

for the Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

After mentioning the pleasure and challenge of wildlife photography he sounds a warning on behalf of the wild creatures we are so eager to capture on film. All of us who attempt to photograph wildlife are sure to be guilty of harassment to some extent, even the biologist who needs data for management and protection programs. The biologist whose helicopter accidentally blasts the eggs from a gyrfalcon's nest is just as guilty as the photographer whose persistence causes a song bird to desert her eggs.

If you find you are causing much anxiety and distress, if you feel like breaking off branches or leaves for the sake of a picture, if you are keeping a brooding bird from her rapidly cooling eggs, it's time to pack up and call it a day.

- Margaret Mallett

Unusual Red Fox Litter Sizes for P.E.I.

Prince Edward Island's largest mammalian predator, the red fox, is one of the more common and well known animals on P.E.I. A high incidence of the silver or black color phase is characteristic of the Island population and "cross" or "patch" foxes are not uncommon. The more unusual color phases are the result of large numbers of ranched silvers being released in the late forties when prices dropped to all time lows and it was cheaper to release the animals than to raise them.

Examination of 40 adult female red foxes by P.E.I. Fish and Wildlife personnel this fall indicates that each fox produced an average of 5.60 pups in the spring of 1974. Studies conducted by students at U.P.E.I. in 1973 showed a similar production while 1972 studies indicated an average litter size of only 4.50.

This year unusually large litters were noted in several instances. Of the 40 animals analyzed, 20% produced litters of 7 pups, while 3 foxes from South Lake, Fanningbrook and Pownal, respectively, produced litters of 8 pups. One fox from Forest Hill excelled above all others with a litter of 9 pups!

The red fox breeds throughout late January until mid February and the pups are born 51 days later in March and April. Both parents care for the pups until autumn, when the young, then able to fend for themselves, disperse from the rearing area to set up their own territories.

For further information on the Red Fox refer to "Familiar Wildlife of P.E.I." available from Fish & Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 200, Charlottetown.

- Rosemary Curley
Environmental Technologist
P.E.I. Fish & Wildlife Div.

Avian Ingenuity

On January 3, I dug myself out of my Winsloe abode and proceeded over the snow covered front yard to my car. En route I noticed that my dog was very interested in some of the tracks my brother had made earlier. I soon realized the source of her interest as I saw 5 or 6 house sparrows using the broken snow of his footsteps to ease their digging to the ground. The snow underneath was powdery and they had succeeded in scratching up many grass seeds and some spilled feed. On a day when the snow has become crusty due to high winds, the available feeding areas diminish greatly and the hardy passerine birds which chose to stay around all winter must exercise considerable ingenuity to utilize all possible avenues.

- Kathy Martin
U.P.E.I.
