

untouched. Was this a friendly "thank you" before setting forth on a long journey south? I wonder!

BUNTING BONANZA

by Evelyn Meader

This morning (April 3) I realized our magnificent displays of Snow Buntings have really melted away. From mid-January to mid-February we had daily ballet troupes from a dozen to eighty of these wintery birds, soaring in circular patterns around the house from the feeder to the top of our matriarchal chestnut tree. When I read in Peter Whelan's Globe and Mail column that the hardy buntings rarely visit feeders, I thought, "He should see the Meader seed clientele." In December and early January we had sparse but regular bunting visitations. Then came the entertaining large flocks. These gradually dwindled till in March we'd sometimes surprise a loner in the lane or see a flock working the neighbouring field. There were 5 Easter buntings in the lane March 30 and one on the feeder April 1 and 2.

I enjoyed my month of bounteous buntings. They created a memorable image as they right-wheeled in military precision against a clear blue sky. Even resting in the chestnut crown they were never still. One would hop to a new position, then another would do the same. There was a continuous bunting flow in air and tree and on the ground.

The first birds to the seeds ate best. They had time to peck up a good beak full before the skittish late arrivals stimulated a departure in unison. The last birds to the table must have been on a low cal diet.

I had plenty of time to study their winter colours. They all had "Rinso white" underparts, rusty cheeks and crowns and a rusty necklace which varied from complete circles to partial crescents. As they swirled over the fields they disappeared and reappeared against the white background, depending on which side, light or dark, faced the watcher.

One day as I watched the flock giving our table feeder a complete feather covering, I noticed a darker bird in the bunch. Behold! - a Lapland Longspur. He joined his bunting buddies regularly enough to keep this birder's observing a little sharper.

Now most of the buntings have headed north to feast on Arctic spring offerings and raise new families. Here the partridge and House Sparrows visit in pairs while the ever present colourful Blue Jays zap around them. It's "hello" to the glossy grackles and the flashy Red-winged Blackbirds. "Welcome to the abandoned buntings' buffet."

NEWS FROM ABOUT

The National Audubon Society has purchased a 116 acre tract of old growth forest Douglas fir in Oregon in the middle of the largest intact stand of coastal temperate rain forest in the continental United States. (Adapted from Audubon Magazine, March 1991)

The 1990 duck population in Canada and United States increased 1% to 31.3 million for all areas surveyed. This was the third lowest number on record. As ducks are an indicator of wetlands health, these low numbers are of concern to all

