

by a different route, up the Mississippi River valley. It was during migration stop-overs where they were vulnerable to indiscriminate hunting in spring and fall. Despite their small size, they were shipped to the big city markets by the trainloads. They were easy targets for they flew in dense flocks and were easily attracted to decoys. While they were still common, they provided an annual source of food for Islanders, but here, as everywhere else, the hunting was unregulated. The last confirmed Eskimo Curlew on PEI was one shot in 1904. So rare is this bird today that, for many years, they were believed to be extinct. Surprisingly, sightings of Eskimo Curlews from Texas in spring, mostly single birds or pairs, confirmed that the species had somehow survived. Its breeding grounds remain unknown but recent reports indicate that it is still with us and, presumably, still taking its ancestral migration route through out region each year.

In the past, little regard was shown to conserving wildlife for future generations. Abundant species such as the Passenger Pigeon and Eskimo Curlew were decimated by over-hunting while others like the Pileated Woodpecker suffered from habitat destruction. We have come a long way in wildlife conservation with carefully regulated hunting laws but habitat loss remains a major concern. The Piping Plover today struggles to maintain breeding areas on the Island free from human disturbance and off-road vehicles. The list of birds lost to the Island is long enough.

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SET DATE FOR BIRDATHON

The Francis Bain Birdathon, scheduled for Saturday, May 25, is a highlight of the spring birding season on PEI. The count can be done anywhere you like, and it's a good excuse to get out and enjoy the day. Contact Geoff Hogan (894-5995) or Jane Symmes (675-4806) for further information.