

Nova Scotia Birds

A Quarterly Publication of the Nova Scotia Bird Society



Summer Season 2013

Volume 55, Issue 4



NOVA SCOTIA BIRD SOCIETY

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Formed in 1955, the Nova Scotia Bird Society is a member of Nature Nova Scotia and Nature Canada. The activities of the Society are centred on the observation, study and protection of the birds of the province and preservation of their habitats.

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Inside This Issue

Special Points of Interest:

Colour-illustrated seasonal reports on the birds; discussion of status of the summer's birds; introduction to choosing binoculars; photo story on odd plumages; and more!



Cover: Arguably, the bird of the season was an AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, here being "ticked" on June 14 by a passing Barn Swallow. [Photo Richard Stern]

	Page
Bird Society News	4
Message from the President	4
Summer Bird Reports	5
Waterfowl	5
Galliformes	8
Loons, Grebes	9
Tubenoses through Cormorants	10
Hérons	11
Diurnal Raptors	12
Rallids, Cranes	15
Shorebirds	16
Gulls through Alcids	19
Pigeons through Woodpeckers	21
Flycatchers through Thrushes	22
Mimids through Wood Warblers	26
Sparrows through House Sparrow	30
List of Contributors	34
Field Trip Reports	34
Other Reports	35
What kind of Summer Was It?	35
Binoculars 101	37
Counting and Controlling Crows	39
A Portfolio of Plumage Oddities	40
Raising a Starling	43
Birds in our past	45
Upcoming Events	46
Corrections	47

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Foreword by the Acting Editor

We are living with and adjusting to marked changes in the ways we send, receive and analyze bird reports and images for use in *Nova Scotia Birds*. Mail-in lists and slips of paper with individual bird records are long gone. For some years most of our data have come through NatureNS, NS-RBA, and a relative handful as direct e-reports to the Society's website. Our Facebook site is now also becoming important. Most of all, we now have access to numerically overwhelming eBird reports. Scores of contributors living in or visiting Nova Scotia now use the resource, and this June and July they submitted almost 14,000 counts of nearly 86,000 individuals of 132 species, plus many "present" ("x") entries. Furthermore, province-wide coverage has taken a boost. Summer visitors to northern Cape Breton, including CBHNP, have greatly augmented the records of the small number of regular contributors in those areas. Records on eBird are thus becoming a primary source of information for our section editors. In time, these records are going to be extremely valuable for analyzing changes in distribution and abundance of our birds, even matching more carefully controlled programs like the BBS and CBC. As yet, eBird contributors are not making full use of measures of survey effort, like number of observers, hours and distances involved. Nonetheless, statisticians recognize that a large number of approximate counts, if not consistently over- or underestimated, can be as useful as a small number of accurate ones. Meanwhile, summarizing this new great flood of information poses problems to our busy editors. Records on eBird need much preliminary editing and condensation – they include some probably or certainly misidentified species, although most are removed by the regional reviewer; many uninformative "present" entries rather than counts or estimated numbers of common species; some duplicated reports by two or more persons reporting the same birds in the same location; and serial counts of the same birds in the same places, often the same backyard. Various section editors have dealt with these issues in various ways, but we hope that eBird contributors will also address these problems.

However, a more serious deficiency of eBird is its lack of narrative, although there are underused columns for remarks on circumstances and on the species observed. Narrative is what makes our seasonal accounts interesting. We hope more of you go beyond the listing and enumeration on eBird, and send comments (on NatureNS, our website, Facebook, etc.) on the birds you watch. Inform us about interesting behaviors and plumages, day-to-day and longer-term changes that you observe, about the tools and techniques of your birding activities. Tell us about things you observe that appear to threaten or benefit our birds. You tell us, and we'll tell our members and other readers.

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Notes from the President, David A. Currie

For the first time in a long while, we are seeing quite impressive signs that our society is gaining strength in numbers! We will wait for the Annual General Meeting in late November to announce the actual numbers, but from all reports our membership is growing, and I want to thank you all for your support as we work through some very interesting times.

Our *Facebook* site, our first foray into social media, has attracted over 1,200 participants from all over the world. Some of those Facebook contributors have become members of our society and are helping out where they can as volunteers. People are telling us that this venue is not only a great place to show their photos, but also to learn about identification, get answers to bird-related questions, and keep informed about current issues. It also creates a means of contact among participants and helps people navigate the province when visiting from elsewhere.

With the recent change by which members can read our magazine on-line at our website (see web address p. 2), many are deciding to forego the printed and mailed copy in favour of the electronic version. Should anyone wish to stop receiving the printed version, please let us know and we will add you to the ever-growing list. You can contact me or Ulli Hoeger to make that change.

As I mentioned in the last issue, one of the most exciting and satisfying achievements this year was the digitizing of all our past issues of *Nova Scotia Birds* (and its predecessors), which will soon be available to read through our website. We have also purchased special NSBS memory devices (with our new logo engraved), pre-loaded with all these digitized issues, all *Fall Flyers* (in earlier years when we had only 3 issues a year), the two Anniversary issues (25th and 50th), and all three *Birding Nova Scotia* publications (bird finding guides). Although the accessible website versions of the digitized issues will be readable, only the memory devices will be loaded with searchable files. This very important feature will enable quick access to valuable historic information on species, people, and places.

As a footnote to this venture, the older printed back issues will most certainly be available to those of you who may be collecting the complete printed set as other members donate their copies to the Society in favour of the electronic format.

During the coming year, we will be looking for people to help us out in several aspects of running the society. We are currently in need of people to help with NSBS merchandise sales and inventory, hospitality at monthly meetings and the annual general meeting, as well as people willing to lend their skills in website management and social media.

These are pretty exciting times for The Nova Scotia Bird Society and I sincerely hope you enjoy the changes as they happen.



NOTE: The following are frequently used abbreviations and acronyms, especially to save space in tables and often in text. In addition, months and most county names are abbreviated (except when stand-alone), and the latter are always in *italics* to distinguish them from towns with the same names. Well known cities and towns, even some small ones, are spelled out in full, without their counties or municipalities. Cardinal and ordinal directions may be abbreviated (as w., n.e., etc.) and capitalized only when part of a place name.

General terms

Ad., ad. = adult
 Atlas = Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas, 80-90 &/or 06-10
 BBS – Breeding Bird Survey
 Bch., bch. = Beach, beach
 Brk. = Brook
ca. = approximately
 CBC = Christmas Bird Count
 DU = Ducks Unlimited wetland
 f. = female
fide = on the authority of
 Hbr. = Harbour
 Hway(s) = Highway(s) usually numbered
 I. = Island (pl. Is.)
 imm. = immature
 incl. = including
 juv. = juvenile (first post-nestling plumage)
 Lr. = Lower
 m. = male
 m. obs. = many observers
 n.d. = no details (unsupported by documentation)
 no. = number
 nr. = geographically near
 NSMC = Nova Scotia [Spring] Migration Count
 obs., as in '2 obs.' = observer(s), *not* observation(s)
 Pk. = Park
 Pen. = Peninsula
 ph. = photographed

PP = Provincial Park
 Pt. = Point (*not* Port)
 pr. = pair
 R. = River
 Rd. = Road
 rept.(s) = report(s)
 Sanct. = Sanctuary, as in several Game Sanctuaries
 spec. = specimen
 thr. = throughout a season, as in 'thr. summer'
 var. obs. = various observers
 WMA – Wildlife Management Area
 yng. = young
 + or ++ with numbers = more; with dates = later
 < , > = less (or fewer) than, greater (or more) than

Geographical locations

APBS = Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary, *Cumb*
 BPI = Bon Portage (Outer) I. *Shel.*
 Brier I. = Brier Island, *Digby*
 CBI = Cape Breton Island
 CBHNP = Cape Breton Highlands National Park
 CBRM = Cape Breton Regional Municipality
 Hbr., hbr. = Harbour, harbour
 HRM = Halifax Regional Municipality
 Keji. NP = Kejimikujik National Park
 Keji. Seaside NP = Kejimikujik NP Seaside Adjunct
 PPP. Halifax = Point Pleasant Park, Halifax
 Seal I. = Seal Island, Outer Tusket Is., *Yar.*
 Uniacke Pk. = Uniacke Estate Museum Park, *Hants*

Waterfowl

By Ross Hall

Of the four seasons covered by *Nova Scotia Birds*, summer is the season for growth. Young ducklings that hatch early grow to near adult size by the end of this season and begin their adventures in flight.

CANADA GEESE were well reported across the province. Nancy and Mike Dowd commented on seeing the first ever brood of Canada Geese on L. Torment, *Kings*, as an example of the expanding breeding goose population in Nova Scotia. August reports indicate the increasing sizes in Canada Geese groupings as families join together.

Belleisle and Annapolis Royal Marshes continue as good locations to see WOOD DUCK. In the previous issue of *Nova Scotia Birds* Kate Steele reported Wood Duck broods of 23 and 17 young at the latter marshes, and obviously some counts in this issue must have included some of these. Wood Duck in some usually good areas of the province, such as *Cumberland*, were no doubt underreported. GADWALL was only reported from three locations, by far the most at Annapolis Royal (JAH). AMERICAN WIGEON were reported sparingly throughout the province, but not in s.w. counties. By contrast, there were several reports from *Pictou* (KJM, CHK). No lingering EURASIAN WIGEON were noted this summer.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK was reported widely across the province. They nest early, and by early August young Black Ducks, by feeding greedily like all growing ducklings, equal the size of their watchful mothers. In recent years it seems Black Duck broods have become tamer on the shorelines of cottages and are seen chasing water-striders or waiting for handouts from cottage owners. By contrast, drakes desert their females before eggs hatch to moult and hang out in bachelor groups. MALLARD was also widely reported. In early summer only male Mallards are seen at Kiwanis Pond in Truro, as the females remain with their young. Most Mallards were reported from urban regions. Readers might be interested to know that the Blandford Game Sanctuary, *HRM*, owes its existence to Mallards. In the 1950's, Cyrus Eaton raised and released Mallards and Canada Geese in this area. Because of his feeding program, large numbers of native waterfowl used Hollahan L. as well. The area became a sanctuary in 1959 to provide undisturbed habitat for the waterfowl. However, when the feeding program stopped most of the waterfowl left.



This impressive assemblage of 24 WOOD DUCK ducklings, June 3 at Belleisle Marsh, *Anna*, is presumably not a shared crèche, but a result of “egg dumping” by other, less willing mothers. [Photo Cliff Sandeson]

Reports of BLUE-WINGED TEAL indicate that duck's preference for eutrophic wetlands, as found along the Northumberland Strait and in *Annapolis*. The fertile saltwater lagoon behind Rushtons Bch., *Pict*, is an example (B. Mortimer). There were no reports of Blue-winged Teal in *HRM*, despite the many observant birders there. There were only five reports of NORTHERN SHOVELER (see table), and only two of NORTHERN PINTAIL, one from Sable I., where they have often nested. GREEN-WINGED TEAL were reported fairly evenly across the province (see table).

RING-NECKED DUCK does well in Nova Scotia, nesting even in many infertile lakes throughout the province. As diving ducks, perhaps this ability allows them to exploit wider food sources. While there were only two reports of GREATER SCAUP from elsewhere, Ken McKenna observed an interesting buildup of Greater Scaup numbers at Pictou, with 32 in late July. As we will see in the next issue, this was a foretaste of numbers reported in August, and ultimately the thousands that will overwinter in open water with good shellfish food sources.

COMMON EIDER, as their name implies, is common along most of our coastline, with their young usually hatched by June 1. The only reported HARLEQUIN DUCK was a male that delighted passengers on the Bird I. Boat Tour, out of Big Bras d'Or, *Vic*, and apparently present throughout the season. Ken McKenna and Charles Kendall reported the only SURF SCOTERS, with up to 35 at Big Merigomish I., *Pict*. Their July 14 report was exclusively of males. Would this mean that male Surf Scoter, with nuptial duty done, had returned from summer breeding range? There were a few scattered reports of

WHITE-WINGED and BLACK SCOTER through summer (see table). Maria Stager and Nathan Senner saw the only LONG-TAILED DUCK at the mouth of Indian Brook, Vic, with the comments: “A male moulting out of breeding plumage, but tail still on display! Seen well, 100m from shore in great light. A complete surprise.” There have been a few such summer records here in the past. Ken McKenna also joins the ‘only-one-report’ group by his COMMON GOLDENEYE record.

The table lists the dates and locations for HOODED MERGANSERS, COMMON MERGANSERS and RED-BREADED MERGANSERS through the summer season. There are no summer reports of Common Merganser for western Nova Scotia but others can speculate on whether that means anything. One Common Merganser startled Blake Maybank June 4 by tumbling down his fireplace chimney. It was doubtless seeking a nest site and was released unharmed.

Canada Goose			
thr. summer	Province-wide	many repts.	var. obs.
Wood Duck			
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	1	RBS
June 5	Annapolis Royal Marsh	60	RBS
June 9	Little Lake Area Trails, <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
June 23	Annapolis Royal Marsh	30	KEL
June 25	Waternish Rd, <i>Guys</i>	5	ebird
July 8	Dartmouth, <i>HRM</i>	2	eBird
July 12	First South, <i>Lun</i>	2	KEL
July 26	Miner’s Marsh, <i>Kings</i>	1	RBS
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	14	JAH
July 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	31	JAH
July 31	Caledonia, <i>Queens</i>	2	JAH
July 31	Pleasant R., <i>Queens</i>	7	JAH



These families of CANADA GEESE were roaming on mud flats May 26 at Gosse Bridge, *Hants*. [Photo Cliff Sandeson]

Gadwall			
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	2	RBS
June 23	Hemeon’s Hd., <i>Shel</i>	2	AVM
July 31	Annapolis Royal Gardens	27	JAH
American Wigeon			
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	2	RBS
June 10	Three Fathom Hbr, <i>HRM</i>	4	PMC
June 10	Cheticamp, <i>CBRM</i>	2	eBird
June 23	French Basin Trail, <i>Anna</i>	8	KEL
June 24	N. Sydney	1	eBird
30 June	Lr. Barney’s R. <i>Pict</i>	5	KJM
July 8 – 22	Red Bridge Pond, <i>HRM</i>	sev. repts. (no?)	MZE
July 28	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	4 ad., 6 yng	D. Gorham
31 July	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	18 ad., 12 yng.	KJM
American Black Duck			
thr. summer	Throughout	many repts.	var. obs.
July 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	155	JAH
Mallard			
thr. summer	Throughout	many repts.	var. obs.
Blue-winged Teal			
June 3	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	3	D. Gorham
June 5	Annapolis Royal Marsh	1	RIW
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	5	RBS

July 3	Country Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	1	B. Obermayer
July 6	CSI	2	AAD
July 12	Inverness, <i>CBRM</i>	1	NAD.& Mike Dowd
July 23	Rushton’s Beach PP, <i>Cumb</i>	10	B. Mortimer
July 25	APBS	1	Nathan Senner
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	2	JAH



By July 3, this drake GADWALL at Annapolis Royal Marsh was entering its dull, “eclipse” plumage. [Photo Cliff Sandeson]

Northern Shoveller			
June 4	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	2 m.	D. Gorham
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	1	RBS
June 5	Annapolis Royal Marsh	2	RIW
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	1	JAH
July 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	8	JAH
Northern Pintail			
June 23	Sable I.	1	Dorothy Wadlow
July 31	Annapolis Royal Marsh	1	JAH
Green-winged Teal			
June, July	Country Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	2-15	B. Obermayer
June 3	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	8	D. Gorham
June 23	Hemeon’s Hd., <i>Shel</i>	1	AVM
July 23	Windsor Sewage Lagoon	1	WPN
June 23	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	3	KEL
July 7	Indian Brk., <i>CBRM</i>	1	EBird
July 9	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	5	D. Gorham
July 10	Port Bickerton, <i>Guys</i>	f., 2 yng.	KJM
July 23	Lawrencetown Beach, <i>HRM</i>	8	TEB
July 25	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 28	Sand Pt., <i>Col</i>	2	JOK
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	2	JAH
July 31	Rushton’s PP, <i>Pict</i>	3	JOK
Ring-necked Duck			
July 25	APBS	1	Nathan Senner
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	7	RBS
June 29	McCoys Pond, L. Echo <i>HRM</i>	3	Greg Baker
June 6	Big Bras d’Or, <i>CBRM</i>	6	D. Versaw
July 26	Sydney River, <i>CBRM</i>	26	K. English

July 19	Pembroke L., <i>CBRM</i>	1	Nathan Senner
July 27	Benjies L., <i>CBRM</i>	f. & yng.	J. Klizas
July 8	Dingwall Beach, <i>CBRM</i>	3	Nathan Senner
July 31	Barney's River, <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM
Aug 19	Egerton, <i>Pict</i>	15	KJM, CHK
Aug 21	Middle R. of Pictou Dyke	7	KJM
July 28	Sand Pt., <i>Col</i>	3	JOK
June 25	Pugwash, <i>Cumb</i>	2	PMC
June	Tyndal Rd. Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	4,5	D. Gorham
Greater Scaup			
July 25	APBS	1	Nathan Senner
June 24	North Sydney, <i>CBRM</i>	4	P. Blancher
July 28	Middle R. of Pictou Dyke	32	KJM
Common Eider			
thr. Summer	Brier I	many repts.	var. obs
thr. Summer	Halifax Hbr. & Lawrencetown	many repts.	var. obs
June 6	The Cape, <i>CSI</i>	70	AVM
June 8	Partridge I., <i>Cumb</i>	8	NSNT
June 12	Louisbourg, <i>CBRM</i>	5	C. Smith
June 15	Bayswater, <i>Lun</i>	18 ad., 4 yng.	EBird
June 24	L. West Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	48	Mark. Field
July 1	Point Aconi, <i>CBRM</i>	94	S. Russell
July 7	Kingsburg, <i>Lun</i>	50	KEL
July 8	Cow Bay, <i>HRM</i>	ad, f. & yng.	N.Hentze
July 13	Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	24	JAH
July 16	Yarmouth Hbr.	28	J. Patterson
July 21	Taylor's Hd. PP, <i>HRM</i>	35	C. Mosher
July 23	Sober I., <i>HRM</i>	19	C. Mosher
July 25	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	3	KJM
Harlequin Duck			
June 6	Bird Is., <i>CBRM</i>	1 m.	J. Klizas
July 31	Bird Is., <i>CBRM</i>	1 m.	D. Versaw
Surf Scoter			
June 13-26	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	35, 30, 3	KJM,CHK
July 14-28	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	24, 27, 30	KJM,CHK

White-winged Scoter**Galliformes****By Rick Whitman**

Eight of the 13 eBird reports for SPRUCE GROUSE come from Chris Pepper and Ken McKenna, as they visit the more forested parts of the eastern mainland. We have no summer reports west of *Cumberland* and *HRM*.

The **CHUKAR** reported below would have to be escapes but they have been photographed and are reliably reported to have been in the Tatamagouche area for at least two years. Local birders might want to check closely for any signs of breeding next year. Also, are the birds surviving the winter on their own or are they being fed daily?

For all species, the counties named below indicate the geographic limits of the eBird reports.

Ring-necked Pheasant

June-July	<i>Digby-Inv-HRM</i> , 29 repts.	1-12 birds	eBird
June 1-30	Tremont, <i>Kings</i>	1	SLH
June 6	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	2	DMW
June 27	Aylesford, <i>Kings</i>	1	SLH
July 16	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	2	DMW
July 17	Torbrook Mines, <i>Anna</i>	1	SLH

CHUKAR

June-July	Tatamagouche, <i>Col</i>	4 ph.	Karen Ashfaq, <i>fide</i> IAM
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Ruffed Grouse

June-July	<i>Digby-Queens-Guys-Vic</i> , 24 repts.	1-10 birds	eBird
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June 18	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM
July 22	Brier I.	2	A. Carriere
July 30	Digby	5	J. Holden
Black Scoter			
June 1	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	15	B. Obermayer
July 2	Mouth of Indian Brook, <i>CBRM</i>	15	Nathan Senner
July 9	CBHNP	x	eBird
June 13	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM
June 26	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 11	Port Maitland Beach, <i>Yar</i>	1	J. Patterson
July 19	Bay of Fundy, Brier I.	2	A. Carriere
July 22	Kingsport Beach, <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
Long-tailed Duck			
July 22	Mouth of Indian Brook, <i>CBRM</i>	1	Nathan Senner
Common Goldeneye			
July 28	Middle R. of Pictou Dyke	1	KJM
Ruddy Duck			
June 23	French Basin Tr., <i>Anna</i>	2	KEL
Hooded Merganser			
June 4	Tidnish Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	9	D. Gorham
June 9	Little Lake Trails, <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
July	Middle R. of Pictou Dyke	7-14	KJM, CHK
July 19	Margaretsville Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	3	WPN
July 31	Barney's R. Rd., East Pond, <i>Pict</i>	6	KJM
Common Merganser			
thr. summer	Throughout, except w. NS	many repts.	var. obs.
June 28	Lake Torment, <i>Kings</i>	f. + 5 yng.	N.& M. Dowd
Red-breasted Merganser			
June, July	Country Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	present	B. Obermayer
June 1	Taylor's Hd., <i>HRM</i>	8	C. Mosher
July 2, 19	Mouth of Indian Brk., <i>CBRM</i>	3,10	Nathan Senner
July 9	Hartlen Pt., <i>HRM</i>	1	N. Hentze
June 13	Big Merigomish I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 23	Johnston's Pond, <i>Shel</i>	2	AVM

June 10	James River, <i>Ant</i>	1	KJM
June 16	Mid. Musquodoboit, <i>HRM</i>	1 f.	VJH
June 22	Mid. Musquodoboit, <i>HRM</i>	2 m.	VJH
June 23	Apple River, <i>Cumb</i>	1 ad. 8 yng.	KFS
July 3	Joggins, <i>Cumb</i>	2 ads., yng.	KFS
July 22	<i>Rich</i>	7 juv.	BID

Spruce Grouse

June-July	<i>Cumb-HRM-Guys-Vic</i> , 13 repts.	1-8 birds	eBird
June 27	Pockwock Lake, <i>HRM</i>	1 m.	RIV
June 30	Northeast Branch L., <i>Guys</i>	3 f., 15+ yng.	CHP
July 5	Joggins, <i>Cumb</i>	1 ad., 3 yng.	KFS



CHUKAR, either escaped from captivity or illegally introduced, have been spotted in the Tatamagouche, Col, area (here at Brule Pt., 18 July) in the past two or three summers. [Photo Karen Ashfaq]

Loons and Grebes

By Ross Hall

There were many reports of COMMON LOON, both coastally and on inland lakes. Lakes, especially in western Nova Scotia, had exceptionally high water levels this summer, and it is assumed that many loon nests were flooded. Resident loons at the lower end of Ponhook L., *Queens*, had no young this summer (ROH). With no responsibility for young the adults seem to have had an idyllic summer on the lake. Nesting loons at Little Dyke Marsh, *Col*, also had no success and their nest is believed to have been predated. The Canadian Lakes Loon Study has concluded that good reproductive success for loons is at least one young every other year (equivalent to at least 0.48 six-week-old young per pair each year).

The photographed RED-NECKED GREBE (RIV) was unexpected in late June at River Bourgeois, *Rich*. Among eBird reports for late August, there are many sightings of Red-necked Grebe arriving on the US East Coast and in New Brunswick, so we will soon start seeing them here. Like the PIED-BILLED GREBE, the Red-necked Grebe in the West builds a floating nest. An interesting fact about grebes is that they ingest large quantities of their own feathers and also feed the feathers to young. The feathers remain in the bird's stomach. A hypothesis is that the feathers protect the lower digestive tract from bones and other hard, indigestible material. Both parents care for the young.

Common Loon			
thr, summer	coastal & inland	many repts.	var. obs.
Pied-billed Grebe			
June 4	James R., <i>Guys</i>	1	KJM
June 5	Annapolis Royal Marsh	1	RIW
June 5	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	1	RBS
June 7	Pugwash, <i>Cumb</i>	ads. + 6 yng.	JUO
June 9	Tyndal Rd. Marsh, <i>Cumb</i>	1	D. Gorham
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	5	JAH
July 31	Lake Torment, <i>Kings</i>	1	NAD, Mike Dowd
Red-necked Grebe			
June 24	R. Bourgeois, <i>CBRM</i>	1 ph.	RIV



A PIED-BILLED GREBE family found good foraging among the Pond Lilies, July 15 at Annapolis Royal Marsh [Photo Cliff Sandeson]

Tubenoses through Cormorants

By Eric Mills

Late summer (in our fall-season issues) usually yields the most reports of pelagic birds; but there is good evidence of numbers in the right places, frequently far offshore, much earlier. Among these is Ian McLaren’s observation of NORTHERN FULMARS, likely non-breeding birds, near Sable Island during the second week of June; a scattering of GREAT and SOOTY SHEARWATER observations; and an early report, June 12, of a MANX SHEARWATER on the edge of the Gully, an offshore marine reserve on the edge of the eastern Scotian Shelf. A WILSON’S STORM-PETREL inshore near the Glace Bay sanctuary, *CBRM*, was noteworthy, especially for summer when numbers are still building up offshore.

The bird of the season was the **AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** first found June 9 by Charlene MacDonald in Upper South Cove, just outside Lunenburg. It was seen and enjoyed by many, birder and non-birder alike, through June 16. Five days later, June 21, judging by photographs, it reappeared at Tabusintac, NB, on the Miramichi, where it stayed until the 28th. Maine birders have built a case that the same bird then appeared on Long Lake at Saint Agatha (just s. of Edmunston, NB) in the extreme northern part of that state from about July 9 to 16, after which it was on a reservoir farther south, in Fort Fairfield (just W of Perth-Andover, NB) at the end of July. However, what we know of its travels goes back even farther, for a White Pelican was seen May 27 on Martha’s Vineyard, MA; one was seen May 29-30 at Sharon, MA; and one was reported June 1 from Middlesex, MA. All may have been the same bird, but at least the bird in MA seems to be the one that was seen later in NS, NB and ME, judging by markings and an anomaly on its bill that show well in photographs (thanks for information to Bill Sheehan and Derek Lovitch in Maine).



The week-long stay near Lunenburg of this AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (only our 13th on record) gave plenty of opportunities to life-listers and photographers. The image at left, June 9, was obtained by its finder the day it was discovered, and the one at right, June 15, was one of several allowing close comparison of bill features with those of apparently the same individual in Massachusetts, Maine, and NB. [Photos: left, Charlene MacDonald; right, Ronnie d’Entremont]

Northern Fulmar

June 10	nr. Sable I.	33	IAM
June 21	S of Cape Sable, <i>Shel & Yar</i>	5	Dorothy Wadlow
June 22	off Halifax	2	Dorothy Wadlow
June 23	Miscaine Bank, <i>CBRM</i>	No. present	John Loch
June 25	off N Sydney, <i>CBRM</i>	2	Peter Blancher
July 27	off Yarmouth	2	James White

Great Shearwater

June 9	30 km S of Halifax	300+	IAM
June 10	nr. Sable I.	180	IAM

Plus about 20 eBird repts. of low numbers late June through July mainly from ferries and cruise ships along the S. Shore and in Bay of Fundy.

Sooty Shearwater

Jun 3, 10	nr. Sable I.	1, 9	AGH, IAM
June 9	30 km S of Halifax	2	IAM

Plus about 10 eBird repts. of low numbers seen mainly from ferries & cruise ships off the south shore and in the Bay of Fundy.

Manx Shearwater

June 12	w. edge of The Gully, Scotian Shelf	1	IAM
July 27	Off Yarmouth	2	James White
July 30	Off Brier I.	3	Jim Holden

Wilson’s Storm-Petrel

June 21	S of Yarmouth	1	Dorothy Wadlow
July 12	Glace Bay Sanctuary	1	Nathan Senner, Maria Stager

Plus four eBird repts. of very low numbers mainly off Halifax in July

Leach's Storm-Petrel

June 22 BPI "Hundreds" on colony CDI
 Scattered eBird repts. of 1-10 birds, mainly in July off the S. Shore, from CBI ferries, and around colonies.

Northern Gannet

July 9 Conrads Bch., HRM 100 DMW
 July 16 Conrads Bch., HRM 100 DMW
 More than 100 eBird repts. of low numbers to ca. 100, mainly off CBI, and in Bay of Fundy, but lacking information on age.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN

June 9-16 Upper S. Cove, Lum 1 ad. ph. m.obs.

Great Cormorant

July 1 Pt. Aconi, CBRM 20 Skip Russell, Darlene Betat

July 6 Pearl I., Lum 1 imm. BLM, IAM
 July 13 CSI 3 JAH
 July 14 Brier & Long Is., Digby 3 James Patterson
 July 21 Cape Split, Kings 3 Patty Rehn, Steve Mattan
 July 28 Bacarro, Shel 75 JAH, DPO

Plus about 18 reports on eBird, mainly from CBI

Double-crested Cormorant

July 6 Pearl I., Lum 25 BLM
 July 28 Bacarro, Shel 75 JAH, DPO
 July 31 Conrads Bch., HRM 1 DMW

About 300 eBird repts. from throughout province, indicating the abundance of this ubiquitous species.



Conscientious parenthood is admirable, but not always a pretty sight, witness DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS, June 20 on their traditional Pictou Causeway colony. The white gular pouch of one youngster is an oddity. [Photo Beverly Meilleur]

Hérons

By Ulli Hoeger

The summer season is quiet time. Migrants have arrived on territory by then and it will be a few weeks before they are on the move again. Highlights of the season, other than a few of the "usual" strays "at the wrong time at the wrong place", were sightings of the first fledged GREAT BLUE HERON young of the year. On July 31 ELM reported the first three stalking prey at the Rossway saltmarsh on Digby Neck. One of the above-mentioned strays was a less-regular TRICOLORED HERON reported by Michel Soucy at Cheticamp, Inv.

According to local non-birders a GREAT EGRET reported on July 17 at Rainbow Haven PP had been present in the area for at least six weeks and appears to be a regular summer guest, possibly the same one showing up for the third year in a row. It is interesting how long a bird that one expects to stand out like a sore thumb goes unnoticed by birders – or are we just getting a bit lazy reporting sightings of birds that are becoming an increasingly more common sight in our province?

Cape Sable I. is still a reliable place to find BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON in the province. After the first returning bird was reported in late April by MUN and another reported in after the spring-season issue (see table), we had only two summer reports, both on a pond at the nearby Cape Sable Light; however, they are still around and presumably nesting on CSI and perhaps elsewhere.



A photo obtained in May of an adult BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON at Daniel's Head, CSI, serves to document their continuing reliability there. Its hunched-up, rather un-heron-like pose, is typical. [Photo Cindy Newell]

A CATTLE EGRET was a backyard surprise at Gardiner Mines, CBRM. It may have been the same one photographed a couple of days earlier at Donkin. [Photo David Gouthro]



American Bittern

May 27 – June 24	Apple River, <i>Cumb.</i>	1	KFS
June 1	Grand Desert marsh, <i>HRM</i>	1	DOU
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna.</i>	1	JAH, DPO

Great Blue Heron

Common in all suitable habitat

Tricolored Heron

June 9-10	Cheticamp, <i>Inv.</i>	1 ph.	Michel Soucy
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Great Egret

July 17	Rainbow Haven marsh, <i>HRM</i>	1	BLM, DAC
July 22	Port Joli, <i>Queens</i>	1	JOA

Snowy Egret

July 21	CSI	1	JON, SAN
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July 23	Homeville, <i>CBRM</i>	1 ph.	Sue King-Gosse
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Little Blue Heron

July 28, 29	MicMac Lake, <i>HRM</i>	1 ad.	Guylaine McGuire
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Green Heron

June 4	Durham, <i>Pict</i>	1 ph.	Chris Morrison
June 11	Grand Desert Marsh, <i>HRM</i>	1	KST

Cattle Egret

June 9	Donkin, <i>CBRM</i>	1 ph.	var. obs.
June 11	Gardiner Mines, <i>CBRM</i>	1 ph.	David Guthro

Black-crowned Night Heron

May 28	CSI	1	AGH
June 20	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	3	RDE ph.
July 6	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	1	AAD

Diurnal Raptors

By Rick Whitman

TURKEY VULTURE was reported only from the mainland west of *Antigonish*, although it has occurred beyond. BROAD-WINGED HAWK, AMERICAN KESTREL and PEREGRINE FALCON were also only reported from the mainland, and this has been the case during the June-July period for the previous six years, with single exceptions for both American

Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon in 2011. The smaller SHARP-SHINNED HAWK and AMERICAN KESTREL, as well as the secretive NORTHERN GOSHAWK, are only reported in small numbers during the nesting season. Note the analysis below of **CRESTED CARACARA** images. The Canso bird reported in this issue was clearly the same one seen by many in Lawrencetown, but the bird photographed May 4 at Middle W. Pubnico (see last issue) seems to have been a second individual. The bird reported without details from Monastery, *Ant* (see last issue) remains unconfirmed. Finally, photographs of one that hung around late May at Brookfield, *Col* (Nicholas Wentzell; see image below) were posted on the Society's Facebook page in October, but cannot be compared with those taken elsewhere. The number of individuals earlier in New Jersey, the apparent source of the Lawrencetown bird, remains to be sorted out. But clearly at least two birds, and maybe more, appeared in Nova Scotia. On a rare visit to Isle Haute, 16 km off *Kings* in the Bay of Fundy, RBS noted that PEREGRINE FALCON is probably nesting there.

For all species, the counties named below indicate the geographic limits of the eBird reports.

Turkey Vulture

June-July	<i>Yar-Shel to-Pict</i> , 8 repts.	1-3 birds	eBird
June 1	Diligent River, <i>Cumb</i>	2	JCZ
June 1	Brookville, <i>Cumb</i>	1	JCZ
June 7	Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	3	JCZ
June 11	Wharton, <i>Cumb</i>	3	JCZ
June 11	Fall River, <i>HRM</i>	6	JCZ
July	Falls Lake, <i>Hants</i>	1-2	JLC
July 7	Brier I.	1	DGA
July 10	Digby Neck, <i>Digby</i>	5	DAM
July 30	Waverley, <i>HRM</i>	2	AGH

Osprey

June-July	<i>Yar to Inv-CBRM</i> , 55 repts.	1-4 birds	eBird
July	Centrelea, <i>Anna</i>	2 ad., yng.	MCR
July 17	nr. Amherst, <i>Cumb</i>	2 ad.	KFS
July 31	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1	DMW

Bald Eagle

June-July	<i>Yar to Vic</i> , 60 repts.	1-65 birds	eBird
July 4,9,14	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1	DMW
July 8	Bird Islands, <i>Vic</i>	40+	DOU

Northern Harrier

June-July	<i>Anna-Shel to Vic-Inv</i> , 21 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
June 11	Trafalgar, <i>Guys</i>	1	KJM
July 5-6	Hilden, <i>Col</i>	1	Alan MacKenzie
July 16	Lawrencetown, <i>HRM</i>	1	DMW
July 28	Baccaro, <i>Shel</i>	1	JAH, DPO
July 31	Annapolis Royal	1	JAH, DPO
July 31	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	2	JAH, DPO

Sharp-shinned Hawk

June-July	<i>Shel, Queens, Vic, Inv</i> , 5 repts.	singles	eBird
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Northern Goshawk

July 9	Mineville Rd., <i>HRM</i>	1	KST
July 30	Macaskills Rd. <i>Rich</i>	1	KST, CHP

Broad-winged Hawk

June-July	<i>Yar to Pict-Guys</i> , 14 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
June 22	Milton, <i>Queens</i>	1	JAH
July 26	Sandy Bottom L., <i>Anna</i>	1	MCR

Red-tailed Hawk

June-July	<i>Yar-Queens to Inv-Vic</i> , 28 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
June 10	James River, <i>Ant</i>	3	KJM
July 3	Joggins, <i>Cumb</i>	1	KFS
July 13	Brooklyn, <i>Queens</i>	1	JAH, KEL

American Kestrel

June-July	<i>Col-Ant-HRM</i> , 8 repts.	1-3 birds	eBird
June 24	Lower Greenville, <i>Cumb</i>	1	DOU

Merlin

June-July	<i>Shel-Anna-CBRM</i> , 26 repts.	1-2 birds	eBird
June-July	Wolfville	nest, 2 ad. 1 yng.	<i>fide</i> JCT

June 3	Sable I.	1	AGH
June 26	Wolfville	1	JWW
July 19	Wolfville	nest, 2 ad. 2 yng.	<i>fide</i> JCT
July 28	Baccaro, <i>Shel</i>	1	JAH, DPO
July 31	Fort Needham, <i>HRM</i>	1	Robert Thomas

CRESTED CARACARA

Late May	farm at Brookfield, <i>Col</i>	1 ph.	Nicholas Wentzell
July 7	nr. Canso, <i>Guys</i>	1 ph.	RDE

Peregrine Falcon

June-July	<i>Kings, HRM</i> , 3 repts.	1-3 birds	eBird
July 21	Isle Haute, <i>Cumb</i>	2	RBS



A RED-TAILED'S life is not made easy by flying over a marsh occupied by breeding RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS. This pursuit was photographed June 18 during the NSBS field trip in the Hébert R., *Cumb*, area [Photo Frank Gummett]

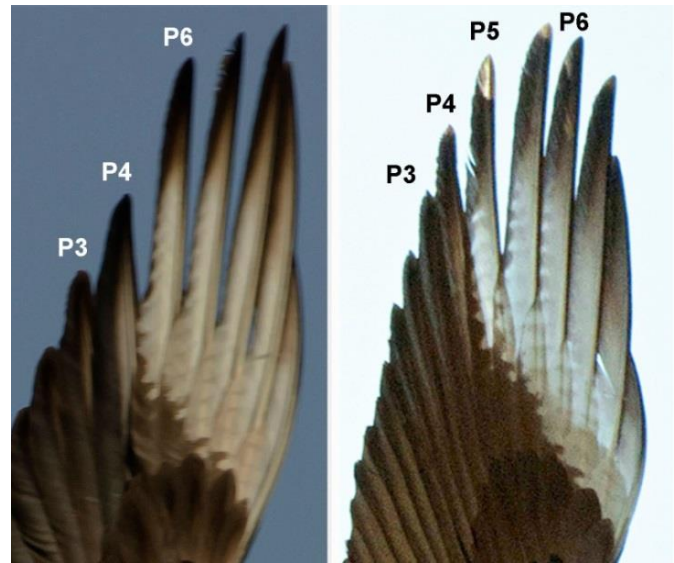


This CRESTED CARACARA, clearly identifiable as such, stayed for about a week beginning in late May on a farm near Brookfield, Col. Unfortunately, no flight photographs are available that might have allowed comparison with photographs of individuals elsewhere. [Photo Nicholas Wentzell]

At top left, an image the upper left wing of the Lawrencetown caracara is rotated to compare with the one at Mid. W. Pubnico at bottom left. The patterns of dark marks on the white bases of the primaries, although not clear on the Pubnico bird, seem to differ. Note also the apparently truncated primary (P5) on the Pubnico bird and the relatively longer white base of P5 compared with P6 on the Lawrencetown bird. At right: the undertail of the Lawrencetown caracara (top) lacks the extension of white with a dark bar onto the belly as seen on the Pubnico bird. In all these features, the two appear to be different individuals. [Photos: top left, Frank Gummett; top right, Hans Toom; bottom left and right Alix d'Entremont]



Comparison of the right underwings of the Canso (left) and Lawrencetown (right) caracara. The brightness and contrast of the original images have been modified to enhance the patterns of dark bases of the primaries, and the image of the Lawrencetown bird has been rotated to assist comparisons. Note that the Canso bird's fifth primary (P5) is missing (newly moulted) and P4 and P3 (and maybe P6?) appear to be new, with unworn rounded tips. (In this species, moult begins in summer with P4 and then sequentially inward to P3-1, and outward to P5-10). The dark bases of P6-P10 appear to have identical patterns, strongly indicating that the Canso individual was the same one seen earlier in Lawrencetown. [Photos left, Ronnie d'Entremont; right, Hans Toom]



Rails, Cranes,

By Ulli Hoeger

SORA seems to be our most common rail, or at least the least secretive. The only other rallids reported were VIRGINIA RAILS in *HRM* and *Yarmouth*, although doubtless a few American Coot nested in the Amherst area marshes. There were no reports of Sandhill Crane, although one was noted in *Yarmouth* up to the end of May (see last issue).

Virginia Rail

June 22	Crowell Rd. marsh, <i>HRM</i>	1	KST, CHP
July 5	Goose Creek Marsh, <i>Yar</i>	1 ph.	AAD
Sora			
Thr. season	Belleisle Marsh, <i>Anna</i>	several	var. obs

June 22	Three Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1	CHP, KST
June 23	Brookfield wetlands tr., <i>Col</i>	2	KST, C
July 11	Miners Marsh, Kentville	1	RIW
July 21 & 22	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	Robert Lange, ALD



VIRGINIA RAIL is elusive and seldom photographable. This one calling on the edge of cattails July 5 at Goose Creek Marsh, *Yar*, was an exceptional treat. [Photo: Alix D'entremont]

Shorebirds

By Susann Myers

Early June was enlivened by a few northbound stragglers, and a scattering of summering immatures remained throughout the season along with good numbers of local breeders. The beginning of southward migration seemed delayed, with the first Lesser Yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitcher not seen until almost a week later than average. The majority of species arrived roughly on schedule, however, and many were seen in good numbers, despite little reporting from CSI and CBI. Numbers were boosted by eBird records, including some welcome reporting of good numbers from Country I., *Guys*.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER were found in average numbers for July, which represents only the beginning of a long migration season for this species. Six AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER spotted July 31 by IAM were unusually early, the first to be reported in July since one in 2004. SEMIPALMATED PLOVER arrived on schedule but in low numbers, over 40% below the seasonal average. Sue Abbott, NS Program Coordinator for Bird Studies Canada, noted July 3 that June's cold, wet and windy weather had resulted in much lower than average chick survival for PIPING PLOVER to that date. Good numbers of young were reported from some sites in July, however, such as Cherry Hill Beach with eight adults, four juveniles and eight downy chicks July 20.

One of the season's few rarities was a **BLACK-NECKED STILT** found behind Silver Sands Beach, HRM, July 8 by Nathan Hentze and reported to BLM, who spread the news. The Stilt, an adult female, was seen by several birders and photographed by IAM. Although one or two have been found in the province almost annually since 1995, this was the first Black-necked Stilt to be spotted here in the summer season since June 2004.

Two reports were received of the many hazards faced by SPOTTED SANDPIPER during the breeding season. Nancy Dowd wrote of a family group foraging on rocks at Lake Torment, *Kings*, that had one small juvenile taken out by the wave of a large boat. And Kevin Conley reported a crow flying away with one juvenile at the beach at New Harbour, *Guys* July 22, despite desperate efforts by its parent. SOLITARY SANDPIPER was seen in typically small numbers for July; a juvenile noted July 28 at Port Joli was unusual so early in the season.

Most of the GREATER YELLOWLEGS reported in June were breeding locally. Migrants were first noted at Morien Bar June 30, on schedule. Numbers were below average for the season, partly due to a lack of reports from favoured sites such as Morien Bar, the Cole Harbour Saltmarsh, and CSI. Poor June weather did not appear to adversely affect the breeding season for WILLET. The first downy young had been shepherded down to the shore at Three Fathom Hbr. by June 23, on schedule, and the seasonal peak there of 64 adults and juveniles July 17 was above average. Adult migration was underway by mid-July, once juveniles were well-grown, and numbers had dwindled considerably by the end of the month. LESSER YELLOWLEGS were reported in strong numbers, boosted by a report by IAM of about 1000 counted along the Eastern Shore July 21. The first WHIMBREL were noted on schedule and in good numbers, but with only one report from CBI, a favoured stopover.

The seasonal total of 68 southbound RUDDY TURNSTONE was the highest in 10 years and almost twice the 10-year average, welcome news for a species that has seen sharp declines. RED KNOT numbers remained very low, with only four returning migrants noted for the season. The total of 191 SANDERLING, most from *Shelburne*, was the highest summer count since 2005.

The first small flocks of peeps at the Minas Basin were reported July 13 from North Grand Pré by JWW. Numbers of SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER had grown to 5000 at Grand Pre by the end of the month (RIW), which is still early in the migration season. Other sandpiper species were seen in the small numbers typical for July.

The second rarity of the season was a female **RUFF**, or Reeve, found at Three Fathom Hbr. by PMC and me, the morning of July 6. We saw a long-legged wader, slightly smaller than the nearby SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, with shortish, decurved bill (largely dark, with orange at the base). Seen briefly in flight, it showed plain brown upperparts with a lot of white on the uppertail. We considered the possibilities of both female Pectoral Sandpiper and Reeve. Unfortunately, the bird was backlit by harsh morning light that made a positive identification impossible. I was able to return the following afternoon; in much better light, I noted that the bird was dull brown overall with white belly and a very weak supercilium, but no darker cap. The breast was heavily marked with broad, splotchy markings that ended in a ragged edge rather than a crisp

line. And the legs were dull green, rather than yellow. All of which confirmed the identification of a Reeve. The Ruff is a vagrant shorebird from Eurasia, and is a rare but regular visitor along the Atlantic coast during migration. This is the third consecutive year that a Ruff has been found at Shorebird Cove, Three Fathom Hbr. in early July, and another was spotted there in late July 2008. Eight Ruffs have been reported in NS in June/July since 1999, all along the Atlantic coast, at Schooner Pond, Morien Bar, Sable I. and Three Fathom Hbr. It is interesting to speculate on how many more might be found if more sites along this coast were checked regularly.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER migrants were once again reported in low numbers. The summer totals of flocks reported have declined sharply in recent years, from an average seasonal total of 9,110 for 2004 to 2008, to an average of 3,730 for 2009 to 2013. While this may be due in part to reduced reporting from some key locations, the same downward trend can be seen at some well-monitored sites. Flocks at Three Fathom Hbr. contained good numbers of the *hendersoni* subspecies, with their much more extensively red underparts, throughout the season.

small shorebird species

July 13	N. Grand Pré, <i>Kings</i>	1 st small flocks	<i>fide</i> JWW
July 17	N. Grand Pré, <i>Kings</i>	ca. 400	<i>fide</i> JWW
July 19, 31	Evangeline Bch., <i>Kings</i>	658, ca. 6700	JWW
July 28	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	500	B. Obermayer



These KILDEER, presumably both males, were caught squabbling June 17 at Cooks Bch., Yar. [Photo Ron d'Entremont]

Black-bellied Plover

June 1	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	8 ad., 7 basic	SJF
June 5	Conrad Bch., <i>HRM</i>	2	KST
July 6	islands off The Hawk, CSI	10	AAD, Bertin D'Eon
July 11, 28	Grand Pré area	2, 32	RIW
July 11-31	various locations, widespread	25 total	eBird; var. obs.
July 20, 27, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1, 1, 10	SJF

American Golden-Plover

July 31 Seal I. 6 IAM

Semipalmated Plover

July 8, 12, 28	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	2, 12, 30	SEM
July 11- 31	var. locations, widespread	74 total	eBird
July 14, 25	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1, 16	KJM
July 17, 31	Sandhills Bch. PP, <i>Shel</i>	30, 180	AVM
July 20	Sandy Bay, <i>Queens</i>	25	AVM
July 20, 27, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	30, 110, 182	SJF
July 28	The Hawk, CSI	14	BJS, SIS

Piping Plover

June 1, 18	Cherry Hill, <i>Lun</i>	2, 5	SJF
June 13	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	4 ad., 7 juv.	KJM, RFE
June, other	3 sites, <i>Shel</i>	9 total	eBird
July 6-28	3 sites, <i>Shel</i>	10 total	eBird

July 8	Dingwall Bch., <i>Vic</i>	1	eBird
July 15, 22	Crow Neck Bch., <i>Shel</i>	23, 10	AVM
July 20	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	8 ad., 12 juv.	SJF
July 20	Sandy Bay, <i>Queens</i>	6	AVM
July 31	Sandhills Bch. PP, <i>Shel</i>	12 migrants	AVM

Killdeer

June 30	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	2	ALD
June, other	various locations, widespread	11 total	eBird
July 20	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1	SJF
July 20, 27	Second Peninsula, <i>Lun</i>	3, 1	JAH; NSBS
July	var. other locations, widespread	12 total	eBird

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER

June 7, 20	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	1-3	AVM; RDE
July 6	islands off The Hawk, CSI	1	AAD, Bertin D'Eon
July 17	Daniels Head, CSI	2	AVM

BLACK-NECKED STILT

July 8-13 Silver Sands Bch., *HRM* 1 ad., ph. Nathan Hentze *et al.*



This summer's vagrant **BLACK-NECKED STILT** stayed in the saltmarsh behind Silver Sands Bch., *HRM*, long enough (here July 13) for several to add it to their life lists. [Photo Ian McLaren]

Spotted Sandpiper

June 9	East River, Pictou, <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
June 25	Lake Torment, <i>Kings</i>	1 ad., 2 chicks	N. Dowd
June,	var other. locations, widespread	30 total	eBird
July	8 locations, widespread	17 total	var. obs.
July 22	New Hbr., <i>Guys</i>	1 ad., 2 juv.	K. Conley
July	<i>Vic, Pict, Guys</i>	totals 27, 17, 13; 103	eBird

Solitary Sandpiper

July 28	Port Joli saltmarsh, <i>Queens</i>	1 ad., 1 juv.	JAH, DPO
July 28	Plymouth, <i>Pict</i>	1 heard	KJM

Greater Yellowlegs

June 10-23	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1	SEM
June 3-29	<i>Cumb, Pict, Vic</i>	7 total	eBird
June 30	Morien Bay, <i>CBRM</i>	9	eBird
July 3	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 6, 7, 12	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1, 2, 8	SEM
July 7	Cross Lake, <i>HRM</i>	2 ad., 2 juv.	CHP
July 13	Silver Sands Bch., <i>HRM</i>	8	IAM
July 20, 27, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	2, 4, 2	SJF
July 30	Oxners Bch., <i>Lun</i>	7	JAH
July 31	Conrad marsh, <i>HRM</i>	6	DMW
July, other, var. locations, widespread		101 total	eBird

Willet

June 1, 18	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	10, 12	SJF
June 16	"Shorebird Cove", 3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	4 ad.	SEM
June 23	"Shorebird Cove", 3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	2 ad., 3 juv.	SEM
June, var. other locations, widespread		62 total	eBird
July 3, 20, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	21, 44, 19	SJF
July 6, 22	Crow Neck Bch., <i>Shel</i>	9, 20	BJS, SIS; AVM
July 12, 17, 28	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	52, 64, 22	SEM, PMC
July 13	Silver Sands Bch., <i>HRM</i>	16 ad.	IAM
July 13, 28	CSI	33, 4	JAH
July, other, var. locations, widespread		236 total	eBird

Lesser Yellowlegs

July 3, 14, 31	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	2, 22, 100	KJM
July 7, 12, 17	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	13, 22, 49	IAM; SEM
July 13	Silver Sands Bch., <i>HRM</i>	140	IAM
July 21	Eastern Shore, <i>HRM</i>	ca. 1000	IAM
July 24	Rose Bay, <i>Lun</i>	23	KEL
July 28	Port Joli, <i>Queens</i>	22	JAH, DPO
July	other, Atlantic coast & <i>Pict</i>	ca. 185	eBird

Whimbrel

July 3, 23	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1, 24	B. Obermayer
July 6	islands off The Hawk, <i>CSI</i>	1	AAD, Bertin D'Eon
July 20, 22	Crow Neck Bch., <i>Shel</i>	9, 10	BJS, SIS; AVM
July 21	West Head, <i>Shel</i>	12	JCZ
July 28	Cheticamp, <i>Inv</i>	8	eBird
July 28	The Hawk, <i>CSI</i>	2	BJS, SIS; JAH
July, other	<i>Kings, Pict, Shel</i>	12 total	eBird

Hudsonian Godwit

July 10	Lawrencetown L., <i>HRM</i>	1	PMU
July 12	Glace Bay	2 ad.	eBird
July 22	The Hawk, <i>CSI</i>	6	AVM
July 23	W. Chezzetcook, <i>HRM</i>	4	TEB

Ruddy Turnstone

June 1	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	6	B. Obermayer
June 6	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	6	AVM
July 6	off The Hawk, <i>CSI</i>	1	AAD, Bertin D'Eon
July 21	Taylor Head PP, <i>HRM</i>	4	eBird
July 21, 25	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1, 9	KJM; ALD
July 28	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	40	B. Obermayer
July 30, 31	Bird Islands, <i>Vic</i>	5, 14	CHP, KST; eBird

Red Knot

July 25	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 27	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	2 alt.	SJF
July 29	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1	B. Obermayer

Sanderling

June 6, 20	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	12, 2 alt.	AVM; RDE
July 3, 20, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	4, 40, 37	SJF
July 15, 20	Crow Neck Bch., <i>Shel</i>	6, 12	AVM; BJS, SIS
July 17, 24	Daniels Head, <i>CSI</i>	12, 70	AVM
July 17, 31	Sandhills Bch. PP, <i>Shel</i>	6, 40	AVM
July 23	Johnstons Pond, <i>Shel</i>	20	AVM
July, other, <i>Guys, HRM, Pict</i>		1, 7, 1	eBird

Semipalmated Sandpiper

July 6	islands off The Hawk, <i>CSI</i>	4	AAD, Bertin D'Eon
July 6	Pearl I., <i>Lun</i>	2	BLM

July 12, 20, 28	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	5, 87, 215	SEM, PMC
July 14, 29	The Guzzle, Grand Pre	500, 5000	RIW
July 17-31	4 sites, <i>Shel</i>	302 total	AVM; BJS, SIS
July 20, 27, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	35, 63, 145	SJF
July 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	80	KJM
July, other, var. locations, widespread		122 total	var. obs.



The SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER at left, June 1 at McCormacks Bch, *HRM*, demonstrates the great flexibility of shorebird bills, allowing them to grasp food items. [Photo Rick Whitman]

Least Sandpiper

June 13	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	2	KJM, RFE
July 7	Kingsburg, <i>Lun</i>	3	KEL
July 8	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	5 ad.	SEM, PMC
July 13	Silver Sands Bch., <i>HRM</i>	13	IAM
July 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	6	KJM
July 28	Port Joli saltmarsh, <i>Queens</i>	32	JAH, DPO
July 29	Cape North, <i>Vic</i>	15	eBird
July 31	Sandhills Bch. PP, <i>Shel</i>	20	AVM
July 13-31, other, var. locations, widespread		53 total	var. obs.

White-rumped Sandpiper

July 8, 28	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1 ad.	SEM
July 15	Sydney Hbr., <i>CBRM</i>	3	eBird
July 27, 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1, 2	DOU, ALD
July 29	Grand Pre, <i>Kings</i>	2	RIW
July 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	1	SJF

Baird's Sandpiper

July 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	3	DOU, ALD
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Pectoral Sandpiper

July 20	Horton Landing, <i>Kings</i>	1, ph.	RIW
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RUFF

July 6-7	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1 f.	PMC, SEM
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Short-billed Dowitcher

July 3, 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	10, 52	KJM
July 3, 27, 31	Cherry Hill Bch., <i>Lun</i>	19, 55, 8	SJF
July 5	The Hawk, <i>CSI</i>	1500	JON
July 6, 20, 28	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	26, 410, 230	SEM, PMC
July 13	Silver Sands Bch., <i>HRM</i>	200	TEB
July 17, 31	Sandhills Bch. PP, <i>Shel</i>	55, 255	AVM
July 21	Eastern Shore, <i>HRM</i>	ca. 1000	IAM
July 26	Rose Bay, <i>Lun</i>	150	KEL
July 28	Port Joli saltmarsh, <i>Queens</i>	140	JAH, DPO

Wilson's Snipe

June	<i>Inv to Lun</i>	12 total	eBird
July 20	3 Fathom Hbr., <i>HRM</i>	1 ad.	SEM
July, other, <i>Vic to Lun & Kings</i>		7 total	eBird

American Woodcock

June	<i>Ant, Guys, HRM</i>	singles	eBird
July	<i>Vic to HRM</i>	11 total	eBird

Red-necked Phalarope

July 13	off Pubnico Pt., <i>Yar</i>	6	JAH, RDE
July 13-30	off Brier I.	6-30	eBird

Gulls through Alcids

By Eric Mills

All was certainly not well with terns and alcids during this nesting season. As a result of very cold wet weather in June, many COMMON and ARCTIC TERNS either abandoned their colonies or raised very few young. This seems to have been also true of KITTIWAKES in the small colony along the South Shore at Pearl I., *Lun*, and probably also of many alcids. ATLANTIC PUFFINS and RAZORBILLS on Machias Seal I., NB, either failed to raise young, or were observed feeding young into early September, which is exceptionally late. This compounds these alcid species' problems after a winter when large numbers of them perished of starvation along the east coast of North America.

Many first-summer ARCTIC and COMMON TERNS stay on their winter ranges and do not come north. Those that do, show white foreheads, black bills, a faint dark "carpal" bar (in Arctic) and more variegated juvenile wing pattern (in Common). These frequently stand out as unusual in flocks of adult terns and their young. Many years ago, British birders puzzled over these individuals, which they categorized as "portlandica" terns (named after Portland Bill, a headland in s. England). At first it was thought that the "portlandica" plumage was unique to Arctic Terns, but in the late 1960s and 1970s the late Peter Grant and others showed that this plumage is the overwintering plumage of young *Sterna* terns of several species, including Common, and is worn by young birds in their first overwintering period after they have left the Northern Hemisphere. Most moult out of it before coming north, but some do not and show up as a very low percentage of "portlandica" birds that make it north in their second summer. Two or more such birds were recorded this summer among Arctic Terns in the famous colony on the Brothers Islands off Pubnico, *Yar*, and also off CSI (see photos).



Interesting plumage and bill characteristics were noted in our regular terns this summer. Left is a "portlandica" ARCTIC TERN (July 7 off Dog I., near CSI). Note its relatively short bill and neck. (It also readily differentiated from similar Commons by less-pronounced dark carpal bar on upper wing.) At right is an all-red-billed ad. COMMON TERN one of several in late July (here Aug. 1 at Rainbow Haven PP). A few field guides mention the loss of the black tip of their bills in late summer, and this can cause puzzlement. [Photos: left, Alix d'Entremont; right, Paul Murray]

BLACK TERNS were present on their breeding colony in APBS in mid-July, but an individual seen and photographed by researchers near the tern colony on Country I., *Guys*, was certainly unusual, likely a non-breeder or early migrant.

Two reports of **LONG-TAILED JAEGERS** came from offshore waters during the first ten days of June, the first from Sable Island, the second at sea south of Halifax.

THICK-BILLED MURREs are occasionally but rarely found among Common Murres or other seabirds in summer; such was an individual seen July 3-7 and photographed by tern researchers on Country I., *Guys*.

Black-legged Kittiwake

June 6-July 13	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	40-200+	v. obs.
July 1	Pt. Aconi, <i>CBRM</i>	4	Skip Russell
July 6	Pearl I., <i>Lun</i>	40	BLM
July 12	Powell Pt., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 8	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	200+	DOU

Plus about 10 other reports on eBird of colonies in CBI in June-July.

Bonaparte's Gull

June 7	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
June 24	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1	Brennan Obermayer
July 14	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 21	Middle R., <i>Pict</i>	30	KJM
July 28	Sand Pt., <i>Col.</i>	7	JOK
July 28	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	22 ad.	KJM

Plus about a dozen other reports on eBird from *Pictou* mainly during July showing increasing numbers toward the end of July.

Laughing Gull

June 1-2	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1, ph.	Brennan Obermayer
June 16	Freeport, Long I., <i>Digby</i>	1 ad. ph.	K. Robertson-Walker
June 21	Eastern Passage, <i>HRM</i>	1 ad.	DOU
July 24	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1 ad.	AAD

Ring-billed Gull

June 5	Sandy Cove, <i>Cumb</i>	25	Donald Gorham
June 7	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	44	KJM
June 26	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	42	Skip Russell, Darlene Betat
July 1	Pugwash, <i>Cumb</i>	15	Debbie Cusick
July 14	Cherry Hill bch., <i>Lun</i>	2	BLM
July 14	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	14	KJM
July 16	Tidnish, <i>Cumb</i>	25	Donald Gorham
July 16	Big I., <i>Cumb</i>	26	KJM, CHK
July 28	Sand Pt., <i>Col</i>	11	JOK
July 28	Middle R., <i>Pict</i>	20	KJM
July 29	Cape North, <i>Vic</i>	75	Jonathan Klizas
July 31	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	28	KJM, GDE

Plus about 150 other reports on eBird, mainly from CBI and *Pictou*.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

June 13	Horton Landing, <i>Kings</i>	1	RIW
June 22	Prospect, <i>HRM</i>	1	Cory Coolen
July 28	Lockeport	1	Charity Fraser

Black Tern

June 17	APBS	5+	DOU
June 24	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1, ph.	Brennan Obermayer

Caspian Tern

June 20	Red Bridge Pond, Dartmouth	1	BBU
June 30	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	KJM
July 2	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1	ALD
July 7	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	1 ad.	KJM

Roseate Tern

June 19-July 5	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	On tern colony	Brennan Obermayer
June 24	Pubnico Pt., <i>Yar</i>	1	Mark Field
July 6	The Hawk, CSI	2	AAD, Bertin d'Eon
July 6	Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	1	JAH
July 11	Lr. W. Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	7	Nathan Hentze
July 13	Pubnico, <i>Yar</i>	1	JAH
July 28	Lockeport, <i>Shel</i>	6	Charity Fraser

Common Tern

July 6	The Hawk, CSI	"hundreds"	AAD, Bertin d'Eon
July 7	Sandy Bottom L., <i>Anna</i>	2	MCR
July 31	Big I., <i>Pict</i>	20	KJM, GDE

Plus more than 300 reports on eBird from throughout the province.

Arctic Tern

June 10	Nr Sable I.	2	IAM
June 22	N. Brother I., <i>Yar</i>	1 <i>portlandica</i>	RDE, TCD
July 6	The Hawk, CSI	2 <i>portlandica</i>	AAD
July 6	The Hawk, CSI	ca. 50	AAD, Bertin d'Eon
July 6	Pearl I., <i>Lun</i>	2	BLM

Plus ca. 20 reports on eBird from throughout the province, never in large numbers except on colonies.

Pomarine Jaeger

July 1	off N. Sydney	3	Skip Russell, Darlene Betat
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Parasitic Jaeger

June 6	Cape Sable, <i>Shel</i>	1	AVM
June 10	nr. Sable I.	1 dark-phase	IAM

LONG-TAILED JAEGER

June 1	Sable I.	1	Rob Ronconi, fide AGH
June 9	ca. 30 km S of Halifax	1 light ad.	IAM

Common Murre

July 1	Pt. Aconi, <i>CBRM</i>	8	Skip Russell, Darlene Betat
July 1	Off N. Sydney	2	Skip Russell, Darlene Betat
July 7	Off N. Sydney	2	Peter Blancher
July 8,13	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	1	DOU, DBM

THICK-BILLED MURRE

July 3-7	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	1, ph.	Brennan Obermayer
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Razorbill

June 27-July 3	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	2-4, ph.	Brennan Obermayer
July 6	Pearl I., <i>Lun</i>	75	BLM
July 8	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	300+	DOU
July 13	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	1800+	DBM

Plus 14 other reports on eBird, all from the Bird Islands, representing a fraction of the total breeding population.

Black Guillemot

July 6	Pearl I., <i>Lun</i>	40	BLM
July 13	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	est. 400	DBM

Plus about 50 other reports on eBird from throughout the province, most in low numbers.

Atlantic Puffin

July 3	Country I., <i>Guys</i>	6	Brennan Obermayer
July 6	Pearl I., <i>Lun</i>	60	BLM
July 8	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	100+	DOU
July 11	Green I., <i>Shel</i>	20	Nathan Hentze
July 13	Bird Is., <i>Vic</i>	est.300	DBM, v.obs.
July 14	Off Brier I.	6	James Paterson
July 14	Round I., <i>Yar</i>	1 ph.	AAD
July 21	Green I., <i>Yar</i>	1 ph.	RDE

Plus a few other eBird reports of individuals or low numbers from the same areas.



It's hard to resist another image of a COMMON July 21 off W. Pubnico, *Yar*, flipping its prey (a larval hake?) for a better grip. Or maybe it was discomfited by what appear to be strands of algae wrapped around its bill and head, although harmlessly enough. [Photo Ronnie d'Entremont]

Pigeon through Woodpeckers

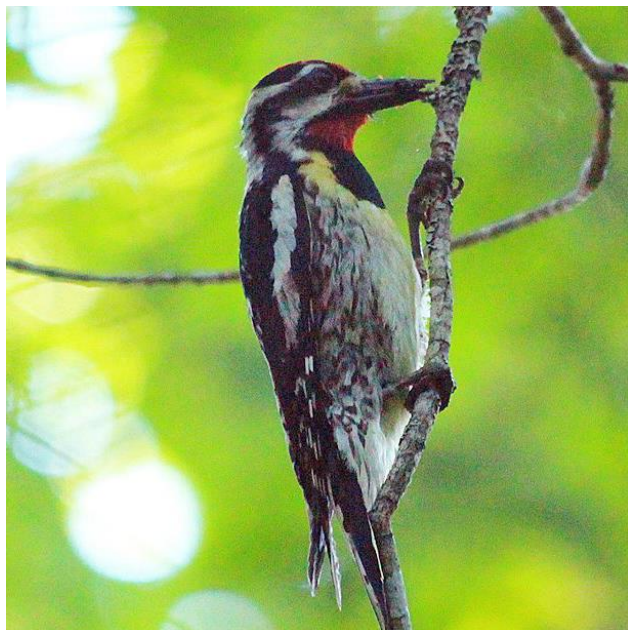
By Chris Field

As is sometimes the case for the summer season, there were no vagrant rarities for this section other than a second-hand report of a **WHITE-WINGED DOVE** on Seal I. **COMMON NIGHTHAWK** seemed to be more reported, which is encouraging given their decline in recent years. Red-bellied Woodpecker has either become regular enough to be ignored or, more likely, became more secretive when nesting in some of the few areas where they were present in spring. Also there was an increase in the number of reports of **BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS**. It's not clear whether this reflects an increase in their numbers or that more observers are out in their habitat. Also more **BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS** were reported than usual.

The **CHIMNEY SWIFT** reports, as compiled by Jim Wolford and on eBird showed them at 18 locations. The Temperance St. School in New Glasgow again reported the largest numbers with a peak of 630 on June 8. Other large number were 280 at Middleton High School on July 27th, 237 at McGowan's Lake, *Queens* on July 9, and 200+ in Upper Falmouth, *Hants*, June 13.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE			
July 10-14	Seal I.	1 at feeder	Michael Ross <i>et al.</i> fide IAM
Rock Pigeon			
June-July	province-wide	85 repts.	eBird
Mourning Dove			
June-July	province-wide	169 repts.	eBird
Black-billed Cuckoo			
June 3	Kentville, <i>Kings</i>	1	JLC
June 4	Barrington, <i>Shel</i>	1	RDE
July 2	W. Locaber, <i>Ant</i>	1	Robert McClung
July 5, 31	Apple R., <i>Cumb</i>	1	KFS
July 28	Lockeport, <i>Shel</i>	1	C.Fraser
Great Horned Owl			
June-July	<i>Ant, HRM, Lun, Shel, Yar</i>	7 repts.	eBird
Barred Owl			
June-July	7 counties	18 repts.	eBird
Short-eared Owl			
July 25	Lake Torment, <i>Kings</i>	1	NAD
Northern Saw-whet Owl			
June 1,2	Mid. Musquodoboit, <i>HRM</i>	1	VJH
July 4	Highland Road, <i>Vic</i>	1	N.Senner, M.Stager

Common Nighthawk			
June-July	10 counties	38 repts.	eBird
Chimney Swift			
June-July	8 counties	21 locations	eBird
Ruby-throated Hummingbird			
June-July	province-wide repts.		eBird
Belted Kingfisher			
June-July	province-wide repts.		eBird
Red-bellied Woodpecker			
June 13	Oakland, <i>Lun</i>	1	JAH
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
June-July	province-wide	40 repts.	eBird
Downy Woodpecker			
June-July	province-wide	83 repts.	eBird
Hairy Woodpecker			
June-July	province-wide	75 repts.	eBird
Black-backed Woodpecker			
June-July	<i>Gays, HRM, Inv, Kings, Pict., Rich</i>	15 repts.	eBird
Northern Flicker			
June-July	province-wide	146 repts.	eBird
Pileated Woodpecker			
June-July	province-wide	37 reports	eBird



At left, a male **YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** offers an unusual pose at June 17 at Barr Settlement, *E. Hants*. Note the unimpressive (despite its name) dirty yellow wash on the lower belly. [Photo Lou-Anne Bidal]

Flycatchers through Thrushes

By Nic Fieldsend

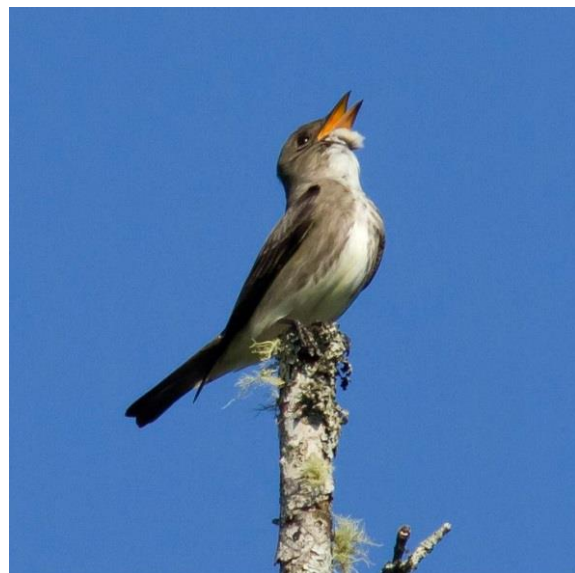
The season got off to an exciting start with the arrival June 16 of a gorgeous male **SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** at the house of Jerome K. d'Eon on Robert's I., *Yar*. Ron d'Entremont captured some good photos that were posted on the NSBS Facebook page.



A rare **SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (note the lengthy male tail) was a thrilling find June 16 on Roberts I., *Yar*. [Photo Ronnie d'Entremont]

There were reports of single **OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS** during the first week of June: June 1 at Country Island, *Guys* (Brennan Obermayer; and see image below), June 4 at Abrahams Lake, *HRM* (CHP & KST), and June 5 at Brierly Brook Quarry, *Ant* (KMK), with a high count of five on July 25 at Camp Lake Torment, *Kings* (NAD, Mike Dowd).

An **OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** June 1 at E. Jordan, *Shel*, was “quick-three-beers”-ing loudly for all potential mates or rivals to hear. [Photo Russel Crosby]



Rick Whitman had several sightings of EASTERN WOOD PEWEE early June in *Kings*, with two reported June 3 on the Gaspereau R. Tr. and a single June 7 at Black River Lake. His earliest report for the season was shared with CHP and KST who had another June 3 at “Phoebe Bridge” between Meaghers Grant and Middle Musquodoboit, *HRM*. Across the province, this species was reported in small numbers in 13 counties, with small concentrations of four in the Shelburne/Welshtown area, *Shel* July 4 (JAH).

Although not noted in the spring issue, YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHERS were reported in good numbers, with counts of six at St Mary’s Lake, *Guys*, June 20 (KMK), and ten at McPhail Lake, *HRM*, July 10 (CHP). Nathan Senner and Maria Stager both noted a single singing on consecutive dates (July 19 & 20) at MacDonald’s Pond, *Vic*. ALDER FLYCATCHERS were recorded from all counties throughout the summer months, with high counts of 11 at Brierly Brook Quarry, *Ant*, June 5 (KMK), and St Mary’s Glenelg Bridge, *Guys*, June 21 (KJM/NS Nature Trust). However, the duo of Senner and Stager can potentially lay claim to the most fruitful sighting, observing a single July 19 at Cheticamp Back Rd. Bog, *Inv*, while apparently enjoying some blueberry ice-cream! A single WILLOW FLYCATCHER was banded Aug 25 on BPI by Nikki Flood, part of a notable passage of “Traill’s Flycatcher” that accounted for almost half the 110 birds banded over the preceding two days. LEAST FLYCATCHERS were numerous with eight reported July 10 at Oakfield PP, *HRM* (Nathan Hentze), up to eight on several dates between June 4-26 at Brierly Brk. Quarry, *Ant* (KJM, Melanie MacDonald), and up to eight seen by a NS Nature Trust group 20 June on St Marys Lake Rd, *Guys*. Fifteen counts of “*Empidonax* sp.” were documented on eBirds, underscoring the perennial challenge of confirming identification of species of this genus.

EASTERN PHOEBE counts totaled 16 individuals, including one July 27 at the Meander R. Conservation Easement, *Hants* (RSM) that was thought likely to be nesting under the bridge near the property, and one Aug 11 at Coalburn, *Pict* (KMK) seen flycatching along the old railway trail, pumping its tail as it sat between catches. Brier Island laid claim to an impressive male GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER found by the Northern Light on July 7 (DGA). EASTERN KINGBIRDS appeared to favour their namesake when taking up residence this summer, with eight of the 14 eBird sightings recorded in *Kings*. In particular, the area of Grand Pré to The Guzzle offered regular sightings of one between June 16 and July 30 (RIW)

BLUE HEADED VIREOS were observed in small numbers throughout the province, with concentrations of eight at St Marys Lake Rd. West, *Guys*, June 6 (NS Nature Trust), and July 14 at N. River Big Falls Tr., CBHNP (Maria Stager, Nathan Senner). Skip Russell and Darlene Betat had the pleasure of observing a presumed family group of three, including a begging juvenile, June 24 on the Abraham Lake Tr., *HRM*. A lone WARBLING VIREO was found by Nancy & Mike Dowd at Camp Lake Torment, *Kings* July 24, “in full view and full voice”. The ever-vocal RED-EYED VIREOS had taken up residence and were in full voice in NIF’s yard in Lakeview, *HRM*, by early June and remained present throughout the summer months. Greg Baker heard two singing all morning on Echo Forest Drive, Lake Echo, *HRM* (June 6), delivering “those broken robin-like phrases”. Among the many larger counts, 21 at Blomidon PP, *Kings*, June 10 (RIW) and 33 in the Shelburne/Welshtown area, *Shel*, July 4 (JAH) were notable.

GRAY JAYS provided fleeting glimpses to several observers, with CHP noting three adults and three juveniles during a visit to McPhail Lake, *HRM*, on July 10. The BLUE JAYS of Birch Cove Pk., Dartmouth, made a fittingly patriotic bunch on July 1, with nine nicely assembled and seen by MZE. On July 7, a party of ten dropped in for a late morning break at the Northern Light on Brier Island, where Dennis Garratt enjoyed them briefly before the group flew on to Long Island. There were no surprising sightings or major concentrations of AMERICAN CROW or COMMON RAVEN.

The only reported sighting of PURPLE MARTIN was of two on June 28 at Tidnish Marsh/Tyndal Rd. Estuary, *Cumb* (Donald Gorham). They are not known to have nested in that area, although formerly did so in the Amherst region, 20 km southwest.

TREE SWALLOWS were observed in numbers up to 50 from the French Basin Trail, *Anna*, on June 5 (RBS), with parties of 25 at Camp Lake Torment, *Kings*, on July 12 (Nancy & Mike Dowd), and at Lilydale, *Lun*, June 14 (KEL). Swallows are often seen as some of the more effortless and acrobatic birds on the wing, but these skills still need to be mastered. KMK observed July 21 from Pictou Dyke at Middle River, the harsh realities of developing these talents when a young Tree Swallow dipped to the water, maybe to catch an insect or a drink, and misjudged the distance, smashing into the water and unable to get back in the air. It started to paddle shoreward with wings, but exhausted itself and died in the water. Wayne Neily's first BANK SWALLOWS of the year were in a group of 25 on June 27 at Torbrook, *Anna*, at a colony with about 60 holes visible at Trimper's sand/soil extraction area. Donald Gorham had 35 at Sandy Cove, *Cumb*, June 2, where he noted a resident colony has nested on the face of a 16 m. bank for more than 50 years. However, in recent years, ice erosion and summer cottagers trying to prevent further erosion have increasingly destroyed the nesting sites. Numbers dwindled to eight at this location by late July. BARN SWALLOWS were observed in smaller numbers, with 15 at Broadway, *Pict*, July 16 (KMK, CHK), including a family with six young being fed on a fence. The high count was 50 around the Fortress of Louisbourg, *CBRM* on July 4 (Jennifer Andrea). Small counts of CLIFF SWALLOW were made throughout the province with larger concentrations of 5-6 at Little River Wharf, *Vic* July 6-13 (Nathan Senner, Maria Stager) and a remarkable count of 25, again at Fortress of Louisbourg, *CBRM* June 12 (Christopher Smith).



Swallows in flight are a photographic challenge, but here all four “regulars” are nicely captured: clockwise from upper left, a TREE June 14 in Lunenburg, a BANK June 9 in Kentville, a CLIFF June 9 in New Minas, *Kings*, and a BARN SWALLOW June 14 in Lunenburg. [Photos Richard Stern]

BLACK-CAPPED and BOREAL CHICKADEE were present in the usual numbers, the latter mostly in coastal locations with a maximum of ten counted on Baccaro Pen., *Shel*, July 28 (JAH). Likewise RED-BREASTED NUTCHATCHES were observed in small numbers, with groups of five at Upper Hammonds Plains, *HRM*, June 23 (John Morgan), and at Keji NP, June 13 (Denise & David Hamilton), being the maximums reported. WHITE-BREASTED NUTCHATCHES were less widely

observed with a maximum of four at Carleton, *Yar*, July 11 (James Paterson). Of the rarer wrens, three MARSH WRENS were reported July 16 at Ketch Harbour, HRM (Janis Grant), but no details were submitted. The usual numbers of GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS were widely reported, with several groups of six and a maximum of 10 at McPhail L., HRM, on July 10 (CHP). Conversely, seeing groups of RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET required a trip to the other end of the province, with six seen at two locations on July 19 in CBHNP - Fishing Cove and Benjies L. Trail (Nathan Senner and Maria Stager).

Gisele d'Entremont and Judy O'Brien had a male EASTERN BLUEBIRD on the Pugwash River Road, *Cumb*, June 2 and Brier I had a female on July 6-7 (Dennis Garratt). At least one male and a female (a pair?) were at Dempseys Corner, *Kings*, July 11 and 16 (WPN) at a site where they had been earlier reported by PLC from her Breeding Bird Survey. A male seen later about 400 m west on power lines was presumed to be one of the same pair. The breeding status of a male July 23 at Sable R., *Shel*, where there are no recorded recent breeding records (Russel Crosby, see photo), is unknown.



A rather worn male EASTERN BLUEBIRD was something of a surprise, July 23 at Sable R., *Shel*. [Photo Russel Crosby]

A single WOOD THRUSH report was posted on eBird July 25 at Chipman Brook Rd, *Kings*, but no details were forthcoming. The best VEERY counts were of six at both Fauxburg/Northwest, *Lun*, on Jul 20 (JAH), and along Lamont Road, *Pict*, on July 3 (KMK). SWAINSON'S THRUSH was the most widespread of the woodland thrushes, particularly numerous through July in *Inverness* and *Victoria*. Nathan Senner & Maria Stager had a significant count of 20 along the entire length of the North River Big Falls Tr., *CBHNP*, on July 14. Large counts of 42 HERMIT THRUSH and 47 AMERICAN ROBIN July 4 in the Shelburne/Welshtown areas, *Shel* (JAH), demonstrated the abundance of both species, with many other double-digit counts across the province.

A recently fledged HERMIT THRUSH, June 9 in *Kings*, makes an appealing image. It is distinguishable from other woodland thrushes by its heavy breast spotting and rufous tones on wings and short tail. [Photo Rick Whitman]



Mimic-Thrushes through Warblers

By Ken McKenna

As in last year, all three mimic-thrushes were observed this summer. GRAY CATBIRD was the most commonly reported of the three and quite widespread on the mainland with about 28 eBird observations of 42 individuals, but only one in Cape Breton from W. Arichat, *Rich* (Karen Roy). It is ordinarily a skulker, so JAH was taken aback when a catbird responded to his pishing by flying straight at him, landing on a car a foot in front of him, and berating him. Although NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD continues to be reported in small numbers, this year it was quite widespread with eight reports of nine birds from Bay St. Lawrence, *Vic*, and New Waterford, *CBRM*, to Delaps Cove, *Anna*. Only two reports of BROWN THRASHER were noted, both from *HRM*. Our Society's president, DAC, had one singing June 19 in his Dartmouth property – a first for his yard. The second report from Bruce Curtis was of a thrasher, eating not singing, July 4 at Sambro Head, *HRM*, and present for only a few minutes.



This fine photo of the **COMMON MYNA** at Pubnico Pt., obtained by its finder July 10, near the end of its stay, captures the attractiveness of the bird. Its stance and concentrated stare remind us of its classification with the starlings. [Photo Ronnie d'Entremont]

Ronnie d'Entremont discovered and photographed a **COMMON MYNA** July 4 at Pubnico Pt., *Yar*, and it may have been there for about a month (*vide* CLS). This colourful South Asian species has colonized southern Florida (from escaped cagebirds) and is increasing rapidly there. The bird was last reported July 11. Although it is not an ABA "officially" countable bird in NS, I am sure it will sit prominently in the personal lists of those who took the time to observe it.¹

¹(Acting editor's comment.) There is almost no chance that this non-migratory species will ever occur naturally in Nova Scotia. It has appeared widely in N. America and elsewhere as an escaped cagebird, but has not spread beyond the subtropical to warm-temperate regions where it has become naturalized and is generally considered to be an invasive pest. For example, it is common in N. Island, New Zealand, but has not been able to persist in cooler S. Island. One recent record in coastal Georgia, which has been mooted as a plausible stray from the established population in s. Florida, has not been accepted by the Georgia Bird Records Committee, because of the high probability of escape from captivity. Most interestingly, another Common Myna at Seal Cove, Grand Manan I., NB, was first reported June 17 and well photographed June 20 (and perhaps present for some time and still there late Sept). While it might seem logical to suppose that ours had flown there over the Bay of Fundy, Jim Wilson, well-known NB naturalist, concluded from careful examination of photos that the two birds "appear sufficiently different to eliminate the likelihood of it being the same bird, in my opinion, assuming the dark markings within the bare skin area on mynas normally don't change quickly." This might suggest that both birds had escaped from the same source – a passing boat? But birding should be more than listing under agreed "rules", and Jim Wilson sensibly concludes: "For now I'm happy to have met with a new bird in NB with an interesting appearance and habits and mysterious origins and to add it to my list of "Birds of Unknown Origin". And when I meet it again in Florida, I'll know a lot more about it."

STARLINGS are known to mimic a great variety of other species and DAM reported one doing a perfect imitation of an American Robin in Halifax. Starlings are successful because they often out-compete other species for nest sites. On Paul Steele's property in Wolfville, both Pileated Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers lost their excavated holes to starlings in the same tree only 2 m. apart (*vide* JWW). There were about 300 e-Bird reports of 1-200 birds. CEDAR WAXWINGS were found to be common in every county mostly in small groups of fewer than 10 birds.

All the expected 23 species of breeding warbler were observed this season and there were no reports of rare warblers. More often heard than seen, the OVENBIRD was noted from all counties except *Richmond*, but it is likely common there as well. There were about 120 eBird reports of 400 birds. It was the second-most common warbler on the James River BBS June 10, with 27 heard (KJM). Less common in the province was the NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH with only 16 eBird reports of 23 birds, all north and east of *Annapolis-Lunenburg*. This species is normally an early migrant so one seen the last of May on Sable I. was certainly a migrant, and was not noted the first few days of June (AGH). BLACK AND WHITE WARBLERS are also early migrants but one on Sable I. June 1-3 was likely still migrating to a more suitable breeding area. The 124 eBirds reports of 225 birds were widespread through the province.

Only six locations reported TENNESSEE WARBLERS continuing the trend of low numbers – likely a reflection of low abundance of their food such as spruce budworm. Likely breeding reports were from *Victoria, Halifax* and *Pictou*. A singing bird in *Trafalgar, Pictou*, was first thought to be another species as it was dropping two parts of the three part song (KJM). One making a quick visit July 13 to Lr. Rose Bay, *Lun*, stayed only a few minutes and was considered by ELM to be unusual for both this location and date. In the 35 eBird reports of 46 NASHVILLE WARBLERS, all but one were north of *Annapolis-Queens*.

MOURNING WARBLER is the latest arriving of our nesting warblers, so one photographed June 6 at Keji NP was most likely migrating, although there are a few scattered records of possible breeding in s.w. parts of the province during the last Atlas. All the other 30 reports of 59 Mourning Warblers were from north of *Annapolis-Lunenburg*. A hot location was Money Pt., *Vic*, where 10 were noted June 29 by Skip Russell and Darlene Betat. COMMON YELLOWTHROAT was indeed common and widespread through the province with 275 eBird reports of 765 birds. A male found June 1 on Sable I. (AGH) was a migrant rather than breeding bird, as there is no evidence (and no likelihood) of past breeding there. It was not surprising that RBS found several pairs of AMERICAN REDSTART on Isle Haute in the Bay of Fundy as the last Atlas had confirmed breeding on this island. There were 144 eBird reports of 321 pretty widely distributed individuals in the province, with fewer records from the s.w. counties. It was the number-one warbler on the *Trafalgar* BBS route, with 54 detected. There is not much good news for breeding-season CAPE MAY WARBLER. I gathered only two observations of this species for this period, and both possibly migrating birds in the first week of June: one on *Country I., Guys* (Brennan Obermeyer), and another in *Digby (MZE)*. NORTHERN PARULA, on the other hand, was reported to be more abundant than usual this summer by a number of observers. David Johnston noted he had seen and heard more Parulas this year than ever in s.w. *CBI*. Other areas where this species was noted in abundance were *Wyman Rd, Yarmouth; E. Dalhousie, Kings; Wolfville Ridge; and Bridgewater*. It was also the most numerous warbler on the James River BBS with 36 noted, but it was fourth on the *Trafalgar* route with 30 seen (KJM). On eBird, there were 164 reports totalling about 360 birds. MAGNOLIA WARBLER with 41 was the third most common warbler on the *Trafalgar* BBS. A total of 360 were noted on 150 eBird reports. Two migrants were present June 1 on Sable I. (AGH).

If one wanted to find BAY-BREASTED WARBLER this breeding season, chances were better in conifer dominated areas, such as near the *St. Marys River, Guys*, where during June there were sightings of one at *Waternish* and five at *Lake Rd. (KJM)*, or in areas near the *Liscomb R., Guys*, and *McPhail L., HRM*, where five were seen on July 10 and 12 respectively (CHP). Four were heard singing on the *Trafalgar* BBS route June 11 which is also along the *St Marys River (KJM)*. The Nature Conservancy property at *Abraham's Lake, HRM* continues to be another reliable breeding location. with five found June 4 by CHP and KST; however many of the big old conifers there are now dying. Other observations were of two singing June 2 on *McNabs I., HRM*, by BLM, who felt they might stay to breed there, and one July 22 along the *Skyline tr. In CBHNP (Steve Mattan)*. The more widespread BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER was noted in 67 eBird reports of 81 birds.

The YELLOW WARBLER is relatively easy to find in most parts of the province so it is not surprising there were 27 reports of 560 birds on eBird. However, there are locations where they are harder to find. The *Trafalgar* BBS route had only one on June 11, but 25 the day before the on the James R. BBS was the third highest count of a warbler species. Similarly, 23 CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS were noted on the James R. BBS, but only on the *Trafalgar* route. This species is at the northern limit of its breeding range in NS and often tough to find on *CBI*, where only two of 56 eBird reports of 100 birds

were noted, and those were by two visiting birders during July in n. *Victoria*. The Atlas maps show a little pocket of breeding in that region. Only 12 reports of BLACKPOLL WARBLER were garnered and five of these in the first week of June were likely migrants, as those sightings were not in typical breeding areas. Observations of probable breeding birds in coastal areas were at Meisners Pt., *HRM* (HAT), Country I. *Guys* (Brennan Obermeyer), and Sober I. and Taylors Head *HRM* (Chase Moser). High elevations at Money Pt., *Vic*, and Benji Lake Trail, *CBHNP*, were productive of this species in late June for Skip Russell. Reassuringly, June 22 on BPI they were “in many areas of the island . . . more than I have ever heard.” (CLD). Although BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER numbers are increasing in New Brunswick, according to the recent Atlas maps, this does not seem to have been accompanied by increased numbers in Nova Scotia. I could find only 20 reports of 40 birds. A couple of visitors discovered this species in *CBHNP* and at the North R. Big Falls tr., *Vic*. Two on Brier I. in late July (Alexander MacDonald) were likely early fall migrants. Atlas maps indicate PALM WARBLER is very widespread in the province, but observers must not often be visiting areas where this species breeds, with only 26 eBird reports of 64 birds. Included in these was a July 4 report of 16 in the Shelburne-Welshtown area (JAH). In the last issue, I commented on breeding PINE WARBLERS at Miller Pt., *Lun*, as reported then by JAH. These birds were followed up several times in this report period. On June 15, ELM heard 1-2 singing males and saw a pair carrying fat, green caterpillars in a fine stand of white pine. Both he and AHM reported two still singing there June 22. On the same day and again July 14 KEL noted one in the same area. During the same period at Carrigan Hill off the Whiteburn Rd. in West Caledonia, *Queens* (square LQ30), Andrew MacDonald was very diligent in discovering and photographing (see below) a male and a worn female, and heard another male singing from large pines at the edge of an overgrown field. The species was not in any books he had at hand, but on returning home he checked online websites and determined the birds were Pine Warblers with songs matching what he had heard.



A bright male and a dull, worn female PINE WARBLER, June 22 at W. Caledonia, *Queens*, added to increasing evidence of scattered breeding in mainland pine stands of the province. [Photos Andrew MacDonald]

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER was widespread as expected, with 155 eBird reports of 379 birds, yet the species was detected only in small numbers on both the James R. (1) and Trafalgar (5) BBS routes. BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER was reported in similar numbers with 139 eBird reports of 307 birds throughout the province. This species is often difficult to detect in the James River BBS route, but the 11 this year was higher than recent years, but few compared to the 45 on the Trafalgar BBS, the second highest warbler count on that route. CANADA WARBLER is now listed as endangered and is legally protected under the **NS Endangered Species Protection Act**. An endangered species is defined as one that is facing imminent extirpation or extinction. In the spring-season issue, there were reports of a dozen along the BLT trail, *HRM*, and sightings continued into this report period, with 14+ seen along the St. Margarets Bay Tr., *HRM* (HAT). The chances are that only a few of these birds would have won ideal breeding sites, and the rest had moved on, but in any case, those areas seem to be important for migration stopovers of this species. One, certainly a migrant, was noted June 1 on County I. *Guys* (Brennan Obermeyer). There were about 18 eBird records of 21 birds in probable breeding areas, mostly in counties n.e. of *Lunenburg-Annapolis*. WILSON'S WARBLER is not an abundant breeding warbler in the province. Two on Country I., *Guys* (Brennan Obermeyer) June 1, and one on Sable I. June 3 (AGH), were certainly migrants. No other reports were received for this June-July period.



The beautiful CANADA WARBLER, here a male June 1 at Jerry Lewis PP, is listed as endangered, but sightings this summer appeared to give some indications of greater numbers than usual. [Photo Hans Toom]

I tabulate below all the reports of only some less regular species.

COMMON MYNA

July 4-11 Pubnico Pt., *Yar* 1 ph. RDE + m. obs.

Northern Mockingbird

June 6 Bay St. Lawrence, *Vic* 1 *vide* FMC
 June 6 Dartmouth 1 MZE
 June 20 New Waterford, *CBRM* 1 Kathy MacNeil
 June 21 Country I., *Guys* 1 Brennan Obermayer
 July 2 Delaps Cove, *Digby* 1, ph. JAH

July 4 Windsor, *Hants* 1 Tim & Ann Hall
 July 5 Bridgeville, *Pict* 1, ph. Carla Marshall
 July 24 Greenwood, *Kings* 2 Alaine Carriere

Pine Warbler

June 15, 22 Miller Pt. Pk., *Lun* 2+ singing ELM
 June 22, July 14 Miller Pt. Pk., *Lun* 1 KEL
 June 22 W. Caledonia, *Queens* pair + 1 m. Andrew MacDonald



Newly fledged warblers can be confusing, but among these, only YELLOW WARBLER (left, July 7 at Horton Landing, *Kings*) has yellow extending to the tip of the tail. The juvenile “MYRTLE WARBLER” (right, July 1 at Annapolis Royal) is much more heavily streaked below than any older “Myrtle” or other young warblers, including Blackpoll and Black-and White. [Photos: left, Rick Whitman; right, Stephen Hiltz]



The COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (left, July 7 at E. Chezzetcook, *HRM*) was formerly our sole wood warbler of the genus *Geothlypis*. Genetic evidence has recently moved the MOURNING WARBLER (right, July 16 in James R. area, *Pict*) to that genus. They share yellow underparts and both near ground level, but the Yellowthroat is much more familiar and often seen along roadsides, whereas the Mourning Warbler is an elusive resident of dense woodland thickets. [Photos: left, Hans Toom; right, Charles Kendall]

Sparrows through House Sparrow

By Ian McLaren

The birds in this section were overwhelmingly reported on eBird – 3592 reports of 11769 + individuals during June and July. As noted in the Acting Editor’s Forward (p. 3), eBird counts need much editing and condensation – in particular the removal of repeated counts to get reasonable estimates of numbers residing in given localities. In my analysis of these reports, together with those submitted by other means (natureNS, NS-RBA, etc.), I have attempted to tease out overall patterns of abundance and distribution in the province, largely without attribution of sightings, unless they are of particular interest.

A wandering **FIELD SPARROW** June 20 near the Cape Sable Light (RDE) was out-of-season for a vagrant (see photo). A total of 34 **CHIPPING SPARROWS** was reported from 16 localities from Annapolis to CBHNP during June, and 32 from 16 localities between Yarmouth and *CBRM* during July. This suggests a well monitored but seemingly much diminished population, which is more convincingly evident in severe decline in the BBS estimates since the mid-1960s. The **VESPER SPARROW** was not reported from its traditional nesting area along Highway 101 in w. *Kings* (see last issue), but were a surprise in two localities – June 17 “singing” (no.?) near E. Dalhousie, *Kings* (NAD) and one July 4 in the Shelburne area (JAH). **SAVANNAH SPARROW** was, as usual, well and widely reported: 165 individuals at 27 locations from *Shelburne* to in June, and 230 at 52 localities from *Shelburne* to *Victoria* in July. The increase in July is clearly related to greater numbers of localities visited, perhaps reflecting increasing attractiveness to birders of dune beaches with breeding sparrows as summer unfolds. The same may be true for **NELSON’S SPARROW**, with 29 reported at nine localities from *Shelburne* to *CBRM* in June, and 80 at 29 localities in the same span of the province in July. However, that species often doesn’t arrive until early June and becomes increasingly vocal through early summer.



This **FIELD SPARROW**, June 20 at the “forest” (a tiny cluster of spruce) near Cape Sable Light off CSI, is perhaps especially interesting because of its reduced blackish back streaking and lack of rufous eyeline and postocular wedge, hinting at the Midwest subspecies *arenacea*. [Photo Ronnie d’Entremont]



A **NELSON’S SPARROW**, perched on a bayberry bush at the saltmarsh behind the Silver Sands Bch., *HRM*, nicely shows field marks of the local subspecies *subvirgatus* – the overall greyish plumage, yellow supercilium, and broad, “fuzzy” ventral streaking. [Photo Hans Toom]

Eight **FOX SPARROWS** were reported from seven CBI counties. It has become increasingly rare during the breeding season in mainland Nova Scotia, where there was only one report of a pair at Marie Joseph PP, *Guys* (Skip Russell). However, they cling to our southern islands, where 12 were found (with much singing) June 22 on BPI (CLD), and up to five July 7 on Fish I. off Woods Hbr., *Shel* (AAD). They are known to occur on the still-wild E. Shore islands, but were not reported from there this summer. Nothing much can be said about **SONG SPARROW**, with reports from throughout of 522 individuals in 122 localities in June, and 803 in 222 localities in July. The increased number in the latter month seems attributable to wider coverage, not a flush of young, although a couple of fledglings were being fed at JCT’s Wolfville Ridge feeder as early as June 16. The largely boreal **LINCOLN’S SPARROW**, like Fox Sparrow, is probably being impacted by forestry and global warming, and the recent Atlas compared with the last shows fewer confirmed nestings in mid-mainland counties. This summer, almost all were reported from the n. mainland (total of 4 in *Ant*, *Guys*, *Pict*) and CBI counties (16), except for singles July 10 near McPhail L., *HRM* (CHP, KST) and July 21 along the Fauxburg Tr., *Lun* (JAH). A late migrant **SWAMP SPARROW** (not previously reported) was noted May 28 on Sable I. (AAH). During summer, 43 were reported in June in 18 localities from *Shelburne* to *Inverness*, and 82 in July in 51 localities from *Shelburne* to *Victoria*. Fledged young were noted July 20 in *Lunenburg* (JAH). Again the increased number in July is probably attributable to increased coverage, although with significantly fewer per report. As expected, **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** was reported throughout the province in both June (112 in 52 localities) and July (178 in 79 localities), with no clear seasonal trend in numbers per locality. A **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** was a somewhat late and off-course migrant, June 7 at Broad Cove, *Lun* (SJF). Finally, **DARK-EYED JUNCO** was in its usual abundance: 139 in 44 localities from *Shelburne* to *Victoria* in June, and 374 in 90 localities in the same span of the province in July, again revealing no obvious seasonal trends. Three examples of odd nest sites were reported (see photos): in a hanging flower basket in Tantallon, *HRM* (Elvira Gonella Welch), another in a wall basket of artificial strawberry leaves (!) at Trout L., *Anna*, and a third in saddle gear in a barn on the Hornes Rd., *CBRM* (B. & I. Williams).



Two unusual Dark-eyed Junco nests were: left, in saddle gear hung in a barn at Hornes Rd., *CBRM* (here June 10) and (right) in a hanging flowerpot at Tantallon, *HRM* (here July 26). [Photos: left, B. and I. Williams; right, Elvira Gonella Welch]

Late-spring overshooting tanagers reached Sable I.: one m. and one f. **SCARLET** May 31, and one f. **SUMMER TANAGER** June 3 (*AGH*; see photos); note that most of those two “overshooting” species appeared here this spring after mid-May (see last issue), later than usual. A singing m. of the latter was a surprise June 11 in Lr. Sackville (*DGA*).



These two point-and-shoot images highlight the delights of witnessing migration on treeless Sable I. At left, a m. and f. **SCARLET TANAGER**, May 31, chose a fence as a substitute tree, and, at right, a f. **SUMMER TANAGER** found shelter from the noonday sun on a tractor wheel. [Photos Andy Horn]

A mere 25 **NORTHERN CARDINALS** were reported on eBird, from 20 mainland localities (*Yar, Anna, Digby, Kings, Lun, HRM*), perhaps because of reduced singing males in summer (although *JCT* reported one singing July 31 on Wolfville Ridge), and many young had not yet appeared widely at feeders. However, there were reports of success in June in *Kings*, where fledglings were reported at feeders in two Wolfville locations (fide *JWW*), and young and adults representing perhaps three nearby nestings came to feeders at Ridge Style Pk., Wolfville Ridge (fide *JCT*). “Several” in Hubbards, *HRM*, in late July (*PST*), may have included wandering young. A vagrant f.-plumaged **BLUE GROSBEAK** was a seasonal surprise July 7 at N. Light, Brier I. (*DGA*). A low (alarming?) number of **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** was reported on eBird and otherwise: nine in five localities (*Col, Kings, Ant, Guys*) in June, and 12 in seven locations (*Kings, HRM, Pict, Vic*) in July. In addition, a pair apparently nested on *JCT*’s property on Wolfville Ridge where they had not done so for some time.

An out-of-season **DICKCISSEL** appeared May 27 at Richard and Phyllis McBride’s property in Union Square, *Lun* (fide *JAH*, not previously rept.). Some blackbirds are in trouble, in part because of large “control” programs at rice crops in s. US. **BOBOLINK** largely avoids that threat, but is assailed by agricultural practices here and in s. S. America. A total of 88 at 19 mainland locations (*Digby* to *Ant* and *Guys* was unimpressive), with highest counts (including some young?) of 20 along Canard Dyke path July 8 (*RBS*) and 10 on Big Merigomish I. July 25 (*CHK, KJM*). Totals throughout the province also seem

low for the once super-abundant RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD: 307 at 57 localities in June, and 260 at about the same number of sites in July. A count of 72 on the NSBS trip July 27 to Second Pen., *Lun* (JAH), may have included post-breeding flocks. COMMON GRACKLE is holding its own (BBS), but their totals were just as unimpressive, with eBird plus other totals of 285 at 68 locations in June and 222 at 71 locations in July (*Shel* to *Vic* both months). A large and rather early post-breeding gathering, mixed with singing and calling Red-wingeds, was observed evening July 3 at L. Torment, *Kings* (NAD). Only 13 BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS were reported through summer at six locations (in *Anna*, *Cumb*, *Kings*, *HRM*). They are disappearing because of changing livestock husbandry in e. N. America, where of course they only arrived from the Great Plains in the 19th century. BALTIMORE ORIOLES May 30 on Sable I. (AGH, not earlier rept.), June 2 at Broad Cove, *Lun* (*fide* JAH), and June 4 at Quarry Brk., *Pict* (KJM), were certainly late migrants, but a pair again nested near RBS's property e. of Kentville (see photo), and one July 2 at Berwick, *Kings* (SYP) may have been similarly engaged. A male that appeared July 27 at Windsor (Angela Joudrey) was probably on the move. A male **ORCHARD ORIOLE** June 1 at Roachs Pond, *HRM* (Ray Staszko ph., *fide* HAT) was presumably a late overshoot, but another July 13 in Lr. W. Pubnico, *Yar*, was an unexpected find at this season (AAD, ph).



The male of a nesting pair of BALTIMORE ORIOLE was a cheerful presence near the Stern's property e. of Kentville this summer (here June 18). [Photo Richard Stern]

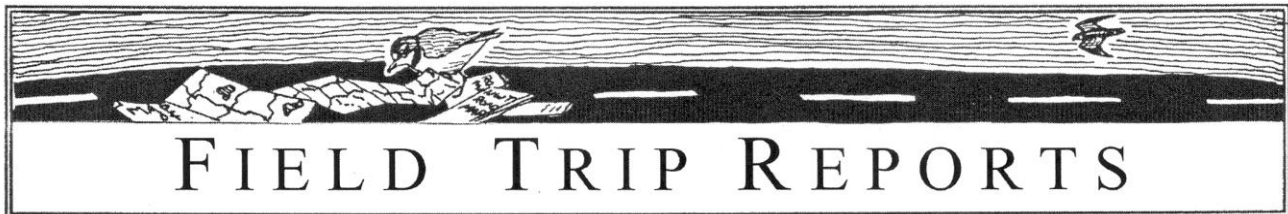
Last year's paltry cone crop impacted some of our "winter" finches, but this year's crop looks promising. The 13 PINE GROSBEAKS on eBird, with no other reports, were all on CBI, except for two reported (n.d.) July 31 on N. Point, Brier I. PURPLE FINCH was widely and lightly reported (almost all on eBird), with about 100 at 60 locations (*Anna* to *Vic*) in June, and a like number (*Shel* to *Vic*) in July. Young (not all this year's?) were visiting feeders with adults June 9 at Apple River, *Cumb* (KFS), and July 13 at Wolfville Ridge (JCT). Both crossbills were scarce, with RED CROSSBILL totalling 11 at five *HRM* locations (CHP and KST, DOU), three in two *Guysborough* localities (CHP), and one in CBHNP (Maria Stager, Nathan Senner). The only reported WHITE-WINGED was seen June 14 at Brierly Brk. Quarry, *Ant* (KJM). PINE SISKIN, not so cone-dependent, was better represented by 44 at 10 localities (*Queens* to *Inv*) in June, and 75 at 23 localities (*Digby* to *Vic*) in July. In mid-June, Judy Tufts on Wolfville Ridge observed "bright young fledglings . . . brought to the feeders by their parents – presumably from several locally successful nestings." AMERICAN GOLDFINCH was in its usual abundance, with 381 at 88 localities in June (*Shel* to *Inv*) and 437 at 164 localities in July (*Shel* to *Vic*), suggesting more coverage in July, but no augmentation yet by fledglings. Indeed, Nancy Dowd noted a male still giving its "brief summer territory song" (per Sibley) July 27 near E. Dalhousie, *Kings*. EVENING GROSBEAK also depends little on cone crops, and there was a total of 58 at 22 localities through the season (*Queens* to *Vic*), almost all on eBird and few at feeders; they seem to be back to stay, at least for a while.

Finally, HOUSE SPARROW continues to be scarce, with maximal counts (all but one on eBird) totaling 88 in 32 localities, showing little change from last summer. Only 16 of these were reported from four Halifax-Dartmouth sites, but they may be doing better elsewhere, with better counts in N. Sydney (8), Lunenburg (15) and Baddeck, *Vic* (10).

List of Contributors Represented by Initials.

Names of other contributors noted in the seasonal reports and photo captions are spelled out. Thanks to all, including others not mentioned (especially some eBird reporters), whose records are included in overall numbers and analyses.

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ALD	Doull, Ann	IAM	McLaren, Ian	PMC	McKay, Pat
AHM	Mills, Anne	JAH	Hirtle, James	PST	Stowe, Peter
AVM	Avery-McArthur, Avery	JCT	Tufts Judy C.	RBS	Stern, Richard
BEC	Crowell, Beverly	JCZ	Czapalay, Joan	RDE	d'Entremont, Ron
JJS	Smith, Betty June	JLC	Churchill, James	RIV	Viau, Rita
BLM	Maybank, Blake	JOA	Allen, Joyce	RIW	Whitman, Rick
CHK	Kendell, Charlie	JOK	Kearney, John	ROH	Hall, Ross
CHP	Pepper, Chris	JOL	Loch, John	RSM	McDonald, Robert S.
CLD	Diggins, Claire	JON	Nickerson, John	SAN	Nickerson, Sandra
CLS	Stevens, Clarence L.	JUO	Obrien, Judy	SEM	Myers, Susann
DAC	Currie, David	JWW	Wolford, Jim	SIS	Smith, Sid
DAM	MacNeill, Don	KEL	Lantz, Kevin	SJF	Fullerton, Sylvia
DBM	McCorquodale, David	KFS	Spicer, Kathleen	SLH	Hulford, Sheila
DGA	Garratt, Dennis	KJM	McKenna, Ken J.	SYP	Penner, Sydney
DOC	Cameron, Dorothy	KST	Steele, Kate	TCD	D'Eon, Ted
DOU	Doull, Elizabeth	MCR	Rice, Maggie	TEB	Boswell, Terry
DPO	Poole, Dorothy	MMI	Millard, Margaret	VJH	Higgins, Verna
ELM	Mills, Eric L.	MUN	Newell, Murray	WPN	Neily, Wayne
FMC	McEvoy, Fritz	MZE	Zelenietz, Marty		



Bon Portage Island, June 21-23

By Claire Diggins

The annual NSBS spring trip to Bon Portage Island had to be cancelled due to harsh weather conditions, but was held on the weekend of June 21. Two participants arrived on the island on a sunny, warm evening and explored the east shoreline. The summer solstice was celebrated with a supper of seafood chowder, a driftwood fire, and face-to-face encounters with LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS.

Saturday delivered more perfect weather and we skirted the island and explored for bird species, inhabitants, and visitors. The search revealed a few warbler species – YELLOW, COMMON YELLOW-THROAT, YELLOW-RUMPED, NORTHERN PARULA, AMERICAN REDSTART, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, and numerous BLACKPOLLS. Three GREAT-HORNED OWLS were spotted, one COMMON TERN, two CANADA GEESE three GREEN-WINGED TEAL, and three BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS. There was an abundance of

AMERICAN ROBIN, SWAINSON'S THRUSH, FOX SPARROW, and SONG SPARROW. Two ALDER FLYCATCHERS were present, and two TREE SWALLOWS were flying around their nest box. A NORTHERN HARRIER was the only raptor seen, and only four shorebirds appeared. During a few wakeful times at night, the chuckle of hundreds of Storm Petrels could be heard as they flew in to find their burrows. The burrows continue to grow in numbers in every corner of this small island.

We left the island in warm sunshine with feelings of renewal and regret.

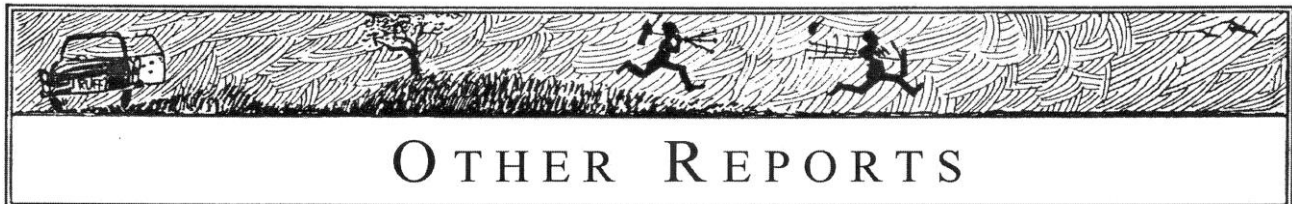
During our stay, we observed some very impressive bird behaviour. As we walked along the trail from the lighthouse to the cabin we frightened a mother COMMON EIDER. She lifted off her four babies and clucked in frenzy as she escorted them to the nearby water. Then a GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL swooped in and grabbed one tiny black, furry ball in its beak. I ranted and screamed at the gull in horror as I watched the gull return and make another swoop. The mother eider began plunging each baby under water by turn, as a juggler would. Meanwhile, many female eiders that had been swimming further down the shore swam over quickly to surround the mother and her tiny ducklings, and soon the gull flew off to survey the scene from a rock. I stumbled to our cabin in distress.

The following day we repeated our trek down the trail and the mother eider once again became frightened and coaxed her three babies to the water with a clucking voice. As we watched, a black-backed met again her at the water's edge, and she began pushing the little ducklings underwater, one-by-one and again and again. The flock of female eiders swimming further down the shoreline turned quickly and eight of them flew to surround the family and another seven quickly swam to the spot. The huge gull flew off to wait for a better chance to grab a meal.

From this dramatic experience I have drawn three conclusions:

1. Eiders suffer greatly from living near a flourishing gull colony.
2. The presence of interlopers creates problems and stress for breeding Eiders.
3. It takes a community to raise a child!

When we arrived back in Shag Harbour I saw that my car had been heavily bombed by petulant gulls.



What Kind of Summer Was It?

Compiled from *NatureNS*

As usual, various observers developed different overall views on the state of our birds from wandering in their local patches. It was generally agreed (see last issue) that the weather was somewhat miserable in late spring, and some thought that breeding would be negatively impacted. Then a lively exchange began in early July on NatureNS (the archives can be found at <<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/FNSN/MList/>>), from which the following have been gleaned, with minor editing and combining of some paragraphs.

The discussion was begun July 2 by Blake Maybank, who wrote: "This does not appear to be a great summer for breeding success. In our yard the only evidence of fledged young is of Common Grackle, and both Downy and Hairy Woodpecker. [It's a] bust so far for juncos, sparrows, jays, robins, finches, and doves. And the hummingbirds seem to have disappeared completely. Three or four were around the feeders regularly up to a few days ago, but no

sign of any now, and others nearby who feed hummers have reported the same disappearance. What is everyone else's experience?"

Donna Crossland responded cautiously that day: "I would agree with this having been a bad season for a lot of nesters, particularly those who nest on the ground. Many of the loon nests have flooded out, some with eggs that were near hatching, but alas the water keeps rising. In the Valley, pheasants did not appear to have a very successful this year. I haven't startled any young broods as I walk along the places where I've often seen them in the past. Ovenbird, Veery, and Hermit Thrush [are] not quite as vocal on the annual point counts, but maybe that's just the overcast weather."

Next day, Judy Tufts wrote from Wolfville Ridge: "We seem to have had more birds here this year than usual . . . the most successful species has been the Pine Siskins. Half a dozen adults appeared in April, stayed to raise families nearby . . . I have counted up to 20 siskins at feeders . . . Other fledglings seen: Hairy and Downy woodpeckers, N. Flicker, White-breasted Nuthatch (this week), Song Sparrow, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Robin, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Purple Finch, Common Grackle, junco, starling, and crow. After a great struggle to find enough flying insects to feed their young, the Tree Swallow adults in my nest box in the field across the road were able to raise a family after all. We thought they had given up but they persevered. I saw the last two of their brood fledge . . . Male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are regular visitors to the feeders. We are keeping our fingers crossed hoping they will be successful, as we haven't had this species here for quite a few years . . . Other species [are] on our property, but breeding success is not known: Mourning Dove, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Veery and Swainson's Thrush, Chipping and White-throated sparrows, and Goldfinches. . . Occasionally I hear and/or see a male Pileated Woodpecker . . . [and] Ovenbird and Eastern Wood-Pewee both call continually in our backyard . . . Have not seen any Black-and-White Warblers or Am. Redstarts in our woods this year, but do have N. Parula, Chestnut-sided, Black-thr. Green, Ovenbird, Magnolia and Yellow-rumped warblers, so there's a fair amount of song. Surprisingly there are more Ovenbirds, Parula, Magnolia, and Chestnut-sided warblers and E. Wood-Pewees here than in the past, but fewer Black-throated Greens."

Three others responded July 3 specifically on the status of hummingbirds, saying that they were still coming to their feeders, and John Sollows noted that only males (which take no part in rearing young) were coming to his feeder. Marian Fulton from Hantsport clarified that "This same discussion comes up every year, year after year, at this time. [Hummingbirds] always take a break from feeders when they are nesting and reappear again later. If you watch your feeders regularly during this time period you may see them early in the morning or late in the evening; I have spotted them at my feeders when it is almost dark."

The subject was addressed again on July 22 when Jame Hirtle reported that: "I did my breeding bird survey [on July 4] for Shelburne [County] . . . This was later than I normally run the route [and] overall . . . numbers of bird species were lower than normal . . ." He then listed species, some missing for the first time, and most mostly down in numbers, with a few as high as, and fewer higher in numbers than usual, specifically noting a scarcity of Black-throated Green Warbler. On the same day Nancy Dowd responded to James's mailing, and wrote: "I too have found Black-throated Green Warblers very scarce this year (E Dalhousie, Kings Co). Their song is so distinctive they'd be hard to miss if around." Writing from from s. Yarmouth, John Sollows felt that "cardinals and catbirds [were] at numbers similar to last year. . . There have been a fair number of hummingbirds [and] goldfinches have been fairly common. Parulas have been the champ in terms of warbler abundance, and as in Shelburne, Black-throated Greens have been very scarce. I have heard one so far this year. In previous years, they were considerably commoner. Have not heard any vireos this year, nor Veery, which is the only thrush (aside from robin) we normally encounter in the summer out here."

Note how the conversation had shifted from early July – the time of the first mailings noted above and of James Hirtle's (belated) BBS – to the whole summer season. So Lance Laviolette focussed on late July in his thoughtful response to James Hirtle, as follows:

"I'm always interested to hear what experienced observers such as you are seeing in their local area at this time of year. There are invariably reports of birds on the move and of birds disappearing from the woods through much of Nova Scotia during the last two weeks of July and I see similar reports from other parts of eastern Canada.

“So what’s going on? It could be that most of Nova Scotia’s breeding birds move out of the province in small groups at this time of year. However, observations at locations in the south end of the province such as Brier Island indicate that the southern migration of most song birds in Nova Scotia doesn’t really begin for another 3-4 weeks and for species such as the Blue-headed Vireos you saw, not for another 6-7 weeks. In fact, as you mention, many nests, especially on the coast and on offshore islands, won’t even have fledged their young for another few weeks.

“Certainly in some years of early breeding success, some flocks do leave Nova Scotia earlier than expected. However, I suspect that what’s usually happening is that many adults and fledged young are gathering into small, pre-migration, feeding flocks. These mostly remain in thicker cover at this time of year and stay there building up their fat reserves for several weeks. Combine this with the fact that the males stop singing from exposed positions and the result is that the flock is simply not very conspicuous. When birds are seen in these groups at this time of year after an absence of a week or three they are often thought to be migrating.

“However, this is speculation on my part. I’ll be very interested to see if you continue to notice similar groups in your area over the coming weeks which would lend some support to the idea.”

Support for this effect of local flocking was given by Nancy Dowd, who wrote Aug. 1 (thus at the end of our nominal summer-season: “I noticed a big difference this week compared to last. The woods are very silent. The most obvious absence is the Parulas. They were everywhere 7 days ago, singing, but I have heard not one these past few days. Ditto for Ovenbirds, Yellow-Rumps, Redstarts, B&Ws, Magnolias and Black-throated Blue Warblers. All I am hearing are Yellowthroats and a few Black-throated Greens in the warbler world. East Dalhousie, *Kings Co.* is very inland . . . Do the warblers move to more peripheral areas now or are they just silent? Anyone noticing related changes in other locations?”

There we must leave it. This year’s Breeding Bird Survey may enlighten us, but here’s a suggestion. We all look forward to eBird becoming really informative. Someone might compare this year’s with last year’s eBird counts in the province by the same observers in the same localities during the same time spans (say, weekly in July), perhaps with corrections for effort in hours or distances. This would offer fairly straightforward statistical procedures. Then, perhaps, we could more confidently assess the majority impression that this was not a very good season for our birds.

Binoculars 101

By Brian and Kelly Delaney

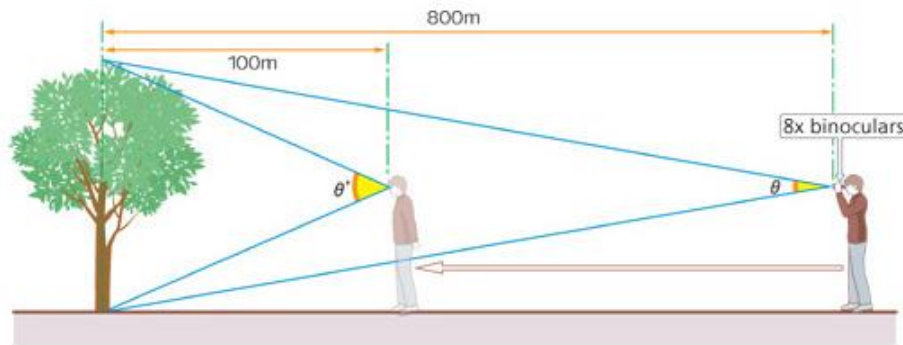
For the Birds Nature Shop, Mahone Bay

Getting started with the right Binoculars

We think binoculars are a lot like shoes – what fits one person may not fit another. You may choose a binocular based on a brand your friend has or a brand that you are familiar with, and that may be not actually be the best fit for you. Most people choose a pair for their optical quality, the focusing mechanism and the way the binoculars feel in your hand – and these can be different for different people. It also helps to understand some of the basics to help you make the right choice.

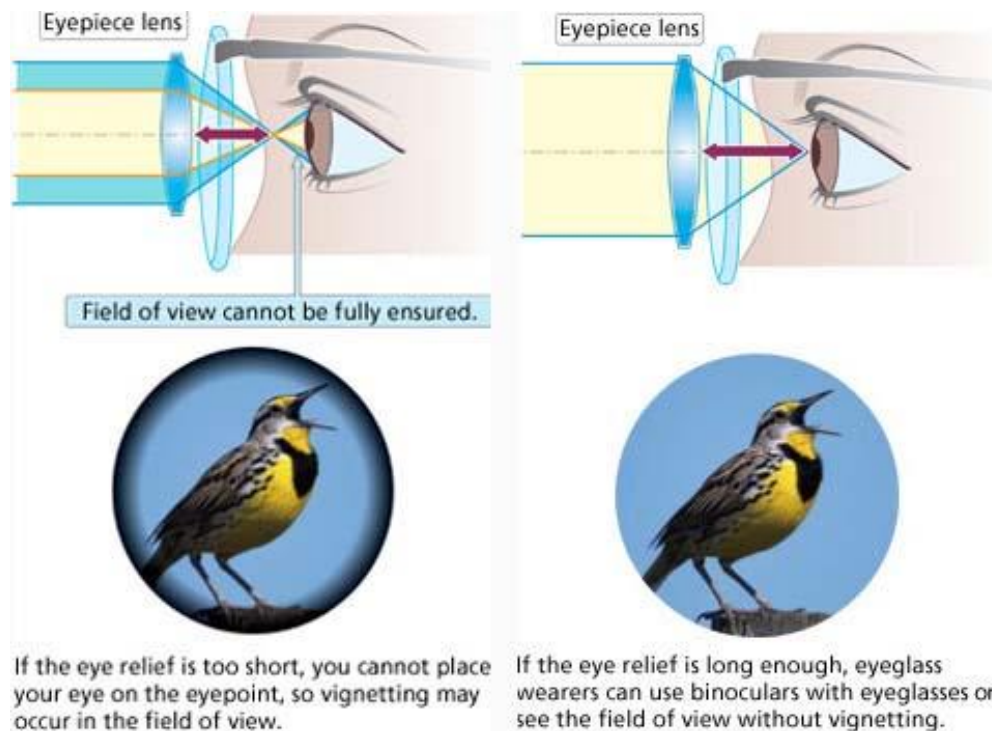
What do the numbers mean?

Binoculars are manufactured and sold as 8x42, 10x42, 8x21, etc. The first number is the binocular’s magnification – so an 8x magnification will make an object appear eight times closer than with the naked eye. The second number is the diameter of the binocular’s objective lens (the one facing away from you) in millimeters. This means that a 42 is a larger binocular than a 21. The most popular combination for bird watching is 8x42.



So is a 10 magnification better than an 8?

Not necessarily. A stronger magnification may bring the object a little closer but you may lose image quality due to less light gathering or an unsteady hand. Stronger magnification diminishes the brightness of your image and it can make it harder to see field marks or small colour differences. If you are not steady when holding a stronger magnification, you will notice the image will vibrate or shake which also makes it harder to see the details. When comparing binoculars with the same sized objective lenses, higher magnifications will have a narrower field of view. Another reason so many birders prefer an 8 magnification.

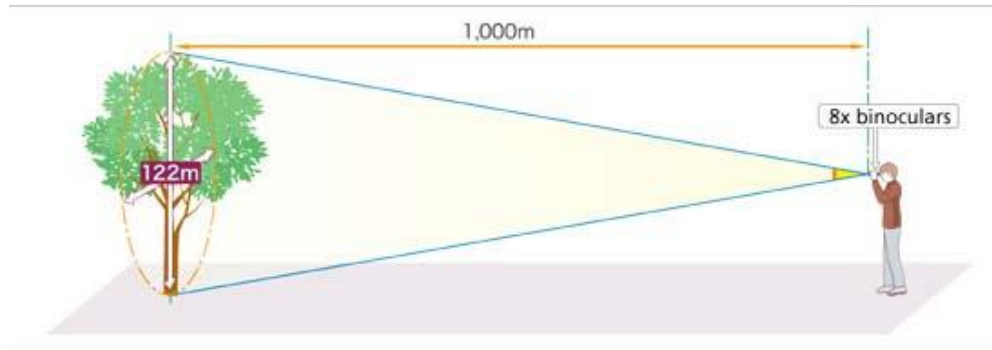


Can I wear my eyeglasses with binoculars?

Ideally, yes. By the time you remove your glasses and bring up your binoculars, you can miss a lot of the action. If you wear eyeglasses or need to look through your binoculars for long periods at a time you should choose a binocular offering at least 15mm in eye relief and with twist-down eyecups. Eye relief refers to the distance (measured in millimeters) between the ocular lens (the one you look through) and where the image comes to focus (inside the binocular) and the entire field of view can be viewed. Most eyeglass wearers find the best view with the eyecups twisted down tight and holding the binocular so it just touches their eyeglass lenses. If you wear multi-focal or progressive lenses, you'll want to hold the binoculars so you are looking through the distance part of your eyeglass lenses.

I have trouble finding the bird when I look through my binoculars – is there a trick to it?

The trick is to keep your eyes on the bird and bring your binoculars up to your eyes. If you look down at your binoculars and bring your eyes and binoculars up together you will have more difficulty. The field of view of the binoculars can also make a big difference. The field of view is the distance from left to right that you can see when looking through your binoculars. This is measured either in linear feet at a distance of 1000 yards, or in angular degrees (1 degree equals 52.5 ft. wide at 1000 yds.). The wider the field of view, the easier it will be to find your bird and to follow moving birds. A minimum of 300 feet at 1,000 yards is recommended.



How much should I spend on binoculars?

Most experts agree that you should spend as much as you can afford – that you do get what you pay for. This is mostly true. Light transmission will be higher through more expensive optics than through modestly priced optics due to better optical designs, glass quality, and improved optical coatings. Higher light transmission results in better image quality particularly at dusk and dawn when the birds are most active. The more you plan to use your binoculars the happier you will be that you chose the best you could afford.

We pride ourselves on helping people find the right binocular and we stock quality models at a wide variety of price. You are welcome to come to our store to try out some models and see for yourself the difference the right binocular can make.

Counting and Controlling Crows

An interesting exchange on NatureNS began on Jan 23, 2013, with an excerpt posted by James Churchill from the Justice section of the then current *Kentville Register/Advertiser*:

“After a couple of complaints about a murder of crows, the village of New Minas tried firing some blanks last week to disturb the birds. On Jan. 11, a village resident called police to report hearing gunshots . . . [The] Superintendent of works said Monday that the village does not have a crow eradication program and any resident disturbed by the birds should contact the province’s natural resources department. As many as 40,000 crows were plaguing the town of Kentville approximately 17 years ago. Eventually, the Phoenix Wailer, a device that emits random sounds, was used successfully.”

Jim Wolford commented: “I think the figure of 40,000 crows for Kentville a long time ago was . . . based probably on the highest count ever gotten by Randy Milton when he had teams of people counting the incoming birds from all directions at dusk as they homed in on their long-time roost on Boot Island off n.e. Grand Pré . . . Richard Stern or someone else can comment on any real counts attempted later in Kentville, where a couple of Phoenix Wailers (invented in Truro area?) were used for a long time and moved around with the changing roost locations within Kentville”. Randy Milton replied that the estimated number of crows mentioned “does seem high compared to the number we recorded at the central roost on Boot Island in the late 1970s. At that time numbers peaked at 25,000-27,000 in each of several years.”

However, David Webster posted a copy of a message that he had sent in May 2002 that gave credence to a larger estimate. “At the peak, sometime in the early 90’s I think, I [estimated] that at least 45,000 crows flew each evening

to Kentville winter roosts from the East. The flights were often well under way when I left work, more or less continuous, and were still going strong when I arrived home more than 30 minutes later. The skeins were diffuse but broad and if all were drawn together into one line, there would have been at the very least one column beak to tail and probably three; an impressive sight . . . If crows fly 30 mph and are 20" long then 15 miles x 5280 X 12 /20 = 47,520 crows."

David Webster also noted that (prior to the "Wailer") that: "for years I think Kentville used exploding shells of some kind. And they tried to move [the crows] on before they landed, by having crow disturbers widely distributed. This latter approach was my recommendation, based on experience with bird depredation control, and I was told subsequently by . . . that my suggestions had been followed." Others noted that the "Wailer" was indeed developed here by Phoenix Agritech, Ltd., of Truro, and that it doesn't produce "random sounds", but can be programmed to present recorded sounds in random order. The long list of sounds available can be found at: <http://www.phoenixagritech.com/birdlist.html> and includes many bird species, including avian predators, cars, dogs, shotguns, a motorbike, and even a "Huey Chopper".

Finally, Bob Macdonald wrote that the dispersal of the Kentville crows was "just about the time when the number of crows at the Mount started to increase significantly. But the number at MSVU is much smaller - more like ~7500 at last count. I wonder how widely they might have dispersed."

A Portfolio of Plumage Oddities

Photos of a number of birds with abnormal plumages have been posted online during the past year. We see more images of such birds in recent years, presumably not because of some dire increase in abnormality; but probably due to an increasing awareness of birds, especially in people's backyards, as evidenced by the spectacular growth of the Society's Facebook site. Furthermore, since birding and bird photography have been revolutionized by the ubiquitous digital camera, we rarely hear the once common plaint, "I know you won't believe me, but..."

Here is a selection of some backyard oddities posted online from fall 2012 through fall 2013 seasons, arranged more or less in taxonomic order.



The rather wishy-washy foreground dove, at Lr. Rose Bay, Lun., Aug 23, 2013 (low dosage of brown pheomelanins?) might have caused some excitement as an errant Eurasian Collared Dove, but it was recognized by the photographer from its plumage as a MOURNING DOVE. [Photo Eric Mills]

Most recent summers have produced all-white hummingbirds such as this one photographed Aug. 27, 2013, at the O'Neil feeder in Waterside, *Pict.* The seemingly long bill and the lack of normal plumage features of this bird might have caused some i.d. anguish, but the confusion is eliminated by closer inspection. The true tip of the bill is marked by an arrow and draws attention to the long extended tongue. The narrowed outer primary, also highlighted by an arrow, makes the bird almost certainly a RUBY-THROATED. [Photo Ken McKenna]



Corvids seem prone to partial or all-white plumage. This BLUE JAY visiting feeders Apr 10, 2013, near Rose Bay, *Lun.*, remains readily identifiable by its crest, etc. Its lack of blue is an error in feather structure, not a lack of pigment. However, it seems to have retained a low dosage of the black eumelanin pigment in its plumage. [Photo Karen Mills]

This patchy BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEEE, Mar 3, 2013, at Union Square, *Lun.* can be rated as partially leucistic – a condition possibly caused by a problem with early development, perhaps from a localized mutation in a stem cell leading to abnormal plumage of the head. [Photo Judith Orr]





This chilly looking waxwing, Apr 18, 2013, was huddled in a largely berry-depleted multiflora rose at Canning, *Kings*. It seems to be widely deficient in brown (pheomelanin) pigments that produce its attractive beige plumage. Which species? Check the tail tip. [Photo Herbert Lockyer]

Entirely white sparrows can be puzzling. This one, Apr 2, 2013, at Brookvale, *Cumb.*, retains a plumage clue to its identity – its bright yellow lores. Its chunky shape and long tail eliminate Savannah Sparrow, leaving the familiar WHITE-THROATED SPARROW as the remaining candidate. [Photo G. Perry]



Superficially, this AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, Oct 11, 2013, at Lr. Sackville, *HRM.*, seems to be a partially leucistic male moulting out of breeding plumage. But it is not deficient in black (eumelanin) in the right places. Rather, it lacks yellow carotenoid pigments which are derived from plant matter; but this extensive example is more likely to reflect an inborn metabolic deficiency. [Photo Sue Myatt]

This one is a real stunner – a COMMON GRACKLE with a bright red tail photographed this summer at Bear Pt., *Shel*. We've had one like it before, and might wonder if it is an expression of a deep-seated genetic potential to produce red pigments in icterids (e.g. Red-winged Blackbird) [Photo Ruthie Crowell-Smith]



Here's a pair of puzzlers that we leave to readers to identify. Both seem very similar. Their short tails may result from feather breakage – lack of pigment weakens feathers. The one at left was photographed Nov. 16, 2012, at Parsborro, *Cumb*, and the one at right a week later at Freeport, Long I., *Digby*. So, could they have been the same bird on the move? **No, they are not even the same species.** Can you tell which is which? Answer in the next issue. [Photos: left, Harriet_McCready; right, LetyitaThemont]

Raising a Starling

By Joan Czapaly

I heard the front door of the city duplex open one day in early May, and the voice of my elder daughter Ava call: "Mom! Guess what?" During the years of raising four children in rural Barrington Passage, Nova Scotia, those words were the signal for an new addition to our family. "Rescued" creatures included a weasel that lived (until it recovered) in Randy's sock drawer, a destructive crow (*Edgar Allen*) who ended his post-amputation days at Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, an injured Mallard safely returned to the wild, four domestic rabbits that lived in the playhouse, an oiled Murre (that didn't make it in spite of devoted cleaning). Many others creatures shared our home: *Keeba*, the black Labrador retriever, Sammy the cat, who

walked on a leash, *Nothing*, the mouse, and *Something*, the Guinea Pig. All represented extra work for a busy mom. We also had a snake tank on the kitchen table for study purposes.

Now in the Halifax doorway, I, a busy grandmother, saw Ava with her hands cupped around something very small, and her two children, Julian and Rachel, looking excited, and waiting for my appreciation. I looked at what was being reverently presented, as if it were the host at communion. "This baby bird fell out of a nest built on a drain pipe on Gottingen Street, and the parent starling was trying to chase away a hungry looking cat. So we brought it home. Do you think we can save it?" asked my first-born child. "Oh, Ava", was my response, "it's only a starling!" All three of my offspring looked horrified, and I was told, "Mamma, that is a terrible thing to say. It didn't ask to be born a starling!" Lessons learned. So what could I do, but look for an empty shoebox and some cotton and shredded paper for nest material, and place it next to the porch door on Northwood Terrace. The bird seemed in shock, and I was sure it would be dead by morning. What did I know about a starling's will to survive? After all, they spread across North America from the single pair released in Central Park in NYC in the 1890s. Our first was recorded in Nova Scotia in December of 1915 (McLaren, 2011, p 187), and we have no lack of them now.

As soon as the bird was settled in the home made nest box it seemed to revive; we saw a beautiful yellow gape open wide in a featherless, eye-bulging bird face. Noises were being made which meant, "Feed me!" I estimated the little creature was over a week old since the eyes were open. We dug some worms in the back yard, and found even the first small worms were too big for the baby bird, so I chopped the worms into bird-bite sized pieces and thrust them into the gape on a toothpick. Eventually we decided to wet the worms so the baby bird would get water, too. Next we learned that baby birds eat often! Ava took the early morning feeding shift at daylight, and the children and I dug and fed all day. Amazingly the bird, by now called *Chirpy*, was surviving and growing. I had opted to name our starling Mortimer (as in Shakespeare's Henry IV), but was outvoted. In very few days, it became obvious that *Chirpy* did not want the "nest box" soiled. We cleaned the nest every morning and put newspapers around the box. We were surprised and happy to see they were regularly used. *Chirpy* after a few days would lean his rear end over the box when nature called. No one would believe that our starling was toilet trained to newspapers, but it was!



If the young starling survived until next spring, it might have looked like this. Certainly, looked at without bias, it is a beautiful bird. [Photo Pamela Gallant]

Birds in our past

Here are two more clips by Eric Ruff from the "*Yarmouth Herald*" of June 24, 1875 (left) and May 11, 1987 (right). NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD, rated then as "southern", is now widespread here, although uncommon, but our first was captured (had it escaped?) in Truro only in 1889. The praise of their music in the wild seems overly flowery, but the (mild) condemnation of keeping them in captivity reflects modern sensibilities.

The Southern Mocking Bird.

The racy editor of the *Methodist Recorder*, Pittsburg, says: "But we must throw aside a handful of botanical specimens, and a page of memoranda for letter writing, else we should linger in these Mississippi woods all summer. Hark! 'Listen to the mocking bird!'—Yonder on that water-oak how proudly he balances himself on the swinging bough. Will he sing? Yes. Only hearken. His notes are clearer than the notes of flute, more shrill and ringing than the falsettoes of the most perfect flageolet, endless in variety as if his octaves reached into the ethery skies, and modulated with a grace beyond the range of words to express. He takes up the song of the thrush, the time-beat of the robin, the caroling of some distant swallows too faintly remote for our coarse ears to hear, the victor call of the lark mounting into the face of the sun, the chattering of the bluebird, and a score of remembered cadences from summers that are gone, and—hearken! He transposes them into a new creation. His original variations surpass Gottschalk's grandest liberties with "Home, Sweet Home." He swells his mellow melodies into an anthem; it rises, falls, repeats, strikes on, a very blessed babel of confusing, bewitching, captivating song, with notes too quick for pulsing time or quivering heart to tell—a miracle of melody. And all this from the throat of a stray mocking bird, one of a million in the Mississippi woods! If God has so endowed a wild warbler of the forest, what rapturous surprises await us in the eternal morning when the New Song shall strike our ravished ears.

The Mocking Bird.

That the mocking-bird is susceptible of some degree of education is well ascertained. A bird kept in a saloon and subjected to careful training by its keeper, sang "Dixie" with astonishing accuracy, and was known to sing parts of the famous duet from "Norma." It is always true that these birds are wonderfully influenced, and even excited by hearing music, and it may be safely conjectured that no bird in the world has a more delicate musical ear. Yet no bird better loves its liberty. Freedom, unlimited freedom, is its watchword. Hence the general belief, in regions where it is found, that if a cage containing young ones is accessible to the motherbird she will, under pretence of conveying food to them, give them poison. Whether this be true or not, caging them is an almost insurmountable difficulty. They not only pine under the confinement but beat themselves to death against the bars of the cage. Birds that have been hatched in this confinement have sometimes become beautiful singers, but when they have enjoyed liberty they rarely survive imprisonment.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, November 24, 2013 – Taylor Head Provincial Park–Winter Birds, HRM

Leaders: Jim Cameron 885-2970 Email: jim.cameron@ns.sympatico.ca and Warren Parsons 772-2207
 Email: rosalieeast@ns.sympatico.ca Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 Meet at the kiosk at the last parking lot. This will be a leisurely walk to the Headland Trail. Expect to see lots of eiders, grebes, fcoters, Dovekies, guillemots, mergansers, Harlequin Ducks, Long-tailed Ducks, and Purple Sandpipers. Depending on weather, lunch may be eaten at the Headland. Bring waterproof boots, warm clothing, snacks and lunch, and a hot drink. This should be a good warm-up to the Christmas Bird Count. Bring your binoculars. There is no rain date because we're pretty much prepared for any kind of weather in these parts. Bird enthusiasts of all levels are welcome at all our events – who knows, maybe we'll learn something from you? No storm date for this trip.

Saturday, December 7, 2013 – Metro Hot Spot Birding, HRM

Leader: Mike King 434-6099 Email: mikenjenn1@hotmail.com. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at McCormack's Beach in Eastern Passage. We will check local sites for rarities and unusual birds. Storm date: Sunday, Dec. 8

Saturday, December 7, 2013 – Annual General Meeting & Wine and Cheese

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History - 1747 Summer Street, Halifax - 7:30pm. Jordan Allen of *Capture Design* will be on hand to share with us and discuss the new NSBS website and logo prior to us starting the business-proceedings portion of the AGM. Wine and cheese will be served after the meeting, for which everyone is welcome.

Saturday, December 14, 2013 to January 5 2014 – Christmas Bird Counts, province-wide

For information on where and when Christmas Bird counts will take place this year in Nova Scotia, check the Nova Scotia Bird Society's website (<http://nsbirdsociety.ca/>). We will provide information as it becomes available. Don't forget that the \$5 fee for participants is no longer being collected! No storm date for this trip.

Saturday January 4 2014 – New Birders Walk: Living in the Dead of Winter, HRM

Leader: Sue Abbott Email: sabbott@birdscanada.org. 10:00-11:30 a.m. Point Pleasant Park, Black Rock Beach concession stand. We'll seek out coastal and forest birds in Point Pleasant Park and see and learn about physical and behavioral adaptations that allow them to survive in the dead of winter. This chilly but fun walk is great chance to see interesting seabirds and coastal waterfowl of Halifax Harbour and, if we're lucky, Purple Sandpipers. We'll share helpful tips for identifying common birds and discuss what you can do to help them. Dress warmly and bring binoculars if you have them (a few spare pairs will be available to borrow). Walk will be cancelled if raining or snowing. No storm date for this trip.

Saturday, January 11, 2014 – Sewer Stroll I – Halifax/Dartmouth Area, HRM

Leader: Dennis Hippen 435-5363 (home) or 476-8639 (cell) Email: dhippen@hotmail.com. This will be a joint field trip with the Halifax Field Naturalists. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot of McCormack's Beach Provincial Park, just past Boondocks Restaurant in Eastern Passage. We'll look for rare birds and regular winter visitors. Dress for cold weather and bring a lunch. Plan to carpool as much as possible. No storm date for this trip.

Sunday, February 9, 2014 – Beginner Birders' Walk, Dartmouth

Leaders: Chris Pepper 483-6693 and Kate Steele 476-2883 Email: katefsteel@gmail.com. Meet at 9:00 am at Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth on Hawthorne Street. We will explore the pond looking for ducks and gulls and learning how to identify the different species present. If weather and interest allow, we will head over to nearby Dartmouth Cove to look for ducks who prefer the salt water. Trip should last approximately 2 hours. Call ahead if unsure of weather. No storm date for this trip.

Friday, February 14, 2014 to February 17 2014 – Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. **GBBC checklists can be accepted from anywhere in the world!** Everyone is welcome--from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants tally the number of individual

birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website. For more information check out <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

These and other announcements will also be posted on any or all of the Society's website, Facebook, and NatureNS.

Corrections of past issues

Autumn season 2012, Vo. 55, Issue 1, p. 35. The Sparrows in the photos were seriously misidentified. Both, despite their seemingly thick bills (a result of perspective) are Vesper Sparrows, and it is possible – if not a result of lighting and stance – that they were different individuals. Immature Lark Buntings, although they can have white eye-ring and hide their conspicuous white coverts, differ from these images in many details. The photo editor blames the acting editor, and vice versa. Thanks to Bruce Mactavish for catching this mistake.

Spring Season 2013, Vo. 55, Issue 3, p. 13. The American Bittern May 11 listed as in W. Pubnico, was in the W. *Pictou* section of the NSMC. The Cattle Egret was photo'd May 21 (as in table) not mid-April (as in photo caption). **P. 16.** The Virginia Rail May 11 tabulated as in W. Pubnico, *Yar.* was in Central, Caribou, *Pict.*, during the NSMC.



Emblematic of the summer season are a row of fledgling TREE SWALLOWS, July 3 near Quinan, *Yar.*, begging for food from an approaching parent, and an agitated OVENBIRD, June 22 near Lockeport, presumably in the vicinity of its nest or fledglings. [Photos: left, Alix d'Entremont; right, Russel Crosby]



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