

POINT LEPREAU BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report to the Saint John Naturalists' Club

For Annual Meeting - July 13, 2013

The Point Lepreau Bird Observatory (PLBO) has been a project of the Saint John Naturalists' Club since 1996 and completed its 18th spring migration monitoring season this year. We now focus most of our efforts on the spring migration as the best indicator of East Coast sea duck populations because a much higher proportion of birds appear to migrate through the Bay in the spring than in the fall.

Funding for this project becomes increasingly difficult to source as the years go by, but thanks to Ducks Unlimited Canada (DU) we were able to once again obtain a grant of \$5,000 to fund a contract with our Dedicated Observer, Richard Blacquiere. DU's ongoing financial support is greatly appreciated!

Richard was contracted as Dedicated Observer to visually monitor seabird migration and act as a mentor to volunteers for a period of five weeks, from March 29 to May 2 of 2013. Thus the addition of migration data to the PLBO database was uninterrupted and was collected on a basis consistent with earlier years.

The electrical connection between the observatory building and the light station failed during the past year, leaving us without a source of heat. Dr. Phil Taylor at Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S. kindly loaned us a portable generator which we used last fall and again this spring to run our electrical heater and window fans as we worked with the Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO) to get permission to run an electrical line across its land from the nearest hydro pole to the observatory building.

Formal permission recently came from DFO and we are now communicating with officials at NB Power to make arrangements to have an electrical connection installed. Our goal is to have the work completed before cooler weather this fall. The PLBO budget for 2013 includes \$1,500 for this purpose.

Club member Dr. Ian Cameron has analyzed the migration data in an effort to estimate total species numbers and identify population trends in scoters and eiders, which form the bulk of the migratory birds passing through the Bay in spring. He has concluded a steady decline in the numbers of scoters and Common Eider continues at an approximate rate of 3-4% per year. As more data is collected, this disturbing trend becomes increasingly certain and the information has been shared with officials at the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Vital to this project are the hundreds of volunteer hours contributed each year by SJNC members and other New Brunswick naturalists. This involves at least 30 people and between 400 and 500 hours in total. We wouldn't be able to continue the project without them. Thanks once again, for your interest and effort during this past year!

Included in that volunteer effort are the contributions of the PLBO Committee, which is responsible to the Club for managing the PLBO activities. Current members include Eileen Pike, Bill Gentleman, Charles Graves and Hank Scarth. Eileen also acts as Committee Secretary and as contact person for volunteers. NB Power employee Jim Elgee acts as our liaison with security officials at Point Lepreau to arrange for visitor access and Bill Gentleman oversees maintenance of the observatory building, with help from other club members. Collectively, their time, care and insight are invaluable to the project.

We also thank Richard Blacquiere for another job very well done as the contracted Dedicated Observer during the peak weeks of migration this spring. Not only is he the principal observer and mentor to volunteers, but he also inputs all migration data into our computerized system.

Lastly, we thank volunteers Paul Clark and Paul Mansz who have ensured our database remains accurate and up to date.

Respectively submitted,

Jim Wilson
On Behalf of the Steering Committee