phyllis Dodsworth, Mrs. John Erskine, W. E. Harlow, Mrs. Fred Heath, Mrs. Margaret Kenney, Harrison F. Lewis, Martin McNally, Willett J. Mills, G. F. T. Morland, Mrs. J. Stuart Roy, David Silver, Mrs. Ivan Smith, E. Swailes, C. F. Taylor, Robie W. Tufts, Miriam Wetmore, Florence M. White and L. Roy Whitman. The thanks of the Society are due to all who participated.

Tabulation of the reports shows that the picture of fall migration in Nova Scotia of all species studied except the Black-bellied Plover is rendered somewhat obscure toward the end by the fact that a few individuals linger in the province and attempt, more or less successfully, to winter here. There is discernible, however, a tendency, as might be expected, for birds to leave the eastern end of the Province first and to linger longest in the west.

For example, the earliest date of departure reported for the Yellow Palm Warbler is September 29, at Sydney, and the latest date reported for this species is November 13, at Rockville, Yarmouth County. All other dates of departure reported for this species fall in the month of October.

Dates of departure for the Myrtle Warbler are chiefly in October and it appears that most individuals of this species have left Nova Scotia by October 20. Later dates reported are October 23 at Truro; November 1 at Paradise; November 4 at Indian Harbour, Halifax County; and November 17 at West Middle Sable, Shelburne County. (Your Editor observed Myrtle Warblers in Shelburne County on December 24 and 25 and January 4, but considers these to be wintering individuals.)

Dates of departure for the Hermit Thrush may be sorted into five in September, five in October and two in November. This fact probably indicates that this retiring species was not consistently observed and was actually present into October, at least, in most areas. The November records at hand are November 1 at Stewiacke and November 10 at Paradise. It should be noted in this connection that a Hermit Thrush attended a feeding station in West Middle Sable through the week December 10-16 and that two were seen on December 30, during a Christmas Bird Count, at a feeding station at Windsor Junction.

Only eight reports include the Fox Sparrow. This bird is a late migrant, whose real departure dates are likely to be in November in at least a large part of Nova Scotia. In the period under investigation a number remained here into December, but it is uncertain whether these birds had ended their autumn migration. Possibly November 13, at Chebogue Point, Yarmouth County, is the latest date for a Fox Sparrow still in migration. December Fox Sparrows were reported at Dartmouth (on the 27th), Indian Harbour (on the 20th), and West Middle Sable (December 10 to 27, with maximum of four, December 15-18).

Two departure dates reported for the Great Blue Heron are in late September (27 and 29, in the Dartmouth area), but it appears that in many parts of the Province this species is present into November. The easternmost report of it in that month comes from South River, Antigonish, where it was observed on November 21. One of these herons was noted at Chester on December 2 and one at West Middle Sable on December 3. The Editor has a credible report of a Great Blue Heron found frozen to death and still perched in a tree at Matthews Point, Shelburne County, shortly after Christmas.

Departure dates received for the Black-bellied Plover range from August 27 to October 29. As this species quite certainly remains in Nova Scotia until some time in November, it appears that we did not spend enough time in its favourite haunts in November, 1955, to get a good record of it.

As the number of observers taking part in such projects increases and as we improve our observation through experience, improvement in results may be expected. — HARRISON F. LEWIS, *Editor*.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

1955 - 1956

The first Christmas Bird Count of the Nova Scotia Bird Society was a very encouraging start in this interesting activity. Reports were received from four areas in and near Halifax and from Country Harbour, Truro, Wolfville and West Middle Sable. Wolfville, with 37 species, takes first place. The total number of species reported is 55. Of course, there were many additional species in Nova Scotia at the time, but they failed to rendezvous with the observers engaged in the Count. Why, there's not an Owl in the list! On the evening of the day after the taking of the Count in West Middle Sable, a Great Horned Owl alighted, in bright moonlight, in the top of a large birch tree in the Editor's yard and hooted at him, no doubt in derision!

The eight reports available this winter appear below. After reading them, let us all resolve to make the next Christmas Count more fully representative of the winter bird life of this Province. More reports, more observers, more organization, more preliminary scouting, more hours afield, more miles on foot, more persistence in obtaining identifications will do it.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORTS

Truro, N. S., Dec. 27, 9.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Base Point: Truro town dump. Lower Onslow and Victoria Park. Five miles by car through town and from Town dump to Lower Onslow. On foot at Victoria Park. 100% cloudy; snow too deep for distant travelling. Ponds and rivers frozen; wind N to NW, light; temp. 15° to 25°. Two observers in one party. Total hours

afield, $3\frac{1}{2}$ (2 by car, $1\frac{1}{2}$ on foot). Total party miles, 8 (5 by car, 3 on foot). Black Duck, 10; Ruffed Grouse, 1; European Partridge, 4; Common Pheasant, 4; Great Black-backed Gull, 3; Herring Gull, 150; Blue Jay, 4; Eastern Crow, 20; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Brown-capped Chickadee, 7; Robin, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5; Starling, 355; Evening Grosbeak, 7; Northern Pine Siskin, 17; White-winged Crossbill, 9; Slate-coloured Junco, 5. Total 17 species, 607 individuals, plus Rock Doves and English Sparrows.—HERMAN WEATHERBEE and MARTIN G. McNALLY.

Port Wallis, Halifax Co. (Locks Path and Spider Lake Road); Dec. 31, 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.; 12.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. Sunny and clear, few clouds, very light wind; ground covered with more than 1 ft. of old snow, 2 in. of fresh snow; lake completely frozen. Temp. 10° to 12° . Three observers, of whom one was at feeding station. Total hours afield, 5; total miles, 12 by car, 9 on foot. Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 5; Raven, 1; Crow, 12; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; Robin 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 3; English Sparrow, 55; Bronzed Grackle, 5; Starling, 30; Pine Grosbeak, 2; Slate-coloured Junco, 4; Song Sparrow, 1; also 1 large broad-tailed hawk in grey phase, unidentified. Total 13 species, 128 individuals, plus unidentified hawk. — FLORRIE WHITE, FRANK WHITE, ETHEL CRATHORNE.

Halifax, N. S. Jan. 1, 1956, 9.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Base Point: junction of wood-road with Old Sambro Road immediately north of Henry's Lake. Halifax waterfront from Yacht Squadron to and including City dump on Bedford Basin, Bedford road to Prince's Lodge, western slope of Halifax City, Point Pleasant Park, Melville Cove, Jollimore, Boulderwood (North West Arm), Road from Purcell's Cove to Herring Cove, road from Armdale through Spryfield to and including Portuguese Cove, points along Prospect Road from St. Margaret's Bay Road (Route 3) to Prospect Bay. Clear, ground completely covered with 6-7 in. old snow, approx. 1 in. fresh snow. Fresh water and heads of salt-water inlets frozen. Wind N to NW, light to moderate. Temp. 8° to 12° . Nine observers in six parties, of which three at feeding stations. Total hours afield, 42 ($15\frac{1}{2}$ on foot, $26\frac{1}{2}$ by car); total party miles, $80\frac{1}{2}$ ($73\frac{1}{2}$ by car, 7 on foot). Old Squaw, 1; American Merganser, 5; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Common Pheasant, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 43; Herring Gull, 1522; Dovekie, 1; Rock Dove, 48; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 8; Raven, 6; Crow, 29; Black-capped Chickadee, 14; Brown-capped Chickadee, 1; Brown Creeper, 1; Robin, 3; Starling, 589; English Sparrow, 226; Cowbird, 66; Evening Grosbeak, 36; Pine Grosbeak, 2; Redpoll, 5; unidentified Fringillids in flock, 5; Slate-coloured Junco, 6; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 3. Total 26 species, 2623 individuals, plus unidentified Fringillids. — C. R. K. ALLEN, M. B. ALLEN, J. A. MACCARTER, IAN MACPHERSON, MRS. J. A. MACPHERSON, L. B. MACPHERSON, W. J. MILLS, H. P. MOFFATT, J. C. MORROW.

Bedford, N. S., Dec. 30, 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. Base Point: Fenerty Siding. From Millview along Hammonds Plains Road to Sackville, via Lucasville, returning Bedford via Old Sackville Road. Bedford to Waverly on Route 2, Windsor Junc-

tion, Inner Bedford Basin. Snow falling, light winds, E in a.m., S in p.m. Ground covered with deep snow, lakes and ponds frozen. Sackville River open at Fish Hatchery, Inner Basin frozen to Millview. Temp. 20° to 32°. Two observers in one party a.m., three observers in party p.m. American Merganser, 6; ducks, unidentified, 20; Common Pheasant, 22; Great Black-backed Gull, 300; Herring Gull, 2500; Belted Kingfisher, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 10; Raven, 5; Crow, 16; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; Robin, 5; Hermit Thrush, 2 (seen by all observers at feeding station, Windsor Junction); Starling, 93; English Sparrow, 60; Bronzed Grackle, 1; Common Redpoll, 4; Pine Siskin, 11; Slate-coloured Junco, 10; Tree Sparrow, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 1. Total 21 species, 3059 individuals, plus unidentified ducks. — MARGARET A. CHRISTIE, BONNIE ROY, J. R. CALDER FRASER.

Wolfville, Kings Co., N. S., Dec. 28, 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Base Point: Port Williams Bridge. General area covered, farming lands, coastal marshes and coniferous woodland to the south. Cloudy with some snow-flurries; ground covered with 10 to 12 in. partially crusted snow; wind N, about 10 m.p.h.; temp. 15° to 25°. Eight observers, two at feeding stations and six in field parties. Total hours afield, 8½, mostly by car with short side-trips on foot. Miles by car, 100; on foot, 10. Black Duck, 87; American Golden-eye, 18; American Merganser, 2; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Red-tailed Hawk, 4; American Rough-legged Hawk, 3; Bald Eagle, 7; Ruffed Grouse, 1; European Partridge, 57; Common Pheasant, 112; Wilson's Snipe, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 15; Herring Gull, 294; Eastern Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Northern Downy Woodpecker, 2; Northern Horned Lark, 84; Northern Blue Jay, 61; Northern Raven, 109; Eastern Crow, 155; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; Brown Creeper, 2; Eastern Robin, 6; Eastern Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5; European Starling, 234; English Sparrow, 433; Eastern Cowbird, 4; Eastern Evening Grosbeak, 7; Newfoundland Pine Grosbeak, 1; Common Redpoll, 30; Northern Pine Siskin, 4; Eastern Goldfinch, 28; White-winged Crossbill, 32; Slate-coloured Junco, 178; Eastern Tree Sparrow, 7; White-throated Sparrow, 6; Eastern Song Sparrow, 39; Eastern Snow Bunting, 66. Total 37 species, 2105 individuals. — JOAN BROMLEY, DAVID ERSKINE, JOHN ERSKINE, MARY FORBES, JANE MCNEILL, MARGARET MILLER, ANNE SEXTON, R. W. TUFTS.

Country Harbour, N. S., Dec. 31, 8.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 1.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. Base Point: Country Harbour School. Hines Point Beach, Country Harbour, N. S., 5 mi. E. along the harbour, 3 mi. W. across Country Harbour. Clear at sunrise, 25% cloudy in p.m. Ground covered with about 12 in. snow; lakes and ponds frozen; wind N to NW, moderate; temp. cold all day. Two observers, one at feeding station and vicinity, one as field party. Total hours afield, 14 (12 on foot, 1 by car, 1 by boat). Common Loon, 5; Black Duck, 500; Old-Squaw, 100; mergansers (sp.), 25; ducks (unidentified), 30; Ruffed Grouse, 5; European Partridge, 10; gulls (unidentified), 40; Blue Jay, 3; Crow, 25; Black-capped Chickadee, 15; Robin, 1; Starling, 50. Total 10 species, 714 individuals, plus unidentified ducks, mergansers and gulls. — A. BURNS HODGSON, CLEONE HODGSON.

Peggy's Cove Road, South, N. S., Dec. 29, 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Base Point: Miriam Wetmore's backyard, Indian Harbour, Halifax Co., Glen Margaret, Peggy's Cove. Sunny 50%, cloudy 50%; ground entirely covered with 3 to 16 in. snow and ice; lakes frozen, bogs open but covered, harbour with some mush ice; wind NE 15; temp. 20° to 34°. Three observers at own homes, Total hours, 17. Canada Goose, 1; Black Duck, 30; American Eider, 20; (Sharp-Shinned?) Hawk, 1 (small, not rounded tail, M.W.); Great Black-backed Gull, 3; Herring Gull, 50; Blue Jay, 4; Crow, 8; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Starling, 55; English Sparrow, 24; Bronzed Grackle, 1 (larger than Starling, all black, long tail, steady customer at feeding station since early Nov., M.W.); Purple Finch, 2; Slate-coloured Junco, 7; Fox Sparrow, 1 (larger than Song Sparrow, rufous colouring, steady customer since Dec. 15, M.W.); Song Sparrow, 2. Total 15 Species, 212 individuals, plus unidentified hawk. — IRENE BERGGREN, Glen Margaret; ROBERT GARRISON, Peggy's Cove; MIRIAM WETMORE, Indian Harbour.

West Middle Sable, Shelburne Co., N. S., Dec. 28, 7.45 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Base point: Schoolhouse in West Middle Sable. West Middle Sable, Louis Head and beach, Little Harbour, Hemeon Head, Matthews Lake. Completely overcast at sunrise, 95% cloudy during day; ground covered with 9 in. snow, less near ocean; ponds frozen, extensive ice on Matthews Lake and upper section of Sable River estuary; wind N to NE, 5 to 10 m.p.h.; temp. 21° to 26°. Two observers, one constituting field-party and one at feeding station. Total hours afield 9 on foot; total party miles, 16 on foot. Horned Grebe, 1; European Cormorant, 78; Canada Goose, 2400; Black Duck, 279; American Golden-eye, 35; Buffle-head, 6; Old-squaw, 1; American Eider, 26; White-winged Scoter, 1; Surf Scoter, 1; American Merganser, 3; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 13; Herring Gull, 230; Eastern Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Northern Horned Lark, 10; Canada Jay, 1; Northern Blue Jay, 3; Northern Raven, 1; Eastern Crow, 19; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; European Starling, 7; Bronzed Grackle, 1; Eastern Cowbird, 3; Slate-colored Junco, 26; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Eastern Song Sparrow, 1; Eastern Snow Bunting, 63. Total 28 species, 3219 individuals. — HARRISON F. LEWIS, LAURA N. LEWIS.