

27 (2) Summer / Été 2000

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





## N. B. Federation of Naturalists      Fédération des naturalistes du N.-B.

277 avenue Douglas Avenue, Saint John, N. B. E2K 1E5 Canada

The Federation is a non-profit organization formed in 1972 to encourage an understanding of nature and the environment, and to focus concern for the natural heritage of New Brunswick.

La Fédération est une organisation sans buts lucratifs formée en 1972 pour encourager une meilleure compréhension de l'environnement naturel, et pour éveiller le souci pour le patrimoine naturel du Nouveau-Brunswick.

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**Fredericton Nature Club**, Box 772, Station A, Fredericton, NB E3B 5B4; 457-1720; meets Odell Park Lodge, at Odell Park, 7:00 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed., Sept.-May; monthly newsletter.

**Kennebecasis Naturalists' Society**, c/o Ms H. Folkins, 827 Main St., Sussex, NB E4E 2N1; meets St. Paul's United Church Hall, 7:30 pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Mon., Sept.-June; quarterly newsletter.

**Moncton Naturalists' Club**, Box 28036, Highfield Square P.O., Moncton, NB E1C 9N4; 857-4271 or 384-5212 or 384-6397 (information line); meets Church of the Nazarene, 21 Fieldcrest Drive, 7 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mon., Sept.-June; monthly newsletter.

**Ornitho Restigouche Club**, 6 Van horne Cr., Campbellton, NB E3N 3K3; 789-7759.

**Restigouche Naturalists' Club**, c/o Campbellton Library, Box 130, Campbellton, NB E3N 3G1; 684-3258; meets Campbellton Centennial Library, 7 pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Monday

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT UN MOT DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

Pierrette Mercier

My first year as Federation president has come and gone. The year began slowly but things quickly started rolling. The main goals I set for myself and the Federation during my mandate were to acquire insurance for the clubs, achieve charitable status and to hire a program director.

So far, we have succeeded in attaining one of these goals, that of insurance for our members. As of September, members and affiliated clubs of the Federation will have liability insurance. Though we do our best to avoid them, accidents can happen. This insurance will protect members and clubs from lawsuits in the event of such an accident during activities sponsored by affiliated clubs and the Federation. However, having insurance does not exempt us from using good judgement. (e.g. Do not dangle from a cliff to spot a Peregrine Falcon chick because insurance will pay in case of a fall.) For the moment, there will be no increase in membership fees to cover the price of insurance but this may be revised at the end of the coming year and will depend on attaining charitable status and getting funding.

This year, we will continue working on charitable status and a program director's position, as well as other Federation projects. A lot has already been accomplished but there is still much to do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Restigouche Naturalists' Club for the great effort in putting on the 2000 NBFN AGM. It was a great success and I think all who attended enjoyed themselves in discovering the North Shore's natural wonders.

I would also like to thank Jean Wilson and Jim Brown, who have retired from their respective positions on the executive, for their tireless work during the past four years.

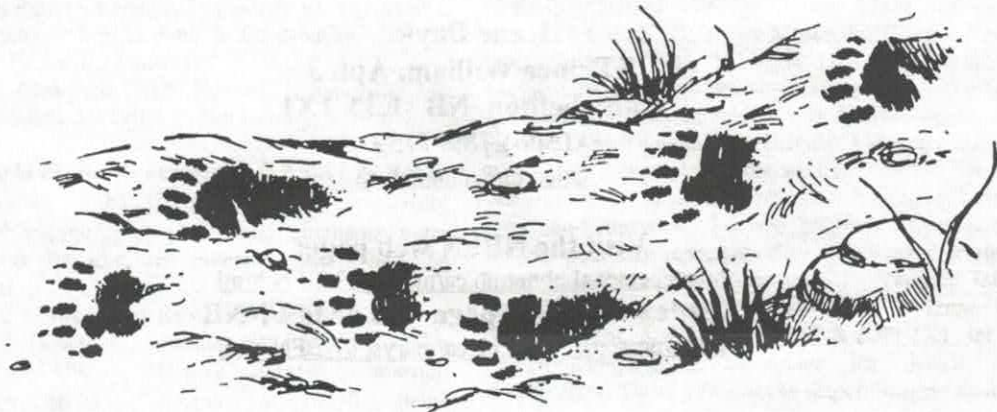
Ma première année comme présidente de la Fédération est passée comme un coup de vent. Malgré une période d'adaptation, les choses ont rapidement fait boule de neige. Mes objectifs principaux pour mon mandat et la Fédération étaient d'acquiescer une assurance responsabilité pour nos membres, d'obtenir un statut charitable pour la FNNB et d'engager un coordinateur de projets.

A date, nous avons réussi à obtenir une assurance pour les membres et les clubs affiliés. Cette assurance protégerait les membres contre une poursuite suite à un accident qui pourrait se produire lors d'une activité patronnée par un club ou la Fédération. Cette assurance nous ne libère pas de la responsabilité d'être prudent lors de nos activités. Pour le moment, il n'y aura pas de hausse de cotation pour les membres ou les clubs; cependant, ceci sera révisée lors la prochaine année et va dépendre surtout sur l'obtention du statut d'organisme charitable et de lever de fonds prévu.

Au cour de la année 2000-2001, la Fédération va concentré sur le statut charitable et un coordinateur de projets ainsi que d'autres activités de la FNNB.

J'aimerais prendre cette occasion pour remercier le Restigouche Naturalists' Club pour leur excellent travail lors de l'AGA de la FNNB. Je crois que tout le monde c'est amusé tout en découvrant les beautés de la Nature du Nord de la province.

J'aimerais aussi remercier Jean Wilson et Jim Brown qui se retirent de leur poste auprès de l'exécutif de la FNNB. Leur travail et dévouement lors des quatre dernières années furent indispensable.





## TRACKING THE ELUSIVE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE ASTER

James P. Goltz

Botanists tend to assume that any species of plant seen at a certain location will still be there tomorrow, next week, the following year, or perhaps even in a hundred years. After all, most of our vascular plants are rooted to the ground and can't flit off just moments before you arrive -- not like those fickle Great Gray Owls, Black-necked Stilts or Black-tailed Godwits. Would that botanizing were such a sure thing! Loss of habitat, flooding, erosion, predation, seasonal variation, poor flower development, imprecise directions and faulty memories can all handicap the botanist's chances of success.

About 10 years ago, Hal Hinds suggested that I should look for the Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster (*Aster laurentianus*, now more properly called *Symphyotrichum laurentianum*) while on a Thanksgiving visit to the Acadian Peninsula. After hours of combing magnificent dunes, shores and salt marshes, amidst a constant background noise of duck hunting, I had to admit failure. I would surely find the aster next year. Wishful thinking!

After a few more non-productive years, I finally made a foray to a reliable site on the north shore of Prince Edward Island to become acquainted with this species, thinking that it would improve my chances of finding it in New Brunswick. Within minutes I had finally met up with my aster quarry. Now, I was ready to try the Acadian Peninsula yet again.

Armed with knowledge of the precise habitats where the species grows, the label data from herbarium specimens and some of the best botany companions one could hope for (Hal Hinds, Alison Dibble and Hilaire Chiasson included), the little aster still eluded me. The site where it had once been found by Patricia Roberts at the north end of Miscou Island had been drastically re-sculpted by severe winter storms. Where Sidney Blake had encountered it in "drier spots" in a salt marsh near Tracadie in 1913, there was nary a dry patch to be found. Francine Houle, who had last seen the aster in 1984 at two sites in New Brunswick, seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. A possible site for the aster at Kouchibouguac National Park was now under a metre of Eel Grass and the specimen collected from there had disappeared so its identity could not be verified. I was jinxed.

Ten years passed and still New Brunswick refused to share its aster with me. When Roland Chiasson and Sabine Dietz invited me to join them in yet another search for the aster near Tracadie in early September of 1999, how could I refuse? Restless to begin the search, Maureen Bourque and I were already in a salt marsh by 7 a.m., two hours before we were to meet up with the aster reconnaissance team. With only ten minutes looming until our rendezvous time, and a ten-minute drive ahead of us, we cut across the salt marsh, only to hit a section where most of the normal graminoid vegetation had been flattened by drought. Only three species of plants could be seen in this bare patch --

Maritime Dock (*Rumex maritimus*), New York Aster (*Aster novi-belgii*) and 96 plants of the Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster! Needless to say, we were late. Following hours of diligent but unsuccessful searching at a suitable location nearby, we all eagerly returned to the place where Maureen and I had found the aster earlier that morning. It was still there.

After looking at the rather drab little plant depicted in the accompanying photograph, you might ask why anyone would be so



Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster

Photo by: Sabine Dietz

obsessed with the Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster? This indeed is a rarity, with a total global population of under 900 plants occurring only in northeastern New Brunswick, the Magdalen Islands and the north shore of Prince Edward Island. This aster is listed as an endangered species under New Brunswick's *Endangered Species Act*, and is also considered to be endangered in Canada. It is an annual herb and depends on its seed crop to continue to grow from one year to the next. Indeed, it is not showy, as its small white flowers completely lack the ray flowers seen in most species of aster. To me, it resembles an exotic candelabrum, much sought after by botanical connoisseurs who can truly appreciate its elusive character, inconspicuousness and priceless intrinsic value.



## BUTTERFLIES OF NEW BRUNSWICK --THE ELFINS

Jim Edsall

One of New Brunswick's most interesting groups of butterflies is the elfins, a genus of small, cryptically-coloured butterflies that have very unusual habits. They are all depicted beautifully in *The Butterflies of Canada* (Layberry, Hall and Lafontaine, University of Toronto Press, 1998), so I will not attempt to describe them here. Six of the eight Canadian species of elfin have been found in New Brunswick and most can be seen with a little research and diligence. However, elfins have characteristics that can make them difficult to find.

The first of these characteristics is their flight period. The elfins all fly at approximately the same time of year, so it is possible to find them all on the same day. The flight period, however, is early spring, from late April until early June. In some years elfins have come and gone before the weather seems nice enough even to consider a butterfly hunt. Because of their early flight they are hardy butterflies. They all have a dark colouration, which makes them very difficult to see but also helps them absorb warmth and they are often seen sunning themselves along woodland roads. They fly rapidly and low to the ground to avoid the wind, but that also helps them avoid detection by butterfly watchers.

Our species are all relatively habitat restricted, though some of these habitats are widespread. The restriction, as with most species, is based on their foodplants. Our elfins can be divided into two groups. The members of the first group feed mainly on heaths and are rather plain beneath. Those of the second group feed on conifers and tend to be heavily patterned beneath.

The most common elfin is the **Brown Elfin** (Lutin brun) (*Incisalia augustinus*). Its larvae feed on the flowers and buds of a variety of heathy plants, especially blueberries. Blueberry patches can thus be good locations to find this species, especially in sheltered corners of bogs and barrens.

The **Hoary Elfin** (Lutin gristâre) (*Incisalia polios*) is usually the earliest species to emerge in the spring, often seen in April before all the snow is gone. Its foodplants include Mayflower and Bearberry. It is often found with the Brown Elfin but usually in smaller numbers and more localized within a habitat.

**Henry's Elfin** (Lutin des bluets) (*Incisalia henrici*) is generally considered to be the rarest elfin wherever it occurs. Its apparent rarity could be a result of its similarity to the Brown Elfin with which it often flies and finding it may be matter of closely examining all the elfins one

encounters. It tends to be restricted to boggy areas such as the New Scotland bog near Moncton and the Regent Street bog in Fredericton. In these areas it can be found along the edge of the bog where its foodplants, blueberry and Canada Holly, grow.

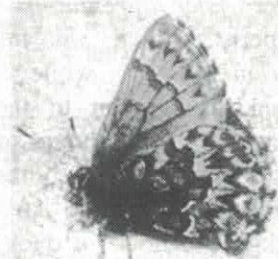
The **Eastern Pine Elfin** (Lutin des pins) (*Incisalia niphon*) is usually, as its name implies, found near pine trees, especially young White Pines. The adults are often found sitting on the ends of pine branches or resting on the ground nearby. It is a widespread species but not yet found in the northern part of the province.

The **Western Pine**, or **Banded Elfin** (Lutin chevronné) (*Incisalia eryphon*) was first discovered in New Brunswick by Tony Thomas in 1982 and its presence here is a bit of a surprise as it is mainly western in distribution. It also occurs in areas of White Pine but is mainly found in the northern part of the province. It does overlap with the Eastern Pine Elfin at Allardville, in northeastern New Brunswick.

The **Bog Elfin** (Lutin des tourbières) (*Incisalia lanoraieensis*) is the smallest elfin and, to my mind, the most interesting. It was first discovered in 1934 in Quebec and has since been found in Maine, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and one area in Ontario. It is very localized in areas where its foodplant, Black Spruce grows. This is usually wet bogs, hence the butterfly's common name. Its diminutive size and relatively inaccessible habitat probably explain how it remained unknown for so long. It does, however, stray from its boggy habitat to drink from sandy roads and find flowers when it can be observed more easily, often in the company of its relatives.

For many butterfly watchers, elfins are indeed a highly prized rare treat. Imagine our elation when Stu Tingley and I saw and photographed all of the New Brunswick elfin species along an old woods road on June 3, 1996.

**Editor's note:** Readers may notice that in some recent publications the genus name for elfins is *Callophrys* instead of *Incisalia*. Let's leave that for the entomologists to sort out.



Western Pine Elfin  
Photo by: Stu Tingley



## WOWED BY A WHITE-WINGED DOVE

Frederica Givan

When a **White-winged Dove** arrived at our feeder site at our home in Fredericton Junction on May 18th, 2000, we were cautious when making our identification as our experience as birdwatchers could be counted in months rather than years. We were fledgling birders.

I had first seen the bird perched in our Highbush Cranberry tree and didn't at first recognize it as a dove as it seemed to have a rather rounded appearance; however as soon as it was on the ground feeding, the profile of a dove was unmistakable. The uniform colouring was very noticeable and the dove's wings had a *white fringe*; this dove was definitely different from the usual Mourning Doves that we were accustomed to seeing as our daily visitors. After calling my husband to come and see the bird, I took pictures while he searched through our bird book. Our conversation became full of incredulous comments as we became more confident of our identification.

"You're not going to believe this! "

"And the bird shouldn't even be here!"

"But it's a *White-winged Dove*! "

We were not really sure what to do with the news of our find. Even though the pictures indicated to us that it was a **White-winged Dove**, we decided to seek confirmation of our identification by posting the news of our sighting, and the URL of the pictures I had taken, to the **NatureNB mailing list**, hoping that someone would verify our find for us.

Within a few moments of our posting the first e-mail we received was from a list member in Florida congratulating us on our find and stating that, "Yes", indeed it was a *White-winged Dove*. Other e-mail messages arrived shortly thereafter also confirming our identification. Thus began for us an introduction to and a very interesting four-day adventure in the more serious aspects of bird watching.

Our awareness of the interest that the bird's presence would have for others became apparent to us almost immediately with the arrival of our first visitor within an hour of our posting. Don Gibson of Fredericton arrived at our home in hopes of sighting the dove and adding it to

his life list. Our second visitor that afternoon suggested that we might want to set up a guest book and he kindly formatted a page in my 'daily feeder sighting' notebook for me. He advised us that we would have other visitors also, and he was right. Three of our visitors, who each have a NB life list of 300+ birds, were able to add the *White-winged Dove* to their life lists. The rarity of the dove's sighting in our feeder area gradually began to dawn on us. In fact, the *White-winged Dove* is not listed among the 292 confirmed species included in the "*Birds of Fredericton-a regional field checklist (1999)*".

An introduction to bird checklists was also a welcome addition to our developing awareness and increasing knowledge of birdwatching in New Brunswick when we were given the Fredericton checklist and the *New Brunswick Bird Checklist*. Along with these came information of different classifications dependent upon habitat and expectation of bird sightings. We discovered that the presence of the *White-winged Dove* was classified as "*R*; very rare, not expected annually". We became aware of the Bird Records Committee, and of the

importance of rare sightings being confirmed. Also mention was made to us of the supportive helpfulness and common bonds of interest that are afforded with membership in nature clubs and birdwatching organizations.

Although the dove's brief stay of four days coincided with the Victoria Day weekend, and the possibility of our being inundated with visitors did

not develop on a large scale, we were able to experience an enriching introduction to many friendly, helpful, experienced

ornithologists which offered an opportunity to discuss our developing interest in birdwatching. Our early mornings became somewhat like social gatherings. Around 7 am each day, and for four days, the *focus* of our and our visitors' common interest appeared for its morning feeding outside the windows in the feeding area we refer to as *Bird Alley*.

Our learning developed incrementally, and our increasing awareness of the many aspects of birdwatching developed through the wealth of friendliness and information made available to us. It was with the departure of the *White-winged Dove* that we were truly able to say to each other:

"That was really a very special bird, wasn't it!"



*White-winged Dove*  
Photo by: Frederica Givan



## THE LACKLUSTRE LAMPREY

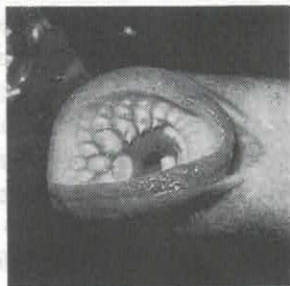
Rod Currie

In early June, I was pursuing one of my favourite pastimes, trout fishing, on one of the tributaries of the Nashwaak River. I was looking to connect with the famous "sea run" of brook trout that reportedly appear at this time of year. I say "reportedly" because I have never encountered the numbers nor the size of fish that are supposed to be involved in this event.

This particular morning, as on most early-morning fishing expeditions, was full of anticipation and enough visual, sound, scent and tactile stimulations to overload one's senses. Despite the time of year, the water felt refreshingly cool as waders pressed against my legs. A mist still hugged the water, but the climbing sun showed every intention of burning it off soon. The gurgle of riffles in this section of the stream could not drown out the various bird songs or the hum of insects. Although I had applied bug dope as soon as I had stepped out of the car, I immediately put on a few more squirts.

As I was putting my fly rod together I noticed that spider webs in alders that hung out over the stream were filled with large cream-coloured mayflies. These insects likely hatched the previous evening and the lucky survivors were hiding in vegetation along the stream till evening when they would fly upstream, mate, lay their eggs then die. As I searched through fly boxes for a suitable imitation, I became aware of a couple of large fish moving in the riffle just upstream of me - "big sea trout" I thought to myself.

With nervous anticipation I managed to tie on a suitable mayfly imitation and started to work upstream toward these fish. Time and time again I drifted the imitation over their position, and although I occasionally saw an impressive swirl in the dark water, my fly was completely ignored. Finally, after one particularly active display, I caught a better glimpse of my "sea trout" and edged over to confirm my suspicions. I had been wasting the best part of the morning fishing over a pair of big, slimy, ugly lamprey eels. Totally revolted and irritated, I moved on to search for trout. Well, I didn't find any sea trout that day (again), but did find other lampreys scattered throughout the stream. As I picked my way through deep dark pools, I couldn't help but imagine I was wading through a bunch of eels, the stuff nightmares are made of. Suddenly the stream had lost some of its magical appeal.



*Mouth of a Lamprey Eel*  
Photo by: Don Vail

Since that day, I have reflected on how these very similar organisms inhabiting the same habitat can evoke such dissimilar feelings. Sea trout, lampreys and Atlantic salmon are all anadromous fish, meaning that they are born and conduct their early rearing in freshwater, then they go to sea for one or more years where they mature.

It is interesting to note that when lampreys select a spawning site, it is the exact location that trout and salmon would select a few months later, and is very likely in the vicinity of where they were born a number of years previously. As with salmonids, lampreys put a lot of effort into nest building to protect their eggs. They can lay several times more eggs than the largest salmon (up to 236,000 eggs) and actively defend their nests from disturbance until both parents finally die within a few days. Such

devotion should evoke a sense of respect for this species. It doesn't.

The lamprey is not parasitic during its first few years of life. Rather, it hides in burrows in soft sediments and feed on micro-organisms. After several years, the young lamprey goes through a smoltification process as it prepares for life at sea. A more developed mouth forms, larger eyes develop and its colour turns from a uniform drab gray-olive to blue-gray on the back and white on the belly. Researchers or educators often describe as magical a similar but less dramatic transformation when salmon parr turn into smolts. I have never heard the term magical applied to lampreys.

Lately, conservation and sporting associations have put a lot of effort into restoring salmonid habitat and initiating stock-recovery programs. I don't expect I'll ever see any effort directed toward lamprey habitat improvement.

In some areas, such as the Adams River in British Columbia, there is a growing tourist interest in the observation of spawning sockeye salmon - "one of the miracles of nature". Could we be missing a golden opportunity with a similar large obvious spawning run of lamprey occurring in streams each summer throughout our province? I don't think so. The lamprey is truly a species in need of an image consultant.

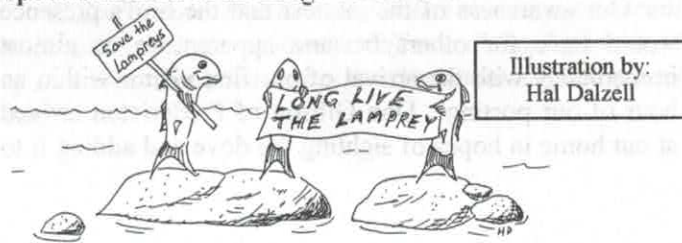


Illustration by:  
Hal Dalzell



## MISSED BY A WHISKER

Don Gibson

While many people yearn to see an Eastern Cougar, my life list even lacks the more common Bobcat. Undoubtedly it is just a coincidence, but I have never been in the right place at the right time. This past winter, about mid-February, Jim Goltz happened to mention that a number of Bobcats had been sighted around residential areas. Apparently these were young animals that were having difficulty finding sufficient food. Within the next few days I became aware of two specific incidents in which Bobcats were visiting backyards on a regular basis.

Ernie MacLean lives at Granite Hill, about 15 kilometres down river from Nackawic, on a beautiful hillside that overlooks the St. John River. Once a commercial maple sugar operation, his land is now operated as a "hobby-sugary" in the spring months and, somewhat surprisingly, there is an active airstrip on a plateau at the back of the property.

The afternoon of February 9 was nice and sunny, and as Ernie returned home from a week in the hospital he noticed an animal on a rail fence about 25 metres from the house. His first impression was that it was a large "Maine Coon Cat", but as the animal moved to sharpen its claws, he soon realized that he was looking at a young Bobcat.

The cat returned again before dark and was back the next day, and Ernie noticed it was gathering bread that was intended for crows and ravens. It was so unafraid or hungry, that it even ventured onto the verandah.

Two days later, a second cat appeared, this one being larger and longer than the first. Ernie felt that both were young cats, for in his estimation the larger was only half-grown. For a week both cats made regular visits, as now a beaver carcass was on the menu. The fact that they were willing to tolerate one another caused speculation that they were from the same litter.

Although the larger cat disappeared, the other continued to welcome handouts for another three weeks. Over this period of time the cat's habits changed dramatically. At first, food was its main objective, as it showed little fear of man and would often appear during daylight hours. However when it began to regain its strength, its natural instincts returned and it became more nocturnal and wary.

A Long-tailed Rosefinch, visiting the feeder of Alice and Dave Baldwin, lured a number of naturalists to Second Falls, Charlotte County. I made at least three trips there over the winter, and on one visit Dave happened to mention that a Bobcat had recently been on

his back deck. He showed me some very impressive photos of the animal.

He first sighted the cat on February 11 or 12, and it stayed in the backyard for 30 minutes or more in the middle of the day. It was feeding on suet that was intended for the woodpeckers. It was seen again a day or two later, walking on the railing of the deck, checking the feeders and some cooked chicken scraps that had been set out. However, the scraps apparently did not appeal to the cat. Dave was able to take a number of photos through the patio door, as it appeared unafraid.



*Bobcat on Patio Deck Railing*

*Photo by: Dave Baldwin*

Neighbours, Eva and Henry Robbins, also sighted the cat and began feeding it cat food. For the first ten days, it would appear during daylight hours but soon switched to night visits, as evidenced by tracks in the snow.

One day in mid-March, four deer were feeding on the carrots that had been set out for them, when they became very alert and kept pointing back toward the woods. The Bobcat walked past at a leisurely pace, and two of the deer began taking steps toward the Bobcat but stopped. The Bobcat maintained its pace and soon was out of sight, and the deer went back to eating their carrots. The Bobcat was not seen again.

Fanatical birders, like myself, often have a "nemesis" bird (a bird species that we should be able to see, but it continues to elude us). It would seem that I now have a "nemesis" mammal.

On a nice sunny afternoon in February, Cathy and I spent a couple of hours as Ernie MacLean's guest, with great expectation of seeing the cat, but no luck. Hmmm, seems to me that I have done this before, only looking for birds.

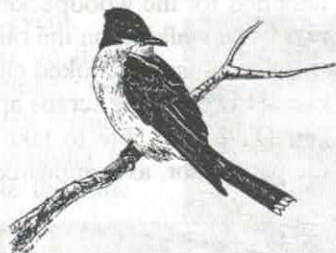


## KINGBIRD CAPERS

Shirley Sloat

A big part of birding, for me, has always been the enjoyment of birds about the yard. During fall and winter we watch to see what birds might stay, then spring brings the summer residents with their cheery songs as they look for a place to build a nest.

Each habitat attracts different species. An old apple orchard naturally draws kingbirds. One year, a pair of them were quite friendly and started nest-building in an old tree practically in the yard. To build the nest, they took all the yarn scraps they could find and made a very colourful spot to raise their family. Other birds took yarn only to line their nests, but not the kingbirds; they had to use every bit to build their entire home.



*Eastern Kingbird*  
by: Hal Dalzell

They also took over one birdbath entirely for their own use and chased any other visitors off into the trees. Soon, the female stayed on the nest all day and only came to the birdbath morning and evening for a drink and a splashy bath. The male kept busy all day hunting, bathing, drinking, and being very attentive to the female. All of a sudden, tent caterpillars, the type we call army worms, started appearing in the birdbath. At first we thought they had dropped from the white birch nearby, but none were visible on the tree. One morning, there were 34 caterpillars floating in the water (they got

counted as they were removed and put into hot soapy water). Soon we noted that both birds were bringing them to the water to get them out of their tree and away from their nest.

After a few days, this stopped, and the next things to appear in the water were half-shells of small, quite white eggs. There were finally six halves of shell, so feeding the brood of three young had obviously started in earnest. The feeding created fecal sacs, and these too floated in their water. All too quickly, there were five kingbirds flying and feeding about the yard, but only occasionally visiting the birdbath.

One morning in late August they were gone from the yard and it was quite a let-down after a summer of being entertained by this active family. I often wondered why they put all their garbage where they drank and bathed, and decided it must have been our maid service keeping things clean that kept them coming back. There were a good many laughs that summer as we watched the kingbird pair and wondered what they would be up to next.

When kingbirds returned to the colourful nest the next year they were so badly harassed by grackles that they had to move further back into the orchard and seldom came to the yard. We missed being able to watch their antics more closely, but at least we weren't so busy cleaning up after them. There has never been another such friendly family that required so much attention and high maintenance. I still wonder if the kingbird offspring carry on the fastidious housekeeping traditions of their parents.

## SOUNDINGS

Peter Pearce

Herewith a comment on observations of curious creatures reported to and in a provincial newspaper:

**Razor-billed Ox** - to be severely avoided on dark nights

**Mirdle Warbler** - readily separable from Tirdle Dove

**Chitting Sparrow** - normally found only in the foothills of the Himalayas

(While pondering the potential problems of verbal transmission of messages, I recalled the war-time one supposedly sent down from the front: "Send reinforcements, we're going to advance" was eventually received as "Send three and fourpence, we're going to a dance.")

It is hoped that other freaky fauna may be revealed in due course.



## JUST ANOTHER MORNING ON THE NASHWAAK ....

Julie Singleton

A few years ago, my husband Robert and I were enjoying our morning coffee on the deck. It was a beautiful summer day as we watched the Nashwaak flow by and listened to the birds singing. Suddenly we heard a Baltimore Oriole singing from across the river. Since orioles aren't all that common out our way, and they are always a delight to see, we decided to try to get a closer look.

Armed with our binoculars and field guides, and accompanied by our little Corgi-cross, Rusty (who was a wonderful birder - but that's another story!), we trooped across the Taymouth bridge. The oriole continued to sing from the top of a little stand of poplars which was bordered on one side by the Nashwaak River and by an old hayfield on the other.

As we walked into this little glade it was like entering a very magical place. It was shady and cool, the poplar leaves rattling above us. The oriole continued to sing with great gusto, but we were distracted by three tiny groundhogs. Two were whistling from the mouth of their burrow, while the third was clutching the trunk of a dead tree about three feet above us. The tree was only a couple of inches in diameter, and was quite rotten, but strong enough to hold this little fellow. His eyes were tightly closed and he was clutching the tree with all his

might. It was as though he was hoping that if he couldn't see us, we couldn't see him! That was the first time we'd ever seen a groundhog up a tree, and realized they could climb - at least when young.

As we discussed the tree-hugging groundhog, we were distracted by yet another sight. A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was staggering about on the ground singing a disjointed song. His feathers were all disheveled, and he looked a mess. We went to see if we could help and Robert reached down and picked him up. Well, he started to struggle and squawk like a frightened chicken! We'd never heard such sounds come from a non-chicken-type bird before - so Robert tried to put him up on the branch of a tree. The bird tottered there for a second and then flew back across the river to the poplar trees in our yard

and continued to sing his flustered, disjointed song. As we wondered what was wrong with him, we noticed lots of fermented cedar seeds on the ground and we realized - he was drunker than a coot! He'd either been having a nice morning snack when we'd interrupted or else was trying to sleep it off!

As we walked back across the Taymouth bridge, the grosbeak abruptly stopped singing and flew off - back to his family, we hoped. We laughed and wondered how he was going to explain his condition to his mate, and whether she'd believe the tale he'd have to tell.

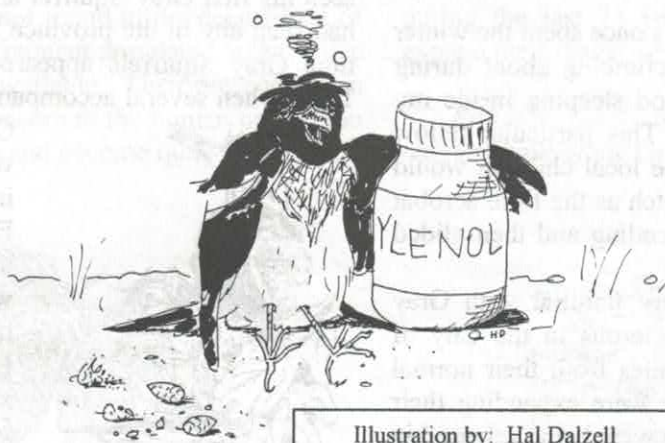


Illustration by: Hal Dalzell

### You May Be Birding Too Much If:

1. You have been to Havelock twice in the last six months.
2. You frequently get your spouse's name wrong.
3. You don't mind eating your lunch at the edge of a sewage lagoon.
4. You just "psshed" at a Monarch butterfly.
5. Someone shouts "**DUCK**", and instead of getting your head down you search the skies for a King Eider.
6. While taking your family to visit the in-laws, you inadvertently take the road toward the Grand Manan Ferry.



## OF GRAY SQUIRRELS AND SUCH

David Myles

It is difficult to recall precisely, when I first spotted a Gray Squirrel at my bird feeder in Prince William. I believe that it was about 10 or 15 years ago. I have made my home in Prince William for more than 35 years and in that time we have enjoyed the rascality of the Red Squirrels on a regular basis and, on numerous occasions, the highly entertaining night visitations of Flying Squirrels.

One of these "flying" mammals once spent the winter in our summer kitchen, actively climbing about during the day when the stove was lit and sleeping inside my glove during the coldest nights. This particular fellow was such an entertainer that all the local children would troop in from the school bus to watch as the little acrobat climbed to a high place near the ceiling and then glided across the room to receive a treat.

At that time, we were all very familiar with Gray Squirrels because they are so numerous in the City of Fredericton but to see them 30 miles from their normal habitat could only mean that they were expanding their range. I don't know if the animals were being released in our neighbourhood by city residents attempting to reduce the Gray Squirrel population in their own area or if the squirrels were expanding their range naturally due to population pressures.

Early lists of New Brunswick mammals do not include the Gray Squirrel as a native species. A list published in 1884 by Montague Chamberlain notes that the Gray Squirrel had been sighted on occasion in the western parts of Charlotte and Carleton counties near the Maine-New Brunswick border. Other naturalists have, from time to time, noted the occasional sighting of Black Squirrels but this was considered to be an exception and there was no documented resident population of Gray Squirrels or Black Squirrels in New Brunswick. "Uncle" Henry Braithwaite, the dean of Canadian woodsmen, did not mention Gray Squirrels in his notes on the behaviour of indigenous species of birds and mammals of New Brunswick but he did include notes on Red Squirrels, Flying Squirrels and Ground Squirrels. Henry spent 70 years in the forests of New Brunswick and he was a keen observer of mammals and birds. He was the source of much of the information in Charles G.D. Roberts' well-known animal stories.

William Moore, of Scotch Lake, York County noted in his diary that he shot a Gray Squirrel in the vicinity of his home in December 1910. Although one had been

taken in the vicinity before, the occurrence of the species was so unusual that he felt the event should be recorded.

The first record that I encountered about the presence of Gray Squirrels in New Brunswick was in a letter written to the Family Herald nature section in the early 1920s. A trapper and woodsman from the Southampton area of York County wrote saying that he had recently seen his first Gray Squirrel and wondered if anyone else had seen any in the province. It is reported that the first time Gray Squirrels appeared in any numbers was in 1921, when several accompanied a carload of grain from

Ontario and escaped to the wild when it was unloaded in the freight yard in Fredericton.

Shortly afterwards, several carcasses were seen at a local taxidermy shop in the city. However, some managed to survive and there were reports of sightings of these unusual animals on Charlotte Street, Aberdeen Street, the Odell estate and at Old Government House.



Gray Squirrels have different behavioural traits than their red cousins and they have adapted well to life in a new environment. Red Squirrels are aggressive and although they are much smaller, they will generally drive Gray Squirrels from any territory that they consider belongs to them. Red Squirrels build nests in holes in trees and logs and, if you are unlucky, you may find that they have taken up residence or in your house or garage where they are capable of becoming destructive pests. Gray Squirrels build nests of leaves high in the tops of trees; these are sometimes mistaken for crow's nests.

The abundance of Butternut trees in the Saint John River valley provides a reliable source of food for both species. The Butternut tree is a member of the Walnut family and it produces a large nut that is difficult to open. Red Squirrels gnaw holes in the sides of the nut along the seam that separates the two halves of the shell to get at the kernel. Gray Squirrels have much larger teeth and a stronger bite so they attack the nut at each end and bite out pieces of the shell until they gain access to the tasty centre fruit. The way in which these two species store their winter food supplies also differs. Red Squirrels tend



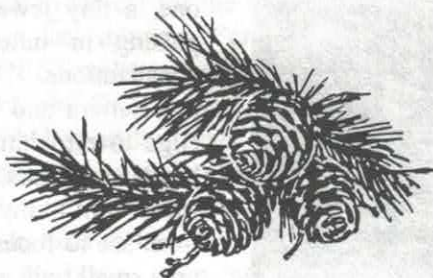
to hide most of their winter provisions in trees where they can be easily retrieved when the ground is frozen and covered with ice and snow. Gray Squirrels bury their winter food supply in the ground by digging holes and placing acorns, butternuts and other seeds in them. Of course, these supplies are unavailable to them during most of the winter and by spring they no longer remember where they buried them. Consequently, every year I discover 15 or 20 new Butternut trees emerging in my yard from the crops sown the previous fall by the Gray Squirrels.

These newcomers are not found in the deep forest of the province but prefer to frequent populated areas where the food supply is readily available. Their presence in an urban setting is of some concern to the human population because they accept people and become quite tame. On

the other hand, they will enter dwellings and make themselves at home and they have been known to bite the hand that feeds them. Often you will see Gray Squirrels travelling on the power or telephone lines in the city. This common occurrence accounts for about 10% of power outages in urban areas. The problem prompted NB Power to install insulated covers on transformer connections to reduce the number of outages caused by both birds and squirrels.

Before 1930, Gray Squirrels were rare visitors to New Brunswick but they have become well established during the last 75 years and are likely to continue to expand their range.

*Editor's note: Black Squirrels are a melanistic colour phase of the Gray Squirrel.*



## MORE WORDS FOR BIRDS

*Peter Pearce*

The nomenclature of birds has been subject to constant revision as phylogenetic relationships have become better understood and the desirability of standardization of common names more recognized. Many of us have seen some changes, even the return of once-abandoned names.

In "The bird-watcher's quiz book" (Harper and Brothers, New York 1961) Henry Collins cites a number of earlier English names of birds used by pioneer American ornithologists. Some are quite descriptive, others somewhat obscure. A selection (1-16) is given below. Some additional names (a-e) were once assigned to subspecies but are now embraced by present species' terminology. See if you can work out, or guess, the identity of the listed birds, all of which have occurred in New Brunswick. (Answers on page 38)

1. Carrion Crow
2. Summer Duck
3. Great-footed Hawk

4. Bartram's Sandpiper
5. Meadow Oxeye
6. Purre
7. Cabot's Tern
8. Richardson's Owl
9. Green-crested Flycatcher
10. Titlark
11. Golden-crowned Thrush
12. Chewink
13. Bay-winged Bunting
14. Nonpareil
15. Black-throated Bunting
16. Rice Bunting
- a. Treganzer's Heron
- b. Brewster's Egret
- c. Lutescent Warbler
- d. Calaveras Warbler
- e. Pileolated Warbler



## THE SPIRITS OF HYLA PARK

Don Vail

Water dribbles off the rim of my headlamp as I carefully scan the ground around the trail. It is a rainy mid-April evening in Hyla Park, and I am in search of animals that make their appearance only at night—and in particular, at that special time of the year.

As I make my way slowly down the trail, I am reminded of a story told to me by volunteers who were working out here (in daylight of course!) during the construction of the footpath. A man came along as they were busily spreading crusher dust one day, and warned them never to enter the park at night. It seems that there are "Spirits", spirits that rise from the ponds and do all sorts of unspecified terrible things to anyone foolish enough to enter their realm after dark.

I hope I won't disturb one of these spirits as I slosh through some flooded sections of trail. Indeed, my goal is not to disturb but to observe. Among other things, I am hunting for salamanders, which take advantage of wet nights like this one to migrate from their woodland retreats to ponds in order to breed and lay eggs. I approach one of the areas where I have seen them in previous years, and begin to move more slowly, searching carefully, squinting through the backscatter of light reflected from the rain, for any signs of movement. Back and forth, squint and search, and all of a sudden my light picks out a small glistening dark shape at the edge of my headlamp's range. I move cautiously toward it, being careful to check where I step, and kneel down for a closer look. A large Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) moves resolutely through the drizzle, headed across the trail for the ponds. It is too wet for the camera, so I am content to watch and admire his shiny black skin and large yellow spots. I follow him with my light until he disappears into the woods, and realize that the rain is beginning to let up. Excellent! Now for the peepers! I head off up the trail, zeroing in on a sound that has

accompanied me throughout this night. As I near a low, partially flooded section of trail, the bell-like cheeping of the Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*) rings in my ears. There must be several dozen frogs calling from grassy bumps and the edges of puddles all around me. I continue for a time until the calls become deafening, and

settle down at the edge of the trail. I begin the same careful scanning process that I used on the salamander, only this time I have the calls to help me. Finally, I spot one, a tiny jewel, throat pulsing in time to his vocalizations. I ready my camera and begin to edge toward him on my hands and knees, fixing a small light to my flash so I can see to focus. I pick up a small twig and use it to gently ease a blade of grass out of the way in order to get a clear shot. I peer through the lens, wait until his throat is fully extended, and release the shutter. The flash fires, and for a brief

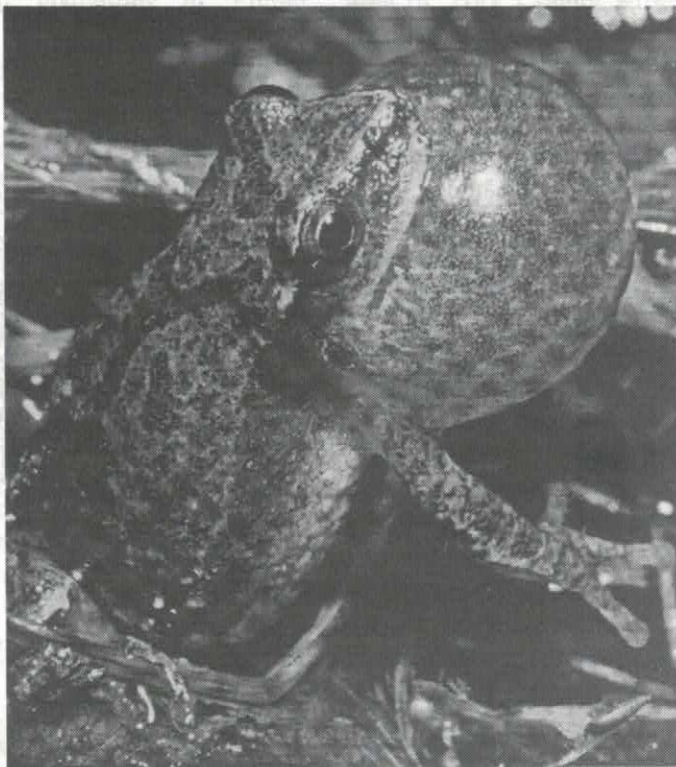
instant night becomes day, and his image is mine. Knees popping in protest, I ease my

way out of his territory, wet and elated.

As I make my way back toward the kiosk at the start of the trail, it occurs to me that tonight I have met some of the true spirits of Hyla Park not evil apparitions, but gentle creatures to be admired, not feared. Here's hoping that the Spirits of Hyla Park will occupy this special place for a long, long time to come.

**Editor's note:** Hyla Park Nature Preserve is located in Fredericton. It was established in 1995 to protect wetland habitat mainly for the Gray Tree Frog, and is Canada's first amphibian park.

It would also appear that Fredericton has the highest number of nocturnal amphibian photographers per capita of any community in Canada. (See article page 35.)



Spring Peeper  
Photo by: Don Vail



## NATURE RAMBLES

Tony Thomas

Sunset, the first warm day of the year; the ice is out and there was a good rainfall earlier in the day. This is the night for the annual pilgrimage in search of peepers. If they are calling, then winter is officially over by my reckoning. The camera bag is packed as I head south-east along the mighty flood-swollen St. John River, cross the cold dark Nashwaak to the twinkling lights of South Devon (red, amber, green, amber, red, amber, green, ad infinitum). A left turn and I'm on the home stretch. Soon I'm there, a circular turn around in a cul-de-sac. I attempt the impossible - parallel parking on a curve. A few dozen steps and I pass the sign "**Hyla Park, Canada's First Amphibian Park**" and the attack starts immediately. Rush back to the car for the bug-jacket and the spray left over from last summer. Careful not to get any on the hands. DEET melts camera equipment.

Reach the first pond, meltwater way up into the willows and spreading over the gravel path that I, and many others, laboriously placed there a year or so earlier. Pay-back time. Peepers calling everywhere. This makes it difficult, hard to locate an individual as the cacophony confuses the brain. Step into the water. Silence. The buzzing of mosquitoes takes over; for now, they can't get through the head net - their opportunity will come when the photography begins and the net comes off. Fondly remember the recent cold days of winter - no bugs! Wait a minute or two, a lone peeper calls in the distance. My immediately local peepers cannot contain themselves and a single male gives a short trill. My head swivels, eyes become fixed on the clump of 'grass' from whence the sound came. Ignore the other males that start their chorus. Step closer. Silence. A faint call, another step, silence. After 10 minutes of this hide-and-go-seek I am kneeling in the ice-cold water at eye level to a bunch of coarse 'grass'. More games, more time-outs but finally the clump is parted and sitting half-submerged on some rotted vegetation is the quarry. This peeper can thank his maker that I am not the local American Bittern. *Homo sapiens* eyes meet *Hyla crucifer* eyes. Nobody moves. Now the real challenge begins. The goal is to photograph this peeper in full voice. Head net is off, weak headlamp is on, camera flashes are charged and Mr. Peeper is in focus in the viewfinder. Of course, he has no intention of performing under such circumstances; but then again he has no intention of leaving his tiny piece of territory and he cannot let the calls of the surrounding males go unchallenged. You wait, he begins. Got to get into the rhythm of his calling, have to anticipate when his throat

sac is fully extended. Push the shutter release. Instant daylight, if only for about 1 millisecond. Silence. Wind on the film. Begin the sequence all over again. Try 20 exposures, thank Mr. Peeper, carefully push back the 'grass' and realize that the combination of kneeling, cold water and age prevents any movement below the waist. Eventually one extricates himself from the marsh, exhausted. Looking at your watch you can't believe that you been there for two hours! Now a 10-day wait in nervous anticipation until the slides are returned from Kodak. Was he in focus? Did I get his throat extended? Was the exposure OK? I could use Fuji or Ektachrome and get overnight processing or even print film and get one hour service. However, Kodachrome 64 is still my film of choice.

Everything turned out just fine, see Figure 1:



Figure 1

Being six feet tall and photographing spring peepers has disadvantages. However, for my next ramble, six feet is an advantage. Same locale, same parking impossibility, same hordes of mosquitoes. But loose jeans and sneakers (no hip waders necessary). Again at sunset but now it's mid-June. The quarry is the Gray Treefrog and the goal is to photograph a male in full voice. No wet feet this time and no stiff limbs as these frogs call from lateral branches of trees, surrounding their breeding ponds, at a convenient six feet off the ground. Far less abundant than its congener, it takes much longer to pinpoint a calling male. Really need two or more people for triangulation. Once found, the photographer still needs flash to freeze movement and provide sufficient light for the slow Kd 64. A tripod is useful in these situations as it allows for



critical focussing. Eventually success, a lone male calling from an old spruce log; the preferred calling site for Hyla Park treefrogs appears to be horizontal limbs of white birch trees, but I take what I can get, see Figure 2:

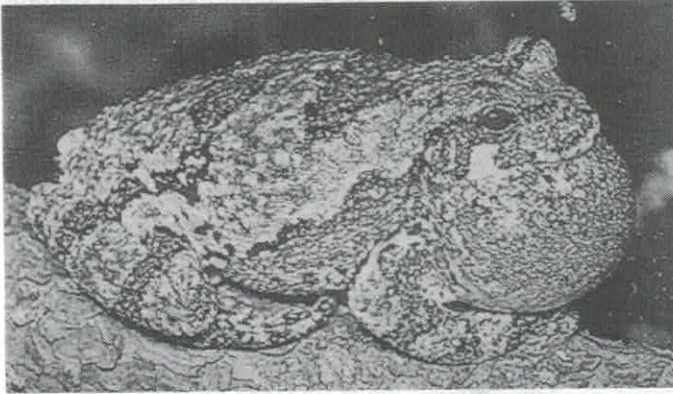
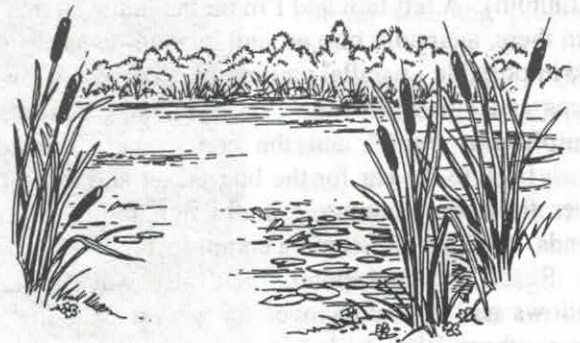


Figure 2

Thought for the day: "If male frogs call to attract females, why do they have larger ears than females?"

To paraphrase the signs in Blockbuster Video stores "If you enjoyed this narrative (video) you'll love 'Rum, Molasses, and Rotten Bananas - How to Seduce Moths' by the same director.



## RARE SIGHTINGS

Allan Madden

*This article is not about rare species or of species on unusual dates. Instead it relates to behaviour we seldom get a chance to see, such as politicians using more than 3% of their brains.*

*After tallying countless hours in the natural world, one is certain to experience, sooner or later, just by chance, and probably for only a few seconds, a rare glimpse of animal behaviour that one will never see again.*

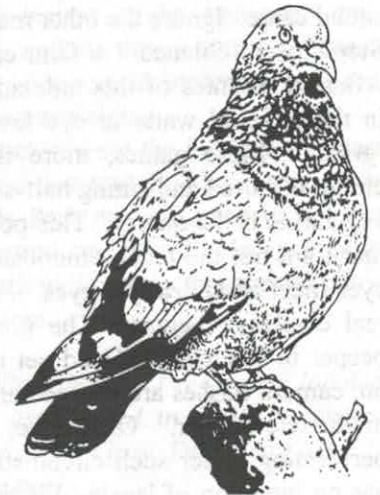
*One would think, since I've been in fish and wildlife management for 30 years, that most of my rare sightings occurred while on the job. However, most occurred outside working hours. Several memorable sightings also occurred when I was a youth who just about lived in the field. The following is one of the best I recall: -*

In March 1996, I saw through our kitchen window an adult Goshawk strike a Rock Dove five metres above the ground, knocking several feathers from the dove. The hawk swung around and this time caught the dove in its talons and flew approximately 40 metres, landing on the

snow behind a clump of spruce. I grabbed my camera and waited 15 minutes for the hawk to settle down, then began to stalk.

When about eight metres from the hawk, still hidden behind the spruce, it took off. I examined the depression it left in the snow, saw a pigeon feather, and reached to pick it up. To my surprise the feather was stuck solid to its owner beneath the snow!

Yes, the dove was still there, fully alert, with only a drop of blood on its breast. I tossed it in the air and it flew away strongly.





## BOTANY QUIZ: CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS PLANT?

Gart Bishop

What is it? See if you can guess the identity of the following common wild flower. The answer will appear in the next issue of the *N.B. Naturalist / Le Naturaliste du N.-B.*

This issue's subject is a friendly plant found throughout much of the province. Its dusty pink flowers line many of our roadsides from mid-July to late August. It is also found in fields, meadows and waste places having dry sandy or stony soil. Occasionally it shows up on one's lawn (it certainly does in mine) and is very tolerant of mowing.

This short plant (9-30 cm high) has erect silky-hairy stems. The tight clusters of flowers form in short cylindrical heads with the long narrow gray tips of the sepals exhibiting a soft fuzzy appearance when mature. It is the nature of the flowerheads which gives rise to the common English name.

Like Strawberry (*Fragaria Virginiana*) and Goldthread (*Coptis trifolia*), this plant has a three-parted leaflet ... which should serve as a definite clue to its identity. However, like other closely-related plants, the leaflets are short (less than 2 cm long) and narrow.



Illustration by: H. Hill Craig

Some botanists have stated that this plant "is a useless member of an important agricultural family and is of little consequence," rather harsh words for a small annual introduced from Europe that I always look forward to seeing each year.

The photos illustrated in the Botany Quiz from the last issue (Vol. 27 (1)) were:

- A. Fiddlehead Fern / *Pteris nodulosa* / Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) emerging in spring
- B. Old fertile frond of Fiddlehead Fern / *Pteris nodulosa* / Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*)
- C. Last year's fruit of Wild Cucumber / Concombre grimpant (*Echinocystis lobata*)
- D. Goldenrod gall
- E. Willow gall
- F. Old fertile frond of Sensitive Fern / *Onoclea delicata* (*Onoclea sensibilis*)
- G. Old fertile frond of Sensitive Fern / *Onoclea delicata* (*Onoclea sensibilis*)

The following books were consulted in compiling the above descriptions:

Clark, G.H. & J. Fletcher. 1906. Farm Weeds of Canada. Government Printing Bureau, Ottawa.

Hinds, H.R. 1986. The Flora of New Brunswick. Primrose Press, Fredericton, NB.

Muenschner, W.C. 1980. Weeds. Cornell University Press, NY, USA.

Uva, R., J.C. Neal & J.M. DiTomaso. 1997. Weeds of the Northeast. Comstock Publishing Assoc., Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Wherry, E.T. 1948. Wild Flower Guide, Northeastern and Midland United States. Doubleday & Co., USA.

## You May Be Birding Too Much If:

- 7. You are wearing your binoculars while serving as a pallbearer.
- 8. You have named your dog "Plover".
- 9. Your neighbour says, "You're made a five hundred kilometre trip to see **What?**"



## LOCAL LARID-WATCHER'S LAMENT

Peter Pearce

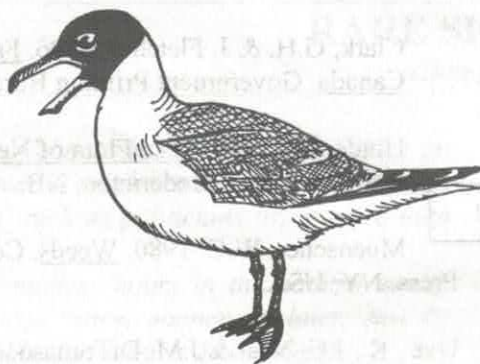
Observation of a Franklin's Gull in the Fredericton Wildlife Refuge (established in 1962 as the Fredericton Game Management Area) by Don Gibson and Shirley Sloat on 7 June 2000 was a significant event in the annals of larid-watching in New Brunswick's capital city. It was the first "new" gull species to be added to the refuge's bird list since 15 November 1969 when I saw a Black-headed Gull there. The recent sighting led me to reflect on the pleasures of birding at that site in earlier years.

There's no doubt about it, the decade of the nineteen sixties was the golden age of gull-watching at Fredericton - ten years sandwiched between the formation of the Fredericton Field Naturalists' (now Nature) Club in 1959 and the beginning of sewage treatment in the city in 1970. Prior to the latter year, raw sewage was pumped from the south shore of the refuge directly into the St. John River. The area near the outfall proved to be a magnet to visiting gulls and other birds. Through those ten years I visited the site frequently, especially in the fall, in eager, often rewarded, anticipation of seeing a fair variety of gulls. My site list of ten species includes unlikely

Laughing and Sabine's gulls and Black-legged Kittiwake.

There can be few stations in our province where so many (now eleven) species of gulls have been identified.

With the removal of the prime attractant, things changed noticeably after 1970, fewer gulls visiting the refuge. Since



Laughing Gull  
bv: Jim Edsall

that year there has also been a marked decline of transient shorebird stopovers in Fredericton, undoubtedly for the same reason. Of course, one commends the action, long overdue, to clean up the river but one also harbours a lingering regret at the diminished opportunity to see 'rare' gulls locally.

Needless to say, I still scan the river in the refuge for gulls and other birds despite the subsidence of the earlier excitement. All was not lost. A phenomenon of recent origin is the gathering of numbers (up to 100) of Ring-billed Gulls along "The Green" within the refuge, a reflection of the population increase and range expansion of that species. And I keep a lookout for Lesser Black backed Gull, surely a prime candidate for eventual inclusion on the refuge list. Mew and California gulls have also been noted not too far from Fredericton ...

Although there are fewer than 50 species of gulls worldwide, the group presents considerable identification challenges because of the many, often subtle plumage differences, especially in the larger species, and the possibility of hybridization. Perhaps that is why gull-watching has become, in the words of John Pratt (In: *A bird-finding guide to Canada*), "... a growing subspecialty in the birding world...". It's an activity much more sophisticated now than the less frenetic, more innocent pursuit of a bygone age that I remember so fondly.

**Editor's note:** As stated above, Fredericton and the surrounding communities dumped raw sewage directly into the St. John River (or tributaries) for many years. In 1970, a treatment facility was constructed at Barker Street, on the north side of the river, and since then sewage from the south side has transported there via a pipeline under the St. John River.

Coincidentally, on the day that the Franklin's Gull was sighted, construction materials had just recently been placed on site in preparation for the installation of a new pipeline across the river.

### Answers to bird names quiz (see page 33)

- |                     |                       |                           |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Black Vulture    | 8. Boreal Owl         | 15. Dickcissel            |
| 2. Wood Duck        | 9. Acadian Flycatcher | 16. Bobolink              |
| 3. Peregrine Falcon | 10. American Pipit    | a. Great Blue Heron       |
| 4. Upland Sandpiper | 11. Ovenbird          | b. Snowy Egret            |
| 5. Least Sandpiper  | 12. Eastern Towhee    | c. Orange-crowned Warbler |
| 6. Dunlin           | 13. Vesper Sparrow    | d. Nashville Warbler      |
| 7. Sandwich Tern    | 14. Painted Bunting   | e. Wilson's Warbler       |



## LITTLE KNOWN HISTORY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

*Editor's note: The attached article was discovered recently in an old newspaper in the United States and sent to us from an anonymous source. Because of the great potential interest to the naturalists of New Brunswick, we have decided to reprint it for your enjoyment.*



### *The Colonial Enquirer*

**Boston, Massachusetts**

**25 August, 1851**

#### **Audubon may have been Cecitized**

We are saddened to report the passing of renowned wildlife artist John James Audubon, who went to meet his maker while on an expedition in Canada. Audubon had joined local bird authority and friend, Cecil Lockett Johnston, for a fortnight of collecting bird skins, on the islands near the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. Apparently this unfortunate incident occurred two months ago, and we have only recently received the news because of the state of the communication with this remote isle.

On a particular outing, Audubon and Johnston came upon a small bird unfamiliar to either man. Audubon immediately shot it. Seemingly unprepared for the recoil, Audubon stumbled and fell backward, hitting his head on a large boulder. Realizing that help would be difficult to find on this sparsely populated island, Johnston was relieved to see a young man

walking toward them. The man was a sailor, who had rowed ashore from a nearby ship, in search of his recently escaped pet bird. The man spoke very little English, but was eager to assist Johnston in efforts to revive Audubon. However, their efforts were in vain and the great man passed on.

As the two men sat there in silence, the young sailor suddenly jumped up and ran to the small lifeless bird, calling it by name. Distraught at finding his pet dead, the man gathered it up and proceeded toward his small rowboat. Recognizing the fact that important documentary evidence was disappearing, Johnston quickly intervened, stating this was a valuable piece of history, that one day may be considered the best bird sighting of all time, and must remain in the province. Although the young man could not understand all of the words, he did understand a loaded musket and reluctantly retreated.

Prize in hand and Audubon properly buried, Johnston boarded his rowboat and began his long

arduous trip back to the port of Saint John. After thirty hours of nonstop rowing, he approached his destination, where he saw his colleague Wilson standing on shore, prepared to greet him.

Wilson was a man who had gained such prominence in scientific world, that newly discovered species were being named after him (Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope, Wilson's Tern, Wilson's Thrush, Wilson's Warbler, etc.). Johnston was jealous of Wilson's fame and he hoped that his recent acquisition would bring glory to himself. But alas, he knew that this discovery would have to pass the scrutiny of the Bird Records Committee, and this would be virtually impossible without the help of Wilson. ....and that's how the Stonechat got added to the official list of Birds of New Brunswick.

*Ezekiel Dalzell,  
Correspondent for the  
provinces*



## POINT LEPREAU BIRD OBSERVATORY

Annual Report - 1999

Jim Wilson, Chairperson

### HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

The Point Lepreau Bird Observatory (PLBO) was established in late 1995, as a project of the Saint John Naturalists' Club (SJNC). It was created to study the spectacular migration of seabirds through the Bay of Fundy each spring and fall. The initial building construction was funded by the SJNC and carried out by volunteers from the Club. The New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists and the Fredericton Nature Club provided additional financial assistance. Further support was welcomed from the Canadian Wildlife Service and from Bird Studies Canada, through the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund.

Prior to this project, almost no quantitative information was available on the scale of seabird migration through the Bay. During the course of the four years that the Observatory has been in operation, a significant amount of information has been accumulated, laying the foundation for a continuing study. The Observatory has also acted as a catalyst for initiatives by other groups to extend the observations to further areas of the Bay. The Moncton Naturalists' Club, for example, has started operating its own observatory at Cape Enrage, east of Fundy National Park. Members of the PLBO Steering Committee also organized, coordinated and participated in the first "Superwatch" which has now become an annual feature of the study of seabird migration. This one-day event, carried out on a date in April selected on the basis of experience at the PLBO as being at the peak of the spring migration season, sees observers making simultaneous migration counts at numerous locations in the three maritime provinces.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

At the outset, the SJNC established three long-term objectives that continue to be the core of the program. These are:

1. To establish and maintain a database which will permit evaluation of trends in seabird migration;
2. To spark interest in other naturalist organizations to establish similar projects at suitable sites in the region;

3. To educate industrial and other interested parties about the hazard posed to seabirds by oil and other pollution, particularly during peak migration periods.



### ACTIVITIES IN 1999

In 1999, the spring observation period ran from 14 March to 4 May and the fall period from 27 August to 30 October. While volunteer observers did counting in previous years, a grant from the Canadian Wildlife Service enabled us to hire a daily observer for the spring counting period in 1999. Volunteers, however, were still strongly encouraged to participate, and made a valuable contribution in covering the weekends and supplementing the efforts of the observer at peak periods. The ability to employ an observer was of great value in ensuring that every weekday was covered and in improving the day-to-day consistency of the data.



### OBSERVATIONS IN 1999

Some interesting patterns are beginning to emerge from the data accumulated over the four-year period during which the Observatory has been in operation. Averaged over these four years, the main contributors to the count, expressed as a percentage of the total birds recorded, are as below:

<u>SPRING</u>		<u>FALL</u>	
Scoter	78%	Scoter	36%
Eider	18%	Eider	42%
Cormorant	0.7%	Cormorant	21%

Comparison of the **actual numbers** (rather than percentages) of the same groups in spring and fall shows some interesting features. While the total number of eiders recorded in fall is approximately the same as the number in spring, the spring-to-fall ratio for scoter is about 6:1, suggesting that the majority of scoters in fall are following a different route that does not take them past the Observatory. For cormorant, on the other hand, the ratio is reversed; the total number in fall is roughly 12 times that in spring. This may indicate that cormorants in



spring tend to follow a more inland route, a conclusion tentatively supported by casual observation.

While the **year-to-year variation in average birds per hour** for scoter in spring is not too marked, there is much greater variation in the fall. This may be partly explained by the remarkable degree of peaking shown in the fall scoter migration; in 1999, for example, 90 percent of the total observed scoter migration took place on a single day (3 October). This underlines the importance of having a full-time observer available on a daily basis. Reliance on volunteer observers could well result in the missing of the "peak day", with a major impact on the recorded count. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that all three scoter species peaked on the same day.

## FUTURE WORK

For 2000 and beyond, the intention is to expand the database by continued observation, hopefully with sufficient funding to maintain a full-time observer for both the spring and the fall seasons. In addition to the advantages outlined above, this would enable us to re-direct some of the volunteer effort to providing more detailed coverage of the period round about the migration peak, to ensure that major movements are not missed.

Another area to which attention should be directed on a longer-term basis is the problem of relating the counts at PLBO to the total level of migration through the Bay of Fundy as a whole. The annual April "Superwatch" is a first step toward this objective, but consideration should also be given to extending the Observatory data by simultaneous counting from vessels anchored offshore.

The Steering Committee is greatly encouraged by the provision of funds by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Canadian Nature Federation, which will permit the hiring of an observer again in 2000 during the predicted peak migration period.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Observatory ended the year with a balance of \$429.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are particularly indebted to:

Canadian Coast Guard	Merv Cormier
Canadian Wildlife Service	N B Power
Saint John Naturalists' Club	Paul Clark

On behalf of the Steering Committee,  
Jim Wilson, Chair

**POINT LEPREAU BIRD OBSERVATORY**  
**Peak Migration Dates by Species (1996 - 1999)**

Species	Date of Peak Migration - Spring				Date of Peak Migration - Fall			
	1996	1997	1998	1999	1996	1997	1998	1999
Black Scoter	18-Apr	17-Apr	14-Apr	20-Apr	18-Oct	25-Oct	20-Oct	03-Oct
Surf Scoter	20-Apr	22-Apr	22-Apr	26-Apr	06-Oct	28-Sep	04-Oct	03-Oct
Scoter - Species?	24-Apr	16-Apr	14-Apr	19-Apr	01-Oct	16-Oct	24-Oct	03-Oct
White-w. Scoter	18-Apr	27-Apr	14-Apr	26-Apr	12-Oct	10-Oct	02-Oct	03-Oct
Total Scoters	18-Apr	22-Apr	14-Apr	26-Apr	12-Oct	25-Oct	20-Oct	03-Oct
Common Eider	18-Apr	17-Apr	19-Apr	08-Apr	06-Oct	14-Oct	24-Oct	28-Sep
D.-c. Cormorant	28-Apr	27-Apr	18-Apr	18-Apr	01-Oct	16-Oct	13-Oct	27-Sep
Great Cormorant	11-Apr	10-Apr	12-Apr	08-Apr	01-Oct	21-Oct	24-Oct	22-Sep
Cormorant - Species?	27-May	17-Apr	22-Apr	None	17-Oct	14-Oct	25-Sep	None
Total Cormorants	11-Apr	27-Apr	18-Apr	18-Apr	17-Oct	14-Oct	13-Oct	27-Sep
Common Loon	20-Apr	07-May	22-Apr	16-Apr	17-Oct	28-Oct	02-Oct	03-Oct
Red-th. Loon	17-Apr	07-May	18-Apr	26-Apr	07-Sep	25-Oct	23-Oct	06-Oct
Loon - Species?	21-May	20-Apr	01-May	20-Apr	07-Sep	14-Oct	04-Oct	None
Total Loons	17-Apr	07-May	18-Apr	26-Apr	07-Sep	25-Oct	23-Oct	06-Oct
Heaviest Day - All Species	18-Apr	22-Apr	14-Apr	20-Apr	17-Oct	14-Oct	24-Oct	03-Oct



## HARDWOOD FOREST BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

*Fred Somerville and James Goltz*

On June 10, 2000, naturalists and foresters teamed up to conduct a breeding bird survey in several areas of hardwood forest that are under the management of St. Anne-Nackawic Pulp Company Ltd. As far as we know, this survey represents the first such collaborative effort between the forest industry and naturalists in New Brunswick. Here's an account of how the survey came to pass, as well as some highlights and results.

As New Brunswick pulp companies go, St. Anne is relatively small, with a landbase of 150 000 hectares (ha) of Crown land and 40,000 ha of freehold land. The company's landbase stretches from Napadogan in the North to the Charlotte County line in the South, and from the Nashwaak River in the East to the Maine border in the West.

St. Anne is interested in what people outside of the forest industry think about how it manages its forested land. To facilitate public input, St. Anne established a permanent stakeholders' committee to discuss issues regarding management of lands under the company's control, to share information and, more recently, to actually influence how St. Anne's landbase is managed. The committee started meeting in 1992, was revamped in 1998 and early 1999, and is currently comprised of 26 members representing 19 interest areas. The New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists has been a member of the stakeholders' committee since the committee was first formed and continues to be represented by Jim Goltz.

St. Anne's Woodlands Division is moving toward registration or certification of their environmental management system under ISO 14001. This registration process will start in the Fall of 2000, with a completion date of December 31, 2001. This means a third party will be monitoring St. Anne's approach to environmental protection. With a view to preparing for the certification process, St. Anne and the stakeholders' committee have been discussing the Canadian Council of Forestry Ministers' "criteria and indicators". "Criteria" are broad categories that are considered to be key components of a healthy forest industry (e.g., biological diversity) and "indicators" are specific elements that can be monitored over time (e.g., population levels of wildlife species) to assess how well the company is doing with regard to sustaining a viable forest and forest industry<sup>1</sup>.

It was agreed that a well-designed breeding bird survey, or even a Christmas bird count, could provide some indication as to how the forestry operations are affecting biological diversity. This was an ideal

opportunity for a partnership. St. Anne does not have people with the necessary skills to carry out a breeding bird survey, but the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists does. The Federation has proven success in mobilizing volunteers to conduct population studies and could benefit from the opportunity to share its knowledge, love and appreciation of wildlife with workers in the forest industry.

The breeding bird survey was planned with assistance from James Donald (Management Planner with St. Anne) and Scott Makepeace (a wildlife habitat biologist with the Department of Natural Resources and Energy). Some governing parameters were as follows:

- The survey would be restricted to the hardwood portion (both tolerant and intolerant hardwoods<sup>2</sup>) of the forest since St. Anne uses only hardwood (900,000+ Gmts per year) and is one of the major hardwood users in the province. The hardwood resource has always received less attention, but increased demand for hardwood is putting more pressure on the resource and, thus, it was timely to focus on hardwood forest.
- The survey would monitor the general impact of harvesting and silviculture treatments on breeding bird populations over as broad an area as possible. We know that any intervention in the forest will modify habitat and result in changes in what bird species can use it. This can't be helped. However, no matter what the forest condition is, there will be some bird species using it. There are constant trade-offs. We know that clearcuts don't have all the same bird species as mature forest, and selection cuts don't have all the same birds as unthinned forest (e.g., Mourning Warbler is usually found in thinned forest stands but absent in unthinned stands).
- The survey would be set up so it could be repeated periodically over time at the same fixed points and at roughly the same time of year (early to mid June). Although populations fluctuate naturally from year to year and are impacted by many variables, we want to identify trends (either upward or downward) so appropriate action can be identified and taken.
- The survey would be organized and carried out by interested and dedicated volunteers. Relying on volunteers to do the census was not intended to save money. The company does not have the



expertise to carry out such a survey alone, but there are a lot of interested and dedicated people, especially naturalists, who have knowledge and desire to contribute. Such a contribution is priceless and can't be bought.

- The survey has the potential to pull together a lot of stakeholders (environmental groups, wildlife groups, educational organizations, general public, industry, government) in a general cause.
- St. Anne would establish permanent sample points and provide transportation for participants.
- The census would not just provide valuable information but it should also be fun.

On the day of the census, all groups got an early start and were on site by 6:00 a.m. The sunrise was glorious, but quickly gave rise to heavy cloud cover. As the morning progressed the temperature progressively dropped, so by the time the 10:00 a.m. cut-off time arrived, the participants were eager to head to Fredericton for the hearty lunch that St. Anne provided. After each group shared highlights of its survey experiences, St. Anne gave each participant a wooden pen and awarded some lucky participants with walking sticks carved from young trees that had been harvested through commercial thinning.

A **general summary**, compiled by Scott Makepeace, is as follows:

- 18 people participated in 4 groups.
- 35 point counts, each of 10 minutes duration, were completed in three different types of tolerant hardwood conditions, namely old stands, partially-cut stands and young stands (less than 20 years old).
- 48 bird species were recorded, plus 5 unidentified bird species, 1 unidentified warbler species and 15 unidentified woodpeckers.
- A total of 491 birds was recorded.
- Ovenbirds and Red-eyed Vireos were the most abundant species, with 51 and 48 of each recorded.
- The most abundant bird species of old forest conditions were Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, American Robin, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Least Flycatchers.
- The most abundant species of young forest were Chestnut-sided Warbler and American Redstart.
- The impacts of partial cutting on bird abundance were both positive and negative. No species of bird found commonly in old forest was absent from partially-cut areas. In fact some species

such as the Black-throated Blue Warbler, were much more abundant in partially-cut areas than in uncut old forest (average 0.47/point in old stands vs. 1.38/point in partially-cut areas). Ovenbirds, however, were less abundant in partially-cut areas compared to uncut areas (average 1.84/point in old vs. 1.13/point in partially-cut areas). The explanation of these observations is that partial cutting maintains an overstory tree cover but the openings in the canopy created by removing some trees cause a dense shrub layer to develop. For Black-throated Blue Warblers that nest in the shrub layer, this creates more nesting and foraging areas within a stand. For Ovenbirds, that prefer sparse understories with no shrub layer, it creates less foraging and nesting areas. For species that prefer young forest, partially-cut areas appear to be suitable. Similar abundances of Chestnut-sided Warblers and Common Yellowthroats were found in both partially-cut and young areas.

#### Species of note

- 7 Scarlet Tanagers were recorded (mostly in older and partially-cut areas)
- 10 Mourning Warblers (mostly in young stands)
- 1 Philadelphia Vireo (an uncommon bird species in southern NB)
- 3 Pileated Woodpeckers
- 2 Barred Owls
- 2 Common Loons flew over 1 point during the survey.

From the viewpoint of the company and all participants, the breeding bird census was a tremendous success, and everyone learned a lot from the interaction with other participants. Many thanks to all who contributed their time and expertise to this event, especially to Scott for helping to design the survey and compile the results, Jeff Dixon (Forest Technician for St. Anne) for marking the survey points, Marcel David for coming all the way from Caraquet, St. Anne for the great meal, and Fred, James Donald and Jeff for acting as chauffeurs. We would like to make this an annual event and hope to have an even higher level of participation next year. Please reserve June 9 or 16 so you'll be able to join us!

<sup>1</sup> Industry has generally stayed away from population studies because there are so many factors that can impact on populations. Industry has concentrated on taking steps to ensure habitats are not compromised to a point where populations of any species will be put at risk. If the



forested habitat requirement of species can be described in attributes used in forest inventory then Industry can monitor changes in habitat over time. Industry and government have assumed that by protecting habitat, populations will take care of themselves.

<sup>2</sup> "Tolerant" and "intolerant" hardwoods refer to the ability of the hardwood tree species to tolerate or grow in

shaded conditions. Shade tolerant tree species include Sugar Maple, Yellow Birch and American Beech, while shade intolerant species include poplars and Paper Birch.

*Editor's note: Fred Somerville is Manager of Forestry at St. Anne-Nackawic Pulp Company.*

## RICH HARDWOOD FOREST SITE PROTECTED IN HONOUR OF HAL HINDS

James P. Goltz

At a very well-attended ceremony in Fredericton on August 31, 2000, Hon. Jeannot Volpé, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, announced that 33 hectares of Crown Land at Hovey Hill would be protected as a tribute to Hal Hinds. How fitting that New Brunswick's top botanist be honoured by protecting a site teeming with plants that are uncommon to rare in our province!

Hovey Hill is one of the province's best examples of what the Nature Trust of New Brunswick refers to as Appalachian Hardwood Forest. Such forests are dominated by Sugar Maple, Beech, Butternut, Basswood, Ironwood and/or White Ash, grow in circumneutral soil, and have understory plants like Maidenhair Fern, Blue Cohosh and Wild Ginger that are at or near the northeastern limit of their ranges. Although our province still has a number of sites where Appalachian Hardwood Forest still flourishes, it is estimated that only 1% of New Brunswick sites originally covered with this forest type remain. In nearby parts of Maine, this forest type has been even more severely decimated.

Hal Hinds, author of the *Flora of New Brunswick* and New Brunswick's outspoken advocate for the preservation of rare plants, has for many years promoted the protection of rare plants of rich hardwood forests. While doing botanical inventories for the Nature Trust, Gart Bishop, Bruce Bagnell and Samantha Hines discovered that Hovey Hill had the largest known provincial populations of Lopseed and Fragrant Sanicle (both considered to be very rare in New Brunswick and apparently extirpated from Maine) and also harboured other species of rare (e.g., Large-fruited Sanicle, Northern Wild Comfrey) and uncommon plants (e.g., Maidenhair Fern, Yellow Lady's-slipper).

At the ceremony, the splendor of the rich hardwood forest at Hovey Hill was beautifully captured in a two-minute video (replete with birdsong) and in several lovely posters depicting the site's flora. A granite plaque with the following inscription has been installed at Hovey Hill: "The people of New Brunswick dedicate this unique woodland to Harold R. (Hal) Hinds, botanist, teacher and author of our flora, as a tribute to his tireless work to protect our native plants. Henceforth, may this place be known as the **Hal Hinds Forest**."

Hal is delighted to have this site, and its rare plants, protected in his honour and was very moved by the tribute. In his very gracious speech at the ceremony, he urged the government to do more to protect rare plants and to make sure that protected areas remain interconnected so that their ecological integrity is not compromised.

The New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists is very pleased that its proposal to protect this site in honour of Hal, one of the Federation's former presidents, was so well received by government and industry, and has resulted in the protection of an excellent example of one of New Brunswick's most threatened ecosystems.



*Large-fruited Sanicle*



## NATURE NEWS: Mid-April to mid-July 2000

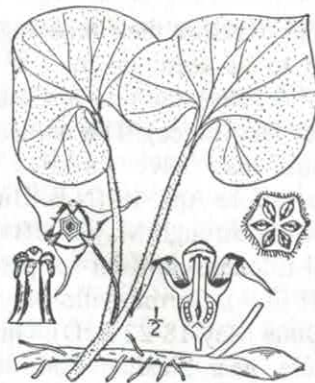
David Christie

The development of vegetation gradually changed from being early to being behind schedule during the rather cool later part of spring, but no severe weather was reported such as has caused mortality of insectivorous birds in some other years. The backward weather and flower and insect development, however, may have been responsible for busy activity at bird feeders in May, including the tardy disappearance of some winter birds. The early summer was relatively normal but a couple of storms washed out Piping Plover nests along the east coast and knocked down Cliff Swallow nests at Grand Manan.

### Flora

Trout-lily, Bloodroot and Trailing Arbutus ushered in the blooming season of woodland wildflowers. **Trout-Lily** was beginning to bloom at Fredericton Apr. 20 (JPG) and Rosevale, near Turtle Creek, May 3 (AWi). There was a single **Bloodroot** flower at Keswick Ridge Apr. 22, hundreds there May 1 (JPG+), and it was in full bloom at Shediac Bridge May 5 (NP). **Trailing Arbutus** was flowering at Rosevale Apr. 25 (AWi) and Fredericton Apr. 28 (JPG, SS).

Other early flowers were **Red Trillium** at Crock's Point, near Mactaquac, May 1 (JPG, JW); **Woolly Blue Violet** (*Viola sororia*, and what we used to know as Northern Blue Violet, *V. septentrionalis*), at Fredericton May 4 (JPG); **Northern White Violet**, **Wild Strawberry**



Wild Ginger

and **Wild Ginger** at Mactaquac Park (JPG, DGG, Cathy Gibson) and **Spring-beauty** at Mary's Point (DSC) May 4; **Sweet White Violet** at Mary's Point May 6 (DSC); **Wild Ginger** along the Tay River, near Taymouth (JS), and **Dutchman's breeches** at Rosevale May 7 (AWi).

Currie Mountain, upriver from Fredericton, is the best-known New Brunswick location for **Round-lobed Hepatica**, one of our rarer spring flowers. Several plants "sported blue or white-coloured buds and were almost ready to bloom"

there May 1 (JPG, JW). Margie Pacey found this species in full bloom at McLaggan Bridge, York Co., May 22.

One of the showiest flower displays during May is provided by various species of *Amelanchier*. These shrubs and small trees known variously as Shadbush, Bilberry, Serviceberry and Indian Pear paint the countryside with banks of white flowers accented by attractive young leaves of bronze or green. They would have begun blooming earlier in most southern inland locations than they did at North Head, GM (May 11—LM), and Harvey, Albert County (May 20—DSC).

Gart Bishop's botanical explorations turned up some new plants for New Brunswick this summer, including **Wall Rue**, a diminutive fern discovered on the Minister's Face cliffs of Long Island in Kennebecasis Bay. It is of very local distribution in northeastern North America.

The location in Kouchibouguac National Park of another rarity, **Southern Twayblade**, an orchid known from only 2 locations in New Brunswick, was rather vaguely known because it had not been seen there for more than 20 years, but a special search this year found two plants in bloom there June 24 (JPG, MT, Inuk Simard, Sara Richard).

A white-flowering **Rhodora** was a rare and interesting sport found in the Sackville area in early June (*fide* Paul Bogaard).

### Fishes, Amphibians and Reptiles

While birding on the Rockland Road, Memramcook, July 14, Roger LeBlanc was surprised to see a very big fish jump completely out of the water of the Memramcook River. He estimated the rather elongated fish with a pointed head at about two metres long and decided it must have been an **Atlantic Sturgeon**, the only fish likely to reach that length in upper bay estuaries.

A major migration of **Yellow-spotted Salamanders** was crossing the highway between Queenstown and Gagetown during a cold rain on the evening of Apr. 22. A few had been killed by cars, but fortunately the traffic was very light. Jim Goltz and James Walde stopped several times to move salamanders to safety off the road. What appeared to be a salamander had fallen prey to an American Kestrel in the Sackville area in the third week of April (KP, RM).

Turtles had become active in April, when 2 **Wood Turtles** were reported April 19 (Mike Sullivan, *fide* Don McAlpine) and 50 **Painted Turtles** were seen in a pond at Lower Jemseg Apr. 29 (JB, GB). Surprising was a



good-sized **Snapping Turtle** seen on the Dock Road, North Head, June 19 (*fide* LM). It is not known whether it was one brought to Grand Manan Island from St. George a few years ago or "a more adventuresome snapper that swam across the Bay."

A snapper was found laying eggs at Fredericton Junction June 27 (FG).

## Birds

The coastal migration of sea ducks and loons that was mentioned in the last issue peaked in late April, when numbers passing Point Lepreau reached 4630 **Surf Scoters**, 1284 **Black Scoters**, and 127 **Red-throated Loons** per hour during watches at the bird observatory there Apr. 25 (DJC), 624 **Long-tailed Ducks** [new official name for Oldsquaw] during one 15-minute count Apr. 24 (DJC), and 4000+ sea ducks (the two scoters and **Common Eider**) in one hour Apr. 29 (Janet Whitehead, Eileen Pike). During the same period impressive concentrations of scoters were noted on the Petitcodiac estuary, including around 5000 (80% Surf) between Beaumont and Belliveau Village Apr. 28 (RA).

Weather conditions may have interfered with overland migration the night of Apr. 29-30, for on the 30th, there were 200 mixed scoters and 100 **Long-tailed Ducks** on the river at Fredericton (DGG), 46 scoters and a Long-tail on the Salisbury sewage lagoon (RS) and another Long-tail in the Sackville Waterfowl Park (RM, KP). In addition, seventeen dead ducks were found that morning on Route 160 between Butte-d'Or and Allardville (*fide* LD). Although reported as Black Scoters and American Black Ducks, I suspect that they were actually male and female Black Scoters that mistook wet pavement for a body of water.

Nine **Common Eiders** were also seen at Fredericton on the 30th (BJS) and a **Red-throated Loon** on the Madawaska River at Edmundston, a very unusual location for that species, Apr. 20 (GV).

Two male **King Eiders** seen from the Deer Island ferry in Letete Passage May 4 (Katherine Landry) had apparently been present there 3 days. An adult male King among 65 Commons on the bay at Mary's Point July 9 (DSC, Mike Majka) was really out of season. I had assumed that flock was passing northeastward but other observers saw good-sized flocks of Common Eiders moving down the Memramcook valley towards the Bay of Fundy June 28-29 (RA) and July 13 (AC).

Numbers of shearwaters and storm-petrels were found east of Grand Manan on June 20: 250 **Greater Shearwaters**, 35 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 200 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** and 25 **Leach's Storm-Petrels** (LM). A **Manx Shearwater** was seen from the Grand Manan ferry about July 9 (John Hanson).

**Northern Gannets** are seen commonly off the opposite corner of the province (e.g., 1303 tallied during the Miscou Island Spring Bird Count May 27), but tubenoses are seldom reported there. Partly that's because observers have not been going offshore to look for them. This summer Hilaire Chiasson and Jacques Guignard did just that July 12 and saw 4 **Northern Fulmars** and about 50 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** 13 miles off Pigeon Hill, Lamèque Island. A subsequent trip on July 16 found one Fulmar and 14 **Wilson's Storm-petrels** (v.o.). The observation of 19 **Razorbills** close to shore at the Miscou Lighthouse July 2 was a rare event there (HC, Jocelyne Guignard). Numbers of **Common Murres** were also seen at Miscou, including 100 on June 3 and 60 July 16 (RD).

Five **Northern Gannets** were reported present at White Horse Island, off the northern end of Deer Island, in late June (*fide* DJC), but I haven't heard whether any were attempting to nest as a pair did in 1999. Some **Atlantic Puffins** were also being seen at White Horse, and there were 4 near one of the Spruce Islands in that area June 25 (DJC).

**Common Murre** estimates at the Yellow Murr Ledge colony south of Grand Manan were estimated at 250 on May 24 (BED) and 300 on June 14 (Steve Mirick). Three lingering **Dovekies** were seen in that area May 24 (BED).

A **Least Bittern** was calling almost constantly in the evenings, and sometimes earlier in the day, at Germantown Marsh, near Riverside-Albert, June 11-24 (v.o.). Several birders got excellent looks at this secretive bird. A **Green Heron** was weeks early at Anthonys Cove, Saint John, Apr. 17 (DGG, SS, BJS). One at the Buctouche Dune July 13-14 (*fide* DD) was unusual in that area.

**Great Egrets** that had overshot their breeding range in early April continued to be seen: up to 3 at Grand Manan through May 7 or 8 (v.o.) and one at Grand Bay through Apr. 25 (Jennifer Day-Elgee). The earlier Third Loch Lomond Lake bird may have travelled on to Upperton, near Hillsdale, before Apr. 19 (N.B. Bird Info Line) and to Sussex Apr. 22 through May 2 (JB+). One (or more?) frequented St-Édouard-de-Kent for perhaps 2 weeks through Apr. 23 (LEC+), Cormierville May 11-15 (LEC), and Buctouche Dune May 18-22 (DD). One, later 2, settled in at Cap Brûlé, near Shediac from June 11 (v.o.) onwards. Others were seen briefly at Lower Jemseg Apr. 30 (BJS), Waterside May 3 (Rick Elliott & Barbara Curlew), Baie-du-Petit-Pokemouche May 8 (MD) and Rivière-à-la-Truite May 25-27 (Nicole Benoit, Gertrude St-Pierre, Jollande St-Pierre). The total amounts to our biggest-ever visitation by this species.

**Snowy Egrets** were not so numerous, being reported at Chance Harbour Apr. 17 (KM), Castalia Apr. 21



through May 21 (1-2—v.o.), Richibucto, May 14 (LEC), and Saints Rest Marsh, Saint John, June 1-5 (MJC+). There also reports of **Little Blue Herons**: at West Quaco May 3 (David Lounsbury), Castalia May 7/8 to 13 (RL+), Anderson Road, north of Middle Sackville, May 24 (Norm and Gisèle Belliveau & Léona Cormier) and a more unusual summer bird at Gagetown Island July 16 (JB+). Rarest of the visiting southern herons were the **Tricoloreds**, a very cooperative adult at Edmundston May 5-14 (GLT+), then as many as 3 (KRN, Susanne Overgaard), but mostly 2 at a time, at Saints Rest Marsh May 28 to June 2 (v.o.).

Individual **Glossy Ibises** also overshot their breeding range and appeared at Pointe-à-Bouveau, Tracadie, Apr. 18-24 (Jollande St-Pierre, Nicole Benoit+), McGowans Corner May 2 (SS) and Grand Manan May 7 or 8 (RL+).

**Turkey Vultures** were reported frequently in their Saint John to Hampton stronghold. Ian Cameron and Jim Wilson visited the known nest site near Saint John on July 3 and found a fairly large, white downy young with "dark tail and wing feathers just beginning to show." During April and May there were reports in several other southern New Brunswick locations, including a group of 7 at Welsford Apr. 17 (SS, BJS, DGG). In the north there was a report of two in the Restigouche region in the third week of May (*vide* MGD). Surprising were two at tiny Machias Seal Island June 13 (LM). There was also one at Richibucto that day (Mike LeBlanc).

For the second year, a large number of **Snow Geese** stopped in the Restigouche estuary, spillover from the huge St. Lawrence population. There were about 200 there on Apr. 18 (ID, MGD), 1000 or more Apr. 29 (MGD) and "still lots" May 15 (*vide* MGD). Otherwise there were 18 at Inkerman Ferry Apr. 30 (Jean-Guy Robichaud) and an unusually late one at Fredericton June 26 (BJS).

The third "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal** of the spring was at the Hillsborough s.l. May 13-15 (RJW; FD). Male **Eurasian Wigeon** were at Lower Jemseg May 9 (JGW), Hillsborough s.l. May 13-31 (RJW+), presumably the same bird in moult at Gray Brook Marsh, Hillsborough, June 11-July 8 (v.o.), Tracadie-Sheila May 31 to June 1 (RD) and at Cap Brûlé, Shediac July 12 (FD). On May 26 three pairs were reported at Val-Comeau (RC).

The **Redheads** at Calhoun Marsh, near Riverside-Albert, had increased to 5 (2 males, 3 females) by May 4 (v.o.) and on June 14 there were 7 ducklings swimming with them (FD), breeding evidence that has been only suspected in that marsh in the past. An additional male **Tufted Duck** on the Saint John River was the first for the Fredericton region, at Sheffield Apr. 30 (BJS+). A scattering of single male **Ruddy Ducks** was noted at the

Salisbury s.l. Apr. 30 - May 4 (RS), Calhoun Marsh Apr. 30 - May 8 (NB+), Bell Marsh, Moncton May 16 (Roger LeBlanc), and Atholville s.l. May 28, where there were also 2 males and a female June 19-24 (MGD, ID). A pair were at Val-Comeau May 27 (HC).

A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** just beginning to moult at Meenan's Cove, Quispamsis, July 9 (Peter Wilshaw, JGW) seems to be an unprecedented mid summer report in this province. Two pairs of **Harlequin Ducks** were still at Southern Head Beach, GM, May 14 (RAG, AC) and a pair at Val-Comeau Apr. 30 (Club des naturalistes de la Péninsule acadienne).

A dark **Gyr Falcon** at Machias Seal Island May 27 and June 13 (Dedreic Grecian; Richard Elliot) was surprisingly out of season. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was still at the Tantramar Marsh May 30 (Chignecto Naturalists). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen at Siegas, Madawaska Co., May 17 (GV, AV) and more unusually on the Acadian Peninsula at Val-Doucet May 22 (MD). One was also seen July 2 at Maces Bay (John Hanson).

On June 11 Chris Adam was surprised to see an adult **Gray Partridge** accompanied by about 6 downy young near the Keswick Ridge Road, south of Zealand. Since the last of the formerly established New Brunswick population of this partridge disappeared about 20 years ago this family is probably the result of a recent release.

A **Common Moorhen** was present at the Gray Brook Marsh, Hillsborough, c. June 15 (*vide* NP). A few **American Coots** were noted: at Lower Jemseg May 14 (Marion Belyea), Atholville c. May 18 (*vide* MGD), and Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska s.l. June 7-9 (Andrina Côté+).

For the second consecutive year a number of **Sandhill Cranes** were seen during June. They are probably wandering, non-breeding subadult birds but the presence of several suggests that an eastward expansion of the breeding range may soon occur. Particularly interesting are reports that the pair near Havelock were being seen for the fourth year (*vide* JB). Those birds were reported from May 6 to at least June 6 (JB+). Another pair were seen in the Salisbury area, on the Old Fredericton Road to the north May 12 (Ryan Dykstra) and on MacPherson Road to the east June 3-17 (Connie Colpitts+). Elsewhere there were 5 at Florenceville June 4 (GV, AV), two at Sadlers Flat, near Plaster Rock, June 11-13 and 24-25 (Roger Jenkins+), and one at Kouchibouguac National Park June 20 (Marc-André Villard).

**Piping Plovers** did not have a good breeding year. Numbers seemed down and quite a few nests were washed out by early June storms. Mike LeBlanc wrote



that 5 of 7 pairs in Kouchibouguac National Park had abandoned their nests by mid June.

A couple of Australians, Roger & Louise McGovern, who were passing through the province May 31, discovered a **Black-necked Stilt** at Jacquet River but had no contacts for reporting it. Fortunately for New Brunswick birders, two days later they encountered Régis Fortin who mentioned their sighting on Quebec's Internet mailing list. As a result the stilt was rediscovered and seen by numerous observers June 4-6 (DSC, Mary Majka+). We've had only about 4 reports in the last hundred years.

Of more frequent occurrence but still rare here were the **Ruffs**, or more precisely Reeves, since the reports were all of females, first at the Buctouche Dune May 8 (DD, MLeB), followed by Malbaie Nord, Miscou Island, May 21 (RD), and Petit-Rocher July 2 (Bob & Sharon Blake et. al.).

Rarest gull of the season was a short-staying adult **Franklin's Gull** at Fredericton June 7 (DGG, SS). Beyond the Grand Manan archipelago where **Laughing Gulls** are rare but expected, a couple strayed to Sheffield April 9 (adult—SS, JPG) and the Buctouche area June 4-19 (2nd-year—DD). Second-year **Little Gulls** were noted at Eel River Bar June 3 (DSC), Bathurst June 5 (SIT+) and Miscou Lighthouse July 2 (RAC). A second-year **Black-headed Gull** was seen at Cap Bimet, near Shediac, June 25 (SIT, Robert Doiron). An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** at the Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska s.l. May 6 (Martin Thibodeau, GLT+) was the first record in that county for several years. The continuing increase of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** on this continent is reflected in reports between Apr. 8 and June 14 of individuals at Hammond River (JGW), Maugerville (Jeremy Gullison) Sheffield (BJS), Ste-Marie-St-Raphaël (HC, RAC), Robichaud (SIT), Fundy National Park (NB+) and Coverdale (DGG, PAP, SS).

An adult **Sandwich Tern** at Crab Island in Tabusintac Bay June 13 (RC) was about the fifth provincial report. Inland **Caspian Terns** were spotted at Bloomfield, Kings County, Apr. 28 (Ian & Heather Cameron) and at Lower Jemseg Apr. 30 (BJS).

A stray **White-winged Dove** visited a Fredericton Junction feeder May 18-21 (FG+).

A moderate number of **Black-billed Cuckoo** reports during June and July was associated with an abundance of tent caterpillars, a common food for that species. Very unusual in spring was a probable **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** heard calling at Nauwigewauk May 27 by Richard Blacquiére, who is familiar with its calls in Ontario.

A **Burrowing Owl** described at the Swallowtail, GM, June 5 by visiting birders Rachel Rosenberg and Molly Saunders could not be relocated the following day.

Tantalizingly, the only previous New Brunswick record was also in June. Late **Snowy Owls** were seen at Campbellton, Apr. 12 (*fide* MGD) and Castalia Marsh Apr. 29 (*fide* LM) and a **Northern Hawk Owl** was at Bathurst May 3 (Pierre Duguay. Nestlings had apparently fledged by June 28 from a **Long-eared Owl** nest found near the Bouctouche Dune this year (DD). Denis Doucet knew of five species of owls calling and possibly nesting around Saint-Antoine in mid June.

A **Chuck-will's-widow**, the second provincial report, was heard calling several times and responded to a tape on the evening of June 14 (BED & Anne Chudleigh) but could not be relocated on subsequent nights.

At Fredericton and Sussex many **Chimney Swifts** congregate to roost for the night in large chimneys, especially in late spring and early summer. This year about 1000 were estimated to enter the chimney of the INCUTECH building on UNB's Fredericton campus June 7 (Richard Grant) and 480 at the old Sussex High School May 30 (JB, Brian Elliot). That evening about 60 swifts entered the old Mercantile Building which had been their main roosting site in Sussex through 1997.

A **Rufous Hummingbird** was reported without further details at Lac Baker May 28-29 (*fide* JDB). **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** appeared across much of southern New Brunswick May 6-9 and in the north May 13-15.

A **Willow Flycatcher** was seen back at this species' regular breeding area, Wilkins Field in Fredericton June 3 (DGG). Observations there by Peter Pearce have found a very high rate of nest loss there the past two years, with raccoons being suspected as the major cause. About 4 Willows were reported on the northern part of Grand Manan June 8-19 (v.o.) and 2 at Red Head Marsh June 24 (KM). Hank Deichmann and a group of British birders found not one, but two, **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers**, a 2nd-year bird at Anchorage Park, GM, May 30 and an adult at McLaren Pond, FNP, May 31 to June 1.

Three **White-eyed Vireos** showed up at Grand Manan: at Castalia May 19-20 (MGD, RL), White Head Island (BED) and Woodward's Cove (RS) on May 20. Two singing



White-eyed Vireo  
Photo by: Don Gibson



**Yellow-throated Vireos** were located at Pacific Junction, near Berrys Mills May 19-20 (John Tanner, Alma White).

A **Northern. Rough-winged Swallow** was seen May 21 at Fredericton Junction (FG), where they have nested in previous years.

Although **White-breasted Nuthatch** and **Blue Jay** are resident year round in New Brunswick many young birds of these species migrate. During April and the first part of May a stronger than usual migration of **White-breasted Nuthatches** produced reports from numerous locations where they were not seen during the winter, including a half dozen on the Acadian Peninsula where the species is rare. Heavy **Blue Jay** migration was noted along the Bay of Fundy beginning in mid May.

There was a nice showing of **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** in May: at St. Andrews May 11 (KRN), Saint John West May 12-13 (2-1—MJC), Castalia May 20 (MGD), North Head May 22 (*fide* BED) and Miscou Island May 27 (male—RD).

**Eastern Bluebirds** were reported widely. When the pair nesting beside his house at Taylor Village, Memramcook, began feeding young Alain Clavette put out meal worms in a dish for them. The bluebirds fed them non-stop to their nestlings as long as the supply of worms was available. This was a tip Alain had read in *Birdwatcher's Digest*.

During a visit to Stillwater Brook, Kedgwick, in the last week of June, Georgette Thibodeau, Gisèle Thibodeau, and Denys Bourque were 95% certain of a **Bicknell's Thrush** calling at a site where the species has been previously reported. Bicknell's also was seen June 26 on Mount Sagamook (MGD+), one of its regular breeding locations.

A very early **Wood Thrush** appeared at Pointe-Alexandre, Lamèque, Apr. 17 (RAC, HC).

**Brown Thrashers** were reported at Taymouth May 16 (JS), Grand Manan on the weekend of May 19-21 (MGD), Bayside May 21 (TD), and Pennfield Ridge July 1 (2—MJC+).

**Bohemian Waxwings** were seen in southern N.B. till Apr. 25 at Shediac Bridge (80—SIT) and Apr. 27 at West River, near Alma (RJW), where they were feeding on rock cranberry fruits. In the north there were 6 at Pokeshaw May 13 (MD) and a really late flock of 20 at Campbellton June 27-28 (Flora Kelly, *fide* MGD).

A **Blue-winged Warbler** was at White Head Island c. May 8 (RL, AC, VB) and a hybrid blue-winged x golden-winged, a "**Brewster's Warbler**," reported at Baker Brook May 19 (GV). The lone **Orange-crowned Warbler** report came from at Grand Manan the weekend of May 13-14 (RG+). **Pine Warblers** are largely confined to the south of the province in spring and

summer but one was seen at Miscou May 27 (Gilles Landry). A **Prairie Warbler**, a greater rarity in spring than in fall, was seen at Machias Seal Island May 25 (Dedreic Grecian).

**Summer Tanagers** were seen at White Head Island May 13 (*fide* BED), Seal Cove May 14-16 (AC+), and Sackville June 27 (2nd-year male—Ruth Miller). Rarer still was a male **Western Tanager** reported at Lower Prince William May 14 (David Myles).

**Eastern Towhees** appeared at Machias Seal Island May 12 (Dedreic Grecian) and Alma May 18-20 (RJW, DR). More interesting was a male on territory at Oromocto Lake from the first half of June into July. On July 3 Gayle Greer thought there might be adults with young but did not study the birds with binoculars, and only the singing male could be found during searches July 7-8 (DGG, PAP).

Only a single **Field Sparrow** was reported, at White Head Island Apr. 22 (RL), but a few **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found, at Alma May 28-29 (singing—RJW+), St. Andrews June 5 (KRN), Harvey Bank June 11 to July 23 (singing—DSC+) and Pointe-Sapin June 26 (singing—JPG, MT).

**American Tree Sparrows** lingered later into May than usual, with some singing at St-Antoine May 13 (DD) and 13 counted on the Miscou Spring Bird Count (*fide* MD). Two late **Lapland Longspurs** were at the Maisonnnette Dune May 8 (MD) and 13 **Snow Buntings** there May 13 (MD), as well as other buntings at Escuminac May 14 (Sandra & Tom Gulliver) and one at Miscou Island May 27 (Spring Bird Count).

A few **Blue Grosbeaks** overshot their breeding range, appearing at Seal Cove May 13 (NB Bird Notes), Ste-Marie-St-Raphaël May 15 (Benoit Duguay), North Head May 21 (*fide* JGW), and Oromocto May 23 (imm. male—Barb Curlew), and Petit-Paquetville June 5 (RR).

A good number of **Indigo Buntings** were reported in southern N.B. during May and June. Northwards there were singles at Pointe-Alexandre May 5-6 (HC, RAC), Val-Comeau May 25 (Éric Breau) and Doaktown June 8 (Faye Cowie, Bill Hooper). A rarity among the buntings was a male **Painted Bunting** that appeared with up to 5 of them at an Alma feeder May 28-30 (DR+).

There were scattered reports of **Eastern Meadowlarks** throughout southern New Brunswick and one was found at Birch Pt, Miscou, July 2-3 (HC). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were reported at Mactaquac May 14 (Fred Steadman), Shippagan May 23-26 (female—Jean-Eudes Haché), Lower Jemseg June 10 (Grant Treger) and Memramcook June 11 (RR). **Orchard Orioles** were seen only at Seal Cove, one to 2 there May 13-16 (AC+) and an adult male May 30 (Ruth Wilcox). **Bullock's Oriole** is not yet accepted on the New



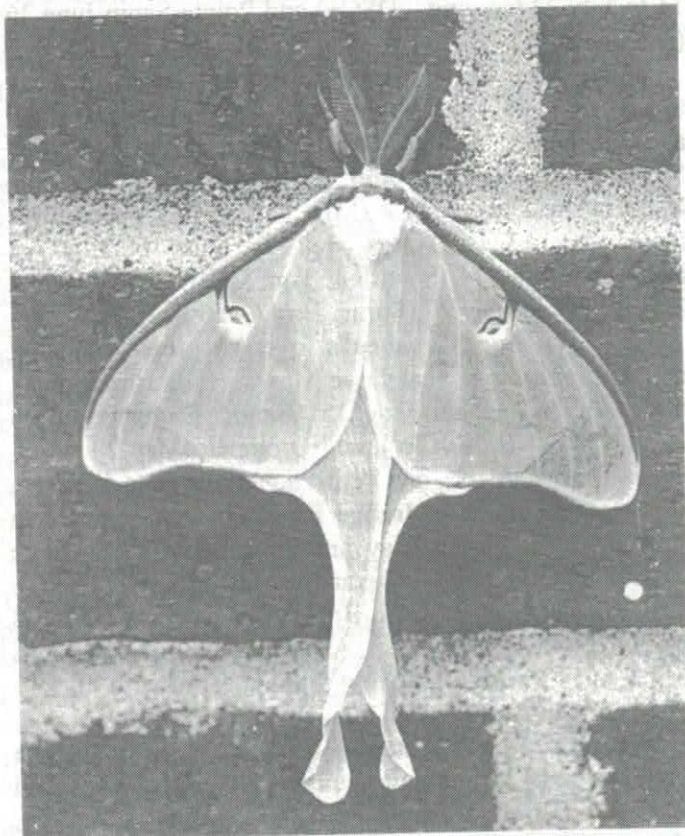
Brunswick list. A new report is of an adult male at Keswick Ridge June 26 (Brian Cowan).

**Common Redpoll** is another winter species that stayed late. After the first week of May, there were some at Pleasant Vale, near Elgin, May 12 (Pearl Nowlan), 7 at Edmundston May 14 (GV), "still some" at Campbellton May 16 (MGD), and a single at Fredericton May 9 and June 6 (Kevin Tutt). Last **Hoary Redpoll** of the season was noticed at Pointe-Verte Apr. 23 (RG).

### Mammals

A very-out-of-place **Harp Seal** at Riverview Apr. 18 (*Times & Transcript* story & photo) may have come up the Petitcodiac River from the Bay of Fundy searching for a route north. A description from David Hughes suggests that the same seal was still there in the second week of June.

**Gray Seals** are a big summer attraction at Kouchibouguac National Park, where a congregation of 200 to 250 could be seen loafing and swimming in late June and July (MLeB).



*Luna Moth*  
Photo by: Don Gibson

Special thanks to Don Vail who digitized the photographs in this issue. Don works as an imaging specialist with Appleby Color Lab in Fredericton.

June 20 marked the start of whale watching season off Grand Manan with the sighting of about 5-6 **Minke Whales**, 5 **Finbacks** and one **Right Whale** (LM).

A **Cougar** observation was reported near Lutes Mountain May 19, when Cheryl Davis's sister-in-law and her husband saw a very large brown, long-tailed cat with a long tail crossing the road just ahead of them.

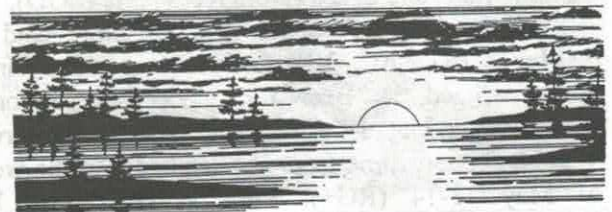
### Abbreviations

AC Alain Clavette; AV Adeline Verret; AWi Ajo Wissink; BED Brian Dalzell; BJS Beverley Schneider; DD Denis Doucet; DGG Don Gibson; DJC David Clark; DR Doreen Rossiter; DSC David Christie; EP Eileen Pike; FD Fred Dubé; FG Fredrica Givan; GB Gart Bishop; GLT Gisèle Thibodeau; GM Grand Manan; GV Gérard Verret; HC Hilaire Chiasson; ID Irene Doyle; JB Jim Brown; JDB J. Denys Bourque; JGW Jim Wilson; JPG Jim Goltz; JS Julie Singleton; JW James Walde; KM Ken MacIntosh; KP Kathy Popma; KRN Kenneth Neilsen; LD Luc DeRoche; LEC Louis-Émile Cormier; LM Laurie Murison; MD Marcel David; MGD Margaret Gallant Doyle; MJC Merv Cormier; MLeB Mike LeBlanc; MT Maureen Toner; NP Nelson Poirier; PAP Peter Pearce; RA Ron Arsenault; RAC Rose-Aline Chiasson; RC Roland Chiasson; RD Robert Doiron; RG Roger Guitard; RJW, Rob Walker; RL, Roger LeBlanc; RM Ruth Miller; RR Roland Robichaud; RS Ron Steeves; s.l. sewage lagoon; SS Shirley Sloat; VB Valmond Bourque; v.o. various observers

The following article appeared in *Sports Illustrated* (Sept. 11, 2000):

### This Week's Sign of the Apocalypse

After angry birders complained they'd heard geographically out-of-place species chirping in the background of some golf telecasts, CBS admitted it had played bird songs during some tournaments for "ambient sound."





## TRADITIONS DIE HARD

*J.A. (Sandy) Burnett*

Traditions die hard. Ask why, and the answer is pretty simple. Local accents, stories, songs, and ways of doing things signify our attachments to a special group. By preserving traditions, we preserve our identity.

Shooting waterfowl and seabirds is a tradition dear to the hearts of Atlantic Canadians. The custom began with the earliest settlers. When our ancestors arrived here, they found a land blessed with fish and game in seemingly endless abundance. Frontier folk, thinly scattered along these rugged coasts, they adopted a free and easy wildlife policy: take what you need when you need it.

Need it they did, until recently. Well into this century there were still communities where the only fresh meat to be had was what could be harvested with a gun. And elsewhere, whether wild game was truly required for subsistence or not, hunting for the table was a tradition sanctioned by generations of practice.

So long as the harvest was moderate, no harm was done. Some species, though, such as the Labrador Duck and the Great Auk, were just too easy to kill and too slow to reproduce. They were hunted to excess by people who took them for granted, and their fate was extinction.

By the start of the twentieth century the recognition began to dawn that wildlife was a finite resource. In 1916, Canada and the United States signed the Migratory Birds Convention and undertook to regulate the hunting of migratory game birds. The free and easy hunting tradition gave way to careful management practices, including closed seasons, specific bag and possession limits, and enforcement officers who backed up words with action.

Enforced conservation came none too soon. With steady advances in technology – high-powered speedboats, snowmobiles, and automatic repeating shotguns, for example – hunters were rapidly acquiring the means to decimate game populations if the hunt remained unregulated.

The vast majority of hunters in Atlantic Canada accepted the need for a regulated harvest. Today they respect the game laws and are among the most vocal in urging rigorous enforcement. Still, there remain communities and individuals who dishonour the cherished hunting tradition by killing without restraint, in season and out. They cling to poaching as if it were a right – some from tradition; some for perverse pleasure; some to supply a lucrative, illicit market.

Poaching can occur wherever there is secluded habitat for birds and poachers. It's a recurring problem

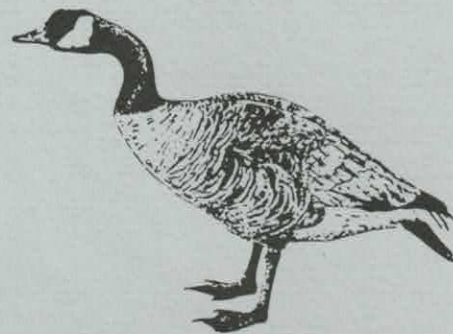
here and there throughout the Atlantic Provinces. Till recently, one traditional trouble spot was New Brunswick's northeast coast during the spring migration of sea ducks. Gunners, forewarned of the approach of enforcement officers by spotters with CB radios, would simply produce a provincial varmit license and claim they were shooting cormorants or crows.

To sell or buy migratory birds is a federal offence punishable by a fine of up to \$300 and/or as much as six months in jail. On the other hand, a price of ten or fifteen dollars per bird can add up to significant untaxed income for a person with time on his hands and little respect for the law. In one case last year in Newfoundland, six poachers were convicted of possessing 676 eider ducks. The potential return from such a haul can be tempting, especially when judges often treat hunting infractions as petty misdemeanours, assessing fines as low as ten dollars.

Steadily the tide is turning against flagrant abuses of hunting regulations. From 1980 to 1984 fifteen migratory bird charges were laid in Newfoundland; in 1987 there were about 90. This winter, poachers have been arrested and charged in Nova Scotia for night hunting of Canada Geese. And in New Brunswick last year, the provincial government amended its regulations under the Fish and Wildlife Act, making it an offence to carry a firearm on board a boat in any tidal waters bounded by Westmorland, Kent, Northumberland, Gloucester or Restigouche counties during the closed season for migratory game birds.

Wanton destruction of wildlife can be greatly reduced by enforcement. It won't be stopped

outright, though, while citizens still turn a blind eye to infractions or continue to purchase illegal game. After all, unregulated hunting has been a long-standing tradition in Atlantic Canada. And traditions die hard.



*Editor's note: This article was originally published by the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1988.*



Cecil Lockett Johnston & John James Audubon



See Page 39

Little Known History of New Brunswick

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