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Barry King, *editor*

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Preferred articles are those from one-half to two pages in length, having relevance to the natural history of New Brunswick. Authors of potentially longer articles are invited to contact the editors. Drawings and cover illustrations should be in black ink and in the same size and proportions they would occupy in the N.B. Naturalist. Observations for "Nature News" should be submitted promptly after March 15, May 31, August 15 and November 15, or more frequently.

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BINOCULARS ARE FOR THE BIRDS

(Reprinted from: The Review (Imperial Oil Ltd.) Vol. 62 (4), 1978)

by Dan Proudfoot

When word reached Norman Chesterfield at his mink farm near Wheatley, Ontario, that a housewife somewhere east of Thunder Bay had made what was certain to be among Canada's outstanding bird sightings of the year, there really was only one thing to do: he left home immediately.

He always leaves home whenever a contact calls with news of an unusual bird sighting, for Norman Chesterfield is the leading bird lister in this country. If it can be said that an increasing number of Canadians are taking pleasure in the gentle pastime of birding, and the evidence suggests this is so, then it also can be stated that few approach it with Chesterfield's sense of competitiveness.

So he drove the 380 km. to Toronto International Airport, flew to Thunder Bay, met the person who had contacted him with news of the fork-tailed flycatcher, and left by car with him for the woman's house. At that time Chesterfield had a detailed list of hundreds of birds he had sighted in Canada. A rare bird like the fork-tailed flycatcher, which had strayed into northern Ontario from South America, offered a unique opportunity to add to the list.

Rita Taylor, the housewife who spotted the bird, had been having lunch three days earlier when it had caught her eye, darting in front of the kitchen window and looking for all the world like an eastern kingbird, except for the long tail feathers that reminded her of calipers.

Taylor isn't a competitive lister but she knows her northern birds, having taken notes on about 150 of them during the years. She recognized this one as being something special, even if she didn't know exactly why. She telephoned a knowledgeable friend in Thunder Bay who came quickly, along with a few other birding enthusiasts. This was how the oddity was identified and how the news eventually got to Chesterfield.

Driving the 75 km. from Thunder Bay to Taylor's home near Dorion, Ontario, gave Chesterfield plenty of time to discuss the fork-tailed flycatcher. Only one had ever before been seen in Canada, in Nova Scotia several years ago. This one, Taylor had told him earlier in a telephone conversation, probably had "stowed away" on an ocean freighter. Regardless of how the bird came to this country, it had spent four hours on the day of its sighting, hungrily flitting after flies in Taylor's backyard.

But the flycatcher was gone when Chesterfield arrived, and that was that. He spent the afternoon waiting, but the bird did not re-appear. The weather had turned cool; the flycatcher undoubtedly was doomed.

Chesterfield talks now about this near miss in the same way a retired hockey star might discuss a key play in a long-ago Stanley cup series. "I had my most successful trips in 1977," he said. "I rushed out to Regina and saw a whooping crane, a bird I'd never seen before in Canada. But I would have preferred that fork-tailed flycatcher - an extreme rarity. But that's birding. You don't always get the bird you've come to see." Implied in this anecdote about the one that got away is the central point of birding: It has challenges and rewards for anyone who takes to observing the fascinating feathered creatures.

The lure of bird listing predates recorded history. Sketches of cranes and herons drawn in the Old Stone Age have been found on walls of caves in

France and Spain. The ancient Sumerians in Mesopotamia devised a new type of artwork based on birds - doves carved in limestone and copper reliefs of eagles. The Mayas of Central America left impressive carvings of vultures, turkeys, and great horned owls. But the more classical study of birds began with Aristotle who raised this knowledge to the rank of a science, declaring that the detailed study of birds was a worthy occupation for the philosophic mind. He devised a simple classification for the then-known birds, performed dissections, and even studied bird embryos. Ornithology (the formal title given to the science) suffered a setback in the Middle Ages when most science was suspect and it wasn't revived until the Renaissance.

The first record of birds in Canada was found as early as 1007 in the writings of the Vikings where, in the Saga of Karlsefni, eider ducks were mentioned nesting on Belle Isle, off the shores of Newfoundland. In 1497 John Cabot described black hawks, partridges, and eagles in his journals, and Jacques Cartier, in his voyage of 1534, not only wrote about the abundance of seabirds but gathered many of them for food. However, if these men were the first to chronicle birdlife in Canada, they weren't the last.

Chesterfield had observed and taken detailed notes on more than 4,500 species in many parts of the world, the second highest total among all those who belong to the American Birding Association. Yet Rita Taylor, who travels

no farther than two kilometers from her home in search of birds, tops him in at least one unofficial category, having spotted the elusive flycatcher.

Every level of this pastime - from the meticulous list keepers and dedicated scientists to the casual watchers at window feeders - has its pleasures. A child at Pointe-des-Monts, Quebec, notices a robin for the first time and thinks it wonderful. At Brandon, Manitoba, members of the local Junior Birders build nest boxes for the mountain bluebirds; the bluebird population had been diminishing since the fifties when an influx of starlings invaded their nests. Today the bluebirds are thriving again because of a network of volunteer-built nest boxes, stretching more than 3,200 km. through Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. There are more serious observers, too, at places such as Bonaventure Island, off Perce, Quebec, where ornithologists count the nests of the endangered gannets, spectacular birds with two-metre wingspans.

Nowhere is there such activity in spring, however, than at Point Pelee National Park, the southernmost tip of Canada. The park reaches so far south into Lake Erie that it is on the same latitude as northern California. The unique location has allowed for the growth of a type of forest that makes it a natural resting-place for migrating birds. To date about 324 species had been identified at Pelee. "No other spot in the interior of the continent can offer the bird lister more action on a good day in May or September," says Roger Tory Peterson, the ornithologist whose field guides are standard equipment for most birders.

The scope of Pelee's spring spectacle - an accomplished birder can see 100 species in a single day - attracts an incredible range of birders. On a peak day in May, 1977, park officials recorded 2,137 cars and estimated attendance at more than 6,000. Many, to be sure, were neophytes. Yet, the place is perfect for beginners because of the crowds of more experienced birders eager to help. Walking along the sunny trails through orchard and swamp, one is sure to encounter clusters of people hastily raising binoculars to their eyes. "A wood thrush," one will whisper to a newcomer, "that's a really good bird to identify."

Quickly one learns to listen in, whenever possible, on conversations about what's been spotted elsewhere on the point. "Pierre Berton's out on the trail," I overheard a young American confide to a friend. "He's a famous Canadian writer. I'm thinking of looking for him." But usually the name-dropping involves birds.

The fascination with birding is growing across the country. Certainly the sale of books on birds has increased. According to Alice White, manager of the Nature Canada bookstore in Ottawa, sales have more than doubled in the past year. The circulation of the Audubon Society magazine, American Birds, has grown 300 percent since 1971, according to its editor, Robert Arbib. The magazine has created two new Canadian regions in its reporting on bird species, separating Quebec from a region that once included part of the northeastern United States and adding northwest Canada. The Canadian Nature Federation has found stability after a period of struggle following its 1971 beginning.

Long-time birders are enthusiastic about the number of newcomers who become committed to a greater degree than was common in earlier years. The image of the bird watcher as a frail eccentric also has changed. The real birder is more likely a doer, attracted to ornithology for relaxation and exercise.

The path from beginning bird watcher to avid birder is deceptively smooth. Consider, for example, Peter Gilchrist, a young lawyer from Toronto, and his wife, Roberta, who first found themselves taking a second look at birds while on a vacation in Prince Edward Island. "The red-winged blackbirds," Gilchrist recalls, "would fly away from the side of the road, banking as if to show off their red epaulets. That's what got us talking."

However, the innocent observation of other common but spectacular birds, such as the cardinal, led the Gilchrists inexorably to a common experience shared by all birders; the sighting of a fascinating mystery bird. It happened one Sunday when they were out for a country drive. They saw a beautiful bird, stopped the car, and tried to identify it. Could it be a cedar waxwing? "Much later we were talking with a friend who's an experienced birder, and we put together the pieces, just like in a detective story," says Gilchrist. "It turned out we were right; it had been a cedar waxwing. Right then we were hooked on birding."

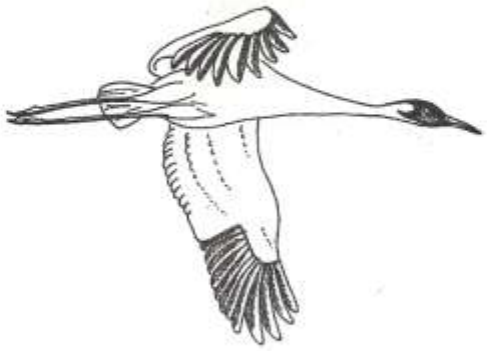
That was six years ago. The acquisition of binoculars and copies of Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds followed quickly; then came longer and longer trips in search of birds - as far away as Florida and Egypt. Gilchrist now has a lifetime list of more than 500 birds, and his wife has about 350. Their enthusiasm has grown with their travels.

Many serious birders, however, feel it's unnecessary to leave their own cities, and some make it a point of pride to stay within the borders of their home towns. Roger Powley, an audio expert and member of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club, says that he's had some of his greatest pleasures in birding from stalking in a marsh beside raised subway tracks in Toronto.

There was a time last summer when Chesterfield and Tull found themselves leaving from Bamfield, B.C., on the same expedition for sea birds. Each was in awe of the other because each had been told by friends that his opponent now had a Canadian list of 450 bird sightings. "I thought to myself, 'I'll never get 450,'"Chesterfield recalls. "There have been only 537 species recorded in Canada. Some are extinct now and several haven't been seen for years. I might get 445, but not 450.

And Tull, 35 years old and little more than half his challenger's age, was similarly dismayed at the news that Chesterfield had 450 birds to his credit. For the longest time neither took the risk of actually asking directly how many the other had recorded.

The true score, it turned out, was Chesterfield 440, Tull 435. Tull had been done in by Chesterfield's extensive travels in 1977 from Machias Seal Island, off the coast of New Brunswick to see a razor bill, to Banff for a pygmy owl. For the remainder of their pelagic outing Tull kidded Chesterfield, questioning the validity of his sightings in waters anywhere near the United States. But Chesterfield cheerfully continued increasing his score, eventually taking trips to both Canadian coasts again at Christmas to finish the year with 445.



Birding's growth, which Chesterfield compares to golf at an early stage of its development ("both pastimes were considered silly until they got some exposure"), enhances the lot of all those who practise it. There's no longer the same embarrassment about being seen walking along city streets with binoculars. "You used to try to keep them hidden," confides Peter Iden, a prominent Toronto birder. "People would think you must be a Peeping Tom." Still, memories die hard of the days when birders were known as "Quixotes among the trees."

After all, what passerby could fathom the sight of an intrepid birder shaking a tree in an attempt to stir up a saw-whet owl? What non birder could understand the spectacle of a grown man in a forest, playing a portable tape recording of a rare bird, getting an answer, stealing closer to the replying bird...and finally finding another birder playing the same tape in the same quest?

Small wonder that so many birders have such an exquisite sense of the ridiculous. The funniest stories about birders, inevitably, are those told by the birders themselves. Peter Gilchrist, for example, tells of the horror that he and a few fellow birders felt at the sight of a sparrow being gobbled whole by a large, hungry herring gull.

"Apparently," says Gilchrist, "none of us had ever stopped to think that gulls did such 'nasty' things. At any rate, three older ladies were particularly upset by this gruesome sight. What makes the incident worth remembering is the explanation that an experienced birder in our group used to calm down the three women. 'Ladies,' he said, 'Not to worry; it was merely a transfer of energy.'"

None of this sense of the ridiculous, however, reduces birding's value in daily life. "You get involved in birding, Pierre Berton says, "and you find yourself interested in all aspects of nature, all forms of life." The birds respond to the environment and when some undesirable change in their surroundings takes place, the birders make themselves heard.

When first constructed, the CN Tower in Toronto was a killer of migrating birds until birders expressed their concern. The birds were crashing into the tower, drawn by its aircraft warning lights. CN officials responded by reducing the frequency of the lights from 40 to 10 flashes per minute, thus reducing their attraction. Across the country there are other examples of businesses and birders communicating in the interest of nature: in Alberta, for instance, birders and naturalists convinced CN Telecommunications to review its plans to build a tower near the nesting area of the whooping cranes in Wood Buffalo National Park.

Increased interest also has benefited the science of birding in Canada. "Standards are improving," says Clive Goodwin, secretary of the Ontario Ornitholigical Records Committee. "It's now known, for instance, that a sabine's gull is not a rare bird on Lake Ontario; whereas 15 years ago it was considered very rare. This is because few people at that time had taken a boat onto the lake to look for the bird. Now it's a commonplace occurrence."

There are more rare-bird committees in more cities and more "hot bird alerts," as the telephone networks among city enthusiasts are known. More birders also are looking up fellow enthusiasts wherever they travel, making use of the local expertise to find new birds. And, as Normand David, president

of the Club des Ornithologues du Quebec, Inc., points out, birding is bound to grow in popularity as people become more committed to preservation of the natural environment.

I suspect very few rare birds get into the country now without being seen," says W. Earl Godfrey, author of the standard reference work Birds of Canada and curator emeritus of ornithology at the National Museum of Canada in Ottawa. "Having so many observers in the field has contributed tremendously in a scientific way."

But it's the deep satisfaction, not the science, that draws most people to birding. "A beginner often has a lot more fun than the expert," says Norman Chesterfield. "I overheard inexperienced birders in the field, and they sound just delighted with whatever they've identified. They feel what I would have experienced had I sighted my fork-tailed flycatcher."

field trips

A Trip to Kent Island

Brian Dalzell

The small skiff bobbed gently in the surf as we drew nearer to the slightly sloping cobble beach on the eastern side of the island. Upon closer examination the "slightly sloping" beach turned out to be a sharply rising three foot wall of rocks about the size of footballs. The surging tides of the Bay of Fundy had piled these rocks up as easily as you or I might build a castle in the sand. As I stood there and watched my last contact with the outside world slowly row away, I got the feeling by looking at the badly eroded shoreline that this small piece of rock would someday be swallowed by the relentless sea.

But for the time being the ground was quite solid and I found myself standing about as far south in New Brunswick as one can get and still not get his feet wet. Kent Island is one of a number of small islands scattered off the eastern shore of Grand Manan and about four miles from it. At one time it was settled by a few hardy souls who managed to eke out a living from the sea, but its main inhabitants are now mostly Herring Gulls and Leach's Petrels. The island was presented to Bowdoin College of Maine by J. Sterling Rockefeller in 1935, with the understanding that the bird life of the island would not only be guaranteed protection but that it would also serve

a very serious purpose. For years the college has been operating a summer research station at which students from Bowdoin and other universities conduct scientific research projects.

Approximately two miles long and one quarter of a mile at the widest point, it was to be my home for the next five days. I had come to watch the fall migration hoping that on a small offshore island such as this my chances of seeing something really rare were much better than on the mainland. As it turned out it was also a lesson in how to get along without running water, electricity, phones, flush toilets, central heating, and automobiles. I left with a much better understanding of how life must have been for the former inhabitants of this tiny island.

When I arrived on the 25th of September there were only four students left and they were involved in a special bird-banding project. They had just captured a White-Eyed Vireo and everybody had the opportunity to observe this rarity at close range before it was released. Apparently this is only the second record of this southern vireo occuring in New Brunswick, the first being last summer also on Kent Island. As far as I was concerned the effort of getting out there was well worth it even if I didn't see another bird all week.

To capture the birds the students had placed nine mist nets in various habitats and locations about the island. These are very fine nets constructed of black nylon and are difficult for the birds to see in time to avoid them. The nets are raised at dawn and are left open until nightfall or until high winds or rain force them to be taken down. Once a bird is captured, it is carefully removed, placed in a cloth bag, and taken to the banding station where it is processed.

The bird is first identified, then the appropriate size band is placed on the right leg, and if at all possible the sex

and approximate age are determined. If age or sex cannot be determined using the keys in the manual that is provided by the bird-banding office in Maryland, it is simply classified as an unknown. The skull of the bird is then checked for the state of ossification, and the furcula (breast bone) is examined for fat content to see how much fuel has been built up for migration.

Next, the wing chord is measured, the feathers are looked over for evidence of molt, and the bird is weighed. Usually that is all the bird is subjected to, but if it is rare or hard to identify (Empidonax flycatchers for example) there will be additional measurements taken. Finally the bird is released and flies off seemingly none the worse for wear. If this all seems rather lengthy it usually only takes one minute to process a bird. For the most part they are very quiet when handled, but I noticed flickers, sapsuckers, and cuckoos put up quite a fuss and seemed very indignant. Every half-hour the nets are emptied and the whole thing is repeated again.

On a good day when migration is heavy and the weather is good as many as 400 birds have been banded in a day. The five days I was there only two were suitable for banding and about 150 were processed altogether. Generally the best weather seems to be a moderate northwest wind the night before and no wind on the day of netting. This is the final year of a two year study and this year from August to date they have tagged almost 5000 birds.

Despite the poor conditions I was able to total 103 species in and around the island during my stay with 63 and 26 species in one day being my best and worst counts. Of interest were the Peregrine Falcons, at least 1-2 per day seen migrating along the

shore and occasionally swooping on shorebirds. On the 29th a single Solitary Sandpiper was caught and banded in a small bog and remained about all day, being quite tame and permitting close approach. The Prairie Warblers were so thick they had to be shooed out of the way in order to see anything else.

Both species of cuckoo were observed and an Indigo Bunting which was decidedly brown with nary a trace of blue to be seen on it. The last day was the warmest and Ruby-Throated Hummingbird and a little flock of four Tree Swallows put a bit of summer back into fall. As I rode the Kent Island cab company's only taxi (a rideable lawnmower) to the wharf I was waved good-bye from an Orange-Crowned Warbler and a Brown Thrasher.

I succeeded in adding five new species to my life-list and anytime you can add new species at the rate of one a day you are either very lucky or in a good birding spot. Needless to say Kent is probably one of the best birding hotspots in New Brunswick and if it is possible for you to get over I would not hesitate to recommend it. August through October would seem to be the best time to go but one should check with the college to see if it is all right and to get permission. My thanks to Bowdoin College and especially Peter Cannell, his wife Amanda, and Jeff Cherry for their hospitality and in helping to make my stay a very memorable one.

nature news.

David Christie

A good number of interesting observations are at hand but unfortunately they are mainly from three areas of the province, Grand Manan, Saint John and Fundy Park. How about it, naturalists elsewhere, send in reports to share with others. Not only will they be useful for "Nature News" but, added to the growing files of natural history information in the New Brunswick Museum, they will be accessible to you and others for future reference and research.

Because the majority of information received by the Museum's natural science department concerns birds we have a more structured system for storing that information than for other fields. Firstly, of course, is the traditional collection of mounted birds and study skins, numbering over 4000 specimens, some on display but most in cabinets for reference. There are also hundreds of sets of eggs and a smaller collection of nests. That may seem like a lot but there are considerable gaps in the collection. For instance, recently we wanted to illustrate the immature plumage of the White-crowned Sparrow and found we had only three adults. A large proportion of the birds in the museum were collected by ornithologists between 1860 and 1920 but most current additions are birds found dead and turned in by the public. A card catalogue serves as an index to this large collection. Do you have an identification problem? Perhaps the bird skins can help you solve it. Contact Stan Gorham to arrange to see specimens that are not on display.

The basic file of bird observations stems from that begun by W.A. Squires when he was preparing The Birds of New Brunswick, published in 1952. He sorted records by county for each species and that file has multiplied many times since. When you send a report

to the museum the letter is given a number and filed under your name. Many of your observations are selected to be added to the file begun by Dr. Squires. A volunteer enters the marked observations in the proper place, including the identifying number of your letter so that the original report can be easily located for checking. Transcribing these records by hand is a time consuming,tedious job but the volunteers have the satisfaction of maintaining an important data bank and of learning a lot about our province. If you would like to refer to data in this file contact Gayl Hipperson at the museum.

There is another small collection of bird information, a file of details on unusual occurrences. It contains cards outlining the substantiating details of observations, as well as documentary photographs. I encourage you to obtain some "Bird Record Scheme" cards and to fill one out each time you see something very unusual. If you get a photo send the museum a copy. These cards and photos are often a good substitute for a specimen verifying the occurrence of a casual or accidental bird. Tape recordings too could become part of this evidence.

Similar systems exist at the museum for recording information on botany and other branches of zoology.

MAMMALS

The most interesting recent news about mammals in New Brunswick comes from a study conducted by the Atlantic Center for the Environment, Ipswich, Mass. Tom French and two interns, Beth Ann Sabo and Mark Dalton, spent a month and a half last summer collecting mammals in Mount Carleton Provincial Park. Their objective was to expand our knowledge of the poorly known Gaspé Shrew. This small shrew was described from the Gaspé Peninsula in 1924 and was unknown elsewhere until 1961 when one was captured near Mount Carleton and 1974 when seven were taken in northern Cape Breton. Tom French's project showed that the Gaspé Shrew is not a rare mammal at Mount Carleton, 67 having been captured during

June and July. The main habitats used by Gaspé Shrews were the banks of swift-flowing mountain streams and mossy, talus slopes. Information on reproduction, parasites and food habits was also gathered. Other rather scarce small mammals taken at Mount Carleton Park were 23 Pygmy Shrews, 17 Yellownose (Rock) Voles and 10 Southern Bog Lemmings. During their stay in New Brunswick French and his team also trapped briefly at Moose Mountain, Carleton County, and at Tabusintac. To everyone's surprise, a Gaspé Shrew was taken at Moose Mountain, extending the known distribution to an isolated hill of relatively low elevation.

Coyotes continue to increase in southeastern New Brunswick where observations have been frequent in Fundy Park and surroundings. The Majkas and I watched a full grown adult in excellent condition as it leisurely crossed the road at Daniel's Marsh, Albert County, on October 1 and Jan Dexter saw one near Geary in the last week of September. Perhaps less often seen, except by trappers, in New Brunswick these days is the common Bobcat, one of which crossed the road in front of David Baird at Welsford, October 17th.

BIRDS

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an article by Brian Dalzell about his visit to Kent Island this fall. Bowdoin College has been running a banding station there for migrant songbirds (mostly). Last year (1979) the project reported banding 2978 birds of 67 species during 37 days between July 24 and Sept. 7. The three most common species were warblers that breed mainly in coniferous forest, 622 Cape Mays, 399 Bay-breasts and 351 Yellow-rumps. Unusual birds captured were a Kentucky Warbler, 2 Prairie Warblers, 2 Blue-winged Warblers, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 3 Lark Sparrows and 5 Yellow-breasted Chats.

Brian brought back some highlights of the 1980 bandings and observations by Peter Cannell, Jeff Cherry and others. Most exciting were some of the rare (for New Brunswick) warblers: Blue-winged (banded Aug. 8), Orange-crowned (seen Sept.29),

Yellow-throated (immature July 30, adult Sept. 12) and especially Cerulean (banded Aug. 10), also the White-eyed Vireo banded while Brian was visiting Sept. 25. Other rare vagrants included Buff-breasted Sandpiper (Sept. 11), Western Kingbird (Sept. 3), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (Sept.12), Prairie Warblers (1 or 2 on 10 dates from July 27 to Sept. 28), Yellow-breasted Chats (4 days from July 27 to Sept. 28), Blue Grosbeak (banded Sept. 12), Seaside Sparrow (Aug. 24 & Sept. 11) and Lark Sparrow (Aug. 10 and 1 or 2 daily Aug. 25 to Sept. 3). It is obvious that a small isolated island like Kent is a good place for strays. The White-eyed Vireo record might be the first good one for New Brunswick except that one was apparently seen at Kent Island in 1979, according to Brian.

I have been trying to interest people in conducting hawk watches - counts of migrating hawks. Mary Majka and I spent some time this fall watching at Park Headquarters in Fundy Park. The days we picked were beautiful ones to be outdoors but probably too warm to encourage many hawks to move south. August 17, a sunny day with a cool north wind, might have been better,for the N.S. Bird Society group saw two Broad-winged Hawks passing west at Albert about 9 a.m. and Ken Meyer reports 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks apparently migrating in Fundy Park that day.

In the park we watched for a total of 9 hours 40 minutes on Sept. 7, 13 and 20 (a very small effort, but a beginning) and counted 82 migrating hawks. Our count per hour ranged from one to 29. Watching intently for an hour and seeing only one hawk can be a bit boring but fortunately there were small numbers of cormorants, gulls and songbirds passing through as well. A large proportion of our hawks (45 Broad-wings, 2 Sharp-shins and 4 unidentified) were seen during an hour and a quarter in advance of a cloud front moving in from the northwest during the middle of the day, Sept.20. All those birds were moving to the northeast, the reverse of the main direction of flight during fall. They were not birds apt to be noticed by the casual observer. Most were high enough that they could not be seen without the aid of binoculars. Hank Deichmann watched at Park HQ for an hour 40 minutes on Oct. 25 and saw no

migrants other than songbirds but later in the day, while driving, he did see 5 Red-tailed Hawks in the coastal section of the park. Red-tails are probably the main migrant at the end of October but Rough-legs should also be on the move.

At Hammond River, Jim and Jean Wilson kept an eye out for migrating hawks on the afternoon of Sept. 13 but were involved in other activities and never maintained a sustained watch for more than 15 minutes at a time. Their summer resident Osprey was the only raptor seen. During 3 hours canoeing there on October 4, Jim saw 5 Marsh Hawks heading SW over the marsh from Darlings Island to The Neck, suggestive that a sustained watch skyward might have been productive that day. Erwin Landauer reports having started hawk watches a few times this fall but given up because there was nothing around but the local Marsh Hawk.

Of recent hawk reports the most rare are the reports by Stan & Renie Gorham of a Black Vulture at Browns Flats Sept. 14 and by Dan Busby of a Golden Eagle near Mactaquac Nov. 1. Also interesting was an immature Red-shouldered Hawk at Hastings Trail in Fundy Park; its behaviour suggested to Ken Meyer (who has been studying Sharp-shinned Hawks nesting in the park) that it might have fledged nearby.

A pair of Peregrine Falcons nested successfully in eastern Maine this summer (The Guillemot), exciting news about an endangered species that may now be slowly increasing rather than declining as it has for many years. In New Brunswick, there was a summer report at Point Wolfe warden station in Fundy Park June 16 (Steve Woodley) and the usual observations of fall migrants, such as one or two a day on six dates in September at Kent Island (fide Dalzell) and an immature at Elgin Oct. 11 (Deichmann). A late Osprey, one that appeared to be in poor condition, was at Fundy Park, Nov. 22 (George Sinclair).

Many American Robins were "gobbling rowan berries, gorging on fallen apples, tugging earthworms from the lawn" (Gayl Hipperson) in the Saint John area Oct. 9-15, during which time Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-throated Sparrows and Northern Juncos were also

prominent.

In Maine there was a heavy flight of Black-capped Chickadees this fall (The Guillemot) but aside from a few moving along the coast at Fundy Park Oct. 25 (Deichmann) there was no special mention of them in New Brunswick. Red-breasted Nuthatches were migrating in late September when 30 to 40 were seen at Blacks Harbour Sept. 24 and 10 to 15 at Kent Island Sept. 25 (Dalzell).

At Hammond River, about 30 Wood Ducks, a good number there, were seen Oct. 1 (Wilson) and in Moncton a flock of 30 Killdeer were roosting on the roof of Champlain Mall Sept. 19 (Dalzell). In some areas of the U.S. Killdeer have even been found nesting on flat roofs, from which the newly hatched chicks must jump to the ground to reach feeding areas.

I suspect Long-eared Owls may have been migrating Sept. 24. While I was driving from Saint John to Albert County that evening, a Long-eared or Short-eared Owl (I could not tell which) flew in front of my car at Sussex about dusk and later a similar bird crossed the road at New Horton. Arriving at Mary's Point, I went to cover the tomatoes in the garden and to my surprise two medium-sized owls began flying around me. The beam of my flashlight revealed them to be Long-ears, one of which obligingly landed on a garden post just 5 meters away.

Jim Wilson also relates an interesting experience with an owl this fall. Driving at Quispamsis "I saw a Saw-whet Owl, sitting on the road in headlights of the car, apparently asleep, eyes closed. I thought the bird might have been injured, so stopped approxmately 10 feet from it and walked outside beam of headlights toward it, so as not to disturb it with my shadow. I walked to within 2 feet, stopped to pick it up...It suddenly awoke, took one startled look into my eyes and fluttered off into the woods, apparently OK. Possibly the bird had recently caught some prey and was resting. I have read of incidents where they simply are docile during daylight and allow themselves to be picked up, but this one was after dark."

A few flycatchers were still present at the end of September: a Least at Kent Island Sept. 26 & 28, an Olive-sided there Sept. 29 (Dalzell) and an Eastern Pewee at Portage (Britt Brook) Lake Sept. 27 (Millers, Majkas & DC). The pewee, weakened by a few days of cold rainy weather, followed our movements and caught any insects that flew up when we walked. It was especially attentive when Bill Miller was splitting wood; sitting on a log less than a meter away, "Britt" as we have christened the bird, darted in each time a hidden spider or fly was exposed by the axe. Eventually the bird was perching on our heads and snapping insects from our fingers when we discovered them under rocks and logs. We took "Britt" indoors overnight to a sheltered perch in a carton but unfortunately he died the next day. Much more unusual was an Eastern Kingbird at Saint John West Nov. 17 (Mrs. Wyn Miller)

Four or 5 Tree Swallows were at Kent Island Sept. 29 (Dalzell) and a Cliff Swallow at Miscou Island Sept. 13 (Jean-Paul Lebel). A few Northern (Baltimore) Orioles appeared at feeders in late November, 2 at Sackville (fide Stu Tingley) and 1 at East Riverside (Nov. 21, Joyce Golden). A Black-billed Cuckoo at Kent Island Sept. 29 (Dalzell) was rather late.

Some of the earlier reports of winter birds were of Buffleheads at Saint John Oct. 14 (fide Hipperson), Rough-legged Hawks at Hopewell Hill Nov. 8 (3, Dalzell) and Jemseg Nov. 16 (Melvin Moore), 2 Glaucous and 4 Iceland Gulls at Cape Jourimain Nov. 16,(Chignecto Nat. Club), Snowy Owl at Waterside Oct. 30 (Deichmann & Buzz Crowston) and East Saint John Nov. 17 (Mrs. Norman Smith), Bohemian Waxwings at Sackville Nov. 10 (Tingley) and Sisson Ridge near Plaster Rock Nov. 16 (16, Erwin Landauer), Northern Shrike at Fundy Park Nov. 17 (Barry Spencer), Pine Grosbeaks at Cape Maringouin Oct. 15 (numerous flocks flying west, Chignecto Nat. Club), Common Redpolls at Cape Jourimain Nov. 16 (7, Chignecto Club), Tree Sparrows at Moncton Nov. 7 (20, Dalzell), Salt Springs Nov. 8 (Wilson) and Gagetown Nov. 9 (flock, Moore) and Snow Buntings at Salt Springs and Hammond River Oct. 26 (Wilson) and Moncton Oct. 27 (Dalzell). Several of these species must have

appeared a week or two earlier than indicated.

For the second consecutive fall there was a good influx of Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Reports extending from Aug. 17 to Oct. 14 came from Kent Island, where 5 or more were seen Sept. 24 (fide Dalzell), Pennfield (Mrs. Justason), Saint John (Charles Belyea), Alma (Mrs. Garnet Butland), Mary's Point (DC) and Andover (Fred Tribe). Three of these birds were found dead and have been added to the museum collection.

A pair of Cardinals which bred at Saint John West in 1980 (see article by Gayl Hipperson in next issue) were still attending Reg Smith's feeder in November. Also in the Saint John area, 3 were seen in Rockwood Park in the first week of October (Tom Page) and one at Sandy Point Nov. 16 (Don Patterson). Elsewhere, a female was at Alma Nov. 8 (Thelma Keirstead) and nearby Hebron Nov. 29 (Sinclair), another female at Long Point, Belleisle Bay, Nov. 10 (Harold O'Brien) and a male at Gagetown Nov. 24 (Mrs. Coombes). Indications are that this beautiful bird will soon be a regular resident of Southern New Brunswick suburbs and villages where there is an abundance of thick shrubbery and good winter bird feeders.

Reports of all vagrants include Ruddy Duck at Bancroft Point, Grand Manan, Aug. 14 (Dalzell), Baird's Sandpiper at Miscou Island Sept. 12 (Lebel), 2 Stilt Sandpipers at Fundy Park Aug. 28 (Con Desplanque) and 1 at Castalia Sept. 29 (Dalzell), a Wilson's Phalarope at Castalia Aug. 17 (Peter Pearce) and 2 there Aug. 31 (Dalzell), 2 Laughing Gulls at Blacks Harbour Sept. 30 (Dalzell), Yellow-headed Blackbird at Castalia Aug. 20-22 (Dalzell, Pearce et al.) at Saint John West Sept. 22 (R.T. Dole) and perhaps at Machias Seal and White Head (The Guillemot), Lark Sparrow at Long Pond, Grand Manan Aug. 19 (N.S. Bird Soc.) and Castalia Aug. 21-22 (Pearce), Field Sparrows at Moncton Nov. 7 & 14 (1 & 2, respectively, Dalzell). Unusual for the inland location was an adult Great Cormorant at Wolfe Lake in Fundy Park Nov. 28 (DC & Mary Majka).

FISHES, INVERTEBRATES & FUNGI

A Thresher Shark caused quite a stir in Saint John when it washed ashore in the harbour Sept. 12 and was identified by Stan Gorham as the second recorded for New Brunswick waters, the first having been trapped in a Deer Island weir in 1966. The Thresher is the shark with the huge, scythe-shaped tail.

A large moth which blew into a Mrs. Nugent's kitchen in Saint John Sept. 16 was strange to her and to Gayl Hipperson who identified it Erebus odora, a stray from the south (Gulf States to South America). Gayl reports that the museum has six old specimens in its collections but this year's is the first definitely known to have been collected locally. Barry Wright, of the Nova Scotia Museum, describes Erebus as "an occasional tropical stray, particularly following storms in the fall".

The Chignecto Naturalists' Club held its traditional fall mushroom collecting trip along the Dorchester-Memramcook road Sept. 20. Under the leadership of Hinrich Harries they turned up a rich harvest of Catathelasma ventricosa, Lactarius deliciosus, Hypomyces lactifluorum (growing on Lactarius spp.) and several kinds of Boletus and Suillus. Keeping the poisonous mushrooms separate, including one Amanita virosa (the Death Angel), and removing the wormy specimens and the dubious species of Russula, Lactarius and Cortinarius the 24 participants enjoyed a mushroom feast from Virginia Harries' kitchen. The Chignecto report states that chanterelles, often the mainstay of their outing, were scarce this year.

ADDENDA

I neglected to mention in the last number a report I had received of a Dovekie in the Grand Manan Channel on an unusual date, July 28. Those high arctic breeders arrive in mid-fall to spend the winter off our shores but there have been at least two other summer reports in the Bay of Fundy. The 1980 bird partly in summer and partly in winter plumage, was reported by Gordon Pringle.

announcements.

FEDERAL AND ONTARIO GOVERNMENTS CRITICIZED FOR ALLOWING EUROPEAN WILD DOGS INTO CANADA

(A News Release from Canadian Wildlife Service)

Nature conservationists have strongly criticized the federal and Ontario governments for permitting fur ranchers to import 135 European raccoon dogs which could cause destruction of wildlife in Canada.

Rick Pratt, Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) spokesman, said the federal and provincial governments had agreed in principle, over a decade ago, to prohibit the import of exotic (foreign) wildlife. "I was appalled to learn they had never acted on their concerns through legislation", he said. "it is well known that exotic animals can successfully compete with native wildlife and eventually deplete their numbers through interbreeding or habitat destruction. It was irresponsible of the two governments to allow raccoon dogs to enter Ontario because no one knows what effect they could have on indigenous wild species such as foxes."

The CNF and the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club are asking the governments to compensate the ranchers, send the raccoon dogs back to Finland and pass strict laws which would prevent a similar incident. They fear that escaped or released raccoon dogs would thrive in Ontario. In Europe, raccoon dogs eat ground-nesting game birds, grain and fruit crops. There are reports of raccoon dogs attacking chickens in Russia.

"The onus should be on the importer to demonstrate that foreign animals would not be harmful either now or in the future," said Pratt.

He gave several examples of how the introduction of exotic animals into other countries caused problems. Starlings were first brought to North America in the late 1800s. Now they cause millions of dollars worth of damage to agricultural crops each year. They have also displaced native birds such as the bluebirds. In Australia, the import of rabbits caused declines in domestic livestock.

The raccoon dogs were brought into Canada by an Ontario fur rancher to be bred for their valuable pelt. Only health factors currently govern importing common foreign animals.

Raccoon Dog

(Nyctereutes procyonoides)

- member of the canine (dog) family
- approximately the size of a fox but with a shorter tail and legs
- measurements: body length 65 to 80 cm, tail 15 to 25 cm, weight in summer 4 to 6 kg, late fall up to 10 kg
- mostly brownish-gray above, yellowish-brown below with dark areas around the eyes from which it gets its name (it looks like a raccoon
- originally found only in eastern Asia, the Russians brought it to Europe as a furbearer in the 1920s

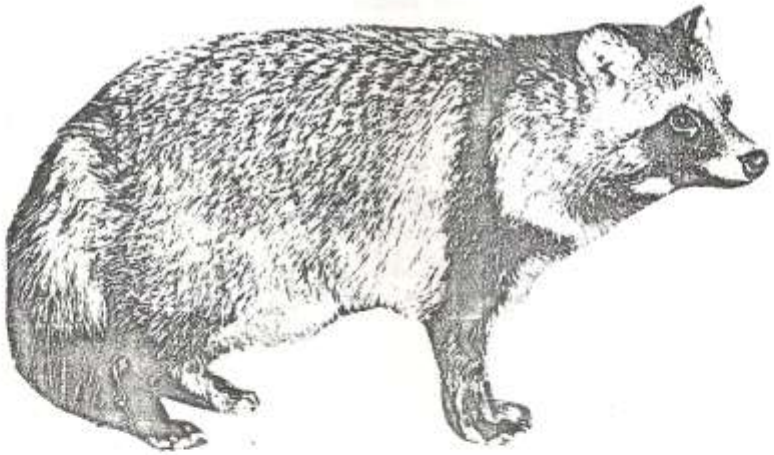
- now its range includes Sweden, Finland, Western USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and even into Norway and West Germany
- primarily nocturnal although it will come out by day if hungry
- unique in the Canine family in that it sometimes hibernates during the winter (the weight gain in the fall is in preparation for hibernation)
- preferred habitat is thick vegetation such as marshes, reedbeds
- is an omniverous feeder, meaning that it eats both plant and animal matter depending on what is available
- included in its diet are: frogs, voles, mice, insects, reptiles, mollusks, fish, ground-nesting birds (waterfowl, grouse, etc.), fruit, berries, grain, carrion and even garbage
- the gestation period is 59 to 63 days, litters are large, usually 7 or 8 but up to 19 young have been recorded, by the age of 6 months the pups are self-supporting
- preyed upon by wolves, stray dogs, wolverines, lynxes, martins, sometimes foxes, occasionally large birds of prey and of course humans
- the fur is sold under the name "ussurian raccoon" or "Japanese fox"

The Problem of Introduced Wilflife

A mere 42 years after rabbits were introduced to Australia a 2,000 mile rabbit-proof fence had to be built to try to contain the spread. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent trying to control rabbits while an incalculable loss to the economy resulted as livestock were decimated by the mushrooming rabbits

feeding in their fields. It was only in the 1950s that with the introduction of myxomotoses, a disease affecting only rabbits, that the rabbit problem was solved.

Starlings were brought to North America in the 1890s. Now they cause millions of dollars worth of damage annually to agriculture. They carry diseases, have displaced native birds and their flocks have caused airplane crashes.



Wild European Raccoon Dog

News from N. B. Clubs

Saint John Naturalists Club

The Saint John Naturalists Club has had a well-attended and interesting series of fall and winter monthly meetings. In September, NBFN President Mary Majka gave us a taste of what was to come with her artistic slide presentation "Winter in Albert County". Sidney Bahrt of Pembroke, Maine took us to warmer climes in October via a unique, dual-projector travellogue of South African wildlife. Club member Kit Graham was lucky enough to visit Baffin Island over the summer, and his slides an narrative provided our November program. The final meeting of the year saw 1980 out with a bang, when Dr. Alan Gordon, geologist at UNBSJ, spoke on the May erruption of Mount St. Helen's volcano.

Field trip activity has been seasonally suspended, save for a last outing in September to the Barnaby Head Nature Trail at New River Beach, but will resume with the first hint of spring. Many members took part in the Christmas Bird Count, either braving biting cold and mountains of snow, or counting comfortably at their feeders!

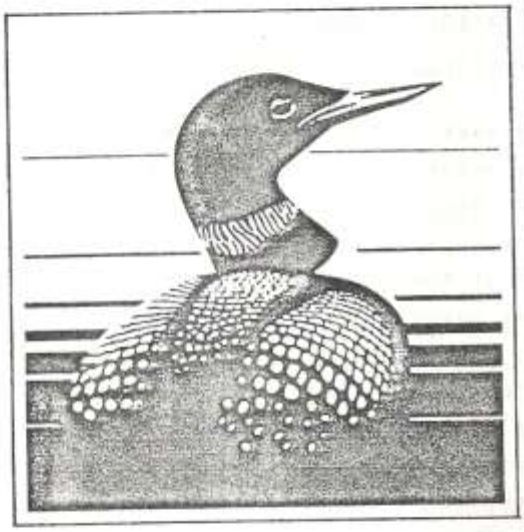
If you have anything for inclusion in "News from the Clubs" please send to the editor: -

Barry King
N. B. Museum
277 Douglas Avenue
Saint John, New Brunswick
E2K 1E5

CHECK-LIST OF BIRDS

TINTAMARRE

NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA



Environment Canada
Canadian Wildlife Service

N O W A V A I L A B L E

The Check-list of the birds, of the Tintamarre National Wildlife Area and a brochure on the Cape Jourmaine National Wildlife Area are now available from

The Canadian Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1590
Sackville, N.B.
E0A 3C0

OWL REHABILITATION CENTRE

K. H. Deichman

The N.S. Bird Society, as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations, invited Mrs. Kay McKeever, of the Owl Rehabilitation Centre situated near Peterborough, Ontario, to give an address. It was my pleasure to be able to attend this talk on Wednesday, October 8, 1980, at the Nova Scotia Museum, in Halifax. Mrs. McKeever and her husband have treated over 1000 birds of prey at their centre. Their object with each "patient" is eventual release back to the wild, preferably near its original home territory. They have also successfully bred adults rendered flightless - in which case they release the progeny. It is quite noteworthy that nearly 100% of the charges turned over to the McKeevers have been injured by the hand of man - in the case of the larger owls by "would-be sportsmen", and in the case of the smaller ones by collisions with motor vehicles.

The McKeevers accomplished a first last year when they bred Saw Whets in captivity, with three little owlets to prove it. Currently they are at the initial stages of turning a meadow near the otherwise wooded Centre into an area to breed the threatened Burrowing Owl for eventual release to former ranges, particularly south central B.C..

In the course of the presentation which was largely based on slides, Mrs. McKeever gave forth with an amazing amount of owl lore, gained of course from her long and intimate association with these beasts. Did you know that owls sunbathe?

This presentation was the 127th lecture given by the McKeevers and well accepted by the 100 or more present. There is a book on the McKeevers work, also excellent pictures and a descriptive article is to be found in the December 1979 - January 1980 "Canadian Geographical Journal".

For those who would find a hapless owl that should or might be salvageable, be assured that it's very important that the candidate be specially packed and shipped via air express. For an injured bird reduction of the effect of shock may be just the thing to ultimately save its life. Details are available from the N.S. Bird Society through the N.S. Museum.

This is your newsletter. Anyone having articles, sightings or other contributions, send them to:

Barry King, Editor
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The deer mouse has an incredible breeding potential. The offspring of one pair could number 10,000 in a year. Few mice, however, survive from one year to the next due to the pressure of predators.

Large amounts of seeds which are carried in cheek pouches are stored near the nest as winter approaches. This time of year the deer mouse is active in tunnels under the snow only occasionally venturing to the surface. One can often see their tracks in snow with the characteristic tail sweep this time of year.