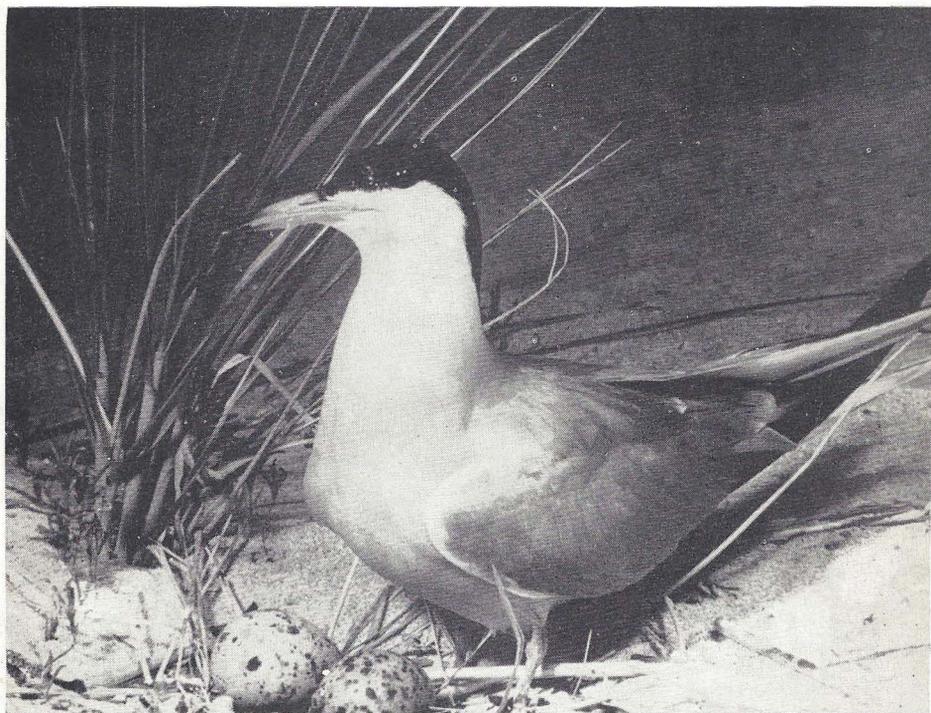


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NEWSLETTER

LIST OF RARE AND UNUSUAL BIRDS REPORTED BY MEMBERS OF THE NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

By R. W. Tufts

In submitting the following list of rare and unusual birds observed in Nova Scotia during the past twenty months, I take this opportunity to thank those members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society whose keen observation and willing co-operation have made its compilation possible. It makes interesting reading for all bird students in the Province and adds substantially to our general knowledge of the distribution and frequency of occurrence of many of the species involved.

GANNET. Three seen by C. R. K. Allen, I. A. Macpherson and L. B. Macpherson, on December 22, 1956, off shore from Lawrencetown Beach, Halifax County, provide the only recorded occurrence for winter.

SNOWY EGRET. One seen at Lawrencetown Beach, on October 8, 1956, by C. R. K. Allen, John Comer and W. J. Mills. Another at Martinique Beach, Halifax County, April 22, 1957, by T. F. T. Morland, I. A. Macpherson and L. B. Macpherson. These are believed to be only the fourth and fifth records of the species here since 1868.

LITTLE BLUE HERON. One at West Pine Island Lake, Halifax County, was seen on May 13, 1957, by L. B. Macpherson and W. J. Mills. It was in the white, sub-adult plumage with traces of blue showing. This heron occurs here more frequently in late Summer or Autumn than in Spring.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON. Two reported, both adults, one at West Middle Sable, Shelburne County, on March 28, 1957 (Mrs. Harrison Lewis), and one seen about the same time at Cape Sable, Shelburne County. Spring records for this species are much in the minority.

AMERICAN WIDGEON. The first record for breeding for Nova Scotia is supplied by Charles Bartlett, of the Canadian Wildlife Service, who saw a brood of six following a female at Amherst Point Sanctuary, on August 25, 1957. In the Lawrencetown Beach area, Halifax County, 85 were counted on October 14, 1956, and usually 100 or more were present at the same spot until late in November. A flock of about the same size was in the same place this year. (Allen, Comer, Mills and Macpherson).

SHOVELLER. A male in eclipse or immature plumage was seen near Cole Harbour, Halifax County, on November 14, 1956, by C. R. K. Allen. This bird has been recorded here a very few times.

WOOD DUCK. Lloyd Duncanson tells of finding one caught in a muskrat trap, near Clyde River, Shelburne County, on December 31, 1956. I have but one other record for Winter.

CANVASBACK. One seen off Cape Sable Light on April 7, 1957, by Lightkeeper Benjamin Smith, provides the only record for Spring.

RUDDY DUCK. Between November 17 and December 2, 1956, as many as 13 of these strange looking little ducks were to be seen at Seaforth, Halifax County. (Allen, Comer, Macpherson, Mills). Though no great rarity in Nova Scotia, this occurrence is well worth recording.

BALD EAGLE. What appears to be a first year nest of this species is described at some length by E. Holdway, of Pictou. He has provided us with a map which shows the exact location of the nest, but because there are those who do not like eagles, this information is being withheld from the general public for obvious reasons. Discretion should always be used in releasing such information.

DUCK HAWK. At Wallace, Cumberland County, one was seen to stoop twice at duck decoys, on October 1, 1957, deceived by the excellence of the work of the craftsman who made them. An interesting account of this incident is furnished by Lloyd Duncanson, who had no difficulty in restraining his hunting companions from shooting this rather rare bird.

CLAPPER RAIL. Two reported. One at Sable River, on September 2, 1957, by S. M. Chivers, and one at Brier Island, Digby County, on September 24, by John Comer, Wickerson Lent, and W. J. Mills. The only other records for the species in Nova Scotia are: May 12, 1892, and October, 1893, when specimens were taken near Lawrencetown Beach.

AMERICAN COOT. As many as nine at a time seen at Lawrencetown Beach, between November 17 and 28, 1956, by C. R. K. Allen, John Comer, L. B. Macpherson and W. J. Mills. Close relative of the rails, Coots are more frequently seen in open spaces than are rails.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER. One seen at Grand Desert, near the Chezzetcook Inlet, Halifax County, on May 19, 1957, by C. R. K. Allen, John Comer and T. F. T. Morland. This probably constitutes the most amazing bird record for the entire period. Reported by three observers, this bizarre bird could not be mistaken for any other.

KILLDEER. Three records for the period. The first at Wolfville, on September 9, 1956 (Eric Mullen, Stephen Smith and R. W. Tufts). Another seen at Wine Harbour, Guysborough County, on April 23, 1957, (Gordon McLeod), and two at Tannery Pond, near Wolfville, on May 9, 1957 (Eric Mullen, Thomas Sheppard, and Stephen Smith). This species is not so rare in Nova Scotia as it was formerly believed to be.

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER. Twenty-six seen on the runway of the Yarmouth Airport, on September 26, 1956, as reported by I. J. Pothier, of Lower Wedgeport. Although seemingly marked for extinction early in this century, it has recovered somewhat but is still rare enough that twenty-six at once merit a place on this list.

UPLAND PLOVER. Two reports. The first on the Grand Pre meadows, September 9, 1956 (R. W. Tufts), and the other at Louis Head Beach, Shelburne County, on October 13, 1957 (Harrison Lewis). In all we have four records of the species for Nova Scotia.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. A small flock seen on Thrum Cap, a small islet off Barren Island, Guysborough County, on June 4, 1957, by John Comer, L. B. Macpherson and W. J. Mills. The previous latest

date for spring loiterers is May 10.

BLACK-HEADED GULL. Three seen at Lawrencetown Beach, on November 25, 1956. A number of other observations of this European species have been made in the same general district as well as at Halifax Harbour, by Allen, Macpherson and Mills. It was not until February 6, 1957, that the remains of one was picked up on the waterfront of Halifax by J. A. McCarter, thus providing a specimen record, the first for the Province. They breed in Iceland and those reaching North America may well have wandered from there.

ROSEATE TERN. On July 13, 1956, Mrs. Marie Henry (Belmont, Mass.) banded several immatures on the Bald Tusket Islands, off Yarmouth, and on July 4, 1957, approximately five pairs were found nesting on Thrum Cap islet, by Comer, Macpherson and Mills.

MOURNING DOVE. A pair, obviously mated, was seen at Gaspereau, Kings County, on May 24, 1957, by R. W. Tufts. Although no definite record of nesting in the Province has as yet been provided we believe it is only a matter of time before a nest will be discovered. These birds are so commonly seen during August through November, that observations are no longer being recorded.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO. Three observations: one near Halifax, on September 19, 1957, by Mrs. J. M. Doull; one on the 23rd of that month, by a field party of the Bird Society, at Brier Island; one picked up in the Halifax Public Gardens, on October 15, 1957, was in poor condition (W. J. Mills). Of 20 or more records, all are for fall.

WHIP-POOR-WILL. One heard many times during the summer of 1956, at New Glasgow, by Mrs. Margaret Kenny; one at the Bedford Rifle Range, on June 27, 1956 (Macpherson and Mills); one heard several times in summer of 1957, on the North West Arm, near Boulderwood, Halifax, (Mrs. A. D. M. Curry and Richard P. Ward); one at Path Lake, Queens County, on June 15, 1957 (R. S. Johnson); and one heard calling in the evening, May 23, 1957, at Wolfville, was not heard afterwards (Peter Smith). We have two nesting records for this species in the Province.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD. The earliest record for spring arrival is provided by W. E. Whitehead, of Round Hill, Annapolis County, who saw one on May 10, 1957. May 12, at Wolfville, was the previous earliest date for spring.

NORTHERN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER. A "first" for this species has been established by Wickerson Lent, who saw one at his home in Westport, Digby County, on September 29, 1957.

BELTED KINGFISHER. Dr. G. A. Barss, Rose Bay, Lunenburg County, tells of one that wintered there, 1956-57. It is not usual for these birds to attempt survival here through the lean months, but we have a number of similar records.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER. One seen at Port Wallis, Halifax County, by Mrs. Florence White and W. J. Mills, on June 12, 1957, and both parents seen feeding three juveniles, on August 5, 1956, near Prince's Lodge, Halifax County, by I. A. and L. B. Macpherson. The latter observation constitutes the first record of breeding for the species in Nova Scotia.

WESTERN KINGBIRD. Several records. One at West Middle Sable on October 5, and two there on October 7, 1957 (Harrison Lewis);

one at Brier Island, September 24, 1957 (W. J. Mills and John Comer); one at Lawrencetown Beach, October 8, 1956 (C. R. K. Allen, John Comer and W. J. Mills); and one seen by the same group of observers, at Seaforth, Halifax County, on November 14, 1956.

PHOEBE. During the summer of 1956, one was seen on a number of occasions by Mrs. Margaret Kenny, near New Glasgow, and at Wine Harbour, Guysborough County, Gordon McLeod saw one on October 26, 1956. Though no nest has as yet been reported it seems highly probable that they do breed in the Province.

BARN SWALLOW. A small flock seen at Wine Harbour, on November 11, 1956 (Gordon McLeod, and three seen the same day at Cole Harbour (C. R. K. Allen), Three days later the latter observer counted five Barn Swallows at Lawrencetown Beach. We have had several November records for this species in recent years. Why they should be here so late is not understood.

MOCKINGBIRD. One seen near Chezzetcook, on September 29, 1956, by C. R. K. Allen and L. B. Macpherson; one at Lower Wedgeport, on December 4, 1956 (I. J. Pothier); and a spring record at Kingsport on May 12, 1957 (Eric Mullen). Spring and summer records for this bird are few, but for fall and winter we have many. Why they are here more frequently in late fall and early winter is not understood. The late Dr. F. H. Sexton provided the only record of nesting in the Province. That was in the summer of 1938, on a then vacant lot near Jubilee Road in Halifax.

BROWN THRASHER. Three records. One at Wine Harbour, on May 19, 1957 (Gordon McLeod); two on the Lighthouse premises, at Cape Sable, on September 29, 1957, had been seen on different occasions in preceding days (Benjamin Smith); and one at Brier Island on October 2, 1957, reported by Wickerson Lent. A specimen is needed for the collection at the N. S. Museum of Science, all records to date having been sight observations.

ROBIN, *Turdus migratorius nigrideus* (formerly known in the vernacular as Black-Backed Robin). A male of this subspecies was taken at Wolfville on May 23, 1957. It was one of a breeding pair. The breeding range of this bird, as published in the new Check-list, lies considerably north of here.

GREY-CHEEKED THRUSH, *Hylocichla minima bicknelli* (formerly known in the vernacular as Bicknell's Thrush). The occurrence of this thrush in Nova Scotia is rare and decidedly local. One was captured for banding at Nyanza, Victoria County, by James Lowther, of the Canadian Wildlife Service, on August 10, 1956.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD. Reported as nesting at Loch Broom, Pictou County, during the summer of 1957 (Miss Catharine Graham); and as having nested twice, and raised two broods, at Gaspereau, Kings County, during the summer of 1956 (Cyril K. Coldwell).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE. One seen at Shubenacadie, Hants County, on May 4, 1957, as reported by C. R. K. Allen. The same observer saw what could have been the same bird there on July 11, as well. For this exceedingly rare bird we are fortunate in having established, through a fortuitous circumstance, a single breeding record several years ago at Chipman's Corner, Kings County.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER. A third record of occur-

rence for this little wanderer in the Province was established at Wolfville, when one was seen by Eric Mullen, Peter Smith and R. W. Tufts, on December 14, 1956. It was very active and restless, remaining but a short time in one place.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT. Unrecorded in the Province before December 1951, we now have nine observations, three of which were made during the period above cited. They are: one seen in the Lawrencetown Beach area on December 31, 1956, by C. R. K. Allen and L. B. Macpherson; several seen about the premises of the Light at Cape Sable, by the Keeper, Benjamin Smith, on September 29, 1957; and one at Boulderwood, near Halifax, on October 1, 1957, as reported by A. D. M. Curry.

BOBOLINK. This species is reported as nesting in June 1957, at Indian Harbour, Halifax County, for the first time in 12 years (Mrs. Miriam Wetmore), and Dr. G. A. Barss, Rose Bay, Lunenburg County, writes to state that Bobolinks nested there during the summer of 1957, for the first time in 38 years. Indian Harbour and Rose Bay, are in the same section of the Province, being separated by some 40 miles. Other observers have also noted this recent extension of the Bobolink's breeding range to the Atlantic tier of counties.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK. Three additional records have come in. One was seen repeatedly during the summer of 1956, near New Glasgow, (Mrs. Margaret Kenny); one at Matthew Lake, Shelburne County, on January 14, 1957 (Harrison Lewis); and one picked up dead at Prospect, Halifax County, on October 26, 1957, and taken to the Nova Scotia Museum of Science (Lloyd Duncanson). These birds are no longer considered a rarity in Nova Scotia, and for reasons difficult to explain, nearly all have been recorded in late fall or winter.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD. One was reported seen at Bon Portage Island, Shelburne County, on September 9, 1956, by Mrs. Evelyn Richardson. Benjamin Smith, Lightkeeper at Cape Sable, also mentions having seen one near the light, but data concerning it are lacking.

REDWINGED BLACKBIRD. A marked extension of the breeding range of this species, as well as the Bobolink, has been noted by many observers on the Atlantic side of the Province.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE. Of a number of additional records that have come to hand in recent months, the following are included: one near New Glasgow, during the summer of 1956 (Mrs. M. Kenny); a male at West Middle Sable, on May 9, 10, and 11, 1957, and two there in December, 1956 (Harrison Lewis); one at Bedford, on January 19, 1957 (C. R. K. Allen); one seen in Liverpool, during the summer of 1957 (R. S. Johnson); a female at Port Wallis in summer of 1957 (Mrs. Florence White); one at Rose Bay, seen many times during summer of 1957 (Dr. G. A. Barss); and a pair at their nest, seen at Bedford, on June 27, 1956, by W. J. Mills and L. B. Macpherson. Formerly considered as rare, this species may now be classified as uncommon.

SCARLET TANAGER. Five new observations of this bird have been made during the period covered by this paper. They are: a bright male at Halifax, on October 11, 1957 (D. C. Ferguson); one at Hebron, Yarmouth County, on May 15, 1957 (Helen Prosser); a male in bright plumage seen at Annapolis, on May 22, 1957, by W. E. White-

head; a female seen at Mount Uniacke, Hants County, on June 17, 1956 (R. W. Tufts); and one at Barrington Passage, Shelburne County, on May 15, 1957, as reported by Byron Fenwick of Pugwash.

SUMMER TANAGER. One found dead on the Herring Cove Road, near Halifax, on April 17, 1956, was reported by C. R. K. Allen. Records here for this bird are much fewer than those for the preceding species.

CARDINAL. One, a female, was seen by Miss Louise Daley, on January 31, 1957, on the feeding tray in the garden of Mrs. Thomas Harris, in Digby. Mrs. Harris said that it had been coming regularly, several times each day, for some weeks, and it was quite unafraid. On receiving this report I immediately motored to Digby to see the bird, but missed it by a few minutes. It continued to visit the tray until late winter, particularly during periods of snow and cold.

INDIGO BUNTING. Two reports. Two males and one female at Digby, on April 19, 1956 (Miss Louise Daley); and a bright male at Wolfville on April 22, 1957, and for several days following (R. W. Tufts).

DICKCISSEL. Five new records have come in. They are: one near Pictou, October 9, 1956 (Mrs. M. Kenny); one on feeding tray from December 15-19, 1956, in the garden of Mrs. Florence White, at Port Wallis; one at Brier Island, September 23, 1957, as reported by Harrison Lewis; one on Bon Portage Island, on August 19, 1957 (Mrs. Evelyn Richardson) and one at West Middle Sable on October 7, 1957 (Lewis).

EVENING GROSBEAK. Two interesting records for summer increase to four the known occurrences for the species here at that season. They are: eleven seen in Pictou and Antigonish Counties, on June 15, 1957, by E. M. Hodel; and a male and female reported at Liverpool, on July 11, 1957, by Mrs. Jerry Nickerson. One seen at Brier Island on September 24, and eight there on the 25th 1957 (Harrison Lewis), may have just crossed the Bay of Fundy.

PINE GROSBEAK. Known breeding records for the species in Nova Scotia are few. James Lowther, Canadian Wildlife Division, reports having seen an adult female carrying food, on July 7, 1956, near Baddeck, Cape Breton Island.

RED CROSSBILL. Formerly regular and common in summer and irregular in winter, this bird is now considered rare in Nova Scotia. One reported seen at Brier Island, on September 23, 1957, by Lewis and other members of the Society's Field Party, is the first reported since 1952, and the writer has not seen a Red Crossbill since June 6, 1946. A flock of five was seen by C. R. K. Allen and John Comer, on September 2, 1957, and during the ensuing three weeks, in the Lawrence-town-Chezsetcook area. What factors responsible for this marked change in the route taken by these wanderers is not at present known.

RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE. Four additional records have come in. A bright male taken at Greenfield, Kings County, on October 24, 1957, by the writer; a female seen at Port Wallis, on October 25, 1957, by Mrs. Florence White; and a male found in a weakened condition in the Public Gardens at Halifax, was taken to the Museum (Lloyd Duncanson). Several members of the Halifax group saw a male in the Gaston Road woods, near Dartmouth, from May 19 to mid-July,

1957. This bird was formerly known by the vernacular name Red-eyed Towhee.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW. Two seen at Corborrie, Digby County, on April 28, 1957, were reported by I. J. Pothier; one at Crousetown, Lunenburg County, on May 22, 1957, reported by Mrs. George Snyder; one at Avonport, Kings County, was seen on October 1, 1957, and for several days thereafter, by Mrs. Eva Urban; and three were seen at Brier Island; on September 23, 1957, by members of the above-mentioned Field Party. The migration lane regularly followed spring and fall by these transients, lies some hundreds of miles to the west of Nova Scotia.

LARK SPARROW. One seen at Grand Desert, Halifax County, on September 18, 1957, by C. R. K. Allen and L. B. Macpherson, constitutes the second record for the Province. The first was a wandering specimen collected on Sable Island, on September 4, 1902, by Jonathan Dwight.

Wolfville, N. S.
November 3, 1957.

ANNUAL MEETING OF NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

The enthusiasm of those attending the annual meeting of the Society, held October 25, 1957 in Halifax, was a sure indication of the interest that a knowledge of the birds of our Province engenders. The President, R. W. Tufts, noted this enthusiasm in his report to the members. One of the forward-looking steps taken at the meeting was to authorize the Executive to proceed with the incorporation of the Society under the provisions of the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. Incorporation will enable the Society to own or control property should this become advisable in connection with bird sanctuaries or bird study areas.

This year, for the first time, four papers concerning birds and bird-watchers activities were presented at the meeting — these are published now in this issue of the Museum Newsletter.

The new officers of the society, elected at the meeting, are President — C. R. K. ALLEN; Vice-President — HARRISON F. LEWIS; Secretary-Treasurer — T. F. T. MORLAND; Editor — L. B. MACPHERSON. Additional members of the Executive are R. W. TUFTS, the Past-President; R. A. KANIGSBURG, W. J. MILLS and J. A. MCCARTER.

BRIER ISLAND FIELD TRIP—1957 *

By Harrison F. Lewis

This year the Nova Scotia Bird Society sponsored its third annual field trip to Brier Island, the westernmost land in Nova Scotia. As in 1956, the party was made up of John Comer, Wickerson Lent, Harrison F. Lewis and Willett J. Mills. The visiting members arrived on Brier Island in the evening of September 20th and left in the late morning of the 25th. Working time on the island was therefore restricted to the four days, September 21st to 24th, and part of the morning of the 25th.

On September 23rd the party enjoyed for several hours the assistance of Stewart Whitman and Gordon Troop, of Upper Granville.

Under special permit, mist nets were again used near the north-east point of the island to capture small land birds for banding. Our increased familiarity with the use of the nets was helpful in this operation, but the weather was adverse. Experience has shown that in September clear, cool mornings with northerly winds result in heavy concentration of small migrant land birds in the last woods at the north-east point of Brier Island. On September 21st to 24th of this year we experienced mild southerly winds and cloudy skies, with frequent fog and occasional showers. Consequently, little in the way of either concentration or migration of small birds was to be observed at north-east point. The morning of September 25th was clear, with moderate temperature and almost no wind. Under these conditions, the number of migrants present increased noticeably, but did not approach a truly high level.

During the mild, foggy days, John Comer developed a method of driving flocks of small birds, principally Juncos, through the scattered groups of alders and white spruces and past the nets, so that many were taken and our banding total was built up more rapidly than it otherwise would have been. He later devised a technique of attracting some birds, such as Black-capped Chickadees, into the nets by imitating their calls from an appropriate position.

Our modest total for this year's banding operations was 91 birds of 21 different species. This was at least a substantial gain over last year's record of banding 51 birds of 20 species and it leaves plenty of room for additional gains in future.

Pond Cove, the main lighthouse, Pea-jack Road and other parts of the island were visited for purposes of observation as opportunity occurred.

The record that easily takes leading place in interest this year is that of a Clapper Rail that was observed at a small pond back of the beach near the main lighthouse on September 23rd by John Comer, Wickerson Lent and Willett Mills. This bird was fully identified through careful observation of its distinctive points of size, shape and colour. A Clapper Rail had been reported from Sable River, Shelburne County, on September 2nd of this year by Society member Samuel Chivers and there are two Nova Scotia records more than 50 years old.

Other strays observed on Brier Island by the field party of 1957 are 2 Mourning Doves, 1 Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 1 Western Kingbird,

*Read at the Annual Meeting, Nova Scotia Bird Society, October 25, 1957.

and 1 Dickcissel. The Cuckoo flew into a net on a damp, sombre morning, while Willett Mills was on a trip back to the base for his breakfast. It had to be banded and released before his return. When he came back to the banding station and discovered what had taken place, it would have done you good to hear his sunny shout, "Why, that makes the whole trip worth while."

Other birds observed during this trip to Brier Island that are rare enough to be specially interesting, though they do not rank as strays, are 2 Baldpates, 1 Ring-billed Gull, 3 Brown Creepers, 1 Red Crossbill and 3 White-crowned Sparrows. The Red Crossbill was associated with a small number of White-winged Crossbills.

Some unusually late records for species leaving Nova Scotia in fall migration are Spotted Sandpiper on September 21st to 23rd, including 4 individuals on the latter date; 1 Chimney Swift on the 22nd; 1 Eastern Kingbird on the 21st; 1 Wood Pewee on the 25th; 3 Barn Swallows on the 22nd and 2 on the 24th; 1 Cliff Swallow on the 24th; 1 Black and White Warbler on the 25th; Yellow Warblers on the 21st, 22nd and 24th, with a maximum of 3 on the 22nd; Magnolia Warbler, 1 on the 23rd, 1 on the 24th and 2 on the 25th; Blackburnian Warbler, 1 on the 25th; Wilson's Warbler, 4 on the 21st; Bobolink, 1 on the 24th; and Baltimore Oriole, 2 on the 24th and again on the 25th.

Because there is undoubtedly, for many land birds, an important route of autumn departure from Nova Scotia by way of Brier Island, it is to be expected that this should be one of the most likely places in the province for the latest occurrence of laggard individuals.

In contrast to these departure records are two of autumn arrivals. An Evening Grosbeak was observed on September 24th and a flock of 8 of this species was seen on the 25th. Two Tree Sparrows were recorded on the 21st. It seems not unlikely that in both cases these arrivals from the north had crossed the Bay of Fundy from Grand Manan, New Brunswick, or some part of the adjacent mainland.

The field party noted with regret that, since 1956, the number of Ring-necked Pheasants on Brier Island had sharply decreased. This year our only observation of this species was that of a cock bird on September 23rd. Without a large measure of public willingness to co-operate in self-control, it is impossible to build up a useful population of this game bird on a heavily inhabited island of limited size.

MORE FOOD FOR BIRDS IN POINT PLEASANT PARK

Following the destruction of many trees in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, during the violent windstorm of December 30, 1956, the Executive of the Nova Scotia Bird Society suggested that the necessary re-planting might include fruit-bearing shrubs and trees that are known to be attractive to birds, especially in the winter. C. R. K. Allen and W. J. Mills drew up a list of such desirable plantings and through the enthusiastic co-operation of R. A. Kanigsberg, Q.C., of the Park Commission, Thomas T. E. Fripps, the Park Superintendent and George T. Power, Superintendent of the Public Gardens, it is gratifying now to be able to report that 275 shrubs and trees of the following types have been planted: Dogwoods, Multiflora and Rugosa Roses, High-bush Cranberry, Elder, Mulberry, Hawthorne, Bush Honeysuckle and Mountain Ash.

The public-spirited action of these men is much appreciated and will pay big dividends in increasing the bird population of the Park, a place already popular with bird-watchers.



Brown-headed Cowbird *Allan D. Cruickshank*
from National Audubon Society

SUMMER RANGE OF COWBIRDS IN THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES *

By Willett J. Mills

The fifth edition of the Check-list of North American Birds, published by the American Ornithologists Union this year, gives the northern breeding range of the Brown-headed Cowbird as New Brunswick and southern Nova Scotia (Digby and Yarmouth counties) and the winter range as New York and Connecticut south. . . . rarely north to Maine. This splendid new edition, which I am sure many of you will want to own if you have not already purchased a copy, states in the preface: "The known extent of the range is given, even when the probabilities suggest wider limits." It is to record the wider limits and make the probable known that these notes on the present status of the Cowbird in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada are now being presented.

Early records of breeding of this species in Nova Scotia, from the files of R. W. Tufts, are as follows: July 17, 1933, immature Cowbird being fed by Slate-colored Juncos, Halifax, Halifax County, (E. C. Allen). This is the first definite record of Cowbirds breeding in Nova Scotia. June, 1935, nest of the Yellow Warbler having in it a Cowbird's egg, Lower Wedgeport, Yarmouth County, (Israel Pothier). August 11, 1939, a Redstart seen feeding a young Cowbird, Wolfville, Kings County, (A. C. Fales).

More recent evidence of breeding in Nova Scotia are these observations: July 5, 1954, young Cowbird being fed by a Parula Warbler and July 7 and 8, a Cowbird being fed by a Yellowthroat, Wedgeport, Yarmouth County, (Marie C. Henry). July 6, 1956, a Slate-colored

*Read at the Annual Meeting, Nova Scotia Bird Society, October 25, 1957.

Junco seen feeding an immature Cowbird near New Germany, Lunenburg County, (J. Comer and W. J. Mills). August 10, 1957, a Palm Warbler observed feeding a young Cowbird at Glen Margaret, Halifax County, (G. W. I. Creighton). July 23, 1957, a Myrtle Warbler feeding an immature Cowbird at Avonport, Kings County, (A. J. Erskine).

Sight observations of Cowbirds are now numerous and Halifax bird-watchers have only to go to Point Pleasant Park or to the Gaston Road area in Dartmouth to see up to six at a time during the summer season. W. Earle Godfrey reports a sight record by Austin W. Cameron at Port Hood, where, on April 25, 1954, he observed two males and a female. Another record of observation in Cape Breton comes from E. Swailes, Sydney. In 1955, on May 13 and 14, he observed a male Cowbird and again on the 15th, at which time a female also appeared.

Studies at Brier Island, Digby County, the westerly part of Nova Scotia, and notes made by Mrs. Evelyn Richardson, Bon Portage, off the south-west coast of Shelburne County indicate that this species migrates through the southwestern part of Nova Scotia. Mrs. Richardson has written such an interesting report of Cowbirds that portions of her letter relating to them are being included in this paper. She writes:

"I have been over my notes on sight records and here is what I have gleaned on Cowbirds. 1955, May 2, one male and one female. May 10, one female. August 26-30: Morrill mowed the hay which had been badly eaten by army worms. Immediately birds gathered in great numbers. There were many Cowbirds among the several varieties that helped clean up the worms. I usually ask Morrill to estimate flocks when it is hard to get a count as he is accustomed to judging the flocks of ducks, etc. My notes say, 'Morrill judged about one hundred, more rather than less, Cowbirds.' My notes are hurried and spotty, but both Morrill and I remember the flocks of Cowbirds that stayed in the mowing field for several days at that time and moved on as the army worms disappeared. October 28, one male. 1956, July 11, young Cowbird among many young sparrows along wooded path. August 6, one Cowbird in field (I suspect this was the same one). August 23, early morning, a flock of 50-70 in lighthouse field. Apparently arrived during night, gone by noon. Clear, cool weather, wind E. to SE. in morning, rising wind and rain by night. August 29, about 30 Cowbirds, here at breakfast time, gone by noon. Light, variable winds. September 9, have merely noted 'Cowbirds' among birds seen. November 19, two males. 1957, April 29. I had just sealed your letter and come out to the kitchen to prepare dinner when I glanced out the window in time to see four Cowbirds (two males, two females) fly down to my patch of seadressing! They have stayed nearly all day, the males very resplendent in their gleaming black and brown."

During the 1955 Brier Island field trip sponsored by the Nova Scotia Bird Society, Cowbirds were observed as follows: sixteen on September 10th, six on the 11th, six on the 12th two on the 13th. None were seen on the 14th and 15th, the last two days, but this may have been because it was not possible to cover all parts of the island daily. On September 8, 1956 the Brier Island field expedition noted a flock of

50 but none were observed on the remaining four days there. On September 20, 1957, John Comer and the writer were on Route 1, four miles west of Hantsport, driving toward Digby to meet Harrison F. Lewis for the 1957 Brier Island field trip. At this point Cowbirds were noted in a stubble field bordered by orchards and containing 15 head of grazing cattle. On close inspection and checking, and by actual count of those flocks flying into and out of the trees as we moved among the cattle, there proved to be about 500. Counting a flock of 70 in one tree, one lone Starling was noted with them. When we met Dr. Lewis one of our first questions was "Did you see any Cowbirds?" His answer was, "Two flocks of about 100 each, one in Mavillette, and the other about 12 miles north of Mavillette, toward Digby." In 1922 P. A. Taverner wrote of the Cowbird in the second edition of *Birds of Eastern Canada*, "Common except in the extreme coastal provinces of the east." The abundance of this species has increased now that three individuals in two parties have observed in Nova Scotia 700 Cowbirds on one day.

It was intended that something would be said in this report of the increased numbers wintering here and also the sex ratio of birds banded during the last four years, but this will have to be dealt with in a later paper.

Now shall we turn to Prince Edward Island, where until 1953 there had been no known record of Cowbirds breeding. On August 5th of that year I observed an immature Cowbird being fed by Magnolia Warblers at Stanhope on the Gulf of St. Lawrence coast of the island. On August 7th, 1954, I again saw a Cowbird being fed by an unidentified Warbler in the same area at Stanhope. These observations were reported to the National Museum at Ottawa and have been recognized as the earliest known record of breeding in Prince Edward Island.

Midway in the course of the preparation of these notes news of the further extension of the northward range of this species was brought back from Newfoundland by Harrison Lewis who reported observing on June 26th, 1957, two male and two female Cowbirds, all in one group, at Grand Falls (48°8' North, and 55°8' West) on bare ground in front of a recently built house in the suburban area. On June 27th Dr. Lewis saw 4 Cowbirds beside Botwood Road, Grand Falls, which he thought were probably the same and on June 28th, three were seen. On July 1st, 2 males and 2 females were again seen by him in the same area as in the first area.

It was about this time that information was also received of a banded Cowbird captured at Ramea (47°27' North and 57°25' West), Newfoundland by Archibald Carter on April 21, 1957. Bearing number 55-181243, it had been banded as an immature male by James Baird, Norman Bird Sanctuary, Middleton, Rhode Island, on March 25, 1957. These reports, while not of breeding, constitute the first records of Cowbirds in Newfoundland. Whether or not these individuals were there because of a misadventure or by intention is not known, but the presence of both sexes may very well be the beginnings of the establishment of a new species in this, Canada's newest Province.



Double-crested Cormorants

H. L. Mendall

**REPORT ON OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION
OF CORMORANTS IN NOVA SCOTIA
IN 1956 AND 1957 ***

By Harrison F. Lewis

In accordance with instructions from the Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests of Nova Scotia, complaints against cormorants in this province were investigated in 1956 and 1957 by the present writer, with the assistance of F. A. Woodland, of that Department.

The complaints against cormorants that had been received by the Department may be divided into two principal groups. Some complaints were based on the killing of trees at nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants. The remaining complaints related to fish and fisheries.

In investigating the complaints we visited nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants on Indian Island, Lunenburg County; on Roger and Duck Islands, near Jeddore; on the Brothers Islands and The Specs, near Sheet Harbour Passage; on Tobacco Island, near the mouth of St. Mary's River; and on Crow Island, near Canso. We also visited nesting colonies of European or Great Cormorants at Crystal Cliffs, Cape George and Monks Head, near Antigonish.

The approximate number of occupied nests in each of these colonies is as follows:

*Read at the Annual Meeting, Nova Scotia Bird Society, October 25, 1957.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS

Colony	Year	No. of occupied nests
Indian Island.....	1956	70
Roger Island.....	1956	25
Duck Island.....	1957	250
Brothers Islands.....	1956	147
The Specs.....	1956	192
Tobacco Island.....	1957	110
Crow Island.....	1956	136

EUROPEAN OR GREAT CORMORANTS

Crystal Cliffs.....	1956	18
Cape George.....	1956	9
Monks Head.....	1956	20

In many places outside this province, Double-crested Cormorants nest on the ground, but in all of their colonies named above we found them nesting in trees. The excrement of these birds is a powerful fertilizer, but it contains so much phosphoric acid that where it is applied in abundance, as in a nesting colony, it soon kills the trees. While this natural occurrence may have regrettable aspects, it is usually without economic significance. In all the Nova Scotian nesting colonies of this species that we visited the trees had grown on small islands in the ocean and were so stunted and gnarled that they lacked commercial value.

The principal complaint against the cormorants was that they destroyed young salmon or parr in salmon rivers and were also seriously destructive to trout. Special attention was given to this matter.

Cormorant food was collected in two ways. A number of Double-crested Cormorants were shot by members of the departmental staff on waters inhabited by trout and young salmon. Their stomachs, complete with contents, were preserved in formalin solution and were submitted to the Fisheries Research Board for examination of their contents by fisheries experts. Fresh fish that had been captured by cormorants and regurgitated in their nesting colonies were also taken into account. Some of this material was similarly preserved and submitted to the Fisheries Research Board for identification, but in some cases it was possible to identify the fish in the field.

In general, the attempt was made to take cormorant specimens at places and seasons indicated by the complainants, so that the findings would relate directly to whatever they had in mind. Special attention was given in 1957 to obtaining stomachs of cormorants feeding in the Mosers River and St. Mary's River, which are well known salmon streams. The common experience was, however, that cormorants were found to be much less plentiful at the places and seasons indicated than had been alleged by the complainants. More than once no cormorants could be discovered by the would-be collectors at places where they were claimed to be numerous. After strenuous efforts, the total number of cormorant stomachs collected in the course of the investigation was only 41. Of these, only 27 contained identifiable food. In some instances a stomach contained more than one species of fish.

The number of regurgitated meals found in nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants and recorded for purposes of this investigation was 46.

For convenience, the information obtained through identification of regurgitated meals and the contents of collected stomachs has been prepared in tabular form as follows:

OCCURRENCES IN NOVA SCOTIA RECORD
FOOD OF DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS
1956-57

Kind	Number	Per Cent
Cunner or "sea perch"	37	44.6
Sticklebacks.....	14	16.9
Herring (including gaspereaux).....	7	8.5
Minnows.....	5	6.0
Crustaceans.....	5	6.0
Yellow perch.....	3	3.6
Winter flounder.....	3	3.6
Golden shiners.....	2	2.4
Smelt.....	2	2.4
Gunnel.....	2	2.4
Sculpins.....	2	2.4
White perch.....	1	1.2
	83	100.00

It will be observed that no salmon or trout has yet been discovered by this investigation in the food of Double-crested Cormorants in Nova Scotia.

The outstanding item of food in the record is the cunner, or "sea perch", which has no economic value. The item second in frequency of occurrence is sticklebacks (sp.), likewise without economic value.

Among the scattered items that make up the rest of the identified food, the only fish commonly used for human food are herring, yellow perch, winter flounder, smelt and white perch. The unit value of uncaught herring is extremely low, as is made very clear by the indifferent treatment accorded them by fishermen. The percentage of occurrence of the other food fish mentioned is so low as to indicate that cormorant capture of these species is without practical significance.

The fact that cormorants destroy such spawn eaters as sticklebacks and sculpins may be regarded as a credit offsetting their limited consumption of fish used by man.

With respect to salmon and trout, it may be useful to draw attention to the following facts resulting from investigations of food of Double-crested Cormorants in Quebec, Nova Scotia and Maine.

Investigator	Region	No. of cormorant Occurrence		
		meals Examined	of salmon	of trout
Taverner	Gaspé	30	none	none
Lewis	N. shore of Gulf of St. Lawrence	552	none	.78 % of total
Mendall	Maine	519	none	none
Lewis	Nova Scotia	73	none	none
	Total meals	1174		

Salmon are plentiful in the Gaspé Peninsula and along the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, are common in Nova Scotia, and are relatively scarce in Maine. Yet examination of 1174 meals of Double-crested Cormorants in these regions, with the definite purpose of determining the kinds of fish taken by these birds, has failed to reveal even a single instance of destruction of salmon by cormorants. No authenticated instance of capture of Atlantic salmon by cormorants anywhere is known. Captive cormorants kept by the writer ate white-fleshed fish scraps readily, but rejected salmon fragments mingled with them.

It is impossible to be sure that no cormorant, anywhere, has ever eaten or will ever eat a salmon. It is submitted, however, that the record summarized in the preceding paragraph is sufficient to show that cormorants do not harm the salmon population to any appreciable extent.

The present writer is the only investigator of cormorant food in northeastern North America who has found trout in that food. On the north shore of the gulf of St. Lawrence, where many waters are practically virgin and trout abound, these fish were found, by examination of 552 cormorant meals, to compose about three-quarters of one per cent of cormorant food. No trout has yet been found in cormorant food in Nova Scotia. It is reasonable to conclude that there is no significant destruction of trout by cormorants in this province.

The low-water conditions that prevailed in the Mosers and St. Mary's Rivers in the summer of 1957 would concentrate parr and make them more vulnerable than usual, so, if they were ever to be captured by cormorants, they should have been taken this year.

Unfortunately, it did not prove practicable to obtain specimens of food of the Great Cormorants nesting in three colonies near Antigonish, but the small size of these colonies, containing less than 50 pairs in all, is assurance against their having any important economic effect of any kind.

When complaints that cormorants were causing loss and annoyance to commercial trap fishermen in coastal waters east of Halifax were investigated, the number of cormorants found was so small that the investigation was discontinued by agreement.

The remaining complaints against cormorants in connection with fisheries were:

That they steal bait from lobster-traps,

That they catch so many flat-fish or flounders that none is now available for use as bait.

That they are generally destructive to fish sought by fishermen, and

That they make holes in the netting of fish traps.

Each of these complaints received careful consideration. None was supported by evidence. Some appear to be very unlikely. Until supporting evidence is forthcoming, no weight can be given to them.

Cormorants are not protected by the Migratory Birds Treaty between Canada and the United States, but in Nova Scotia they are protected throughout the year by Section 134 (1) (c) of the Nova Scotia Lands and Forests Act, Part III, Game. The investigation covered by this report has revealed no reason for changing this protected status.

Cormorants might be of greater positive economic value to Nova

Scotia if the colonies in which they nest were more generally exploited as places of interest to tourists and others who are not familiar with them. As indicated above, cormorant colonies that are relatively easy to approach are to be found near Antigonish, Jeddore, Sheet Harbour Passage and Canso, as well as in other places in this province. Those near Antigonish are on mainland cliffs; the others included in this report are on islands. Any members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society who have had no experience of a cormorant nesting colony would, I am sure, find it very interesting to visit one or more colonies and observe the cormorants there, as well as other seabirds inhabiting the vicinity.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 1956

The second Christmas Bird Count in the history of the Nova Scotia Bird Society has resulted in nine reports, as compared to eight the previous year. Three places, St. Peters, Windsor Junction and Digby, take part in the Count for the first time. Their reports are welcomed.

Cole Harbour-Chezzetcook, with 48 species, takes the lead with respect to number of species. The total number of species included in the 1956 reports is 77, as compared to 55 in the previous year. We are beginning to get an idea of the abundance and variety of birds that range this province in winter!

Possibly the most notable species in this group of reports are the Gannet (Cole Harbour-Chezzetcook), Black-headed Gull (Cole Harbour-Chezzetcook and Halifax), Yellowthroat (Cole Harbour-Chezzetcook), Ruddy Duck (Halifax), Wilson's Snipe (Wolfville) and Baltimore Oriole (West Middle Sable). Every report, however, adds substantially to the accumulation of data. We can do still better in 1957!

St. Peters, Richmond Co., N. S., Dec. 27, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Base point: St. Peters Post Office. 1½ mi. E. along Route 4, then 2 mi. NE. along shore of Bras d'Or Lake on secondary road (Lynch's River), ½ mile through abandoned farm. Ground bare, frozen; wind NW., light; ponds frozen, thin ice near shore of Lake; temp. 24°. Two observers, 3 mi. by car, 4 mi. on foot. Total hours, 3. Herring Gull, 22; Canada Jay, 1; Crow, 30; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Robin, 1; European Starling, 25; English Sparrow, 26; Tree Sparrow, 10. Total, 8 species 118 individuals. Also 6 unidentified birds, sparrow size, grey and white, climbing spruce trees from bottom to top. — BETH MACRAE, KATHERINE MACRAE.

Country Harbour, N. S., Dec. 29, 7.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Base point: Country Harbour School. Hines Point Beach, Country Harbour, 5 mi. E. along the harbour, 2 mi. W. across Country Harbour. Clear at sunrise, 50% cloudy in p.m., ground bare, lakes and ponds clear of ice; wind SW., moderate; quite warm all day. Two observers, one at feeding-station and vicinity, one as field party. Total hours afield, 9 (7 on foot, 1 by car, 1 by boat). Common Loon, 10; Black

Duck, 400; Oldsquaw, 200; American Merganser, 50; unidentified ducks, 200; Bald Eagle, 2; Ruffed Grouse, 10; Common Pheasant, 5; Great Black-backed Gull, 10; Herring Gull, 75; Great Horned Owl, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 5; Raven, 10; Crow, 35; Black-capped Chickadee, 25; Brown-capped Chickadee, 20; Robin, 3; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 2; European Starling, 75; English Sparrow, 25; Cowbird, 2; Slate-colored Junco, 10. Total, 22 species, 977 individuals, plus unidentified ducks. Kinglets were seen at feeding-station. — A. BURNS HODGSON, ALMA CLARE HODGSON.

Cole Harbour - Chezzetcook, Halifax Co., N. S., Dec. 22, 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Base point: Mineville bridge. Cole Harbour, Lawrence-town, Mineville, Wedge Island, Seaforth, Chezzetcook and Highway No. 7 from Dartmouth to Porter's Lake. Mostly clear and sunny all day; ground bare and frozen, small lakes frozen over; wind light; temp. 20°. Nine observers in five parties. Total hours afield, 30 (23 by car, 7 on foot); total party miles, 104 (95 by car, 9 on foot). Common Loon, 6; Red-throated Loon, 5; Holboell's Grebe, 7; Horned Grebe, 16; Gannet, 3; European Cormorant, 1; Canada Goose, 225; Black Duck, 200; Pintail, 3; American Golden-eye, 5; Bufflehead, 8; Oldsquaw, 12; Common Eider, 40; White-winged Scoter, 4; American Merganser, 3; Red-breasted Merganser, 32; ducks (unidentified), 80; Rough-legged Hawk, 1; hawk (unidentified, not Buteo), 1; Bald Eagle, 2; Ruffed Grouse, 3; Purple Sandpiper, 64; Great Black-backed Gull, 50; Herring Gull, 500; Ring-billed Gull, 4; Black-headed Gull, 6 (seen by all observers; had been previously seen and repeatedly identified in the area); Short-eared Owl, 1; Horned Lark, 16; Canada Jay, 4; Blue Jay, 3; Raven, 17; Crow, 60; Black-capped Chickadee, 44; Brown-capped Chickadee, 4; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 36; European Starling, 975; Yellowthroat, 1 (a warbler with olive-brown back, rich yellow throat, white belly and no wing-bars; observed for about 2 minutes by L.B.M. and J. A. McC.); English Sparrow, 81; Cowbird, 60; Evening Grosbeak, 10; Purple Finch, 1; Redpoll, 19; Goldfinch, 31; White-winged Crossbill, 4; Savannah Sparrow, 2; Tree Sparrow, 8; Song Sparrow, 8; Lapland Longspur, 6; Snow Bunting, 12. Total, 48 species, about 2607 individuals, plus unidentified ducks and hawk. — C. R. K. ALLEN, JOHN COMER, FRANK DOBSON, J. R. CALDER FRASER, ROBERT GRAY, IAN MACPHERSON, I. A. MACPHERSON, L. B. MACPHERSON, J. A. McCARTER.

Port Wallis, Halifax Co. (Spider Lake Road), Dec. 29, 8.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Overcast, some hail and showers, some sun, very light wind; ice in lakes, ground bare, temp. 34°-38°. Four observers, one at feeding-station. Total hours afield, 4½; total miles, 22 (13 by car, 9 on foot). Ruffed Grouse, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 2; Herring Gull, 17; Rock Dove, 7; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Raven, 1; Crow, 10; Black-capped Chickadee, 62; Brown-capped Chickadee, 6; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5; European Starling, 26; English Sparrow, 154; Purple Finch, 12. Total, 15 species, 306 individuals. — ETHEL CRATHORNE, GLADYS HEATH, FLORRIE WHITE, FRANK WHITE.

Halifax, N. S., Dec. 29, 7.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Base point: Henry Lake, on Old Sambro Road. Halifax city, Herring Cove, Sambro,

Rockingham and south end of Bedford Basin. Highway No. 7 to Nine-Mile River, Old Sambro Road, Prospect Road and Greenhead Road. Overcast with showers, fog and thunder in p.m.; ground bare, ponds partly frozen; wind light; temp. about 35°. Sixteen observers in seven parties, of which one at feeding station. Total hours afield, 40 (16½ by car, 23½ on foot); total party miles, 134 (97 by car, 37 on foot). Holboell's Grebe, 1; Horned Grebe, 3; European Cormorant, 1; Common Eider, 6; Ruddy Duck, 2 (C.R.K.A., F.D., P.D.); Red-breasted Merganser, 5; ducks (unidentified), 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; hawk (unidentified), 1; Bald Eagle, 1; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 3; Glaucous Gull, 4; Iceland Gull, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 290; Herring Gull, 2250; Kittiwake, 2; Black-headed Gull, 6 (repeatedly seen and identified in the area in winter); Dovekie, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 9; Canada Jay, 4; Blue Jay, 14; Raven, 13; Crow, 56; Black-capped Chickadee, 92; Brown-capped Chickadee, 58; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Robin, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 52; European Starling, 850; English Sparrow, 210; Cowbird, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 13; Pine Siskin, 2; Goldfinch, 21; White-winged Crossbill, 2; Slate-colored Junco, 8; Tree Sparrow, 9; Song Sparrow, 1. Total, 38 species, about 4002 individuals, plus unidentified duck and hawk. C. R. K. ALLEN, MRS. G. P. BACKMAN, JOHN COMER, FRED DOBSON, MRS. PHYLLIS DOBSON, A. J. ERSKINE, J. R. CALDER FRASER, J. W. LORIMER, IAN MACPHERSON, I. A. MACPHERSON, L. B. MACPHERSON, WILLET J. MILLS, H. P. MOFFATT, T. F. T. MORLAND, J. C. MORROW, W. F. TAKE.

Windsor Junction, Halifax Co., N. S., Dec. 27, 7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Base point: Windsor Junction Station. Routes 1 and 2 to fork at Bedford; thence on Route 2 to Grand Lake Station; on Route 1 to Hants Co. border; connecting roads between these stretches of Routes 1 and 2; north on Beaverbank Rd. to crossing of Beaver River; east on Old Guysborough Rd., for 6 miles; road along east shore of Bedford Basin from Bedford to Tufts Cove; Dartmouth-Waverley Rd. from Waverley to Port Wallis; road from Mill Cove to Hammonds Plains. Clear with a few cloudy intervals; light covering of fresh snow; new ice on lakes and streams; salt water inlets open; light westerly winds; temperature approximately 20°-25°. Eleven observers in three parties. Total hours afield, 30½ (23 by car, 7½ on foot); total party miles, 81½ (68½ by car, 13 on foot). Common Loon, 2; Holboell's Grebe, 1; American Golden-eye, 35; Barrow's Golden-eye, 1 (pattern on back and flanks and shape of loreal spot clearly seen by six observers); American Merganser, 20; Red-breasted Merganser, 7; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Common Pheasant, 9; Great Black-backed Gull, 165; Herring Gull, 850; Belted Kingfisher, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 5; Canada Jay, 6; Blue Jay, 23; Raven, 16; Crow, 43; Black-capped Chickadee, 28; Brown-capped Chickadee, 9; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5; European Starling, 225; English Sparrow, 200; Cowbird, 82; Purple Finch, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 11; Tree Sparrow, 1; unidentified hawk, 1; unidentified fringillids, 10. Total, 28 species, 1756 individuals, plus unidentified hawk and fringillids. C. R. K. ALLEN, CURTIS H. CHIPMAN, M. A. CHRISTIE, FRED DOBSON, J. R. CALDER FRASER, J. A. MCCARTER, IAN MACPHERSON, L. B. MACPHERSON, J. C. MORROW, BONNIE ROY, FLORRIE WHITE.

Wolfville, N. S., Dec. 23, 8 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Base point: Acadia University. N. to Delhaven, E. to Hortonville, S. to Gaspereau Valley, W. to New Minas. Overcast all day; ground partly bare; Gaspereau River open, ponds frozen; wind easterly, moderate; temp. 15°-22°. Sixteen observers; thirteen in three field parties; three working independently at feeding stations and adjacent territory. Total party miles, 187 (36 on foot, 151 by car). Black Duck, 482; Goldeneye (probably American) 22; Surf Scoter, 2; American Scoter, 30; American Merganser, 6; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Red-tailed Hawk, 5; American Rough-legged Hawk, 4; Northern Bald Eagle, 6; Marsh Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 5; European Partridge, 5; Common Pheasant, 43; Wilson's Snipe, 5 (R. W. T.); Great Black-backed Gull, 161; Herring Gull, 294; Rock Dove, 108; Great Horned Owl, 1; Flicker, 3; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Northern Horned Lark, 13; Blue Jay, 14; Raven, 54; Crow, 417; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Brown-capped Chickadee, 12; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Robin, 20; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 28; European Starling, 1196; English Sparrow, 531; Cowbird, 3; Goldfinch, 82; Savannah Sparrow, 10; Slate-colored Junco, 15; Tree Sparrow, 11; Song Sparrow, 5. Total, 38 species, 3601 individuals. — JOAN BROMLEY, A. J. ERSKINE, JANET ERSKINE, J. S. ERSKINE, RACHEL ERSKINE, MARY FORBES, RUPERT HALEY, MARGARET MILLER, RALPH MOSHER, ERIC MULLEN, W. B. SCHOFIELD, ANNE SEXTON, TOMMY SHEPPARD, STEPHEN SMITH, CHRISTOPHER THURROTT, R. W. TUFTS.

West Middle Sable, Shelburne Co., N. S., Dec. 22, 7.20 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Base point: Schoolhouse in West Middle Sable. Sable River, West Middle Sable, Louis Head and beach, Little Harbour, Hemeon Head, Matthews Lake. Mostly sunny; cloud 2% to 50% until 4.00 p.m., then increasing rapidly; ground bare, some ponds and small lakes frozen over; wind N, light, with brief maximum about 15 m.p.h.; in late afternoon SE, 10 m.p.h.; temp. 31° to 35° to 22°. Two observers, one constituting field-party and one at feeding-station and vicinity. Total hours afield, 9½ (6 on foot, 3½ by bicycle); total party miles, 25 (8 on foot, 17 by bicycle). Common Loon, 1; Horned Grebe, 9; European Cormorant, 3; Canada Goose, 28; Mallard, 1; Black Duck, 261; Pintail, 2; American Golden-eye, 17; Bufflehead, 14; Eider (Northern or American), 2; Red-breasted Merganser, 4; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Great Black-backed Gull, 36; Herring Gull, 338; Black Guillemot, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 5; Blue Jay, 5; Raven, 2; Crow, 41; Brown-capped Chickadee, 7; Robin, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 7; European Starling, 5; English Sparrow, 13; Baltimore Oriole, 2; Pine Grosbeak, 1; Ipswich Sparrow, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 6; Tree Sparrow, 8. Total, 31 species, 827 individuals. — HARRISON F. LEWIS, LAURA N. LEWIS.

Digby, N. S., Dec. 31, 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. Base point: centre of town. Snow at sunrise, wind NW. in p.m., 2-6 in. snow covering ground, temp. 10°. Two observers, 2 hours on foot. Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Herring Gull, 30; Crow, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; European Starling, 20; English Sparrow, 50; Slate-colored Junco, 1; White-throated Sparrow, 3; Song Sparrow, 2. Total, 9 species, 110 individuals. — ELIZABETH CARDOZA, LOUISE DALEY.

FIELD TRIP TO BARREN ISLAND, NOVA SCOTIA *

By L. B. Macpherson

Some of the virtually unvisited and uninhabited islands close to our coastline offer very attractive habitats both for birds and for bird students. Such a one is Barren Island in Guysborough County, situated some two miles off the general line of the coast, and about two miles south of the fishing village of Marie Joseph. Last Spring (June 3rd and 4th 1957), a field party authorized by this Society, consisting of Harrison Lewis, W. J. Mills, John Comer, and the author, paid a most interesting visit to the island for the purpose of observing the birds of the area. We gratefully acknowledge the kindness of Miss Rita Kleinsmith of Tacoma Park, Maryland, the owner of the island, in allowing us access and for the use of a building there during our stay. As is usual in this Society, the members of the party met all expenses.

Barren Island has an area of about a square mile. The seaward or south-eastern side has steep boulder and gravel margins while there are some rather fine sand beaches facing the mainland. The island is wooded near the shore—spruce and fir—with a few marshy ponds behind the beaches, and the occasional small rocky point jutting into the water. The almost treeless interior gradually rises to an elevation of perhaps 100 feet, has several rocky outcroppings, and is mainly a boggy barren, although by no means level. Typical bog plants such as cotton grass, pitcher plants, bake-apple, Labrador tea, cranberries and occasional taramacks, give a good idea of the vegetation of this barren. The animals of the island, other than bird-watchers, an occasional lobsterman and the birds, seemed to consist of a few deer, quite an abundance of rabbits and two garter snakes. So much for the background of our visit.

While there we noted 58 species of birds, but many of these were Spring migrants commonly found elsewhere and not typical of this habitat. Gulls and terns were much in evidence, of course. The Great Black-backed Gull was the dominant and dominating species of the island. We estimated that there were 90 breeding pairs and found many of their nests. These were placed either in solitary fashion on the small rocky points of land and on the rock outcroppings that I mentioned as occurring in the middle of the island or in small colonies on the rock ledges at sea that I shall mention shortly. Most of the nests had full clutches of 2 or 3 eggs—some had freshly hatched chicks that could quickly wander away from the nest if disturbed, but seemed to be able to find their way back eventually. Although some 50 Herring Gulls were seen, there were probably not more than 3 or 4 breeding pairs on the island.

About a quarter of a mile from Barren Island is a small grass-topped islet, called Thrum Cap, bearing an abandoned lighthouse and a very fine colony of three species of terns—Common, Arctic and Roseate. This last species was rather an exciting find for most of the members

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of the party. For myself, I still find these Terns difficult to tell apart, but, concealed in the old lighthouse shed, we enjoyed an unrivalled opportunity to study the characteristics of the three species. The nests covered most of the available space in the grass and on the gravel of the margins. Our estimate of breeding pairs there was: Common Tern, 100; Arctic Tern, 20; Roseate Tern, 5. In addition, on one of the rocky points of the main island, there was a colony of 10 more pairs of Arctics.

One evening Dr. Lewis and I set forth in the dory and laid a general course of 180 degrees. However, we stopped before we arrived at Bermuda, at a series of rocks in the ocean known as Gull Ledge, which are about one and a half miles from Barren Island. Although we each spent only about 5 minutes exploring—the other had to hold the dory away from the rocks—the effort expended in reaching the ledges was well worth while, for, in addition to more nests of the Great Black-backed Gull, we found nesting Common Eiders, saw two pairs of Black Guillemots, and found numerous freshly excavated burrows of Leach's Petrel in the small amount of soil at the top of the ledge. We did not see the Petrels, as they are almost exclusively nocturnal at this time of year, but by putting one's ear to a burrow entrance the bird could sometimes be heard. Although we saw many more Eiders and their nests, Guillemots and more Petrel burrows the next day, under more favourable circumstances, the trip to Gull Ledge remains, in my memory at least, a high point of the expedition. It was well after dark when we arrived back at our headquarters.

We had not expected to see many shore-birds there at that time of year and were not disappointed by their scarcity. Spotted Sandpipers, of course, were evident on most of the beaches and ponds—at least 8 pairs—and we did see 3 Willets. A pair of these were undoubtedly breeding birds. This was concluded from their vociferous and excited behaviour as we walked about on the barren. The shore-birds, however, did provide two surprises for us—a flock of 10 Purple Sandpipers on the rocks at Thrum Cap, rather late for this winter bird to linger with us, and a single Red Phalarope, found by Willett Mills, which had the good grace to remain swimming in the area in which he noted it until the rest of us could get back and have our look too. This Phalarope is undoubtedly common enough off-shore, but is rarely seen near land here at that time of year.

During our days on Barren Island we did not neglect the land birds. The warblers, for instance, were in full song — this was the 3rd and 4th of June, remember—and this fact enabled us to make a reasonable estimate of the number of breeding pairs there. The rather damp, cold, evergreen woods fringing the island provided a preferred habitat for at least 12 pairs of Blackpoll Warblers, while the stunted trees and bushes of the edge between the woods and the boggy barren provided territories for about the same number of pairs of Yellowthroats. Others of this family that we noted, were Magnolia Warbler, 8 pairs; Myrtle, 8 pairs; Redstart, 7 pairs; and Yellow Warbler, Palm Warbler, Canada Warbler and Black-throated Green Warbler, 1 to 3 birds of each species.

The commonest members of the sparrow family were Song and Savannah Sparrows and Juncos—probably 15 pairs of the latter and rather less of the two other species. In addition, we saw 1 or 2 individ-

uals of each of the following species: Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow, but came to no conclusion as to their breeding status on Barren Island.

Other species that we adjudged to be breeding on the island were Flicker, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Crow, Brown-capped Chickadee (or, as you will now have to learn to call him, Boreal Chickadee), Winter Wren, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Olive-backed Thrush and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

The morning of the 5th of June, our boatman not having made an appearance, we loaded ourselves and our gear into the small dory, and rowed to Marie Joseph without incident.

There remains only to tell you of our search for Laughing Gulls in the vicinity of Moose Head and Harrigan's Cove in the course of our return to Halifax. In the past there has been known to be a colony of them, in this area, on the Bird Islands. R. W. Tufts visited the colony in 1937, but was unable to reach the islands in 1943, because of bad weather. Some of our party had seen 2 Laughing Gulls on the beach at Moose Head a few days previously while on their way to Marie Joseph, so we felt that the present status of the colony should be investigated while we had the opportunity. Considerable searching was necessary before we were able to hire a lobster boat and its cooperative skipper, Mr. Freeman Macdonald, of Harrigan's Cove. After a rather rough, wet passage, we were landed on the Islands, and spent a most interesting and instructive hour there. First, I should say that we did not find any Laughing Gulls. It may have been too early for them, but it is more probable that the great increase in recent years of the Black-backed Gulls has made such inroads on the colony that it has not survived. This is a great pity, as this was our only colony of these attractive small gulls, but such things do happen in Nature all the time. One species increases at the expense of another that has the same feeding habits or breeding habitat. In this case, man was not directly involved or possibly not involved at all. Unfortunately, this cannot often be said. Fortunately, the Laughing Gull is still plentiful on the Atlantic shore farther south on the continent. Likely Nova Scotia was out of its optimal range, anyway.

As I have indicated, however, our visit was not without other interest. On this isolated rocky outcrop in the sea, besides the Black-backed Gulls, were many nesting Eiders, which seem to be able to hatch off their broods successfully in close proximity to the gulls; Black Gull-nests, or Sea Pigeons, as the fishermen call them, that protect their nests by hiding them in the recesses of cracks in the rocks; and 500 or more Leach's Petrel nests. The Petrels survive in the presence of the Gulls by nesting in burrows and keeping late hours. I do not want to give the impression that the Great Black-backed Gulls have natures as black as their backs. The species in these mixed colonies, if not too frequently disturbed, and they rarely are, get along quite amicably in a sort of armed truce, and all usually manage to raise enough young to maintain or even increase the species. When man visits such a colony the excitement among the birds is such that a Black-backed Gull is just as liable to take a swipe at another gull's eggs in the confusion as he is to steal from an Eider's nest. All birds, including the so-called predators, have their place in the scheme of things and it is usually only when man

tips the balance that a bird becomes a nuisance to man, and in most of those cases the harm the birds do is imaginary. Dr. Lewis's paper on the Cormorants, published in this issue, relates a good example of such imagined harm.

The continuing ambition of the members of this party, and of some other members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society as well, is to visit many more of the islands and ledges that abound off our Atlantic coast. They hold much that is unknown in store for the bird student who will seek it out—new knowledge of our Nova Scotia birds and pleasure for himself.



Black Guillemot's Nest / / / / / /

Willett J. Mills



Common Eider's Nest / / / / / /

Willett J. Mills

SUMMARY OF SPRING MIGRATION PROJECT

— 1957

By Harrison F. Lewis

This year the Society's study of spring migration resulted in 75 usable reports, coming from 15 counties. Cape Breton, Inverness and Antigonish Counties were not represented.

In these studies in previous years, after dates that were obviously incorrect had been discarded, dates of first observations were averaged and the averages were compared. Though this gives some indication of the direction and rate of spring migration across the province, the time of the movement, when calculated in this way, is sure to be wrong.

If, for instance, Robins are correctly reported by one observer as first appearing in X County on March 20, then their date of arrival in that county can be no later than that. Yet, by striking an average that includes that date and also later dates from other observers in the same county, we may obtain March 24 as an "average" date of arrival in the county. It certainly is not the true arrival date, as we know that some migrant Robins had entered the county by March 20.

To trace the progress of migration in Nova Scotia it is therefore proposed to use the earliest acceptable date of arrival reported each from county and to compare these dates, instead of comparing county averages. An "acceptable" date is one that the results of experience do not indicate to be presumably wrong or so erratic as to be useless for the purpose of tracing the advance of migration of the species under consideration. Until adequate evidence to the contrary is available, Robins reported early in March must be considered wintering Robins, rather than newly arrived migrants, and reports of Nighthawks in March or April must be considered either erroneous or records of stray birds.

It is true that selection of earliest acceptable reports places a heavy responsibility on the compiler. That is his tough luck. Even under the system of using county averages, the compiler could not escape the responsibility of deciding what reports were to be accepted for use in calculating the averages. The purpose of the investigation is to bring out, impersonally, the soundest possible information about spring migration in this province. There is no question but that the use of earliest acceptable county dates will result in a general picture that will be much closer to the actual facts than will a record relying on county averages.

In order to bridge the change-over from the one system to the other, both types of calculation for 1957 are presented in this report and the retardation of arrival record that results from using county averages is showing.

Numbers in parentheses after county names indicate the number of reports from each county that entered into the calculations.

		Robin	Tree Swallow	Hummingbird	Nighthawk
Annapolis (7)	selected date	Mar. 18	Apr. 16	May 12	May 25
	average date	Mar. 21	Apr. 22	May 18	May 28
Colchester (5)	selected date	Mar. 23	Apr. 24	May 11	May 28
	average date	Mar. 25	May 1	May 19	May 30
Cumberland (2)	selected date	Mar. 16	Apr. 23	May 25	May 25
	average date	—	May 2	—	—
Digby (1)	selected date	Mar. 19	—	May 20	—
	average date	—	—	—	—
Guysborough (2)	selected date	Mar. 18	Apr. 22	May 25	May 28
	average date	Mar. 20	—	—	—
Halifax (23)	selected date	Mar. 18	Apr. 19	May 12	May 19
	average date	Mar. 27	Apr. 27	May 20	May 28
Hants (4)	selected date	Mar. 18	Apr. 24	May 11	May 20
	average date	Mar. 26	Apr. 30	May 21	May 26
Kings (7)	selected date	Mar. 16	Apr. 15	May 13	May 26
	average date	Mar. 20	Apr. 18	May 19	May 29
Lunenburg (5)	selected date	Mar. 18	Apr. 14	May 16	May 29
	average date	Mar. 23	Apr. 25	May 21	—
Pictou (2)	selected date	—	Apr. 22	May 28	June 4
	average date	—	Apr. 29	—	—
Queens (2)	selected date	Mar. 19	Apr. 14	May 17	May 28
	average date	Mar. 25	Apr. 15	—	May 29
Richmond (1)	selected date	—	—	May 30	—
	average date	—	—	—	—
Shelburne (4)	selected date	Mar. 17	Apr. 11	May 20	May 25
	average date	Mar. 20	Apr. 14	—	—
Victoria (2)	selected date	Apr. 1	Apr. 27	June 1	—
	average date	Apr. 2	May 3	—	—
Yarmouth (7)	selected date	Mar. 15	Apr. 10	May 12	May 25
	average date	Mar. 18	Apr. 16	May 15	May 30
Southwest Mainland	selected date	Mar. 15	Apr. 10	May 12	May 25
	average date	Mar. 21	Apr. 18	May 18	May 29
Northeast mainland	selected date	Mar. 16	Apr. 19	May 11	May 19
	average date	Mar. 25	Apr. 30	May 20	May 28
Cape Breton Island	selected date	Apr. 1	Apr. 27	May 30	—
	average date	Apr. 2	May 3	—	—
Apparent retardation using county averages		5 days	8 days	8 days	7 days

The evidence indicates that Robin and Tree Swallow cross the Gulf of Maine or the outer Bay of Fundy, enter Nova Scotia through the southwestern mainland and spread successively into the northeastern mainland and Cape Breton Island.

On the other hand, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and the Nighthawk make their first appearance in the province in the northeastern mainland, either by the actual land connection or by a route where water crossings are narrow. From the northeastern mainland they spread rapidly into the southwestern mainland and more slowly into Cape Breton Island.

A much more accurate and more nearly complete record can be obtained with a better distribution of competent and active observers. There should be no blank counties and such strategically placed areas as Digby and Cumberland Counties should have intensified attention.