

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS. On October 17, two members of the P.E.I. Natural History Society attended a meeting in Sackville, New Brunswick to consider the feasibility of undertaking a breeding bird atlas project for the Maritime provinces. Those present felt the idea to be worthwhile and preparations to proceed will likely begin soon. It is hoped that Nova Scotia birders, whose representatives were unable to attend the Sackville meeting, will also be interested in participating.

The purpose of the project is to accurately determine the distribution of all bird species currently breeding within the Maritimes. To this end it will be necessary to adopt a definite time period (say 5 years) for completion of field work, and a standard sized block (say 10 km by 10 km) for survey purposes. According to standard topographical maps, if 10 km squares were decided upon, about 90 such squares (out of 1600-1700 for the whole Maritimes) would fall on P.E.I. However, many of these would be largely water and could likely be combined with adjacent landward squares. Participants in the project would head out each spring and attempt to determine as many as possible of the bird species actually breeding within their assigned squares. During each consecutive season further efforts could be made to learn the true status of less common species suspected to be breeding but for which evidence was not obtained in previous years. The later years of the survey period would also be needed for birders to concentrate on areas which had received poor coverage in early years of the study. It is estimated that, for 10 km squares in the Maritimes, between 50 and 100 breeding species could be expected.

In the end all the data would be collated and published in the form of an atlas. For each species a map marked with a grid representing the survey blocks, would indicate all squares within which that species was breeding.

Breeding bird atlas projects have been completed for a number of western European countries and have only more recently gotten underway in North America. A number of northeastern American states as well as Ontario have now begun atlas projects.

The information obtained by atlas projects is of particular value in assessing candidate species for endangered species lists. Without detailed data on population distribution it is often very difficult to determine just how rare a species actually is. A breeding bird atlas for the Maritimes would also be invaluable as a baseline data set for atlas writers of tomorrow who could then analyze shifts in the distribution of bird populations which will undoubtedly occur in the future.

It is hoped that a Maritime atlas organizing committee will soon become officially established and that guidelines will be developed for carrying out the field work in this region. It is possible that the project could begin as early as the spring of 1982 so keep your eyes and ears open for further details as they become available. We will need the full support of Natural History Society members if the project is going to be successful on P.E.I.

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A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE. While driving through Clear Springs during the afternoon of Oct. 24, Geoff Hogan noticed some commotion on the highway and stopped to investigate. A mink was experiencing some problems in dragging a good sized trout across the road. The trout was about 13 inches long while the mink was approximately 15 inches in length and both creatures probably weighed about the same. The trout was still alive and flipping wildly about, making the mink's task even more difficult. Except for a gash in its back the trout appeared to be uninjured. The fish was brightly coloured with speckles and had a vivid red belly.

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