



NEXT MEETING

Time: 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 7, 1978
 Place: Provincial Health Building, 3rd floor, Room 47
 Program: November's program will be a "Rosemary Curley Special" - too good to be disclosed ahead of time!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Bird Count - Details concerning dates, areas and times of the 1978 Christmas Bird Count will be discussed at the November meeting. Winnie Cairns is our coordinator.

Nest Record Cards - Its time that all your nest record cards were submitted to the Canadian Wildlife Service office in Sackville, New Brunswick.

Philip Higson - We were saddened to hear one of our most faithful members was involved in a rather serious car-pedestrian accident. Philip is now in the Prince Edward Island Hospital and all of us hope he mends quickly!

Seabirds - teeming thousands, but very vulnerable

Few biologists and fewer other people ever see a seabird colony. The birdwatchers who visit Bonaventure Island or Witless Bay to see the comings and goings of the throngs of birds or to hear the hubbub of their calls seldom recognize threats to the birds other than disturbance by casual or thoughtless visitors. But seabirds are the group of birds most vulnerable to present and impending environmental impacts in the Atlantic Region. The alcids (murre and puffins) are especially vulnerable, owing to the scarcity of suitably secure breeding sites near to good feeding areas; thus 80 per cent of all Common Murres in the northwest Atlantic nest on Funk Island, and 80 per cent of all Puffins on Great Island off Witless Bay, both near the eastern Newfoundland coast. For years now the CWS seabird project has been assembling data to document changes in seabird numbers.

The major threat at present is petroleum developments. Exploratory drilling is underway on the Labrador Shelf, one of the most iceberg-swept parts of the globe. Oil blowouts in this area would threaten the local colonies as well as those down-current off the Newfoundland coast. Birds from Newfoundland and West Greenland also move to the Labrador shelf area outside the breeding season. Oil exploration also poses potential impacts on Canada's eastern Arctic colonies, from which birds move to west Greenland after breeding. These birds have suffered major losses in recent years, at least partly from drownings in the offshore net fishery of Greenland, now closed. Losses to hunting, both in Greenland and Newfoundland, are a largely unassessed drain on all these populations. And the new "vacuum-cleaner" fishery operations for capelin are hitting the foods of these birds as well.

In 1978, Tony Lock conducted a survey to locate and photograph all major seabird colonies on the Labrador coast, and two ground teams, led by Richard Elliott and Stephen Clayden, recensused previously known colonies. In 1979, intensive studies of breeding and feeding ecology, involving David Nettleship's team and Dick Brown respectively, will be added. Meanwhile, Ian Goudie of the CWS Newfoundland office, with help from CWS headquarters in Ottawa, will be trying to get a handle on the Newfoundland harvest of murre.