

BIRD REPORT

Bird sightings are relatively few this newsletter; everyone must have been busy enjoying the holiday season indoors this year. John Wright reports a Great Blue Heron which remained in the Upper Montague area until at least December 8. His son Peter Wright was the first to spot a Red-winged Blackbird which visited the family feeder from Dec. 18 until at least the 20th. Although no Gray Partridge appeared for the National Park Count a covey of 12 was seen at Glasgow Road a week later on Dec. 21 (Ralph Matheson). Two Ring-necked Pheasant sightings have come in; one at West Covehead on Dec. 13 (Florence Rae) and another in York on Dec. 22 (Clare Martin).

Once again the open water at the West River causeway seems to be harbouring large concentrations of wintering ducks. On Dec. 22 Clare Martin and Winnie Cairns made the following tally: 450 Black Ducks, 450 Common Goldeneye, 30 Barrow's Goldeneye, 400 Common Merganser and 1 Pintail.

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MAMMAL COUNT

To add interest and variety to this year's Christmas Bird Counts participants were also asked to report any mammals or tracks observed. On the P.E.I. National Park count tracks or sign were noted for 5 species of mammals; snowshoe hare, mink, weasel, red squirrel and vole. In addition one birder watched a very startled hare hop out from beneath an old tree stump and across the feet of a second birdwatcher who was so engrossed in watching birds that she failed to notice her toes being stepped upon.

Counters on the Hillsborough count were more systematic in their mammal reports and many included numbers of tracks or sightings. Varying hare seem to be quite plentiful this year and densities ranged from the two individuals plus 'billions' of tracks reported by the Point Prim observers to the total of 'dozens' of sets of tracks seen in other parts of the count area. One red squirrel plus two sets of tracks, two sets of vole tracks, and one set of red fox tracks were reported. In addition 79 harbour seals and 2 grey seals were observed hauled out on the ice or swimming in the frigid waters of Hillsborough Bay. Snow fleas, while not quite rating mammalian status, were apparently active and abundant in certain locations.

