

# Strictly for the birds

by Bethsheila Kent

It is that transitional time of year for birders when focus shifts from passerines to shorebirds, a time when waterfowl, shorebirds and waders are on the move, stopping over at Cape Breton’s beaches for much-needed sustenance and a restoring break in the long journey to the south for the coming winter. Although the greatest concentrations of migrating shorebirds tend to enjoy their short stays on our fair Island along the south-east shore (from Dominion Beach in CBRM all the way to Point Michaud in Richmond County), good numbers do turn up on the beaches of Victoria County as well.

**Spotlight on the Semi-palmated Sandpiper:** The semi-palmated sandpiper is one of the most abundant sandpipers to migrate through our area and is often found in association with the most abundant plover, the semi-palmated plover. Both species get their names from the narrow, partial webbing between their toes (obviously not apparent from casual observation!) and like other "peeps", so named because of their calls, it is a relatively small bird, between 5" and 6" in length. The semi-palmated sandpiper is dark above and light beneath and one of its most easily recognizable features is its black legs. Its black bill is somewhat stouter than other small sandpipers, with which it often migrates. Its grey-brown back has a somewhat scaled appearance and its light breast shows some faint streaking. A narrow, light band is evident above its eye; a similar light band often extends breast to shoulder. The semi-palmated sandpiper can be easily distinguished from the other small sandpipers by its overall greyer look and dark legs.

**Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs:** The greater yellowlegs is one of our most common waders and, from mid-August to late October, can be observed at many locations around the county, from the mud flats at Goose Cove, along the shores of the Bras D’Or and along the bars and beaches that characterize Victoria County. Not quite so often seen is the lesser yellowlegs but, hopefully, the following will help in differentiating the two very similarly-plumaged, long-legged waders. Both species are dark brown above, streaked along throat and breast and with spotted sides and barred underparts. The lesser, however, is markedly lighter than the greater and its legs are not such a bright yellow. The greater is approximately 14" in length and stands about 16" tall. The lesser is much smaller in size, a mere 10 1/2" in length and stands several inches shorter than the greater. A good i.d. feature is the bill length – the greater’s bill is longer than the depth of its head (or from nape to start of bill; the lesser’s is slightly shorter than the depth of its head. Both have shrill, loud, repetitive calls, with the greater vocalizing with longer phrases than the lesser. And finally, the greater will wade into water almost up to its belly. The lesser, on the other hand, prefers to remain somewhat drier and will forage closer to shore.

**Semi-palmated Plover:** One of our most numerous, small shorebirds, the semi-palmated plover is found, at this time of year, on almost all beaches in Victoria County and beyond as well on the shores of some of the many islands that dot the Bras d’Or. It gets its name from the webbing between its toes (obviously not apparent from casual observation!) and like other "peeps", so named because of their soft, “cheeping” calls, it is a relatively small, plump bird, measuring between 6? and 7” in length. The semi-palmated plover is brown above and pale beneath and one of its most easily recognizable features is its single “belt”, the irregular black band that separates its white breast from its equally white throat. Adult birds show a bi-coloured bill, orange with a black tip (juvenile birds show an all-black bill); its legs are yellow or orange-ish. The semi-palmated plover also sports a rather jaunty white forehead patch. This active forager can be found on beaches both rocky or sandy, protected or open, as it makes its way to its wintering grounds far to the south.

**Black-bellied Plover:** Our largest plover (approximately 11 1/2" in length), the black-bellied plover migrates along our eastern shores on its way to and from its breeding grounds high in the arctic. It is easily identified in all plumages by its distinct white under-tail coverts, black axillaries (feathers beneath wings), black legs and black, heavy, short bill. In breeding plumage the black-bellied plover's black face, breast and underparts contrast sharply with the bold white striping extending across its forehead, nape and down the sides of its breast. Autumn and winter juveniles, as well as adult birds, are much more subdued - the dull grey plumage of autumn is fully apparent by early October. Juvenile birds of this species are somewhat paler in appearance than the adults. Black-bellied plovers can be observed during fall migration foraging along rock and sand bars at low tide for much of the length of Victoria County in the company of greater yellowlegs, semi-palmated plovers and other migrants. The black-bellied plover’s plaintive three-note whistle is helpful in locating the birds so well-camouflaged against the rocky bars typical of our coast.

**Sanderling:** The sanderling is a bird usually found in late summer - fall at such locations in Victoria County as Englishtown, Wreck Cove, the beaches at Ingonish and Aspy Bay, etc. Striking in its rusty breeding plumage (sexes similar), by the time this 8” sandpiper makes it back to our latitudes from its breeding grounds in the high north, it has faded to a grey and white basic winter plumage that it retains well into the next April. Sanderling are easy to identify not so much by colouring but by behaviour – this sandpiper races along the strand just at the point of a wave’s highest reach, probing the sand with its long, heavy, black bill for small molluscs and crustaceans exposed by retreating waves. In doing so, it presents an elongated, heads-down profile. This is winter’s palest sandpipers – no other sandpiper shows such extensive white underparts, mottled white-grey back and barely-exposed black epaulettes. Its feet and legs are also black. Like other small sandpipers, its call is s sharp “kip” or “pip”, usually in a short series.

I am Bethsheila Kent and I can be reached at 295-1749 with your birding news.



SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPER

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The Victoria Standard is published once every two weeks. Community events for the next issue are due August 31, 2011.

### Tuesday, August 23rd:

A.A. Meeting at 8 pm in Baddeck Rooms, Bay Road. For info - Bev. 929-2426.

### Wednesday, August 24th:

Join Cape Breton Naturalist, Bethsheila Kent, exploring the wonders found in our watershed. Today, featuring “Forest Floor - Watershed Wonders.” 7 pm at the Bras d’Or Lakes and Watershed Interpretive Centre in the Old Post Office Building on Chebucto Street, Baddeck. Free admission!

### Thursday, August 25th:

Tickets go on sale for an event at the Bell Estate at Beinn Bhreagh on September 24th - a Coffee Party, 10 to noon and an Afternoon Tea from 2-4 pm. Tickets available at the Baddeck Curling Rink at 10 am, \$40.00, limit 4 tickets per person. Proceeds will be going to the Victoria County Memorial Hospital Charitable Foundation.

Women’s A.A. Meeting at 8 pm at Baddeck Rooms. Discussion. Bev. B. 929-2426

### Friday, August 26th:

Merchandise Bingo at 7 pm at Big Bras d’Or Fire Hall. Call Mary at 674-2241 or Cathy at 674-2072.

A.A. Meeting at 8 pm at Baddeck Rooms. Discussion. Bev. B. 929-2426, Stewart E. 295-1583.

### Saturday, August 27th:

Second annual Old Time Picnic at the old Baddeck Academy site on Shore Road (across from Lynwood), sponsored by the Baddeck & Area Historical Society. The theme this year is "Faces of Our Past". Members of the society and community members will provide information about someone from the past who interests them.

Flea Market, Sausage BBQ and Bake Table at South Haven Community Hall from 10 am to 1 pm. You’ll find a great variety of flea market finds and books. Admission \$1 with tea/coffee provided.

### Sunday, August 28th:

Buffet Breakfast at 9 am to 1 pm at Big Bras d’Or Fire Hall. Adults, \$6, children under 12, \$3. Call Mary at 674-2241 or Cathy at 674-2072.

A.A. Meeting - Baddeck Serenity at 8 pm. OP/S/D at Knox Presbyterian Hall. Call Sonny at 295-3172.

### Saturday, September 10th:

The 81st annual Victoria County Community Fair at Baddeck Valley Community Hall. The hall will be open Friday, September 9th, 6-9 pm to receive exhibits, and all exhibits must be in place by 9 pm. For more information, call Wendell at 295-2494. Everyone is welcome to enter an exhibit and attend the fair!

Ninth annual Old School House Festival at South Haven Community Hall with a Ceilidh at 7:30 pm featuring local Cape Breton performers. Adults, \$10, children under 12, \$5.

### Tom’s Pizza

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Municipality of the  
County of Victoria

## Notice of Adoption

Baddeck Municipal Planning Strategy and  
Land Use By-law: Tourist Cabins Amendment

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT** on Monday, July 4, 2011, the Council of the Municipality of the County of Victoria approved an amendment to the Baddeck Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law to rezone a portion of the property owned by Mr. Kurt Johnston at on Highway 105, Baddeck Bay (PID# 85152023) to permit up to five (5) tourist cabins on a lot in the Residential (R-1) Urban Zone subject to lot size and buffering provisions and more than five (5) by development agreement. The document has been reviewed by the Provincial Director of Planning, Municipal Services Division, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, and two copies have been returned to the Municipality.

This amendment comes into effect with the publishing of this ad.

Copies of the approved Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law can be inspected at the **Eastern District Planning Commission Office, 32 Paint Street, Unit 4, Port Hawkesbury** between the hours of 8:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., weekdays (excluding statutory holidays), at [www.edpc.ca](http://www.edpc.ca), or by calling 1-888-625-5361

**DATED** at Baddeck, Nova Scotia, August 22, 2011

Sandy Hudson  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Victoria County

Posted in accordance with the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*.



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