

SOCIETY NEWS:

Compiled by Dan McAskill

Bonnie McOrmand, Dwaine Oakley, Fiep de Bie, and Dan Kennedy arranged a bird feeder tour with stops at four feeder stations in Stratford, Vernon River and Montague.

Dwaine Oakley, the Society's President, was one of over 90 people who submitted written comments on the Island's forest policy paper which was released last autumn. The private members of the Public Forest Council have the task of developing recommendations for the Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

The Society donated \$100 for the land conservation activities of the Island Nature Trust and \$46.25 to the Robertson Library for the American Birds subscription. On March 30th, Rosemary Curley was appointed as the Society's new Treasurer. Rosemary will be officially assuming her duties in early May. On behalf of the Society, a nomination for the J. Angus MacLean Natural Areas Award was submitted to the Island Nature Trust.

ST. CHARLES & NAUFRAGE SIGHTINGS:

by Sherron & Warren Foulkes

A few observances from our home & cottage. This second last week of April at our cottage near Naufrage we had a Northern Harrier hunting every evening. The Sharp-tailed Grouse are also around. Three flew across our lawn one evening and Warren saw one on the driveway the evening before. Hopefully they're here for the whole summer. At home, we have the flickers back on our lawn, two Ruffed Grouse, and our resident chipmunk looking very thin. Our feeder is very busy with lots of Pine Siskins, Purple Finch, goldfinch, chickadees, and others. We have a Downy Woodpecker and still plenty of Evening Grosbeaks.

THE ELUSIVE PINK-FOOTED GEESE:

by Daphne Davey

Thanks to Nine Mile Creek dairy farmer Reg Walsh for observing and caring for a trio of unusual geese only a few yards from the road in his wide-open snow-covered pasture adjacent to the Northumberland Strait on one side and across the road from his farm on the other. The geese apparently arrived around New Year's weekend and have been sighted regularly, almost daily, at the same spot for the whole month of January (this is written on January 30).

Reg knew these geese were special as he had never seen anything but Canada geese before across the road from his farm. With the rough weather we experienced in January, he decided that if they were going to hang out at his place he might as well make them comfortable, so he filled his tractor bucket with straw bales and made a little nest for them, using several bales as a wind break and others, broken out, for bedding. He observed the geese hunkered down in their straw nest during the blizzard of January 24 and 25. He also cleared a nearby patch of ground and has kept it topped up with grain. The birds, although initially disturbed by these visits, soon got used to the "catering tractor," while they were quite put off when, on one occasion, Reg walked by along the road.

On January 30, I was fortunate to sight the geese from Reg's truck pulled up at the roadside. The three geese were snuggled down behind the straw wind break in their "nest," with just their heads and necks showing over the top like snorkels. The brilliant sunlight unfortunately blotted out the nuances of colours and markings into more stark black and white, but I was able to observe that these were short-necked geese with no white on the head (which narrows the field down somewhat!). The head and neck were dark, but I could not see the white neck line indicative of a brant goose (which several bird books indicate is not necessarily clearly visible anyway). The birds were undisturbed by the pointy things (camera and binoculars) aimed in their direction, although several companionable crows had flown away at our approach. Finally, we pulled further forward and I was able to observe the back half of one goose from around the wind break, and observe its whitish underside.

Given the total lack of white patches or markings on the heads and necks of these geese which all but the brant carry to some degree or another, as an amateur birder I thought they were brant. I took three photos, but I am afraid the pictures will only show three silhouetted snorkels.

Editor's Note: Others visited Reg's field and were challenged either by backlighting and or distance. They were first identified as Greater White-fronted Geese. Later, they were identified by some Nova Scotia birders as Pink-footed Geese. Checks of some digital telescope images showed the pink feet and small, patterned pink and black bill.