

Whittam on behalf of the Atlas Steering Committee)

## AVIAN SHOWERS?

by Lois Doan

A funny little happening - my oldest daughter asked me one day if I thought the following was a weird behaviour. She was planting her garden and spraying down the rows with the hose first to moisten the soil and some blur of a thing flew through the end of the spray and then again and again. She couldn't tell it was a hummer at first and then she shut off the water and the hummer flew within a few feet of her face and hung there as if to tell her to put that back on! (which she did) I've heard before that they do indeed enjoy a shower. (Adapted from PEIbirders mailing list E-mail dated Jun. 5/05)

## NEWS FROM ABOUT:

compiled by Dan McAskill

Thirty-eight species of damselflies and dragonflies, the Odonata, were found near ponds and streams in Prince Edward Island National Park according to Donna J. Giberson and Michelle Dobrin's study in the Park. The Brackley to Dalway region of the Park features the highest diversity with 36 species compared to Greenwich's 13 species. These differences in diversity reflect the abundance of aquatic habitats. (Adapted from the abstract of their report "Species Composition, Distribution, and Seasonal Patterns of Dragonflies and Damselflies on Prince Edward Island National Park", Report #37, PEI National Park)

The number of Piping Plover that returned to Prince Edward Island fell in 2003 and in 2004 while all other provinces saw an increase or at least the same number as in 2002. Thanks to the careful use of exclosures and the work of the Piping Plover guardians, fledging success was good compared at 1.78 in 2003 and 1.8 in 2004 compared to less than one fledged chick per pair in 2002. (adapted from Piping Plover Guardian Newsletter Issue #14, March 2005).

Five new, highly invasive plants have been added to the invasive alien plants list in Canada compiled by D.J. White, E. Haber, & C. Keddy's 1993 report ([http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/publications/inv/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/publications/inv/index_e.cfm)) Dr. Paul Catling of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada's Biodiversity, National Program on Environmental Health identified five new species which were not in the 1993 report on the New "Top of the List" invasive plants of natural habitats in Canada. They are: European Common Reed (*Phragmites australis* var. *australis*); Diffuse Knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*); European Lake Sedge (*Carex acutiformis*); Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) and Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). Three of these have already been established on Prince Edward Island. The sea buckthorn's many uses include its use as a nitrogen-fixing plant and the processing of its berries and leaves for health foods and herbal products and an oil that is used as a medicinal and for cosmetic purposes. (adapted from an article from Dr. Paul Catling of AA-FC).

The Red Knot makes one of the longest migrations of any bird, travelling 15,000 km from its Arctic breeding grounds to Tierra del Fuego in southern South America. These shorebirds concentrate in huge numbers at traditional staging grounds such as Delaware Bay during spring migration where they feed on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*). Banding studies have shown an increasing proportion of the Red Knot population is unable to gain sufficient weight for migration to the breeding grounds on the tundra apparently because of a reduction in the availability of the eggs caused by crab harvesting. The mid-1980 counts of 100,000 Red Knots at the Delaware Bay have declined to less than 10,000 birds in 2003. It is estimated that nearly 90% of the entire population of the North American race of the Red Knot subspecies (*Calidris canutus rufa* (Linnaeus)) can be present at Delaware Bay in a single day. In an attempt to combat this decline, the harvesting of horseshoe crabs in this area was stopped in 2003. (Adapted from Calidris Newsletter #13, May 2005 and R.I. Morrison, R. Kenyon Ross, and Lawrence J. Niles' "Declines in wintering populations of Red Knots in Southern South America" in The Cooper Ornithological Society 2004's The Condor 106:60-70)

The steel in the railway car at Elmira Railway station was being chopped up and smoldering on May 28