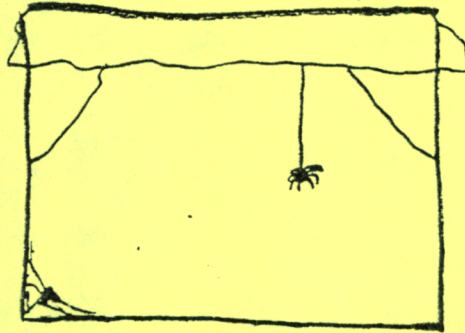


SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

by Rosemary Curley, Waterside, P.E.I.

Everyone I talked to had the same problem in the autumn of 1980. No matter where, messy cobwebs were hung along walkways and across doorways, and houses were badly in need of a woman so tidy she would polish the spiders' webs. At home, I overcame the fear of inviting rain, and dispatched them faster than they could spin. Occasionally, I took time to inspect them: the ugly garden types, others so tiny that ten at once could sit on the head of a pin, and large, whitish egg-laden ones which popped explosively when stepped upon. These were all short-lived spiders. In the bathroom there resided a shiny rusty-coloured spider whose habits were more endearing. It didn't spin obtrusive webs, and was of such sedentary nature that it could be counted upon not to run up your leg when your head was turned. Weary of the task of sweeping cobwebs and squashing spiders, I left it there. How long does a spider live? This one has survived since early October, has consumed only two flies, yet remains fat and healthy. Others are not so lucky.



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ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MAMMAL COUNT

For the second year in a row Christmas Bird Count participants also recorded sightings of mammals and their sign. On the National Park count unfavorable weather and danger of frostbite kept many observers close to their cars. Nevertheless one red squirrel was seen and sign was observed for muskrat, hare, fox and skunk.

On the Hillsborough count one red fox and lots of tracks were seen in the Rocky Point area, where a set of raccoon tracks was also observed. Hare tracks were plentiful in all areas and scat was seen as well. A set of red squirrel tracks and a cache were seen in the Rocky Point area. A squirrel was seen in the Point Prim area and a squirrel, a midden and several sets of tracks were reported from the Keppoch - Pownal area. Several sets of mouse tracks were noted near Rocky Point. Weasel and mink were seen at Southport, and a mink was seen at Earnscliffe circling out on the ice to approach a flock of roosting ducks. When the ducks entered a lead of water, the mink followed and swam about for a time causing considerable consternation among the ducks.

No seals were seen on either count, likely a result of scarcity of open water.