

# NEWSLETTER

BLOMIDON  
NATURALISTS  
SOCIETY

LB

Volume 1, No. 2

December 1974.

## Programme of Coming Events

- December 15, 1974 - Annual Christmas Bird Count. If you are interested in assisting with this project, please call Mrs. John Erskine (meal times are best) at 542-2388.
- January 20, 1975 - at 8 p.m., A.V. room, Wolfville High School. A tentative programme has been agreed upon with Mr. Lamont Foster, retired meteorologist, CFB Greenwood. In case the weather becomes too miserable and he and his wife go to Florida for the remainder of the winter, an interesting alternative programme will be substituted.
- January 25, 1975 - winter walk featuring identification of trees from winter buds with Dr. Sam Vander Kloet. Meet at 1p.m., Acadia University Parking Lot.
- February 18, 1975 - at 8 p.m. A-V room, Wolfville High School. Dr. David Stiles will present a talk concerning chemical pollutants, pesticides and fertilizers.
- February 22, 1975 - at 1:30 p.m., Huggins Science Hall. Dr. Darryl Grund, mycologist, Acadia University, will conduct a visit to the micro-world.
- March 10, 1975 - 8 p.m., A-V room, Wolfville High School "Members Night", a social evening when members will be able to exhibit displays, exchange hobby information, snow nature slides, etc. Further information on this will be circulated nearer the actual meeting date.
- March 17, 1975 - 8 p.m., A-V room, Wolfville High School, Geological Oceanography of the Bay of Fundy, Dr. B. R. Polletier, Scientific Program Coordinator, Atlantic Geoscience Center, Redford Institute of Oceanography. Also: Annual Business Meeting and Election of Officers

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## For Pleasure and Profit

The feeding of wintering birds by kind-hearted folk across North America is today a thirty million dollar annual business. Among the great research programs going on is that of determining the factors governing natural control within our environment, and birds play no little part! By feeding a few you just might be participating in one of the truly great bargains of our time. Let's talk about "When, with what, and how."

While there are no hard and fast rules, the suggestions to follow have been rewarding, and you may wish to adopt some.

When? Never feed before freeze-up or snow fall; to do so could be to entice some exotic migrants to halt in their journeying south, and thus expose them to an early death.

Be concerned for chickadees, juncos, jays, pheasants, mourning doves, woodpeckers, evening grosbeaks, the occasional white-throated Sparrow and Song Sparrow, the common winterers.

Feed consistently until Spring break-up, the exception being a big mid-winter thaw.

out of the water for over half of its body length before falling back again.

With what? A 50 lb. bag of scratch from the local poultry feedgrain supplier, some suet and drippings, a hamper of corn on the cob, a few heads of sunflower seeds, a jar of peanut butter, a bushel of apples (drops), bread crumbs (fine), and a plastic garbage bag of chaff from some friendly farmer's barn, can be spread over the full cold season.

How? Old branches and prunings staked out on the back lawn, teepee fashion in which is tossed grain, corn and finely crushed bread crumbs, has proved to be just about cat and hawk proof for the jays, pheasants, and juncos: large chunks of pastry, bread, etc. only attract starlings, house sparrows and crows....the latter do not scatter over the area supplementing your handouts with what insect larvae may be gleaned.

An elevated tray of sunflower seeds in the shelter of a bare-branched tree is much preferred by the evening grosbeaks; near fruit trees a suet stick fastened to a post or drippings smeared on an upright limb, will draw downey or hairy woodpeckers, who in turn will pretty well rid your favorite apple tree of the coddling moth larvae overwintering there.

Another stick, with rough bark, smeared with peanut butter and hung from a limb, will feed your small flock of chickadees for a week. They in turn will clean your hedge and shrubs of many an egg cluster of destructive insects.

Several small evergreens, trunks sharpened and poked in the ground in a clump, over which during the deep cold days you pour melted suet and drippings, which immediately congeals, becomes a long lasting life-saver for many a songster. And don't forget to toss some crumbs and grain under the bared branches of your hedge and shrubs for the white-throated and song sparrows.

A big ball of suet and seeds hung in a bit of netting, and a window-sill box of sand and grain may round out your feeding station. While this latter may provide some interesting close-ups, for gosh sakes, don't try to tame any of these feathered creatures! Their wonderful "wildness" is the essence of their lives.

Have fun feeding; the rewards are more than a fair trade. \*\* Oscar Morehouse

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Editor's Note: Mr. Morehouse has agreed to compile a list of birds observed by BNS members during the winter period December 1, 1974 to March 1, 1975. Let's see how many we can list! Either send records of your sightings to Mr. Morehouse, P.O. Box 576, Wolfville, N.S. or call him at 542-5322. We will publish the results in our next newsletter, so please make notes on the birds you see, either at your feeders or on walks, etc., and report to Oscar. Please record name of bird, date, place, approximate numbers, and comment on any unusual factors, such as weather, behaviour, etc. 5 x 3" index cards are useful for this purpose.

#### Some Observations From Five Months in Newfoundland and Labrador

Scuba diving is a very interesting hobby or profession and it can lead one to many different places. This past summer I was working as a diver for the Marine Sciences Research Laboratory of Memorial University of Newfoundland on a survey of the flora and fauna in some of the bays in Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland is not everyone's idea of an interesting place to dive, especially since the water temperature was rarely warmer than 10 C, very often was 4 to 6 C and once dropped to -2 C. Properly outfitted, however, a diver can almost ignore the cold and concentrate on the beautiful and fascinating life in the cold water off Canada's east coast. There are places in Fortune Bay, Newfoundland, with incredible forests of kelp 20 to 30 feet long. There are other places in Newfoundland with huge beds of sea cucumbers, hundreds of them as far as you can see. In Labrador, we found areas of the bottom covered with white and purple Cerianthus anemones. Rocky bottoms in some areas were paved with sea urchins, just as they are in Nova Scotia, but other areas were blanketed with soft corals, yellow and purple sponges, many-armed sun stars, large, white, flowery sea anemones and many different types of molluscs, the most beautiful of which were the sea slugs found on some of the algae. We swam through large schools of the pink jellyfish Aurelia, so thick I could not see my buddy who was only five feet away. There were also less dense schools of the beautiful but more dangerous lion's mane or arctic jellyfish, Cyanea. We sat on the bottom and watched as thousands upon thousands of capelin swam by, on their way to spawn near the shore. All the while, the water around us was filled with tiny jellyfish about as big as a fingernail.

It was just as interesting on the surface as it was underwater. While in Labrador, home for eight of us was a converted 65 foot fishing boat. We rarely steamed anywhere without seeing the great whales. In Sandwich Bay, while watching a large flock of kittiwakes feeding about half a mile from the boat, a large sea whale suddenly shot out of the water for over half of its body length before falling back again.

We encountered icebergs wherever we went in Labrador, right up to the middle of September. Among the birds seen were northern fulmar, both light and dark phases, greater shearwaters, sooty shearwaters, Leech's storm petrels, Wilson's storm petrels, pomarine jaegers, skuas, great-black backed gulls, herring gulls, ring-billed gulls, kittiwakes, common and arctic terns, common murre, razorbills, common puffins, black guillemots, gannets, white-winged scoters, common eiders, black ducks, whimbrel, semi-palmated sandpipers and a flock of phalaropes that appeared and disappeared into the fog too fast to be identified.

The animals along the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially those under the water, are fascinating to watch, as are animals all over the world. They would also have been very interesting and challenging to try to photograph, but work schedules prevented me from taking a camera underwater with me. Another time perhaps.

\*\* Peter Frank

#### STELLAFANE

Ever since 1609 when Galileo first raised a telescope to the night sky, many people have been fascinated by this instrument. Telescopes, or "far-watchers", have been constructed in many shapes and sizes; however, whether of brass and mahogany, or aluminum and fiberglass, the silent blend of glass, vision, and the universe has cast a spell over innumerable individuals.

In North America there are thousands of amateur astronomers. For several decades those who have been particularly interested in telescopes have held annual meetings on the side of a small, wooded mountain in Vermont. The choice of this location is linked with a man who contributed both to the popularization of amateur telescope making and to the design and construction of the giant 200 inch telescope on Palomar mountain in California. Russell W. Porter (1871-1949) became interested in the design and construction of telescopes when he was about forty years of age. During the 1920's he produced articles and diagrams on the subject and was one of the founders of the Amateur Telescope Makers of Springfield, Vermont. He donated a piece of land on Breezy Hill near Springfield and designed a small clubhouse for the group. The clubhouse was called "Stellar Fane" ("fane" is an old term meaning temple, or church), but this soon was shortened to "Stellafane", a name known to astronomers all over the third planet.

In recent years the annual Stellafane meetings, held on an early August weekend, have attracted several hundred people of all ages. This year, which was the 40th gathering and my first visit, the attendance was the largest ever with perhaps 1500 coming from many locations over the United States, Canada, and even Japan. Most of those present camped in one of two large fields a short distance from the clubhouse. Telescopes were as abundant as cars, tents, and people. Although much of the weekend was very informal, talks were given by several individuals on various topics, and telescopes were entered in a competition in which they were judged for optical and mechanical excellence. A threatening overcast moved away on the first evening and allowed light from the depths of space to enter hundreds of telescopes on both that night and the next. An added bonus was the annual Perseid meteor shower which was approaching its peak on this weekend. Never before had I heard a thousand voices exclaim as an especially bright meteor expired in the night. It was a unique gathering of interesting individuals - people who have in common a love of the universe and a loathing of mercury vapor lamps.

Roy Bishop

#### Armchair Nature

It is that time of year when weather tends to encourage us to spend more time in our artificial environments, while many of our friends from nature have fled into some state of dormancy or to warmer climates! It is also that time of year for gift giving, so with these things in mind I thought it might be worthwhile to discuss membership into other natural history societies. Not only do they publish informative and often very beautifully illustrated magazines, but frequently such organizations give special prices on books, records, gifts, and sponsor trips to places of interest for the naturalist.

1. Canadian Nature Federation, 46 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Canada, K1P 5K6. \$8/year individual; \$10/family. Publish 4 times/year Nature Canada; approximately 40 pages of articles, well illustrated, plus 20 pages of news on environmental issues across Canada, letters, book reviews, up-to-date catalogue of new nature and environmental books and records.
2. Nova Scotia Bird Society. This organization is concerned almost entirely with N.S. birds, but occasionally other aspects of nature are considered. Membership may be obtained by sending dues (student, \$2.00; single, \$4.00; family, \$6.00) to Ethel Crathorne, Nova Scotia Bird Society, c/o Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, N.S. Their newsletter is being published 4 times/year.

3. National Wildlife Federation (U.S.A.) Membership Services, 1412 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
  - (a) National Wildlife (6 issues/year for \$7.50) deals with many similar problems and wildlife as we have here in Canada.
  - (b) International Wildlife is devoted to world wildlife and environmental problems (6 issues at 7.50).
  - (c) A combined subscription of these two magazines may be had for \$12.50.
  - (c) Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine (10 issues for \$7.00) is designed for the children.These three magazines have articles which are easily understood and are filled with superb photos.
4. National Geographic, the official journal of the National Geographic Society, P.O. Box 2895, Washington, D.C., 20013, deals mainly with people and places, but usually includes at least one article/issue on some aspect of nature. For example, in the November, 1974 issue, there is an article entitled, "The Red Sea's Sharkproof Fish." Excellent photography. Price: \$9.65 Canadian or U.S. funds/year for 12 issues.
5. Audubon is published 6 times/year by the National (U.S.A.) Audubon Society. Membership is \$12/person or \$15 family. Approximately two-thirds of each magazine is devoted to some topic such as Australia, Alaska, birds. The photographs are probably the most splendid of any publication in this price range. The remainder of each issue is concerned with articles and notes on conservation, ecology, legislation, both American and world wide. Address: Audubon, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10022.

This list is in no way intended to be complete as one could easily go on and on! However, if any one wishes to share information on a favourite nature magazine with other BNS members, please do so. Be sure to note title, price, address, and give a brief description of its contents. We'll be happy to pass the information along in future BNS Newsletters.

\*\* Jean Timpa

#### WRECK COVE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

Any individual wishing to protest the Wreck Cove Hydroelectric should attempt to do as much of the following as possible:

1. Write to: John S. MacIntosh  
Deputy Minister of the Environment  
Department of the Environment  
P.O. Box 2107  
Halifax, N.S. B3J 3B7  
carbon copies to: E. L. L. Rowe, Executive Secretary, Environmental Control Council, and to Doug Carter and Art Crouse all at the above address.
  - (a) Request that the original, unaltered McLaren Atlantic Ltd. report to be made available to the public and
  - (b) that a public hearing on this matter be held throughout all of Nova Scotia, not just in Victoria County.
2. Write to: Director  
National Parks Service  
Ottawa, Ontario  
c.c. Superintendent  
Cape Breton Highlands National Park  
Ingonish, Victoria Co., N.S.  
Voice objections to the sale or swapping of the lands around the Cheticamp Lakes which control the headwaters of the Cheticamp River. This land was once within the Park boundaries, and its return to its former status should be encouraged.
3. Express concern to Premier Gerald Regan, opposition leaders, John Buchanan and Jeremy Akerman, your local MLA, c/o the N.S. Legislature, Halifax, N.S., or to their home addresses; also to L. F. Kirkpatrick, President, Nova Scotia Power Corporation, Halifax, N.S.
4. Write letters to the editors of the Halifax Chronicle Herald-Mail Star, Fourth Estate, Halifax; the Cape Breton Post, Sydney, N.S., and to local newspapers.

Seasons Greetings to All!

- 5. Send a "chain letter" to any of your friends outside the ENS who are interested in natural history with the above instructions.

A significant letter writing blitz to government officials and agencies could make quite a difference.  
\*\* Jean Timpa

ON THE FUNGI TRAIL

Fungi became the theme of this society's autumn field trips. On two occasions, Dr. Ken Harrison, who is well known in the field of mycology, led the group to the Kentville ravine in search of mushrooms and their allies.

The Sept. 7 trip saw no less than 30 persons hiking the ravine trail in the rain. They were successful in finding a good variety of fungi. Under the good roof of the large picnic shelter provided by the Research Station, Dr. Harrison discussed the many interesting aspects of fungi. He also identified many of the species that had been collected.

The frosty morning air of October 7 added zest to this very successful trip. The 21 persons who attended found mushrooms literally popped up all around them. Many were discovering for the first time the variety, form, colour, and edibility which fungi have to offer. Dr. Harrison, once again, provided interesting information and interpretation about these often unnoticed intermediators of the living and the dead.  
\*\* Sherman Williams

HEARING THE ROCKS SPEAK

A most interesting and comprehensive workshop featuring the rocks and geomorphology of the Wolfville Map Area was given November 23. As the 17 participants examined rock specimens and geological maps representative of the area, Dr. Harold Nathan of Acadia University Geology Department provided fascinating interpretation. It was as if the rocks themselves could speak. A summary of Dr. Nathan's very well organized interpretation may appear in a future edition of this newsletter.  
\*\* Sherman Williams

LAST CALL FOR DUES (SEPT. 1974 - SEPT. 1975)

To: Dr. Roy Bishop, Secretary-Treasurer,  
Blomidon Naturalists Society,  
Avonport, N.S. BOP IBO

I wish to become a member of the Blomidon Naturalists Society for the 1974-1975 year. Enclosed please find my dues for ( ) an adult membership \$2.00 or ( ) a membership for children 16 years or younger \$1.00.

Name .....

Mailing Address.....

.....

Telephone No.....

Please remit as soon as possible to Dr. Bishop, by mail, or at the next regular meeting. After January 1st, 1975 notices of meetings and Newsletters will be sent only to those people who have paid their dues.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER ----- February 28, 1975

Please send your articles, suggestions, letters to the editors to:

Mrs. John W. Timpa  
R.R.#3, Box 129,  
Wolfville, N.S. BOP IXO

So far we have not had much response to our pleas for articles to include in our Newsletters!! Please put on your thinking caps!

Our thanks to all those people who contributed to this issue, and special thanks to Dr. Kenneth Harrison and Dr. Nathan for conducting field trips and laboratory demonstrations; to Dr. Robie Tufts, Dr. Dodds, and Roy Bishop for their talks during our regular monthly meetings this fall.

Seasons Greetings to All!