

A fantastic sight!

BY ANN DUTTON

On April 1 and 2, we watched for two hours as skein after skein of Canada Geese flew directly over us, and as far from the left and right as we could see, all converging on one grassy field in Uigg.

It was a fantastic sight!

It began at dawn; no painting could exaggerate the colour and beauty of the strings of geese against the reds and yellows of the sky as the sun rose. No matter how far away they seemed, each string veered towards this field and at some unknown signal, held their wings motionless as they curved into the arc of their descent. They flew straight into the rising sun.

The geese honked their primeval call as they came - and the lookouts on the ground answered them - a warning, a greeting, or a presentation and acceptance of credentials?

There were hundreds of them.

Interestingly, although this occurred every day for a week, (by which time much of the ice on the Orwell estuary and other waterways had thawed and the loosely-knit flocks had either dispersed throughout the Island or continued their journey northwards) they never used the same field twice.

An instinct for preventing the spread of disease?

HAIKU: The Landing

Wild geese from the sky
Slow their smooth and practised flight;
Stretch wings, then alight.

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Natural history news

Sorry for the delay with this issue of the Island Naturalist. It's been a busy two months. I hope you'll find it worth the wait. Thanks to all those who took the time to contribute.

The April meeting of the Natural History Society was well attended, including more than our usual share of children, which was nice to see. David Cairns was the guest speaker and took us on a visual tour of the Pribilof Islands in the Bering sea, full of spectacular scenery and interesting history. The NHS awarded prizes at the 1989 Science Fair to the following students: Shelley and Lorrie Jollimore for the Senior project on demoic acid; Abby Rix and Melissa Costain took the Junior award for their display on trees, shared with Rebecca and Benjamin Wright for their display on a Merlin; Brian Stewart took the Intermediate award for his project on sand dunes. Lorne Hughes and Michael Morrow received honorable mention for their project that featured a snake. Ruth Richman, Helen Ferguson and Gertrude Partridge were the judges for the NHS.

At the May meeting, George Wotton judged the annual slide competition and it was a very entertaining and informative evening. Mr. Wotton's humour and expertise held him in good stead as a judge. Rosemary Curley took top prize, followed by Colin MacKinnon and Ken Mayhew. There was a lot of discussion at the meeting about the Greater Black-backed Gulls taking away the nesting habitat of the Common Terns on the old Hillsborough Bridge piers. The executive will send a letter to the Canadian Wildlife Service recommending that they pursue a non-destructive control system to keep the gulls from nesting there, and to keep us informed of their progress.