

March 2/84

Pine warbler sighted in province

My apologies to Jeep Bosma. When he reported a Pine Warbler at his bird feeder on the day of our Christmas Bird Count, I suggested that perhaps it was a Palm Warbler knowing that the Palm Warbler had been recorded on previous Christmas Bird Counts in New Brunswick.

Later information supports Jeep's identification. David Christie of the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John says that last fall there was a flight of Pine Warblers into our province.

Reports of them came in from scattered points throughout New Brunswick, including some that were seen on other Christmas Bird Counts besides our own.

Of course, judging strictly by the names, the Pine Warbler seems much more likely to be found here than does the Palm.

We still have Pine Trees standing, whi' despite our recent mild winters, no palm trees have yet been reported.

Often misleading

However, bird names are often misleading. The Palm Warbler breeds regularly in New Brunswick (though not in large numbers) — usually around the edges of bogs. Its range even extends up into Labrador.

The Palm Warbler is also one of our earliest warblers to arrive in the spring, and one of the latest to leave in the fall.

It winters in the southern United States and southward through the Caribbean Region. But, W. Austin Squires, in his book "The Birds of New Brunswick" states, — "A few fail to migrate and are still in the province in December."

On the other hand, the Pine Warbler has never been known to nest in New Brunswick — its breeding range extending only into southern Maine.

Squires, in his above mentioned book, (published in 1976) records no occurrences of this species during any of the winter months, although he does have a record for one seen at the Hopewell Rocks on Nov. 22, 1976; and another seen at Kingshurst (a superb of Saint John) on Nov. 10, 1962.

So, the flight of Pine Warblers into our province last fall, and Jeep's sighting of one of them, were very rare events.

Possibly two

Actually, Jeep said that he thought that there were two of them at his feeder, but he was unable to get his eyes on both of them at the same time and therefore was not sure of this.

The Pine Warbler seems to be especially prevalent in areas of Pitch Pine, found to the south of us.

Farther west it is found in areas of Jack and Red Pine, but it is not attracted to White Pine. During migration it may be in any kind of woods. It winters in the southern United States.

Harry Walker

Wildlife



The Pine Warbler has a yellow breast, an olive coloured back, and two white wing bars.

In searching for food, it travels along the trunks and larger branches, clinging to the bark in the same manner as does the Black and White Warbler or the Brown Creeper.

Another grey

Another Grey Squirrel has been reported — this time from Chatham, where Doris Carter saw one in her backyard earlier this winter.

Another kind of squirrel has been reported from McKinleyville where Irene Clark lives. She has a Flying Squirrel coming to her bird feeder.

It returns every night between 10 and 12 o'clock and can be seen by turning on the yard light.

This light apparently does not disturb it for it carries on its activities without any evidence of distraction.

There have been two reports of Bohemian Waxwings — the first from Mrs. Charles Clark of the Bathurst Road, the second from Roderick McDonald of Nelson-Miramichi.

The Clarks had over 70 of them on Feb. 25, and some of them have been coming there frequently during the last few days.

14 at Nelson

Roderick said that there were 14 of them at Nelson, and he commented on how tame they were. Terres mentions this in his book, and says that they may alight on one's shoulders or head.

Like almost all of the Bohemian Waxwings reported in this area, the birds in both of the above instances were feeding on crab apples.

Terres states they can be attracted to bird feeders, if dried fruit such as raisins, currants, prunes, etc., are provided.

One puzzling report comes from Clara Croft of Chatham who says that on Feb. 18, two birds came to her yard to eat some bread which she had thrown out for them.

One bird was an ordinary pigeon; but the other one, though like a pigeon in size and build, had a comb on its head like a chicken.

Also, this bird was coloured differently from a pigeon — it being rusty brown on the head and neck (including the comb), and a paler, sandy shade of brown over the rest of its body.

Since this bird does not seem to fit the description of any of our native birds, it may be an escaped domestic fowl of some kind. If you can solve this mystery, let us know.

Solutions proposed for glut of seagulls

March 9/84

Harry Walker

Wildlife



A controversy over how to deal with the over-population of seagulls along Toronto's waterfront is contained in Saturday's Times and Transcript.

Two solutions are suggested:

The Canadian Wildlife Service has advocated that some of the gull's eggs be sprayed with kerosene to prevent them from hatching.

A retired professor of biochemistry, Dmytro Buchnea, says the eggs should be eaten. He says the kerosene could be harmful to other forms of wildlife and that these eggs are nourishing and delicious anyway, having a mild fish flavour, and for this reason, are prized as food in some European countries.

Apparently he is not worried by reports that Toronto's seagull eggs are contaminated by chemical poisons—these poisons originating in the contaminated garbage which the gulls eat. To prove this, he is offering to eat seagull eggs over a five-year experimental period.

"The Cama-i Book", a book about Alaskan living and customs, has more to say on this subject. According to this book, seagull eggs are good when boiled, but not when fried.

If fried, they become so tough and rubbery that it is difficult to cut them let alone eat them.

Good for baking

It is further stated that these eggs are good for use in baking, and that when used in a cake, the cake will rise about one-half inch higher than it would if chicken's eggs were used instead.

According to Hal H. Harrison in his "Field Guide to Bird's Nests", Herring Gull eggs average 72.3 x 50.5 millimeters, while Great Black-backed Gull eggs average 77.9 x 54.2 millimeters. These are the two most common gulls in New Brunswick.

When I measured three Grade "A" large chicken eggs that were in our refrigerator, I was surprised to find they were considerably smaller, averaging 57.8 x 44.1 millimeters.

It is difficult to calculate the volume of an egg from such dimensions. (If you don't think so—try it).

You can arrive at their volume by measuring the volume of water that they displace, but in order to do this, you need to have the eggs on hand.

In this case, I had no seagull eggs on hand, so I had to resort to other methods.

According to my calculations, a Herring Gull's egg is approximately 64% larger than a chicken's egg; while a Great Black-backed Gull's egg is about 104% larger, or almost exactly twice as big.

This leads me to the following conclusion—

Start on industry

We should start a new industry in the Maritimes. This is the ideal place for it.

We could domesticate seagulls, set up this industry beside some of our fish processing plants, feed them fish entrails and laying mash.

By feeding them laying mash, we should be able to induce them to lay year-round, the same as hens.

By experimenting with different species and hybrids, we should be able to determine which are the most suitable for this purpose.

By putting some good commercials on TV, we should be able to convince people that these eggs are delicious and so establish a market.

The unusual properties of fried seagull eggs should make them useful as sink-stoppers, for patching tires, for mending holes in canoes, and for hundreds of other purposes.

It can be visualized a whole complex of satellite industries springing up around such seagulleries.

Mail goes to
Moncton 7:30 p.m.
and 10:30 p.m.

Fredonston 10:30 p.m.

32° up to 30 gms
48° " " 50 "

OLD MANSE LIBRARY

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1:00 p.m. TO 8:00 p.m.

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1:00 p.m. TO 5:00 p.m.

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10:00 a.m. TO 5:00 p.m.

Whistler returning?

March 16/84

Swan sighted in Nelson-Miramichi

Will the Whistling Swan return to New Brunswick?

It was never here in large numbers and it disappeared long ago.

Squires, in his book (1976) said the Indians had a name for it. Chamberlain, writing in 1887, said it was occasionally seen with flocks of wild geese.

Still earlier, in 1708, Diereville said that at that time it nested around the Bay of Fundy.

However, in this century, reports of Swans have been few and far between. Squires lists only three for New Brunswick, while Tufts lists five for Nova Scotia.

The two most recent of these were both in Nov. 1966; and, since these two reports came only four days apart. Since they originated from points almost directly across the Bay of Fundy from one another, they may represent some of the same birds.

Four were seen at Brier Island, N.S. on Nov. 9, while at least 10 were seen at Grand Manan Island on Nov. 13.

Two new reports

The above can be found in the literature. Now comes two new reports of Swans in the Maritimes—one of these being of one that visited our immediate neighbourhood.

Rev. Don Hoddinott of Newcastle has informed me that late last September he saw a Swan on a small lake in the Nelson-Miramichi area (near Passmore).

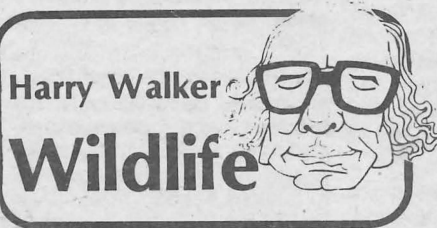
When he hiked into this lake he had his lunch with him, and this he ate on the shore there.

Upon finishing it, he threw a crust out to the Swan—throwing it as far out over the water as he could. The Swan came and took the bread and was less than 40 yards away from him.

Don said it had a long snake-like neck—the neck being of almost uniform size from head to shoulders—not tapering as is the case with most birds. Its tail turned upwards—not straight back as in the case of a gull.

Its eye and beak were black and its feathers were white (or almost all white). There seemed to be a light bluish grey tinge on the back, but Don thought this may have been only an illusion caused by a shadow. There was also a dark area in front of its eye.

He watched the bird for some time but it made no attempt to fly. When he returned a week or two later, it was gone.



At the time, Don says that he was not sure that it was a Swan, but after returning home and referring to Godfrey's book "The Birds of Canada", he found that the picture of the Whistling Swan corresponded exactly to the bird which he had seen.

He further says, that sometime later, he watched a TV program that dealt with the Whistling Swan—specifically, a group of 4 or 5 of them which stopped over somewhere in Nova Scotia this past fall. This TV account constitutes the second new report as stated earlier.

Mature Whistling Swans have a pure white plumage, but Godfrey says they often have a reddish stain on their heads and necks. Immature birds have an ashy grey plumage.

Winter woodpecker

Margaret Russell of Strathadam reports, that periodically all this winter, there has been a Northern three-toed Woodpecker coming to a dead fir tree beside their house.

Through its activities, the woodpecker has now stripped the three almost entirely of its bark.

Maxime Tozer of Northwest Bridge had a Kingfisher outside her kitchen window on Feb. 24; while a neighbour, Mrs Mel Henderson, had five Robins come to dine on some crab apples, still hanging on a tree in her yard, on Jan. 15.

Maxime says the creek beside her home is partially open almost all winter.

Chester Creighton, who works at the South Esk Fish Hatchery, says that almost every year, a Kingfisher will be seen 2 or 3 times during the winter. Again, there is always some open water there.

Club meeting

A meeting of the Miramichi Naturalist Club will be held on Wednesday evening, March 21, at the home of George Cadogan, Nelson-Miramichi, meeting to start at 8:00 p.m.

Bruce Ferguson, Chief Metallurgist at Heath Steele Mines, will be giving a slide presentation on the Yukon and British Columbia.

Pileated woodpecker recipes, recitations

The Pileated Woodpecker is sometimes called The Cock of the Woods, and this name in turn, is sometimes rendered Woodcock.

Even Terres, in his "Encyclopedia of North American Birds" gives Woodcock as another name for the Pileated Woodpecker.

However, the true Woodcock is a very different bird. It is entirely unrelated to the Pileated Woodpecker.

This confusion of names led to an amusing incident in the life of Stirling Burchill of Nelson-Miramichi. Here is his story as he, himself, related it, —

It was back around 1930. Stirling and the late Pat Sullivan were walking together on the Semi-wagon Ridge and, although it was not his general habit to do so, Stirling was carrying a gun.

A bird appeared which Pat identified as a Woodcock. Stirling, having heard of other people eating Woodcock, decided to try one for himself. He shot it, took it home, his wife cooked it, and they ate it.

Sometime later, Stirling became friends with Dr. Alexander Bell, who, at that time, had a practice in Newcastle.

Dr. Bell was a knowledgeable outdoors man and was accustomed to hunting Woodcock.

When Stirling told him about eating this Woodcock and described it to him, Dr. Bell informed him that it was no Woodcock that he had eaten, but rather a Pileated Woodpecker.

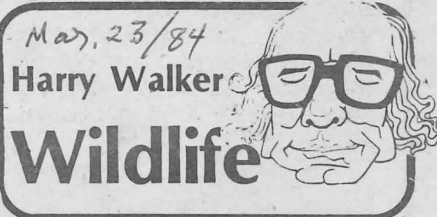
Stirling says he cannot remember what the woodpecker tasted like, but that he can attest to its nutritional value for he is now 84.

On the other hand, he says he is now a conservationist and he realizes that the Pileated Woodpecker is protected by law, and therefore should never be eaten except in emergencies.

Winter visitors

Earlier this winter, Stirling and Mrs. Burchill had a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers visit their yard in Nelson while Vince McCarthy also saw one in the mill yard. (not far away) about two weeks later.

The Pileated Woodpecker origi-



nally had a very wide distribution in Canada and the United States but it was greatly reduced in numbers, and in much of its range, completely wiped out.

Taverner, writing about 40 or 50 years ago, said "this once much more widely distributed bird is to be found only in the quiet of the more northern woods."

However, in recent years, it has made a comeback and is now much more common again. Also, it has reclaimed much of its original territory which it had lost.

Its cousin, and still larger woodpecker, the Ivory-billed, has not been so fortunate. It is now near extinction.

It never ranged this far north, but was found throughout the southern states. The last one was seen there in Dec. 1946 but it is said to still exist in Cuba.

Roger Tory Peterson saw two Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in some virgin timberland in Louisiana shortly before they disappeared from there.

In his book "Birds Over America" he describes the awe with which he viewed them. They were depicted as being "downright archaic" and as being entirely different from any other bird he had ever before seen, including the Pileated.

After reading this column of two weeks ago — one dealing with seagulls — Stirling had this suggestion, —

Since the Icelanders are depleting the Eider duck population by eating their eggs, perhaps we could convert them to eating seagull eggs and thus save the Eiders.

Every year, in March, a Bald Eagle appears along the river in front of Newcastle. This year is no exception.

Maizie Matergio reported seeing one in front of her place on Sunday, March 11.

Adult Application
for

Joanne Godin
P.O. Box 128

Lower Neguac EOCIMO

Deciding on a summer camp?

Are you, or is your child, interested in attending an outdoor camp this summer?

If so, the Living Rivers Program at Tabusintac, or the North Woods Canoeing Program on the St. Croix River, might be the one you are looking for.

Both are economical — being highly subsidized; and both are sponsored by the Atlantic Centre for the Environment, a division of the Quebec-Labrador Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of our wildlife.

I attended the Living Rivers camp a few years ago and have been in touch with the staff during some of the other summers.

Judging from this experience, I believe you will find the staff to be friendly and helpful, the food to be good, and the activities enjoyable. Among the other participants you will probably meet people from a wide geographical area and from varied walks of life.

Here is what the brochure says about these two camps, -

Living Rivers, Tabusintac

A river has a life of its own, a life we invite you to share during this exciting summer — our tenth as an environmental education camp. You'll find out about forest and freshwater resources, salmon conservation and acid rain. You've heard people talk about things like this: here's your chance to see how they affect your world.

Activities include:

Wildlife walks.

Individual and group projects to conduct small experiments and record natural history observations.

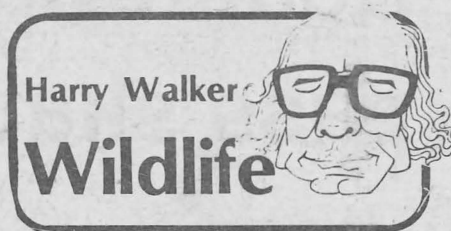
Swimming, canoeing and hiking with the staff.

Movies, skits, games and group sings.

Special guest visitors.

Keeping a personal journal

Field trips to places of special interest, including forestry operations, fisheries to see their resource management techniques, and national and provincial parks.



Session information

15-20 participants per session.

Session 1, July 1-6, ages 11-13, fees \$75.

Session 2, July 8-13, ages 11-13, fees \$75.

Session 3, July 15-20, ages 11-13, fees \$75.

Session 4, July 25-Aug. 3, ages 14-17, fees \$100.

This last session includes an overnight field trip.

North Woods Canoeing Program
Primary waterway: St. Croix River.

Special sessions are being considered for the Allagash, Miramichi, Nepisiguit, or Restigouche Rivers.

Come with us

Come on expedition with us! We'll teach you how to handle yourself skillfully in a canoe and in the wilderness, and you'll learn first-hand about freshwater natural history. Our staff is well-trained in canoeing, outdoor first aid and survival skills.

Each trip includes:

Learning in the field about water

safety, camping, woodsmanship, and natural history.

Canoeing challenging stretches of rivers and rapids.

Exploring and hiking.

Informal discussions about the North Woods world, including aquatic biology and wildlife, and a chance to talk with biologists, foresters and resources managers.

Session information

6 participants per session.

Session 1, July 1-6, ages 13-15, fees \$75.

Session 2, July 11-16, ages 13-15, fees \$75.

Session 3, July 22-27, ages 13-15, fees \$75.

Session 4, August 1-10, ages 16-18, fees \$125.

This last session is a white water expedition.

Registration Information (Both programs)

The enrolment fee includes all room, board and transportation for each session.

A non-refundable deposit of \$35. is require to reserve a space in the program.

If necessary, financial assistance is available through program sponsor, some of whom are willing to help with the registration fees or transportation. If you need and are unable to find a sponsoring organization, we'll be happy to assist.

Application Forms

For application forms call 622-2108.

Signs of spring are on the rise

A few days ago, the only convincing evidence of spring, were the pot-holes in the roads. Recently the pace has quickened, and evidence is mounting that that long-awaited season is upon us.

Officially spring started at 6:25 a.m. on the morning of Mar. 20; but it was certainly not evident to a casual observer. For most of us something more is required than this official pronouncement. Spring is announced by nature's vanguard — the songs of returning birds; or the appearance of the first bright-eyed Crocus, or the first sweet-scented Mayflower.

For me, spring started on the morning of April 1. On that bright and cloudless morning, before I had even gotten past my doorstep, I heard my first Red-winged Blackbird of the year. That was only the beginning — before the day was over, I had added 5 new species to my list.

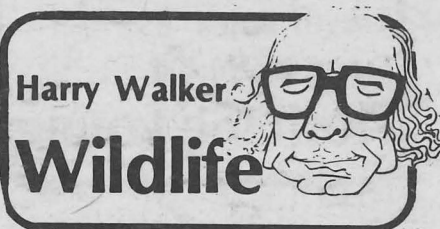
Next came that superb singer the Song Sparrow, whose lack of colour is more than compensated for by his voice. He was adding cheer to an otherwise desolate piece of landscape behind Miramichi Mall.

Bald Eagle

In the evening, Steven Norton reported a Bald Eagle sitting on the ice of the river, out from MacDonald's Auto Body shop. When I arrived I found not only the eagle but also 6 Black Ducks and 11 Common Mergansers.

One of our earliest birds is the Kildeer. It was reported at Bryenton on Mar. 23, when Boyd Carnahan saw a flock of about 10 of them. Spring must be a little earlier out there, for none have yet reached Newcastle.

The migratory urge in some birds



must be very strong, for one domestic goose apparently set out by foot. It arrived in Keith Henderson's yard, at Northwest Bridge, on Mar. 26. Where it came from is a mystery for Keith says that no one within

miles keeps any geese. This bird is now in the care of the Department of Natural Resources.

Other creatures too

Not only are the birds returning, but other creatures are responding to the increased warmth from the sun. On my April 1st walk, I noticed that some flies were buzzing about, and two spiders were out for a stroll.

However, in these two observations, I was away behind some other observers. On Mar. 21, John

Coughlan saw a fly walking on top of the snow in Nelson; and, about a month ago, Agnes Moffat saw a black spider walking on the snow while she was shovelling out her driveway in Newcastle.

Among the mammals, the skunks are again astir. They have not been seen, but they are again sloshing their perfume about indiscriminantly. In this way, their presence was strongly announced, both in Newcastle, and at one location in the surrounding bush — both on Mar. 31.

Easy to be deterred in search

This week I am going to digress from my usual subject of wildlife.

A member of Alcoholics Anonymous has requested that I reproduce the following poem in the hope that it may shed some light on others' paths as it has his.

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self

And the world makes you king for a day,

Just go to a mirror and look at yourself,

And see what THAT man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife

Who judgment upon you must pass;

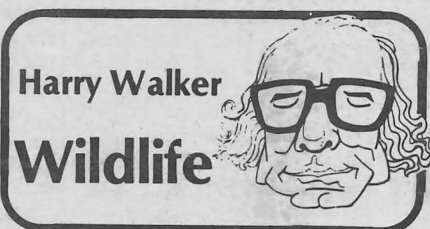
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life

Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you a straight-shootin' chum

And call you a wonderful guy, But the man in the glass says you're only a bum

If you can't look him straight in the eye.



He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest

For he's with you clear up to the end,

And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test

If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years

And get pats on the back as you pass,

But your final reward will be heartaches and tears

If you've cheated the man in the glass.

The End

Life a search

Continuing in a similar vein: I prefer to think that life is a search, rather than a competition — a search for truth, a search for God, a search for our true identity, and in

this search we are in competition with none.

But, competition is so stressed in so many aspects of our society that we can easily get distracted or entirely side-tracked in this search, and confusion, frustration, and despair is the common result.

One writer once said "In order to please friends and relatives, we work the mines of silver, while the mines of gold are left untouched."

Birds set fire to homes with burning butts

For the next couple of months, while the birds are nest building, take care when disposing of cigarette butts.

According to the Moncton Purple Martin and Bird Society, cigarette butts are considered prime building material by both House Sparrows and Starlings.

But, these birds make no distinction between a dead butt and a smouldering one and the result is that they will carry a smouldering butt into their home and set fire to it.

Since both of these species habitually build in knot holes and cranies about buildings, they can also set fire to our homes.

It is believed some previously mysterious fires have been caused in this way.

Speaking of birds and cigarette butts: I once read of a traveller visiting India, who said there was a bird there that would swallow burning cigarette butts.

It apparently suffered no pain in doing this for it would continue to swallow these lighted butts, one after another, as long as they were thrown to it.

Spring birds

Many reports of spring birds have been coming in. I failed to keep good records of all of these.

The earliest Robins returned during the first few days of April, Val Keating reporting two in Strathadam and Mrs. Arnoldus reporting one in Chatham.

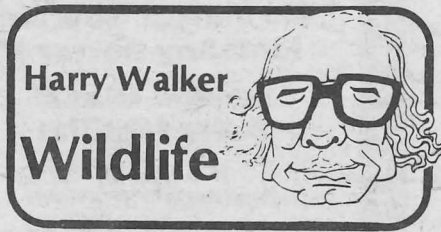
The first large flock was reported by Verna King at Oak Point this morning (April 15). She also reported Great Blue Herons there; however an earlier one was reported by Doug Underhill at Mill Cove on April 5.

Mourning Dove

Earlene Hunter of Sunny Corner reported that a Mourning Dove had been coming to her yard periodically since Mar. 28, and that it was joined by a second one on April 9.

Lem McDonald also reported a Mourning Dove coming to his feeder in Newcastle on April 11.

John Keating reported a flock of Snow Geese at Chatham on April 7. They flew along honking and passed directly over head at an elevation of only about 40 feet.



John also reported two Lapland Longspurs on the Gordon Road on April 13.

Bald eagle

The Bald Eagle was again reported on the river in front of New-castle — this time by Chris Treadwell who said it was in hot pursuit of a seagull.

This is an uncommon activity for a Bald Eagle since it lives almost entirely on fish.

However, a few years ago, Phillip Ansoin, while visiting on Cape Breton Island, reported seeing a Bald Eagle attack a gull. This seemed to be a spite attack since the eagle did not feed on the gull.

In a recent issue of the New Brunswick Naturalist, a Bald Eagle was reported to have been seen catching a muskrat; and, Charles Broley, the Eagle Man of Florida,

reported finding the remains of Scaup Ducks and Great Blue Herons at Bald Eagle's nests.

Domestic goose

The origin of the domestic goose that appeared in Keith Henderson's yard at Northwest Bridge on March 26, is thought to have been determined.

Donald Gordon had seven geese which he kept at an open part of a creek at Maple Glen.

He built a shelter for them there which they could enter or leave at will and he fed them regularly.

Early in February they were attacked by dogs. Two were killed and the rest were scattered through the bush.

A wounded one was tracked down the next day, two turned up at a neighbour's place on Mar. 20, the sixth was found living near a spring last week.

The seventh is presumed to be the one that turned up at Keith Henderson's — this domestic fowl having travelled through the bush from Maple Glen and having survived the better part of two months of winter weather without shelter and without food other than what it could find on its own.

Bird activity brisk despite cold weather

Despite the unspringlike weather, bird activity has been brisk.

Out in Maple Glen there are two angry crows. Their newly constructed home was lost when the tree in which it was located was felled.

This was unintentional as the woodsman Eddie Nash did not know it was there. Otherwise, the tree would have been spared.

However, the accident did provide us with an excellent opportunity to examine the nest in detail, and it certainly looked like a valuable piece of crow real estate.

It was estimated to weigh about 25 or 30 pounds, and consisted of a platform of sticks supporting a cup made of usnea lichens, deer hair, shredded cedar bark, a few strands from an old rug, and a piece of glass wool insulation — all this being firmly woven together.

It had been placed in a Jack Pine about 40 feet from the ground. The tree was toppled on April 12 — rather early for a crow to have its nest completed.

The predominant material in the nest was the usnea lichens, commonly known as Old Man's Beard Moss — those pale-green hairlike growths that hang from the branches of trees in the bush and which are especially noticeable on dead or dying spruce and fir.

Not in town

These lichens never seem to grow in town and this is probably due to the fact that there is too much air pollution there. Lichens are very sensitive to this, in fact, their absence is a good indicator of air pollution. Incidentally, these lichens do no harm to the trees they are on.

Oldsquaw ducks

On the evening of April 18, I was alerted to a flock of Oldsquaw Ducks that had settled on a small patch of open water beside the Cement Plant in Chatham. Martin McIntyre, along with Steven, Kirk, and Amanda met me there.

Having never before observed these ducks at such close range, I hadn't realized what an exquisitely coloured duck the Oldsquaw is. Some were in summer plumage, and some were in a transitional plumage.

During the yearly cycle, these ducks display a confusing array of colours for the males have three distinct plumages and the females two.

The males have a winter plumage, a summer plumage, and an

Harry Walker

Wildlife



eclipse plumage. Besides this, they may be seen in intermediate plumages while changing from one to another. The two female plumages are again distinct from any of the male plumages.

One characteristic that remains constant is the long, thin, pointed tail of the males. The Pintail also has this sort of tail, but it is a puddle duck frequenting only shallow pools, whereas the Oldsquaw is a deep water duck found mostly on salt water.

Oldsquaws, which feed largely on mussels and other shell fish, are capable of surprising deep-diving feats. Terres says they have been caught in fishermen's nets at depth of 180 to 200 feet.

Researchers at Churchill Manitoba found the Oldsquaws placed their nests near Tern colonies, and in this way obtained free policing services.

(Terns mob any predators that come near their colony and drive them away. This protects the Oldsquaw's nest as well as their own.)

Influx of Juncos

Down in Lower Newcastle, Theresa Ross has had a great influx of Juncos. Late last week they started coming by the dozens, but then on April 20 and 21, they were there by the hundreds — feeding on the ground all around her house.

What they were finding was hard to determine but they must have been picking up fine weed seeds or grass seeds in addition to some seeds scattered from the winter bird feeder.

Cormorants back

The Black Shags or Double-crested Cormorants are back in countless numbers.

On that very wintery morning of April 21, with the snow falling, Doug Underhill phoned to report a flock of about 200 of them at Mill Cove.

About an hour later Don Hoddinott phoned to report about 1,000 of them along the water front back of Creaghan's store — some on the ice, some in the water, and some diving into the water from the air.

May 4/85

Try dandelion fritters for a treat this spring

Wilbur Travis of Sillikers has had a lone Red Squirrel spend the last couple of winters in a shed by his house. He wonders when the Red Squirrel has its young.

Banfield, in his book "The Mammals of Canada," says that in the southern part of its range, the Red Squirrel has two litters—the first in April or May, and the second in August or September; while in the northern part of its range, it has only one litter.

At our latitude, I believe it normally has only one litter, but I am not certain about this.

According to Banfield, the young emerge from the nest at the age of 10 weeks, at which time they are about a third grown; but they continue to remain with the mother until about 18 weeks (4 months or a little better).

At our cottage one year, a litter of young Red Squirrels appeared about the middle of August, after which, they were seen every day.

Going by Banfield's figures, these squirrels would have been born in late May or early June, and they would leave their mother about the 1st of October.

It appears that the male takes little part in the rearing of the young. To quote Banfield "The male may form a loose attachment with its mate over a period of months and shares the same den with its partner or half-grown young."

Litter size varies

The size of a litter varies greatly. Sometimes a single offspring is produced; while in other cases, as many as eight are produced. The average is about four and a half.

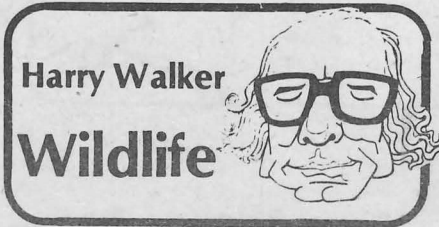
Last summer, I was surprised to see a Red Squirrel swim across the main Southwest Miramichi, near Blissfield.

I followed it with my binoculars until it reached the opposite side, whereupon it quickly scampered up the bank and disappeared.

Dandelions appear

The dandelion season is upon us. A few of these yellow blooms could be found on the south side of buildings, on April 28.

This is good news to some people and bad news to others—depending



on whether or not you eat them.

Personally, I have always found the leaves to be too strong and bitter; while the flowers are much better. My wife has a simple recipe for dandelion fritters—

Just make up a fritter batter, throw in a handful of the flower heads, fry in deep fat, and serve with syrup.

Here are a couple of tips about harvesting the greens—

An article in the Globe and Mail says to use only the outer half of the leaf—the half that is farthest from the stem; while an article in the Christian Science Monitor says to harvest the leaves when they first appear and before the bud develops.

This same article refers to Vine-

land, New Jersey as the dandelion capital of the United States for here dandelions are grown commercially on a large scale to be sold in nearby city markets.

These dandelions are grown for the greens which are generally used in raw salads but which may be cooked in such recipes as Dandelion Quiche.

Donna Sanders of Lower Sackville, N.S. feeds her cat spinach.

She says that if she doesn't, it eats her house plants; but when fed spinach, it leaves them alone.

May 11, 1985

Small Swift Fox returns to plains

"Return of the Native" is the title of two independently produced articles that have recently been published.

The first appeared in Nature Canada and deals with the reintroduction of the Swift Fox to Canada's western plains. It was written by Richard H. Russell and George W. Scotter.

The second appeared in National Wildlife (published in the U.S.) and deals with the reintroduction of the Musk Ox to Alaska. It was written by Maryanne Newsom-Brighton.

The Swift Fox is small — only about half the size of our common Red Fox. As its name implies it is very fast; but the term "sly as a fox" apparently was never derived from this species.

It is easily trapped and easily attracted to poisoned bait. This, along with the turning of much of the native prairie into farmland, led to its expiration in Canada and in most of its range in the United States.

Its last officially recognized occurrence in Canada was at Man-berries, Alberta, in 1938.

Some survived

However, some Swift Foxes survived in a few pockets in the U.S. With stricter regulations on trapping and poisoning, their numbers began to increase again in the 1950's

Now, the Canadian Wildlife Service, in co-operation with a number of other agencies is attempting to re-establish the species in Canada.

For this project, they have selected what is considered to be one of the most suitable areas for it — an area in southeastern Alberta where the human population is sparse and public roads are widely spaced.

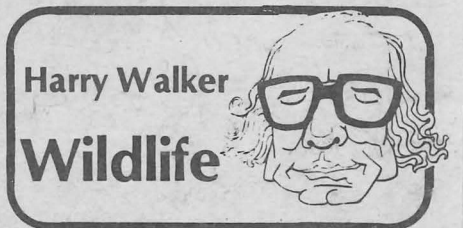
It is too early to say how successful this attempt will be; but, four out of six pairs released in the area, are known to have produced 13 pups in the spring of 1983.

Musk Ox disappeared

The Musk Ox disappeared from Alaska about 120 years ago. By the beginning of this century, only small remnants of their original population remained — these being found in the northernmost parts of Canada and Greenland.

The decline in their population stemmed mainly from the fact that their natural method of defence was ill-designed to protect them against modern firearms.

They travel in small groups of 8



to 15 individuals; and, when attacked, gather together to form a circle — their heads pointed outward, and their tails pointed inward towards the centre — the calves being enclosed within it.

Gathered in this formation, their horns can be used effectively to ward off predators, but not bullets.

Despite their clumsy appearance, they are capable of running long distances at high speeds, but they seldom resort to this.

Low rate of reproduction was also a factor contributing to their decline; but, this rate of reproduction varies greatly depending on the conditions under which they are living.

With good pasture

On poor pasture, a cow will have her first calf at four years of age, and will then have one every second year after that. But, on good pasture, she will have her first calf at two years of age, and will then have one each year after that.

Efforts to re-establish the Musk Ox in Alaska began in the 1930s when 34 of them were shipped there from northern Greenland. These were released on Nunivak Island, off the coast.

By 1969, this herd had grown to 750 animals, and the island was becoming over-populated. New herds were then started at four other locations in Alaska, and these are also growing.

Other good news

Other good news on the conservation front comes from Tass news agency. It reported that a group of Soviet researchers, with the Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography, spotted 20 Asian Gray Whales, a species thought to have been extinct since the beginning of this century.

This sighting took place last fall, and a Soviet research expedition is planned for this spring, its objective being to gather further information about these whales.

This expedition will go to the Shantar Islands, near to where the sighting took place, and an area known to be a former summer gathering place for these whales.

Millstream means rough waters

One of the joys of canoeing is coming home and putting on a dry pair of socks.

Also, you are fortunate if that is all that is needed to restore your comfort.

On a trip down the Millstream with my sons, Bruce and Ian, we managed to get through without any upsets but, only barely so.

This was on the evening of May 10, and the water was very high. Bruce and I were in the canoe, and Ian was in the kayak.

We embarked from the Chaplin Island Road beside John Ryan's place, and we disembarked at the Sunny Corner Road in Whitneyville.

The volume of water was sufficient that we had little trouble with the "growlers" — those big, hidden boulders that claw the paint off the bottoms of canoes.

However, the large volume of water resulted in unusually deep waves on the rapids.

Before we had gone far, we were taking water over the bow; but, by landing periodically and dumping the water, we kept it afloat.

Portage around dam

Of course, we had to portage around the old Fraser dam. There is no way you can go through the slot in that dam without smashing up your canoe — at least not when the water is as high as it was at that time.

Since the water is rougher below the dam, than above it, Bruce and I moved to the middle of the canoe. (This makes the canoe more difficult to manoeuvre, but it allows the ends of it to ride up on the waves better.)

We still took in water; but, without resorting to this tactic, we surely would have swamped it.

When we came around one sharp bend in the stream, there was a "sweeper", right in front of us. A tall spruce had fallen — its trunk about two feet above the surface and its limbs combing all the debris from the water.

It required some frantic back — paddling to avoid getting racked up on that.

A short portage through a tangled growth of alders got us around that obstacle and gave us another opportunity to dump the water out of our canoe.

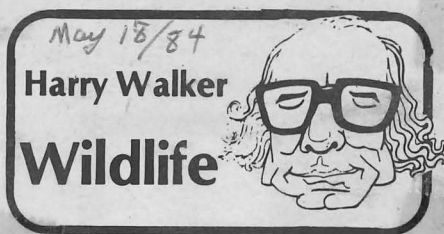
Next came the "chute" — a very narrow section through which the water rushes — the fastest section in the Millstream.

This chute ends with a few large standing waves, with deep troughs. It is difficult at any time to get through without taking in some water.

Also, there is a large submerged boulder at the bottom end of the chute, but, if you stay a little to the right of centre, you avoid this.

We missed the boulder okay and managed to keep afloat, but we had about a barrel full of water in the canoe.

Besides being uncomfortable, this makes a canoe heavy, unstable, and hard to handle. So, as soon as was possible, we landed and overturned our canoe again.



Comparably mild

This was a mild canoe trip compared with some — including one down the upper reaches of the Barnaby in late April.

That trip had countless hazards and was finally terminated very abruptly. All participants went for an unscheduled swim.

That was back of Mike Edmonds Mechanical Repair shop in Collette. Mike kindly offered us dry

clothes and the use of his telephone.

The Barnaby is a good river to canoe, but it is recommended that you put in at the first bridge north of Collette, rather than trying to canoe closer to the headwaters.

Also, there is a short, rough set of rapids just above the mouth that you should avoid unless you are confident that you are a good canoeist.

On Saturday morning, May 19, weather permitting, there will be a field trip at the South Esk Fish Hatchery Nature Trail, starting at 7:30 a.m.

To pick up the tardy ones, the party will return to the start of the trail again at 9:00 a.m.

The start of this trail is at the top of the hill just to the east of the fish hatchery entrance. Everyone is welcome!

Bit of wool draws nest-makers

At this time of year it is interesting to supply nesting materials for birds — hair, wool, yarn, string, feathers, etc. — even provide a mud puddle in clayey soil.

A ready supply of nesting material may induce birds to nest closer to your home.

Cedar Waxwings, which are relatively late nesters, are especially eager to accept such handouts. They are not infrequently seen tugging at strings attached to fences, wires, etc.

By providing sheep's wool, I once induced a pair of these birds to construct almost their entire nest out of this material.

One Baltimore Oriole, in Brechin, Ontario, recognized the fringe on my sister-in-law's sun-deck umbrella as a good source of nesting material.

The dangling strings, constituting this fringe, were readily perceived by the bird as being ideal for weaving its long, hanging nest.

It worked on the strings and was able to free some of them, resulting in damage to the umbrella.

The Baltimore Oriole attaches its nest to the small outermost branches high up in a tree. Situated thus, it sways in the breeze like a hammock; and, if the nest were not deep like a stocking, the eggs or the baby birds would surely get dumped out.

Just what nesting materials will be accepted depends primarily on which species are in your neighbourhood; but, the eccentricity of individual birds, may also be a factor.

Standard methods

All, or almost all, species of bird have standard methods of construction. But, occasionally, there are non-conformists, like the Black-capped Chickadee that Edwin Way Teale happened upon,

Harry Walker



or the Purple Martin that Robbie Tufts has described.

Teale, in his book "A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm", describes how one Chickadee built its nest in an unused mail box; and, in the mail box, laid down a wall of wall carpet of green moss.

Tufts, in his book "Birds and their Ways," tells how, when one martin house (with several apartments) was cleaned out, it was discovered that all nests, except one, were of standard construction.

This one odd nest was constructed almost entirely of rusty nails — some straight and some bent.

The next fall, when the house was cleaned out again, one odd nest was again found — constructed of rusty nails as before.

This brings us to the Maritimes Nest Record's Scheme, a project now entering its 25th year.

Under this scheme, a card is filled in for each nest covered, and all these cards go into a date bank.

On each card is recorded such information as the species, the location of the nest, the materials of construction, the number of eggs, etc.

Volunteers needed

The Canadian Wildlife Service is looking for volunteers to contribute to the scheme.

If you are interested in participating, write to, — Al Smith, Coordinator, Maritimes Nest Records Scheme, c/o Canadian Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1590, Sackville, N.B.,

EOA 3CO. Al will send you a supply of cards.

Rodney Sargent reports that great numbers of Canada Geese passed over Chatham this spring. He estimates that during a two week period, approximately 30,000 of them passed overhead on their way north.

Flocks of Canada Geese consist of groups of family units. These birds have strong family ties.

Not only do the young remain with their parents all summer, but they migrate south with them in the fall, winter with them, and then migrate north with them in the spring.

Only when they arrive back on the summer breeding grounds do they break up — the parents to start a new family, the yearlings to join themselves with other non-nesting yearlings.

Scarlet tanager seen in area in springtime

Every year, during the last few days of May, at least one or two Scarlet Tanagers are reported. This year, on May 27, Mrs. Kenneth Bradford of Nelson reported one.

Although a few of these birds spend the entire summer with us, seldom are they seen after their spring migration is over.

The explanation is, that during spring migration, they are liable to turn up anywhere; but, those that summer with us, settle down in some secluded spot.

Here they raise a family, never straying far from the nest.

By late summer, the male has lost all of his flaming red plumage — the thing that made him so eye-catching in the spring.

During fall migration, he again may turn up anywhere, but, he is now dressed in a dull olive yellow coat, very much like the female and all of the youngsters.

The spring male has black wings and black tail; but, all the rest of his plumage, is a brilliant scarlet red.

However, the plumage of a one year old male is not quite so bright as that of older males.

Whip-poor-wills

The Whip-poor-wills have returned to Mathew's Settlement. Paul Stewart says, that years ago, these birds could be heard there on summer evenings, but that they had been silent for years.

Now, this spring, he has heard them calling on a couple of evenings — each evening the calls coming from a different direction.

On May 21, Sara Lounsbury of Chatham reported seeing 3 or 4 oddly coloured birds in a flock of Purple Finches.

(In case you are unfamiliar with the Purple Finch — it is not purple. The male is rosy red, while the female is brown and gray like a sparrow.)

Sara says that the oddly coloured birds were orange on the crown, chin, and rump; and had no rosy colouration anywhere.

Except for colour, these birds appeared to be identical to the Purple Finches that they were associating with.

These birds would seem to be off-colour Purple Finches. It is a recognized fact that in this species, individuals are sometimes found in which the rosy feathers are replaced by yellow ones.

This can occur in wild birds,

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but it is much more common among caged ones.

Rarity

Since this condition is considered rare, it must be a rarity of rarities, to find 3 or 4 of them in the same flock. Personally I have seen only one of them in my life.

Swallows have traditionally been credited for their punctuality in the spring. According to my statistics, the Tree Swallows generally arrive here on the morning of May 1st, although a lone individual will sometimes arrive as much as 10 days early.

This year, even though it was a backward spring, the swallows arrived a little ahead of schedule.

The extra day in Leap Year, may help to account for this.

We recorded them here in Newcastle on April 29, while Verna King reported them at Oak Point on the following morning, April 30.

During the hunting season, I have heard stories of hunters mistaking all sorts of creatures for moose; however, I must admit that I recently mistook a moose for a bird.

While conducting a shorebird survey at Point Aux Carr, on the morning of May 26, I saw this large, dark-coloured bird sitting on the water.

I thought it peculiar that this bird was holding its wings extended, even though apparently at rest on the water.

When I raised my binoculars I discovered that it was really the head of a moose and I had mistaken its head for a birds body, and its ears for the bird's wings.

As I watched, the moose rose up revealing its body, and then walked to shore.

Annual meeting

The annual meeting of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists will be held at Florenceville on June 8, 9, and 10.

If you are interested, I have on hand a complete schedule of events and a list of available accommodations.

P.S. Another Scarlet Tanager has been reported — this one by Mrs. Thompson of Chatham, who saw it at Semi-wagon Ridge on May 27.

Birds surveyed in Red Bank area

It was 4 a.m. when the alarm went off but, even at that early hour, some birds were already up and singing.

My wife and I had a quick breakfast, then set out to conduct our annual Red Bank Breeding Bird Survey.

The route covered in this survey is 25 miles in length. It starts at the top of the Lane in Boom Road, and ends in the bush south of Coughlan.

Between these two points, it passes through Sunny Corner, Red Bank, Warwick, Quarryville, White Rapids, and Gray Rapids.

At each one-half mile interval along this route, a 3-minute stop is made. At each stop all of the birds that can be identified by either sight or sound are recorded. Birds seen or heard between stops do not count.

The survey is always conducted on some morning in June — this year's survey being run on Saturday June 9.

It begins at 2 minutes before 5:00 a.m. or exactly one-half hour before sunrise. It ends between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m.

Weather observations are made at the beginning and end, and at every 10th stop.

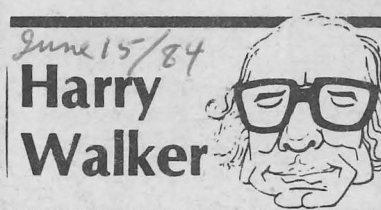
The following list represents the totals for all 50 stops, beginning with the most plentiful, and ending with the least plentiful species. I hope that not many mistakes were made.

1. Bank Swallow, 59; 2. Robin, 44; 3. Crow, 43; 4. Ovenbird, 36; 5. White-throated Sparrow (Old Tom Peabody), 36; 6. Starling, 30; Cowbird, 26; 8. Barn Swallow, 25; 9. Tennessee Warbler, 22;

10. Tree Swallow, 22; 11. Chipping Sparrow, 21; 12. Red-eyed Vireo, 19; 13. Maryland Yellowthroat, 19; 14. Bobolink, 18; 15. Magnolia Warbler, 18; 16. Cliff Swallow, 16; 17. Alder Flycatcher, 15; 18. Veery, 15; 19. Herring Gull, 15;

20. Northern Waterthrush, 11; 21. Redstart, 11; 22. Evening Grosbeak, 11; 23. Common Grackle (Blackbird), 11; 24. Song Sparrow, 10; 25. Rose-breasted Grosbeak, 8; 26. Myrtle Warbler, 7; 27. Raven, 6; 28. Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 6; 29. Purple Finch, 6;

30. Lincoln's Sparrow, 6; 31. Blue Jay, 5; 32. Swainson's Thrush, 5; 33. Winter Wren, 4; 34. Hermit Thrush, 4; 35. Cedar Waxwing, 4; 36. Baltimore Oriole, 4; 37. Canada Warbler,



4; 38. Nashville Warbler, 3; 39. Red-winged Blackbird, 3; 40. Savannah Sparrow, 3; 41. Junco, 3; 42. Catbird, 3; 43. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, 3; 44. Least Flycatcher, 3; 45. Chimney Swift, 3; 46. Spotted Sandpiper, 3; 47. Killdeer, 2; 48. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2; 49. Kingbird, 2; 50. Olive-sided Flycatcher, 2; 51. Black-capped Chickadee, 2; 52. Parula Warbler, 2; 53. Yellow Warbler, 2; 54. Black-throated Green Warbler, 2; 55. Blackburnian Warbler, 2; 56. Goldfinch, 2; 57. Black Duck, 1; 58. Flicker, 1; 59. Wood Pewee, 1;

60. Black and White Warbler, 1; 61. Cape May Warbler, 1; 62. Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1; 63. House Sparrow, 1; 64. Pine Siskin, 1.

When we arrived at stop No. 35 in Gray Rapids, Wendell Parks recognized what we were doing (having seen us stop there on previous years) so he very considerably turned off his power mower.

Bobolinks

When the 3 minute counting period was over he told us that there were 6 singing male Bobolinks in the area.

Presumably there would be an equal number of females, and since I recorded only one Bobolink at that stop, this would indicate that I am detecting only a small fraction of the total bird population.

Bobolinks should be much easier to detect than many other species since they stay in open fields and sing loudly and distinctly.

We finished our survey without trouble, but before getting home we had a flat.

The wrench supplied with our Rabbit proved completely inadequate to the task of removing the nuts that held the wheel on.

However, we had barely stopped before Perley Arbeau of Blackville, arrived to give us a helping hand.

A friendly assist from him and another from Amy Jardine and we were on our way again.

June 8/84

Tame Tanagers alight here

A glorious array of beautiful birds have been reported this week — Scarlet Tanagers, Redstarts, and Baltimore Orioles.

Since the two Scarlet Tanagers were reported last week (Nelson and Semiwagon Ridge), several more reports have come in.

There seems to have been a greater influx of these birds into our region this year than in previous ones.

Out in Whitneyville, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Jardine, and Mr. and Mrs. Ralph MacDonald, have been seeing Scarlet Tanagers for about a week now — on one occasion, three of the bright red males at the same time.

They are reported to be very tame, allowing people to approach to within a few feet of them, and even alighting on the doorstep of the MacDonald's store.

In Maple Glen, Cecil Sobey reported one male Scarlet Tanager, accompanied by several of the yellow and olive coloured females (May 29); and, on this same date, Wendell Parker reported one at Basil Jay's garage on the Chaplin Island Road, and Kevin Dawson reported one in Strathadam.

Also on May 29, Mrs. Leslie Loose was delighted to see two of these Firdbirds (as they are sometimes called), near her home on MacKenzie St., in Newcastle; while two days later, Nonnie Bunting's day was brightened when one appeared in her yard.

Lastly, a Scarlet Tanager visited Ann St. in Newcastle, where it was reported by Mrs. Matchett. It was a particularly unusual bird, since it was an orange variant, rather than a normally coloured one.

Not Oriole

When Mrs. Matchett first reported it, I thought that it must be a Baltimore Oriole, not a Scarlet Tanager; but, she explained that only its wings and

Harry Walker



tail were black, the rest of its body, **including the head**, being orange.

This description rules out the Baltimore Oriole, but fits that of the orange variant of the Scarlet Tanager.

I have no information on how common this orange variant is, but none of my bird books refer to it, except Peterson's Field Guide. (latest edition)

One reader asked "Where does the Scarlet Tanager come from?"

Off hand I could not answer but according to Squires, it winters in western South America, from Columbia to Peru. Here in New Brunswick we are on the northern edge of its summer range.

Another bird that has been widely reported this week is the dainty and spritely little warbler — the Redstart; or, in French "La Fauvette flamboyante."

Tameness

Mrs. Charles Clark of the Bathurst Highway reported seeing it at her place, as did George Swezey of Loggieville, Bill MacIntosh of Chatham, and Ken Sweeney of Newcastle.

Like the reports on the Scarlet Tanager again, some of these people commented on this bird's tameness.

Personally I have found this to be so, especially if I remain still; and, on occasions, have had them flitting about, seemingly oblivious to my presence.

For those unfamiliar with the Redstart, — the male is black, with a white belly and some bright reddish-orange trimmings.

One of these reddish-orange areas is situated half way out each wing, another decorates either side of the tail, and a third forms a crescent-shaped patch on each shoulder, in front of the wing.

Like other warblers, the Redstart is in almost continuous motion as it moves from twig to twig; and, while doing this, it frequently fans its tail, thus displaying the greater advantage, the beautiful orange flashes that are situated there.

In addition to the Redstart, Mrs. Clark also reported that a pair of Baltimore Orioles had been frequenting her yard.

Increasing

Fortunately for us, the numbers of these birds have been increasing on the Miramichi. In addition to their obvious aesthetic value — sharply contrasting colours and clear, cheerful notes — they also represent an economic asset, for they are fond of those hairy tent caterpillars, an abundance of which is predicted for this year.

Color

P.S. Linda Hartlen of McKinnon Road, back of Douglastown, has been seeing a whole kaleidoscope of colour as the birds fly about in her yard.

Not only has she had a Scarlet Tanager today (June 3), and a Baltimore Oriole last Monday, but she has had 10 or 11 pairs of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks there almost constantly — they being attracted by her bird feeder.

She says her feeder contains nothing out of the ordinary, just mixed bird seed like most of us use. On warm evenings she has been hearing Whip-poor-wills again this year, as was the case last year.

P.S. (June 4) Harold Whitney of Strathadam reports still another group of Scarlet Tanagers — this time 2 males and 1 female.

Morklor can be eaten, but cook carefully

Well, we ate them and we're still here.

Anna-Len assured us that she could cook them in such a way that there would be no danger of poisoning anyone.

She said that in her native Sweden, Morklor (the Swedish name for the False Morel) is widely eaten, but that it must be prepared properly. Otherwise it is not considered safe.

The False Morel is a species of mushroom that grows here on the Miramichi. It comes up in the early spring and is found in the bush, in clear cuts, or on road sides, etc. — usually under, or near, coniferous trees.

It is not one of those neat umbrella shaped mushrooms, but rather, it is an irregularly shaped blob covered with wrinkles — the colour varying from dark brown to cinnamon, or reddish-brown; and the size varying from that of a plum to that of your fist. The short stem is of a light sandy colour.

About the 1st of May, Anna-Len Wikström came to Canada for a 6 week vacation.

Shortly after arriving here, her friend, Alan Anderson of Newcastle, brought her to our place.

During our visit, she said she hesitated about coming to Canada at this time as it was the season for picking the Morklor in Sweden.

Later, on June 3, while out at Point Aux Carr, I discovered several small patches of False Morels growing on the road side.

They were especially large specimens and I got a good picking.

Howard Russell and Don Cable happened by at this time, and when I told them what I was doing, they wished me well.

On returning home, I gave Alan a call; and, a few days

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later he and Anna-Len visited us again.

Clean, cook

Anna-Len thoroughly cleaned the False Morels using a soft brush, then opened them to make sure there were no insects hidden in the hollow interior.

She then boiled them using a large amount of water; and, during this boiling period, she skimmed off the white froth that formed on the surface of the water.

After this, she strained them and rinsed them thoroughly in cold water, dried them in a paper towel, and placed them in a frying pan along with some butter.

After frying them for a short time (at low heat), she added cream, fried them a little more, then served them.

All ate them with relish except our daughter, Elayne, who views all mushrooms with suspicion.

However, even she sampled them and said they tasted better than most mushrooms.

In return for Anna-Len's treat, we introduced her to some of our own specialties — dandelion fritters, lambs-quarter greens, and huckleberry pie.

Anna-Len has now returned to Sweden, but she has promised to send us another of her recipes — Poison Ivy Soup.

Alan Anderson says that he has eaten this soup in Sweden. He says it has a very unique flavour and is one of the best soups that he has ever eaten.

Now, here is another little side light to Anna-Len's visit — call it mere coincidence, twist of fate, design of Providence, or whatever — depending on how you interpret such events.

Anna-Len first visited us only two days after arriving here in Canada. We were surprised to learn that her home town was Skelleftea, far in the north of Sweden; and she was equally surprised to learn that I had visited there.

She was still further surprised when we produced some unused Swedish post cards bearing familiar scenes from her home town.

I am not a world traveller. Other than a bit of Canada and a very small part of the United States, the only other part of the world that I have ever seen is a small area around Skelleftea, plus a still smaller area in Stockholm — seen while enroute there.

This trip took place about 14 years ago — my exact destination being a small mining town, 25 miles from Skelleftea.

On the last leg of the trip, the man seated beside me on the plane, was a resident of Skelleftea.

He told me he had never before met a Canadian and he asked me to come to his home for dinner at my first opportunity.

This I did, and before leaving, his family wanted to give me some remembrance of Sweden, so they gave me a number of post cards.

When Anna-Len saw these cards, she asked for two of them — one to send to her parents, and one to send to her grandmother.

She promised to replace them later. She also took the name of the man whose family gave me the cards, and she intends to get in touch with them.

Healthy Orioles take precedence

The welfare of a family of Baltimore Orioles has taken precedence over town planning.

Margaret Wheaton of Newcastle discovered the Orioles' nest in a tree near her home.

Knowing that it was scheduled to be cut down shortly, she got in touch with town hall which in turn referred her to Mary Lyons, who is in charge of tree cutting operations.

The result is that the feeling of this particular tree has been rescheduled to accommodate the orioles. It will not come down until the young Orioles have left their nest.

Birds are fooled and stimulated by their own reflections. Two instances of this have been reported recently.

Gib Taylor of Douglastown says each spring his mother soaped her basement windows in order to prevent the Robins from seeing their reflections in them, for they had on occasion injured themselves in vain attempts to drive their own reflections out of their territory.

Delbert Johnston of Newcastle had a similar story.

When visiting Dr Cole's office, he was surprised to see a Flicker perched on the window-sill and struggling with its reflection.

When he mentioned this to Dr Cole, he was told that this flicker had been coming there every day and doing the same thing.

In this instance, the window pane was of the type through which you can see if you are on the inside looking out, but though which you cannot see if you are on the outside trying to look in.

My wife and I saw a similar thing when we visited Jim and Anna Rodgers of Sussex Corner last fall. Some windows had been recently cleaned and learned against the side of the barn and a domestic duck was examining its reflection in one of them.

Absorbed

It would touch its bill to the glass, then turn its head sideways to look. It kept repeating this and going thorough similar motions.

It was apparent that the duck was absorbed with, and puzzled by its reflection. In this case, the duck, being non-territorial, exhibited no aggressiveness.

As you have probably seen, small mirrors are often placed in Budgie cages.

Edwin Waye Teale, in his book "A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm", describes the battle which one particularly belligerent male Song Sparrow waged against its reflections.

It and its mate had built a nest near a shed that had several windows in it.

This bird returned to the attack several times a day, and did this every day for 71 days running.

Teale figured that a con-

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servative estimate of the time spent in this way, was two hours per day during this whole period.

It rained blow after blow on the windows with its bill, sometimes going from one window to another and fighting several reflections at the same time.

Most small birds are territorial during the nesting season, but when the nesting season is over, they gather in flocks, and territorial disputes are over until the next year.

Of courses this has a practical purpose. By keeping other members of the species away, a more bountiful food supply is ensured for the nestlings.

Mammals?

I have never had any reports of mammals being fooled by their reflections. However, Aesop, in one of his fables mentions one--the greedy dog that tried to snatch the piece of meat away from his reflection seen in a stream; and, in this attempt, lost the piece of meat he already had.

Mammals depend largely on scent and hearing, and depend much less on sight than do birds. This probably accounts for the differences in their responses.

Another creature that is said to be fooled by reflections is the Giant Water Bug. These insects spend most of their lives in water, but on some nights, they fly off to populate other ponds and lakes.

While doing this, shimmering reflections of light from large areas of glass, such as is found on greenhouses, may, at night, look like pools of water to the bugs, causing them to dive into them and kill themselves.

Sometimes they are found on the ground far from water; but, not being adapted to live on land, they soon die.

Mary Muzzeroll reported one of them at her place in Douglastown, on June 21, and said it was about 2½ inches long.

These bugs are of a uniform muddy brown colour. They have broad flattened bodies, with a large pair of legs projecting out front--these are used for grasping prey.

Until a few days ago, Mockingbirds had not been reported in this area for about two years. Previous to that, for a few years, they were reported fairly often.

On June 16, one of them was singing on Amby LaBerge's TV antennae.

Since then, it has been heard and seen several times around this same neighbourhood in Newcastle.

202 species in N.B.

JULY 6/84

Updated Nov 1/89 (cont.)

In answer to a request by George Cadogan, I am giving you my life list of birds, seen and identified.

The sequence followed is that of the American Ornithologist's check list — in other words, the order in which they appear in most bird books.

Arranged thus, they show the order in which they are related to one another — the most closely related species appearing side by side.

Unless otherwise specified, the species has been seen in New Brunswick.

Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Gannet, Double-crested Cormorant.

Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, American Bittern, Glossy Ibis.

Canada Goose, Brant, Snow Goose.

Mallard, Black Duck, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Shoveler, Wood Duck.

Redhead (Ontario), Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Oldsquaw, Common Eider, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Common Scoter.

Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser.

Turkey Vulture (Ontario), Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Marsh Hawk, Osprey, Pigeon Hawk, Sparrow Hawk.

Spruce Grouse, Ruffed Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse (Ontario), Bobwhite (Ontario), Ring-necked Pheasant, Gray Partridge (Ontario).

Sora, American Coot.

Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, American Golden Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, American Woodcock, Common Snipe.

Whimbrel, Upland Plover (Ontario), Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Knot, Purple Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper.

White-rumped Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Hudsonian Godwit, Sanderling.

Wilson's Phalarope, Northern Phalarope.

Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Bonaparte's Gull.

Common Tern, Caspian Tern (Ontario), Black Tern.

Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo.

Screech Owl (Ontario), Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl.

Whip-poor-will, Common Nighthawk.

Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Belted Kingfisher.

Yellow-shafted Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker (Ontario), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, Northern Three-toed Woodpecker.

Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird (Ontario), Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher.

Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Purple Martin.

Gray Jay, Blue Jay, Black-billed Magpie (Colorado), Common Raven, Common Crow.

Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper.

House Wren, Winter Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher.

Robin, Wood Thrush (Ontario), Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Veery, Eastern Bluebird.

Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Water Pipit.

Bohemian Waxwing, Cedar Waxwing.

Northern Shrike, Loggerhead Shrike (Ontario), Common Starling.

Solitary Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Warbling Vireo.

Black and White Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Parula Warbler, Yellow-Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler.

Blackburnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler.

Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler (Ontario), Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, American Redstart.

House Sparrow.

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Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird.

Scarlet Tanager, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch.

Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill.

Rufous-sided Towhee (Ontario).

Savannah Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Slate-coloured Junco, Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-coloured sparrow, Field Sparrow (Ontario), White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow.

Fox Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow.

Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting.

Hooded Crow (Sweden), European Bullfinch (Sweden).

These last two I added here, as I don't know exactly where they should go in the above list.

There are 220 species in the list, 202 of which were seen in New Brunswick, if I counted correctly.

This may look like a long list to beginning bird watchers, but it is a modest list compared with some New Brunswick bird watchers.

The list could easily be expanded upon by visiting a few islands off the coast, especially at the head of the Bay of Fundy, and thus adding some sea birds, almost none of which I have seen.

Joshawk (N.B.) 266
Sage Grouse (Sask.)
House Finch (N.B.) 270
Hoary Redpoll (N.B.) 271
Hark Sparrow (N.B.) 272
Updated Sept. 2/91
Atlantic Puffin (NB)
Red-throated Loon (N.B.)
Greater Scaup (Nfld.)
Laughing Gull (FL)
Red-shouldered Hawk (FL)
White Ibis (FL)
Limpkin (FL)
Swallow-tailed Kite (FL)
Prairie Warbler (FL)
Yellow-throated Warbler (S.C.)
Carolina Wren (Del.)
Carolina Chickadee (Del.)
Oystercatcher (Va.)
Crested Icaracara (FL)
Roseate Spoonbill (FL)
Black-legged Stilt (FL)
Reddish Egret (FL)
Moor Hen (FL)
Purple Gallinule (FL)
Yellow-crowned Night Heron (FL)
Tricolored Heron (FL)
Wood Stork (FL)
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (FL)
White-winged Dove (FL)
Ring-necked Dove (FL)
Black Skimmer (FL)
Brown Pelican (FL)
Red-bellied Woodpecker (FL)
Royal Tern (FL)
Man-o-War Bird (FL)
Boat-tailed Grackle (FL)

Missed Meadowlark (eastern) (N.B.)

Upgraded Jan. 16/87

Western Grebe (Montana)
White Pelican (Montana)
Roadrunner (B.C., Alta) (S.D., Man.)
Swainson's Hawk (Sask.)
Rough-legged Hawk (Alta) (Man.)
Blue Grouse (B.C.)
~~Long-billed~~ Willet (N.S.)
Long-billed Dowitcher (Montana)
Western Sandpiper (B.C.)
American Avocet (Sask.)
Blancos-winged Gull (B.C.)
Barred Owl (N.B.)
Red-shafted Flicker (Montana)
Red-headed Woodpecker (N.B.)
Western Wood Pewee (Montana)
Stellar Jay (B.C., Wyoming)
Northwestern Crow (B.C.)
Clark's Nutcracker (Alta, Wyoming)
Chestnut-backed Chickadee (B.C.)
Common Bushtit (B.C.)
American Dipper (B.C.)
Mountain Bluebird (Montana, Sask.)
Townsend's Warbler (B.C.)

* Townsend's Solitaire (Montana)
Western Meadowlark (Man.)
Yellow-headed Blackbird (Sask.)
Brewer's Blackbird (Sask.)
Dickcissel (N.B.)
Oregon Junco (Wash., etc.)
[206 N.B., 249 in all]
(counting 2 Juncos + 2 Flickers)

Upgraded Nov. 11/89

Stilt Sandpiper (Man.)
Red-necked Phalarope (Man.)
Franklin's Gull (S.D. + Man.)
Parasitic Jaeger (Man.)
Great Egret (S.D.)
Canvasback (S.D.)
Little Blue Heron (S.D.)
Willow Ptarmigan (Man.)
Arctic Tern (Man.)
Orchard Oriole (Man.)
Tufted Titmouse (Penn.)
Least Cormorant (Que.)
Black Guillemot (Que.)
Black-legged Kittiwake (Que.)
Common Murre (Que.)
Razorbill (Que.)
Sanderling (N.B.) (Man.)
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (N.B.)

Great Auk first to go

Since a reader in Nelson has drawn my attention to two accounts of the now extinct Passenger Pigeon, I have decided to devote this article to extinct New Brunswick birds. These include (in addition to this pigeon) the Great Auk and the Labrador Duck, and possibly the Eskimo Curlew.

The first of these to disappear was the Great Auk--its last definite occurrence being recorded 140 years ago, in 1844, on a rock off the coast of Iceland.

It was a large flightless sea bird, with very small wings, and standing more or less upright on its tail. It therefore, had a superficial resemblance to a penguin, but it belonged to an entirely different order of birds from them.

It was about 2½ feet in length, nested in large colonies, and laid a single egg that was about five inches long.

It is known to have nested on both sides of the Atlantic-Newfoundland being one known nesting place on this side, and Funk Island (off the Newfoundland coast) having one of the last surviving colonies.

Whether or not it nested on New Brunswick's shores is not definitely known, but it definitely did occur in the waters off our coasts.

Old records indicate that it was an abundant species at one time; but, after becoming valued for its oil and feathers, it was soon wiped out. This was easily done by men, who visited their colonies, herded

them into corrals and then slaughtered them.

Jacques Cartier recorded in his log that the ships supplies were replenished with Great Auks.

Next to go was the Labrador Duck--the last living specimen being recorded at Elmira, New York, in Dec. 1878; and the last Canadian record being one shot on Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, in April 1871.

It was a black and white duck with large feet and a peculiarly shaped bill, broadening towards the tip. For what purpose this peculiar bill was adapted is not known, but it is known that this duck did eat some mussels and small clams.

Little is known about the bird--either about its range, habits, or the reasons for its extinction.

Most writers think that it was not a common species, even when the first European settlers arrived here. It was not considered to be particularly good to eat. It has been suggested that its breeding distribution may have been restricted to a few small islands, making it vulnerable to people gathering its eggs, or collecting them for their feathers, but this is mere speculation.

Rather than continue with the stories of the Passenger Pigeon and the Eskimo Curlew, they will be left until next week and we will conclude with a few local bird reports.

Irma Campbell of Ferry Road reports that a Goldfinch

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keeps fluttering against a window, trying to get into her house.

Rather than trying to get into the house, this is probably another case of a nesting bird mistaking its own reflection for another bird.

It is therefore, trying to drive this supposed intruder out of its territory.

Jack and Betty Muzzeroll described a bird that has visited their yard in Newcastle on a couple of occasions recently--their attention being first drawn to it by the strange and unusual sounds that it made.

Being keen observers, they had an accurate and detailed description of it.

It was the size of a Robin, or a little larger, but with a considerably longer tail; was of a uniform brown colour on the head, back, and tail; and a uniform gray colour on the belly. It had a black bill that was slightly down-curved and it had a fine, bright red eye-ring.

This description cinched the bird as being a Black-billed Cuckoo.

I had never before noticed the bright red eye-ring; but, when I checked my field guide, sure enough, it was there.

Passenger Pigeon has a tragic history

Last week's article dealt with two extinct species of New Brunswick bird — the Great Auk and the Labrador Duck. Now, here is another one — the Passenger Pigeon.

The Passenger Pigeon's history, its great abundance and sudden extinction, represents one of the most dramatic and tragic wildlife stories ever recorded.

Many of the reports about the Passenger Pigeon handed down to us from earlier generations, are hard to believe. They sound like great exaggerations, yet they came from many different sources; and some of them came from men who were known for careful and accurate observations — Audubon and Wilson. Both these men left paintings, descriptions, and notes about the early bird life in America.

The Passenger Pigeon was very similar in appearance to the Mourning Dove, but it was quite different in habits. It was larger than the Mourning Dove, being about one third longer.

The last Passenger Pigeon died in a Cincinnati, Ohio, zoo in 1914; and the last time that one was positively identified in the wild state, was in 1907. The last known New Brunswick specimen was one shot at Scott Lake in 1899.

As one example of the incredible numbers in which the Passenger Pigeon was re-

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ported to exist, here is a brief quotation from Major W. Ross King's book "The Sportsman and Naturalist in Canada."

"Early in the morning I was apprised by my servant that an extraordinary flock of birds was passing over, such as he had never seen before. Hurrying out and ascending the grassy ramparts, I was perfectly amazed to behold the air filled and the sun obscured by millions of pigeons, not hovering about, but darting onwards in a straight line with arrowy flight, in a vast mass a mile or more in breadth, and stretching before and behind as far as the eye could reach."

He went on to describe how this steady stream of birds continued in undiminished intensity for several hours. And this was not a leisurely fly-past, for the Passenger Pigeon was reputed to fly at 60 miles per hour.

It was said that pigeons had been shot in the vicinity of New York city, with their crops full of rice, and with the nearest rice fields between 3 and 4 hundred miles to the south.

At the time of Major King's

observation, he was stationed in the Niagara region of Ontario. The exact date is not given, but his book was first published in 1866. (It has recently been republished by Coles.)

The famous naturalist, John James Audubon, painted a very similar picture to the one above, but the flocks that he described were on migration through the state of Ohio.

By a method of calculation, rather than guesswork, he concluded that there were more than one billion birds in one flock that he saw. His method of calculation was based on the density of birds in the flock (2 pigeons per square yard), the breadth of it, the length of time that it took to pass over, and the speed of flight of the pigeons.

That other early American ornithologist, Alexander Wilson, who named many of our birds, estimated that one flock he saw contained even more — two billion birds. However, I do not have any information on how he arrived at this figure. He was in the state of Kentucky at the time, about 1808.

The French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, while in the state of Maine, in 1605, reported that Passenger Pigeons were there in "infinite numbers".

Nor did all of this spectacle take place in remote regions, far from the Miramichi. W. Austin Squires, in his book "The

Birds of New Brunswick", records that a Nicolas Denys "described great flocks, the smallest numbering five or six hundred, passing for days in June about 1650 near where Newcastle now stands."

Tufts indicates, that in Nova Scotia, Passenger Pigeons were plentiful until about 1850, at which time they went into a very sharp decline, after which they were very scarce.

Two factors contributed greatly to the Passenger Pigeon's extinction.

First: they nested in extremely large and dense colonies, thus facilitating the job of the professional fowling who

could bag them in quantity with little effort. They were netted, shot, clubbed from their roosts at night, and the young taken from their nests when they were nearly mature. They were shipped to markets in cities, fed to pigs, and even used for fertilizer.

Second: they had a low rate of reproduction — a female generally laying only a single egg (sometimes two) in a season.

Everyone ate pigeons. What looked like an unlimited resource, was completely destroyed; and, what Taverner described as one of the wonders of America, was gone.

Williams Farm

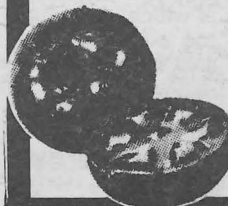
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JULY 27/84

Curlew-extinct or no?

In the last two articles, three extinct species of New Brunswick birds were discussed.

This one may, or may not, fall in that category. Nobody seems to be sure; but, if they do still exist, they do so in very small numbers.

According to a Canadian Wildlife Service bulletin, published in 1979 and written by B. Gallop, the last confirmed records of the Eskimo Curlew, were in the 1960s.

This same bulletin, however, says there were 3 reports of sightings between the years 1970 and 1978. None of these were of more than 2 birds at one time. Whereas, in the previous century, they were estimated in the millions.

The Eskimo Curlew is (or was) a shore bird with a body about the size of that of a pigeon, but with longer neck and legs, and with a long, downward curving bill. It was said to utter a twittering and mellow whistle, and also another call similar to that of a tern.

It nested on the tundra, and the near tundra, of northern Canada. During the fall migration, most of them travelled south along the Atlantic coast, and thence to the Maritimes.

Upon reaching here, they made a remarkable, non-stop, flight over the ocean to Northern South America, then on to the pampas of Argentina.

After wintering there, these birds made their return trip via an entirely different route, flying north through Central America and on up through the Mississippi Val-

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ley and the mid-western states. Their yearly migrations were therefore exceptionally long and arduous.

The Eskimo Curlew ate ants, grubs, and freshwater insects. During fall migration, it ate Crowberries and Blueberries; and, at low tide, fed heavily on invertebrates found in the mud along the shore.

Upon reaching the Maritimes, it was reported that much of its plumage was often stained with Blueberry juice. From Prince Edward Island, it was reported to follow the plow and to feed on the earthworms that were turned up by it.

The Eskimo Curlew's drastic decline in numbers came about in much the same way as that of the Passenger Pigeon.

They were very tame and migrated in large dense flocks, thus making themselves easy targets for the commercial fowlers of that period.

Most of this hunting took place during the spring migration through the central part of the continent.

To quote the above mentioned C.W.S. bulletin, —

“Once the Passenger Pigeon began to decline in the 1880s, hunters and pioneers turned their attention to shore birds, and among the

most desirable and easily harvested were the Eskimo Curlew and Golden Plover, species which usually migrated together.”

The bulletin goes on to state that other factors may have coincided with the hunting pressures, to compound the problem.

At any rate, the species was almost wiped out in the space of a few years.

That was about 100 years ago, and the Eskimo Curlew has never recovered.

The Golden Plover, mentioned above, was also greatly reduced in numbers at that time, but it has made a partial recovery. Fairly large flocks of it are now reported.)

Austin Squires, in “The Birds of New Brunswick” indicates, that before 1870, the peat bogs of Miscou Island were popular stop over places for Eskimo Curlews.

Flocks of them could be seen scattered all over the bogs.

They arrived before the middle of August, and left by the middle of September. Crowberries and Blueberries were no doubt the main attraction there.

Robbie Tufts has recorded that the Eskimo Curlew was once a common species in Nova Scotia, but that the last definite record for it was in 1897, when one was on sale in the Public Market in Halifax.

P.A. Taverner, writing about this species, about 50 years ago, said, — “Once noted for their vast numbers, and Audubon compared the flocks with those of the Passenger Pigeon. Now nearly extinct.”

Dugout canoes were common in this area

Dugout canoes: When my wife drew my attention to the remains of one that was half buried in a salt marsh at Point aux Carr, we thought that we had found something ancient.

However, we have since learned that such craft were in common use in this area, not many years ago.

We were also of the impression that dugouts were always made in one piece, whereas the one we found, had been made in two — each being the mirror image of the other — the two being joined together along the boat's centre-line, or keel.

This union was secured with wooden dowles, morticed into the bottom of the boat. The dowels were positioned perpendicular to the boat's centre-line, and were narrow at the middle and fanned out at both ends, thus holding the two halves of the canoe together.

When I spoke to John Russell about this wreck, he was not surprised. In fact, he was quite familiar with such boats — he had fished in them, and he knew how they were constructed.

He said the seam was sealed with a mixture of hot resin and tar, and that the wooden dowels (called fan-tails) were quite sufficient to hold it together — no nails nor other fasteners being used.

He also said these boats were sometimes made in three

pieces — the third piece being a narrow strip down the middle.

When made in this way, the fan-tails cut right across the middle piece and into each of the two side pieces — binding all three together.

John had one complaint about these boats — they were very heavy.

Mystery bird

A few weeks ago, Charles Plhak of Nordin and Jan Truka of Newcastle described a

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mysterious bird that was seen about the Plhak's home. The bird was viewed at close range and observed in detail, but is still unidentified.

It was described as being built like a miniature crow, and being buff or very light

brown in color, with a black bill, and a black (or very dark brown) belly — this dark area extending from the middle of the breast to the tail.

The bird was said to fly like a Robin, and it was observed overturning loose sods, apparently in the search for insects or worms.

This is an unusual colouration, since there are very few species of bird in which the belly is darker than the back.

A few exceptions are the Black-bellied Plover, the Golden Plover, and the male Bobo-

link while in its breeding plumage.

Gordon Lenahan of Douglastown reported that he and Jim Lord and Dan Levesque saw two pure white Blackbirds while on a fishing trip to McKendrick Lake on July 13.

He said that even the birds' bill's were white, and they seemed to be young ones from the same brood, for a normally coloured Blackbird was nearby making a fuss like most parent birds do when their young are approached.

Aug. 10/84

A wet day for survey

On this hot summer's day, it seems appropriate to talk about cool things, like rain and the ocean.

Last Saturday (July 28), when I arrived at Point Aux Carr, it was raining. I had forgotten my rain suit; and I had a shore bird survey to run — this requiring a long walk along the shore.

Although the weather conditions made counting and identification difficult, the results were rewarding.

I faced into the steady driving rain — if I had been smart I would have run it in the opposite direction. The rain streamed down my glasses, and my binoculars were useless. I tried carrying them inside my jacket but they steamed up. I had nothing dry with which to wipe anything. The sea was choppy; and it is always difficult to follow the flight of a bird against a moving background such as this. Also, the noise of the waves drowned out their calls.

Under these circumstances, the survey took longer than usual and I was thoroughly soaked. My final tally of shore birds was, — 63 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 35 Semipalmated Plovers, 37 Lesser Yellowlegs, 26 Ruddy Turnstones, and 25 Spotted Sandpipers.

This was the largest number of Lesser Yellowlegs that I had ever recorded and one of the best counts of Ruddy Turnstones.

Another reward for my efforts was the good picking of Chanterelle mushrooms that I found. These were gathered along the roadside while returning to the car, after completion of the survey.

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Eelgrass may look like an uninteresting plant, but it plays an important ecological role.

During summer and fall it washes up onto our beaches. It constitutes most of the sea weed that we find piled up along the shores of Miramichi Bay. Winnie and I sometimes gather it and work it into our garden.

It grows in shallow water wherever there is a sandy or muddy bottom, and where there is some protection from the most violent wave action of the open sea.

These eelgrass beds form a jungle in which many marine creatures find food and protection. They also constitute a source of food for many of our waterfowl, and they also prevent erosion.

This last point is vividly illustrated by an occurrence described by Martin L.H. Thomas, of U.N.B., in his book "Introducing the Sea". He says, that in 1935, when a disease killed off much of the eelgrass, whole coastlines were changed in Scandinavia. Some islands disappeared and others were formed.

He further tells us that there are only a very few marine flowering plants, and eelgrass is one of these.

Eelgrass is not really a grass, for botanists place it in a different plant order than that of the true grasses.

To close, here is a thought from Hazel MacQueen of Plaster Rock, —

"Nothing in all the universe is commonplace. That scavenger bird with which we are all so familiar, one of them lighted on my fence post this bleak gray morning, preened its feathers, looked this way and that, and then flew leisurely away.

"Oh, I know it was only a crow returning from its seasons sojourn in the south, but why had it gone? why did it return? and how did it know the way? Inscrutable mystery."

Reprinted by permission from "The Collected Verse of Hazel MacQueen."

Hope remains for Plover

Extinct species of New Brunswick birds was the subject of several recent articles appearing in this column.

Of course, there is nothing that we can do for them now; but we can help those that are left — especially those endangered species which are on the verge of extinction. One of these is the Piping Plover.

H. Ouellet, in a Canadian Wildlife Service bulletin, written in 1979, estimated at that time the total Piping Plover population in Canada barely exceeded 1,000 pairs — these 1,000 pairs being scattered across the country from Alberta to Newfoundland.

The Piping Plover is built like a small Kildeer — being about two thirds as long. Their markings are also similar, but the Piping Plover is very much paler in colour.

Also, it has only one dark neck band, instead of two as found on the Kildeer, and even this one band almost disappears in late summer when it changes into its fall plumage. (More exactly, it looks like a very pale-coloured Semipalmated Plover)

The notes of the Piping Plover are very pleasant and very different from those of any other shore bird — in fact different from those of any other bird species.

Unlike the loud, excited, and wild cries of the Kildeer, its notes are gentle, clear, and melodious — attracting attention by reason of their fine quality — hence the name Piping Plover.

The Piping Plover always nests on beaches — either salt water or fresh. Here, in the east, it prefers nice clean sandy beaches — the very same kind that we humans prefer. This is the reason for its present precarious situation.

Hardly a nest

It makes practically no nest at all — nothing more than a slight hollow in the sand, sometimes rimmed, or lined, with a few pebbles or broken fragments of sea shells.

Its eggs, usually 4 in number, are of sandy colouration, bearing fine brown specks.

This skimpy, well camouflaged nest, is difficult to see, and the result is that it is likely to be stepped on without being noticed.

In recent years, besides the usual foot traffic, there has also been the added hazard posed by trail bikes and dune buggies.

In this situation, even if the nest escape destruction, the commotion caused by all this traffic disrupts the birds nesting routine.

The eggs require about 28 days for incubation and the young leave the nest shortly after hatching. However, they re-

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quire another 28 days before becoming mature enough to fly.

Last year there were a couple of pairs of these birds nesting in Kouchibouguac Park, and park officials were keeping a close eye on them.

Also, there were a few pairs nesting on the Cavendish beach in P.E.I., and part of this beach was closed to the public during the nesting season. (I have no information about either of these places this year.)

Survey planned

The Living Rivers staff have plans to survey New Brunswick beaches next year to determine the whereabouts of Piping Plover nesting sites.

Personally, the only place where I have seen Piping Plovers is on Neguac Island, an island that is entirely rimmed with sandy beaches.

According to the above mentioned bulletin, the Magdalen Islands appear to be one of the last remaining strongholds of the Piping Plover — 125 pairs nesting there, in contrast with only 175 pairs for the whole of the three Maritime Provinces combined, and only 15 pairs for Newfoundland.

The Ontario and Quebec populations have almost entirely disappeared, while the western population has fared a little better.

600 pairs are estimated to nest around lakes and sloughs in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Here it is said to nest primarily on pebbly, or on mildly alkaline beaches; and, on such sites, it is probably somewhat less prone to human disturbance.

Conservation

The Living Rivers organization has implemented an annual conservation award.

The first recipient of it is Bill Hooper of Fredericton, an employee of the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the Department of Natural Resources. He receives the award for his work in connection with the conservation of salmon.

Through the years, Bill Hooper also sponsored a number of young people who attended the Living River's camp at Tabusintac.

In making the announcement, Larry Morris said that one of Bill Hooper's favourite sayings was, — "It is better to do something and ask forgiveness; than to ask for permission, and get nothing done."

Ross gull is a mystery

Aug. 24/84

The Ross's Gull is a mysterious bird.

Earl Godfrey, in his book "The Birds of Canada" (first published in 1966) makes this statement about its range. —

"Poorly known. Breeds in northern Siberia; also one breeding record at Disko Bay, Greenland. Winter range unknown but probably on open waters of the Arctic."

A few years ago, one of these gulls wandered south to the eastern seaboard of the United States. It made headlines in the papers and bird watchers from all over the continent came to see it.

Then, in the summer of 1980, this same bird was discovered to be nesting in the vicinity of Churchill, Manitoba — three pairs of them — and this was a first for Canada.

It was not until about a year later that I first read about this. But, only three or four days after reading about it, an unexpected visitor brought further news of this gull.

She was an Australian, Miss Anne Faraway, who was brought to our door and introduced to us by her friend, Miss Lori Crocker, then assistant minister at the United Church in Newcastle.

Miss Faraway was in Canada studying at the University of Toronto and had just completed a summer job — guarding the Ross's gull nests at Churchill. Four pairs had nested there that year, 1981, and that story was reported in this column at that time.

Now comes another, first hand report on these birds. It comes from L. Page Brown of Summerland Key, Florida.

First hand

He and his wife, Marge spend their summers at Mercury Island which is situated in the Main Southwest about half way between Blackville and Doaktown.

In June, Page was in Churchill and photographed a Ross' Gull. It was an excellent slide, and no doubt he had taken a good many shots before he got this one.

After seeing this picture, the Ross's Gull seems even more mysterious.

We would expect that a bird which is destined to battle gale force winds and endure the biting cold of Polar regions, would be a large and rugged looking bird but the Ross's Gull is not.

Quite the opposite: instead, it is a dainty little gull. Its fine features and delicate colouring reminds one of a china figurine — not at all like our common Herring Gull. The severe circumstances of its life have left no mark on it.

Why does this small gull choose to remain in the Arctic, even in winter, while its larger cousins retreat to a more comfortable home in the south?

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The Ross's Gull is about the size of a Common Tern or Pictar, has a wedge-shaped tail, red legs, black bill, and rosy-pink underparts.

It has a fine black ring about its neck and a fine black line along the leading edge of its outer wing feathers.

It is pale gray on the back and on the wings — otherwise the bird is white.

Nesting long

Page suggested that the Ross's Gull probably nested in Canada long before it was discovered doing so — somewhere in that vast uninhabited north.

He said there were at least five of them at Churchill when he was there. (This small group of gulls is far to the south of most of its kin.)

The Browns reported that a pair of Kingbirds, and also a pair of Baltimore Orioles, both built nests in the same small clump of trees at Mercury Island this year.

When reported, this seemed odd to me for the Kingbird is a very aggressive little bird, continually driving other birds away from its nest. In doing so, it not only chases Blackbirds and Crows, but also large hawks.

Marge directed my attention to Hal H. Harrison's book "A Field Guide To Birds' Nests."

Harrison says the Kingbird sometimes nests in the same tree with other species, and he specifically mentions the Baltimore Oriole as being one of these.

He says he found one tree in which there were three occupied nests — one a Kingbird's, another a Baltimore Oriole's and the third a Yellow Warbler's.

He further says one Kingbird was reported occupying a nest that was only 14 inches away from an occupied Robin's nest.

So, the Kingbird apparently discriminates between which birds are harmless, and which are not. Also, the birds that nest near to the Kingbird's nest, are obviously protected from nest-robbing birds.

The Kingbird is almost as big as a Robin, is dark grey above and light grey below, and has a white band along the end of its tail feathers.

It often nests in old orchards, or in shade trees about country homes. It is somewhat less common in town, and is never found in dense bush.

Osprey grabs goggles

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Commonplace to some of us

Last week, Winnie and I had the pleasure of spending a couple of days with members of the Catharine Traill Naturalists' Club of Montreal.

They were visiting the Living River's camp in Tabusintac. We were all bunked in the Wishart Point House (formerly the Tabusintac Club) at the mouth of the Tabusintac River.

One thing that I particularly noticed while travelling with these people was the enthusiasm with which they greeted many commonplace things--that is commonplace to us who live on the east coast.

For instance, Cormorants, for them, were very unique and unusual birds, which of course they are. But, when seen very commonly, as is the case with us, they are generally taken for granted, if not viewed with outright disdain.

Around Montreal, a Double-crested Cormorant (Black Shag) is seldom, if ever, seen; but, at Tabusintac they were seen by the hundreds.

When we went for a cruise in Bill MacEachern's fishing boat, we saw large flocks of Cormorants. They were packed together on sand bars and on spits of land along the shores of Neguac and Porage Islands.

Some of them had their wings stretched out to dry--a peculiar pose of the Cormorants and one that is not exhibited by other waterfowl.

Seals seen

On this same trip, a group of seals were observed lounging on a sandbar--another sight not likely to be seen at Montreal.

At first they looked like a bunch of huge boulders, but soon they came alive and started lumbering towards the open water.

Later they were seen close by the boat, but with only their heads protruding from the water.

On this cruise, the skipper's seven year old daughter, Lindsey MacEachern, was a prominent figure. She conducted herself like a seasoned sailor, showed us diffe-

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rent kinds of sea shells, and demonstrated how to open a scallop's shell.

Two other things of interest to the Montrealers, but rather commonplace here, were the salt marshes and peat bogs--both of which were visited.

Bogs, marshes

Peat bogs and salt marshes, not only provide their own special panoramic views; but also, they represent unique collections of plants, and they were appreciated as such.

Factories do not impress naturalists. While on a guided tour of the Boise Cascade mill, two of the group, Don Parsons and Wally Sackston, stopped to examine a handful of chips produced by the chipper. They came to the conclusion that a Pileated Woodpecker could do the same thing.

As is so often said, it is a small world. This was borne out again when we discovered that one of the Montreal group, Wendy Bathen, a botanist, knew our son, Ian.

He had taken her on a tour of the Tantramar Marsh at Sackville a couple of years ago.

On a similar occasion, Steven Daniels of Trout Brook had taken her for a tour of Grand Manan Island.

My wife was especially appreciative of our stay at Tabusintac; for, as she says, she not only enjoyed the activities and the people, but also, she was freed from the job of preparing meals while we were there.

Instead we dined sumptuously on the food prepared by Dorothy Harding and Tony Stympist.

By the way, Tabusintac is a Micmac word meaning "meeting place of the waters".

It refers to the joining of Cove and Palmer brooks with the Tabusintac River.

The osprey grabbed the goggles

Lost items sometimes turn up in unexpected ways or in unexpected places, and such was the case with Michael Hambrook's underwater goggles.

(Michael is 10 years old and is the son of George and Carmel Hambrook of Millbank. Mr and Mrs Leo Henry of Newcastle are his grandparents.)

When he lost his goggles, Michael and some friends were swimming at his grandparents' cottage at East Point.

The goggles were lost while the children were tossing them back and forth to one another in the water.

Upon losing them, they searched for some time, but to no avail. It appeared that Michael's goggles were gone and would never be seen again.

However, the next day, Michael's aunt, Agnes Ronan, was watching an Osprey fishing along this same stretch of beach.

As she watched, it plunged into the water; and, upon emerging, was seen to be carrying, not a fish, but the goggles.

The Osprey carried them for only a short distance, then dropped them into the water again. But this short distance was long enough for Agnes to recognize what the bird was carrying.

She took a line on the spot, waded out, and retrieved them. Michael now has his goggles back again.

Michael's grandfather watched this whole episode from the shore.

Telescopic legs?

He suggests that the Osprey must have telescopic legs, for though it plucked the goggles out of water that was at least two and one half feet in depth, nevertheless, it never disappeared below the surface.

On a couple of occasions at Point Aux Carr, I have seen Osprey carrying flatfish which they seemed to have caught well out from shore.

Since the flatfish are bottom feeders, I, like Leo, wondered at the Osprey being able to reach them.

I checked a number of books trying to find some indication as to how deep an Osprey can penetrate the water.

One book said they sometimes become entirely submerged, but only for an instant.

Another one said that during dives they will become entirely submerged except for

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the tips of their wings which are stretched upward above the body.

Since the Osprey's wings are very long, and since his legs are also very long, the Osprey can probably penetrate the water to at least three feet.

Only shallow water?

All books indicate that the Osprey fishes only in shallow water.

Squires, in "The Birds of New Brunswick" says,--

"It usually preys on poor grade fish such as suckers and sunfish but one at Fredericton on August 11, 1926, was carrying a small salmon."

If you happened to pass through Tabusintac in the early or middle part of August, you no doubt noticed the great profusion of purplish-pink flowers blooming in the ditches at either end of the town. This plant is the Purple Loosestrife.

Loosestrife seen

The Purple Loosestrife grows only in wet areas. It has six petalled flowers, hexagonal stems, and leaves grouped in whorls of three around the stems--these three leaves making equal angles of 120 degrees with one another.

This plant was introduced to this continent from Europe and has in recent years spread over large areas of lowland in southern New England.

Clive Wishart says it is not a recent arrival in Tabusintac but has been growing there for some years.

Garden hint

Here is a gardening hint from the Christian Science Monitor. It says that tomatoes, squash, pumpkins and apples will keep longer if they are treated with a dilute solution of household bleach before they are stored.

Just mix two tablespoons of bleach in a quart of water. Dip a cloth into this solution and then wipe it over the surface of the fruit. Allow the water to evaporate from the surface, then store.

Apparently this treatment inhibits the growth of certain organisms which cause these fruits and vegetables to rot.

Duffy's plant belongs to the coral fungi

Tom Duffy of Newcastle described some plants as looking like onion tops, but being bright orange in colour. He said he had seen these while working in the bush.

This description puzzled me until he suggested that they might be some kind of fungus. I then realized that they were a species of coral fungi.

Most fungi have no Common English names — only Latin ones — and I don't pretend to remember them.

Also, my mushroom book says the various species of coral fungi are difficult to identify.

However, based on purely superficial characteristics (and not purported to be very scientific) there are at least two distinct groups of Coral fungi growing in our area.

One is as Tom describes — these species being erect and unbranching — but sometimes growing in dense clusters.

They vary considerably in height — some being no more than an inch, while others may occasionally reach about 6 inches.

The other group has short thick trunks from which many small crooked branches spread out forming a dense mass with an outline like a very small tumbleweed. These species are white, light gray, or pale yellow in colour.

Their common name is very appropriate since they very much resemble small corals, and this time of the year is a likely time to see them.

Valuable functions

We tend to forget the valuable functions the various fungi perform in our world. They enrich the soil by converting dead plant and animal material back into forms that growing plants can reuse.

Also, a less known fact is that many species of trees will not thrive unless certain species of mushrooms are growing with them.

The roots of the tree and the roots of the mushroom intertwine — the mushroom will not grow without the tree — and the tree will not grow well without the mushroom.

Last winter, my son, Ian, while attending Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, sent home some seeds of various B.C. trees. I managed to get only one of them to grow — a Western Red Cedar.

Later Ian suggested that in order to get a western species of tree to do well in New Brunswick, it might be necessary to inoculate the soil with a bit of B.C. soil.

In this way, the necessary fungi and bacteria, generally associated with the tree, might also be induced to grow along with it.

Coincidence

There is no proof that such a procedure will work, but there is sound reason for believing that it might work.

Going back to the Western Red Cedar that we sprouted in our house: be it coincidence or be it design, just when our seedling poked through the

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ground, then also, the Feb. — Mar. issue of Noranda's Panorama Magazine arrived in our mail.

In this magazine was a picture of a mature Western Red Cedar — the very same species.

It was hard to believe that our little seedling could grow into such a giant.

Our seedling was so fine and delicate that a passing ant could have clipped it off with one snip of its mandibles.

Its stem was about the thickness of a fine thread and we followed its development with a magnifying glass.

In the picture, a notch had been cut into the base of the trunk and a man was lying inside it.

The trunk was said to be 19

feet in diameter and about 50 feet in circumference.

Now we have a problem — where will we plant our tree? At present it is in a flower pot in the house.

If we plant it in the middle of our back yard, it may eventually crush the wall of our house.

However, it is not an immediate problem. The tree in the picture is estimated to be between 1000 to 1600 years old.

As I was working on this article, there was a tiny speck of

life moving about on the page that I was writing on.

It was barely more than one-sixteenth of an inch in length, and about half as wide.

With the aid of a magnifying glass I was able to see that it had two hard sheath wings that joined in a straight line down the middle of the back.

This would indicate it was a beetle of some kind. When I poked at it, it played dead, but eventually it flew away.

Difficult for wardens

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Makes warden's job more difficult

"The following are allowed to be taken with the new general hunting licence—blackbirds, cormorant, coyote, crow, groundhog, pigeon and porcupine. There is no closed season on these species.

"The fee for a general hunting licence is six dollars (\$3 for persons 65 years of age and over) and entitles the holder to use a shotgun with shot no larger than number two, a rifle less than .23 calibre or a muzzle-loader .36 calibre or less every day except Sundays."

The above is quoted from the new 1984-1985 hunting regulations. Further on it states that there is no bag limit on any of these birds or animals.

The above law gives a big assist to poachers and other law-breakers, for now, anyone over the age of 16 can legally carry a gun at any time of the year.

Obviously this law makes the work of the game warden much more difficult.

In the above law, what is a blackbird?

In New Brunswick, there are seven species belonging to the blackbird family (Icteridae). These are the Bobolink, the Eastern Meadowlark, the Red-winged Blackbird, the Baltimore Oriole, the Rusty Blackbird, the Common Grackle and the Brown-headed Cowbird.

Although many people think of the Common Starling as a blackbird, it is not. It belongs to another family of birds—the Starling family (Sturnidae) and in New Brunswick, there are no other members of this family.

The bird that is most commonly referred to as simply "The Blackbird", is the one that is officially called the Common Grackle.

On the other hand, it could be argued that this new permit entitles the hunter to shoot Baltimore Orioles and Eastern Meadowlarks, both of which species are not only uncommon, but also are among our most attractive and most useful birds. Of course this was not the intention of the law.

The Rusty Blackbird is a harmless species, but one that is easily confused with other blackbirds. It practical-

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ly never comes into town, but spends its life in remote areas in the bush—along streams, beaver dams, or other wet places.

There are two species of pigeon in New Brunswick. In the new law, pigeon, unquestionably, refers to the common Rock Dove; but does it also include the Mourning Dove?

The Canadian Wildlife Service says the population of Black Ducks has been steadily declining since the mid 1950s.

The loss of suitable habitat is given as one reason for this. (The filling in of Strawberry Marsh is one local example of this.)

Now, the new hunting law could steepen this rate of decline.

Red-winged Blackbirds, like ducks, nest in marshes. It is now, presumably, legal to shoot Red-winged Blackbirds at any time of the year.

If a hunter starts banging away at Red-winged Blackbirds in a marsh during the nesting season, what effect will this have on the nesting ducks and on the chances of their eggs hatching?

It could happen

I don't say that this will happen, but it legally could happen.

Among the other hunting regulations for 1984-1985, is this one—

"Except while hunting waterfowl, hunters must wear fluorescent "hunter" orange between September 15 and November 30".

If it is necessary for a hunter to wear fluorescent "hunter" orange between Sept. 15 and Nov. 30, then it is now also necessary for hunter and non-hunter alike to wear fluorescent "hunter" orange all year round, whenever travelling in the woods.

True, there will be more hunters in the woods between Sept. 15 and Nov. 30, but the risk will still be there at other times of the year.

Pigeon drops by from Guelph, Ontario

The metal band on the pigeon's leg bore this inscription — RL-83-CF-39.

It appeared at Jean Donovan's place in Millerton during the latter part of August.

It was not an ordinary pigeon — it was coloured differently and built differently. It was tame enough to eat out of one's hand and so the inscription on the band was easily obtained.

By getting in touch with Dr. Henri Giasson of Fredericton (a member of the Canadian Racing Pigeon Union), we have been able to learn the code.

RL are the initials of Rob Lynn, the owner of the pigeon who lives in Guelph, Ontario.

83 is the year in which the pigeon was banded.

CF stands for Canadian Fancier, which I presume is the breed of the pigeon.

39, no doubt identifies the specific pigeon wearing the band.

For about three weeks, this pigeon stayed in the vicinity of the Donovan's home — at times flying to the trees back of the house, or over to the O'Donnell's next door, but always returning again.

enjoyed a varied diet. It ate moths, tent caterpillars, hamburger, and bread and milk. Large moths had to be chopped up for it.

For desert it always had some fruit. It was especially fond of bananas and blueberries, but it also ate apples, cherries, and red currants. Strangely, it refused to eat raspberries.

The Oriole was very tame and usually accompanied the Wheatons wherever they went.

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If left behind, it got excited when they returned. They were not sure whether it was greeting them for returning or scolding them for having left.

When its wing healed, it exercised by flying about the

house, but it never tried to fly through a window.

A week before it left, it was released outside. It flew into some nearby trees, but soon returned and was brought inside again. When it did leave, it stayed nearby for awhile, then flew away and has not been seen since. It came into the Wheaton household on July 11, and left on August 23.

We hope that it is strong enough to make the long migration south. The Baltimore Oriole winters from

southern Mexico, south into northern South America.

The Wheatons saved the Oriole's nest after the tree was cut down; and an examination of this nest shows the Oriole to be an adaptive bird, taking advantage of modern technology. Much of its nest was constructed of synthetic materials, rather than natural ones.

Along with plant fibres, it contained yarn, thin strips of tinsel, thin strips of plastic, and one strand of pink, wire-like plastic.

Has he returned?

Now Sam has disappeared and we are wondering if he has returned to Ontario again or whether he is still somewhere in the local area.

Jean wonders if he has moved on as a result of the children returning back to school; for, before school started, the children were always feeding him.

Lately, he had not been getting quite so much attention. Sam had a big appetite and was very fond of bread and milk.

If anyone has seen Sam, we would be interested in hearing from you. He is smaller than an ordinary pigeon, with finer features and a slimmer build.

He is brownish gray in colour with some black and white in the tail, and with iridescent feathers on the neck that show a variety of colours depending on the direction from which the light strikes them.

Also, Sam has a different call — a chirping or whistling sound, rather than a cooing call of most pigeons.

He made this sound throughout the night as he perched near the peak of the Donovan's home.

Jean intends to write to Rob Lynn and inform him about his pigeon's whereabouts.

Orioles' story

You may recall that back in June, the town of Newcastle postponed the cutting down of a dying tree in order that a pair of Baltimore Orioles might finish the job of raising their family — the Orioles having built their nest in this tree.

Well, just after the young Orioles left the nest, one of them was injured. Its one leg was broken and its one wing damaged so it could not fly. Parker and Margaret Wheaton nursed it until it was ready to take care of itself.

While with the Wheatons it

Page eight Miramichi Weekend September 14, 1984

Looking back

5 years ago

Triplets

Bobby Kenny of Whitneyville reported seeing a doe with three fawns near Lawrence Mullin's place in Trout Brook, a few weeks ago. He said they were out in an open field and several other people were watching them at the time.

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Piping Plover spotted in park

A most gratifying and informative letter was received from Michel Savoie, Acting Chief Park Warden at Kouchibouguac National Park.

Along with his congratulations for the article that I had written on the Piping Plover (about 2 months ago) were two reports—one on the Piping Plovers of the park, the other on the shore-birds, in general, of the park. Both were written by Eric Tull.

Eric Tull is an old acquaintance—it was he who taught me how to run the Red Bank Breeding Bird Survey, which I have done every year since then.

Michel's letter points out that 21 pairs of Piping Plovers nested in the park last year, and, that a less extensive inventory taken this year, indicates the population has remained about the same. (My estimate of a couple of pairs was rather far off the mark.)

Tull's report, based on figures gathered from several sources, places the total New Brunswick population of Piping Plovers at about 100 pairs; and therefore the 21 pairs nesting in Kouchibouguac National Park represent a very important portion of this total.

Highest in N.B.

Small as this New Brunswick population is, it is still estimated to be higher than that of any of the other Atlantic Provinces while the total Atlantic coast population, from North Carolina to Newfoundland, was estimated in 1980 to be at most 910 pairs.

Existing in such small numbers, the Piping Plover is classified as a "threatened" species—this being one category better than "endangered".

Last summer, in studying the Piping Plovers, Tull continually walked the beaches of Kouchibouguac Park and some adjacent beaches, checking and re-checking the nests that he had found.

To do this, he marked the nests in an inconspicuous way—with two stakes indicating the line on which the nest was located, and a note in his book giving the distance from one of the stakes to the nest.

In checking the nests, he kept as far away from them as possible, approaching only close enough to count the number of eggs with the aid of his binoculars.

In this way he was able to accumulate a lot of statistics as well as observe some of the behavioural characteristics of the birds.

He determined that in the average nest 3.93 eggs were laid, 2.75 were hatched, and 1.70 young birds were fledged.

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Piping Plovers, like partridge and Kildeer, try to lead intruders away from their nests by pretending to be injured—by dropping in front of the intruder and calling loudly, then running off dragging a wing—in this way acting as a decoy to lead the intruder away from the eggs or young.

Tull says some pairs of Piping Plovers practise this deception to a much greater extent than do others; and that all pairs use it more when they have young than when they have only eggs.

This change in behaviour, brought about by the hatching of the eggs was so apparent, that he could tell whether or not the eggs had hatched before he actually saw them.

Another observation that he makes is that the young birds normally freeze when approached. When they do this, they are so well camouflaged they can easily be stepped upon without being noticed.

However, in one case, Eric approached a young bird which at first froze, but then ran away peeping as it went.

Upon doing this, one of its parents flew in and pecked it on the head, then flew a short distance away and put on its broken wing act.

This same chick tried to run away three different times, but each time, the parent bird repeated this same performance—in one case pecking the little chick so hard that it was knocked over onto its back.

Rough punishment

So it seems, the old birds can deal out some rough punishment when the kids fail to conform to accepted Piping Plover behaviour.

During the observational period, predators were presumed to have caused most of the loss of eggs and young. Since no mammal tracks were found, it was concluded these predators must have been birds of some kind.

A few eggs were swept away by high tides, and a three-wheeler ran over one nest, but surprisingly, broke only 2 of the 4 eggs in it.

No severe storms occurred during this period; but, as Tull observes, bad storms, with their accompanying high waves, have the potential of destroying many nests.

It was concluded that since most of the Piping Plovers in the park nest in areas seldom visited by tourists, these tourists pose no immediate threat to them.

I knew man whose brother was hanged

Much has been said recently about the possible return of capital punishment so I am going to set nature aside and write on this issue.

In this article, I have no intention of making a thorough analysis of the subject, I simply want to point out two aspects of it that I have not seen elsewhere in the press.

Before making these two points, I would first like to give a testimony.

One of my first jobs was in a small quality control laboratory. It was located in a plant that had five identical machines turning out the same product. My job was to check the product being produced by each of these machines by making some quick chemical analysis on them. This was repeated every two hours.

As my analyses were completed, the operators would come to the lab to find out how their particular machines were performing. Among these operators was one man whose brother had been hanged about 10 years previously.

When I started this job, I did not know anything about this hanging, and this operator did not seem particularly different from any of the others and I don't suppose that he was either.

But, one day, one of the foremen in the plant confided to me about this. After that, this operator became to me "The Man whose Brother had been Hanged"—not that I condemned him, but every time I saw him, I was reminded of this fact.

More than one is punished

If I could not get this image out of my mind, how much more difficult must it have

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been for this man to get it out of his mind.

The point I am trying to make is this,—

You cannot isolate an individual and punish him alone without punishing other people and this is especially true in the case of capital punishment.

When you sentence a man to die, you pass a sentence on many other people—his mother, his father, his wife, his children, his brothers and sisters and many others.

For these people the sentence does not end with the execution—the anguish and the stigma goes on long after.

My second point:

Some people interpret the Bible as endorsing the death penalty. However, if all those who had ever killed another, had been quickly brought to trial and executed, then much of the Bible would never have been written.

The 10 commandments would not have been recorded, the Psalms of David and the Epistles of Paul would never have been written (See Exodus 2:12, II Samuel 11:2, Acts 22:4 and Acts 26:10).

In the case of David, he not only had a very selfish personal motive for engineering the death of Uriah, but the crime was premeditated.

However, through repentance and bitter remorse, he was not only rehabilitated, but he was able to make a contribution to the world for which he has been revered ever since.

HANGING:

Columnist knew brother of hanged man

I KNEW/page 8

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Terns are used to aid Puffins

The inter-play and inter-dependance of different wild creatures is illustrated in a project that is underway at Eastern Egg Rock in Muscongus Bay off the coast of Maine.

Here, biologists are trying to re-establish a Puffin colony which was wiped out by hunters about 100 years ago.

As Kathy Blanchard pointed out, in order to do this, the gulls that had taken over the Rock, had to be removed, and a Tern colony had to be established there along with the Puffins.

The reason for this: gulls eat Puffin chicks, but Terns mob any gulls that come near their colonies and drive them away.

Without the protection provided by the Terns, the Puffin colony would be doomed to failure.

Another necessity for the maintenance of this new colony is an adequate food supply for both the Terns and Puffins.

Both eat small fish, and Kathy indicated that during the summer of 1983 there were indications these fish were not as readily available as they normally are.

Kathy Blanchard works for the Atlantic Center for the Environment and she was involved in the early stages of this project and has kept in touch with its progress ever since then. (It started in 1972).

She attended the 10th anniversary of the Living Rivers Program in Tabusintac this summer, at which time I talked with her, and since then she has sent us an article from the Maine Times dealing with this same subject.

Thrive on waste

Gulls thrive on what we humans waste, and in modern times they have proliferated to the point where they are in some respects a pest in some areas.

To counter this, the State of Maine has had in effect a gull-reduction program, and this has in large measure taken care of the problem that they posed at Eastern Egg Rock. (Quite frankly, they have been poisoned.)

The Terns have been induced to return to the rock simply by setting up decoys and now several species are nesting there, including a few of the rare Roseate Terns.

And now for the Puffins--transplanting them has been a much more arduous and time-consuming task.

Young Puffins, upon leaving their nest, fly out to sea. There they remain for several years before returning to nest in the same colony in which they themselves were reared.

Therefore, in order to start this new colony, it was necessary to rear some Puffin chicks on Eastern Egg Rock.

With this and in view, man-

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made burrows (simulating the nesting burrows of Puffins) were dug in the soil there, and chicks placed in them--one chick per burrow since a female Puffin lays only one egg per nesting season.

These chicks were then fed on smelts until old enough to leave and fend for themselves.

The first such transplant took place in the summer of 1973 when six chicks were moved here. The next year 54 more were moved; and for each of the following nine years, about 100 chicks were moved.

This year, 1,000 chicks were transplanted to this and another site (Seal Island); and it is planned that an additional 1000 will be transplanted each year until 1990.

Transplanting

All of the chicks so transplanted have come from the largest Puffin colony in North America.

It is located in the Witless Bay Seabird Sanctuary in Newfoundland--about 50 miles south of St. Johns--and contains 160,000 nesting pairs.

From here they have been transported by plane to their new home, arriving there on the same day.

These chicks cannot be taken from their natural parents until they are eight to 10 days old, for during the first few days of their lives they need the warmth provided by a brooding parent.

The success rate of raising these chicks to adulthood has been 96%, which is said to be twice as high as that attained in the wild state.

Some of the transplanted chicks of earlier years are now returning to Eastern Egg Rock to nest there, fulfilling the primary purpose of the project.

However, in addition, a great deal of information is being gained about the habits and movements of Puffins.

Each transplanted chick is banded (each year's group with a different coloured leg band), periodic weights and measurements taken while being reared, etc.

Steve Kress, who among other things, teaches at Cornell University and is a staff biologist for the National Audubon Society, first conceived this project and has been in charge of it since its beginning.

He and his research assistants have the financial support of the National Audubon Society.

Oct. 26/84

Talk on tuna

I am not a fisherman and know little about fish, but two separate incidents have prompted me to write about them.

First, while motoring along the Nova Scotia coast near Parrsboro, my wife and I happened to pass by a horse and wagon and Winie noticed that on the wagon was a very large fish.

We stopped the car and talked to the driver. He was Gerald Lewis of Lower Five Islands and he was taking the catch from his fish weir home with him.

He said the fish we were looking at was a Tuna and that he had never before caught one in his weir.

He had caught many other odd fish through the years--sturgeon, flying fish, porpoise--but never a Tuna.

Furthermore, he and others who had gathered to see his catch, said they had never heard of any other local fishermen ever catching one either. Lewis had not yet weighed his fish but he said it would go over 150 pounds.

The second incident that I refer to, was a meeting with Bob Allen of Newcastle. He had visited his sister in Cape Cod, and told how the fishermen down there find schools of Boston Bluefish.

Gulls attracted

He says that when schools of these fish attack schools of other species of fish, they leave bits and pieces of fish floating about on the water, and this attracts gulls.

Therefore, a flock of gulls circling about over the water, often indicates the presence of a school of Boston Bluefish.

At home I searched through my books and learned that both of these fish--the Tuna and the Bluefish--have some very unusual characteristics.

There are three species of Tuna found along the east coast of North America, but the Bluefin Tuna is the one most likely to be caught here. Therefore, what follows applies specifically to it.

The Tuna's contours are streamlined to perfection and according to the Grolier Society's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Animal Life, their speed can exceed 40 miles per hour, while a speed of nine

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miles per hour can be maintained indefinitely.

Furthermore, this book indicates that the Tuna never stops swimming until it is dead or dying.

The Tuna is one of the very few fish whose body temperature is decidedly higher than that of the water that it is in. This temperature difference can be as much as 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

They grow very fast and can reach a weight of 30 pounds by the age of three years. They have been known to attain a weight of 2,000 pounds and a length of 14 feet, but they generally run between 400 and 600 pounds,

Rare in Fundy

They live in warm waters and therefore are rare in the Bay of Fundy.

The afore mentioned encyclopedia does not mention the Boston Bluefish, but it does describe a fish that is simply called the Bluefish.

I presume this is the same species Bob was referring to for its activities are described in very similar terms.

It describes them as being "animated chopping machines". They have sharp teeth and apparently race through schools of other fish slashing them in two or taking a bit out of each of them, but never stopping to devour any of them completely.

When feeding near shore, they are said to sometimes chase large numbers of fish right out of the water and onto the beaches.

This fish is placed in a family of its own, there being no other members of the family. However, a non-fisherman like me, the picture of the Bluefish does not look particularly unusual--just looks like an ordinary fish.

Leim and Scott say the Bluefish can reach a length of three and one half feet and a weight of 50 pounds, but its usual weight is from 10 to 15 pounds.

Audubon students study area

By Joanne Cadogan

NEWCASTLE -- A group of 20 students and instructors from the Audubon Expedition Institute of Lebec, Maine, are going to be on the Miramichi this week studying the environment and the culture of the area.

The institute takes groups of students on extensive field trips, visiting communities from Newfoundland to California, studying the environmental and cultural similarities and differences of various geographic areas.

While on the Miramichi, the students will be meeting with well-known singers and folklorists Allan Kelly and Marie Hare, and have tours of the Augustine Mound site, Acadia Forest Products and Heath Steele Mines.

Susan Butler of Newcastle has been making most of the local arrangements for the group, and says the style of education the institute practices is unique.

"I met with Michael Cohen, the leader of this particular expedition, this summer and he is

a very interesting man," Butler says.

"While the institute has come under fire for taking education out of the classroom and into the world, he says his students claim they've learned more visiting various places and living under certain conditions first hand."

The students try to camp whenever possible while on their field trips, and while October frost will make tenting a chilling experience, all 20 plan to camp while on the Miramichi.

"This is just the way they do things," Butler says. "Their brochure reads 'Wild America is our campus' and they live by that."

The brochure says students will be given an opportunity to backpack, visit Amish farms, talk to homesteaders, see deserts, do ski touring, study appropriate technologies, negotiate wild rivers, visit observatories, meet politicians, practise journal writing

and contra dancing, and stay in national parks.

The institute offers career programs leading to A.A., B.S. and M.S. degrees.

In correspondence, Cohen has expressed his enthusiasm for this week's visit to the Miramichi, where he is sure his students will get a glimpse of a different environment and lifestyle.

Bobcat prowling marsh

A bobcat has been prowling about the Strawberry Marsh for at least three years says John Copp, Newcastle Recreation Director.

He says it formerly had its den in the tangle of old timbers that had been dumped on the bark pile there.

Since these timbers got on fire last year, he does not know where it moved to, but nonetheless, the Bobcat has been seen this summer on at least one occasion.

He and Doug Underhill saw it one evening when they were leaving the marsh after a ball game. It was near the culvert by the sewage treatment plant.

Going back further, John's father, Coburn Copp, says when he ran the Riverview Motel, a bobcat had a regular route which passed near the motel, along which it moved on its way to hunt in the marsh--its passage always being about the same time each evening.

Coburn's acquaintance with Bobcat goes back still further to when he trapped them. At that time there was a bounty on them in New Brunswick--the idea of the bounty being to protect the deer. However, he believes the Bobcat has only a very minor effect on the deer population.

Small game

He says that most Bobcat concentrate on small game, while the odd one becomes a killer and will attack deer.

But, the Bobcat is unable to kill a deer unless there is deep snow and the deer has very poor footing.

He recalled one incident where he returned to work (cutting wood) one morning

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to find a bobcat and a deer both dead, and both lying within 15 feet of one another.

They had been engaged in a battle in which both had emerged too badly injured or too tired to recover.

The Bobcat appeared to have received a severe blow on the back from the deer's hoof.

Coburn says trapping bobcat required a different technique from that used for any other mammals.

Since it has a poor sense of smell but a keen sense of sight, it is necessary to use visual means to attract it.

How to trap

The trap was set at the entrance of a small house made of boughs. Inside the house the bait was hung about the height of the cat's eyes; and on top of the house was placed a coloured flag or anything to attract the cat's attention.

He says it was not necessary to conceal the trap for the cat (unlike a fox) would not be suspicious of it. The cat would step right into it, provided it saw the bait.

Well travelled

In his book "The Mammals of Canada," A.W.F. Banfield speaks of the Bobcat as following "well-travelled paths" and as "usually occupying established home ranges".

But he also mentions one tagged Bobcat in Montana that was recaptured 18 months later after having travelled 23 miles from where it was tagged.

He says when raised from kittens they make good pets except they are rough and rather hard on the furniture.

Banfield lists the results of a long term study into the food habits of the bobcat.

It showed that 45.5% of its diet consisted of rabbits, 28% rats and mice, 10% squirrels and the remaining 17% as being comprised of a great variety of things including birds, insects, snakes, porcupine, muskrat, vegetation, etc.

This study was carried out in the United States, and no doubt its diet varies considerably depending on what is available.

Banfield also says Coyotes prey on bobcats, and that Great Horned Owls and foxes sometimes take their kittens.

Bobcats usually have 2 or 3 kittens in a litter but they may have anywhere from 1 to 7. These are usually born in late April or in May, but may not be born until late summer or early fall.

The bobcat will swim if forced to, but is reluctant to do so.

It is found from coast to coast in Canada, but only along the southern fringe of the country.

It is not found in Newfoundland nor P.E.I., nor on the north shore of the St. Lawrence east of Quebec City.

It is found throughout most of the United States and Mexico according to Burt and Grossenheider.

Did provinces drift over?

This article was written by my son, Ian Walker, who is studying for a doctorate in biology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are part of North America, right?

This is a fact that virtually any Canadian school student should be able to recite. There is no reason to doubt this, is there?

Well, many geologists now believe that Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and eastern Newfoundland have more in common with Europe and Africa, than with the rest of Canada.

If you are ready to dismiss this thought, please don't. Given a few moments, I can relate a long story, beginning over 500 million years ago, which geologists have hypothesized.

Most people are now familiar with the concept of "Continental Drift", a theory which advocates that the continents have been slowly wandering about the earth in a manner comparable to floes of ice drifting about in a body of water.

Although the mechanism behind this process is complex, and as yet incompletely understood, the concept itself is very simple.

Neat fits

The first serious proponent of continental drift was a German scientist, Alfred Wegener, who noted how neatly the opposite margins of Europe, Africa, and the Americas would fit together.

The easternmost tip of South America would fit snugly into the Congo region of Africa. Northwestern Africa would have pressed tightly against the eastern seaboard of the United States and Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia. The Norwegian coast mirrors that of eastern Greenland.

When, early in this century, Wegener proposed his idea that these continents had once been united to form the super-continent of "Pangaea", Wegener was treated as a bit of a heretic.

No, Wegener wasn't burned

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at the stake, but he was spurned by many of his scientific colleagues.

It is only within the past 20 years that his idea has become widely accepted, resulting in a complete revolution of thought within the geological community.

Now, virtually every major geological event can find some explanation related to continental drift.

The violence of the earth's most dramatic earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are now routinely considered the consequences of these enormous continental "ice floes" slowly drifting about the globe, grinding at each other's edges, and occasionally colliding.

The following is a description of the hypothetical events which geologists envisage for the formation of the Atlantic Provinces.

What is thought

About 500 million years ago, a great ocean, much similar to the present Atlantic may have separated the land-masses we refer to as North America, Europe, and Africa.

This hypothetical ocean is sometimes referred to as the "Proto-Atlantic" or "Iapetus Ocean".

Scattered within this ocean, a series of islands are envisaged, probably similar to Iceland, and the Canary Islands of the present Atlantic.

As the land masses of North America, Europe and Africa drifted together, the ocean and these islands were caught in the middle.

Upon colliding with each island, the continents and islands became fused together. When finally, the continents collided, they and the intervening islands all became fused together into a single

enormous continent, "Pangaea".

The mountains we refer to as the Appalachians are considered to be the crumpled continental margin created by this collision.

Rocks believed to be remnants of the Proto-Atlantic's ocean floor can be traced through western Newfoundland, the Gaspé Peninsula, and along the western margin of the Appalachians. This line marks the line of fusion hypothesized between the ancient continents.

Ancient islands

The Atlantic Provinces, it is thought, are composed of the series of ancient islands that became fused together during the collision.

Since these islands may once have lain off the coast of Europe and Africa (on the eastern side of the Proto-Atlantic), they lie east of most rock fragments from the Proto-Atlantic's floor.

Ancient fossils from these "islands", now cemented together into the Atlantic Provinces, are more akin to those of similar age in Europe and Africa, than those of North America.

Following the collision, when the continents were thought to have begun drifting apart, again they separated along lines different from the old continental margins.

The rocks composing the Atlantic Provinces were left cemented to North America.

Some of the ancient North American continent was captured by Europe, and now composes part of Scotland. The ocean created by the spreading continents is the present Atlantic.

So, the Atlantic Provinces are now part of North America, but this may not always have been the case.

Consider that some geologists have ascribed an age of over 1,000 million years to most of North America.

At 300 million years, they might consider the Atlantic Provinces to be relatively new additions.

Gladys is moving on

Gladys MacLean is leaving her quiet and comfortable home in Whitneyville to take on a new job in a far and distant land.

She has been invited to go to Singapore and be on the Board of Directors of the new Ling Kwang Home--a home for the elderly which is being run by some Chinese friends of hers.

On either side of this home is an orphanage--the idea being that the elderly and the children are of mutual help to one another, this arrangement therefore enriching the lives of both.

Singapore is about as far away from Whitneyville as one can possibly go without leaving this planet.

However, it will soon be home to MacLean, judging by the ease with which she has adjusted to living among other peoples in the past.

For 12 years she worked as a missionary in India, and for another 3½ years, in Hong Kong, and by her own account, she felt very much at home in both countries.

During her stay in the two countries, she had a constant friend and companion in the person of Miss Bessie Turnbull, another missionary who originally came from Brandon, Manitoba.

Miss Turnbull also lived with her in Whitneyville until the time of her death a few years ago. She was known to many as Aunt Bess.

Nothing modern

In India they had none of the modern conveniences. They lived in mud huts on the edge of the jungle. Gladys described how these were constructed.

First the walls were formed by placing small trees or shrubs upright in a row and then plastering them over with mud--the small twigs and branches helping to hold the mud together.

The Soras prepared this mud by pouring water on the ground and then puddling in it with their feet until it became of the right consistency.

The rafters were made of bamboo and the thatched roof was made of rice straw or palm leaves.

There was always an opening at the eaves between the walls and the roof, but there were normally no windows. A wooden door completed the structure.

The first such hut that they lived in was situated in a village of the Oryias--a Hindu tribe of eastern India.

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The second, which was only a few miles from the first, was situated in a village of the Soras (or Saoras)--a race of animist aborigines.

This second hut was not a detached one like the first, but rather, one unit in a row house--the other units being occupied by natives.

In both locations, they were the only non-native peoples living there.

Keeping tigers away

In their first home, in order to keep cool at night, Gladys and her friend built a rough porch on the side of their hut and here they slept.

Since this porch had no door, a lantern was hung in the doorway to keep the tigers away.

One night they heard a loud ruction, and the next morning they learned that a tiger had killed a water buffalo nearby.

In these huts, Gladys said there were lots of spiders, and you would always hear rats moving about in the thatched roofs at night.

Bandicoots (similar, in appearance to large rats) also entered through the openings at the eaves.

Snakes were not uncommon. Once, while sitting on a stool in their house, Gladys said she happened to look down, and there was a very venomous snake, a krait, coiled around the bottom of the stool.

On another occasion, while on a trip, she slept in a warehouse and awoke the next morning to see a cobra stretched out over the door with its head raised and ready to strike--the cobra possibly having been in the warehouse with her all that night.

Never so happy

Despite the crude conditions and inconveniences, Gladys says that she was never so happy as when she was living there. They were wonderful people and she loved them. They were exceedingly friendly and congenial and had a good sense of humour.

Any time she and her co-worker left the village, the whole population turned out

to see them off. When they returned, the whole village would again assemble to welcome them back.

While in India, Gladys learned to speak three different Indian languages--all of which were distinctly different from one another.

One of these--that of the Soras--was at that time an unwritten language, and she wrote their first primer using the International Phonetic Alphabet.

She says the people there seldom had any meat, fish, or eggs, but they occasionally had a wild boar.

The main dish was a kind of porridge made of millet, ragi, or other coarse grain, and flavoured with red and green peppers.

They also ate a type of small black bean, and some roots and herbs. Green bananas were sometimes cooked as vegetables.

For fruit they had bananas and coconuts year round; and mangos, tangerines, and papayas in season.

In one instance, she and Miss Turnbull obtained a can of sardines which they saved for their Christmas dinner.

Because of Miss Turnbull's health, they were forced to leave India, and so they went to Hong Kong where conditions were much more modern. Here they kept an open house for student refugees.

Gladys returned to this continent 19 years ago and since then she has lived and worked in Michigan, Kansas, Newfoundland, and Whitneyville.

Most of this time has been spent in working with depressed people--the elderly, the lonely, and the sick. Also, much time has gone into studying, writing, and teaching.

She has an interest in wild plants, and since returning to Whitneyville has obtained most of her vegetables from the wild--this interest having been gained partly from her father, Jared MacLean, and partly as a result of living in the jungles of India where much of the food is gathered from the wild.

In contrast to her experience in India, Gladys' new job in Singapore will be in a large and modern institution with many doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, and other specialists in attendance.

She is looking forward to this new move with anticipation and enthusiasm, and feels it will provide her with enlarged opportunities to help others.

Grey squirrels are increasing

Grey squirrels are increasingly reported in this area.

The latest such report comes from South Nelson where Sterling Burchill says one has been staying around his place for two weeks now.

This is a likely time of the year for Grey Squirrels to turn up in new territory, for it is in the fall that the young of the year leave their mothers and disperse.

Sterling also reported that on two different occasions this summer a flock of about a half dozen Mourning Doves came to his yard.

A couple of reports came from employees of Northwood this past summer.

Leonce Gallant, while making his rounds there, saw a Cardinal on several occasions. He suspected it was living down in the Morrison's Cove ravine, although it was always up above the ravine when he would see it.

Wood Turtle

In late August, Doug Matheson reported finding a Wood Turtle on the dock at Northwood. Since these turtles are fresh water creatures, it seems unlikely it was living in the river there.

Wood Turtles spend more time out of water than do most other species and they sometimes travel considerable distances overland.

Stanley Gorham, in his book "The Amphibians and Reptiles of New Brunswick" says of his species--

"It is terrestrial and may be found in the woods some distance from water. Whereas the Snapping and Painted Turtles must be in the water in order to swallow their food properly, the Wood Turtle is perfectly capable of feeding on land and lives on a variety of animal and plant life."

Farther upriver, at Mercury Island in the Main Southwest, Marge Brown reported seeing Wood Turtles laying their eggs there in early summer. She also gave me the shell from one of the hatched eggs.

In mink traps

Although generally considered to hibernate for the winter, Gorham mentions that Wood Turtles have been caught in mink traps in January, thus indicating they do not always remain completely dormant all winter.

Here is another reptile that is in the news. A report from Kouchibouguac National Park reads,--

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"After the recent official opening of the new Caisse Pouplaire in Richibucto and the wine and cheese had been cleared away, an uninvited guest was found crawling around the new building.

"A Brown Anole Lizard!" It had apparently been brought in with the new plants that had been purchased from a Moncton nursery for the Sunday, October 28th official opening.

"An employee, Jeannita Stewart, turned the lizard over to Kouchibouguac National Park official, Barry Spencer, who in turn contacted the New Brunswick Museum and Agriculture Canada officials.

"Donald Mac Alpine head of the Natural Science section of the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John said, 'that the import of foreign reptiles has been on the increase in the past few years with such reptiles as a Cuban tree frog and Gecko being turned over to the museum in recent months.'

"Spencer stated 'that the small reptile, at the park lab, measures one inch (1") and is a common resident in greenhouses in Florida, Mexico, Honduras, Cuba, Jamaica and the Bahamas.'

"The Brown Anole found in Richibucto can climb but is far less arboreal than other anoles in Florida. They eat ants, beetles, grasshoppers, spiders and other prey, which are caught by swift dashes.

"At last report, Park staff were seen turning over dead leaves looking for spiders and small insects to feed the lizard until Agriculture officials come to take it away."

The lizard in the above report is obviously not a full grown one, for an information sheet accompanying the report indicates that the Brown Anole measures 5 to 8 3/8 inches.

A peculiar feature of an anole is its throat fan which can be extended at will.

It is extended by means of a slender bone which is pivoted under the chin and which can be swung out drawing the skin with it.

In the Brown Anole Lizard, this throat fan, when extended, is a brilliant orange-red in colour with a whitish border.

Cankerworms are serious pests

About a month ago, while on a trip through the Eastern Townships of Quebec (where Winnie and I and the family once lived), Gladys Morrison of St. Marguerite de Lingwick showed us some maple and oak leaves. Many of them had round holes in them about 1/4 of an inch in diameter.

These holes had smooth edges, rather than the ragged edges that are usually associated with insect damage. Gladys was looking for an explanation.

When we returned to Newcastle, most of the leaves had already fallen, but I found that many of them, from the oak and maple, had these round holes in them, just as in Quebec.

I also found that a few of the maple leaves had round black scabs on them.

Since these scabs were about the same size and shape as the holes, I erroneously concluded that perhaps they represented an earlier phase of the same problem.

I gathered some of these leaves and delivered them to forest ranger Harvey Murray, who, in turn, sent them to the Maritime Research Centre in Fredericton.

A reply from T.R. Renault, confirmed what Harvey had already suggested was probably the case with respect to the holes in the leaves.

They had been produced by the feeding activities of one of the cankerworms, most likely the Fall Cankerworm (Alsophila pometaria)--these holes having been produced back in June.

Apparently the black scabs are a completely unrelated phenomenon, being diagnosed as a minor disease known as tar-spot.

Serious pest

The Fall Cankerworm can become a serious pest at times, and may completely defoliate trees. They belong to the Geometridae, the family of insects whose larvae are popularly known as measuring worms.

These larvae hatch in the spring, shortly after the leaves begin to unfold. They then feed and grow until the end of June, at which time they will be about one inch in length.

They then drop to the ground on a silken thread, burrow into the ground, and form their brownish cocoons in the top one or two inches of soil.

The adults emerge in late October or November, usually after the first heavy frost. You may have noticed some of the males--these small, pale-brown moths being conspicuous late in the fall when most other insects have disappeared.

I said males for here is one of the strange characteristics of this species--only the males have wings.

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The females are wingless moths which simply crawl up the trunk of the nearest tree and thence to the outer twigs on which they will lay their eggs. As they start up the trunk, the males fly about and mate with them.

The eggs are ash-gray in colour and are laid in compact bands which encircle the twigs they are on--each band, or cluster, containing about 100 eggs.

These eggs remain dormant until spring, at which time they hatch and a new generation is born to start the cycle all over again.

Small sturgeon

While fishing smelts at East Point on Nov. 3, Eugene Breaux of Chatham caught a small sturgeon. It was eaten, and he says it was some good.

It tasted more like chicken than fish and had no bones in it at all, except for the backbone.

He says that years ago, the odd sturgeon was caught in the salmon nets at East Point during the summer--some years 2 or 3, other years none at all. However, this is the first time that one has ever been caught there in the fall or winter.

James Kelly of Loggieville fished for gaspereau on the Kennebecasis River. The water was very deep and James says when they hauled up the nets, large numbers of small sturgeon about the size of wooden match sticks would be stuck to the bottoms of the nets--the jagged backs of the sturgeon making them stick to the linen nets. They hauled up sturgeon up to 8 inches long, but none large enough to keep.

More birds

In my last two shore-bird surveys of the season, more birds, both in numbers and in species, were recorded than is usual at such a late date.

In Oct. 24, at Point Aux Carr, 16 Sanderlings were recorded and in addition, 3 Black-bellied Plovers and 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were seen at Taylor Creek while we were returning to Newcastle after the survey.

On the following day Oct. 25, at Strawberry Marsh, 28 White-rumped Sandpipers, 6 Pectoral Sandpipers and 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were recorded.

For the two days, 57 of these little beach-combers with representatives of five different species being recorded.



Tricks of the trade for using wood stoves

The following article was written by Robert A. Ritchie, a regular columnist for the Creemore Star—a weekly published in Creemore, Ontario.

It is reproduced here by permission of the author, and also of the editor, John Westbrook.

Woodstoves

With the frosty nights quickly invading us now, many people have their woodstoves going to take the chill off the indoors.

On still days and evenings, a haze hangs over the village; walking up the streets one can tell by the smell of the smoke what wood is being burnt, who's starting their fire, who's adding a log, who's got the fire damped down and who's fire is burning brightly.

I received a letter from one of my aunts last week and she enclosed an old rhyme that extolls the burning virtues of firewood:

Beechwood fires are bright and clear
If the logs are kept a year.
Chestnuts only good, they say,
If for long 'tis stored away.
Birch and fir logs burn too fast
Blaze up bright and do not last.
It is by the Irish said
Hawthorn makes the sweetest bread.
Elmwood burns like churchyard mould,
E'n the very flames are cold.
Poplar gives a bitter smoke
Fills your eyes and makes you choke.
Apple wood will scent your room

Harry Walker



With an incense like perfume.

Oak and maple, if dry and old,

Keep away the winter cold.
But ash wood wet or ash wood dry

A king shall warm his slippers by.

Given the choice, I would fill my woodshed (from this part of the country) with ironwood (hop-hornbeam), fruitwoods, ash, maple, beech and oak, in that order.

The chestnut in the poem refers to American chestnut, not horsechestnut which belongs to the buckeye family.

As I have stated before, you can burn any kind of wood, and you can burn wood that has been cut at any time of the year.

For the best in heating characteristics the densest woods rank at the top.

Wood felled and split between October and February will give the best fires and take the least amount of time for proper drying. Why is that you ask?

Avoid the sap

During this period the majority of the sap in a tree is stored down in the roots, to be pumped up again to the leaves in the spring when the warm weather returns and the buds begin to break.

Sap is a weak sugar solution (around two percent on the average).

These sugar and starch carbohydrates contribute to a creosote build-up in your wood-heat system if the wood is cut between March and September when most of the sap is in the upper reaches of a tree.

Wood cut in June is probably the worst to burn and takes the longest to dry. Wood cut in December can easily be burnt in less than a year.

Then there is the old adage about firewood warming you twice—once when you cut the wood and again when you burn it.

There have been a few variations on this theme. Stretch it a bit further and I guess you can say you get warmed a third time from the ashes that are sprinkled on your garden that gives you food next year. (French onion soup, or whatever!)

Some people even get burned again, if they happen to buy poor wood, so if you have to buy wood, take a good look at what you're getting before it's thrown off the truck—buyer beware!

Speaking about wood in general, I'd like to give you this bit of information.

Having joined the International Wood Collectors Society this past summer, I read an article in a recent monthly club journal about wood collections.

The largest wood collection in the world is housed at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

Put together from several other bequeathed collections there are over 100,000 different kinds of wood in storage. Awesome!!

The tale of a bird from Pennsylvania

The following quotation is from an article written for the Dec. 1984 issue of the *Conservator*-the monthly paper of the Valley Forge Audubon Society (VFAS) in Pennsylvania. The writer-C.D. (Gerry) Gerow.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service" recently notified us that someone, somewhere (without further details yet!) caught one of our male Redstarts with a VFAS bracelet!

"We can hardly wait to find out where he showed up. He may be a first in a long series of other significant results from our work in the woods. Hope so!"

Who was that someone? It was Sadie Murphy of Whitneyville. Her cat caught this little bird last May.

When rescued, it was still alive, but it died about an hour later. It was at this point that Sadie noticed that it had a tiny band on its leg; and, with the aid of a magnifying glass, she was able to read the number on it-1670-38941.

A few weeks later, she phoned me and asked whom she should contact about this. I gave her an address in Washington.

Weeks passed without any reply, so I gave her another address in Ottawa. Again, no reply.

I then checked with Tony Erskine of the Canadian Wildlife Service in Sackville. He assured me that we would

eventually get a reply. Often the bird banding office cannot process such reports until the end of the season when the various bird banders send in their reports indicating the numbers on the bands for each of the birds they have banded.

Trickle back

This fall the information started to trickle back. Sadie learned that it was banded at Glen Moore, Pennsylvania, by a C.D. Gerow. She also received a Certificate of Appreciation.

I was amazed when I heard the name C.D. Gerow, for I presumed this must be Deming Gerow, whom, though I have never met personally, I have heard a lot about from his brother Hal.

Also, one of Deming's letters actually appeared in this very column about five years ago. It was about the White-throated Sparrow or the Chingolo (as it is called in Argentina).

The article was headed-"Happiness not a Material Thing." At that time, Deming was teaching in a Baptist seminary in Argentina, but he was banding birds there as well.

How my wife and I met up with Deming's brother is another story. I have related it before, but shall repeat it.

Hal was on his way to New-

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castle to relieve the Rev. Robert Hamilton as pastor of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church here.

Being a bird watcher, he was taking his time and was exploring some of the byways that led off from his main route.

In so doing, it came to pass, that he got onto a dead-end road which landed him at the Cape Spencer lighthouse, near Saint John.

Here he met up with Will Astle, a bird-bander, who upon learning that Hal was coming to Newcastle, directed him to us.

During his brief stay here, Hal and I were on a couple of bird watching excursions together. That was in the summer of 79.

Since then, we have been in touch with one another periodically, and Winnie and I have received notes from him, which were sent from such widely separated places as Warminster, Pennsylvania, the Grand Cayman Island in the West Indies, and from Argentina.

Last Christmas, a card from Hal informed us that his brother Deming had retired, after 35 years in Argentina and had returned to Pennsylvania where he was again banding birds.

Imagine our surprise to learn that one of his birds had turned up in our neighbourhood.

Recently, we received a long distance telephone call from Folcroft, Pennsylvania. It was Jerry Gerow. When questioned, he confirmed that Jerry and Deming were really (as he put it) the same creature. Of course, he was phoning about Sadie Murphy's Redstart.

He says this is the first bird (of those banded in the VFAS project) that has been reported outside the neighbourhood in which they were banded.

For their project, they have set up a number of mist nets within a small area. In these nets, they have recaptured many of their own banded birds, but none have been reported from other localities. So, Jerry and his co-workers are very excited about the recovery in Whitneyville.

He says it was banded in Pennsylvania on May 17, 1984; and, according to the computer print-out received from the Fish and Wildlife Service, it was recaptured here on May 42.

This later date is a little puzzling since the calendar indicates that there were only 31 days in May of 1984.

Sadie Murphy cannot recall exactly when her cat caught the bird, but she estimates it was about May 20. (That would be only 3 days after it was banded in Pennsylvania.)

For a sample of some of the other highlights of this banding project, here is another quote from the article quoted before--

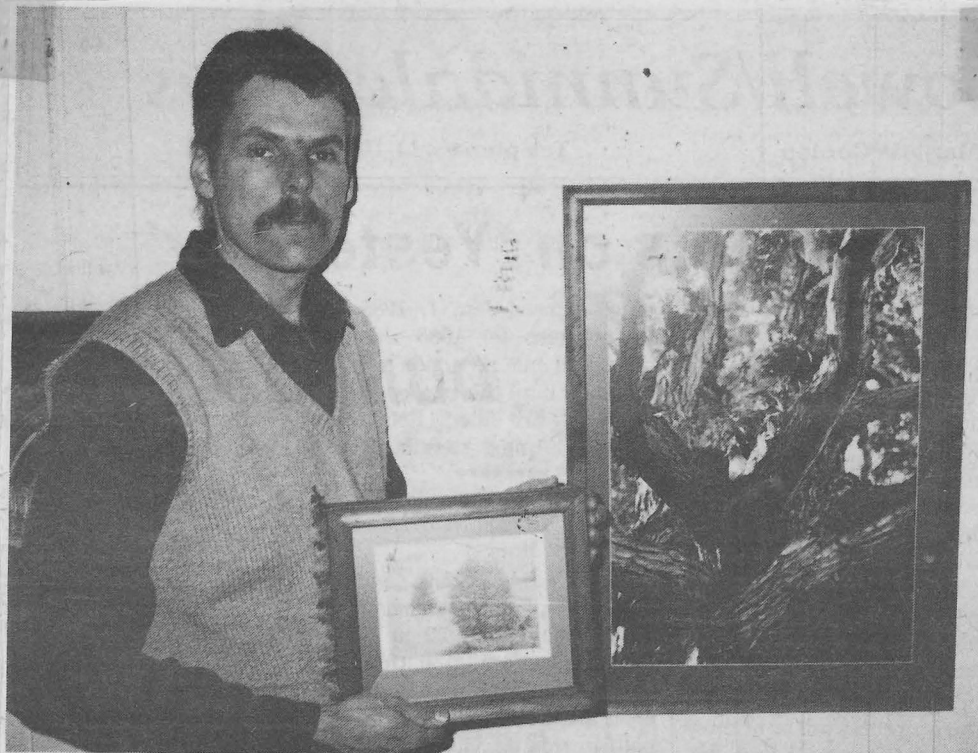
"How would you like to hold a female Catbird in your hand, knowing that she nested in these woods in 1983? Then she and her family headed south for the winter. And now she is back--a year later, nesting in exactly the same spot."

When you find a dead bird, always check to see if it has been banded.

Many birds are banded for each one that is ever reported afterwards--the rate of return varying considerably with the species.

No doubt, the rate of return on Redstarts would be very low. The great majority of them would be taken by hawks and other predators, or they would die in the woods without ever being found.

Will Astle said, that for gulls, he got about one return for every 150 banded; whereas, with White-throated Sparrows, he had only one return for the 3,000 he had banded.



One-man show at the Gallery

Robert Ritchie is currently presenting a one-man show of photographs, greeting cards and wood samples at the Mad and Noisy Valley Gallery. The show will continue until the end of January during regular weekend gallery hours. Mr. Ritchie is also the author of the popular Star column 'In My Own Write'.

—Star photo

Dec. 21
1984

A few words about family

Someone more experienced in the newspaper business than I, has, on a couple of occasions, suggested that I should sometime write about my family and what they are doing.

This, being that time of year when families get together, seems an appropriate time.

Eldest son

Stewart, our eldest son, was married in October. His bride was an Ottawa girl named Lucretia Anne (Luc-Anne) Salm. (She is of Dutch descent and I am told the name Salm is the Dutch equivalent of Salmon.)

Simplicity characterized the ceremony and the celebration. The wedding took place outside amidst autumn colours and with a clear blue sky overhead.

It was held in the Baxter Conservation Area, south of Ottawa. The bride wore a simple dress of her own workmanship and design. She wore a garland of coloured maple leaves in her hair, and carried a bouquet of the same in her hand.

They are now living in Toronto where Stewart works for a small electronics firm designing computer and electronic equipment.

However, after the new year, they plan on moving to Sackville, where Stewart has accepted a research job with the Physics and Engineering Departments of Mount Allison University and where Luc Anne plans on taking some art courses.

Second son

Lyle, son number 2, is working as a Chemical Engineer on an insitu tar sands project--insitu meaning that the crude oil is removed from the sand without digging the sand out of the ground.

In this particular operation, steam is the agent by which this is accomplished.

It is pumped into the ground through a number of pipes, and the loosened oil or tar is then pumped to the surface through a central pipe or well; then it is purified or refined at the surface.

At the present time, this is a pilot plant operation, but the Shell Oil Company who runs it has recently given the go-ahead to expand it.

Third son

Ian, number 3, is working on his doctorate in Biology at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C.

The main focus of his study there is the history of bog lakes--something that he started several years ago while at Mount Allison.

One of the main sources of information used in piecing together this history is the mud cores taken from the bottoms of these lakes.

Each foot of core is treated separately--the mineral material being dissolved with acids, and the remaining

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organic material examined under the microscope.

Apparently pollen grains, spores, and some hard parts of certain invertebrates remain preserved almost indefinitely in this mud and they can be identified as to species under the microscope.

In this way, the succession of trees and other plants that predominated in the vicinity of the lake, and the species of invertebrates in the lake, can be determined for the different stages in the history of the lake. That's it in a nutshell as far as I understand it.

Fourth son

Bruce, No. 4, (that's the one with all the hair) graduated from Mount Allison last spring. After that, he travelled from coast to coast in Canada, then bicycled from B.C. to California--at nights camping in a little pup tent.

During these restless wanderings he apparently found that there was no place like home.

Writing from California, he said that he would "be crazed with joy when he arrived back on the Miramichi."

Recently, he obtained a job with a seismic crew whose job it is to map the contours of the underlying bedrock in an area of northern Alberta. Since much of the land here is muskeg, this work can only be done in the winter when the ground is frozen.

The procedure followed in doing this is--

First, the countryside is marked off in a series of lines; then, one by one, at intervals along these lines, dynamite blasts are set off.

Each blast produces an echo which bounces up from the bedrock below--this echo being picked up by instruments.

The time interval elapsing between the time of the blast and the time at which its echo is picked up, is a measure of the thickness of the soil or overburden overlying the bedrock.

Such surveys are a necessary step in oil exploration.

Only daughter

Now for our one and only daughter Elayne: she is in her first year at Mount Allison University where she is studying Mathematics and Science.

In going to Mt. A., she is following in the footsteps of her four older brothers, all of whom attended there. She will be the only one of the family at home for Christmas this year.

Winnie and I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Dec. 28/84
No weekend published

George's chickens live at sea

Jan. 4/85

Ryan Green, while at home for a visit during the holidays, described some birds which he saw at sea while crossing the Atlantic in a small sailing vessel last summer.

He said these birds, which the sailors referred to as George's chickens, would fly into the sails at night, then fall to the deck where they were unable to get airborne again.

He and other members of the crew would toss them overboard. Once in the sea, they could then launch themselves into the air again from the tops of the waves.

He described them as being small, having very light bodies, but relatively long wings; and as being dark in colour. Looking through a bird book, he picked out the Leach's Storm Petrel as being the same species.

A search of the literature reveals that there are a number of species of Storm Petrels varying in size from that of a sparrow to that of a Robin. They are the smallest of the pelagic birds. Except while nesting, which takes place on small islands or islets, they spend their entire lives at sea.

The name Petrel is derived from St. Peter, who, as related in the Bible, walked on the water with Jesus's help.

The birds received this name because of their habit of feeding while hovering with their feet paddling the surface--thus giving the appearance of walking on the water.

In the case of the Storm Petrels, the name storm has been added because of the sailors felt that their sudden appearance in windy weather indicated that a storm was brewing.

Terres says that Storm Petrels have engendered many superstitions among sailors. Some believed them to be the souls of drowned sailors.

In Brittany, fishermen believed that skippers who were hard on their crews were condemned to become Storm Petrels and therefore to flutter forever over the sea.

The Leach's Storm Petrel is one of the larger members of the family, being 8 or 9 inches long and having a wingspread of 19 inches.

It is also one of the most mysterious, being seldom seen in daylight and making many strange noises at night.

Terres says that another member of this family--the Wilson's Storm Petrel--is thought by some ornithologists to be the most numerous species of bird in the world.

Ryan Green is a native of Newcastle. At the time of making his acquaintance with George's chickens, he was sailing on the tall ship Sorca Breagh (Irish for Beautiful Sarah). It was a 70-foot ship overall, or 46 feet at the waterline, and carried a crew of eleven.

He is now relief engineer

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with the Canadian Coast Guard Service, and as such moves from boat to boat depending on where he is needed.

He has been sailing out of Charlottetown on the C.C.S. Tupper, but is now on leave, after which he is to report to another boat sailing out of Dartmouth.

Examining what I have been writing during the past year, I find that 28 of my articles dealt primarily with birds, 10 with people and their activities, 5 with mammals, 4 with plants, 2 with geology (earthquakes and continental drift), 1 with reptiles, 1 with insects, and 1 with fish.

That lone one on fish (Tuna and Bluefish) brought an extra reward for it was reprinted in the Atlantic Fisherman (Published in Picton, N.S.)

This came as a surprise, especially so, since I so seldom write on this subject. A letter from Sharon Fraser, the Editor, informed me of this; and along with the letter was a copy of the paper containing it.

Most of you will recognize the name Sharon Fraser--she having been on the staff of the Miramichi Leader and Weekend a few years ago. I still have her farewell column. There is no date on it, but she mentions in it that she started writing for the Miramichi Press in October 1976.

Another highlight of my year was my meeting with the members of the Audubon Expedition Institute when they visited this area in October.

I had the pleasure of acting as their guide when they toured the Heath Steele mill, and later had the honour of spending an evening with them in the United Church Centre.

One member of the group was Seth Benz, assistant curator of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary at Kempton, Pennsylvania.

While showing them some coloured slides of local birds and plants, I mentioned that several of the slides had just been received from a friend in Summerland Key, Florida, whereupon Seth asked if they were by any chance from Page Brown. They were. Seth said that he had also received some coloured slides from Page recently.

Page Brown and his wife, Marge spend their summer at Mercury Island, between Blackville and Doaktown, which explains how I happen to know them. Seth had made their acquaintance in Florida.

Results of our Chatham-Newcastle Christmas Bird Count will appear in next week's column.

Sparrows lead annual bird count

Jan 11/85

Harry Walker



On Saturday, Dec. 29 the Miramichi Naturalist Club with the help of many other persons, carried out its annual Christmas Bird Count.

This count takes place within a 15-mile diameter circle with center on the Centennial Bridge, which means it extends from about the Bartibogue Bridge in the east to about the Anderson Bridge in the west.

On the day of the count, 11 dedicated birders were out in the field, driving along roads and hiking along trails in their search for birds. In addition 22 people kept score at their bird feeders.

The count resulting from their efforts was as follows, beginning with the most numerous species and ending with the least numerous:

(1) House Sparrows 733, (2) Starlings 441, (3) Pigeons 203, (4) Great Black-backed Gulls 193, (5) Evening Grosbeaks 190, (6) Blue Jays 167, (7) Black-capped Chickadees 132, (8) Ravens 114, (9) Snow Buntings 100, (10) Herring Gulls 83, (11) Crows 23, (12) Goldfinches 16, (13) Downy Woodpeckers 14, (14) Hairy Woodpeckers 12, (15) Grey Jays (Moose Birds) 10, (16) Glaucous Gulls 8, (17) White-winged Crossbills 8, (18) Slate-coloured Juncos 5, (19) Boreal Chickadees 4, (20) Ruffed Grouse (Birch Partridges) 3, (21) Sharp-shinned Hawks 3, (22) Robins 3, (23) White-throated Sparrows 2, (24) Tree Sparrows 2, (25) Pileated Woodpeckers 2, (26) Ring-billed Gulls 1, (27) Northern Three-toed Woodpecker 1, (28) Pine Siskins 1, (29) Common Grackles (Blackbirds) 1, (30) Rusty Blackbirds 1, (31) Goshawks 1, (32) Northern Shrikes 1.

In addition to the above list, four other species were reported during the count period (that is between the dates Dec. 15 and Jan. 2). They were--(1) Great Horned Owl, (2) Bohemian Waxwings (3) Cowbirds (4) Mourning Doves.

Variety feeder

The feeder from which the greatest variety of birds was reported was that of Phyllis Crowe. She reported 10 species--12 Blue Jays, 10 Black-capped Chickadees, 10 Pigeons, 7 Evening Grosbeaks, 4 Goldfinches, 2 Tree Sparrows, 1 White-throated Sparrow, 1 Grackle, 1 Hairy Woodpecker and 1 Starling.

Monica Charnley and Delta Steeves each reported 8 species at their feeders.

This is the 13th consecutive year in which these counts have been carried out.

Moreover, the late Miss Bertha Clarke once told me that she, Louise Manny, and some others carried out earlier Christmas Bird Counts here but she did not know where the records for them were.

There was a complete absence of waterfowl on this year's count; and Pine Grosbeaks, Redpolls and Nuthatches were all conspicuous by their absence.

However, ducks (probably Mergansers) were reported in a small patch of open water at Mill Cove on the day after our count, and Pine Grosbeaks were reported near Wayerton outside of our count area.

Another bird that was not seen on our count was the Bald Eagle, but Bobby Driscoll reported one near Lyttleton on Jan. 3--on the Tomahawk Ridge Road. We did get one of them on our 1974 count.

Clayton Foran of Sunny Corner reported seeing a flock of 17 Canada Geese on Dec. 7, and also reported that frogs were singing in a ditch near his home on Nov. 14 or 15.

Mrs John Coughlan of Nelson reported seeing two deer (one a fawn) crossing the ice from Beaubear's Island to Wilson's Point. This was on the same day as our Christmas Bird Count, Dec. 29.

A letter from David Christie of the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John, quotes Frank Chapman, editor of Bird Lore Magazine in 1900, as writing--

"It is not many years ago that sportsmen were accustomed to meet on Christmas Day, choose sides, and then, as representatives of the two bands resulting, hie them to the fields and woods on the cheerful mission of killing practically everything in fur or feathers that crossed their path--if they could.

"Now, Bird Lore proposes a new kind of Christmas side hunt, in the form of a Christmas bird-census, and we hope that all our readers who have the opportunity will aid us in making it a success by spending a portion of Christmas Day with the birds and sending a report of their hunt to Bird Lore before they retire that night."

Bird Lore's motto is quoted as having been: "A Bird in the Bush is Worth Two in the Hand."

David's letter indicates, that of the 25 counts run that first year, in 1900, one was in N.B.--at Scotch Lake, York County. It was run by a William H. Moore.

Last year, N.B. birders conducted 30 of these counts. They are now run in communities throughout North America.

66 What You Should Know About the Purple Martin by
J.L. Wade, the Briggsville industrialist and naturalist
240 page book
for \$2.95 plus 25¢ postage
1971

Jan 18/85

Singing birds

Gib Taylor of Douglastown has a story to tell about New Brunswick's Provincial Bird, the Black-capped Chickadee.

The setting, however, is in Ontario — in a one-roomed school in Rama Township, northeast of Orillia.

He says, that while taking teacher training, he was sent to this school for a few days. Upon arriving there he noticed something that he found a little peculiar.

On the corner of each pupil's desk was a little pile of bread crumbs; and at lunchtime, he noticed that some of the pupils were adding to their pile.

At a certain point in the day's proceedings, the windows of the school were all opened. It being wintertime, Gib found this also to be a little peculiar.

But, he was soon to learn the meaning of all this when chickadees began alighting on the window sills, then flitting over to the student's desks, there to feed on the crumbs.

Apparently this was a regular routine at this school.

Here are a few indicators of the growing popularity of bird watching, —

(1) Last year was the 50th anniversary of the publication of Roger Tory Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds".

When first published, the publishers apparently had doubts that it would sell, for they agreed to publish only 2,000 copies of it, and agreed to this limited number only if Peterson agreed to give up his rights to a royalty on the first 1,000 sold.

As it turned out, the 2,000 copies sold within a week, and since then, more than three million copies have been sold.

Songs

(2) In England, a long-playing record entitled "Your Favorite Bird Songs" is on sale. It is designed, not as a technical aid in identifying birds, but simply for the listeners enjoyment.

It was produced after the B.B.C. conducted a survey in which the public was invited to send in votes for their favorite bird songs.

The top birds selected were the Blackbird, Song Thrush, Skylark, Nightingale, British Robin, Mistle Thrush, Wren, Willow Warbler, etc., in that order.

However, on the record, these bird songs are not arranged in order of popularity, but rather, are arranged to simulate what one would

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hear on a walk in the country.

It should be pointed out that the British Blackbird is a member of the thrush family and is not related to the blackbirds of this country.

(3) Now Toruism N.B. is getting into the act.

In order to accommodate the birdwatching tourist, it has now published a brochure on "Bird Watching in New Brunswick."

It is available in either English or French and is about the size of a road map and folds up like one.

It describes some of the best birdwatching locations in the province, what kinds of birds can be seen there, and where to get additional information.

350 species

It points out, that because of New Brunswick's varied habitat, and because of its location on an important migratory flyway, almost 40% of all bird species recorded in North America have been seen here — that is, over 350 species have been seen in this province.

For any of you who happen to be rich enough to travel to Europe to do some bird watching, Andy Paterson has some information for you.

Writing in "Lookout Magazine," he says there are three prime locations in Europe, where large and spectacular concentrations of big birds can be seen — that is, birds such as hawks, eagles, herons, storks, etc.

The 3 locations are, —
(1) The Straits of Bosphorus, where, during migration, these birds funnel through between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean — passing north in the spring, and south again in the fall.

(2) Tarifa, on the southern tip of Spain and at the opposite end of the Mediterranean, where a similar situation exists — birds funneling down from western Europe and assembling here before crossing the straits of Gibraltar, on their way to Africa.

(3) Falsterbo, at the southern tip of Sweden, where again, large birds from all over Scandinavia, gather before crossing the Baltic Sea on their flight south.

Purple martins need special care

Through the years, many people have inquired about Purple Martins—about the proper dimensions of a bird house, how to attract them, etc.

Personally, I have had little experience with them; and during the 22 years that I have resided here, I have seen only one of them in this area. That one was at Red Bank on June 10, 1973.

However, I have had other reports of them; and for many years, Sterling Burchill had an established colony of them in South Nelson. But, he says they were driven out by Starlings about 25 years ago and they have never returned.

If we could get a colony established here again, perhaps they would spread, provided the proper houses were provided for them and their enemies, the House Sparrows and Starlings, were kept under control.

Since Purple Martins prefer to live in colonies, houses constructed for them should have several apartments. Each apartment should have a floor space of about 7 inches x 7 inches, and a height of 8 inches.

I have 3 designs here before me and they vary considerably as to the size of hole recommended—2 inches, 2 1/8 inches, and 2 1/2 inches.

One also suggests making the hole flat on the bottom. All agree that the hole should be placed quite low—the bottom of the hole being only 1 or 1 1/2 inches above floor level. In addition small ventilation holes, near the top, are often provided and are recommended.

Balcony, hinge

A perch should be installed at the entrance; or better still, a 4 inch balcony with a railing and running the length of the house at each floor.

One side of each apartment should be hinged, so that each fall, after the nesting season is over, the old nests can be cleared out.

It is important that the house be well constructed, so the nests remain dry during wet weather. Usually they are made of plywood, but many pre-manufactured ones are now made of aluminum.

The exterior should be painted in light colours—white or yellow, and the interior should be painted white, or better still, lined with a shiny material such as aluminium foil.

These colours and this lining, help to discourage House Sparrows and Starlings from usurping the house, and these are the two main enemies of the Purple Martin.

Remove for winter

Another measure that should be taken to keep these enemies out is to either take the Martin house down for the winter, or plug the holes

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until very shortly before the Martins return in the spring—probably early to mid-May in this area.

The house should be placed fairly high above the ground. A booklet from the Purple Martin and Bird Society of Eastern New Brunswick, gives instructions on how to construct an 11-foot pole on which the house can be raised and lowered without tilting the house itself.

Andre Lerendu of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, who manufactures Purple Martin houses and accessories, recommends 17 feet as the ideal height for the house. (Incidentally Mark O'Shea, formerly of Newcastle, is married to his daughter).

David Hatch, writing in the Winnipeg Free Press, about two years ago, described a Purple Martin tower, that was erected as a community project in Gimli, Manitoba, and was dedicated on May 30, 1981.

This tower is 50 feet high and has 32 aluminium houses arranged in four vertical rows up the sides of it. Each of these houses has 12 apartments.

In addition, three 24-room castles are attached on the top of it. This means there are living quarters for 456 pairs of Purple Martins on the tower.

Place in clearing

Your Purple Martin house should be placed in a clearing with no trees with 12 or 15 feet of it. On the other hand, wires or similar perching places near the house are an added attraction.

Purple Martins live almost entirely on flying insects and large colonies of them are reputed to provide an effective means of mosquito control.

Prolonged spells of cold damp weather in late spring, have at times, resulted in the deaths of many of these birds—insufficient flying insects being available to sustain them during such periods.

Some enthusiasts have even provided heaters in their Martin Houses to be turned on in emergency, to help tide their martins over these periods.

If you would like further information on Purple Martins, I have some additional material that I can share with you.

Also, the Purple Martin and Bird Society of Eastern New Brunswick will supply some free information.

Edwin Hughes of 716 Wedgewood Ave., Riverview, N.B., is or was, the president.

The Nature Society, Briggsville, Illinois

62340 - publishes The Purple Martin News

Andrea's Manufacturing, 643 Redberry Rd.,
Saskatoon, S.K., S7K 4S4 Tel 242-2026

Researchers look to earth's interior for heat

An excess of solar energy is the big energy problem of Caribbean nations: that's what I read in Engineering Digest.

Tim Benson was reporting on an energy Congress held in Puerto Rico.

The above energy problem sounds ridiculous to a Canadian shivering through a long cold winter.

We have other energy problems and one research project that is underway to try to solve them is described in the Sept. 17 issue of Engineering Times. In brief, here it is,--

Prof. Donald Scott and fellow researchers at the University of Waterloo in Ontario are working with a process called "flash pyrolysis", whereby many cheap materials--wood, coal, sludge, or peat moss, can be converted into a liquid fuel.

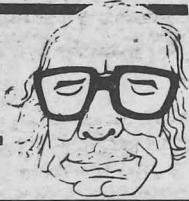
In this process, these raw materials are heated, very briefly (in the absence of air) to a temperature of 500 to 600 degrees C.

The products resulting from this process are--a gas, solid charcoal, and a dark liquid.

This dark liquid can then be refined into a substitute for fuel oil. It has not yet been made into an acceptable automobile fuel, but the researchers hope to do this.

At the present time, these experiments are being conducted on a very small scale--

Harry Walker



in a lab. Any commercial size plant that may result is still some distance in the future.

Abundant materials

What makes this process especially interesting is the fact that the raw materials used in it are abundant and renewable, and therefore they represent an unlimited fuel supply.

This same article describes a hybrid aspen (poplar) which has recently been developed. It grows very quickly and can be grown on poor land.

This hybrid aspen is said to be a suitable raw material for use in the above process, and a crop of it can be cut every 5 to 8 years.

One sour note--the price of oil will still have to rise a little before the process becomes economically competitive.

Interior heat

Another source energy that is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers, is the heat that lies beneath our feet in the interior of the

earth--what scientists refer to as geothermal energy.

On the average, if we drill into the earth, the temperature rises 17 F for each, 1,000 feet drilled--that translates into about 90 degrees F for every mile.

From this, it is plain to see there is a tremendous supply of heat that is only a few miles away--straight down. The problem is to bring this heat up and make use of it.

To do this, two different approaches are currently being tried.

One, is to pump water down from the surface to circulate through the hot rock below, then pump it back to the surface again--there to be used, either for heating, or for power generation.

The other, is to tap naturally occurring reservoirs of hot brine that are entrapped below.

If the first approach is followed, then the first step is to find a suitable location--one where the hot rock comes close to the surface.

As said earlier, the temperature of the earth, on average, rises 17 F for each 1,000 feet that we descend. However, that is only an average figure. In some places it rises considerably faster, and in others, more slowly.

If a short test hole is drilled and the temperature at different depths taken, then the depth to which one would need to drill in order to find

sufficiently hot rock, can be calculated.

Holes drilled during oil or mineral exploration can also be used for this purpose. The vicinity of old or dormant volcanoes, or geological rifts, are likely locations.

The next step is to drill a hole to the desired depth and then fracture the rock with hydraulic pressure--the same procedure as is used to fracture rock at the bottom of oil wells.

Next, a second hole is drilled a few hundred feet from the first, which hopefully, will intersect with the fracture produced at the bottom of the first.

Now, water is circulated down the one hole and then up the other--it being always kept under pressure to ensure that it does not turn into steam.

Indirect heating

This hot water could be used directly to produce steam to drive turbines and thus generate electricity.

But, since it contains various dissolved minerals which may make it corrosive, it is instead used to heat up another fluid which in turn is used to drive the turbines.

This other fluid could be fresh water; but, since Freon is more efficient for this purpose, it is used instead.

A second reason for not using the underground water

directly, is the possibility of it containing poisonous gases.

Exactly what will be dissolved in this water will vary from site to site depending on the kind of rock through which it has circulated.

The most recent geothermal experiment follows the second approach mentioned at the beginning--that of tapping naturally occurring underground brine reservoirs.

As reported in the Oct. 29 issue of "Chemical Engineering" magazine, Bechtel has started drilling at Niland, California--its aim being to tap brine at the 10,000 foot level.

By going to this depth, they will tap brine that is at higher temperatures, pressures, and salinities than has been used in any similar, previous projects.

They hope, not only to utilize the heat from this brine, but also to recover metals that are dissolved in it--silver, platinum, lead and zinc.

There are already similar projects operating in the same area, but the brine used in them is from ~~the~~ depths, ^{the} the hottest brine; as received at the surface, has been 450 F.

Through the years, the Grolier Society's, "Encyclopedia Science Supplements", have had a number of articles dealing with the above subject--one entitled "Hot Rocks" by John Boslough, in the 1982 book, being especially good.

* OF ONLY 3000 TO 4000 FEET. AT THESE DEPTHS

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Annual count, western style

The annual Christmas Bird Count is a big event in our household--all members of the family having participated in them.

Now, they are taking this tradition with them to other parts of the country.

Three of the boys, Lyle, Ian, and Bruce, spent Christmas together in Peace River, Alberta. There they conducted their own Christmas Bird Count. Here are their results,--

Peace River count

Evening Grosbeaks 142, Bohemian Waxwings 96, Common Redpolls 78, Pine Grosbeaks 46, Pigeons 23, House Sparrows 21, Ravens 18, Magpies 14, Blackcapped Chickadees 12, Starlings 10, Hairy Woodpeckers 5, Downy Woodpeckers 2, Pileated Woodpeckers 1, Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers 1, Blue Jays 1, Ruffed Grouse 1, Tree Sparrows 1, Hoary Redpolls 1.

This count was conducted on Dec. 24--a fairly cold day, with temperatures between -15 and -20 degrees C., and with quite strong winds.

There was about 30 centimeters of snow on the ground, but Ian says there were lots of exposed weeds, rose-hips, and crab apples--things that would attract some of the above birds.

The 18 species and 473 individual birds represents a good count considering that there was only the three of them taking part in it, and considering that Peace River is above latitude 56 degrees (which means that it is over 600 miles north of Newcastle at 47 degrees).

The boys did not know, whether or not this was the first Christmas Bird Count ever run in Peace River, but thought that it probably was.

A few days after running their count, the boys took a trip to Hay River in the Northwest Territories.

Here they met Bruce Green, who, along with seven others, conducted a Christmas Bird Count in that community. It was run on Dec. 29, the same date on which we ran our own count here on the Miramichi. The Hay River Count follows,--

Hay River count

Ravens 73, House Sparrows 15, Boreal Chickadees 12, Red Crossbills 10, Grey Jays 9, Black-capped Chickadees 9, Pine Grosbeaks 8, White-winged Crossbills 7, Hairy Woodpeckers 6, Downy Woodpeckers 3, Spruce Grouse 3, Ruffed Grouse 2, Magpie 1.

This count contains 13 species and 158 individual birds. In addition, another species, a Northern Shrike, was recorded during the count period. (between Dec. 15 and Jan. 2)

Hay River is near latitude 61 degrees--over 900 miles north of Newcastle.

Bruce Green says this is the

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ninth annual count they have conducted at Hay River and that the record number of species for any one count is 14. He further says the number of Ravens have steadily declined during that period from a maximum of 230.

These two counts produced three species that we have never recorded on our Miramichi Counts.

These are the Magpie, the Hoary Redpoll, and the Red Crossbill. Lyle says that in Peace River, Magpies are jokingly referred to as Peace River Pheasants.

In their book "The Birds of Alberta", W. Roy Salt and Jim R. Salt have some interesting notes about this bird.

They indicate that the Black-billed Magpie's history has somewhat paralleled that of the coyote in the mammal world; for despite severe persecution at the hands of man, it has still managed to prosper and increase.

Its most objectionable habits result from its appetite for meat for it will peck at the sores and wounds of live animals, as well as eat the dead ones. Also, it robs the nests of other birds, taking both eggs and young.

Since these deeds are inflicted on domestic animals and poultry as well as on wild ones, they have raised the anger of farmers.

However, its beneficial habits are not so readily recognized for it consumes large numbers of farm pests--grasshoppers, cutworms, etc.

Magpie recent

Salt and Salt say that the Magpie is only a recent arrival in western Canada--it having moved north into this country only after settlers began farming the land.

They mention that an early Alberta naturalist, Frank Farley, living in the central part of the province (at Red Deer) saw only two Magpies between the years 1892 to 1911.

Now, apparently they are common, but only in settled areas--they being seldom seen in unsettled parts.

The Hay River Count suggests that the Magpie is pushing its range still farther north.

Coming back home, Earlene Hunter reported, that at her place in Sunny Corner, on Jan. 28, a Robin was singing as though it were spring. The thermometer certainly did not indicate that such was the case.

Earlene also said she had had two Purple Finches--a species which we did not record on our Christmas Bird Count.

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Cormorants seem to help not harm

Cormorants are included as legitimate game on the controversial new general hunting licence.

Therefore, they can be taken at any time of the year and without bag limits by anyone holding one of these licences.

Since it is not specified otherwise in the law, it must be presumed this includes both species of Cormorant found in New Brunswick--the Great Cormorant and the Double-crested Cormorant.

Although the Great Cormorant weighs almost twice as much as the Double-crested, it is otherwise quite similar, and therefore, difficult to distinguish between--especially at a distance.

Many objections have been raised against the new licence. Two that have focused particularly on the Cormorants are,--

(1) The Great Cormorant is not a plentiful species and it especially should not be hunted.

(2) Both species nest in large colonies, and hunters entering one of them can easily wipe it out.

Presumably, cormorants were placed on the general hunting licence because they were thought to be harmful to the commercial and sports fishing industries. This assumption, however, does not appear to be grounded on scientific evidence.

Where their food habits have been studied, it has been concluded that they generally feed on species that are of little economic value.

Furthermore, there is some evidence they help to improve the lobster catch by feeding on species of fish that prey heavily on lobster larvae.

No study here

To my knowledge, there has never been a study done on the feeding habits of the Cormorants in the Miramichi Bay, but such a study was done on Cormorants nesting along the coast of Nova Scotia. It was done by Richard Kenyon Ross while studying for his Master's degree at Dalhousie University.

In making these studies, Ross collected Cormorant pellets and analyzed their contents. He also examined and classified the fish found in young Cormorant's vomit.

Pellets are rounded masses of undigestible material that collects in birds' stomachs, and which are regurgitated periodically.

In the case of Cormorants, these pellets consist primarily of fish skeletons and if soaked in warm water, the various skeletons can be separated and identified.

Vomit would probably be plentiful in a Cormorant colony, for young Cormorants are probably like young herons whose first reaction

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upon being frightened or excited is to bring up their last meal.

Ross' study included several different colonies and involved several visits to each.

Colonies of both Great Cormorants and Double-crested Cormorants were visited; but, since the latter species is the common one here, we will concentrate on it. (Both were fairly similar).

Double-crested

His pellet studies, when averaged out, show the Double-crested Cormorant's diet to consist of 29% Pollock, 24% Wrymouth, 17% Short-horned Sculpin, 15% Cunner (Sea Perch), 6% Winter Flounder, 3% Cod, 2% Rock Gunnel, and small amounts of a few other species. The above percentages were based on the number of fish consumed rather than on the quantity of fish consumed.

Also, in obtaining the above percentages, small fish that could not be completely identified, and which Ross refers to as small gadoids, have been ignored.

These small fish constituted a large part of the birds' diet, and they were so small that 50 skeletons might be contained in a single pellet.

Ross further refers to these small fish as probably being Gadid fry. In other words, first year young of various members of the Cod family (Leim and Scott list 19 members of this family as occurring off our coast.)

Besides fish, rocks, seaweed, marine worms and various other things were swallowed by the bird in small amounts.

The vomit studies were not nearly so extensive, but yielded considerably different results,--48% Rock Gunnel, 26% Sculpin, 16% Cunnors and 10% other species.

Ross indicates that Cormorants feed only in shallow water and that almost all of the fish taken are bottom-dwelling species.

The few non-bottom dwelling species taken were probably ones that happened by while the birds were diving for the bottom.

He recorded no salmon or trout taken, and very few smelt.

Wrymouth (ghostfish) and Rock Gunnel are both eel-like fishes--the Wrymouth being described as a secretive and little-known blenny which burrows in the bottom mud, while the Rock Gunnel lives on rocky bottoms where it hides under rocks and seaweed, and which is often found in tide pools.

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New plant food entering market

This is the time of year when ardent gardeners start planning for the next growing season.

For these people, an interesting new product is coming onto the market.

It is called Pisces Organic Plant Food and is being produced here in our own province, at Port Elgin.

Alan D'Orsay, a Torontonian whose family came from New Brunswick, is responsible for starting this innovative new enterprise.

How the new product is made, and how D'Orsay got the idea of making it, is described in an article by Peter Tonge, in the Christian Science Monitor.

By experimenting, D'Orsay found he could produce a balanced plant food by combining seaweed, fish plant waste and rock powders.

This mixture is composted to eliminate odours and to reduce volume.

Apparently seaweed, though high in many plant food ingredients, nonetheless lacks nitrogen. Fish plant waste, on the other hand, is high in nitrogen.

Therefore, the two of them complement one another, and both are readily available in the Maritimes.

This new product is not only a good organic fertilizer and a good soil conditioner (which has been confirmed by Guelph University's School of Agriculture), but it seems to be surprisingly effective in protecting the garden from insect pests--thus eliminating or minimizing the need for insecticides.

D'Orsay has been several years in developing his new product. He started on it as the result of an incident which took place at Cape Cod while he and his wife Patricia were vacationing there. A severe storm piled large quantities of seaweed on the beach.

D'Orsay had heard that a Maine farmer was able to produce worm-free apples (without using sprays) by spreading a mulch of seaweed under his apple trees. Remembering this, the D'Orsays stuffed their car trunk full of seaweed and headed back to Toronto.

Back home, D'Orsay says his results, using seaweed, have been much better than he expected.

Since using it, his apples too have been unblemished. Also, since using his newly-developed plant food on his garden, it too has been practically pest-free.

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He says he is not claiming his new product will eliminate all pests. He is only claiming that his own garden has been that way, and concedes there could be other factors contributing to this.

However, the article points out that other trials around Toronto, and also research in Norway and Scotland using seaweed, have confirmed in some degree his findings.

In the latter research, it has also been found that when seaweed has been used as a fertilizer, the plants growing there have been better able to withstand the cold.

Avoiding hawks

Every winter I receive inquiries on how to deal with hawks which are picking off small birds at feeders.

Edwin Waye Teale, in his book "A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm", says every fall he makes a brush pile beside his feeder into which the small birds can escape when a hawk attacks.

A few small thick evergreens can serve this same purpose. In our own yard we have two such evergreens, and we have noticed how small birds take refuge in them when a hawk appears.

Most of the hawks that visit our feeders in winter are Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Larks visit

About the middle of January, a flock of eight Horned Larks visited Velma Wilson in Sunny Corner where they fed on the ground about her feeder.

Although the Horned Lark is one of the earliest birds to pass through our area in the spring, I have never before received reports of them in January.

The Horned Lark is a small bird, only slightly larger than a sparrow. It is brown above and white below.

Its most striking feature is the sharply contrasting black and white areas on its face and neck.

It has two tiny tufts of feathers on its head from which its name is derived.

It usually appears in flocks, and feeds always on the ground--never perching in shrubs or trees.

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Merganser facts supplied

Two weeks ago, this column dealt with the feeding habits of Cormorants (Black Shags).

At the time of its writing, I was wishing that I had similar information about Mergansers (Fish Ducks or Saw Bills).

My need has now been met. Local fishery officer, Frederick Johnston apparently surmised what I was thinking for, after reading my article on the Cormorants, he sent me this very information.

It is contained in a report entitled "Food and Natural History of Mergansers on Salmon Waters in the Maritime Provinces of Canada." It was written by H.C. White, Fisheries Research Board of Canada, and was published in 1957.

There are three species of Mergansers in the Maritimes, but the report deals primarily with the Americans (or Common) Merganser as this is the only one that commonly occurs on salmon streams.

During a four year period (1949 and 1951-53), the stomachs of 96 American Mergansers, taken on the Northwest Miramichi, were examined.

Of the fish contained in them, 49.9% were Salmon, 11.6% Blacknose Dace, 9.9% Common Shiners, 7.6% White Suckers, 7.3% Threespine Sticklebacks, and 5.5% others.

Of 53 stomachs obtained from birds on the Southwest Miramichi and its tributaries, 39.1% of the fish contained in them were Salmon, 22.1% were Threespine Stickleback, 20.0% Common Shiner, 6.2% White Sucker, 6.2% Blacknose Dace, and 6.4% others.

Stomach examinations were also made on birds

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taken from many other parts of the Maritimes. However, since the main purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between the Merganser and the salmon, most of these were done on birds living on salmon streams.

However, birds from some other types of habitat were also studied, as were birds taken at different seasons of the year.

Diet varies

These studies showed that the Merganser's diet varied greatly, depending on the habitat and the season.

In many streams, the Sucker was the species taken in greatest numbers, and in a couple of streams the Common Shiner was.

In two streams, sampled during Gaspereau runs, Gaspereau was, at that time, the dominant prey species.

It was also noted, that during Smelt runs, some Mergansers concentrated on them.

Trout were taken in large numbers from a few streams but in no stream was it the main prey species.

One general note in the report indicates, that in many localities, during winter and early spring, eels constitute a large percentage of the Merganser's diet.

Also, in one stream, sampled in winter, freshwater Sculpins were found to constitute 60% of the birds' diet.

(This last result is based on six birds only--their six stomachs containing a total of 78 fish)

Examination of 30 stomachs taken from birds that were living on lakes or ponds, showed them to be feeding primarily on Sticklebacks, Suckers, Shiners, Smelts, Eels, and Chub, in that order. So, in such habitats, Mergansers do not come into conflict with man's interests.

However, the report states "our observations on many streams indicate that the Mergansers do most of their feeding in the better salmon parr habitats."

Elsewhere it also states, "Merganser control experiments have shown large increases in salmon parr populations following curtailment on the Mergansers feeding on the experimental areas."

The report points out that most salmon parr live on swift rapids and that Mergansers seem to be the only birds capable of fishing on such waters.

Mergansers do this by swimming on the surface, but with their eyes and most of the head submerged.

When a parr or other fish is spotted, the Merganser pursues it, still with only the head submerged and dives only when close upon its prey.

Very small ducklings live entirely on aquatic insects, but they soon switch to small fish. After that they live almost exclusively on fish.

From the 887 stomachs containing identifiable food, 29 species of fish were found.

Very minor amounts of a few other items were found--aquatic insects, spiders, frogs, crayfish, gaspereau eggs and vegetation.

Three types of mergansers have been seen

H.C. White's report on "Mergansers" contains a great deal more than that which was summarized in last week's article.

He makes this observation,—

"In our association with mergansers we have been impressed with the independence of the newly-hatched duckling.

"It breaks out of the egg and climbs out of the nest cavity which may be 6 feet or more down in a hollow tree.

"It flutters to the ground and makes its way to the stream.

"Even if left without a mother, it can grow to maturity. We know of no other bird of which the newly hatched is so self-reliant."

He then relates how one female American Merganser brought a brood of 10 ducklings to the river. Two days later, in early June, she and 9 of her ducklings were shot.

The one surviving duckling was observed on different occasions during the following summer — always in the same general area.

It always dived and hid at the first sign of danger.

It lived all alone and grew until it was also shot in early September.

If there had been another family of Mergansers in the neighbourhood, no doubt this duckling would have attached itself to it, for mother ducks commonly adopt ducklings from other broods.

White says, that when swimming on the surface, a Merganser paddles its feet in the same way as does any other duck; but, when it dives, it immediately repositions its legs and uses them differently.

Upon diving, the two legs are spread out sideways — one on either side of the body, then they are stroked in unison, thus simulating the swimming actions of a frog.

White tamed a number of these birds and found each of them to have its own distinct personality.

One bird, that was caught in a net when it was half-grown, was tamed and later released on a stream, after which, it could easily be caught by hand.

Four ducklings, originally caught in a salmon counting trap, were kept in captivity for observation.

From the first day, each exhibited individual differences which remained with it

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and characterized it throughout its captivity.

One bird was very docile and would take a fish out of one's hand.

Another one, the smallest, was very nervous and always trying to escape.

Another one frequently peeped, while none of the others did this. White described it as always being a "quacker".

The fourth bird, although fairly tame, would nonetheless bite at every opportunity.

After a time, the nervous one was liberated and only the other three kept.

When frightened from one end of the pen to the other, it was observed that they always left in exactly the same order.

As to the size of fish that are taken by Mergansers, the report says that this depends on the size of the bird and the size of fish that are available — large males commonly taking suckers that are over 11 inches long.

The largest fish that White and his associates found in their stomachs, was a sucker that was slightly over 12 inches long, and an eel that was 16 inches long.

Earlier researchers (Caldwell) found a 22 inch eel in one stomach.

Sayler and Lager reported seeing a Merganser disgorge a 14½ inch Brown Trout — probably couldn't keep it down.

The above refers to the American (or Common) Merganser. Now, we will go to the other two species.

The Red-Breasted Merganser, which congregates in very large numbers on Miramichi Bay in the fall, usually stays on salt water and therefore it has much less impact on the salmon than does the American.

However, the report shows, that on the rare occasions when it does visit salmon streams, it also feeds heavily on salmon.

The third species, the small Hooded Merganser, is found in very limited numbers in our area. It lives on quiet weedy waters.

The report says that it feeds on fish, frogs, tadpoles, crayfish, aquatic insects, and vegetation.

It also says that the stomachs of 30 of them, taken at Crecy Lake (a lake that was well stocked with trout) were examined. None contained trout.

We are already receiving indications of spring from our friends, the birds.

On March 3, Theresa Ross of Lower Newcastle, phoned to report that she had three Robins in her yard that morning; while on that same date, both Joyce Johnston and David Coull reported a Bald Eagle out on the ice between Vye's Beach and Beaubear's Island.

Every year, this eagle shows up, in this same area, in March. This year he is earlier than usual.

When seen, he is often resting on the ice on the far side of the open water that stretches downstream from the Boise Cascade mill.

Out at Doyle's Brook, Mrs. Richard I. Walsh reports, that starting back in December, a flock of about 50 Horned Larks have been visiting her yard periodically.

Recently, however, they have become more regular, and now they are there every day getting some of the scratch feed that she puts out for them.

If it floats, it attracts objects

A letter (included with the Sept.-Oct. '84 issue of International Wildlife) came from Stirling Burchill of South Nelson. It reads as follows:

"There is an article on Ravens in the enclosed which interested me as they were very plentiful about the lumber camps, at which I spent a lot of my winter time quite a few years ago.

"I was always interested in their conversations among themselves.

"We have crows here, and now and then a pair of ravens. There is also an article by a fellow who spent some time at sea; either of these may or may not be of interest.

"Your column is always interesting and in one late copy George Cadogan's piece on forestry was an idea that many people, who think beyond their working lifetime, should take notice of.

To add a lighter note: I liked one fellow's definition of a virgin forest: ('One that the hand of man has never set foot in-')

Having been connected with the forest industries all of his life, Stirling's last comments are doubly interesting.

Personally, I also found George Cadogan's article very interesting--a refreshingly new approach to forest management.

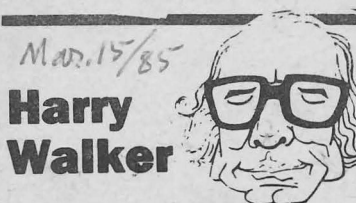
Ordeal at sea

In the second article mentioned above, an American, Steve Callahan, tells of the ordeal he went through after his sailboat had been wrecked on a trip across the Atlantic from the Canary Islands to Antigua.

For 75 days he survived in a small rubber life raft--only 5½ feet long--too small for him to so much as lie flat in.

With the help of a spear gun, and the aid of two small solar stills, he barely warded off starvation. (He lost 40 pounds during those 2½ months).

Add the lack of sufficient food and drink, the extremely cramped quarters, the continual tossing about on the waves, the cold at night, the scorching sun during the day, the sores that developed on his body and into which the



salt water entered, and the contemplation of the forever possibility of his light raft getting punctured--this gives us some idea of his experience.

Yet, despite his immediate and urgent concern for his own survival, he nonetheless made some interesting observations about nature. Here is one that intrigued me,--

Floating notes

He said that every floating object became the nucleus for the creation of a miniature eco-system. Even a floating light bulb would act in this way.

First, seaweeds and barnacles would attach themselves to it, then the eggs of crabs and shrimp would hatch there, and eventually fish and birds would be attracted to it.

His own life raft, small as it was, was a relatively large nucleus for such a system; and so it attracted its own entourage.

A school of about 30 Dorados, and some smaller triggerfish were his constant companions. They frequently bumped his raft (sometimes violently) or pecked at the barnacles growing on it.

To make way for some other nature news, the Ravens will be left for a later date.

As spring approaches, more activity is reported in the bird world.

Bird activity

Mrs Richard I. Walsh of Doyle's Brook had a Robin visit her feeder on March 5, while Wayne Somers reported another one at his father's place on the South Esk Road the following day, March 6.

On March 5, Martina McCarthy reported a flock of Bohemian Waxwings in Nowlanville where they were feeding on apples that had been left hanging on the tree.

In late February, a flock of Waxwings (most likely Bohemians) visited Percy Mullin's place in Maple Glen.

A flock of about 15 Mergansers were observed by Doug Underhill at a small area of open water at Mill Cove, on March 9.

One strange bird that defies identification visited Joan Mahabir's feeder on the North Esk Boom Road, on March 9.

It was in the company of a flock of Evening Grosbeaks and was similar in size and colour to them.

However, it had much more yellow on it than does the ordinary grosbeak, the entire head being yellow except for some tiny dark specks peppered through it.

Instead of one large white area on each wing, as in the grosbeak, this bird had a series of long black and white stripes running along the wings.

Joan also described this bird as being slimmer in build than the grosbeaks and as having a slimmer, more pointed bill.

In actions it was more aggressive than any of the others, and would drive them away from the feeder.

Nothing like it

The Mahabirs went through their bird book, but could find nothing like it. Possibly it is an escapee from an aviary, a wanderer from some distant land, or a mutant Evening Grosbeak.

Mrs Walsh of Doyle's Brook (mentioned earlier) tells of another rather puzzling bird.

She describes it as a white-necked Raven, and says it has been coming to her place for years. She feeds it, and so it is fairly tame.

It disappears about mid-October, but arrives back again early in the spring. This year, it has already returned--on March 10.

She describes it as being smaller than an ordinary Raven, and says the white throat only shows up when the wind is blowing.

Besides taking the food which she gives it, the bird has been observed gathering angle-worms in her yard.

Our biggest poacher

Three weeks ago, I summarized the results of stomach analysis run on Common Mergansers shot in the Maritimes.

The figures were obtained from a report by H.C. White of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada and they showed that on the Northwest Miramichi River 49.9% of the fish taken by these birds were salmon, while the corresponding figure for the Southwest Miramichi was 39.1%—these figures being for a four year period (1949 and 1951-53).

Former fishery protection warden Percy Young of Sunny Corner, has since informed me he participated in this same project during a subsequent four year period (1954-57) where they found the diet of these ducks to be still higher in salmon than the above figures indicate.

He says in the early part of the season the Mergansers ate a considerable amount of smelt. However, from June to freeze up, 80 to 90% of their diet was salmon and trout (mostly salmon), and this held for the entire Miramichi River system as a whole.

These ducks would stay on the bars where salmon parr concentrate and would usually eat 4 to 6 fish at a feeding. Such a meal is digested in about 2½ hours, after which time, they are ready to feed again.

Fingerlings eaten

In one case, 140 salmon fingerlings were found in 3 Merganser stomachs—these Mergansers having been taken on the Renous River.

Only one eel was found in all the stomachs examined—it being 16 to 18 inches long and apparently having been taken in the middle and swallowed double.

Percy says during the first year he was on this program 1,200 Mergansers were shot and their bodies recovered. He estimated that an equal number were shot whose bodies were never recovered.

Each stomach was preserved in a Mason jar, the date and location marked on it, and then sent to the lab in Halifax. However, the sto-

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machs were transparent, and by holding them to a light, their contents could easily be examined.

Grilse increased

He says during the period in which the Merganser control program was in effect, the number of grilse in the river increased dramatically.

At one counting station on the North Pole Stream, they increased from 200 in 1954 to 4,200 in 1957. (This stream, it was pointed out, contains only salmon and trout—no coarse fish at all.)

DDT kill

He also noted that D.D.T. killed a lot of fish when it was being used on the forests. At that time, wardens picked up buckets full of dead fish.

Also there were many dead birds, frogs, etc. along the rivers.

Percy observed that Mergansers prefer to take off into the wind; and, if roosting after a feed, and if approached from upwind (on a small stream) they would throw up most of the fish in their stomachs—this apparently being necessary to lighten the load so they could get airborne more readily.

When doing this, they would go splashing over the water, while at the same time shaking their heads from side to side and with fish flying out of their mouths in all directions. The wardens could then gather these up and examine them.

Percy calls the Merganser the biggest poacher on the Miramichi.

Mervyn Palmer of Newcastle reported, that last week, while driving to Bathurst via the Mines Road, a large bird flew across in front of the car. This was a mile or two beyond Heath Steele Mines.

The bird landed in a tree and Mervyn stopped the car

and got a good look at it. He said it looked much like a Great Blue Heron except it had much shorter legs.

It was bluish on the back, lighter below, had a long, pure black bill, and had a crest which ended up in a thin feather that swept back over its back.

This description fits closely to that of a Back-crowned Night Heron, and this heron more commonly perches in trees than does the Great Blue.

Early for Heron

This is extremely early for a Black-crowned Night Heron to be back, and it is also an unusual location at which to find one.

However, Squires says in his "Birds of New Brunswick"—"This heron may be seen occasionally throughout the province in migration but it is common in summer only in the vicinity of heronries in the north and northeast of the province and at Grand Manan." Squires also says "very rare coastwise in winter."

Black-crowned Night Herons generally feed at night and roost during the day. However, they are not entirely nocturnal.

Last summer, my wife and I saw three immatures feeding in the marsh at the mouth of Murdock Creek at East Point, in the middle of the day.

They can be seen in Strawberry Marsh on summer evenings, but do not appear there until sunset or a little later. They apparently roost, or nest, farther upriver, for they always arrive from that direction.

More robins

Robins continue to be reported at various points throughout our region. Margaret Wheaton reported two in her yard in Newcastle on March 6, and saw another one on St. Patrick's Day; while Verna King reported the first one in Oak Point on March 13.

A flock of Purple Finches visited the Wheaton feeder 2 or 3 weeks ago.

On March 17, a Raven was seen carrying a big stick—no doubt, to be used for the sub-flooring in a new home.

Crayfish move faster in reverse

Last September, Les McKinnon found some Crayfish (or Crawfish) living in a spring beside his home in Chelmsford.

They were about 4 or 5 inches in overall length and looked like miniature lobsters.

Personally, I have never seen Crayfish in New Brunswick, but have seen many of them in Ontario.

As a boy, I lived in a farmhouse beside which flowed a small sluggish stream. (We called it a crick).

It had a very muddy bottom, and a lush growth of water weeds on either bank.

In places, these weeds almost filled the stream--watercress, cattails, jewelweed, etc.

Above, Damsel flies flitted about and Dragon-flies zoomed along, stopping suddenly at times to hover in mid air, then suddenly dashing off again.

This was one of my favourite haunts and many summer hours were spent paddling and puddling about in it--catching and examining all the little creatures that could be found there.

Among the most common of these were the Crayfish (or Crabs, as we called them).

These crabs had a peculiar characteristic--they travelled much faster in reverse than they did when going forward.

When undisturbed, they would lie motionless with their head and claws peeking out from under a rock or other hiding place, or they would crawl slowly about on the bottom, always moving in the forward direction.

But, when frightened, they would disappear in a flash in the opposite direction.

This was accomplished by a sudden flip of the tail which propelled them backwards, almost as though shot out of a gun.

This action often stirred up a cloud of mud which further helped to conceal their whereabouts.

Since a Crayfish looks like a small lobster, it is natural to expect it to be very similar to a lobster in its life history and habits, etc.

Fewer eggs

However, there are some surprising differences.

For instance, whereas a female lobster lays thousands of eggs in a season (maximum 40,000), a female Crayfish lays 200 or less; and whereas a lobster's egg hatches into a tiny larva having no resemblance to its parents, a crayfish's egg hatches into a miniature Crayfish that is an exact replica of its parents.

In other words, a newly hatched Crayfish is much more fully developed than is a newly hatched lobster.

H.C. White, in a report for the Department of Fisheries (1957), says that there is only one species of Crayfish in New Brunswick, and it is

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found only in parts of the three main river systems--the St. John, Restigouche, and Miramichi; and in the case of the Miramichi, found only in the Southwest Branch.

He further states that it has not been found in any of the lower tidal tributaries of these river systems, nor in any of the smaller coastal streams.

From this, it would appear that the Crayfish found in McKinnon's spring at Chelmsford is an unusual occurrence.

Les says that there is only a very small stream running from the spring to the river, and that it empties into the river about 4 or 5 miles below the upper tidal limit.

Besides the species of Crayfish which live in streams, ponds or lakes, there are others which live in holes (or little wells) which they themselves dig into swampy ground--sinking these down to below the water table.

The excavated mud from each is deposited around the entrance thus forming a little chimney.

Are edible

These species are more southern in distribution, being found in the southern and central United States. They are said to be of a pale straw-yellow colour.

Crayfish are edible, but the local people in the area where I grew up never seemed to think of eating them.

However, while on a visit there a few years ago, I met a Maritimer who was fishing them.

Undoubtedly, they were the closest things to lobsters which he could find in those parts.

Studies have been made into the possibility of raising lobsters in agriculture projects (or Lobster Farming). Much has been learned about them--including, how to speed up their growth rate.

But, an economically feasible operation has yet to be established.

One problem is getting them through the winter, for this requires heating of the water which is an expensive proposition.

It has been suggested that it would be much easier to raise Crayfish in this way. The next step would seem to be the development of a large Crayfish comparable in size to a lobster.

The Bald Eagle, which was earlier reported near Vye's Beach, is still frequenting the area--Robert Houlston and Tony Johnston both having reported seeing it recently.

MacLean shares bliss of gardens

The following account was written by Gladys MacLean, formerly of Whitneyville, and now working at the Ling Kwang Home in Singapore.

"I wish you nature lovers could have shared my afternoon of sheer bliss in Singapore's exotic tropical gardens.

"I went through an old iron-wrought gate and found myself walking along an avenue of stately royal palms.

"Luxuriant bougainvillea with a prodigal profusion of purple, mauve, scarlet, crimson, white, magenta and russet blossoms spilled over the wayside.

"A strange-looking tree caught my eye. The plaque said, 'Cannon Ball, Amherstia, Burma'. It was a tall tree with bright leafy branches clustered around the top.

"About eight feet from the ground spiny spikes, about a foot long were hanging down loaded with big, pink velvety buds, and the most exquisite flowers I think I have ever seen.

"Brown seeds or nuts which must have been the cannon balls were visible here and there. They looked like husked coconuts.

"Meandering through a grove of lacey casuarinas a miniature zoo loomed into sight. Giraffes, elephants, crocodiles, lions and tigers were peering at me through the bushes. They were all green! Some skillful artist had shaped and pruned them from the shrubbery.

"The trail led me into a spacious green-house like the Alan Gardens in Toronto, only this was a natural greenhouse.

"Multiple tangled plants and ferns were growing profusely over a wooden framed pagoda. Inside, it was deliciously cool and damp and exuded the tropical, musty, perfumed aroma of a rain forest.

Swan, turtles

"I sat down beside a little lake and a big black swan with a pinky-red bill sailed over to inspect me. It is a native of Australia.

"Hundreds of turtles were skimming along the surface of the water. Colorful Asian Kingfishers were having a heyday diving for minnows.

"The lake ended with a pond of magnificent pink lotus lilies. It was an artist's paradise. Even the most mundane soul would be inspired to grab a brush.

"Knowing that Singapore is the orchid capital of the world, I saved the last hour for the orchid enclosure, and I was not disappointed. I felt like a child let loose in fairyland.

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"Singapore's botanical gardens are a legacy of the British Raj; a relic of the good old days when Britannia ruled the waves, and the sun never set on the British Empire.

"The British love their gardens, so they collected rare plants and trees from around the world to beautify the gardens which they planted in their colonies.

"I came away exclaiming with the psalmist 'Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.' Truly, 'The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.'"

Whistling Swans

Returning to Canada, a flock of Whistling swans has been reported by a former Newcastle resident, Patricia (Wheaton) Kidd. She saw them in flight at Sarnia, Ontario where she now lives.

According to the literature, Lake St. Clair, south of Sarnia, seems to have always been a favourite stopping off place for Whistling Swans during their spring migration. This generally takes place a little earlier than that of the Canada Geese.

Before European settlers came to this continent, they were much more plentiful, and more widely distributed, than they are now.

A few of them apparently nested around the Bay of Fundy (see Squires), although most of them always nested much farther north.

C. Gordon Hewitt, writing in 1921, says of this swan, "Formerly this species was abundant. It occurred throughout Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts, and northward to the coasts and islands of the Arctic."

He indicates they were hunted largely for their skins which were sold to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Peter Freuchen in his "Book of the Seven Seas" says they were formerly numerous in Greenland but they were hunted to extinction. Most were taken during the moulting season when they were unable to fly.

Godfrey gives their present nesting distribution as extending from western Baffin Island to northern Alaska, and their wintering quarters as being along both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States--from Maryland to North Carolina in the east, and from Washington to California in the west.

Vermont fern's inferior

The birds are not only returning from the south, but some are also nesting.

On March 26, Margaret Wheaton of Newcastle reported seeing a Raven steal an egg from a Pigeon's nest.

The Raven flew off with the whole, unbroken egg, in its bill. The Pigeon's nest was on an upper ledge of a large house just back of Margaret's home.

On March 29, another Pigeon's egg was lying broken on the sidewalk in front of the Opera House. Above, was a large projecting ledge from which it had apparently fallen.

Pigeons do not have a definite nesting season as do other birds, but may nest at any time of the year—occasionally, even in mid-winter.

On March 27, Donald Gordon reported a Mourning Dove in Maple Glen while on the following day, Address Johnston reported one at her feeder in Lyttleton.

In addition, she also had some Red-winged Blackbirds and another very strange bird which she later identified from a bird book as being a Crested Myna or Chinese Starling.

Escaped pet?

This is the first time a Crested Myna has ever been reported in the wild state around here, and it is almost certainly someone's escaped pet.

The Crested Myna is closely related to the Common Starling and resembles it in colour, build, voice and habits. However, there are some striking differences.

It is bigger—about the size of a Robin. It has a small patch of white on either wing, and a patch of white on either of the outer corners of its tail.

Also, as its name implies, it

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has a crest. However, this crest is different from other bird's crests, for it is situated up front, between the eyes, rather than in the normal position on top of the head.

The crest's greatest growth is found immediately above the bill. From here, it runs up over the forehead and then tapers off on the top of the head.

This crest is very ragged, but swept back, and reminds one of some of the hairstyles shown in last week's "Weekend" paper.

The Crested Myna has yellow eyes, legs and bill; and, other than the white markings mentioned above, its plumage is black.

Crested Mynas are sometimes sold in pet stores and can be taught to talk like Parrots.

If you have lost your pet Myna, let us know. It would be interesting to know how far this bird has travelled since its escape, and how long it has been loose.

Address says that it was very active, and looked healthy, when it visited her feeder.

Wild in west

The Crested Myna was introduced to Vancouver in the 1890s and still lives in the wild around there, but it has never spread very far beyond the city.

It originally came from Asia where its range extended through southern China, Burma, and East Pakistan.

The history of the Crested Myna, after its introduction to this continent, contrasts

strikingly with that of its cousin, the Common Starling, after its introduction from Europe at about the same time.

A few Common Starlings were liberated in New York City in 1890 and since then have spread from coast to coast and are now found throughout most of the North American continent.

Fiddlehead letter

I have received a copy of a letter which our son, Ian, sent to Paddy Gregg of C.B.C. radio in Fredericton. It reads,

"As a New Brunswick native, my attention was recently drawn to the attempt by the state of Vermont to have the fiddlehead designated as their state vegetable.

"The newspaper clipping (Moncton Times and Transcript) which I have received, however, suggests that it is *Osmunda Cinnamomea*, the Cinnamon Fern, which they wish to designate.

"The true Fiddlehead is the Ostrich Fern, *Matteuccia struthiopteris* (L.) Todaro (Synonym—*Pteris pensylvanica* (wild) Fern.)

"Let the Americans claim the inferior relative to the true Fiddlehead! No New Brunswicker would include it in his or her spring salad," said Ian.

Since writing the article on Crayfish last week, I have received additional information from several different sources. This will be included in a later article about them.

If you have found any Crayfish in our area, pass the information along to us.

During a morning walk to Strawberry Marsh on March 30, the following birds were recorded—8 Black Ducks, one Goldeneye, one Song Sparrow, 2 Redwinged Blackbirds, and a Grackle.

Lobster, man share trait

When cracking open a lobster shell, did you ever realize it was composed of the same material as that of our fingernails and toe nails?

I didn't until I was prompted to investigate this subject after my son, Ian said Crayfish could live only in hard water as otherwise it could not produce a shell.

(In case you are unfamiliar with it, a crayfish is a freshwater crustacean that looks like a miniature lobster).

From my investigation, I learned the coat-of-nail worn by crayfish, lobsters and crabs is made of a material called "Chitin"--the same material which constitutes the exoskeleton of an insect.

The sources I checked indicated the properties of "chitin" vary considerably, especially in hardness and flexibility, depending on whether, and in what degree, it is impregnated with certain other substances--special protein materials or calcium salts (lime).

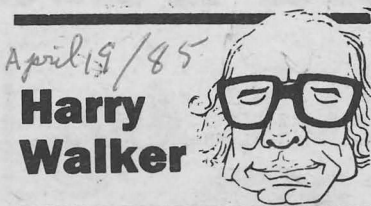
In the case of crustaceans, such as the crayfish, the hardness of the shell depends on the amount of calcium salts contained therein.

Therefore, the crayfish must live in waters in which such salts are dissolved. In order for this to be the case, the water must have come in contact with rocks or soils containing limestone, gypsum, or other soluble calcium minerals.

To my knowledge, there are few such minerals in our area; nonetheless, I have received a number of reports of Crayfish living hereabouts. One was reported in this column three weeks ago, at Chelmsford. Here are some more,--

Stirling Burchill of South Nelson says he has seen Crayfish on several occasions; but, in only one case, can he recall exactly where--this was in the Semiwan River--at the bridge, on the South Barnaby Road. The time would be about 45 years ago.

They were noticed while he, his wife, and their children were stopped there for a picnic lunch. There were ab-



out a half dozen of them and Stirling estimated that none of them would measure more than three inches in length.

Steven Landry of Douglastown reports seeing Crayfish in the small stream that runs by Burchill's Mill in South Nelson--the exact location being the bridge where the new Nelson bypass crosses this stream.

He says it would be 10 or 15 years ago that he saw them; and, as he recalls, they were a muddy olive green colour and about 3 or 4 inches long.

Norman Stewart of the Lockstead Road says he has never seen them in the Miramichi, but he has seen them in the Dunbar River--a tributary of the St. John River.

First in Northwest

The Rev. John (Bonner) Long, minister of the United Pentecostal Church in Newcastle, reported seeing two crayfish in a spring-fed stream near Jack's Lake. This stream's source was high up on a mountain ridge.

From there it flowed along the surface for a short distance, then went underground disappearing under broken rock and rubble, then reappearing again farther down. From here, it ran into a bog, through which it eventually joined the Little South-west Miramichi.

The Crayfish were above the underground portion of the stream, about 300 or 400 yards from its source.

This may be the first record of Crayfish occurring in the Northwest Branch of the Miramichi River system.

Surprisingly, John says these two Crayfish differed in colour--one being a normal dark muddy green, the other an unusual light orange.

How do Crayfish get transported to such out-of-the-way places?

My only suggestion is they probably get there in the same way that some fish and other aquatic creatures are thought to get there--that is, the eggs or very young get stuck in the mud on the feet of herons, ducks, etc. Thus, they are airborne to other streams and ponds.

The early disappearance of snow this year has not induced the birds to return early. In fact some are notably late.

This is especially true of the Kildeer (Plover), a bird which announces its return with loud and unmistakable cry.

The first one was reported on April 14, at Legaceville, by Marianne Morby.

She said one had flown over a few minutes before Winnie and I arrived at her place that day.

(Marianne, whom many of you have met at Tozer Motors in Nordin, originally came from the same part of the country as I did--the Creemore-Stayner area of Ontario).

About two hours later, on this same date, Winnie pointed out two more Kildeers that were mixed in with a flock of Robins scattered over the golf course at Burnt Church.

Canada Geese were reported to have passed over the area in large numbers on the evening of April 6; and, on the following day, a flock was seen at East Point. Margaret Wheaton saw a Fox Sparrow on April 3 and a pair of Common Loons on April 8.

Two Woodcocks were performing their courtship dances back of the Domtar plant in Newcastle on the evening of April 13.

The Double-crested Cormorants (Black Shags) have returned to the river--the first being seen on April 8; while by this same date, the Great Blue Heron and the Green-winged Teal had both returned to the Strawberry Marsh.

Hummingbird's no hitchhiker

Regarding the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, many of you may have heard the story it migrates by burying itself in the feathers on the back of a Canada Goose, thus stealing a free ride.

This story conveniently disposes of one mystery, but in so doing, it creates a few new ones.

For example, who ever saw a hummingbird in early April when the wild geese pass through these parts?

Also, at this early date, where are the flowers and insects on which the hummingbird depends for a living?

In truth, the hummingbird is not a hitchhiker. It migrates on its own, the same as do all other migratory birds.

In one of the Canadian Wildlife Service's series, "Hinterland Who's Who," L. de Kiriline Lawrence says at Point Pelee and certain other locations, large and spectacular flights of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been observed--this being especially true during the fall migration.

Furthermore, they are even known to fly across the Gulf of Mexico--500 miles of open water.

In common with many other bird species, the males migrate first, followed shortly by the females and juveniles. This sequence is followed both in spring and in fall.

Lawrence says banded hummingbirds have returned to the exact same location they nested in during the previous season.

The tongue of a hummingbird is tubular at the tip and thus adapted to extracting nectar from flowers.

However, it cannot live on sweets alone, and so, when visiting a flower, it not only takes the nectar, but it also catches any tiny insects that have been attracted to the flower.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird also drinks sap from holes that have been drilled in trees by the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Attracted to red

Terres says the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is especially attracted to the colour red, and suggests the following flowers are good for attracting them--columbine, salvia, petunias, phlox, lillies, and nasturtiums.

Artificial feeders can be bought for them, or you can design your own, but remember to paint it red, then fill it with a sugar solution.

David Cadogan described a hummingbird's courtship display which he witnessed while vacationing in the Bahamas last winter.

The female was perched in a shrub when the male took

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up a hovering position in the air in front of her.

From this central position, he alternately swung to the left and then to the right, each time moving sideways a distance of about one and one half feet.

While doing this, he maintained a position whereby he always faced directly toward her.

Similarly, he sometimes moved in the vertical plane moving upwards and downwards in front of her.

Also, at times, he moved backwards and forwards--advancing toward her, then retreating from her.

During this entire performance, the male frequently uttered (or otherwise produced) a grunting sound, which was quite unlike the steady whirring sound normally associated with the rapid beat of a hummingbird's wings.

David said this procedure apparently worked for eventually the male and female flew off together.

Similar in size

John K. Terres, in his Encyclopedia of North American Birds, says the Bahama Woodstar is the common hummingbird of the Bahama Islands; so, presumably, this is the species whose courtship dance David observed.

As Terres describes them, the Bahama Woodstar and the Ruby-throated Hummingbird are very similar in size, and fairly similar in colour.

However, in the case of the Woodstar, he describes the male's throat patch as being red-violet in colour, that of the Ruby Throat's as being red or orange.

Also, he describes the male Woodstar as having some reddish colouration on the belly and some rufous in the tail--both these being absent in the case of the Ruby Throat.

Terres says there are about 339 species of hummingbird in America, but none at all in the Old World.

These species range in size from that of a large bee to that of a Cowbird--the majority of them falling in the lower part of this range.

Most are tropical in distribution, only the Ruby-throated Hummingbird reaching eastern Canada, while two other species are found in B.C. and Alberta.

The Wood Frogs have emerged early this year. A group of them were croaking loudly in a gravel pit pond near St. Margarets on April 21.

Black Shag numbers called phenomenal

The increase in the numbers of Cormorants (Black Shags) on the Miramichi in recent years is a phenomenon many observers have noted with wonder.

This increase may not be apparent to you if you live on the upper reaches of the river, however, for the Cormorant restricts its activities mainly to the lower tidal waters, and to the Miramichi Bay.

Those living on the lower river, between Loggieville and Newcastle, see long lines of these big black birds commuting daily--flying upriver in the early morning, then downriver again in the evening--this pattern being followed throughout the smelt season.

Elsewhere in the Maritimes, it is the same story. Recently, on a radio program, mention was made of the great increase in Cormorants (and also of seals) in the Bras d'Or Lakes of Cape Breton, and some concern was expressed about this. It was proposed a study be commenced to determine their impact on the ecology.

From such reports we might get the impression man has upset the balance of nature in such a way as to benefit the Cormorant--this resulting in an abnormally large population of them.

However, this impression is gained only when we consider the recent history of the Cormorant rather than its entire history--that is, when we consider only that part of its history that has occurred during our generation, or the last few generations.

If we look at a longer period of its history--extending back to the time when the first European settlers arrived on this continent, then we get a different impression. The impression is the Cormorant population is returning to the normal abundance in which it was found when the white man first arrived here.

Anthony Erskine of Sackville, searched the literature and pieced together this history of the Cormorant (or Cormorants, as there are two species here).

Wildlife report

The results of his search are contained in a report to the Canadian Wildlife Service. It is entitled "The Great Cormorants of eastern Canada." It is a little out of date, having been published in 1972, but it

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nonetheless puts the present abundance of Cormorants in this new perspective.

Erskine's report indicates that when the white man first arrived here, Cormorants were abundant.

But, these Cormorants, along with other sea birds such as murre and awks, were severely persecuted by the new settlers. Their colonies were relentlessly raided. Eggs and birds were shipped to markets in Boston and New York.

Some of the milestones in the Cormorant's history, as found in Erskine's report, are--

In New England, all nesting colonies of Cormorants had been wiped out by the year 1800.

By 1833, collecting of sea bird eggs for eastern U.S. markets, had moved north to the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and it is presumed by this time, little was left of the sea bird colonies (including Cormorants) that had been in the Maritimes.

In this same year, 1833, Audubon found both the Double-crested, and the Great Cormorants to be still nesting by the thousands on this north side of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but he predicted they would be gone within 50 years.

By 1884, this prophecy had almost been fulfilled, for, in that year, a later observer, named Frazer, found only a few hundred of these birds nesting there.

By the early part of this century, fishermen had eliminated the Cormorants along the Labrador Coast--this possibly being the result of deliberate destruction, rather than disturbance by egg collectors.

Erskine reports the Great Cormorant was at one time thought to have been exterminated from this continent. But, in fact, it probably survived in very small numbers--mainly on Anticosti Island where Taverner found it nesting in 1928.

The Great Cormorant, like the more common and smaller double-crested, is now making a comeback.

Naturalists plan annual

The swallow has returned.

On April 22, Sara Lounsbury of Chatham reported Tree Swallows in Napan. On the following day, Margaret Wheaton reported them in Newcastle, and John Russell reported them at Point aux Carr.

(I understand it is the Cliff Swallows that are so punctual at Capistrano.)

Of course, many other birds have been returning also including the Common Snipe (April 22) with its weird and mysterious serenade — "whoo-ah-whoo-ah-whoo-ah," etc.; the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, (Apr. 26) so small in size, but so big in voice; and the White-throated Sparrow (Apr. 28) with its old Tom Peabody-Peabody-Peabody song.

Through the years many people have inquired of me as to the origin of the strange whinnying sound produced by the snipe.

It is produced by the wind vibrating the snipe's outer two tail feathers, and this happens when it fans out its tail during a dive.

When heard, the bird is usually flying above its territory at a height of 300 feet or more, and the sound can carry for a distance of a half mile or more.

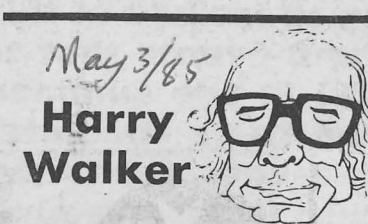
It may be heard during the day or night, but it is most frequently heard at twilight in the spring of the year.

On the ground, the snipe sings a long and repetitious "yuk-yuk-yuk—" or "cak-cak-cak—".

When disturbed, it will take flight with a sudden raspy "Scaipe" call.

Seldom on shores

Many people refer to all shore birds as snipe, but the true or Common Snipe lives in wet fields or marshes and is



very seldom seen on shores. In older books, it is referred to as the Wilson's Snipe.

It has a very long bill, but relatively short legs for a sandpiper. It is similar to a Woodcock, but is slimmer in build, with smaller head and smaller eyes.

This year, the joint annual general meeting of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick will be hosted by the Miramichi Naturalist's Club, and will be held at the Kouchibouguac National Park on the weekend of May 31 to June 2.

The theme of the meeting will be "The Maritime Plain Past and Present."

The planned program is as follows, —

Friday, May 31: 7-9 p.m., Registration. Park Reception Centre. 8-9 p.m., Slide show depicting Kouchibouguac National Park. 9:15-10 p.m., Night creatures hunt (owls, coyotes, etc.) Coffee and refreshments will be available.

Saturday, June 1: 7-9:30 a.m., Early bird walk. 8:30-10 a.m., Registration. Park Reception Centre. 10-10:15 a.m., Official welcome and introduction to the park by the Park Superintendent.

10:15-11 a.m., Address and slide presentation by Chris Turnbull, Provincial Archeologist, Dept. of Historical and Cultural Resources. "The Maritime Plain — Past Indian Relics and the Augustine Mound." Casts of artifacts will be displayed.

11 a.m.-12 noon, Annual General Meeting of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists.

12 NOON — Lunch break at Kelly's Beach. Bring your own lunch.

1:30-3 p.m., Choice of field trips:

(1) Barrier islands and tern colony

(2) Beaver Dam (Board walk)

(3) Kelly's Bog (Board walk).

3-5 p.m., Choice of field trips:

(1) Salt marsh (bring suitable footwear)

(2) Fish Fence on the Black River

5-6 p.m., Conservation Council of New Brunswick's Annual General Meeting.

7 p.m., Hot buffet dinner at the Habitant Restaurant and Motel, on Route 11, 14 km. south of the park. \$8.95 per person. Guest speaker, Hank Tyler, director of the critical areas program for the Main State Planning Office, will discuss critical natural areas in Maine and cooperation between Maine and New Brunswick in providing natural area protection.

Sunday, June 2:

9:30 a.m., Field trips start from the Park Reception Centre.

(1) For people travelling north: to the fish hatchery nature trail near Newcastle: Leader H. Walker.

(2) For people travelling south: Buctouche Bar area. Leader: David Christie.

If interested in attending, you can pre-register by sending \$5. per person, or \$10. per family, to Sara Lounsbury, 121 King Street, Chatham, N.B., E1N 2N8.

When so doing, state the number of people in your party, and the number interested in partaking of the hot buffet dinner.

Robins battle imaginary invaders of their territory

Like Don Quixote attacking the windmill, some Newcastle Robins have, with great gusto, been throwing themselves into battles with imaginary foes.

These birds, seeing their reflections in windows, mistakenly take them to be other robins trying to invade their territories. Thus aroused, they immediately engage them in combat.

On Buckley Ave., Mrs. Warren McCoombs, for a time, wondered if rats had gotten into her house.

She had been hearing these scraping and scratching sounds, but was unable to account for them.

One day she went to the basement and there saw a Robin fluttering up against one of the windows as though trying to get inside. The mystery as to the origin of the scraping and scratching sounds was solved.

This window, being situated in a window well, some full garbage bags were placed over the top of it.

This solved the problem at the time; but, a few days later, when the bags were removed, the Robin resumed its attack.

Over on Radio Street, another Robin is engaged in this same futile pastime. It is defending its territory against a whole flock of imaginary rivals.

Ira Miller says he has seen it attacking windows on two different sides of the house, as well as another one on the garage.

Ira says he has, at other times, seen birds fly into windows accidentally, not realizing the glass was there. But, in this instance, the Robin is striking the glass in a different way — tending to plunge at it feet first.

Last spring, we had two similar reports of this type; but then, it was a Flicker and a Goldfinch that were thus dueling with their reflections.

One solution proposed at that time, was to soap the windows where the attacks were occurring.

Chickadee romance

The male Black-capped Chickadee's courtship manner is simple and affectionate, less noticeable than the male pigeon's pompous strutting.

Winnie and I have been watching a pair of chickadees in our yard. The male searches about the branches of trees and shrubs and periodically flits over to the female to present her with a gift. This she invariably accepts.

Margaret Wheaton has been observing the same kind of chickadee romance in her yard.

Since male and female chickadees look alike, the only way we can distinguish between them is by their differences in behaviour.

Biologist, John K. Terres suggests species like the Black-capped Chickadee, in which male and female look alike, the birds themselves can only make this distinction by their differences in call notes and behaviour.

In back of Douglastown, Linda Hartlen has observed another type of courtship — that of billing — this being observed among the Purple Finches that have been frequenting her yard.

Both courtship feeding and billing are behavioural characteristics of many species of birds.

Billing, between a pair of birds, may vary from touching, clapping, nibbling, or even rattling one another's bills, depending on the species.

This practice has given rise to the term "billing and cooing", and the name "Love birds" for budgies or parakeets.

Linda reports Myrtle Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows as being some of her other recent visitors.

Events coincide

The Myrtle (or Yellow-rumped) Warbler, and the less common Palm, are the first members of the warbler



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tribe to arrive back in the spring.

The arrival of most of the warblers (and also flycatchers) coincides, more or less, with the appearance of the hordes of summer insects, and this in turn coincides with the unfurling of the

leaves — the interdependence of these three events being unmistakable.

White-crowned Sparrows are seen in our area only during migration, for they nest farther north. Some years they seem to pass through more quickly than others — some years being plentiful for a few days, other years passing through almost unnoticed.

Some birds have gone beyond the "billing and cooing" stage. Marjorie

Vautour reports a Kildeer has nested near her daughter's dog house (May 9) — the eggs being placed only a few feet beyond the reach of the dog's chain.

Perhaps the Kildeer realizes the dog will drive other would-be predators away!

If you are interested in any early morning bird walk (weather permitting), be at the junction of the Rennie Road and the back-lots Road behind Douglastown, at 7:00 a.m., Saturday.

Miramichi Naturalists

Northumberland News

Club Hosts

June 12/85

Annual Meeting

The joint annual meeting of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick was hosted by the Miramichi Naturalist's Club, and was held at the Kouchibouguac National Park, on the weekend of May 31 to June 2.

The theme of the meeting was "The Maritime Plain, Past and Present."

Because of the wet weather, the program had to be altered somewhat from that which had been originally planned. Headquarters for all of the activities was the Park Reception Centre, and the park staff was very much involved in the planning and execution of all these activities, especially Harry Beach, Resource management Advisory.

On Friday evening, the program began with a slide show depicting Kouchibouguac National Park. This was followed by a Night Creatures hunt, at which Hal Hinds proved to be an excellent owl-caller, but nobody was able to get any response from the coyotes that are known to live in the park.

Saturday's events included an early morning bird walk in the vicinity of Callanders Beach, followed by the welcoming address by the Park Superintendent Gilles Babin.

Patricia Allen, Assistant Archeologist for New Brunswick, gave a slide presentation on the work that has been done at the early Indian archeological sites at Red Bank.

At the business meeting of the N.B.F.N., the following executive was voted in for the coming year, - President - Hal Hinds, Fredericton; Vice President - Angus MacLean; Secretary - Ruth Rogers, Moncton; Treasurer - Harriett Folkins, Sussex; Directors at large - David Clark, St. Andrews, and Wilma Miller, Nictau.

In the afternoon, some participants opted to remain at the reception centre to view nature films provided by the Park. Others

donned raincoats and spent the afternoon looking at plants and birds along the Beaver Dam boardwalk and the Kelly Bog Boardwalk.

A number of resolutions were passed at the business meeting of the C.C.N.B. Journalist Frank Withers, and Department of Fisheries' David Thompson were cited for meritorious service. The C.C.N.B.'s new executive is not definitely decided; but, for the time being, their executive will consist of: President - Hajo Versteeg, Fredericton; 1st Vice President - Hal Hinds, Fredericton; 2nd Vice President - Jim Bedell, Hatfield Point; Secretary - Justin Mansc, Fredericton; Treasurer - David Underhill, Fredericton; Executive Director - Janice Brown, Fredericton.

A hot buffet dinner followed at the Habitant Restaurant in Richibucto.

At this dinner Eric Tull of Westmount, Que., was given an award by Harry Beach on behalf of Parks Canada - the award being given for his voluntary work in the park including his studies on the Piping Plover, a bird that is now on the endangered species list.

Hajo Veersteeg of the C.C.N.B. presented awards to Linda MacKinley and Janice Brown for their dedicated service to the C.C.N.B.

Mary Majka, Director of the Canadian Nature Federation gave a short address on behalf of the C.N.F.

The guest speaker for the evening was Hank Tyler, Director of the critical areas program for the Maine State Planning Office. He spoke about the critical areas program which is designed to protect areas that are specially endowed with natural beauty, or are the habitats for rare plants or animals.

On Sunday morning, the meeting concluded with two optional field trips — one at a sand dune at Cap Lumiere, the other at the Fish Hatchery Nature Trail at Newcastle.

Rare ruddy duck has been seen at Escuminac

Stirling Burchill of Nelson-Miramichi reports that on May 12 he, Mrs. Burchill and their daughter Mary, saw a Ruddy Duck at Escuminac. It was swimming inside the enclosure formed by the wharves there.

I have only one other record of this small western duck being seen here — that was on June 10, 1973, when Bob Allen reported one in the Strawberry Marsh at Newcastle. As I recall, it stayed around in the same area of the marsh for several days.

At this time of the year, the male Ruddy Duck is unmistakable. Most of the upper parts of its body are of a distinctive rufous or chestnut color and having a narrow, fairly long tail which is frequently held in a peculiar position — pointing upward, almost vertically.

The tail and the crown of its head are black, and it has a conspicuous large white area covering its cheeks and chin.

More crayfish

We have two new reports on crayfish.

Murray Curtis of Blackville says they are to be found in the Black Brook which enters the Main Southwest below the Cains.

Norman Stewart of the Lockstead Road was smelt fishing in the Renous River at Pineville when another crayfish made its presence known.

He was dipping smelts out of a dip net with his hands, when suddenly, something fastened onto one of his fingers.

It was dark, so he could not see what had grabbed him. He shook it off, and when a flashlight was turned on, it was found to be a crayfish.

Norman says it clung to his finger quite firmly but that it did not break the skin.

Nest records

Looking over the 1984 annual report of the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme, I find it was a former Trout Brook man, Steven Daniel, who contributed the most nest records last year — 172.

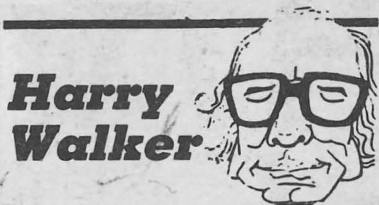
At the time, Steven was working on Michias Seal Island, where he was conducting a study of an Arctic Tern colony.

Another contributor from this area was a Grade 6 student (now in Grade 7) Chandra Mahabir of the North Esk Boom Road.

When I spoke to her, she said she kept records on two Barn Swallow's nests and would have done the same with some Tree Swallow's nests, but could not see inside the bird houses to get the proper information.

If you would like to participate in this voluntary work, write to A.D. Smith, Canadian Wildlife Service, Box 1590, Sackville, N.B., E0A 3C0. He will send you some nest record cards with instructions.

Last year, records were received for two Fox Sparrow nests in northwestern New Brunswick — the first proof this species breeds in our province.



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The following wildlife report was brought to my attention by George Cadogan. It is reprinted from the July 28, 1829 issue of "The Gleaner and Northumberland Scheldiasma," —

"A correspondent informs us that the following singular occurrence took place last week, and as the veracity of our informant is unquestionable, the authenticity of the marvellous fact entitles it to credit.

"As Mr. Robert Lingertwood, of Newcastle, was shooting pigeons in a field belonging to Mr. John Bouie, he was alarmed by the appearance of a monstrous snake: he however, presented his Dice, and shot the reptile in the

head. At this juncture Mr. Batiment came to the spot and measured the animal, the length of which was 12 feet 7 inches: promoted by curiosity, they opened it, and found in its stomach five whole pigeons."

In the above report, the pigeons are probably Passenger Pigeons, but the snake is a?

Passenger Pigeons existed in almost incredible numbers at that time, but there are no other records to indicate snakes of such huge proportions ever existed here. Unfortunately, the Passenger Pigeon is now extinct, and hopefully the snake is also.

Meeting nears

The joint Annual General Meeting of the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick will be held next weekend at Kouchibouguac Park — activities to begin at 7:00 p.m.

Friday May 31, and continuing through Saturday and Sunday morning.

Bird walk

The early morning bird

walk, rained out last Saturday, is rescheduled for this Saturday. Meet us at the junction of the Rennie Road and the Backlots Road behind Douglastown at 7:00 a.m.

Cedar Waxwings eat petals

Cedar Waxwings eat the petals from apple and cherry blossoms.

Two people who witnessed this phoned me. They were Mrs. Herschell Stewart of Trout Brook and Mrs. William Arnoldus of Chatham.

Cedar Waxwings frequent flowering trees but, because of their quiet nature, they often go unnoticed.

They have a faint voice and tend to sit still, rather than hop about in the tree.

The result is that a cursory observation may fail to detect them while a careful scrutiny of the tree will reveal them.

Last week, in our own backyard, a small flock of Cedar Waxwings was partaking of these same delicacies.

They were dividing their attention between a Pincherry tree, a Flowering Crabapple tree, and a male Manitoba Maple tree.

No doubt, the waxwings will be back for another feast when the Pincherries are ripe.

Cedar Waxwings eat a variety of insects but, according to John K. Terres, they are especially fond of cankerworms.

This will be of interest to Don and Velma MacMillan, who, a few years ago, experienced a fall cankerworm plague around their Newcastle home.

Mrs. Arnoldus described another little bird, seen in her yard, as wearing a yellow scarf and as having a rusty patch on either side of the head (we might call these earmuffs although this is hardly the time of year for such attire).

This little bird is most likely the Cape May Warbler. (The scarf is not quite complete as there is a slight break in it at the back of the neck.)

Out in Matthew's Settlement, Paul Stewart has discovered an American Bittern's nest containing three eggs (May 26).

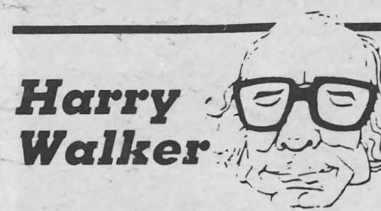
It is situated in an old overgrown field — the nest being placed in a small grassy opening among some alders.

Few birds have evoked such an assortment of names as the American Bittern — most of these alluding to its ridiculous love song, or to its habit, when approached, of freezing with its neck and bill outstretched toward the sky.

These names include Marsh Hen, Stake Driver, Thunder Pump, Water Belcher, and Sky Grazer.

When it rises out of a marsh, flapping awkwardly, the Bittern gives the impression of being a clumsy bird; but, nonetheless, it is not to be fooled with at close range.

The famous bird man, Roger Tory Peterson, records he



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was able to catch a Bittern by hand. This he did by very slowly approaching one that had frozen. However, the Bittern also caught him with a sharp blow to the upper lip that left him with a scar.

Robbie Tufts also records an incident he witnessed where a curious steer stuck its nose too close to a Bittern. When the bird delivered its lightning blow, the steer was sent high-tailing it across the field.

During a short (1½ hour) bird walk behind Earlene Hunter's house in Sunny Corner, May 29, approximately 45 species were met up with.

Taking part in the walk were Velma Wilson, Earlene, my wife Winnie and myself.

The route followed took us down the hill to the river plain, then back up the same hill via another foot path.

Birds recorded were: — Pine Siskin, Goldfinch, Chimney Swift, Song Sparrow, Crow, Northern Waterthrush, Alder Flycatcher, Robin, Bobolink, Black Duck, Killdeer, Purple Finch, Red-

winged Blackbird, Cowbird, Evening Grosbeak, Chipping Sparrow, Tennessee Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Barn Swallow, Catbird, Redstart, Maryland Yellowthroat.

Kingbird, Veery, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Osprey, Bank Swallow, Grackle, Swamp Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Nashville Warbler, Blue Jay, Canada Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Cape May Warbler, Ovenbird, Myrtle Warbler, Tree Swallow, and Starling.

Unidentified

A few additional species were not specifically identified. An unidentified gull, and an unidentified heron flew by at considerable distance from us. While one songster was cassified as being either a Chestnut-sided Warbler, or a Magnolia Warbler.

About a half dozen or more of these birds were not actually seen, but were heard only.

It was the prime time of the day, in the early morning, when the birds are singing at their best. Birds always wake up singing.

Earlene also saw two male Scarlet Tanagers there, on the previous day.

We have another snake

The old snake report, re-printed in last week's column, has prompted one reader to tell us about another big snake sighting.

Ira Miller of Newcastle says, that in the early 1970's, while travelling along the Salmon River Road between Chipman and Harcourt, he and his wife, Roberta came upon a big snake lying across the road.

It was on the opposite lane of traffic; and, after passing it, Ira backed up the car to get another look at it. He then brought the car to a stop alongside the snake.

He estimated it to be about 7 or 8 feet long, and to be at least two inches in diameter.

In color, it was brownish on the back, and pale grey on the belly, and it had little or no pattern anywhere.

While the Millers parked beside the snake, it raised its head to an estimated height of 18 inches and stuck out its tongue--otherwise it made very little movement.

Since it had a fearsome appearance, it was viewed only through the car windows--the doors being kept closed. After about a minute's observation, the Millers proceeded on their way.

This sighting took place near the mid-way point between chipman and Harcourt, but a little closer to Harcourt.

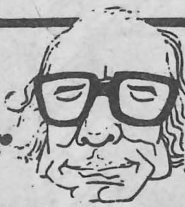
Here, the land was wet and swampy; and the road, which had not yet been paved, had been built up with shale rock.

Ira thought the snake had crawled out onto the road to sun itself, and he was able to estimate its length from the fact it extended across and beyond both of the car tracks on the one lane of traffic.

He suggested this snake had probably either escaped

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from a circus or side show, or it had originally been a pet which somebody had released into the wild.

There were no permanent settlements along the road in that area but there were a lot of hunting and fishing camps nearby.

Again we have reached that time of year when Scarlet Tanagers show up in our area. Margaret Wheaton reported one in Newcastle on May 17, while David and Sara Lounsbury reported one in Napan on May 24.

Although seldom seen except for a brief period in the spring, some Scarlet Tanagers do remain here for the summer--generally, I believe, selecting a secluded piece of mature deciduous forest in which to raise a family.

Apparently Scarlet Tanagers are quite partial to oak trees. Hal H. Harrison in his Field Guide to Bird's Nests says, that of 29 nests examined in his study, 19 were in Oak trees.

Harry Beach of the Kouchibouguac National Park staff says a few years ago a pair of Scarlet Tanagers nested in an oak grove at the southern end of the park.

Some years ago while picking blueberries on the blueberry plain near Dennis on the Little Southwest, I saw a small group of Scarlet Tanagers which I took to be part of a family unit.

In this case, the birds were probably attracted by the

blueberries. Arnold Somers of Sillikers says there are no Oak trees near there, but last year he also saw a Scarlet Tanager near there--about a quarter of a mile back of the blueberry plain.

He has also seen them in his yard on two occasions, and there happens to be several Oak trees growing there.

I have seen them in my own backyard on two occasions (no oak trees)--once in the spring and once in the fall.

Note that the females and the young, and even the fall males are of a greenish yellow color, entirely unlike the scarlet and black spring males.

Oriole, catbird

In addition to the Scarlet Tanager, Margaret Wheaton reported the return of the Baltimore Oriole and Catbird to her place (May 17).

She said the Catbird had begun building a nest on the day after its arrival.

This prompt attention to business contrasts strikingly with the lackadaisical attitude of the Goldfinches which Doug Underhill reported in his yard (May 23).

Harrison, in the book referred to earlier, says of 264 nests in Michigan, the earliest date at which eggs were found, was July 6, the latest Sept. 25.

He further states their nesting time seems to correspond with the ripening of the thistles, the down of which is used to make nests and the seeds of which are a food staple.

One way to attract Goldfinches to your yard, is to plant Cosmos in it--that is presuming you do not want to plant thistles there. Cosmos seeds are another favourite of Goldfinches.

June 7/85

Sea bottom changes in N.S.

Off the southern coast of Nova Scotia, great ecological changes have taken place on the sea bottom. This has all occurred during the last four or five years.

These changes illustrate the chain reactions that can take place when one organism suddenly fails or multiplies due to some change in the environment. Fortunately, in this case, the change seems to be for the better — at least, from man's standpoint.

An article entitled "The Sea Urchin Connection," by David Holt appeared in the Nov. 84 issue of "Atlantic Insight" magazine, and it describes four changes which have been observed in connection with the above mentioned ecological revolution. They are, —

The sea water has warmed. The Sea Urchins (or Sea Porcupines), formerly very plentiful, have almost completely died off over a very large area.

Great forests of kelp have sprung up from the sea bottom.

Lobsters have become more plentiful than they have been for years.

Now for the explanation for these events:

The Sea Urchins have died off because of some disease. Although scientists have not yet agreed on what micro organism is causing it, they are agreed on one thing — the disease becomes more prevalent as the temperature of the sea water rises.

Each year the temperature of the sea water reaches its yearly maximum in September and October; and, in the years 1980-83, record annual temperature highs were recorded.

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It is at this same time of year, when the water is warmest, that the greatest die-off of Sea Urchins occurs.

The appearance of kelp forests is no mystery for the Sea Urchins formerly kept them grazed off, almost down to the bare rock. They did this despite the fact kelp can at times grow faster than a tropical forest.

The increase in the numbers of lobster is not fully understood. However, the article says fishermen have made the observation that lobsters need a kelp bottom.

Other effects

The above four changes are the only ones specifically mentioned in the article. But, with such a drastic change in the underwater landscape, it is inevitable many other plants and animals would also be affected.

Those listed probably only represent the most obvious, and the ones that are of the most immediate concern to man. It seems the Sea Urchin has an insatiable appetite and eats a great variety of food as well as kelp.

To update this story, here are two reports received during the past weekend, —

David Christie, associate curator of Natural History at the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John, says the waters of the Bay of Fundy are colder than normal this spring; while Angus MacLaine, a former resident of Cape Breton,

says icebergs which normally disappear about the latitude of Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, are, this year, reaching as far south as Sable Island.

So, it would appear there has been an interruption in the warming trend observed in the waters off Nova Scotia.

Lobster history

A bulletin in the series, Underwater World, published by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, gives the life history of the lobster.

It begins life as an egg attached to the underside of the female. This egg hatches into a tiny pollywog-shaped larvae which floats to the surface.

Here it drifts about for 3 to 6 weeks, all the while feeding on plankton. During this stage it undergoes three moults; and, with each moult, it assumes more nearly the shape of an adult lobster.

By this time, it is about 1½ centimeters long, and it now sinks to the bottom where it remains for the rest of its life.

In order to grow, a lobster must moult — which means it sheds its shell.

Before each moult, the lobster's flesh progressively becomes more densely packed inside the shell.

Eventually the shell splits and is shed. The lobster then swells by taking in water and a new shell forms.

This sequence repeats itself over and over again — the lobster gaining in weight by about 50% between moults.

The number of eggs laid by a female lobster varies greatly depending on her size — the largest producing as many as 40,000 eggs in one brood, and she may produce two or three broods from only one mating.