

SEABIRD MOVEMENTS

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The Natural History Society has been recording bird sightings for posterity since the late 1960s, but how often are such records used? A recent publication of the Canadian Wildlife Service entitled "Seabird and duck movement through the Northumberland Strait, 1990" acknowledges the efforts of P.E.I.'s naturalists and presents a table of sightings gleaned from the NHS newsletters. The majority of these observations are of loons, particularly Common Loons. Petrels and shearwaters are also noted. Geoff Hogan is (not surprisingly) the authority most often cited.

The publication presents the local story to some degree, but concentrates on documenting movements of large numbers of birds through the strait, especially scoters and Red-breasted Mergansers in spring, and scoters and eiders in fall. Common Loon numbers were found to peak in the last weeks of October.

More information may be obtained from the document cited as follows: MacKinnon, C.M., R.W. Daury, and R.J. Hicks. 1991. "Seabird and seaduck movement through the Northumberland Strait". Technical Report No. 130. Canadian Wildlife Service, Sackville, N.B.

It is gratifying to know that NHS bird records are a useful contribution, albeit a small one, to a study such as this.



LOCAL BLACK DUCKS INCREASE

During the 1960s to 1983 period the North American Black Duck population declined significantly. In response to this, hunting regulations were modified in the United States and Canada. In 1989, P.E.I. introduced a split season that delayed the opening of the Black Duck, Mallard, and Black/Mallard season by 2 weeks so that local Black Ducks had a better chance to survive. In Nova Scotia, the season was delayed a week and closed two weeks earlier. It appears these changes have been successful as breeding pairs surveys for 1990 and 1991 showed a 29% increase in black ducks over those taken in 1989.

The surveys for lead contamination in ducks have found that ducks feeding in Pisquid Pond have been ingesting a high amount of lead pellets. Some ducks have displayed the symptoms of lead poisoning and, as a result, in 1992 the use of lead shot at Pisquid Pond will be banned. Additional surveys this year might result in other areas having this ban imposed in 1992. The use of lead shot in the United States has been banned and most northern European countries except Britain are moving to phase out lead shot.

Editor's Note: This article was prepared from the information contained in the article "Black Duck Update" released by Environment Canada Conservation and Protection, N.B. Department of Natural Resources and Energy, N.S. Department of Lands and Forests, and P.E.I. Department of Environment as well as information from Seasons 31:3, Autumn 1991.

