

Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas NEWSLETTER



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No. 19

Editor: Brian Dalzell

Fall, 1989

1989 COVERAGE SUMMARY

In terms of ground covered, the fourth season just past was by far the most successful to date, both in terms of priority squares completed and the number of observations submitted. We now have 260 (62%) of our 416 priority squares, and 25 (71%) of our 35 special habitat squares "in the bag" (completed). To give you an idea of how much work you did in 1989, consider this: At the end of last year, only 129 (30%) priority squares were done, so we have accomplished as much in 1989 as we did in all of the first three years of the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas!

With only one more year to go, this is not the time to slack off though. In order to finish next year on time, we have to come up with an even greater effort than we did this year. Namely, to finish the remaining 38 per cent (156) of our priority squares. Before you throw up your hands in despair however, it should be pointed out that more than half of these are already over half done.

If all the priority and special squares near you are complete, why not consider spending a weekend or two atlassing a more remote square in 1990? It is always fun to get out and bird in areas you would otherwise never consider birding, and sometimes you even find other interesting things besides birds. So take a look at the coverage map on this page. It shows the status of all priority and special squares as of December 5, 1989.

To get a rough idea of which region these squares fall in, take a look at the map of regional boundaries, which you will find elsewhere in this issue with an updated list of regional coordinators. You'll have to move fast though. All the remaining squares in Cape Breton have been spoken for, as well as those in Regions 3 and 5. The area where help is most needed is Region 16 — Yarmouth.

All remaining unclaimed squares after February 15, 1990 will be listed in the winter newsletter, due out sometime in March. In the case of isolated and hard-to-reach squares, we hope to be able to offer some financial incentive to travel to them. More on that in the next newsletter. Now for those of you who are impressed by figures, with 99 per cent of our data in (hopefully), here are some totals after the end of the 1989 field season.

Party hours dropped again in 1989, showing that the core of atlassers we do have are becoming ever more effective at

collecting data. With roughly 6,800 hours put in, our cumulative total is now almost 35,000 hours (you can think of it as one person working without a break for four years). Some 350 atlassers took part, down slightly from last year, so 885 atlassers have now contributed at least some data.

We passed the 100,000 mark in terms of individual records collected, with 32,500 this year alone — our best to date. We now have more than 4,050 cards on file, so we should easily pass the 5,000 mark next year. The total from this year will likely be close to 1,200, as there are still some tardy atlassers who haven't sent theirs in yet. As far as species go, we have now recorded 220 species as occurring in the Maritimes in suitable breeding habitat and conditions, of which 197 have been confirmed. Let us hope we can crack the magic 200 barrier in 1990!

REGIONAL REPORTS — 1989

The season just past was outstanding in terms of the work that was accomplished and the number of interesting observations that were made. As you can see from the coverage map elsewhere in this issue, we now have more than 62 per cent of our priority squares finished, up from 30 per

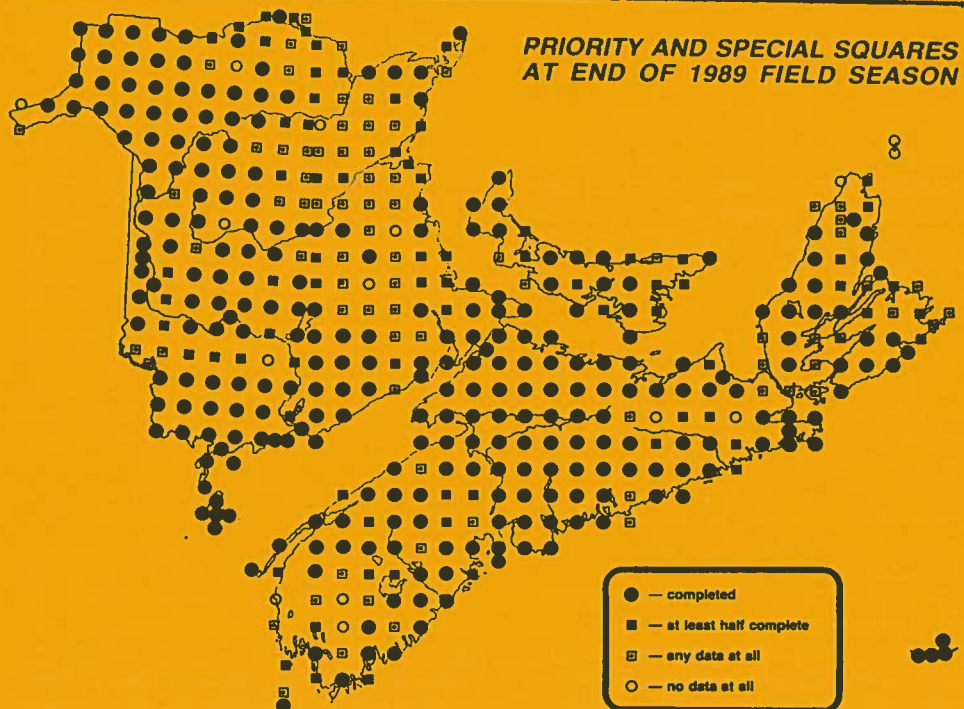
cent this spring. What follows is a short account from each regional coordinator outlining notable achievements in each of their regions:

Region 1 — Peter Pearce

To an absentee coordinator with almost no within-region atlassers to call on, Edmundston region has presented a peculiar challenge, shared with the coordinators of perhaps only two other regions: Campbellton and Tobique. I've really had little coordinating to do! My focus has been on completing each priority square, of which there are 19, almost to the exclusion of the secondary and tertiary ones until this year.

At the end of the 1988 field season I was more or less on track. Thanks to a significant contribution from Brian Dalzell in 1989, I am now ahead of the game, at least as far as priority squares are concerned. Only two (one a tiny sliver of a square) remain to be done. A varying amount of coverage was obtained this year in about 25 secondary and tertiary squares.

The present year yielded no truly outstanding records — but confirmations of Green-backed Heron, Hooded Merganser, Northern Goshawk, Great-crested Flycatcher, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird, Philadelphia Vireo and Northern



Oriole were all pleasing enough. Sightings of probably-breeding Merlins and further Gray-cheeked Thrushes and Fox Sparrows were also notable.

Each of the completed squares was done in two days or less, not allowing familiarization with the distribution of the different habitats. I thus remain hesitant about making abundance estimates. All in all I feel pretty good about my region. And so on to 1990!

Objectives? To complete the two remaining priority squares, to compile species present (H) lists for the secondary ones, and to dig out those owls — the only group of birds I simply haven't been able to come to grips with yet. I'm already beginning to regret the looming end of this fascinating and instructional project!

Region 2 — David Christle

The distribution maps published in this newsletter through the 1988 field season have usually shown a large blank area in north-central New Brunswick, where Region 2 is located. That will no longer be the case. With the exception of owls and rails, which have not been adequately sampled, an absence of dots on a map will now mean that the species is either absent or rare in the region.

I have had to rely mainly on non-residents for coverage, and during 1989 great progress was made. Twice as many hours were spent atlassing as in the previous three years put together, and the effort was much more focussed on finishing priority squares. It was rather like a 320-hour square bash!

Of 22 priority and special squares, the number adequately covered increased from one to 12, six require 5-10 more confirmations, three have 50 per cent of the expected species but few confirmations, and the one with the worst roads has not yet been visited. In addition, varying amounts of information have been obtained for 39 secondary and tertiary squares.

Actually, five of the "adequately-covered" squares now fall one or two species short of the desired number of confirmations because I later revised the number of expected species upwards. It's not worthwhile for me to visit them again, but local atlassers may be able to add to them in 1990.

As regards to the birds seen, observations to date generally fit into the pattern of our previous knowledge of the region. Two observations of the Harlequin Duck (on the Nepisiquit River in 1988 and the Benjamin River in 1989) have been the most intriguing reports, adding to two pre-atlas records. It remains to be seen whether they are actually breeding in the region. The status of Golden Eagle is also enigmatic.

Thanks to Mary Majka, Tony Erskine, Alan Madden and the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for their help in 1989. Finishing off the region's priority and special squares should be readily achievable in 1990.

Region 3 — Brian Dalzell (for Hilaire Chiasson)

The big highlight of the 1989 season was a visit from atlasser Robert Andrie of Eden, New York to the Bathurst region. Bob was one of the editors of the recently-completed "Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State", and was accompanied by Donald Roberson of Niagara Falls. Between June 28 and July 4, the two were able to visit nine priority squares in the region. Due to adverse weather conditions and the short duration of their stay, they were unable to complete any of these squares.

Some of the interesting observations they made were Wood Thrushes in several squares, Eastern Bluebird (H) at Tabusintac River, Vesper Sparrow (H) at Tabusintac, Common Goldeneye (FL) at Pabineau Lake, Broad-winged Hawk (FL) at Pointe Verte and Great-horned Owl (FL) at Brantville. The New York duo were able to visit 20 squares in eight days — a most welcome contribution to the Atlas!

Another very active atlasser in Region 3 was Marcel David. He sent in data from several squares and contributed a lot of valuable information on bird distribution in the Acadian Peninsula. His most notable discovery was of Boreal Owls calling on territory near his home in Sainte-Simon. A special trip organized by David Christie to Miscou Island in March was also successful in locating Boreal Owls. Alas, we still do not have a breeding record for this elusive owl.

Region 4 — Brian Dalzell

Because of an increased workload, Erwin Landauer turned over the reins for the Tobique region to yours truly. Because of an almost total lack of experienced atlassers in the region, I arrived on June 17 ready to complete all 17 priority squares myself. Despite two flat tires (one caused by a live rifle cartridge), covering 5,000+ miles of dusty roads, the thickest blackflies in recent memory and 30C+ temperatures on most days — this was accomplished by July 22 with a lot of sweat and some swearing (at the birds mostly).

I was impressed with the many lakes in the regions, both large and small, most of which contained broods of Common Loon, Black Duck, Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser. Three-toed Woodpeckers were not as common as I had hoped, but Black-backed Woodpeckers were quite common. The Tobique River Valley was the most ornithologically-rich part of the region, with Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Oriole, Brown Thrasher and Warbling Vireo being found as far upstream as Nictau-Riley Brook.

The highlight of the summer was furnished by Yvon Beaulieu, who found a singing male Indigo Bunting accompanied by a female feeding a young bird near Plaster Rock. Mark Phinney reported a colony of Purple Martins from there, the first for the region and the first north of Aroostook, making it the most northerly colony in the province. Bald Eagles nesting at Long Lake

and Bathurst Lake were unexpected. One, and perhaps two, Golden Eagles spent the summer around Nictau as well.

Other birds that were more widespread than I expected were Fox Sparrow, Black-poll Warbler, Gray-cheeked Thrush and Eastern Bluebird. The latter species was found mostly in forest clearcuts, but in rural areas as well. Most disappointing was the scarcity of Ospreys and Belted Kingfishers along the Tobique, due in part I found out, to trout pond owners who shoot them indiscriminately.

Region 5 — Harry Walker

The most unexpected finds in Region 5 (Miramichi) during the 1989 atlassing season were sightings of two Indigo Buntings. The first was found in the Bartibog square on two different occasions a week apart, thus meeting our standards for being territorial (T). On both occasions, it was singing in the same grove of poplars; and, on each of these occasions, it was both heard and seen very clearly by myself. The second bird (habitat only) was found near Renous by Norman Stewart.

Exact location of the first find was the top of the ridge on the south bank of Coltart's Brook where it crosses the Bathurst Highway. This is about 13 kilometers north of Chatham as the crow flies. The grove of poplars in which the bunting was singing is situated on the edge of a pit which was created recently to provide fill for a new highway. Because of an almost total lack of outside help, only two of the region's 20 priority and special squares have been completed.

Region 6 — Ford Alward

Thanks are due to all who sent in data cards for the Carleton region this year. We now have 11 of 16 priority squares finished, leaving five to be done in 1990. Many interesting sightings were made this past summer, but there are still a few species found in nearby regions which could still be found here. These are Northern Pintail, American Coot, Upland Sandpiper, House Wren, Pine Warbler, Field Sparrow, Rufous-sided Towhee and House Finch.

The 18 most-commonly observed and confirmed species in the region are American Robin, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Northern Flicker, Cedar Waxwing, Common Raven, Song Sparrow, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, American Kestrel, Chipping Sparrow, Blue Jay, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, White-throated Sparrow, Eastern Kingbird, American Crow and Purple Finch.

Other species with 20 or more confirmations are European Starling, Killdeer, Ruffed Grouse, Black Duck, Cliff Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Bank Swallow, House Sparrow, Common Yellow-throat and Bobolink. Interesting confirmations this year were Eastern Meadowlark (FL) at Knowlesville; Indigo Bunting (AY) at Florenceville, Solitary Sandpiper (FL) at Beadle Mountain and Northern Shoveller (FL) at Perth-Andover.

Region 7 — Don Gibson

The fine efforts in 1989 by the atlasers of Region 7, Fredericton North, have made the goal of completing the 18 priority squares a reality for 1990. Only four squares are considered not complete and two of these require very little work. However, one remote square (FB66) has yet to be visited and another (KG92) is about 50 per cent complete. I will be able to finish all four of these next year by myself.

The highlights of the season were the confirmations of breeding of a Brown Thrasher and a Vesper Sparrow, both in priority squares. Scarlet Tanagers, Lincoln's Sparrow and Wilson's Warblers were recorded more frequently in 1990. Main objectives in 1990 will be finishing the four priorities, filling in gaps for some species and helping out in other regions where required.

Region 8 — Mary Majka

Unfortunately, injuries I suffered in a fall on the long weekend in May interfered with my activities in Region 8 — Kent, this year. Other people did spend about 6 hours atlasing. One priority square was finished; over 75 per cent of expected species were recorded and a good number confirmed in another priority; and in a secondary as well.

Of 17 priority squares, six have now been adequately covered, one needs only two more confirmations, three need about 15 more confirms, two just over 20, and the remaining five have barely been touched. Over 75 per cent of the species have been found in three of the 54 secondary and tertiary squares, and there is some information for 22 others.

Highlights among the birds that have been reported in this region are Solitary and Upland Sandpipers that were confirmed, and Common Moorhen, Brown Thrasher and Rufous-sided Towhee that were not. Special recognition must be paid to Marge Brown and Mark Phinney who, with their helpers, have confirmed 61 and 60 species — respectively — in their Upper Blackville Bridge and Rexton squares.

Finishing the region's priority squares in 1990 will be a challenging but attainable goal — if I can just keep on my feet!

Region 9 — Christopher Adam

I must admit it was with some trepidation that I took on Dan Busby's region, Fredericton South, which he had so ably managed. However, with the efforts of our splendid group of volunteers, and with the help of other RCs, the region had a good year. I myself was only able to get out about four or five times, so I envy those of you who have the time and energy for more rigorous efforts.

Out of a total of 18 primary and 2 special squares, we now have completed 10 primary and 1 special — for a total of 11. Four of these were completed this year, including: Peltoma Lake (FA64) by Cecil Stairs and Eric Fiander; Juvenile Settlement (FA84) was easily completed by Ron Weir and Ken Kierstead, who confirmed Pine Warbler,

the most northerly so far in the province; Hammtown (KF78) square was completed by Enid Inch with help from Ontario atlasers and relatives Spencer and Helen Inch; and the Scotchtown (FA29) square was completed by Ford Alward and friends.

The Range (KG70) was tackled by myself from absolute scratch. Later I found out that Chipman residents Dusan Soudek and Jennifer Szerb had also been in the square. When I compared totals, they were almost totally complimentary! Enough to finish off the whole square. A start was made on the special square, Palfrey Lake (FA15) by Doug Morrison. I am calling the Queens-town square (GA26) completed, even though it only needs a few more confirmations. Next year shall do it!

Region 10 — Brian Dalzell

Thanks to the efforts of Ontario Atlas veteran Ron Weir and his driver, Ken Kierstead of Saint John, I was able to finish all my priority squares in Charlotte region. As usual, Ron completed his three assigned squares in one day each of intense effort at the peak of the season for finding fledged young and parents feeding young — early to mid July. When it comes to atlasing, Ron is in a class by himself.

For example, on July 13 in the Pocologan River (FA80) square, Ron found 83 species of birds and confirmed 67 (81%) of them in only 8 hours — simply unattainable for mere mortal atlasers like myself.

His best find was a Gray-cheeked Thrush singing (H) in the above square. Three records of Philadelphia Vireo (two breeding) were the first for the region and a most welcome addition to the overall list.

On Grand Manan, 16-year-old Halton Dalzell completed the White Head square, confirming Palm Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow. Summer warden Andrew Hicks sent in his observations from Machias Seal Island, enabling me to write off that square. House Finches were also found on territory in the Grand Manan (FV75) square, adding to their growing beach-head in south-western New Brunswick. At least four or five Peregrine Falcons summered around the island; if they return next summer, breeding can be expected.

Region 11 - Jim Wilson

The Saint John region has been blessed with many active volunteers, and they continued their efforts during the past summer. At the close of 1988, we had attained an 88 per cent completion level for our priority squares, and a 49 per cent overall success rate for all squares within our boundaries.

Our region is one of many varied habitats, and these areas continued to produce some rather interesting discoveries. In 1989 our atlasers located the following which are of particular interest:

- First confirmed breeding of Peregrine Falcons in the Maritimes since the reintroduction program commenced further up the Bay of Fundy in 1982. The pair raised one young at the much-publicized Saint John Harbour Bridge site. Unfortunately, one

young fell out of the nest and was run over by vehicles on the road below.

- Four more Willow Flycatcher records, three by Ron Weir and one from Frank Longstaff, including what I believe to be the first confirmed nesting for New Brunswick (FL) at Penobsquis.

- Fledgling Solitary Sandpipers near the Bay of Fundy coast at Hanford Brook with an adult, third breeding record for the province.

- A Wilson's Phalarope giving a distraction display (DD) at Musquash Marsh, only the second confirmation for the Maritimes.

- Another of very few breeding confirmations for Marsh Wren in New Brunswick at Red Head Marsh near Saint John.

- Sightings in suitable habitat of Gray-cheeked Thrush, Rough-winged Swallow, Least Bittern (2), Common Moorhen, Red-shouldered Hawk, House Finch and Sedge Wren.

We will have no problem completing the one remaining priority square during the coming season and we look forward to being able to export some of our talent to neighboring regions once again — especially Region 9, Fredericton South.

Region 12 — Rob Walker

The overall atlasing strategy in the Moncton region has been to assign priority squares to individuals whenever possible, but at the same time to allow atlasers to work in any square that caught their fancy. It became necessary in 1989 to focus our attention to a much larger degree on the priority squares.

Of the one special and 16 priority squares in the region, four have been completed: Waterside (special), McFadden Lake, Marys Point and Hillsborough. Of the 16 secondaries, eight have been worked to some degree. Of the 30 tertiaries, 21 have been worked, leaving 18 squares untouched by atlasers.

Considering the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas project has only one more year of field work to go, this summary presents a rather dismal picture of the state of affairs in the Moncton region. However, we have not been sitting on our butts for the last four years. The major problem has not been lack of atlasers or hours spent in the field, but the lack of effectiveness of both novice and experienced birders alike at finding confirmations.

In Region 12 we approach 1990 with trepidation at the size of the job to be done but with keen anticipation to complete the project to the best of our ability. Atlasing is fun as well as being a great learning experience. Our atlasers are very proud of the quality of the data we have produced. In fact, concentration on quality rather than quantity has been a factor in slowing us down.

Highlights of the 1989 season in Region 12 were: confirmed breeding of the Peregrine Falcon in one square and probable breeding in another; confirmed breeding (FL) of the House Finch in the Moncton square; and probable breeding for Willow

Flycatcher (territorial behaviour) at Halls Creek Marsh in the Dieppe square.

Our first Three-toed Woodpecker in the Moncton region was observed in the Hunters Home square 16 kilometers northeast of Coles Island on the Trans Canada Highway. We have done reasonably well in the documentation of owls in our region. Banded, Great Horned and Saw-whet Owls are almost everywhere, with fledglings of the last species being found in the Point Wolfe and Alma squares. These have been recorded with the use of the owl tape provided by the atlas office.

Region 13 — Tony Erskine

Our objective was to finish off the Border region in 1989; we didn't quite make it. All squares now have 75% of their "expected" species numbers, and only one has a major habitat unsampled — Shediac Island. All but one secondary and two tertiary squares are completed by species counts of detected and confirmed, thanks to everyone here plus Jim Taylor, Fulton Lavender and friends from Region 18.

We may be short one or two species some places as I've not spent a lot of time checking totals. However, the "expected" numbers are arbitrary so it hardly matters. We got first reports ever (that I know of) for Warbling Vireo and Philadelphia Vireo. Other firsts during the Atlas this year were Redhead (H), Ruddy Duck (H), Sedge Wren (H), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (FL), Willow Flycatcher (H) and Yellow Rail (H - 1987 record), all well documented.

Our only special push was for American Woodcock, added in eight squares this spring to our previous 15. On Atlas weekend, 14 atlasers from the Border region spent one day in Region 14, finishing three squares. I also spent most of eight days in Regions 2 and 3, where I worked in 14 and two squares respectively, but without finishing any.

Region 14 — Blake Maybank

My objective this past year was to manage the completion of all the priority and secondary squares in the Cobequid region; we almost made it. By summer's end all the priority and all but three of the secondary squares were done. In addition, all but eight of the tertiary squares have achieved a 2/3 or better list of expected species, which will help in improving the distributional mapping of the birds.

Considering that a year ago only five squares were complete, a lot of fine work went into atlasing Region 14 this year. Thanks are especially due Jim Taylor, Fulton Lavender, Fran Spalding and Elizabeth Otter for a job well done. Thanks also to Tony Erskine's army of volunteers who descended on Atlas Day and cleaned up a secondary square in short order. Are you free again next year?

It should be fairly easy to complete Region 14 next summer. There are gaps in the data base of course, most particularly and not unexpectedly with owls and raptors. I

hope to make some owling runs through the area this winter to improve our knowledge of their distribution. The Cobequid region is not alone in knowing little about owls — they are a tough group to census.

Highlights from the summer's atlasing include: finding Vesper Sparrows widespread in the blueberry barrens on the north-facing slopes of the Cobequid Hills; discovering two broods of Eastern Bluebirds; Purple Martins breeding in a new square; confirming Merlins in four squares; determining that Sharp-tailed Sparrows breed in all the river estuaries along the north shore of the Minas Basin; two singing Wood Thrushes near Loganville.

Don't forget to make atlasing contacts with the people who live in your region. These people have a lot of helpful knowledge, and there can be unexpected side benefits, such as a Fork-tailed Flycatcher at East Apple River — reported by someone Jim Taylor had encouraged to keep an eye out for birds. It made my birding year complete. On to 1990. . . .

Region 15 — Brian Dalzell (for Jean Timpa)

The Atlas now has data for all 20 priority squares in the Valley region. Of those 20, 16 are now considered complete, which leaves only four to finish in 1990. It should not be a problem to complete these remaining squares if Region 15 atlasers or good samaritans from other regions reach down deep and come up with a good effort. The four are: Saulnierville, Litchfield, Dargie Lake and Aylesford.

Thanks are due to outside atlasers who travelled into the region and made significant contributions in 1989. These include Peter and Linda Payzant of Halifax who made several trips to the western ramparts of the region and completed three squares: Doucetville, Lake Joli and Halfpenny Brook. Ron Tasker of Toronto and Blake Maybank of Halifax also contributed observations from their travels.

The best bird of the season was a Rough-winged Swallow in suitable habitat at Bear River — the first for Nova Scotia during the Atlas. The other notable occurrence was the continuing incursion of House Finches and Northern Cardinals up Digby Neck and into the Annapolis Valley. There were reports for both species from Brier Island up as far as Annapolis Royal, with a pair of Cardinals seen nest-building in Digby, but no reports of breeding House Finches yet.

Region 16 - Jerome D'Eon

The most interesting trend in the Yarmouth region for the 1989 season has been the increase in sightings of the Winter Wren, normally an uncommon bird in southwestern Nova Scotia since I began birdwatching 12 years ago. There were even a few confirmations. Another species which is also on the upswing in this region is the Chipping Sparrow, usually found here only during spring and fall migration. A nest with four young at Pubnico was one of the few confirmations we now have.

The only large tern colony in our region is being threatened by the Great Black-backed Gull. This year Ted D'Eon and I found more than 200 tern nests in this colony consisting of Common Tern (75%), Arctic Tern (20%) and Roseate Tern (5%), but also several nests of the large gull. Left unattended for too long, a tern nest containing eggs or chicks is almost sure to be eaten by the Great Black-backed Gull. Ted has seen Common Eider chicks swallowed whole by these gulls, so it can happen to tern chicks in this colony just as easily.

The Rusty Blackbird is thought of as a bird usually seen during migration in this region, but we now have a couple of breeding records for the Shelburne county area. The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas has certainly opened a new window on birdwatching for us. It has taught us how to look for breeding evidence in the field — one reason new species are turning up on our data cards.

We have now completed 10 priority and special squares out of 23, and though we would like to complete the remaining 13 ourselves, we will need outside help in 1990 — despite there being several competent birders in the region, very few are taking part in the Atlas. Former regional coordinator Ted D'Eon and I would like to thank everyone who took the time to fill in and return data cards for the 1989 season, and we hope everyone in Region 16 can help out in 1990 to make sure this region is completed.

Region 17 - Ian & Christine Ross

We have now finished year four of the five-year Atlas project. Of our 22 priority and special squares, 13 are now complete. Of the remaining nine, seven are nearly complete, while two (Sporting Lake and Second Lake) each have only 28 species. As of Nov. 22, we were still awaiting word from the Halifax Field Naturalists as to whether they were able to complete the latter square this summer.

Of our 72 secondary and tertiary squares, 12 are now complete and we have at least some data from 25 others, with the other 35 not having been worked in at all. In 1990 we shall be aiming at completing all our priority squares and having some more square bashes on the secondaries which have the least data. So look out for the dates of these "bashes", which we will circulate in time for Christmas diaries and calendars.

Out-of-province birders who made major contributions to the Atlas in the Kejimikujik region in 1989 were James Hallett and his wife from Gloucester, Massachusetts and Jean and Ronald Bourque from the Bronx, New York. Both couples worked in Kejimikujik National Park. Thanks to park naturalist Peter Hope for all his work in coordinating atlasing efforts in the park.

The highlight of the season was a calling Screech Owl in the Leminster square heard by Bill Caudle and Chris Ross. A careful search of the area will have to be made next spring to see if there are more about. Two

reports of Whip-Poor-Will was most encouraging, but a far cry from the numbers of just 10 years ago. There were a number of reports of Wood Thrush, with two being confirmations — the first for the province during the present Atlas.

Region 18 — Peter & Linda Payzant

The season just past was a "clean-up year for the Halifax region. All special and priority squares are now complete. Twenty-three atlasers contributed about 1,200 records. The highlight of the season was the first data from Sable Island, courtesy of Zoe Lucas via Ian McLaren. A total of 16 species were found on the 21-mile-long emergent sandbar some 100 miles east of Halifax in the Atlantic ocean.

Species confirmed were: Green-winged Teal, Black Duck, Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Semipalmated Plover, Least Sandpiper (first for the Atlas), Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Barn Swallow, American Crow and Savannah (Ipswich) Sparrow. Starling was a probably breeder.

Confirmations of our first Horned Larks were uncovered by Brian Dalzell at the Halifax airport. The first records for Eastern Bluebird also arrived this year with a pair in a nestbox at Urbania, and two more families near Stewiacke.

We now have some data for all secondary squares and most tertiary squares. Our plans for the final year of the Atlas are to persuade as many of our atlasers as possible to venture into other regions, such as 15, 16, 17, 19 and 20, in an effort to complete all priority squares before the end of the field work.

Region 19 — Roslyn MacPhee

One can't spend approximately two months walking through the woods, along beaches, and through fields without learning a great deal about nature in general and birds in particular. For instance: did you know that very young Fox Sparrows are almost a copper color in bright sunlight? Or that Pine Grosbeak fledglings are often gray and chocolate brown? Or that Solitary Vireo young make a very distinctive, hoarse chattering noise? These are some of the fascinating items of information that I picked up in the Guysborough region this year.

The best news from the region is that we had 48 cards sent in for the 1989 season. Our few but very faithful contributors worked extremely hard and completed seven priority, two secondary and three tertiary squares. In addition, another priority was almost completed, with six secondary and three tertiaries at least half done.

Although we were all aware that many Common Loons and Fox Sparrows were breeding in the region; heretofore we had not managed to confirm many of them. In 1989 that changed. I, myself, had the good fortune to see, while I was standing on a paved road beside the Port Hillford bridge, a loon sitting on her nest.

Henry Green said that in preceeding

summers he had seen many Chipping Sparrow fledglings feeding on Sherbrooke lawns. This year he noted the "Chippies" had been replaced by Fox Sparrow fledglings.

Towards the end of June and into early July, we began to encounter groups, sometimes very large ones, of Pine Siskins with many newly-fledged members. Several times we came across family groups of White-winged Crossbills with the beautifully-striped babies still dependent on their parents.

The Guysborough region is later in producing its young birds than in central Nova Scotia, and perhaps the best and most productive time for atlasing is the last two weeks of July. This is especially true the farther east one goes. At that time we began to run into "hot spots", places where a number of different species had congregated to feed with their offspring. In one such hotspot on the Roachville Road, we were able to confirm a dozen species of such birds as chickadees, nuthatches, several kinds of warblers, vireos and thrushes.

Whoever said that Solitary Vireos were becoming scarcer should come to Region 19. Almost everywhere we went in woodland areas, we encountered Solitary Vireo families. This species is certainly a very common bird in the wilderness reaches of the region.

There are now only six priority squares in the Guysborough region to be finished, and two of these are well on their way to completion. Two of our ocean squares remain a problem; however, I think the problem will solve itself in 1990.

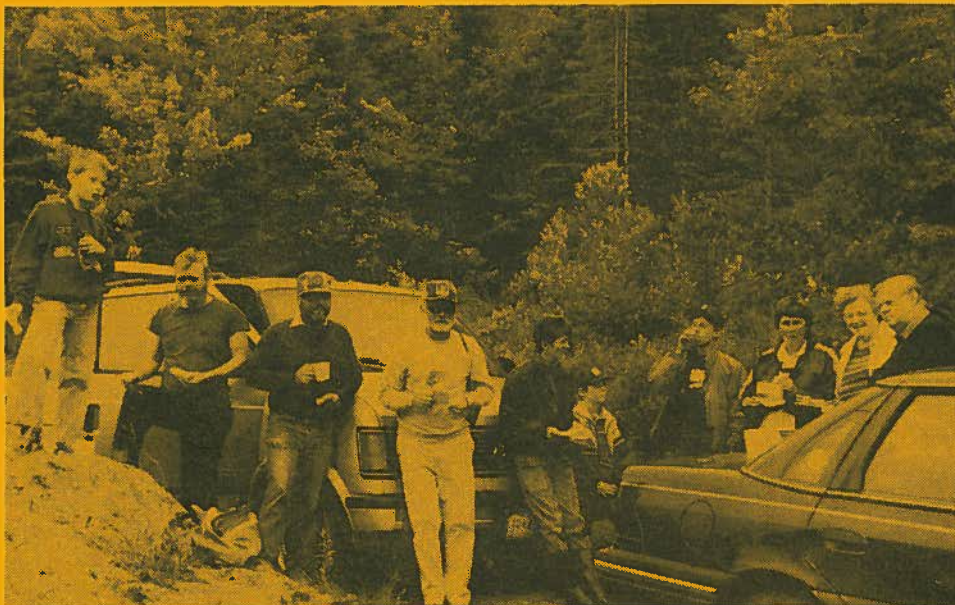
Region 20 — Vicky Bunbury

The high point of the year in the Antigonish region was a square bash we held in the Eden Lake square on June 24. As usual, Fred and Marg Kenney got us off to a running start by going in the day before and scouting the habitat and testing the roads; they also picked up 46 species and nine confirmations.

The next day four groups of birders planned to rendezvous and walk the abandoned roadbed of the infamous Guysborough railway. We were to meet at the cemetery located on our topo maps near Rocky Mountain. For anyone attempting to duplicate this feat, be advised that there are several cemeteries. The first we stopped at wasn't it, but it was the site of a cairn and story-sign for the old railway — and a great spot for a picture.

We met eventually, found the roadbed and tripped over numerous artifacts (ie. railway spikes) as we scanned ahead and overhead for birds. We saw Hermit Thrush throughout the day and Wood Thrush once, and spent some time looking for a possible Northern Waterthrush. Henry Green, who knows his birds and calls very well, thought he might have heard one.

After walking about five miles in and out we returned to the cars for lunch and investigated three more areas in the afternoon. Led by Dave Sweet from Lands and Forests, and Warren Parsons from DFO, we went to a fire tower and spoke with the warden, Ian Austin, who was very helpful. Later the hardier members of our group, the three men mentioned plus Warren's son Ben, Brian Starzomski, Paul Kennedy and mom Agnes went searching for a Bald



Eden Lake Square-bashing crew (from left) — Ben Parsons, Warren Parsons, David Sweet, Henry Green, Agnes Kennedy, Paul Kennedy, Brian Starzomski, Harriet MacMillan, Marg and Fred Kenny. We were saddened to learn of the death of Fred Kenny in September due to a long illness. Marg and Fred were an inseparable pair of birders and made quite a dent in the Antigonish region, completing most of five priority squares by themselves. The story is told that when Marg was attending university in Montreal, she would not consider dating anyone unless they shared her passion for birdwatching. Fred obviously filled the bill. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Eagle nest the warden mentioned, but without any luck.

Meanwhile, Harriet MacMillan and myself investigated a swamp area, while Marg and Fred Kenny made for home. We finished the day with 91 species and 29 of these confirmed. It was a great day. We have been excited by the new records of Northern Oriole in our region. Both the Kenny's and Brian Starzomski added to our count this year. One nest was found near New Glasgow with four young. When Richard Murphy returned to check the nest, it was empty except for one dead fledgling dangling by a leg from a piece of fishing line the parents had woven into the nest. The message here — nylon fishing line is not biodegradable.

In the Pictou area, Durham to be specific, newcomer Michael Olsen made a significant and welcome contribution to the atlas-ing effort in the Antigonish region. Among his more notable finds were a singing Willow Flycatcher (H) in suitable habitat, the first for Nova Scotia during the present Atlas; and Great-crested Flycatchers on territory, the first reported for this region.

Region 21 — Rosemary Curley

Prince Edward Island was invaded by knowledgeable birders in 1989 and some of the local people put in an extra effort as well. Outside birders such as Jim Taylor from Dartmouth, Roger Taylor from Ottawa (no relation), and Dwayne Sabine and Scott Makepeace from New Brunswick made significant new discoveries concerning our island's birdlife.

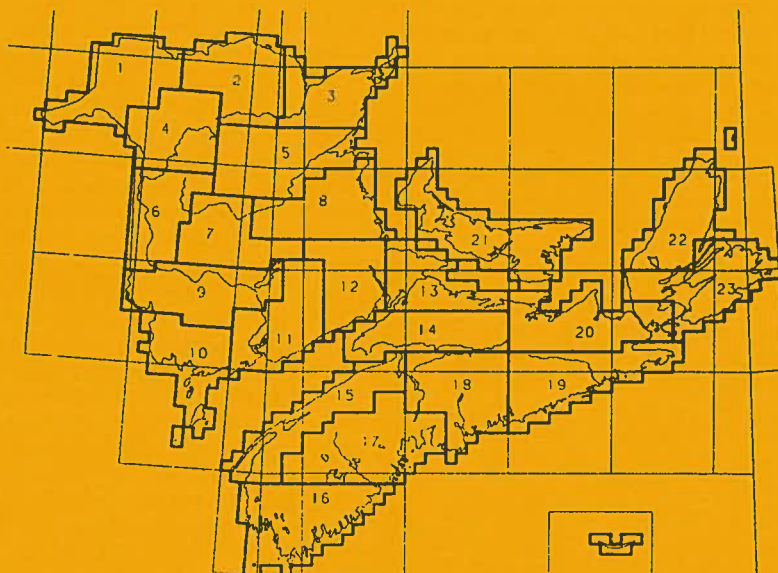
The result is much improved coverage of P.E.I., with a species list complete for 24 of 27 priority squares. There will be 17 squares complete when the data is finally all received. About 30 of 107 squares are now complete, counting all square types, but a lot more are close. The areas most in need of coverage in 1990 are in Prince County and the Summerside area, as well as northeast and southeast Kings County.

The birds that made news in 1989 (all firsts) were Eastern Bluebird (FL), near Strathgartney; Northern Waterthrush (AY); Willow Flycatcher (AY & H); and Philadelphia Vireo (AY). Sighted in suitable habitat but not confirmed were Broad-winged Hawks; Black-billed Cuckoos, Ruddy Ducks, Redheads, Marsh Wrens, Wood Thrush, Warbling Vireo, Pileated Woodpeckers, Hooded Merganser and Eastern Phoebes. Reports of Fox Sparrow and Gray-cheeked Thrush in Prince County are under review.

Region 22 — Brian Dalzell (for Al Gibbs)

Things were relatively quiet in the Highlands region this year with virtually no local atlasers active and only one outside atlaser contributing significantly to the project. Eleanor Waldron of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts again spent the summer in Englishtown and did quite a bit of work around Cape Breton Highlands National Park, for which we are most grateful.

Atlas Regional Boundaries



There are 17 priority and 3 special squares in Region 22, of which 1 special and 10 priorities are now considered complete. All the remaining squares are already spoken for by outside atlasers for 1990, so barring unforeseen circumstances, they should be completed on time. The highlands region presents the most access problems of any in the Maritimes, and special arrangements are being made to hire a boat to go to St. Paul Island and a helicopter for the highland plateau.

The highlight of the year was the discovery of at least three Boreal Owls on territory this spring by Atlas teams from Halifax. Calling males were heard at Bay St. Lawrence, Whites Point and Cape North Village — the first ever for Nova Scotia during the breeding season. Two separate sightings of Golden Eagles near French Mountain provided tantalizing evidence they may breed in the mountain fastness of the park. The first Atlas confirmation for Greater Yellowlegs (DD) was also noted by park wardens in the middle of the highland plateau.

Region 23 — Dave Harris

The Sydney region had its most productive season this year. All priority squares finally have some coverage and many are to an adequate level of coverage. This turnaround is due in great part to the efforts of Fred Scott and Azor Vienneau of the Nova Scotia Museum. They moved into the region through June and July with a goal of completing most of our out-of-the-way priority squares — and almost accomplished that goal in one season.

Gerry Lunn from Edmonton, Alberta took time out from visiting relatives in Louisbourg to give us good coverage from that area (see story about his Scatarie Island trip elsewhere in the newsletter). Ron Trasler from Toronto helped out with some of the squares around Englishtown.

Schoolteacher Jackie MacNeil and his "Big Ponders" are still out to prove there are more species of birds breeding in that

area than anywhere else in the region. The last time I checked they still hadn't managed to have Rita MacNeil declared an honorary songbird, but we're trying.

The highlight of the summer was definitely the Boreal Owl found in the Stirling square in June by Fred Scott. This points out the need for more owl work throughout the region. I feel we should organize a few hooting events to increase this coverage. All atlasers interested in helping us finish the coverage in this region come on down!

ATLAS CRESTS FOR SALE

For all those who want to proudly display the fact they support the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas, we have had a shoulder patch made up that depicts our logo — a Black-throated Green Warbler. This handsome three-color crest is embroidered with a burgundy border and lettering, and a green bird on a yellow background.

This is a great way to support the Atlas, both financially and visibly. For only \$3 (or 2@\$5), we will send you one of these crests, postage and handling included. Order now as we only have 150 and we expect them to go fast. The actual crest is about 8 cm (3 inches) in diameter, somewhat larger than the sample reproduced here.



REGIONAL COORDINATORS

The Maritimes has been divided into 23 somewhat distinct regions in order to facilitate collection of data for the Atlas. Each region is in the capable hands of an RC (Regional Coordinator) who is responsible for ensuring that all the priority squares in their respective regions are completed by the end of the 1990 field season.

Since the Atlas started back in 1985, there have been a number of changes to the list of RCs, so it now seems prudent to reprint that list. These are the people to contact, either by mail or by phone, should you wish to "adopt" one of the remaining priority squares for next summer.

1. EDMUNDSTON

Peter Pearce
5 Shamrock Terrace
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 2S4
506-452-3086(O)
459-3691(H)

2. CAMPBELLTON

David Christie
RR #2
Albert, N.B.
E0A 1A0
506-882-2100

3. BATHURST

Hilaire Chiasson
C.P. 421
Lameque, N.B.
E0B 1V0
506-344-2286

4. TOBIQUE

Brian Dalzell
c/o N.S. Museum
1747 Summer Street
Halifax, N.S.
B3H 3A6
902-429-4610(O)
443-6289(H)

5. MIRAMICHI

Harry Walker
276 Heath Court
Newcastle, N.B.
E1V 2Y5
506-622-2108

6. CARLETON

Ford Alward
P.O. Box 95
Florenceville, N.B.
E0J 1K0
506-392-8367(O)
392-6485(H)

7. FREDERICTON NORTH

Don Gibson
50 Golf Club Road
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 5M4
506-454-3261

8. KENT

Mary Majka
RR #2
Albert, N.B.
E0A 1A0
506-882-2100

9. FREDERICTON SOUTH

Chris Adam
28 Richards Court
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 5K6
506-458-8288(O)
445-8305(H)

10. CHARLOTTE

Brian Dalzell
c/o N.S. Museum
1747 Summer Street
Halifax, N.S.
B3H 3A6
902-429-4610(O)
443-6289(H)

11. SAINT JOHN

Jim Wilson
2 Neck Road
Quispamsis, N.B.
E2G 1L3
506-634-3838(O)
847-4506(H)

12. MONCTON

Rob Walker
P.O. Box 35
Alma, N.B.
E0A 1B0
506-887-2000(O)
882-2040(H)

13. BORDER

A.J. (Tony) Erskine
P.O. Box 1327
Sackville, N.B.
E0A 3C0
506-536-3025(O)
536-2333(H)

14. COBEQUID

Blake Maybank
Box 43, Site 14A
RR #4
Armdale, N.S.
B3L 4J4
902-426-6217(O)
852-2077(H)

15. VALLEY

Jean Timpa
P.O. Box 1382
Wolfville, N.S.
B0P 1X0
902-542-5678

16. YARMOUTH

Jerome D'Eon
Lower West Pubnico, N.S.
B0W 2C0
902-762-2987

17. KEJIMKUIK

Ian & Christine Ross
RR #4
New Ross, N.S.
B0J 2M0
902-678-0515

18. HALIFAX

Peter & Linda Payzant
P.O. Box 2
Waverley, N.S.
B0N 2S0
902-861-1607

19. GUYSBOROUGH

Roslyn MacPhee
P.O. Box 241
Shubenacadie, N.S.
B0N 2H0
902-758-3265

20. ANTIGONISH

Vicky Bunbury
65 Highland Drive
Antigonish, N.S.
B2G 1P4
902-863-2089

21. PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Rosemary Curley
RR #3
Montague, P.E.I.
C0A 1R0
902-368-4807(O)
838-4309(H)

22. HIGHLANDS

Al Gibbs
Cape Breton Highlands
National Park
P.O. Box 23
Ingonish Beach, N.S.
B0C 1L0
902-285-2691(O)

23. SYDNEY

Dave Harris
Nova Scotia Department
of Lands and Forests
RR #6
Sydney, N.S.
B1P 6T2
902-563-3371(O)

BEATING AROUND THE BUSH — A.J. (Tony) Erskine

Atlassing in the northern hinterlands of New Brunswick is a change. Northern N.B. has few roads, and fewer atlasers, and the respective regional coordinators welcome visitors from other regions. Since June of 1988 I have made three trips to "the bush" west of Bathurst.

You need to be self-sufficient there — camping gear, food, gasoline, etc. The forest here features biting insects and unhelpful weather, but no more than close to home. The worst problems I encountered were coping with the roads.

A lot of roads on the maps (dated 1975) cannot be driven without a 4-wheel drive vehicle. There are also roads, often good ones, that are not on the maps — but where are they? In atlassing you must know which square you're in; sometimes you have to work out by odometer and compass where the road goes.

I spent four hours atlassing one morning down a side road that didn't match the map, and learned three days later that the fork where I'd started was eight kilometers east of where I thought it was. Most of the resultant data belonged in the next square, but I'd recorded them in such a way that I could sort out which were which.

Many roads are rough, rutted and steep — no place for a trailer. Pools across the road are common after rain and washouts occur even on the tops of hills. I crossed one in the rain and mist rather than go back all the long muddy way I'd come. When I saw it later in sunshine with full knowledge of where it was, I backed off, as I should have done the first time.

On another occasion I continued towards "civilization" on a road that had been travelled recently (by 4WD?). I came down hills where loose, water-washed stones precluded turning back for several kilometers until the road dove into a beaver pond of knee-deep water for about 30 meters. That was at 4:30 p.m., and I couldn't go back, so I cussed — and tore a breach in the beaver dam.

The water level had fallen enough by 8:30 p.m. so that I could cross with the car, but the road stayed bad all the way to the highway. The locals were amazed that I'd gotten all the way down the Benjamin River road without a 4WD. When in doubt, don't drive it, even if it is 50 km longer back the way you came!

This article was supposed to be about atlassing. . . . Most of the birds I saw would not be out of place anywhere in the Maritimes. Our forest birds mostly breed all across the boreal region. The most obvious difference was the absence of open-country birds; no Starlings, House Sparrows, Bobolinks, or Savannah Sparrow.

However, David Christie and I each found eggshells several kilometers apart in clear-cut areas that we thought were of Starlings.

Also obvious was the scarcity of common edge birds; Song Sparrows, Yellow Warblers and Grackles, though Redwings were local mostly around water. Lincoln's Sparrows, Mourning and Wilson's Warblers and Northern Waterthrushes were more general than in southern N.B. or central Nova Scotia, the first two of these being characteristic of partly grown-up clearcuts.

Fox Sparrows were the most obvious "northern" species. I heard their sweet, creaking songs from alder thickets nearly every day. I had expected them on the plateau (above 300 m), but was surprised to meet them also on the coastal plain. Gray-cheeked Thrushes I didn't find, though I've met them in the past up near the Quebec border, also above 300 meters.

More difficult was the Philadelphia Vireo, whose song differs so little from the Red-eyed Vireo that birders pass most of them without a second thought. I was alert for them, but I only picked them out once this year. I suspected vireo songs a few other times, but was never sure enough to claim them as Philadelphias.

Finally, I met one Solitary Sandpiper on July 16 that I claimed as H (Habitat). It could have been a post-breeding wanderer at that date, but the habitat was similar to places I've met the species on in its western breeding grounds. If they breed south to Kent and Saint John Counties, we should keep back-country records from forested marshes and lakeshores farther north (I'm less sure about records along rivers) in case there is a pattern.

A few numbers will help to sum up what I found. I spent nine and a half days in the bush on my three trips (two long weekends and one week), of which I lost a day to rain. I atlassed in 17 squares, and found 40 or more species in 11. The largest day list in one square was 50 species, eight confirmed, with four more species from casual observations in 1988. None of this will set the world on fire, but it covers a swath of squares with no previous data.

I enjoyed my days and nights in the bush, often without sight or sound of another vehicle for hours. Huge valleys with only a tiny stream in the bottom; moose on the road or in the river (four in all); Black-backed Woodpecker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker fussing around their nests; egg-sized Ruffed Grouse chicks too small to fly scuttling for cover; are only a few of the memories I brought back. You can bet I'll be heading back to northern NB next June to fill some more blanks on the Atlas maps.

ATLASSING ON SCATARIE ISLAND — Gerry Lunn

When growing up in Louisbourg, I had

always wanted to get out to Scatarie. For one reason or another, it never happened and before I knew it I was off to Alberta. It was only when planning our Nova Scotia holiday last June that I knew I'd finally get the chance to explore the barren island for the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas.

At 7:45 a.m. on the morning of July 26, the lobster fisherman who had agreed to take me to Scatarie steered his boat out of Main-a-Dieu harbour and into the thick blanket of fog covering Mira Bay. Before too long, the ghostly, mottled image of a 2nd-year Northern Gannet soared past our bow. I could see one or two Black Guillemots at the edge of the fog, and every now and then Great Black-backed Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants flew over the boat.

After about an hour, we pulled in close enough to the wide crescent beach of Northwest Cove for me to be dropped off on the shore — but not before my National Geographic guide dropped into the chilly Atlantic waters. However, I am happy to report that I managed to rescue it from its watery grave and I still use it, only slightly the worse for its adventure.



I'd decided that the most I could do in the six hours I had available would be to hike the five kilometers to and from the lighthouse at Eastern Head. It was a curious feeling knowing that with the lighthouse no longer manned, I was probably the only person on the island. With great relish I strode eastward along the beach, almost immediately setting up a Whimbrel and a Spotted Sandpiper, both loudly voicing their annoyance.

Bank Swallows dipped and glided overhead as they rode the southeast wind which blew the fog in streamers above me. Starting from the beach and an old jetty, a thickly overgrown roadbed led eastward through spruce-covered uplands. From the alder thickets on either side, Magnolia Warblers and Common Yellowthroats chastised my passing.

Once beyond this phalanx, their calls were replaced by those of Blackpoll and Yellow-rumped Warblers, the latter two re-

sponding quickly to "pishing" hurled in their direction. At one point, a very agitated Fox Sparrow sprang up to greet me.

As I reached an area where the spruce grew thickly and tall on both sides of the trail, the noise of the wind abated and I began to hear more birds singing and calling. Several Swainson's Thrush could be heard and occasionally seen, later joined by a lone Hermit Thrush from deep in the forest.

Mixed flocks of Boreal Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Golden-crowned Kinglets could be seen moving through the spruce foraging in every nook and cranny of bark and twig. Flocks of White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Cedar Waxwings would also alight on the tops of trees around me, only to depart as suddenly as they had appeared.

By about noon, the fog had nearly dissipated and the day was warming. I was nearing the eastern tip of the island and the forest was thinning, giving way to the open headlands typical of the coast. Barn Swallows nesting in an abandoned house darted about, while Song and Savannah Sparrows sang from perches all around me. On the boggy fens and ponds, families of Black Duck swam contently along.

What had been a single Whimbrel at the start of my hike turned into flights of three, five, eight and out at the lighthouse point, a flock of 30! Migration had started in earnest for the northern birds. This was further reinforced by sights of Ruddy Turnstone, Semipalmated Plover and Semipalmated Sandpiper on the rocky shore by the lighthouse.

As I ate my lunch on a point about as far east as you can get to in Nova Scotia, I was treated to the sight of young Common Terns learning to fish, more Gannets soaring over the waters, and Great Cormorants joining the ranks of their Double-crested brothers on offshore rocks.

As they say, all good things must come to an end, and I had less than two hours to return to Northwest Cove, unless I wanted to spend what would likely have been a damp and chilly night on Scatarie. It was a brisk walk back to say the least, during which I was rewarded by the sight and sounds of a Tennessee Warbler joining the ranks of his fellow passerines serenading me from the woods. You'll notice whereas previously they were chastising me, now they were serenading me — birds can be so fickle.

My transport met me at 3 p.m. sharp as he said he would, and bore me away through a big swell back to Main-a-Dieu. It had been an exciting, albeit all too brief, visit. Of 34 species seen, I unfortunately had fewer than 10 confirmed as breeding. Nevertheless, it was six hours which I've chalked up as one of my lifetime's birding highlights.

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