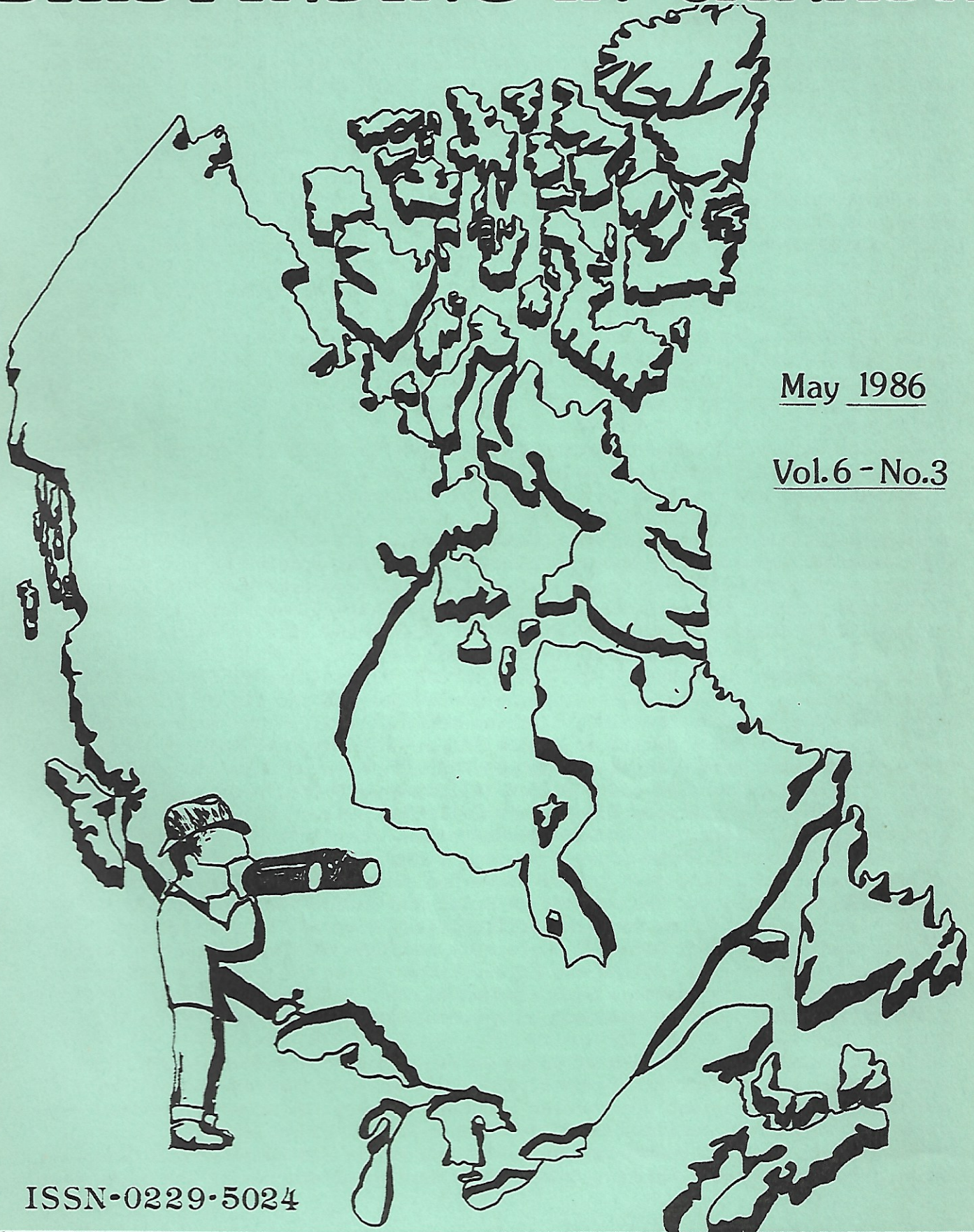


BIRDFINDING IN CANADA

May 1986

Vol.6 - No.3



ISSN-0229-5024

Record Keeping

In our May and November editions, we review miscellaneous types of individual birding records.

May and June are the times of year most likely to see birders afield in quest of a record "Big Day." So this issue is an appropriate one in which to comment on this very popular project.

To many of us, an all-out effort to identify as many species as possible in one 24-hour period, is an event that combines the elements of outdoor fun, an exciting challenge, advance planning and interesting results. And, even on days when final totals fall well short of anticipated goals, there are always enough discoveries to add up to a rewarding experience.

We thought Harv Lane's account of his "Big Day" in the March '86 issue, and Dick Cannings' story of a similar "assault" in the Okanagan Valley (Vol.4 No.5, Sept.'84), both reflected the fun-challenge-reward syndrome we're talking about.

Possible targets (# of species) for a Big Day vary greatly province by province. We realize and recognize this. For this reason, we welcome statistics from all sources. A Big Day of 100 species in one arena may be (in fact, is) just as remarkable as one of 175 somewhere else.

The southeastern sector of Manitoba in late May has produced Big Days of 193 species - Dennis Fast, May 29, 1982; 192 - Harv Lane, same day, same area; and 191 - Gordon Grief, May 26, 1984. All of these birders feel that a 200-day is within reach. They point out that they have seldom had decent weather coincide with the date chosen. "All we need is a break."

The Point Pelee/Rondeau sector of Ontario occasionally produces one-day totals close to Manitoba's. Here, too, forecasters talk of 200 being possible.

It would appear to us that these are the only two sectors of Canada with this level of potential. However, we'd like to be proved wrong. We recently discussed this with Dennis Fast who says, "when Manitoba birders began "Big Days" years ago, their totals weren't anywhere near what they are now. Our totals have been getting better as we get to know more and more key areas."

Whether the potential total is 200, 125 or whatever, we're prepared to look at, and report, each province and territory as a separate statistical category and go from there.

Selecting from data filed with us within the past 12 months, here are some Big Day totals:

Newfoundland	106	Sept.2/84	Blake Maybank
Prince Edward Island	104	Aug.21/85	Blake Maybank & Stu Tingley
Quebec	142	May 27/84	Daniel St.Hilaire
Saskatchewan	132	May 28/83	Stan Shadick
Alberta	115	May 18/84	David Stirling
British Columbia	164	May 26/85	Dick Cannings

We're not contending that all of the above are all-time provincial records. But they're what we currently have on file and can be used as standards for future Big Day outings.

It's evident from the above that late May/early June is not necessarily prime time. Fall migration peaks produce big totals too.

In contrast to the Big Day, a different set of dimensions comes into play in planning a Big Year. For a Big Day, you work out your optimum route beforehand and have to hope that, once the day starts, the birds show up. There's no second chance.

To prepare for a Big Year, matching up timing and location with each species

anticipated is a prime part of planning. Knowing where and when each species is most likely to occur is important. Unlike the Big Day, if you miss something today, you can always hope you find it later. To optimize Big Year results, you have to be prepared to chase rarities (instantly!), sustain your interest over a longer period of time, and fit the whole plan into a package your budget can handle.

Interest in running up yearly totals, by provinces, grew in the '70s when David Stirling and Alan Wormington started posting totals of 300+ in one year, in one province - British Columbia and Ontario respectively.

In 1979, Stirling posted a total of 320 species in British Columbia - a figure many observers would have thought out of reach. Wormington has had 300 or more in Ontario in at least four different years and, in 1981, tied the 320 B.C. record.

Applying the old Sports Columnist's cliché that "Records are made to be broken," Mike Force totalled 336 species in British Columbia in 1983. As far as we know this remains unequalled.

Other birders to post yearly scores of 300 or more include Norm Chesterfield - 300 - 1973; Geoff Carpentier - 301 - 1984 - both in Ontario; and Rick Howie - 300 - 1980 and Chris Siddle - 323 - 1983 - these in British Columbia.

As we said previously, in discussing the Big Day targets, by provinces, a yearly figure of 175, or whatever, may well be as challenging in certain provinces as 300. So, here are some of the higher figures for various other territories and provinces, taken from data filed with us in the past year. (There may well be higher figures; these are the ones we have.)

Newfoundland	- 224 - 1984 - Bruce Mactavish
"	- 224 - 1984 - Blake Maybank
Prince Edward Island	- 208 - 1975 - Roger Burrows
Nova Scotia	- 271 - 1974 - Bruce Mactavish
Quebec	- 235 - 1981 - Daniel St.Hilaire
Manitoba	- 288 - 1984 - Gordon Grieff
"	- 285 - 1982 - Dennis Fast
"	- 282 - 1982 - Harv Lane
Saskatchewan	- 262 - 1985 - Chris Escott
"	- 250 - 1983 - Stan Shadick
Northwest Territories	- 155 - 1973 - Alan Wormington

For total Canada, pursuing a Big Year record obviously involves even more precise planning, an even more flexible budget, an ability to keep at it all year long -- and lots of luck. Dave Mark's figure of 418 species in Canada in 1980 stands out as the highest on record, with Gerry Bennett's 401 (same year) being the only other of which we're aware, over the 400 mark.

A remarkable "Canada Big Year" total was compiled in 1974 by Bruce Mactavish who ran up 361 species with no observing at all in either Quebec or Ontario.

Big Day. Big Year. What about a Big Winter?

What are the possibilities, by province, of a Big Winter total? Obviously, the highest potentials would relate to provinces with a maritime coastline, or a Carolinian-zone sector.

Optimist (or perhaps, realist) Mike Bentley tells us he thinks a 200-species winter list in British Columbia is possible. (Ed. Note to Mike: "You get it, we'll publish it!") We know of Ontario lists over 140 (we had 144 in 1975/76) and there are likely records at least in the 150's. Several birders have Life Winter #'s of 200+.

In our 1985/86 winter project (reported elsewhere in this issue) two participants, Mike Force and Mike Bentley had totals of 151 and 156 respectively. Ray Williams, also in B.C. had 134. In Ontario, Dave Milsom and Tim Sabo were both in the 130's. Harry Kerr had 113 in the 30-mile-radius Toronto Birding Area, of which about 40% is Lake Ontario.

As far as big lists are concerned, we're dutifully reporting them, not necessarily extolling them. As we keep saying, we recognize that "Degree of Difficulty" is a very real factor indeed - and this is why we regard a winter list of a dozen species from Timmins, Ont. just as highly as one of 100+ from the "Banana Belts." In fact, we may look at them a bit more fondly, as we always do when inspecting issues of "American Birds" for Christmas counts in places like Marsh Lake-Yukon River, Y.T., 1982 (9 species); Yellowknife, N.W.T., 1984 (5 species) and Aklavik, N.W.T., 1967 with 2 species - Willow Ptarmigan and Common Raven. They reflect a sort of inverse exoticism.

Let's now look at Life Lists - for various geographic points: Parks, Islands, Metropolitan Areas, and so on. Here are some of them - unfortunately we don't have space for all of the many combinations of statistics we receive even though we enjoy hearing of them and encourage reporting them.

<u>Victoria</u>		<u>Okanagan Valley</u>		<u>Hamilton</u>	
David Stirling	283	Mary Collins	262	Alan Wormington	307
Ray Williams	263	Dick Cannings	260	John Miles	295
Bruce Whittington	236	Phil Ranson	238	Kevin McLaughlin	292
Mike Bentley	230	Wayne Weber	225	Barry Jones	284
Jack Williams	219	David Stirling	217	Bill Crins	273
Mike McGrenere	212				
Wayne Weber	210				
		<u>Long Point, Ont.</u>		<u>Toronto</u>	
		Vic Fazio	263	Don Perks	339
		Barry Jones	263	Harry Kerr	312
<u>Vancouver Island</u>		Alan Wormington	261	Gerry Bennett	312
David Stirling	290	John Miles	257	Eileen Kerr	308
Ray Williams	270	Jeff Skevington	253	Margaret Bain	306
Mike Bentley	240	Terrie Woodrow	252	Alex Gray	302
Jack Williams	235			Luke Fazio	298
Mike McGrenere	231	<u>Presqu'ile Point, Ont.</u>		John Keenleyside	297
Wayne Weber	225	Geoff Carpentier	259	Alan Wormington	293
Stan Shadick	200	John Thomson	254	Edge Pegg	287
		Martin Parker	220	Herb Elliott	283
<u>Vancouver</u>		Ron Tozer	216	Jo Ann MacKenzie	266
Brian Kautesk	329	Gerry Bennett	216		
Wayne Weber	294	Ted McDonald	207	<u>Ottawa</u>	
Mike Force	293	Michael McEvoy	207	Roger Foxall	300
Doug Kragh	291	Hue MacKenzie	201	Hue MacKenzie	293
Jack Williams	265	Ron Scovell	200	Roger Taylor	290
Dale Jensen	262	Clayton Vardy	200	Jo Ann MacKenzie	285
Hue MacKenzie	261			Frank Bell	271
Jo Ann MacKenzie	261	<u>Brier Island, N.S.</u>		Bill Clark	270
Colin Butt	258	Eric Mills	260	Daniel St. Hilaire	249
Dave Mark	245	Bruce Mactavish	235	Gordon Pringle	242
Dick Cannings	244	Lance Laviolette	188		
Mike McGrenere	241				

Here are figures for our "most-reported" National Park - Point Pelee.

Alan Wormington	318	Kevin McLaughlin	262	Hue MacKenzie	245
Norm Chesterfield	309	Don Perks	262	Mike Austin	244
Wilf Botham	285	Ron Scovell	256	Hugh Currie	242
Bill Smith	279	Jo Ann MacKenzie	254	Bill Clark	240
John Keenleyside	270	Roger Burrows	250	Pete Read	237
Luke Fazio	268	Bill Crins	248	Geoff Carpentier	233
Gerry Bennett	268	John Miles	247	Lorraine Foott	232
Scott Connop	264			Gerry Binsfeld	230

As a sort of "what the well-travelled birder sees" index, our ATPAT (All Territories and Provinces Added Together) numbers have become a standard item in our Life List department. As of March 25, 1986, 28 subscribers have reported ATPAT levels of 1000 or more:

Eric Tull, Westmount, Que.	2682	Rick Howie, Kamloops, B.C.	1463
Bruce Mactavish, St. John's, Nfld.	2042	Stan Shadick, Saskatoon, Sask.	1393
Alex Gray, Mississauga, Ont.	1974	Wayne Weber, Vancouver, B.C.	1389
Roger Foxall, Halifax, N.S.	1938	Roger Taylor, Ottawa, Ont.	1359
Hue MacKenzie, Surrey, B.C.	1937	Edge Pegg, Claremont, Ont.	1314
Jo Ann MacKenzie, Surrey, B.C.	1926	Gordon Grief, Dugald, Man.	1251
Dave Mark, Tonawanda, N.Y.	1909	Bill Crins, Vancouver, B.C.	1235
Roger Burrows, St. John's, Nfld.	1876	Paul Mackenzie, Kingston, Ont.	1231
Blake Maybank, Rocky Harbour, Nfld.	1820	Bob McDonald, Halifax, N.S.	1220
Mike Bentley, Victoria, B.C.	1760	Chris Adam, Regina, Sask.	1194
Gerry Bennett, Woodbridge, Ont.	1700	Doug Kragh, Vancouver, B.C.	1185
Angus MacLean, Alma, N.B.	1693	Richard Cannings, Vancouver, B.C.	1143
Luke Fazio, Mississauga, Ont.	1578	Peter Gilchrist, Toronto, Ont.	1114
David Stirling, Victoria, B.C.	1471	Bill Clark, Ottawa, Ont.	1078

More Locations:

Within Arctic Circle - Mike Bentley	126	Peterborough, Ont. - G. Carpentier	267
" " " - Dick Cannings	105	Kingston, Ont. - Paul Mackenzie	274
Sea & Iona Islands, B.C. - Wayne Weber	209	" " - Joel Ellis	265
Athabasca, Alta. - David Stirling	195	Rondeau P. Park, Ont. - A. Woodliffe	301
Calgary, Alta. - Andrew Slater	261	Algonquin Park, Ont. - Ron Tozer	219
Saskatoon, Sask. - Stan Shadick	267	Moosonee, Ont. - Alan Wormington	216
Regina, Sask. - Chris Adam	260	Simcoe Co., Ont. - Bill Zufelt	251
Winnipeg, Man. - Robert Parsona	217	Leslie St. Spit, Toronto - H. Elliott	211
Oak Hammock Marsh. - Gordon Grief	217	" " " " - Karl Konze	192
Oshawa, Ont. - George Scott	287	Thunder Bay Dist. Ont. - A. Wormington	227
St. John's, Nfld. - B. Mactavish	210	Rainy River Dist. Ont. - A. Wormington	234

We're sorry that we don't have space for any more of the various locations reported on many questionnaires - and hope that you will continue to report them for possible inclusion in future. However, we just have to pass on one of Jack Williams' tongue-in-cheek life lists, which says: "Middle East Pubnico, N.S. - 1 - did not stop - raining hard." (Ed. Note: Jack, we have some smaller than that!)

A new blank form for reporting personal statistics is enclosed with this issue. If you intend to file, it would be appreciated if you would do so within five days of receipt.

When referring to an area not likely familiar to most readers (e.g. Turtle Creek Valley) it's most helpful if you define the limits.

BIRDFINDING IN CANADA is published six times a year by G. Bennett, R.R.# 2, 10780 Pine Valley Drive, Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada. L4L 1A6. Business address is: "BIRDFINDING IN CANADA, P.O. Box 519, Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada. L0J 1C0."

All articles are prepared and written by G. Bennett unless stated otherwise.

Copyright. All rights reserved. ISSN-0229-5024. Second Class Mail Registration #5563.

Subscription rates as of May 1, 1986: To addresses in Canada - \$12.00 per year; to U.S.A. - \$12.00 U.S. per year; to addresses in all other countries - \$15.00 U.S. per year. Make remittances payable to "BIRDFINDING IN CANADA."