

a couple of times then flew off.

Right below the perching wire, I have nesting boxes on the light pole designed for swallows. In fact, Tree Swallows are currently nesting in them. I thought maybe the bluebird might just have a mate in the area and he's take her back to occupy one of the boxes. To date they haven't returned. Regardless, it was great to see him and I look forward to a possible return visit.

On June 7th at 7 pm I received a call from a man at East Point wondering if I knew anything about cranes. I said I have some books and am quite familiar with the Great Blue Heron and others. He said a farmer, Ronald MacDonald of East Point, encountered a strange crane looking bird while working his fields close to sanddunes and marshland. He said the bird was edgy and he could only get to half the length of the field before the bird flew off.

I got out my book and with the description given by the man, red patch on the head, flew with a neck stretched out as opposed to indrawn in flight by the Great Blue Heron, etc., I figured it was a Sandhill Crane. The daylight hours were drawing to a close and I knew that I didn't have much time to get to East Point for a possible view. I was in the farmers field by 8 pm and set up my scope. I could see that the terrain looked a bit like crane territory with rolling sanddunes to the west of the farmers fields and marshland and hayfields to the east. As twilight came on, I thought I was not going to see this bird that evening but that was okay too. These farm fields were unbelievably beautiful - totally private and the land appeared to be respected. Many birds could be heard, bobolinks in the hayfields, snipe closer to the marshlands. I said to myself that even if I never saw this rare bird, the experience of this territory on this beautiful June evening was sufficient to me.

I walked along the shore fields to the western beach tip of East Point. I could see gulls on the shore settled in for the evening. Quite a distance from the gulls, I could see a crane-like bird standing on the beach close to the water's edge. I set up my scope hoping this was the bird but it turned out to be a Great Blue Heron. The Great Blue felt disturbed when I positioned the scope and decided to retreat eastwards to join the gulls.

I decided to scan the surrounding fields and, to my amazement, the elusive bird came into view. I could only see him from the breast up as the bird was quite distant and was pacing too and fro. Clearly it was what I suspected, a Sandhill Crane - the red patch on its head and other features confirmed this.

I watched the bird pacing back and forth in the farmer's hayfield for about five minutes. I knew the bird had spotted me long before I had seen him. I thought of edging closer for a better view but then felt I should show respect for this edgy visitor whose normal habitat is the prairies of Western Canada and United States which would afford it more privacy. Furthermore, what more confirmation did I need. This bird had been observed by the farmer and his family for three weeks prior to my arrival.

## **UPEI SCIENCE FAIR NATURAL HISTORY WINNERS:**

by Ben Hoteling

What do lichens, marram grass, and birds have in common? The answer is really quite simple, a student or team of students chose aspects of their life styles to depict in the U.P.E.I. Science Fair and were winners of the Natural History Society's Science Fair awards. The hard working students who conceptualized and implemented these projects were in the Junior and Intermediate Categories.

In the Junior category, Jennifer Taylor chose the topic "Are Birds Colour Blind?" while Ellen Taylor and Kate Smallwood did an excellent project on marram grass. Catherine Colody who was in the intermediate category used lichens as indicators of air quality.

Thanks to this year's judges, Ben Hoteling.