

Becky MacMillan (grade 5) of West Kent School had a very informative and attractive display on *Wetlands*. Her display was general and dealt with different kinds of wetlands. When questioned, she related her information to P.E.I. effectively.



James Sullivan and Matthew Yates, grade four students at Montague Consolidated impressed us with their knowledge and enthusiasm for *Night Hunters*. Owls and bats were on display. These two boys were excited as they described echo location and then very patiently explained how to distinguish the Great Horned Owl and from a Barred Owl. I had to remind myself that they were nine years old, future naturalists for sure.

The third project was from the intermediate group. Shane Thompson and Tyler Fraser, grade nine students at Stonepark School, chose the topic *Are Birds Declining at Island Feeders?* The most impressive aspect of the project was the collection of 74 completed feeder surveys from Island residents. I felt the information they amassed may have changed their way of looking at our bird population. This project also was the recipient of a Forestry Award.

Congratulations to all the participants.

Note: The Natural History Society is respected as one of the original supporters of the Science Fair. This was mentioned twice, just small references in conversation yet it made me, and I'm sure Ben feel the same. Proud to represent the Society. It is nice to know that some one out there is aware of our good intentions. The decline in entries for the senior categories is a concern for all those involved and needs to be addressed.

A GROSBEAK WEEK:

by Lois Doan

This week has truly been a treat. Just as I was looking back to last spring's new arrivals, and reminiscing about the beautiful male Indigo Bunting we had on May 2 and 3, 1996, and hoping for (actually I felt like I "needed" a "new bird fix") another sighting of something new, rare or otherwise exciting, it happened! An answer to my prayers!

On May 12th, around 4:30 pm, I looked out to one of the larger feeders and something struck me as slightly unusual. It was more robust than the usual Cowbird feeding. Grabbing my binoculars, I zoomed in. It had blue tinges and, when it turned its head and the bill was fully visible, a large unmistakable "grosbeak" was apparent. Another long look revealed chestnut wing-bars, but the rest was very "mottled" and undistinguished, almost drab and dark looking. But that bill, so large, and the pale, greenish-yellow waxy look, like it had been modelled from plasticine and stuck on. And still, those very apparent blue patches. You really couldn't see the colour in the feathers with the naked eye, but the binoculars really picked up the blue and contrasting chestnut (wing-bars, cap and back of the head, nape).

I rushed to the (Peterson) field guide. It didn't look like the colouring on the Blue Grosbeaks, but more like the moulting Indigo Bunting illustration at first glance. The large grosbeak bill was the clincher. Back to the grosbeak text. Definitely not as much blue as the male pictured, but not brown as the drab female. In my haste I went back to the binoculars to pick up more clues. Yes - blue cheek patches, blue down the central back showed through from where the wings were folded back, blue on rump and outer tail feathers (a bit darker looking in middle line of tail feathers). The breast was mottled with brown and blue splashed about. A very slight notch in the tail, which was longer than a Cowbird's.

Back to the text, aha! I had completely overlooked the description for the immature male. This was definitely it. I hardly put down the binoculars for the next three hours, as it stayed and fed until dusk. It seemed to be just as happy feeding off the ground on "spill-over" seeds and in an adjacent field edge in the leaf duff under a row of poplar and birch.

It was at the feeder again the next morning from daybreak until 8:30 am and then disappeared until approximately 5:30 pm when it reappeared and stayed until dusk once again. I have not seen it since.

In the week previous (starting May 2nd) we had Evening Grosbeaks visiting the feeders for short periods each day. One female remained for two full days (May 11th and 12th). On May 14th, we had a