

over to scan the flock. Just behind the gulls, a number of shorebirds were observed. Three of these birds had a slimmer, more golden appearance than the others in the flock. These three birds also had a strong white stripe over the eye and the stripe continued past the eye descending downward and narrowing. Many of the birds had black bellies but some had the white belly autumn plumage pattern. The birds flew after about 15 minutes of observation and passed near our vehicle before disappearing behind some trees. The underside of the wing near the body did not display the black axillary spot of the Black-bellied Plover. Thus, the birds were identified as Lesser Golden Plover.

All in all, a memorable day's birding was enjoyed by the group members.

BLACK RED SQUIRRELS SEEN:

by Bruce C. Pigot

Two black colour phase Red Squirrels, probably litter mates, were seen near Mount Stewart on June. 19, 1999. They were seen several times between then and September 10th. One was totally black while the other was not so dark and had the characteristic white eye ring of the Red Squirrel. The only other black Red Squirrel I have seen was in approximately 1951 at a black spruce swamp in Fanningbrook about 2.75 miles from the first site.

Just how common these black Red Squirrels are I am not able to determine. I have only one book that mentions the subject. Hart (1929) quotes two authors who state they are extremely rare but he also records a report by Adams (1873) that on a district on the south coast of New Brunswick the entire Red Squirrel population is black.



References:

Adams, A.L. 1873. *Field and Forest Rambles*. Pp 1-333. London.

Hart, Robert T. 1929. *The Red Squirrel Its Life History and Habits*. Bulletin of the New York State College of Forestry, Roosevelt Wildlife Annuals Vol. 2 # 1.

Editor's Note: A higher percent of melanism in mammal populations in some island populations has been reported in the literature. The most famous development of melanism on Prince Edward Island was the fox industry. There are also a significant number of reports of melanistic snowshoe hare on P.E.I.

During research on the Red Squirrel in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia a small number of reports were obtained on the black colour phase of the Red Squirrel. One was collected in Savage Harbour by J. McAskill as part of the research work and a second was seen near that area in September, 1974. I researched previous reports and was able to identify 8 sightings in P.E.I. compared to 5 records from all of Canada at the National Museum (records up to 1975), one of which was from P.E.I. The second one I seen in the wild was seen in Donagh and was only partially black. On Oct. 4, 1999, shortly after Bruce's report arrived, I was fortunate enough to see a third at the same location as the second was reported. (JDM).

RARE AND UNCOMMON PLANTS:

by Island Nature Trust

A variety of techniques have been used to determine whether plants are rare or uncommon. The first attempts on Prince Edward Island involved surveys and walk-throughs of a wide spectrum of habitats by highly qualified botanists such as David Erskine or Bruce MacLaren. They compiled their results and prepared maps and herbarium sheets on the plants they located.

The latest survey method involved the analysis of forest plants based on randomized forest inventory survey plots across the Island. The Prince Edward Island Department of Agriculture and Forestry's Forestry Division