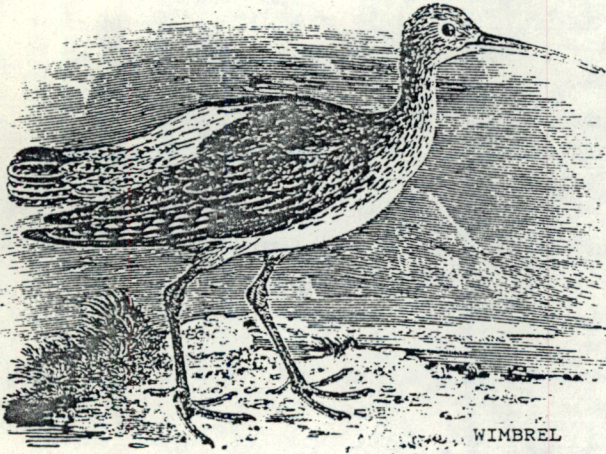


AN ISLAND VISITOR

BY GERALD MacDONALD



The Wimbrel or Hudsonian Curlew as it is called in North America is one of eight birds belonging to the curlew family. The Wimbrel, although much like the common curlew, is smaller and less shy.

Wimbrels are seen occasionally in Britain and a few pairs are known to breed in the Orkney and Shetland Islands off the coast of Scotland. But the Wimbrels which stop off at John MacDonald's blueberry fields at Hermanville each September probably are coming from breeding grounds around Hudson Bay.

Wimbrels are birds of open country such as moors, steppes or shorelines where they gather in flocks sometimes numbering in the hundreds. This was the case last September at Hermanville where large flocks descended on blueberry fields, gorging themselves on the left-over berries prior to continuing their long flight south to their wintering grounds in Argentina. I should add that berries are not the only food of Wimbrels but they also eat shellfish, crustacea, insects, etc. A Hungarian study of the diet of Wimbrels has shown that their diet consists of 96% insects.

On the breeding ground a nest is formed in low vegetation. Usually 4 eggs are laid and subsequently incubated by both parents. The young are capable of leaving the nest shortly after hatching and can be seen creeping away to hide under low vegetation when not feeding with their parents. Enemies of young Wimbrels are crows, hawks, etc. but the adults defend their young vigorously when compelled to do so.

Hopefully next fall the Wimbrels will again stop off at Mr. MacDonald's blueberry fields on their migratory path to warmer southern climes.

I extend an invitation to all you avid naturalists to journey East to witness for yourself this unique fall spectacle.

LITERATURE CITED

Funk and Wagnalls Wildlife Encyclopedia
Complete Field Guide to American Wildlife (Collins)