

ANNUAL MEETING - NOMINATIONS CALL!

The terms of the current Executive Committee expire at the January meeting in 2005. If you would be interested in serving on the Executive or any Society Committees, please contact the Nominating Committee Chairperson, David Seeler at 566-4505 or Ron Arvidson, Vice-Chair at 658-2566. Thanks.

CHANGES TO EXECUTIVE:

Nanette Gauthier who took over as Treasurer for the Society in early summer has accepted employment Off-Island and has advised the Executive that she has resigned. Our thanks to Nanette for her contributions to the Society's efforts this summer.

THE 2004 NEIL BENNETT AUTUMN BIRDING CLASSIC:

by Dan McAskill, Ray Cooke, Dave Seeler, and Eric Marcum

At 4 A.M. on September 26th, the team members noted above assembled to commence the Neil Bennett Autumn Birding Classic. This event is a partnership of the Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island and the Island Nature Trust. All the funds raised being contributed to the Trust's land conservation program.

This morning started warm with variable winds from the SW and SSW. The wind increased with sustained winds running to 50 km/hr and the temperature was 15° Celsius by the time we hit East Point around ~9:30. By early afternoon, the wind had decreased and temperature warmed and it was almost flat calm by evening. Thus, there were no mosquitos until late afternoon.

We commenced birding at 4:00 am and our first birds were the Double-crested Cormorant silhouetted on the Hillsborough Bridge piers. The playing of tape responses for rails, bitterns, and owls worked very well and we picked by both the Virginia Rail and the Long-eared Owl which are often elusive and difficult to locate. Besides the more regular marsh and woodland species above, we were lucky enough to hear a Northern Saw-whet Owl and Long-eared Owl on the 48 Road at Avondale and later picked up a Barred Owl and a Great Horned Owl at Dromore. By dawn around 6:45, we were watching over a thousand Canada Geese as well as Bonaparte's Gulls, White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Sharp-shinned Hawk at the Rollo Bay Wildlife Management area. In Souris, we were fortunate enough to pick up a Swamp Sparrow and a Black-headed Gull. Fifteen Great Blue Heron were found roosting in spruce trees and a female Hooded Merganser was located at the pond in Souris West. Five Pectoral Sandpipers and nine Killdeer were observed in a pasture field at Sheep's Pond near Souris.

One of the highlights of the day was seen above a road just east of Black Pond when we identified a Cliff Swallow. In addition, Cedar Waxwing and a Northern Flicker were seen at this location. An American Kestrel was added to our list at Red Head.

At East Point, a Wilson's Storm-Petrel, two Red-throated Loons, Black Guillemot, and Caspian Tern were seen off the point, and three flocks of Blue Jays (25 to 100 birds) and four unidentified swallows were circling above the woods. The first House Sparrow of the day was located in the early afternoon in Charlottetown and Iceland Gulls were found in Stratford. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was located at Alexandra while an American Golden Plover was seen at Tracadie Harbour. Off Stanhope, four Leach's Storm-Petrels were observed flying along the wave troughs. At our birding day's end at 20:10 hours, a total of 88 species had been identified and two other species were seen but were not identified. The group travelled 447.6 km by vehicle and about 2 km by foot.

Thanks to the various donors, the Trust's pledge collectors, and the team members \$941 was raised in this year's Neil Bennett Autumn Birding Classic. Since the origin of this event, over \$9,460 has been raised.