

BIRD REPORT

Since the last newsletter winter has quietly slipped away and spring has made a dramatic return. With open weather rapidly baring the countryside, feeders became of less importance early this year and most seem to have been discontinued by about the first of April. The break up of ice on rivers, bays and shorelines during the second week of April brought a rapid dispersal of wintering duck populations and opened feeding places for migrants of other species.

The Great Cormorants, some of which had wintered on the Island, were first reported roosting at nesting sites on the Cape Tryon cliffs on Mar. 30 and the majority had arrived there by Apr. 4. Meanwhile their Double-crested cousins had to come from further south, the first vanguard appearing between Apr. 4 and 12. Early Great Blue Herons were seen at the Rustico Island heronry on Mar. 30 and soon showed up in small numbers at scattered sites around the Province. Migrating Canada Geese were first seen on Mar. 7. Concentrations peaked during the first few days of April and then quickly dispersed with ice break-up.

From mid March on small groups or pairs of Black Ducks, sometimes joined by Mallards, were seen frequenting small creeks and marshy estuaries and most had dispersed from wintering sites by early April. Meanwhile the earliest of the returning ducks, Pintail and Green-winged Teal were first reported in mid March. Goldeneye and Common Mergansers had largely disappeared by the end of March, the latter replaced by their Red-breasted cousins in early April.

Some Iceland Gulls lingered at the ferries till mid April, and a few Ring-billed Gulls were sighted from the end of March on.

Credit for the earliest nests of the season goes to two pairs of Rock Doves which were incubating eggs on a ledge high up in a cliff-side cave on Cape Tryon on Apr. 4.

The earliest Robins were reported on Apr. 2 and by Apr. 12 large flocks were common throughout. A wave of Red-winged Blackbirds came the end of March, somewhat later than their cousins the Common Grackles which had appeared the second week of March and became numerous by the last week. Song Sparrows returned in late March and by early April there seemed to be one singing on every fence post.

FEEDER REPORT

Holman Feeder at 153 North River Road in Charlottetown (Maximum numbers seen at any one time from March 4 to April 1; species seen daily are starred*)-1 female Merlin on Mar. 9 (after unsuccessfully trying to capture a small bird at the feeder it perched in a nearby tree for 15 min. before flying off); 6 Rock Dove*, 2 Downy Woodpecker*; 4 Common Crow (active nest building from Mar. 22 on); 5 Black-capped Chickadee* on Mar. 8; 20 Common Starling on Mar. 12 (usually 5 to 10); 20 to 25 House Sparrow* on Mar. 12 (usually 5 to 10); Common Grackle-2 on Mar. 24, 5 on Mar. 29 and from then on daily in small groups of 1 to 5; Brown-headed Cowbird-2 on Mar. 8, 1 on Mar. 24 and 2 on Mar. 31; 60 to 70 Evening Grosbeak* on Mar. 10; 1 Pine Siskin on Mar. 24; 30 to 40 American Goldfinch* on Mar. 10 (1 on Mar. 9 noted to be moulting to summer plumage); 1 Dark-eyed Junco on Mar. 29; 2 Song Sparrow*.

-reported by Geoff Hogan.