

NOTES ON SOME SEAL ISLAND (YARMOUTH CO., N.S.)
BIRDS.

By H. F. TUFTS.

Seal Island, situated some fifteen miles off the southwest coast of Nova Scotia about mid-way between Yarmouth on the north and Cape Sable on the south, is perhaps the most interesting from an ornithologist's viewpoint of the many islands which fringe the coast.

While some four miles long and from one half to one mile wide, the island is mostly low, in no place exceeding 30 or 40 feet above the sea. A sand beach on the east side near its middle, extends with the sweep of the storms nearly across the island, forming a lagoon and marsh, where it backs against the ridge of granite boulders and beach stones, which forms its western wall. From this low area the land gradually rises toward the north and south to the extreme ends. These portions are covered with a peaty, reddish-colored soil, supporting a dense growth of dwarf spruces and firs, in places so closely grown together as to be almost impenetrable. Under foot is a fine carpet of velvety green moss. On the south end is situated the government light station and fog-horn, in charge of Mr. John Crowell, who is also owner of the island.

This is one of the very few islands about Nova Scotia upon which various sea birds still attempt to nest and rear their young. From other islands the birds have been driven by the relentless persecution of the fishermen, who systematically rob them of their eggs or shoot without regard to season.

On Seal Island, however, thanks to the untiring efforts of Mr. Crowell and his family, the birds are in a measure protected from wanton destruction.

The most numerous and conspicuous of the birds are the herring gulls. Here we find them by thousands, perched about on the spruce tree tops, scattered about the rocky shores or winging their way over the surrounding waters in quest of food—always drawing attention by their beautiful forms and plumage and noisy voices. Their nests are scattered about the ground, both in the woods and amid the stumps of the recent clearings, or on the beach—a slight hollow into which grass and moss is scraped and the two or three eggs deposited therein. Many nests are built in the flat tops of the dense stunted spruces, bulky affairs of sticks, sea-weed and moss—crow style. These gulls prove helpful allies to the fishermen, indicating the whereabouts of shoals of fish, about which they gather in excited, eager swarms.