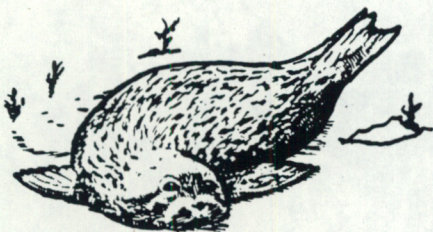


sound off with that distant rattle carrying far and wide. On a bright summer morning I sat having breakfast at the wide open window facing the water. The peaceful quiet was broken when a kingfisher who had alighted atop my stair-railing, gave out the strident rattle to warn off some threatening blackbirds. Before another moment, I watched as the agitated kingfisher came streaking toward the cottage, far to low to avoid a hit. I heard the dull thud as it struck just below my window, and rose to take a look. There on the ground lay the bright stormtrooper! Silent and possibly dead. I ventured a few words of concern, and was answered by a plaintive low murmuring: "Look what your old cottage did to me"; again I commiserated to the still form, that abruptly arose, giving its familiar vigorous rattle and flew off, apparently none the worse for it's strange morning exercise.

The last full weekend in August saw a typical wind-rain storm assault our Island. The surf off-shore looked very beautiful, but no small craft ventured far for several days. It is storms such as this one that bring in large quantities of Irish moss and seaweed. In our bay, we get only seaweed, kelp, etc. while shores washed by the open sea are strewn with Irish moss. On the Sunday, I took my customary walk down the shore for half a mile to where the beach comes to an end and the waters spread over onto marshy areas. As I neared the end of the beach, I was much surprised to see a large animal lying on the sand. When I drew near the inert form my suspicion that it was a seal was confirmed. It was stretched out on its back; I presumed it dead until it gave a movement that lifted my spirit. Such a beautiful animal! I gazed for long moments at the fine eyes, set in its dark brown face. It was, I found when I consulted an authority, a harbour seal, I would judge to be full grown. Clearly, this was a result of the violent storm whose gales produced abnormally high tides, one of which cast this seal up on the beach, stranded well beyond the usual high tide line.

I hurried back to my cottage to telephone for helpful advice, not an optimistic prospect on a weekend! Within a few minutes though, the Parks office put me through to the Chief Conservation Officer, Fish and Wildlife Division, Mr. Nelson Hurry. My concern over what was best to do for the seal was lessened when he assured me seals habitually haul out on rocks to bask in the sunshine. Still, I felt the nagging worry of (a) the seals ability to return, over the length of shore where there were two wide patches of stiff sea grasses, to waters deep enough to allow him to swim away; (b) I couldn't help dreading the possibility that at any time on this public beach, could arrive persons on foot, on all terrain vehicles or dirt bikes, who would take sport in molesting a helpless animal. I knew my neighbors close-by would be interested in "my find", so we three walked down to where the seal still lay, although it was now on its stomach.



As we watched, fascinated , the seal began inching toward the distant water, stopping frequently to relax and rest; it seemed exhausted, as though it had taken quite a buffeting in the storm. We soon noticed that it was using only one flipper to help in inching its body forward. I suppose it took half an hour before it gained a depth in the water where we saw it was swimming freely and we all hoped it would soon return to its friends of the deep. A most unusual walk.