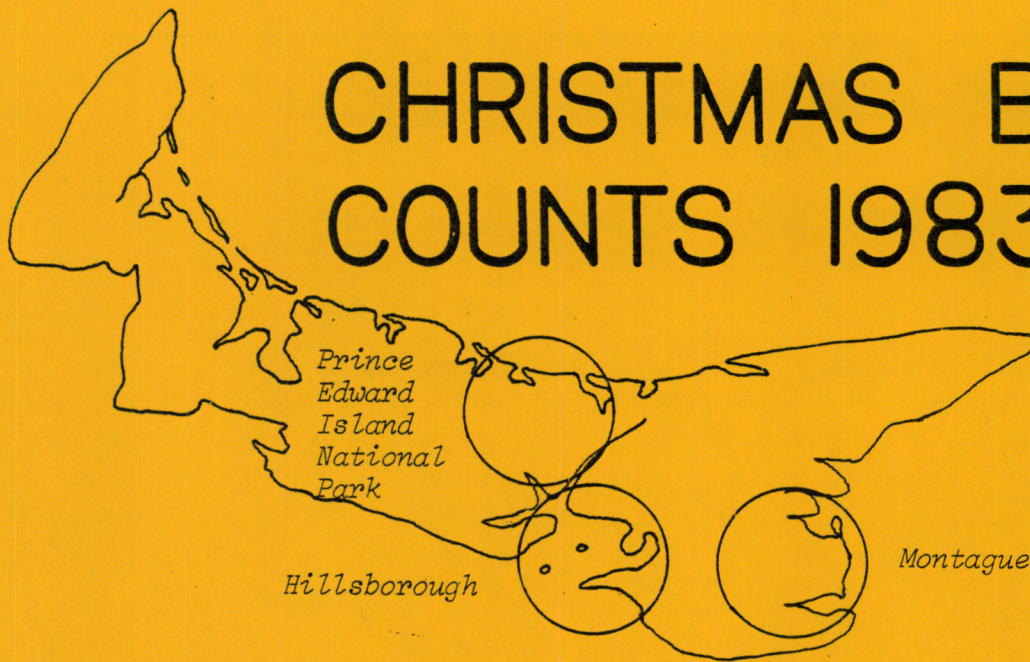


CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1983



The fall of 1983 on Prince Edward Island will long be remembered as an unusually mild and pleasant one, perfect for late lingering migrants. Therefore it was with eager anticipation that birders looked forward to the P.E.I. National Park count on Dec. 17. The day was beautifully pleasant - calm, clear and not too cool. Everything was set for a first rate count, everything that is, except the birds. On the count day they were nowhere to be seen, and try as we might we could only scare up a disappointing 30 species, well below the 12-year average of 35 species. (low - 29 in 1972; high - 43 in 1973). The 5164 individual birds was slightly better than the average of 4515 (low - 2473 in 1980; high - 9641 in 1973). Nevertheless two species new to the count were recorded: Bald Eagle and Merlin.

Although weather conditions had chilled and considerable snow had fallen by the Hillsborough count on Dec. 27, the birds had somehow materialized. Forty-four species were found, the highest ever recorded in the thirteen years of the count (low - 28 in 1978; previous high - 43 in 1971). The 4905 individual birds counted fell slightly below the average of 5005. -Of special interest was the Common Snipe found in Point Prim, the first shorebird ever to be recorded on a Christmas Bird Count on P.E.I.

The Montague count, in only its second year of operation, was highly successful. In spite of being a few weeks later into the winter season than the other two counts, an excellent number and variety of species and individuals were recorded. This count area is certainly one to watch in future years. At the end of the day the species total stood at 45, plus 1 hypothetical species (up from 37 species a year ago). The individual total of 5463 was also dramatically higher than the 3408 on the 1982 count. New species reported were: Double-crested Cormorant, Mallard, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Barrow's Golden-eye, Hooded Merganser, Ring-billed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Thick-billed Murre (hypothetical), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, American Robin, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, White-winged Crossbill and Pine Siskin. Of particular interest were a Hooded Merganser, the flock of Thick-billed Murres (hypothetical), 2 American Robins, a Red-winged Blackbird and 15 White-winged Crossbills. Also worthy of note are high numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatch (8), European Starling (1374) and Evening Grosbeak (417).