

Common Redpoll - 17-20 in East Royalty on Nov. 1 (MWi); 12 in North Enmore on Dec. 16 (GH); 15 in Brooklyn on Dec. 23 (LA).

Tree Sparrow - 1 at South Melville on Dec. 26 (PF).

Song Sparrow - 3 in East Royalty on Nov. 23 and 1 there on Nov. 30 (MWi).

Snow Bunting - 35-40 at Darnley on Nov. 7 (GM); 4 at Covehead Harbour and 50 at Rustico Island on Nov. 15 (GH); 200 at North Cape, 30 at Miminegash, 100 at West Cape and 25 at West Point on Nov. 22 (GH,WC,SS); 15-20 at Johnson's River on Nov. 28 (GM).

Thanks to all observers who contributed records to this month's newsletter: Lenore Andrew (LA), Winifred Cairns (WC), Danny Clark (DC), Thelma Clark (TC), Peter Feldstein (PF), Al Godfrey (APG), Geoff Hogan (GH), Glen MacEachern (GM), Neil MacDonald (NM), Bruce MacLaren (BM), Brian Nettleton (BN), Sue Stephenson (SS), Dr. David Stewart (DGS), Miriam West (MMW), Mary Willms (MWi).

Tragic But True - The Passenger Pigeon

by Geoff Hogan, Charlottetown

"The recorded history of the passenger pigeon began on July 1, 1534. On this day Cartier saw an infinite number of "wood pigeons" (ramiers) and other birds at Cape Orleans (Kildare), Prince Edward Island."

A. W. Schorger (1955) thus begins his tragic account of the extinction of this famous bird at the hands of man. From this first recorded sighting of the passenger pigeon on Prince Edward Island, it took less than 400 years to decimate the species across the entire continent.

Passenger pigeons are, of course, now extinct. In September 1914 the last individual, a 29-year old female, died in the Cincinnati Zoo. It seems astounding that

this species, similar to but larger than a Mourning Dove, could be wiped out entirely. Earlier, their numbers appeared inexhaustible. Single flocks were observed to take days to pass certain places and, at times, they darkened the skies. Indeed, they are considered to have been the most numerous land bird that ever lived. At the time, North America was first settled by Europeans their population is believed to have been between 3 and 5 billion (!) individuals.

Reference: Schorger, A. W. 1955. The passenger pigeon, its natural history and extinction. Univ. of Wisconsin Press, Madison. 424 pp.

