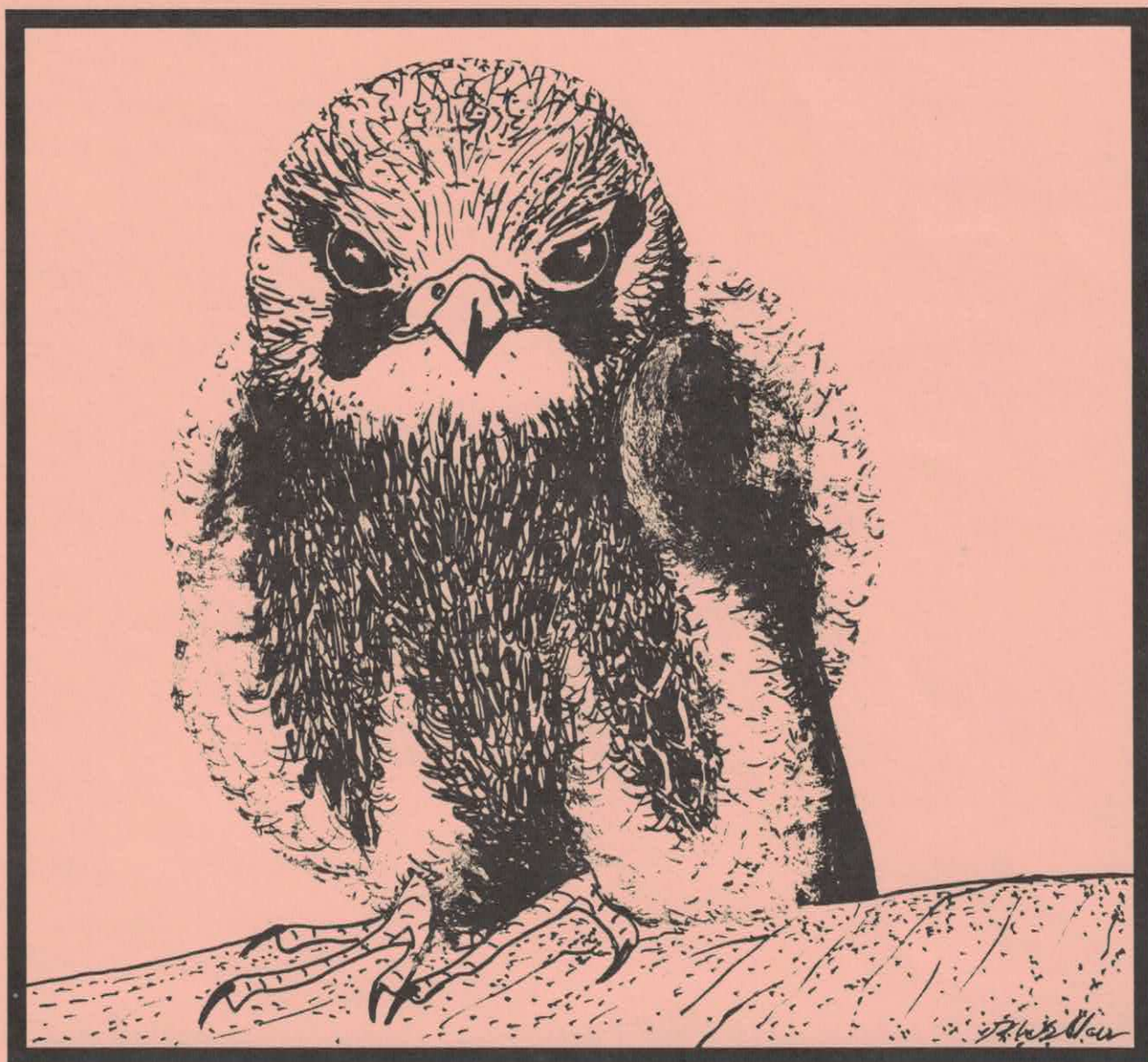


23 (2) June / juin 1996

N. B. Naturalist

Le Naturaliste du N.-B.



DAWN OF A NEW ERA FOR NATURE GROUPS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

A Message From the President - Frank Longstaff

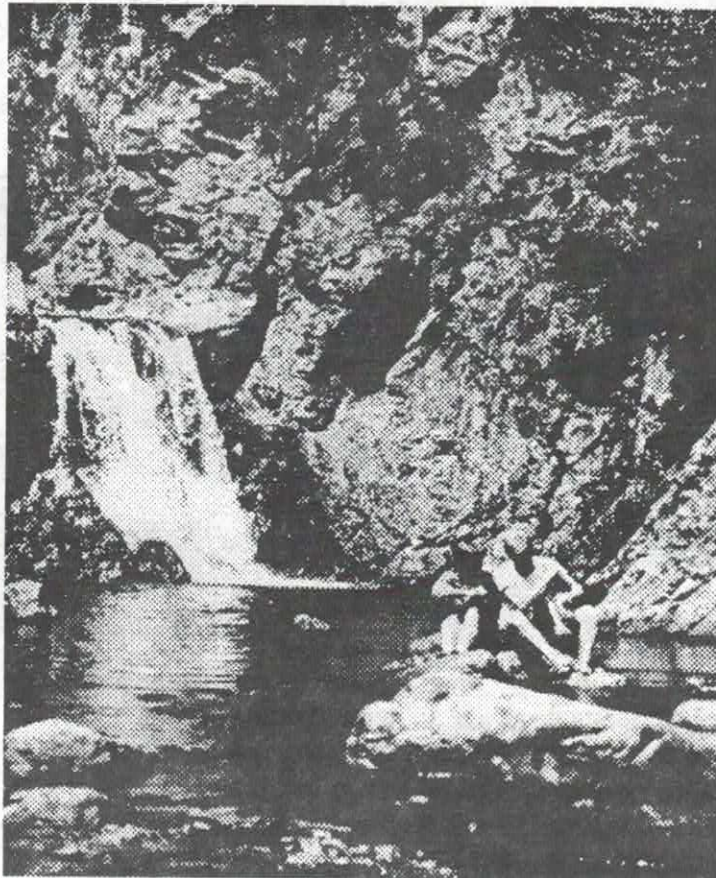
With this issue of Nature Canada and New Brunswick Naturalist / Le Naturaliste du N.-B., we begin a new era for nature groups in New Brunswick. Our two organizations, the Canadian nature Federation and the New Brunswick Federation of naturalists, are joining forces in a joint project. Starting in 1997, a membership in one organization will automatically provide a membership in the other.

It's a sensible marriage - we have so much in common. The members of both groups are nature enthusiasts who enjoy getting into the field to observe and marvel at the wonders to be found there. Our love of nature makes us concerned about conservation issues and the need to protect our natural heritage from overdevelopment and unrestricted industrial growth. The only difference between the groups is that CNF concerns itself with the national and, to some extent, the international scene, while NBFN's view is firmly focused on New Brunswick.

In putting the two groups together, we have created a package that not only offers more to all naturalists in New Brunswick, it does so for a very reasonable price. Currently, an individual membership in the Canadian Nature Federation is \$33.00; a similar membership in the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists is \$15.00. The combined total (which people like me who belong to both groups have been paying for years) is \$48.00. Our special introductory offer for 1997 provides membership in both organizations for only \$25.00. Don't ask me how we can do that;

I'm not sure myself. All I know is that naturalists will be able to belong to both groups for less than it previously cost to join CNF.

This opportunity is so good that we think it should be presented to everyone in New Brunswick with an interest in nature. For this reason it is being made to all members of local nature clubs in the province as well as to the members of NBFN and CNF. More than that, we have made an attempt to identify other nature lovers in New Brunswick who, up until now, had not been affiliated with a naturalist organization. They, too, are being invited to join at this very low rate. In this way we hope we can swell the membership of both organizations, thereby sharing and spreading our enthusiasm for the natural world, and giving us a broader base when we go up against government and industry in our efforts to conserve the places and things that are so important to us.



*Photo: by Brian Townsend,
courtesy of Parks Canada*

To really demonstrate how good this offer is, complimentary copies of the 1996 summer and fall issues of both *Nature Canada* and *New Brunswick Naturalist / Le Naturaliste du N.-B.* are being sent to all the nature enthusiasts in the province that we can find. With those issues will be an application form, asking them and you, to join the two organizations for 1997 for a single membership of \$25. The application form is part of the package of materials you received today. Please fill it in and return it, with your cheque for \$25.00, to the address on the form. Welcome aboard. We're glad to have you with us.

LE BALLET DES BÉCASSEAUX

Denis Doucet

On a tiré cet article de *Québec Oiseaux* (volume 4, numéro 4, 1993), avec certaines modifications appropriées au lecteur ou à la lectrice de la province du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Un quart de million de bécasseaux sur la plage! Voilà ce que découvre l'amateur d'oiseaux de rivage qui visite la région de la baie de Fundy lors des premiers jours du mois d'août. Reconnue pour ses marées géantes, cette baie constitue également un endroit privilégié pour l'observation des bécasseaux dans l'est de l'Amérique du Nord.

En effet, la majeure partie de la population de Bécasseaux semipalmés fait escale dans cette région lors de la migration automnale. Avec une telle quantité d'oiseaux, ce coin de pays jouit donc d'une excellente réputation auprès des amateurs de spectacle ornithologique grandiose. D'autant plus que l'endroit est fréquenté également par d'autres espèces d'oiseaux de rivage qui participent tous à la représentation offerte quotidiennement à cette période de l'année. Et parmi les principales scènes où se déroule ce spectacle, on retrouve Grande Anse sur la baie de Shepody. Situé au sud de la ville de Moncton, ce site vaut vraiment le déplacement.

À travers la campagne

Tout commence par une randonnée à travers la campagne; un court périple au cours duquel vous pourrez découvrir les oiseaux de la région. En quittant Moncton, empruntez la route 106 en direction sud. Vous traversez la municipalité de Dieppe, puis le village de Saint-Anselme, pour finalement quitter cette banlieue. Vous demeurez sur la route 106 tout en admirant le paysage de plus en plus rural. Dans un des secteurs le moins habité, vous longez un petit lac où vous observez quelques canards et un Huart à collier. Cinq kilomètres plus loin, vous arrivez à Memramcook, un petit village situé dans la vallée d'une beauté remarquable qui constitue un des berceaux de la culture acadienne.

La route descend et il y a une bifurcation vers Saint-Joseph. Vous optez de demeurer sur la route 106. En traversant un grand marais interrompu par la petite rivière Memramcook, vous arrivez au centre du village du même nom. Vous tournez à droite afin de poursuivre sur la route 106.

Vous arrivez enfin au centre de Dorchester. Quittant la route 106 au «grand coin» du village, vous empruntez maintenant la route secondaire 935. L'état de la route dégrade rapidement. Vous décélérez progressivement jusqu'à ce que la route ne soit plus asphaltée.

Tout au long du trajet, vous avez sans doute remarqué que la rivière s'élargissait au fil de sa progression vers la partie supérieure de la baie de Fundy. Soudainement, un petit panneau vous annonce votre arrivée à Dorchester Cape. En descendant une petite colline, vous apercevez enfin le site tant anticipé: la plage de Johnsons Mills sur le secteur de la baie de Shepody qu'on appelle Grande Anse.

Une plage rocailleuse

La plage est très rocailleuse et s'étend sur presque un kilomètre. Le chemin vous amène très près de la petite falaise qui surplombe la plage. Vous arrêtez la voiture et scrutez la plage à l'aide de vos jumelles. On dirait réellement qu'il n'y a rien de particulier ici, la plage semble déserte.

Terriblement déçu, vous descendez tout de même de la voiture afin d'examiner le site de plus près. Peut-être y a-t-il quelques bécasseaux cachés un peu plus loin? Vous ouvrez le coffre arrière de l'auto afin d'y prendre votre lunette d'approche tout

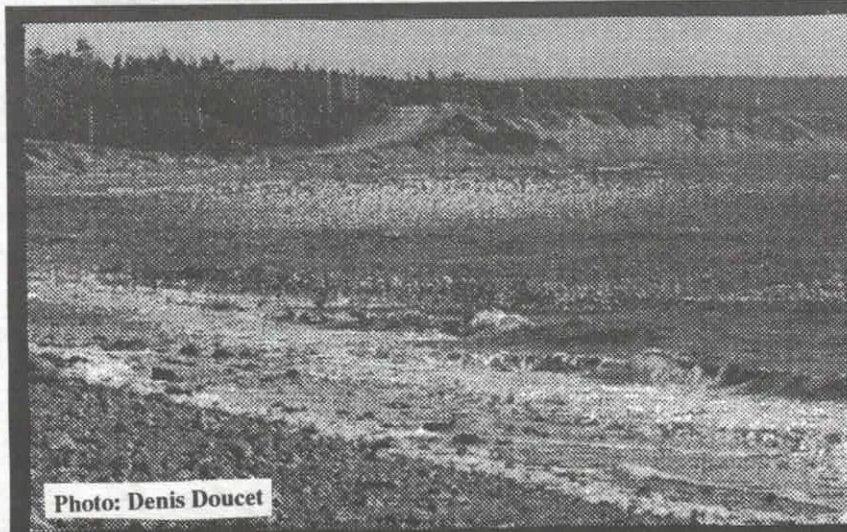


Photo: Denis Doucet

Grande Anse: une vaste plage rocailleuse fréquentée par des milliers d'oiseaux de rivage au début du mois d'août.

en vous demandant comment vous avez fait pour manquer le spectacle tant décrit.

Le spectacle!

Un mouvement rapide au-dessus des conifères attire votre attention. Un oiseau de proie! Vite, les jumelles! Vous le repérez alors qu'il commence à planer assez haut au-dessus de la plage. De la taille d'une corneille, l'oiseau que

vous observez a des ailes pointues et un favori foncé sous l'oeil. Un Faucon pèlerin!

Entre-temps, un vrombissement se fait entendre près de vous. Le spectacle qui se déroule alors vous coupe littéralement le souffle. Un quart de million de Bécasseaux semipalmés viennent de décoller de la plage!

C'est le faucon qui a causé la panique. Les petits oiseaux volent en formation serrée au-dessus des vagues. Ils tourment, plongent et montent tous en harmonie. Lorsqu'ils tourment vers la plage, le blanc des 250 000 poitrines forme une toile blanche miroitante, vacillante. Lorsqu'ils tourment vers la côte, c'est le contraire. Les oiseaux, au loin, semblent subitement disparaître avant de réapparaître dans un éclat de blanc.

Le faucon a repéré sa proie. Il plonge à une allure ahurissante et fonce vers la bande. Les bécasseaux virent vers la plage mais trop tard, le faucon est trop rapide. Il s'abat sur la proie comme un éclair et la tue sur le coup, la mort d'un bécasseau survient à 300 kilomètres à l'heure.

Entre-temps, le ballet aérien des bécasseaux se poursuit sans interruption au-dessus de vous. Les couleurs chaudes du soleil couchant se reflètent sur les vagues. Pour sa part, la vague vivante des bécasseaux en vol se comprime, les oiseaux virevoltent, plongent et la vague se relâche et se reforme aussitôt.

Vous réalisez maintenant que les bécasseaux étaient tous sur la plage à votre arrivée mais qu'ils étaient tout simplement bien camouflés. Déjà plusieurs individus se posent sur la plage et se fondent presque miraculeusement au milieu. Le spectacle valait vraiment le déplacement.

L'importance du site

Grande Anse figure parmi les sites de la baie de Fundy (comme Marys Point au N.-B. et Évangéline Beach sur le bassin des Mines en N.-É.) qui, à tous les étés, accueillent des milliers de Bécasseaux semipalmés et 25 autres espèces d'oiseaux de rivage lors des migrations. Ces sites sont d'une importance écologique majeure au niveau mondial.

Les scientifiques estiment que de 42% à 74% de toute la population mondiale du Bécasseau semipalmé fait escale sur les rives de la baie de Fundy à la fin de chaque été afin de «faire le plein» avant de poursuivre leur route migratoire vers l'Amérique du Sud.

La plupart des bécasseaux séjourneront 10 à 14 jours dans cette région avant de partir. Au cours de ce séjour, ils gagneront plus que 50% de leur poids corporel en réserves de gras. Des réserves qui leur permettront de faire un vol

sans escale au-dessus de l'océan Atlantique jusqu'à la côte nord de l'Amérique du Sud, soit une distance de 4 300 kilomètres!

Une nourriture abondante

Les Bécasseaux semipalmés s'attardent dans cette région afin de se nourrir des petits invertébrés qui vivent dans les vastes étendues boueuses et argileuses de la baie de Fundy qui se découvre, à marée basse, deux fois par jour. Ces vasières sont d'une très grande superficie puisque c'est dans cette région de la baie de Fundy que nous retrouvons les plus grandes marées au monde.

L'amplitude de la marée atteint jusqu'à 17 mètres dans la baie de Shepody et le bassin des Mines. Dans les immenses vasières découvertes à marée basse, les bécasseaux se nourrissent surtout de *Corophium volutator*.

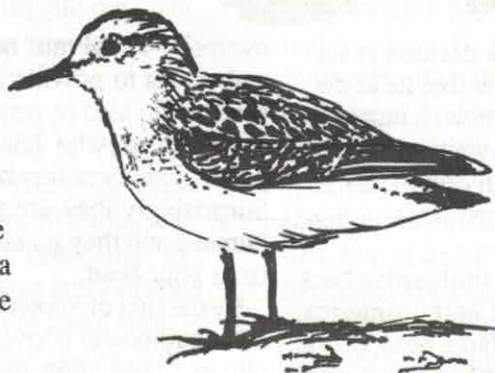
Ce petit amphipode de cinq millimètres de longueur constitue la majeure partie de la diète de ces bécasseaux.

La protection des sites

Les deux sites (la baie de Shepody et Southern Bight dans le bassin des Mines), qui accueillent une très grande partie de la population mondiale de Bécasseaux semipalmés en période migratoire, reçoivent protection, jusqu'à un certain point, grâce à la Convention internationale «Ramsar». Mais qu'elle est cette convention?

Les terres humides ont une grande valeur en raison de leur production biologique très élevée. Ce fait a été reconnu à l'échelle internationale lorsque 18 pays ont signé la Convention relative à la conservation des zones humides d'importance internationale en 1971 à Ramsar, Iran. Le Canada est devenu l'un des signataires en 1981. La Convention n'a pas priorité sur les lois nationales de protection des terres humides. Elle vient cependant les appuyer en attirant l'attention du monde entier sur les menaces ou les graves dangers dont les terres inscrites sur la liste peuvent faire l'objet. En s'assurant que ces sites sont et seront protégés, le Service canadien de la faune s'acquitte des obligations que le Canada a contractées en signant la Convention. Certains sites «Ramsar», tel que Marys Point, reçoivent une protection supplémentaire en tant que réserve nationale de la faune. Jusqu'à maintenant, Marys Point, dans la réserve nationale de la faune de Shepody, est le seul endroit où l'on peut assister à un programme d'interprétation.

J'espère que le nombre croissant de visiteurs sur ces sites,



Le Bécasseau semipalmé: l'espèce vedette parmi les oiseaux de rivage présents dans le secteur de la baie de Fundy.

BALLET DES BÉCASSEAUX

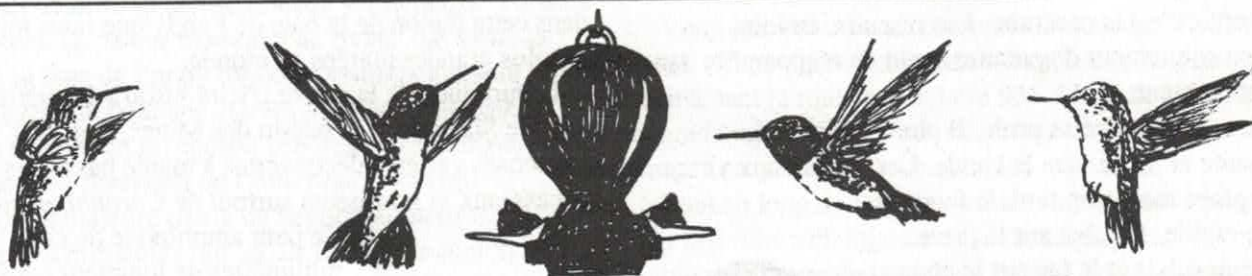
(continué de p. 42)

démontrera à la population locale et aux gouvernements concernés l'importance de protéger ces endroits, non seulement pour des raisons écologiques mais aussi d'ordre économique.

Finalement, je vous souhaite d'assister un jour au grand «ballet des bécasseaux» et de jouir pleinement de la beauté unique de ce petit coin de pays situé tout au fond de la baie de Fundy. C'est un événement qui demeurera sans doute gravé à jamais dans votre mémoire.

THE HUMMINGBIRDS OF PLEASANT VILLA

Cathy McAllan and Don Gibson



When William McAllan of Pleasant Villa decided to set out some hummingbird feeders, it is doubtful that he knew how successful this venture would be. For now, a mere five years later, the population of hummers visiting his feeders exceeds the total number of people living in this small community; which is just down the road from Gagetown.

Sometime between May 10 and 15 the first birds arrive back from their wintering grounds in Mexico or Central America. At first a half dozen birds sample the nectar daily, but soon the numbers grow to 25-30 adults. When nesting season occurs the activity decreases slightly. In July the young are able to leave the nest and they quickly follow Ma and Pa to the sweet bounty at the McAllan residence. By now, as many as 40 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds may be buzzing about.

The four 1 litre bottles have to be replenished daily during the peak period and an additional four bottles are put out if the family goes on vacation for a few days. The feeders hang along the front of a porch that has open sides and a roof. The

overhang of the roof helps keep the direct sun off the nectar and seems to provide some security to the birds while they feed.

Anyone who has a hummingbird feeder knows how pugnacious these tiny birds can be; now multiply that by forty! Surprisingly they are not at all affected by the presence of humans and they go about their business, flying mere inches from your head.

By the first of September most have snuggled into the down of a southbound goose and begin the long journey to warmer climes. Then eight and half months will elapse before they return to do it all over again.

Editor's Note: Anyone familiar with the second author is well aware of his sense of humor and tendency to entrap the unsuspecting in his jokes. The notion of hummingbirds hitchhiking on geese is colorful folklore, unsubstantiated by scientific evidence. The rest of the story is true.

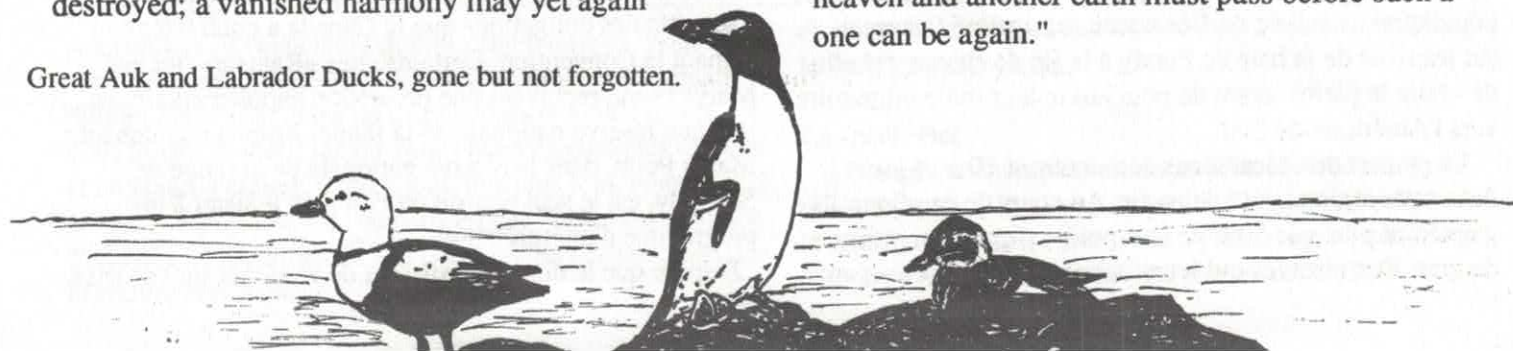
ON THE EXTINCTION OF A SPECIES

The late William Beebe

"The beauty and genius of a work of art may be reconceived, though its first material expression be destroyed; a vanished harmony may yet again

Great Auk and Labrador Ducks, gone but not forgotten.

inspire the composer; but when the last individual of a race of living things breathes no more, another heaven and another earth must pass before such a one can be again."



STAY AT HOME

Mike Lushington - Restigouche Naturalists' Club

The phone rings; word has just come down the line that another rare bird has been seen in some remote corner of the province. A group is leaving at six in the morning to go chase it. Visions of adding another rarity to your list flash through your mind, colliding with those of the work that you have to get done before the snow falls. Reluctantly, you pass, knowing that you could well be missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

This has happened to me on several occasions within the past year. I suspect that it will happen again, because I have begun to realize something else about myself; maybe on some of those occasions (not on all of them, certainly) I could have gone traipsing off with everyone else only for some obscure reason, I really did not want to. Why? Surely, anyone given the opportunity to find a new bird would jump at it. Or would they?

All other things being equal, I am happy to take off on an excursion to search for birds and simply to travel about the province. Within the last couple of years I have had several memorable trips to Grand Manan, to Fundy and Mary's Point, to Miscou and elsewhere. These trips, in turn have enriched my birding experiences and extended my lists. They have also introduced me to some very interesting people and some very beautiful places in this province of ours.

At the same time, though, I have gradually come to realize that I am one of those strange people who would rather find one bird for myself than to have ten shown to me by others and, if it is at all possible, to find the rare, new birds here on my home turf rather than elsewhere.

Let me offer an example. A year ago, we received (very welcome and important) information about Buffleheads on the sewage lagoon in Shippegan; so, on a spectacularly beautiful October morning down we went, a good contingent of us from the Restigouche Naturalists' Club. We found the Buffleheads right where they were supposed to be, and during the course of the day, several other interesting species particularly on Miscou. I was excited and felt that the trip was well worth the effort. But it did not provide me with the thrill that I experienced a couple of months later when I discovered

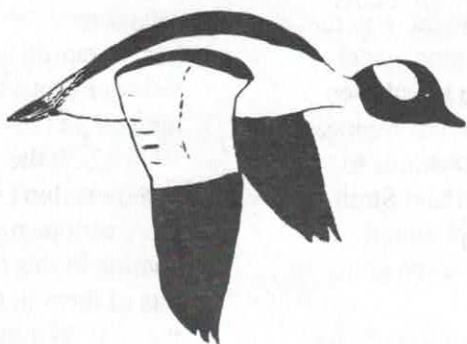
an overwintering Bufflehead right here at home in the midst of a flock of goldeneyes. Since then, I have found them twice more; during the spring of 1995 and again this past fall, here at Eel River Bar.

I have had several such experiences within the past couple of years. I go away, see a bird and then come home to find that we have then here. Now I admit being truly envious when Margaret Gallant and Irene Doyle (two of our most avid bird chasers) were among the very small group to sight the first-ever New Brunswick Tufted Ducks. I am certain that that really was a sighting of a lifetime and I was prepared to go for a look myself the following week, only to find out that the birds had seemingly departed in the meantime (or such, at least was our information at the time).

Usually, though, I find that I am content to stay at home and when I find a good bird locally (or at least one that seems good to me at the time) I experience the real thrill of discovery. I have a couple of friends who enjoy poking about our home turf with me and when we discover our first-ever Horned Larks locally, our first Pectoral Sandpipers or Dunlins, I feel as satisfied as if I had made a truly rare sighting under someone else's tutelage in some other section of the province.

Part of it all is to discover just what we have here. The Bay of Chaleur/Restigouche River area of the province is largely "terra incognita" for birders; as we begin to look with more experienced eyes we begin to see that what might have been considered rare and wonderful a couple of years ago is perhaps just wonderful now, not rare at all.

Let me summarize by saying that I think it very valuable to get out, to go learn from others who have had experience, and then to come home and apply the knowledge and the experience locally. Let me also stress that I am becoming more and more convinced of the value of time spent locally; the more we are available to observe, the more we begin to see. And there is the simple joy of a morning at Eel River Bar checking out all the old feathered friends, partly in the hope that they may have welcomed a stranger to their company and partly just because they are there to be observed and studied.



Bufflehead, male

Drawing by Brenda Carter.

Source: Erskine, A. J. 1972

Buffleheads Can. Wildl. Ser. Monogr. Ser. 4

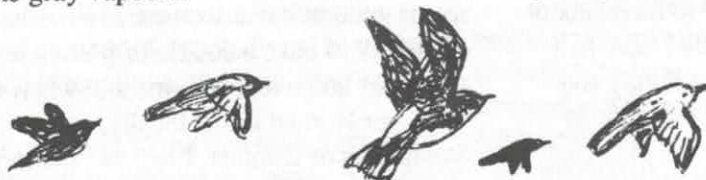
page 28

WARBLERS OVER A FOGGY SEA

Rob Walker

May 21, 1996; a long-weekend of birding on Grand Manan was winding down. Barbara Curlew, Rick Elliot, Peter Wilshaw, Gail Walker and I were aboard the Grand Manan V at North Head for the 11:30 a.m. crossing to the mainland. Four days previously the crossing to Grand Manan had been uneventful and we had no great expectations for the return. Sandwiched between silver sea and fog-wrapped sky we rounded Swallow Tail and headed northward.

Guillemots, flushed by the boat, whirled along just above the smooth surface. Off towards The Whistle, the gray wings of a yearling gannet cut a path through a swirling mass of gulls. The air around us was finger-numbing cold, definitely no warmer than 5° C. A few minutes more and all landmarks disappeared. We were surrounded by fog and could only guess what might materialize out of the gray vapours.



First to come were loons; lines of four and three, pairs and singles all arrowing by about 100 metres above the water on a NE bearing. These were Common Loons on their way to just-thawed northern lakes. Someone said "Watch for kittiwakes, they're nesting on Southern Wolf. Look! Those are warblers." There were two of them, Yellow Warblers, only a metre or two above the water and outpacing the boat. "Go warblers, go!"

As expected, out beyond the warblers were kittiwakes, six at least; dipping down to pick morsels from the surface, settling momentarily on the water, two perching on bits of driftwood. More loons were cutting across our path. In my mind's-eye I could see them working their way up the foggy coast of Maine, through the Grand Manan Channel and onwards to Point Lepreau, Cape Enrage, Northumberland Strait, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and then the lake-splattered expanse of the Canadian Shield, perhaps some going all the way to Ungava and Baffin.

We were now half-way. "Those are swallows." Sure enough, three Barn Swallows winged by at about the level of the upper deck. "And that's a hummingbird!" A hummingbird zipped out over the water and then dropped back behind the stern. Out towards the limit of visibility a flock of 21 scoters, 17 White-wings and 4 Blacks, rushed by on the same course as the loons.

The next warbler was really close, passing under my extended arm and then over the railing and back out to sea. Apparently it had closed in on the boat and flown up the passageway behind our backs. This bird had plain greenish-brown upperparts, possibly a female Blackpoll Warbler. Everyone bubbled with expectation; there was almost no limit on what we might see out here. A flock of five warblers passed us flying high enough to have their colors and patterns obscured by the fog. Dotting the surface out from the boat was a flock of 41 buoyant Red-necked Phalaropes. Fleeing the approaching monster, the ferry, they disappeared into the fog.

"Lots of warblers," was the next call. Parallel with the boat were at least 28 of them, strung out in a loose flock and flying fast. Again we viewed them from below. I am sure that some of them were Yellow-rumps; not surprising when one considers that this was, by far, the

most abundant warbler back on Grand Manan.

A warbler shot by just centimetres above our heads, then up to a rear window of the "bridge" where it clung to the frame for about 5 seconds. No problem identifying this one as a male Magnolia Warbler. I managed to get one photo before it fluttered up to the top of the vessel.

Now there were two hummingbirds buzzing about off the side of the boat. They were probably "hitching" a ride on the air turbulence created by the boat (in particular, by the tall stack). The chilly air, no doubt, encouraged their quick return to the shelter of the ferry. Last to out-distance us as we approached Blacks Harbour was a lone Tree Swallow. Our loon tally totalled 32 (20 in the air and 12 on the water).

At 12:50 the ferry arrived at the dock. "Let's hope the hummers don't make the return trip," someone said. Of a more serious nature was the comment that with warblers coming in this direction over the water, we should find lots of them in the nearby woods. Sure enough, during the next 60 minutes we observed 13 species of warblers in the birches and alders immediately adjacent to the ferry's car park. With them were other migrants, such as Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Eastern Kingbird, that, had also come all the way from South and Central America. We felt very privileged to have witnessed a small part of their epic journey.

NEW BRUNSWICK FAILS AT PROTECTING ITS ENDANGERED SPACES

Roberta Clowater

On April 30, 1996, the New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Coalition (NBPAC) held a press conference to release World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Canada's 1995-96 Endangered Spaces Progress Report. The New Brunswick government received a dismal "F" grade for its progress in the past year to protect our wilderness and natural areas. New Brunswick is at the bottom of the list of Canadian provinces and territories in its proportion of land currently in protected areas, as well as in its progress to designate new protected wildlands.

Last April, after New Brunswick received a D- for Endangered Spaces progress, the Minister of the Department of Natural Resources and Energy, Alan Graham, said that the low grade was a wake-up call for his ministry to do more to protect our natural heritage. In an election questionnaire in September, 1995, Premier McKenna himself said that he would work to establish a network of protected areas to represent the province's various ecosystems. Despite these promises, there was still little action to protect our wilderness. In fact, an October letter from Premier McKenna stated that his government had no plans to designate any large protected areas.

To gauge how important protected areas are to New Brunswickers, WWF commissioned a public opinion poll. Corporate Research Associates conducted this poll in November, 1995, with the stunning results showing 96% of New Brunswickers polled, both rural and urban, saying that it is important to protect representative examples of our natural ecosystems, and 85% responding that it is important to protect examples of all forested landscapes, even if it would result in a reduced timber harvest. Even the pollsters were impressed by this strong show of support for protected areas!

In January, 1996, WWF decided to call upon its New Brunswick supporters to initiate a letter-writing campaign to the Premier, to further demonstrate that New Brunswick's citizens do indeed care about the protection of our wildlands and waters. About 50 to 100 New Brunswickers answered this call to action.

Still, the government has taken little action to meet its own commitment to establish a protected areas network representing the ecosystem diversity of the province. The main reason for this inaction appears to be the government's belief that the people of New Brunswick do not feel strongly about this issue. To paraphrase the comments of one politician, "... nobody is knocking down my door, or keeping my phone busy asking for more protected areas."

Instead, the government has decided that virtually the entire province can be managed, or utilized, while still somehow protecting biodiversity. Except for the 1.3% of New Brunswick currently protected, and a few more small ecological reserves and conservation areas, the rest of the province will be open to development, clearcutting, mining and damming.

As naturalists, you appreciate the natural areas of New Brunswick, and the plants and animals that call them home. There has never been a better time for you to get involved and ensure that your values and interests are considered by decision-makers. This spring and summer, as you prepare to get out into the wilds of New Brunswick, why not take some time to contact your MLA, or write Alan Graham and Premier McKenna? Tell them how important it is to protect our wild spaces - for the species of New Brunswick and for future generations of New Brunswick naturalists. Please send copies of your letters to the NB Protected Natural Areas Coalition.

If you are a member of a naturalist group that has not yet endorsed the Endangered Spaces Campaign, please consider having your group's name added to this growing list of 18 supportive New Brunswick organizations. The more visible support we have for protecting New Brunswick's endangered spaces, the more political attention we can bring to these issues. Naturalist groups that have already endorsed the Campaign are:

Ford Alward Naturalists
Fredericton Nature Club
Le Club des Naturalistes de la Péninsule Acadienne
Moncton Naturalists' Club
New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists

To add your group's name to the endorser list, or for more information, please write or call:

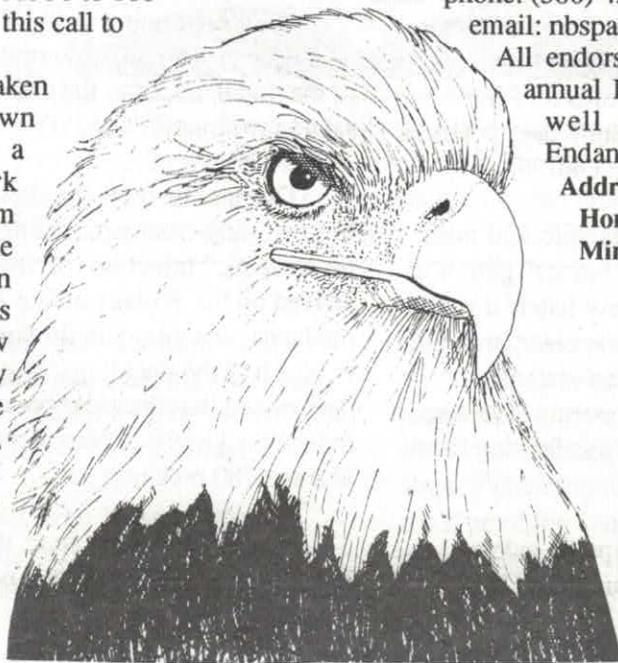
The NB Protected Natural Areas Coalition
180 St. John Street, Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9
phone: (506) 452-9902; fax: (506) 458-1047
email: nbspaces@web.apc.org

All endorsing groups will receive a copy of the annual Endangered Spaces Progress Report, as well as quarterly newsletters from the Endangered Spaces Campaign.

Addresses:

Hon. Alan Graham
Minister of Natural Resources and Energy
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Phone: (506) 453-2510
Fax: (506) 453-2930

Premier Frank McKenna
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Phone: (506) 453-2144
Fax: (506) 453-7407



TROUBLE LOOMS FOR THE BAY OF FUNDY'S COMMON EIDERS

Brian Dalzell

PLEASE NOTE: This article was originally published in the April 15, 1996 issue of Moncton's *The Times-Transcript*. Here it has been slightly altered to conform to the editorial standards of *N. B. Naturalist / Le Naturaliste du N.-B.*

They are as much a part of our coast as the waves and seaweed-covered rocks themselves, but recent research indicates the Common Eider could soon be anything but common in the Bay of Fundy.

Gregarious rafts of the dramatically-plumaged black and white males and the drabber, brown females are a familiar year-round sight for coastal residents and visitors alike, all the way from Alma to St. Andrews and throughout the Fundy Isles. There is obviously lots of natural food for the eiders, with the nearshore waters rich in favoured prey items, such as mussels, clams, scallops, sea urchins, starfish and crabs — all swallowed whole and crushed in their large gizzard. At weights of up to 3 kg, Common Eiders are easily the largest duck in the northern hemisphere. They nest on offshore islands safe for the most part from mammalian predators, except for a brush with local extinction brought on by man earlier this century.

Unrestricted hunting and egg collecting had reduced the Fundy population to a handful by the late 1920s. But for the efforts of one man, they would have been completely wiped out. Concerned at their plight, Grand Manan naturalist Alan Moses set about to protect the last few breeding pairs on Kent Island, a small, isolated island at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. During the early 1930s, Moses lived on the island during the spring and summer, guarding about a dozen birds from egg collectors and hunters. He also took to shooting the eider's only potential winged predator, the Great Black-backed Gull.

Although a full-grown eider has nothing to fear from what the local fishermen refer to as the "farmer" gull, it is quite a different story for the eider's newly-hatched young. Despite the doting protection of the female eider, and often assisted in the task by a gaggle of female assistants, the Great Black-backed Gulls take every opportunity to swoop down and carry off eider chicks, usually swallowing them whole in the process.

However, under Moses' guardianship, the eiders flourished, and in 1935 the island was purchased by

American millionaire Nelson Rockefeller and set aside as a sanctuary for the eiders. Moses had worked for Rockefeller on a scientific collecting expedition to the African Congo in 1934, and having made it a success, Moses was asked what Rockefeller might do to reward him. Apparently, he didn't have to think too long about it, and Kent Island is still a sanctuary for eiders and other seabirds. It is also the home of the Bowdoin Scientific Station, overseen since 1935 by staff from Bowdoin College of Brunswick, Maine. With the protection of college staff, the Common Eider soon recovered its numbers, once again fulfilling its role as an integral part of the marine environment in the Bay of Fundy.

Based on aerial surveys, the New Brunswick breeding population of the Common Eider has remained relatively constant over the past decade, ranging from 7,000 to 8,500 pairs. The largest offshore nesting colonies in the Bay of Fundy are currently on The Wolf Islands, a grouping of five small islands about midway between the mainland and Grand Manan Island.

Although Bowdoin researchers had conducted some informal studies on their eiders, until recently, few serious studies of the large sea duck had been carried out in North America. With this in mind, University of New Brunswick graduate student Kimberley Mawhinney determined the Common Eider would be a perfect subject upon which to base her Ph.D. thesis. Mawhinney decided to investigate the post-hatch ecology of the eider chicks, or in other words, where they disappeared to after hatching out and entering the cold Bay of Fundy waters.

"We were hoping to see if ducklings hatched on the Wolves were moving to brood-rearing areas along the coast of the mainland, or to the Grand Manan feeding areas," says Mawhinney.

"Despite the large number of ducklings hatched from this breeding colony, ducklings were not observed around the Wolves." Intent on solving the mystery, Mawhinney arrived on the Wolves in late April last spring, armed with the latest technology in the form of tiny radio transmitters to attach to the ducklings. She and her two assistants soon determined that the eider population on the Wolves was indeed the largest in New Brunswick, which she estimated at some 780 breeding pairs.

Beginning in early June, the eider chicks began to hatch from their down-lined nests all over the Wolves

Archipelago, and shortly thereafter, made their way down to the nearby sea. In all, Mawhinney estimated some 3,500 chicks hatched out, of which 41 were temporarily detained and fitted with the radio transmitters, which she hoped would shed light on their movements.

However, she was not prepared for what her high-tech gadgetry revealed. Without exception, all of the transmitters later found (31) were in the immediate vicinity of the nests of Great Black-backed Gulls. The conclusion was inescapable. Almost every one of the 3,500 hatchlings had been preyed upon by the voracious black-backs, of which some 450 pairs shared the Wolves with the eiders.

"I was shocked at what we found," said Mawhinney. "Only 12 ducklings survived. No ducklings had a chance to go to brood-rearing areas along the coast or otherwise, because they only lasted on the water about 1-2 days after hatching."

A previous study at the Wolves in 1988-89 indicated eider duck predation was taking place, but it was believed to happen only when low herring numbers forced starving gulls to turn to other food.

In the intervening 60 years since Alan Moses had noticed the first few pairs of black-backs nesting on Kent Island, the species has increased dramatically in the Bay of Fundy. Once more or less restricted to nesting on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and into the low arctic, the black-backs began to move south in growing numbers in the 1920s in response to a new food source — garbage. As society became more affluent, especially after the Second World War, more leftovers from our daily meals were disposed of. Usually only winter visitors, the black-backs adapted immediately to scavenging in open landfills. Able to intimidate their smaller cousin the Herring Gull, and even the sagacious Common Raven, the large gulls soon took up residence on the East Coast, lured by the prospect of easy food.

Apparently having learned from Moses of their appetite for eider chicks, some older fishermen on Grand Manan still persecute the "farmer" gull, shooting them and

breaking up their nests. This is not the case at the isolated Wolves. Although a few fishermen live on East Wolf Island during the summer to tend herring weirs, they apparently do not practice the habit of persecuting Great Black-backed Gulls as is done at Grand Manan.

Curious to see if duckling numbers were low in other areas with large breeding populations, such as Passamaquoddy and Maces Bay, Mawhinney hired pilot Paul Sonnenberg of Manan Air to help her conduct aerial surveys.

"These brood surveys suggest that low duckling production was not only associated with the Wolves Archipelago, but was more widespread throughout the Bay of Fundy, despite stable numbers in breeding pairs," reveals Mawhinney. Curious to see what the situation is in other areas of the Bay, she will be making trips this summer to the islands between Deer Island and Campobello, and the Grand Manan Archipelago. cursory inspections of these two areas last year revealed that other factors besides gull predation may be at work in keeping eider duck production low, such as human disturbance.

Because they are highly faithful to the area in which they hatch, it is unlikely Common Eiders from other nearby

breeding areas in Maine and Newfoundland will fill a void left by the disappearance of the Bay of Fundy population. Because of their longevity, she says the effects of zero population growth may not begin to show for many years. Eiders have been known to live as long as 20 years, or even more.

But Mawhinney warns that if gull predation has been occurring for the last 20 years at the high levels observed in 1995, it may be the eider population here is in imminent danger of collapse. There is no

way to tell for certain how long this has been happening, but one thing is certain. Given half a chance, the resilient eiders have shown an amazing ability to rebound. Mawhinney is anxious to give them that chance, and is already planning her return to the Wolves this summer to see if anything can be done to aid the eiders in their struggle for survival.



This hatchling Common Eider duckling was one of 41 fitted with a radio transmitter last summer on The Wolves to help track its movements. The antenna can be seen arching back from the base of the neck. Photo: Kim Mawhinney.

"BIRDING IN THE MONCTON AREA"

Reviewed by Mary Majka

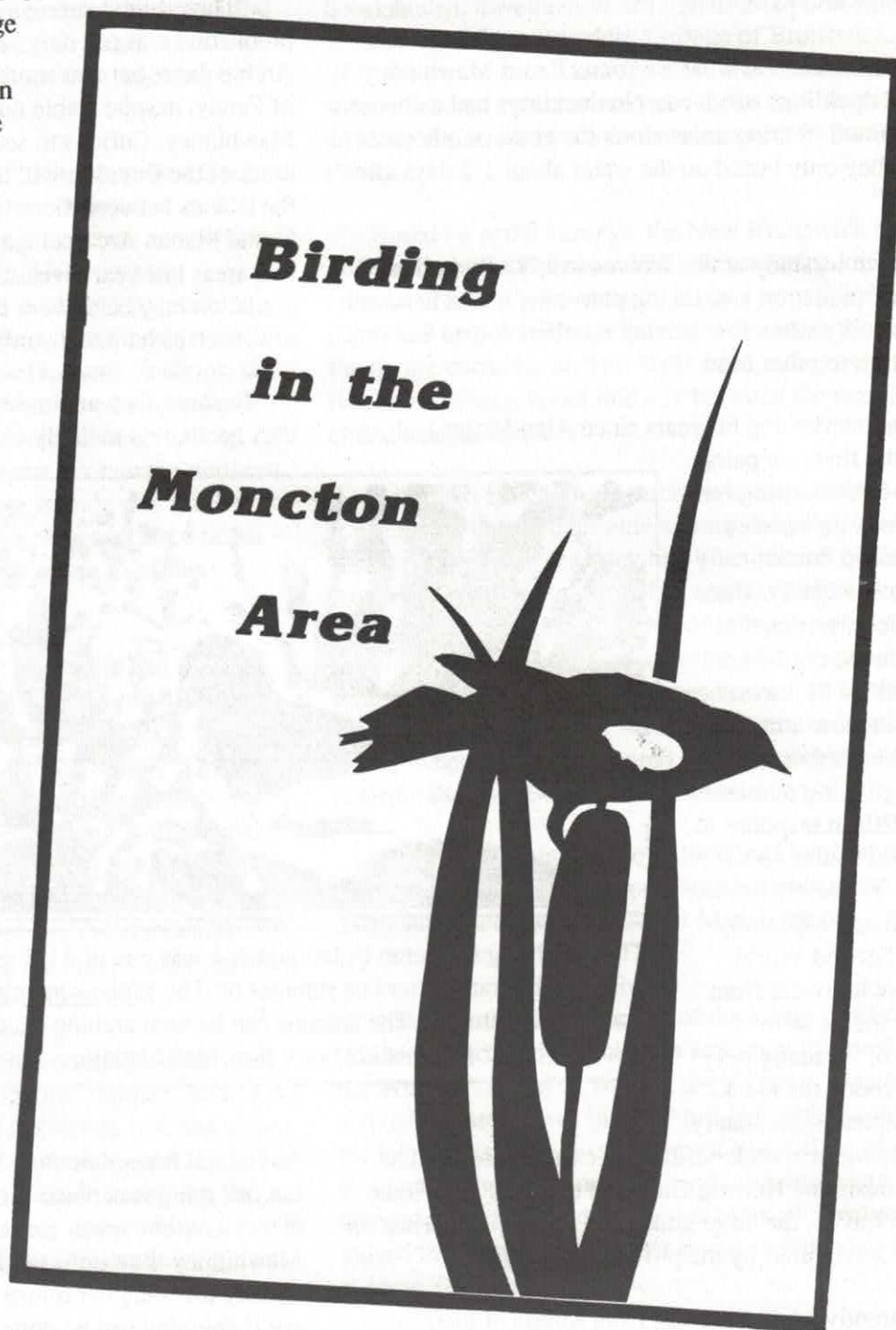
What could be more useful for a birder, especially a beginner or one unfamiliar with an area, than to have a handy booklet with the description of good places to bird.

The Moncton Naturalists' Club saw a need and came up with a grand product. Under the skillful direction of a committee and with a number of contributors, a handsome 27-page booklet *Birding in the Moncton Area* was produced. It was just in time for spring birding and to be of assistance to summertime visitors. I am sure it will be well-received.

Eleven hot areas are featured, half of them within Greater Moncton and the rest within about 70 km of the city. Each location has a detailed map and description of birding sites, directions on how to get there, species to look for, and trails to take. One of the locations is the MNC Bluebird Trail with each nestbox noted on the map.

The booklet has an excellent introduction with a short description of the area's diversity and richness of bird life. The centre page features a very clear and easy-to-follow map of the entire Moncton environs.

Birding in the Moncton Area is available for \$4.50 from the Moncton Naturalists' Club, P.O. Box 28036, Highfield Square P.O., 1100 Main St., Moncton, N.B. E1C 9N4, and at a several shops in Moncton, Shediac, and Albert County.



Congratulations are in order!

IRISHTOWN NATURE PARK

Dwight Staubi

This description of the Irishtown Nature Park is extracted from the publication *Birding in the Moncton Area* reviewed on the previous page.

The Irishtown Nature Park is located on the north edge of Moncton adjacent to and east of #115 (Irishtown Road). The park consists of 2,200 acres of mature mixed forest and 250 acres of reservoir. This was created in 1878 by damming Lynch's Brook, a branch of Hall's Creek. On June 6th 1994 the site was officially designated as the Irishtown Nature Park.

While still in the early stages, the Park has a 6 station Bird Feeder Trail, almost 4 km of hiking trails and 2 Osprey platforms. Future plans include an interpretive centre, further extensions of the trail, viewing towers and a duck enhancement area.

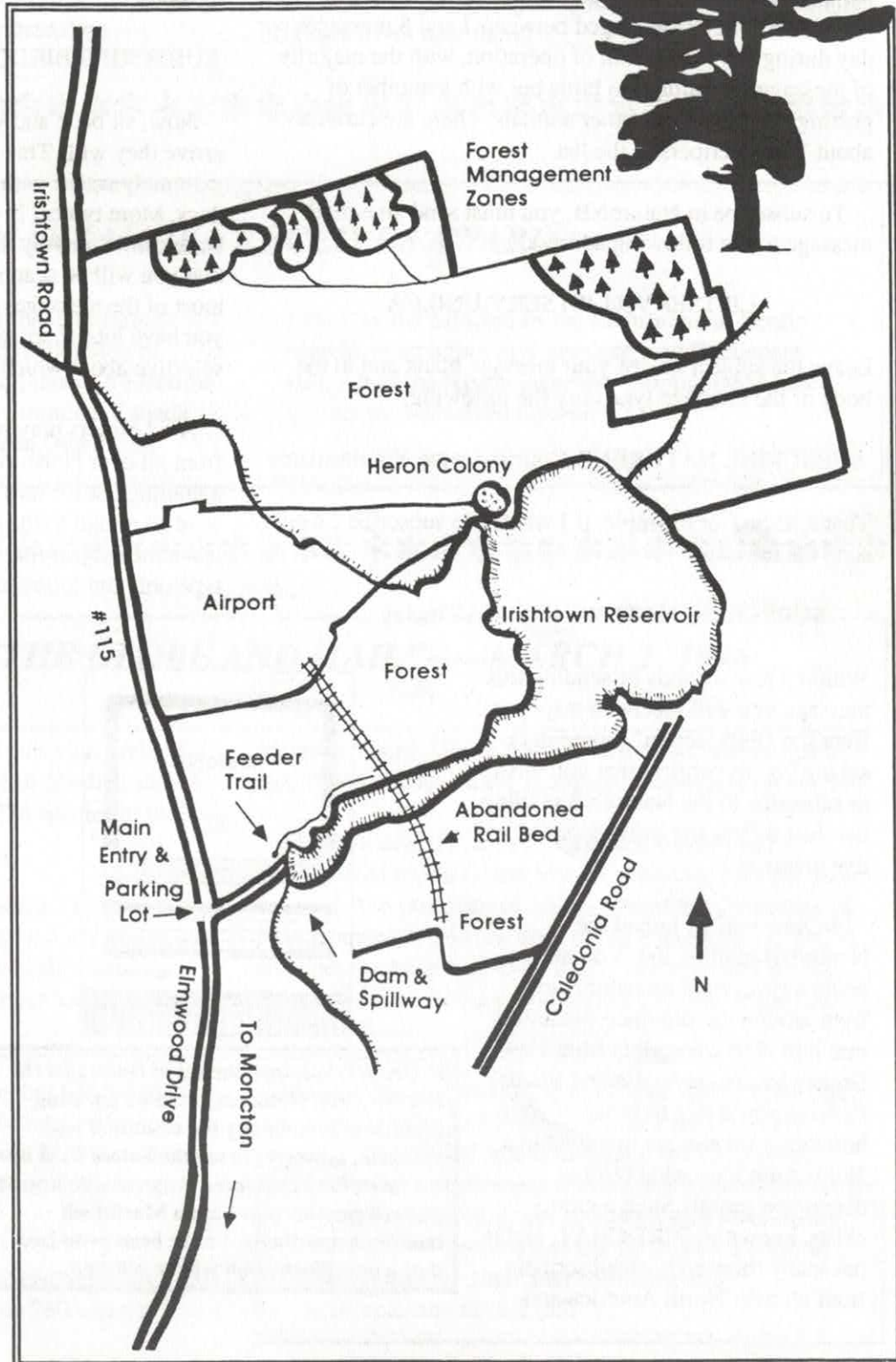
Directions

Proceed north on Elmwood Avenue (#115) to the overpass of the Trans Canada Highway. From here the main gate is approximately 1.6 km on the right hand side. Park in the area provided.

Species To Look For

In the limited time of its existence 76 bird species have been identified. Along the feeder trail Pileated and Black-backed Woodpeckers, Boreal Chickadees, Gray Jays and Brown Creepers have been noted, particularly during the winter. In summer a variety of wood warblers, thrushes, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Red-tailed, Broad-winged and Goshawks have been seen. Fox Sparrows are present in early spring during migration.

The lake and surrounding wet areas are host to Common Loon, mergansers, Willet, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron (which colonize the area) as well as Osprey and Bald Eagles. Of additional interest are the otters and beavers which are sometimes seen near the south end of the reservoir.



NATURALIST ON THE NET

Stuart Tingley - tingley@nbnet.nb.ca

In the previous issue I covered the formation of a new Internet discussion group for New Brunswick birders and naturalists. Since that time there have been a number of changes and developments with that discussion group and it has now become an automated 'listserv' mailing list and is hosted by a 'server' at UNB in Fredericton. The name of the discussion group has been changed from NB-Birds to NatureNB. The list averaged between 7 and 8 messages per day during its first month of operation, with the majority of messages pertaining to birds but with a number of postings on plants and other animals. There are currently about 70 subscribers to the list.

To subscribe to NatureNB, you must send an e-mail message to the following address:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UNB.CA

Leave the subject line of your message blank and in the body of the message type only the following:

SUBSCRIBE NATURENB Yourfirstname Yourlastname

That's it! So, for example, if I wanted to subscribe I would send the message:

SUBSCRIBE NATURENB Stuart Tingley

Within a few seconds of sending this message you will receive a response from the UNB 'server' (computer) asking you to confirm that you wish to subscribe to the NatureNB mailing list. Just follow the instructions in that message.

So now you've joined the NatureNB mailing list. You are being kept current on nature news from around the province (including rare bird alert transcripts from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Maine). Perhaps you'd like to broaden your horizons a bit and get involved in a North America - wide birding discussion group? Such a group exists, known as BIRDCHAT, and it has many thousands of subscribers from all over North America and

throughout the world. To join this list you need to send an e-mail message to this address:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.ARIZONA.EDU

Again leave the subject line of your message blank and in the body of the message type only the following:

SUBSCRIBE BIRDCHAT Yourfirstname Yourlastname

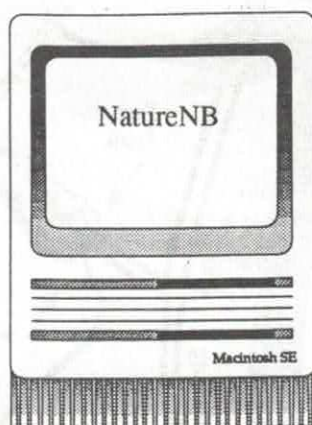
Now, sit back and wait for the messages to arrive, and arrive they will! This discussion group/ mailing list is extremely active with up to 100 messages on the busiest days. More typical is 40-70 messages per day and you may be overwhelmed by the volume of mail. You'll quickly find that you will be scanning the subject lines and deleting most of the messages that are not of interest to you. Unless you have lots of spare time you'll have to be somewhat selective about which messages you read.

Avid birders may want to keep track of rare bird alerts from all over North America. To subscribe to BIRDEAST, a mailing list for rare bird alerts in eastern North America, send an e-mail to the same address as for BirdChat. Again leave the subject line blank and in the body of the message type only the following:

SUBSCRIBE BIRDEAST
Yourfirstname Yourlastname

Similar mailing lists exist for central North America (BIRDCNTR) and western North America (BIRDWEST) at the same address. Subscribe to all these lists and your mailbox will quickly fill up! Good Luck!

So far we've only discussed how to subscribe to e-mail mailing lists whereby the messages are sent directly to your mailbox. E-mail, formerly the dominant activity on the Internet, has in the past couple of years been overshadowed by a more versatile and graphic means of delivering information: The World Wide Web (WWW). When you sign-up



In the previous installment of *Naturalist On The Net*, Jim Goltz prepared an amusing graphic to accompany the column. I was shocked, however, to see the letters IBM on the face of the computer. Anyone who knows me well realizes that I am a Macintosh fanatic. Accordingly, I have been promised that a new illustration will be selected.

with an Internet Service Provider in your area, they will probably provide you with a free copy of a program for sending and receiving e-mail (such as Eudora), as well as a program for viewing (often referred to as 'browsing') the WWW. The most popular WWW browser available today is a program known as Netscape Navigator but many other browsers are gaining in popularity. Whichever browser you use, you will be amazed at the amount of information for naturalists that is available on the WWW.

In my next installment of *NATURALIST ON THE NET* I'll discuss some of the better WWW sites you may want to visit. While this column has concentrated on

information sources for birders I promise to diversify in my next installment with information for other fields of interest. As a quick example of what is available, I did a search the other day for information on dragonflies available on the WWW. I found that there were almost 100 different sites with information on dragonflies! Among them was the home page of ODE NEWS, a dragonfly newsletter published on Cape Cod, with all their back issues available online. And the home page of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas (DSA) announced that their 1996 Annual Meeting was being held in St. Stephen, NB (!), June 29-30. It seems that a new species of dragonfly has been discovered on the St. Croix River near there!



MARY MAJKA RECEIVES AWARD

Mary Majka, a founding member and former president of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists, was recently the recipient of a **Lifetime Achievement Award** from Environment Canada. The award was presented to her in Ottawa on

June 5 by the Minister of the Environment, Sergio Marchi, at an impressive ceremony on Parliament Hill. All of the NBFN members congratulate Mary for this well-deserved honour.



"BIRDS"-----"THE GLOBE AND MAIL"-----MARCH 2, 1996

Peter Whelan

Two women quietly ran up New Brunswick's record year lists in 1995. **Rose-Alma Mallet** of Shédiac and **Eileen Pike** of Saint John each saw 276 species in the province.

A bird-rich year in the province helped. "I just aimed at 250, then things got good and I pushed it," Ms Mallet said. The two often met when viewing rare birds, then joined forces. Ms Mallet made 17 trips to Grand Manan island, Ms Pike 12.

Ms Mallet's big moment was seeing her life tufted duck, not just a rarity but her 300th life sighting, giving her membership in the province's 300 Club. Birding was once a casual hobby of the back yard or informal walks, she said. "Now, it's a passion."

New Brunswickers are casual about big-year lists, but leading birder Stuart Tingley thinks his 260 was the

previous record. "Rose-Alma is an intense, indefatigable lady. I don't believe there is a questionable bird on her list."

Ms. Pike said she, too, was a casual birder until a Tingley-lead trip to Grand Manan, a birding hot spot, turned her avid. The professor of accounting at the University of New Brunswick said she does not like to count off the job, and does not keep lists up to date. "But I can add up later from my diary." Being on sabbatical last year helped her pursuit of birds.

Ms. Pike has no plan to top herself in 1996. "I don't like the pressure." She is also going to Vietnam on an aid program. Ms. Mallet? She is matching her 1995 pace.

Congratulations go out to Eileen and Rose-Alma from all the members of the N. B. Federation of Naturalists for their incredible birding accomplishment in 1995.

THE YELLOWHEADED SPRUCE SAWFLY IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Gart Bishop

During the late winter of 1994-95, it was brought to the attention of the Fundy Model Forest (FMF) partnership that the Yellowheaded Spruce Sawfly (*Pikonema alaskensis*) was increasing in the plantations and young forests of southern New Brunswick. The Department of Natural Resources and Energy and the Canadian Forest Service immediately planned a preliminary study of this insect.

The sawfly makes its home in Canada from Newfoundland to British Columbia. Restricted to spruce (it loves all 3 native New Brunswick species), it feeds in colonies primarily on trees from 1 to 5 metres high with open growth, namely those trees commonly found in plantations, along roadsides, or in open natural regeneration situations.

The sawfly life cycle follows a familiar route. Adults emerge from underground cocoons in the first and second week of June and quickly mate, and lay eggs. Shortly, the eggs hatch into small larvae (caterpillars) which will pass through a series of different moults (called 'instar' stages; males have 5 and females have 6) during the next 30 to 40 days, all the while munching voraciously on spruce needles, starting with the choice new growth and may continue until the trees are completely stripped of needles. When plump and filled, the larva drops from the tree and burrows down into the ground where it spins a cocoon to spend the winter.

The 1995 investigation discovered 5 plantations with sizable sawfly infestations (covering a total of 463 hectares), but only one (75 hectares) was within the FMF. By the fall, 26 more infected plantations (another 719 hectares) had been observed, 16 of them (500 hectares) occurring within the FMF. Significant sawfly populations have also been recently noted in Maine, Quebec and

Ontario. It is more prevalent than previously known, with noticeable annual increases occurring in the past 5 years.

The field work of 1995 consisted of two main phases. First, to research and define the sawfly in New Brunswick, including the timing of its life cycle, natural parasites and predators, current status etc. Second, to develop alternative sawfly management plans for the Sawfly. In this case, alternative meant non-chemical.

All aspects of this poor insect's life have been probed into, in a search for ways to make it unhappy, unproductive, unsexy, unfit and, it is to be hoped, unknown.



Photo: Adult Yellow-headed Spruce Sawfly, from Armstrong, J. A. and Ives, W. G. H. 1995. Forest Insect Pests in Canada Canadian Forestry Service

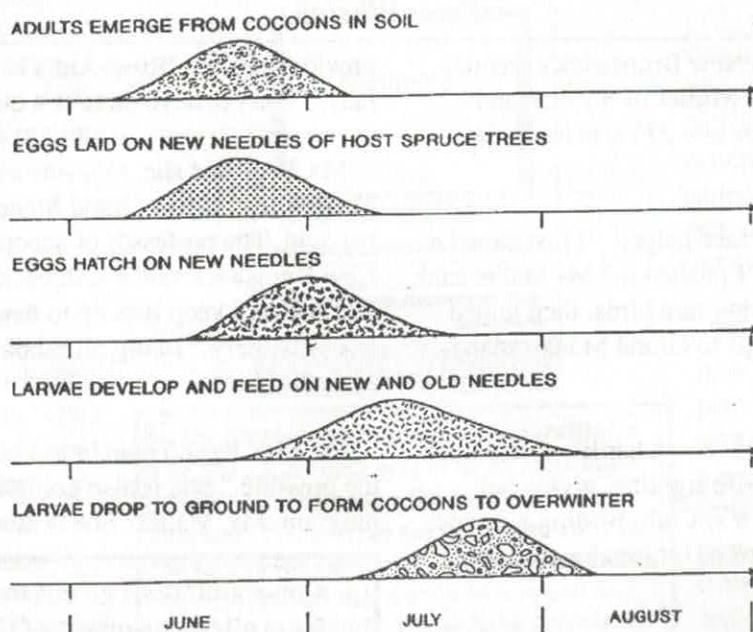
Attack #1 The Adults - Mating disruption

After the long winter, the adults dig out of their cocoons and up to the surface of the ground. Traps baited with chemical sex attractants (called pheromones), lure the adult males to a 'till you die' cage. As well, if a female fails to mate successfully, she will lay eggs which will develop only males, resulting in a greatly reduced population in the following years, unless mated females manage to invade the site from some other uncontrolled location.

Attack #2 Saw fly Egg Predators

There are two known natural parasites which prey on sawfly eggs. One of these, a microscopic species called *Trichogramma minutum*, was discovered in a small sawfly colony on the Hugh John Flemming Forestry Complex grounds in Fredericton. Specimens were collected and sent to the

YELLOWHEADED SPRUCE SAWFLY GENERALIZED LIFE HISTORY



DNRE - FPMS

University of Toronto to determine if a large breeding colony of these parasites could be established. Unfortunately, this was not successful, but DNRE staff were able to entice a few of the parasites to feast contentedly on sawfly eggs. Further work with this parasite will be continued in 1996.

Attack #3 Larvae Predators

Once hatched, the larvae quickly begin eating up the results of the diligent efforts of silviculturalists, and tree planters. The larvae begin as tiny 2-3 mm caterpillars, and proceed to eat and moult their way to ten times that size!

To control insect pests we traditionally treat the larvae stage with some type of poison (e.g. fenitrothion), hopefully killing them (and unfortunately many other species of insects).

Dr. Graham Thurston, under contract with the FMF, experimented by spraying infected green vegetation with microscopic, worm-like critters called entomopathogenic nematodes. These nematodes naturally occur within the FMF, though not at the concentrations used. Initial results were very encouraging, with an 82% reduction of sawfly larvae. As this particular nematode normally lives in the ground, such a pronounced effect on larvae living on above-ground vegetation was unexpected.

As a further experiment, the nematodes were sprayed underneath sawfly infected trees, so that the hungry worms would be waiting for the fatted sawfly caterpillars to drop from the trees. Again the nematode worms had a profound affect, with a 56% reduction in caterpillars which made it to the cocoon stage. The high concentration of nematodes in the plantation does not last for longer than 3 to 4 days due to a lack of moisture and continuous exposure to sunlight. If ingested by birds or mammals, they have no negative effect.

Further study of spraying Nematodes both on vegetation or ground are proposed for 1996.

Attack #4 Natural Insecticide

An alternate insecticide to fenitrothion is an oil extract taken from the neem tree, an attractive evergreen native to India but cultivated in many parts of the world. In different

formulations it can also be used to stop insect feeding or growth. It is non toxic to birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish either through direct contact or from feeding on contaminated insects. The duration of its effectiveness is about 3 days; it being broken down through exposure to light. It is usually applied by being sprayed on the infested foliage.

Although neem comes in many forms, as medicine, insect repellent, and toothpaste, it is currently not registered as a pesticide for use in Canada, although it is used in the US. Small-scale testing is possible, subject to regulatory approval.

Attack #5 Chemical Treatments

It has been suggested that some chemicals (e.g. Dylox, Malathion) be sprayed on sawfly infested plantations in 1996 to provide a point of comparison for effectiveness. The objective would be to seek the lowest effective dose if the alternatives noted above do not prove successful, and the chemical option needs to be considered. It is to be hoped this will not be the case. This is a less friendly alternative, with all sorts of potential hazards which should be explored and either proven true or false.

Attack #6 Looking for Other Choices

A study was done in 1995 to try and discover a native virus, bacterium, or fungus pathogen to use against the yellow headed sawfly. So far none has been

found. It is to be hoped this survey will be continued this year.

Difficulties

Alternate methods such as biological controls are not panaceas for insect pest control. Those which target the egg, or adult stage, have a very narrow time window when they can be applied, and most often require ideal weather conditions for moderate effect.

Just because controls such as nematodes, pheromones, or plant extracts, are natural, does not necessarily mean they are inherently good to use. The control, unfortunately may not be specific to the intended target insect, and "the good, the bad and the ugly" may all be affected.

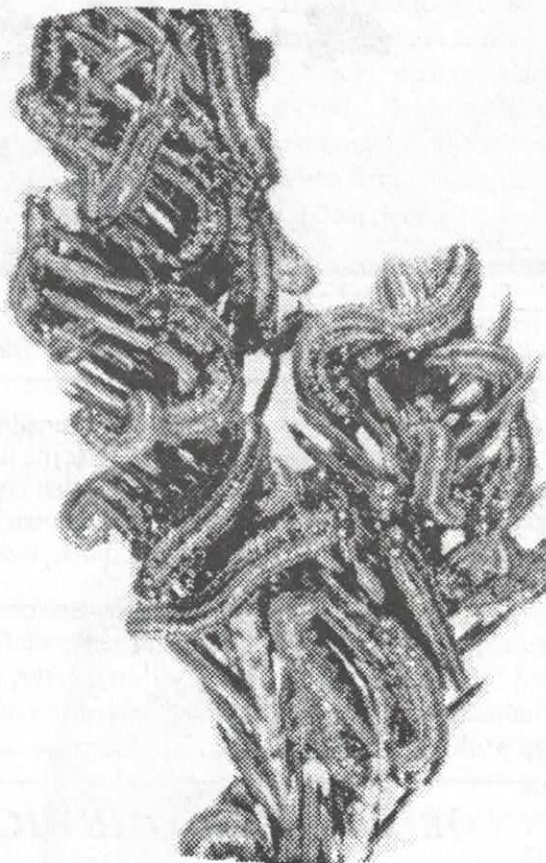


Photo: Yellowheaded Spruce Sawfly larvae feeding on White Spruce shoots, from Martineau, R. 1984. Insects Harmful to Forest Trees. Multiscience Pub. Ltd.

The FMF must give much thought to deciding which methods should be approved for widespread use. Testing should be thorough if we are to obtain the necessary information to make sound judgments. The cause for the infestation should be looked at. If large monoculture plantations were not present, would the sawfly present a problem? Would smaller plantations of mixed species work as a long-term control of the sawfly?

The New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists is on record as being opposed to the spraying of fenitrothion as a means of insect control. We have also stated that we favour the management of forests so as to discourage the development of major pest problems. When control measures must be taken, we support the adoption of integrated pest management principles whereby biological and bio-rational agents are used, the spraying of synthetic chemical pesticides (such as organochlorines, cabanates and organophosphates) being kept to the barest minimum. We have not yet developed a position on the spraying of nematodes, pheromones, neem, etc.

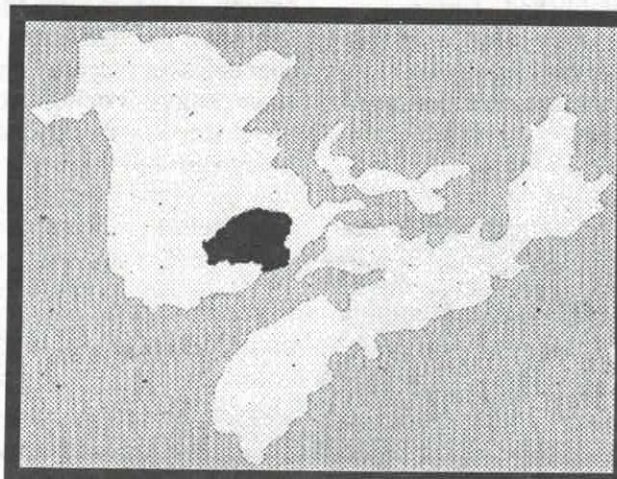
Consideration must be given to the industry's current silviculture practices while encouraging work toward

future improvement. With many hectares of trees in plantations, industry is not likely to wait and watch for too long as the sawfly eats away at potential profits. The testing of the above potential controls seems worthwhile and deserves our support.

Further information on An Alternative Pest Management Program for the Yellowheaded Spruce Sawfly can be obtained by contacting: Fundy Model Forest: Peter Etheridge, Fundy Model Forest, RR #4, Aiton Road, Sussex, NB E0E 1P0.. Phone: (506) 432-2806, fax: (506) 432-2807, E-mail: fundyfor@nbnet.nb.ca

The Fundy Model Forest is one of ten large-scale working

models across Canada. It is located in southern New Brunswick, near the province's 3 major cities. It is a working forest that contains towns and villages, industrial freehold land, Crown land, a national park and many small private woodlots. It covers 420 000 hectares in area.



Location of the Fundy Model Forest in the Maritimes.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Nelson Carter, Peter Pearce and Jim Goltz in the preparation of this article.

GOODBYE NORTHERN ORIOLE, WELCOME BICKNELL'S THRUSH

David Christie and Rob Walker

The 40th supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-List of North American Birds was published in February, 1996 (despite the fact that the copy of *The Auk* in which it appeared is dated July, 1995; changes in the editorial staff of this journal caused the delay). The "splits" outlined in the supplement may give you some new species for your life list. On the down side, these changes render our check lists and field guides instantly out-of-date. Changes in the supplement which influence New Brunswick's bird list are outlined below.

Bicknell's Thrush *Catharus bicknelli* has been split from Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*. Bicknell's breeds in New Brunswick, while the Gray-cheek is a transient in spring and fall. Separation of these sibling species in the field is still controversial. Stay tuned.

Rufous-sided Towhee is split into two species (as it was previous to the 1950s); both of these, **Eastern Towhee** *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* and **Spotted Towhee** *Pipilo maculatus* have been observed in N. B., the Eastern on an

annual basis, the Spotted only once.

The Northern Oriole is no more, having been split into **Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* and **Bullock's Oriole** *Icterus bullockii*. This restores the status of these species previous to 1973. The Baltimore is a common breeder here. The western Bullock's has been reported, mostly in the fall, but it is unclear how many of these birds were true *bullockii*.

The Sharp-tailed Sparrow has been split (and this is new) into two species, only the northern one being found in Canada. Our familiar breeder is now **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** *Ammodramus nelsoni*. 300 km south of N. B. is the **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow** *Ammodramus caudacutus*, which may be found here someday.

Other changes are of names only; **Black-headed Gull** is the name for *Larus ridibundus*. Also, change Greater Golden-Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (reported, but not confirmed for N. B.) to **European Golden-Plover**. And finally, the scientific name of the Great Egret becomes *Ardea alba*.

NATURE NEWS: FEBRUARY-MARCH 1996

David Christie

The next "Nature News" column will cover April through June. Try to send your reports by early July. My address is R. R. 2, Albert, N. B. E0A 1A0 (e-mail: maryspt@nbnet.nb.ca; TalkMail 882-2100).

Late-winter was generally rather mild, with alternating thaws and periods of cold. Snowfall was light in southern N. B. and even in parts of the north during February, but heavier in March. A few migrant birds appeared quite early but the first big influx did not arrive till the last week of March.

Mammals

Mild spells stirred light hibernators into activity, for instance a **Raccoon** at Fredericton Feb. 24 (JPG). By late March, as Brian Dalzell put it, "roadkill season had begun." On Mar. 26 he counted 12 dead animals along 133 km of highway between Moncton and Grand Manan (6 **Snowshoe Hare**, 2 **Raccoon**, 1 **Striped Skunk**, and 3 unidentified). A **Woodchuck** was seen at Nauwigewauk Mar. 30 (JPG).

In the first week of March at Waterside, a dead immature **Harbour Porpoise** was being fed on by Bald Eagles, Great Black-Backed Gulls and Ravens (RJW).



Raccoon

Birds

Red-throated Loons began moving north about mid March. Five at Dennis Beach, near Waterside, Mar. 19 (AC, MB), 7 at Point Lepreau Mar. 22 (BED), and 8 at Cape Enrage Mar. 24 (TA, RJW and Gail Walker) exceed numbers reported in those areas earlier. Migration of cormorants, presumably **Great Cormorants**, began with a distant flock seen from New Horton Ridge, near Waterside, Mar. 19 (SIT+) and about 250 heading towards Saint John from the Lepreau area Mar. 21 (Dave McCurdy). A flock of 32 were definitely identified as **Great Cormorants** at New Horton Ridge Mar. 29 (SIT+). A very early **Pied-billed Grebe** was at Courtenay Bay, Saint John, Mar. 17 (JB).

A **Great Blue Heron** flew by New Horton Ridge Mar. 25 (SIT+), followed the next day by sightings at Hall's Creek Marsh, Moncton, (George Brun) and Castalia Marsh (BED), then Shediack Mar. 29 (DD) and Kennebecasis Park,

near Renforth, Mar. 30 (IC). A breeding-plumaged **Cattle Egret** at North Head Mar. 23 (Martha Ballantyne, *fide* BED) was close to the earliest-ever record in the province. Some southern herons reached N.S. at that time.

The Fredericton Nature Club found 50+ **Brant** at Maces Bay Mar. 2 and there were hundreds at White Head Island and Grand Harbour in the first week of March (RAM). When Brian Dalzell got to Grand Manan Mar. 26, about 3500 were offshore at Castalia.

An early flock of about 15 **Canada Geese** appeared at Dorchester during mild weather at the end of February (JCu). Mar. 15 marked the start of continuing migration, with 110 passing New Horton Ridge (SIT+), 20 to 30 at Quispamsis (Jean Wilson), and 7 at McGowans Corner (SS). On Mar. 22, 301 passed New Horton Ridge/Waterside (SIT+) and 224 went by Pt. Lepreau (BED). The really big day was Mar. 25 when 3108 geese in 65 flocks passed New Horton Ridge in 7.5 hours (SIT+). Farther north, 10 were near Hartland Mar. 29 (GMi) and "the vanguard" near Dalhousie at the end of March (ML).

There was a **Green-winged Teal** around the sewage lagoon at Saints Rest, Saint John, during the first half of February (NBBIL). Singles along Shepody Bay in the first week of March (RJW) and at Saint John Mar. 24 (CLJ) might have been migrants or wintering birds. Definite migrants were back Mar. 27 at Waterside (several—SIT) and in the Maces Bay—Chance Harbour area (10—AC, MB). Two were at Jemseg Mar. 31 (DG).

Outside their wintering areas, **Am. Black Ducks** reached Hartland Feb. 25 (5—GMi) and Edmundston Mar. 17 (GT, JDB). There were 12 **Mallards** between Hartland and Bath Mar. 14 (JM, GMi) and a pair at St-Basile Mar. 30 (JDB). A lone female **N. Pintail** overwintered at the Campbellton sewage treatment plant (Margaret Gallant-Doyle). A male passed New Horton Ridge Mar. 19 (SIT+). Others were at Waterside Mar. 22 (6—SIT), Jemseg Mar. 24 (8—DG), Castalia Marsh Mar. 26 (15—BED), and Cape Jourimain Mar. 29 (30—AC).

An early drake **Blue-winged Teal** was at Castalia Marsh Mar. 27 "but there has been one in late March every year since 1993" (BED). **N. Shoveler** was at Gray Brook Marsh, Hillsborough, Mar. 26-28 (SIT+), **Wood Duck** at Long Pond, GM, Mar. 29 (2—BED) and Jemseg Mar. 31 (4—DG), **Gadwall** at Kennebecasis Park Mar. 29 (IC) and

Lower Cambridge Mar. 31 (2—DG), **American Wigeon** near Hopewell Cape Mar. 27 (2—SIT), Jemseg Mar. 31 (2—DG) and near Dalhousie at the end of March (ML).

An early **Ring-necked Duck** was on the ocean off Long Pond, GM, Mar. 7 (RAM). Others were at Gray Brook Marsh Mar. 26 (2—SIT), Long Pond Mar. 27 (3—BED), Jemseg Mar. 29 (SS) and St-Basile Mar. 30 (2—JDB). The male **Tufted Duck** wintering at Saint John was last reported Mar. 9 (v.o.). A female was present Mar. 23-24 just above the causeway gates at Riverview (BED, Halton Dalzell, Shirley Hunt+). In addition to a **Lesser Scaup** at Saint John during February (v.o.) there were 4 at St. Andrews Feb. 4 (SIT+).

A flock of 51 **Common Eiders** hurrying northward by the Caissie Cape wharf Feb. 26 was the first of many flocks Stuart Tingley would tally this spring. He saw small numbers passing Waterside /New Horton Ridge Mar. 12-14, 308 Mar. 15, 505 Mar. 19, 945 Mar. 22, and then 2297 in 6 hours Mar. 23. The previous day's seawatch at Point Lepreau had produced 1363 in 8 hours (BED). A female **King Eider** at St. Andrews Feb. 4 (SIT) was the first reported this winter. An adult male was there Mar. 12 (PAP). Eider counts at Waterside/New

Horton Ridge included several: two adult males Mar. 22, 4 adult males and a female Mar. 23, and an adult male Mar. 28 (SIT+).

Peak days for **Oldsquaw** migration at Waterside/New Horton Ridge were Mar. 15, 22 and 23 with 164, 157, and 150 birds, respectively. The Point Lepreau seawatch produced 207 on Mar. 22 (BED). Seven appeared inland at Simonds, north of Hartland, Mar. 22 (GMi). There were 3 **Harlequin Ducks** at Dipper Harbour Mar. 23-24 (JB).

Common Goldeneyes were back upriver between Hartland and Bath (30—GMi, JM) and at Edmundston (7—JDB) Mar. 14, and at Clair Mar. 19 (2—Daniel Bouchard). Up to 4 male **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were on the river at Saint John during February (v.o.). There were still 15 at the bridge in Cocagne Mar. 17 (SIT). A female **Bufflehead** was at Waterside Mar. 16-23 (RJW+).

Hooded Mergansers appeared at St-Basile Mar. 16 (2—JDB, GT), Shediak Bridge Mar. 21 (SIT), Waterside Mar. 22 (3—DJC), Riverview Mar. 26 (2—NP). Great Pond, GM, Mar. 27 (BED) and Jemseg Mar. 29 (SS).

Probably attracted by tomcod, **Common Mergansers** were numerous at river mouths in southeastern New Brunswick during February. They increased at that time below the Riverview causeway (BED); 75 were at the mouth of the Scoudouc River in Shediak Feb. 22-23 (Bev

Chance, BED), and 58 at Harvey Feb. 18 (DSC). A pair was back at Edmundston Mar. 5 (JDB & GT).

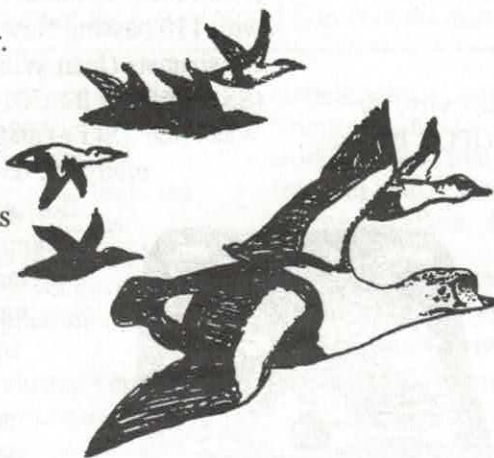
Most unusual raptor was a **Black Vulture** at Central Hampstead Feb. 15 (Enid Inch); it had probably also been seen Feb. 11 (Ann Slipp). An early **Turkey Vulture** flew across the Kennebecasis from Summerville, near Bayswater, Mar. 27 (KHD). Being intercepted by a raven did not change its course. An early **Osprey** was at Hammond River, Quispamsis, Mar. 30 (JGW).

The beginning of **Bald Eagle** nesting season was indicated near Riverside-Albert Feb. 28 when an adult eagle carrying a long stick in its talons flew into the Crooked Creek valley (AB, DJC). An adult was perched in a tree near a nest by the Aboujagane River in back of Barachois Mar. 7 (NP). Both birds were present at the nest upriver from Moncton Mar. 11; the female, had a fish, there was some stick-rearranging, and finally the pair flew to an adjacent tree and mated! (Leroy Dobson). Both adults had been observed on their nest at Riverbank, near Florenceville, by Mar. 29 (*fide* GMi).

The season's first **Northern Harrier**, a male, passed quickly by New Horton Ridge Mar. 19 (SIT+). Mar. 27 there were 2 there, a male at Pt. Lepreau (CLJ) and one at Penobsquis (JCa). The **Cooper's Hawk** at Norton continued to be seen sporadically till at least Mar. 3. (NBBIL). The Moncton bird was seen less often through Mar. 7 (v.o.) and one was reported at Lower Prince William Feb. 27 (David Myles). The unusual wintering **Red-shouldered Hawk** at East Saint John was seen

most regularly during cold weather and missed in warm spells till at least Feb. 20 (v.o.). Stuart Tingley conducted hawk watches at New Horton Ridge most days that the weather was decent beginning Mar. 12. **Red-tailed Hawks** were moving each day but totals were less than on the busiest days in 1995. This early spring, the maxima were 22 on Mar. 25 and 30 on Mar. 27. Highlight of the March watches was an adult **Golden Eagle** that passed Mar. 12 (SIT+). A subadult Golden Eagle was seen there Mar. 17 (DJC, AB).

Early **American Kestrels** appeared near Hillsborough about Mar. 6 (DB) and at Coverdale (HS) and Grande-Digue (JF) Mar. 10. Records at Coytown, near Upper Gagetown, Mar. 29 (SS) and Lower Cambridge Mar. 31 (pair—DG) were more seasonable. The dark **Gyr Falcon** that wintered at Dalhousie, feeding on ducks, was seen till Mar. 10 when it took off from its favorite perch on Bon Ami Rocks and flew steadily out over the bay headed for



King Eider, male, and
Common Eiders

the Gaspé (ML). A gray-phase Gyrfalcon was reported there Mar. 17 (RAM).

Killdeer were at Memramcook Mar. 5 (JCu) and Cambridge Mar. 6 (Niven Thorne). The next reports were two weeks later: Fundy Park Mar. 20 (AB), Knightville, near Anagance, Mar. 21 (JB), and Point Lepreau Mar. 22 (BED). By Mar. 27 there were several in the Maces Bay-Chance Harbour area (AC, MB) and 2 at Waterside (SIT). A **Common Snipe** frequented the creek around Saints Rest sewage lagoon Feb. 4+ (SIT+). The earliest **American Woodcock**, seen near Magnetic Hill Mar. 11 (Julia Chadwick) was followed by one "right in the middle of the road" between Dorchester and Memramcook Mar. 16 (Barry Rothfuss & Pam Novak). They were noted more widely towards the end of the month: in the Memramcook area by Mar. 23 (2—JCu), at Hampton Mar. 25 (KHD) and Summerville Mar. 26 (several "peenting"—KHD).

Saint John's wintering **Mew Gull** (European race) was seen through at least Mar. 17 (v.o.). An **Iceland Gull** was inland at Mactaquac Feb. 1 (PAP). Moncton's **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was back at its usual spot behind Cy's Restaurant Feb. 26 (SIT). It may move farther down the Petitcodiac when icing is severe in mid winter. A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was reported, but not confirmed, at the Campbellton sewage treatment plant in March (*fide* ID).

Returning **Ring-billed Gulls** were noticed at Mary's Pt. Mar. 16 (DSC), Waterside Mar. 19 (6—SIT), Shediac Mar. 20 (3—DD) and Fredericton Mar. 23 (15—DG). The return of gulls is one of the first signs of spring in the upper Saint John valley. Mar. 5 marked their arrival at Edmundston: 139 **Great Black-backed Gulls** and 9 **Herring Gulls** (JDB & GT).

Unusual well up the Bay of Fundy was a **Thick-billed Murre** at Waterside Mar. 23 (SIT). At least 500 **Razorbills** were feeding in the tide eddies 1-2 km off Southwest Head, GM, Mar. 29 (BED).

The cause of death of the **Barn Owl** found at Cape Tormentine in January does not seem to have been starvation, as I implied in our last issue. When Jim Edsall showed the owl's body to me it did not seem emaciated. A pair of **Great Horned Owls** which are nesting on a man-made platform (intended for Ospreys) on Dixon Avenue, near Bayswater, began their nesting cycle Feb. 22 (KHD).

There was a **Snowy Owl** at Sheffield during February (NBBIL), 2 on the Tantramar Marsh near Sackville from Feb. 11 (AC+) into the third week of March (*fide* KP). A **Snowy** was also reported at Memramcook (*fide* JCu) and another on White Head Island (*fide* RAM) about the beginning of March. The **N. Hawk Owl** at the Evangeline Road near Inkerman stayed till at least Mar. 12 (AC+).

The **Great Gray Owl** which appeared at Hopewell Cape in January was seen there or at Lower Cape through Feb. 18, and possibly on the 19th (v.o.) The bird was difficult to locate because it was moving about an area over 6 km

across. It was very crepuscular, being seen mainly between 4:50 and 6:45 p.m.. A second **Great Gray** was seen in the Bushville section of Miramichi City Mar. 9 (Richard Landry, Tom Greathouse). Both birds were photographed.

Searchers for the first **Great Gray Owl** sometimes encountered a **Barred Owl** at Edgetts Landing, north of Hopewell Cape. It was seen frequently during February and into early March (DB+). One seen intermittently from Jan. 24 until Mar. 24 at the Experimental Farm in Fredericton was "most reliable on cold sunny days (when it was sunning) and on mild overcast or rainy days (when it was hunting)" (JPG). A **Long-eared Owl** was killed on the highway at Castalia on the night of Mar. 31 (BED).

The Acadian Peninsula again produced a few records of **Boreal Owl**. One was seen near a snowmobile trail in the interior Feb. 4 (Stéphane Guignard). Another was along the Wilson's Point Road on Miscou Island Feb. 24 to Mar. 12 (RAM, AC+). The first night, responding to a tape, the bird sat in the middle of the road for ten minutes in a car's headlights! Another was sitting under a tree in a yard at Lamèque Mar. 8 (Hilaire & Rose-Aline Chiasson).

At Sackville a **N. Saw-whet Owl** was seen late each afternoon Mar. 6-8 (Al Smith+). It intently watched the ground below bird feeders, presumably for rodents attracted to spilled seeds. On Mar. 12 two were calling at Miscou (AC+) and one at Doak Road, Lincoln (SS).

A **Belted Kingfisher** at Sussex Mar. 2 (JCa+) had likely overwintered in the area.

A **Red-bellied Woodpecker** came regularly to a Moncton feeder through late February (MNC line). Reports in early April indicate that it survived the winter, as may have one or two in Riverview (NBBIL). Two, a first for Madawaska, were at St-Basile Mar. 6 (Benoit Clavette & Gisèle Thibodeau).

Alain Clavette, having noted at least 6 different **Pileated Woodpeckers** during the third week of March, suggests increased activity at that time. At Sussex, a Kennebecasis Naturalists' field trip found 3 together Mar. 2 (JCa+). A pair began excavating a cavity 35 ft up in a dead spruce near Bayswater Mar. 12 but after a few days work, abandoned it late in the month (KHD).

Horned Larks, a few of which winter here, customarily begin moving northwards in late February. A dozen between Woodstock and Hartland Feb. 18 (GMI) and 10 at Riverside-Albert Feb. 20 (northern race—DSC) may represent the beginnings of that movement. 30 at Lower Coverdale Mar. 5 included both the brightly coloured 'northern' subspecies and the duller locally breeding 'prairie' subspecies (AC, MB). They were also reported at Waterside Feb. 29 (AC), Mactaquac Mar. 10 (DG), Lower Cambridge Mar. 19

(EI) and Moulin-Morneault Mar. 30 (D&MP). In late March Kathy Popma and Grant Milroy were each thrilled to listen to the lark's tinkling song on the ground and as it flew "higher and higher into the sky until it almost disappeared!"

The **Townsend's Solitaire**, seen earlier in winter at Hammond River, reappeared sporadically, mostly when the weather was cold, from the second week of February through the end of March (JGW+). Iris McCurdy and Ann McAdam observed it singing on Mar. 26.

A report of a wintering flock of 20 or so **American Robins** feeding on apples at Cape Spear, near Cape Tormentine in the third week of February (Peter Burns—MNC Line) was unique in this winter of few robins. In southern N.B. during Mar. 1-13 there were several reports of individual robins that may have been migrants (v.o.). Mar. 15, when 5 were at Waterside (BC, SIT) and 3 at Mary's Point (DSC), marked the arrival of more certain migrants. By Mar. 19 flocks of up to 40 were being seen in Albert County (v.o.). Several small flocks appeared at Summerville Mar. 27 (KHD). In the Hartland area the first few were sighted Mar. 28 (GMI).

A **Northern Mockingbird** that appeared at a Grande-Digue feeder Mar. 14 was soon joined by a second. During the last week of March the male would swallow a berry, fly to the female, regurgitate the berry and offer it to her, and she would willingly accept it. There was also a great deal of chasing around the yard (JF).

Bohemian Waxwings continued to be prominent in southeastern N.B. throughout the winter. They were most often feeding on apples or berries, but on warm days also were noticed flycatching. Most interesting was the observation by Rob Walker of this species drinking sap from a wound in a red maple tree Mar. 13. **Northern Shrikes** which were reported frequently (e.g., 16 sightings by Peter Papoulidis between Woodstock and Plaster Rock Jan. 1–Mar. 18) also were seen flycatching, including one near Salisbury in the warm weather Feb. 21 (Brian Coates) and 5, all flycatching around houses, in Albert County Mar. 12 (Oscar LeBlanc and Valmond Bourque).

The **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Tina Steeves' feeder in Salisbury apparently survived the winter. It was still being seen there Mar. 19 (*fide* RS).

Some people who had male **Northern Cardinals**

wintering at their feeders were treated to song, beginning the second week of February at Dieppe (TA), Feb. 24 at Salisbury (RS), Mar. 11 at Moulin-Morneault (D&MP) and Mar. 29 at Fredericton (DG).

A **Savannah Sparrow** wintered at a Shediack feeder from Jan. 3 to at least Mar. 13 (DD). Another made a one-day appearance at Fredericton Mar. 11 (SS). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** survived into April at Suzanne Rousseau's feeder in Lower Coverdale, the first known to do that in this province. The **Moncton Swamp Sparrow** was still near a seepage area at Bell Marsh Feb. 26 (AC).

Returning **Fox Sparrows** were noted at North Head Mar. 18 (2—Jim Leslie), Alma Mar. 22 (RJW), Waterside Mar. 24 (2—BC); Saint John West (CLJ), Riverside-Albert (AB) and Shediack (DD) Mar. 29; Bancroft Pt., GM, Mar. 30 (BED) and Nauwigewauk Mar. 31 (JPG).

Four **Song Sparrows** that overwintered at a Shediack feeder (DD) were singing vociferously Feb. 28 (DD) as was one at Sackville Mar. 12 (Tony Erskine). Reports of a few along the Bay of Fundy between Feb. 28 and Mar. 20 suggested wandering of wintering birds and/or arrivals of migrants. On Mar. 24 there was a definite widespread wave of Song Sparrows in southeastern NB (MNC line) and on Mar. 30, an increase to 12 at Bancroft Pt. feeders (BED), 6 (some singing) at Nauwigewauk (JPG), and one at Fredericton (SS).

The numbers of **Dark-eyed Juncos** wintering in southern New Brunswick make it difficult to pinpoint first arrivals, but there were reports on Mar. 21 at Mispec (Brenda McKnight), Saint John West (CLJ) and Moulin-Morneault (D&MP). A heavy snowstorm on Apr. 3 produced a big concentration in Alma: 720+ at 5 feeders, increasing to 1325 the next day (RJW). Rob Walker speculated that the buildup in numbers was due to birds continuing to move along the Fundy shore until they encountered the area of heavy snow (30 cm) at Alma. In all, 32 species were at these feeders Apr. 3-4.

One of very few **Lapland Longspurs** this winter was a brightly coloured individual with Snow Buntings at Lower Coverdale Mar. 5 (AC, MB). Many people reported increased numbers of **Snow Buntings** as they were moving north in early and mid March. Over 250 were visiting a Barachois feeder Mar. 17 (NP).

Blackbirds having been very scarce during the winter, early migrants were more obvious than among sparrows.



Northern Cardinal
(female)

Red-winged Blackbirds were reported Mar. 19 at Alma (3—RJW), Mar. 22 at Saint John West (CLJ), Pré-d'en-Haut, near Saint-Joseph, (males—Rachel Gautreau), and Fredericton (3—SS), Mar. 23 at Nauwigewauk (2—JPG), Mar. 24 at Jemseg (7—DG), Mar. 25 along the Petitcodiac River ("many hundreds migrating northward"—SIT) and Mar. 31 at Moulin-Morneault, (MP). A **Rusty Blackbird** appeared in Alma Mar. 21 (RJW) and there were 3 at Bell Street Marsh, Moncton, Mar. 26 (AC).

A few **Common Grackles** were evidently on the move pretty early: a flock of 4 "acting and sounding suspiciously like migrants" at Blacks Harbour Feb. 21 (SIT, RAM), a dozen probables in flight somewhere near Moncton Feb. 28 (NP), a small flock at Saint John Mar. 2 (KP), and one at Fredericton Mar. 7 (DG). These were followed by Memramcook valley Mar. 13 (10—JCu), St-Hilaire Mar. 15 (5—Simon Bouchard), Grande-Digue Mar. 16 (JF), Alma (6—RJW) and Shepody (6—RS, Pearl Colpitts) Mar. 19, Shediac (DD) and Sackville (Nev Garrity) Mar. 20, Saint John West (+—CLJ), Pré-d'en-Haut (+—Rachel Gautreau) and Riverview (7—Bob Childs) Mar. 22, Fredericton Mar. 23 (4—DG). The morning of Mar. 25 many hundreds were migrating northward along the Petitcodiac River (SIT).

Two Brown-headed Cowbirds overwintered at a Riverview feeder (John Tanner). Others appeared at Dieppe Mar. 16 (TA), Salisbury Mar. 20 (Brian Coates), New Horton Mar. 25 (3—SIT), Moncton Mar. 28 (+—AC), and Riverside-Albert Mar. 29 (AB).

Pine Grosbeaks, widespread in the countryside, appeared at some feeders in late winter. At Salisbury Heather Silliker had about 25 eating a mixture of sunflower seeds and mixed seed in late February, while ignoring the many apples in her yard. At Fredericton Shirley Sloat had up to 14 eating sunflower seeds for several days in March. Five at Gérard Verret's feeders in Edmundston increased to 12 at the beginning of March.

Brian Dalzell estimates at least 100 pairs of **House Finches** in Moncton, where they began singing actively in mid-February. Writing Mar. 6, he says "During my daily walks in the new west end, I have encountered 28 singing males in about 3 km², which works out to about 10 males/km². They are closely associated with the presence of Colorado Blue Spruce. If the trees have been closely shorn,

forming a dense, almost impenetrable outer coating of branches, the House Finches prefer these above all other nesting sites. Trees of 2-5 m seem best, although I have noted a few nests near the tops of tall (10+ m) Colorado Spruce that have been allowed to grow naturally."

He continues, "Something else I am doing is listening for **House Sparrows** as well. So far, I have heard only 10 males in the same area I found 28 male House Finches. At least in Moncton suburbs it seems the latter may now be more common than the former. I would expect older city cores to have more House Sparrows though."

Common Redpolls continued to be common at some feeders. A few **Hoary Redpolls** were among them: one at Nellie Perry's feeder at Cambridge Feb. 6 (EI) had been there most of winter, a male of the *hornemanni* subspecies at Shediac Feb. 17-18 (DD), one at Irishtown Nature Park Feb. 24/25 (Dwight Staubi), and one Mar. 10 at Moulin-Morneault (JDB, MP), where two others had been seen occasionally since December (D&MP).

Insects and Plants

A couple of **woolly bear** caterpillars (tiger moth larvae) were noticed in March: a brown one at Salisbury Mar. 8 (HS) and a banded one "undulating down the beach toward the incoming tide indicating the end of that particular gene pool" at Castalia Mar. 29 (BED).

Speckled Alder catkins were beginning to elongate but not yet shedding pollen at Fredericton Mar. 28 and **Trembling Aspen** were in a well-

developed fuzzy "pussy willow" stage at Nauwigewauk Mar. 31 (JPG).



House Finch, male (top) and female

Abbreviations

+ and following days, or and other observers; AB, Anne Bardou; AC, Alain Clavette; BC, Barbara Curlew; BED, Brian Dalzell; CLJ, Cecil Johnston; D&MP, Don & Monique Plourde; DB, Dwayne Biggar; DD, Denis Doucet; DG, Don Gibson; DJC, David Clark; DSC, David Christie; GM, Grand Manan; GMI, Grant Milroy; GT, Georgette Thibodeau; HS, Heather Silliker; IC, Ian Cameron; JB, Jim Brown; JCa, John Candy; JCu, Jules Cormier; JDB, J. Denys Bourque; JF, Jason Fougère; JGW, Jim Wilson; JM, Joyce Milroy; JPG, Jim Goltz; KHD, Hank Deichmann; KP, Kathy Popma; MB, Meghan Brodie; ML, Mike Lushington; MNC, Moncton Naturalists' Club; MP, Monique Plourde; NBBIL, N.B. Bird Information Line; NP, Nelson Poirier; PAP, Peter Pearce; RAM, Rose-Alma Mallet; RJW, Rob Walker; RS, Ron Steeves; SIT, Stuart Tingley; SS, Shirley Sloat, TA, Théo Arsenault; v.o., various observers.

**GEORGE ARCHIBALD, CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION, WILL SPEAK AT
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, HALIFAX, ON JULY 6, 1996**

**"CRANES, THEIR BIOLOGY, THEIR PROBLEMS, AND THE EFFORTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CRANE FOUNDATION TO HELP THESE ENDANGERED BIRDS"**

George Archibald has some wonderful crane stories to share. You are invited to be part of this rare opportunity:

DATE: July 6, 1996

TIME: 8:00 PM

PLACE: Dalhousie University

Lecture theatre #240

Main floor, Life Sciences Centre

Entrance is straight ahead through Coburg Road main gate, at the end of Lord Dalhousie Drive.

Follow the colorful cranes.

As well as fundraising through admission to the presentation, a hand-painted, crane-adorned tote bag with original work by Stephanie Robertson is being raffled. There will also be a fundraising pot luck and reception earlier in the evening.

The costs are as follows: Presentation by George Archibald: \$5 per person

Tote bag tickets: \$2 per ticket, 3 for \$5

Pot luck: \$25 per person plus pot luck contribution (this includes admission to the presentation).

For more information contact Bernice Moores at 1361 Edward Street, Halifax B3H 3H5, telephone 902-422-5292 or e-mail ae434@ccn.cs.dal.ca.

Details are also available on the following WWW pages:

Nova Scotia Bird Society <http://ccn/cs/dal/ca/Recreation/NS-BirdSoc/nsbsmain.html>

Halifax Field Naturalists <http://ccn.cs.dal.ca/Recreation/FieldNaturalists/fieldnat.html>

**N. B. Naturalist /
Le Naturaliste du N.-B.**

277 Douglas Avenue

Saint John, NB E2K 1E5

Return Postage Guaranteed / Port de retour garanti

**Canadian Publications Mail Product
Sales Agreement No. 487716**

To / à: