

# BLOMIDON NATURALIST'S SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Volume 13  
Number 2  
June 1986

The BNS Newsletter is published on equinoxes and solstices.

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SOCIETY NEWS  
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### BNS Summer - Early Autumn Programme

**MONDAY EVENING MEETINGS:** Both meetings will start at 7:30 p.m. and will be held in room 244 of the Beveridge Arts Centre at Acadia University. All lectures and field trips are open to the public and BNS members are encouraged to bring friends and neighbours.

1. September 15 - Alex Wilson from the Nova Scotia Museum on "Nova Scotia's Natural Areas". A pictorial tour of Nova Scotia habitats and their natural history.
2. October 20 - Our annual meeting. Professor George Stevens of Acadia University will give an illustrated lecture on the geology of the Cape Split area.

"The primary objective of the Society shall be to encourage and develop in its members an understanding and appreciation of nature. For the purpose of the Society, the word 'nature' will be interpreted broadly and shall include the rocks, plants, animals, water, air, and stars."  
from the BNS constitution

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FIELD TRIPS

All times are given for meeting at the Acadia Gym Parking Lot unless otherwise noted. It is wise to bring boots since the walking is often wet; bug-dope for "they seem to like us just as well as the non-naturalists"; and lunch if the trips start in the morning. Many morning field trips turn into all day excursions.

1. Saturday, July 19 - Halifax Field Naturalists' field trip to Brier Island for Whale Cruises. \$25 per person. Meet at the Lower Wharf on Brier Island before 9:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m.

2. Tuesday, July 22 - Pre-European Archeological Dig at Melanson. Professor Ron Nash and Frances Stewart will discuss the artifacts they and their students have uncovered this summer. Room 19 in the Huggins Science Building at Acadia University at 7:30 p.m.
3. Saturday, July 26 - Evangeline Beach Intertidal Life. A combined trip with the Halifax Field Naturalists. Leaders: Sherman Bleakney and/or Jim Wolford. Dress for mud! 9:45 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. at the Grand Pre Park parking lot.
4. Sunday, July 27 - Mud Lake Bog - pitcher plants, orchids, etc. Leader: Jim Wolford. Dress for wet sphagnum bog and biting flies. 9:00 a.m.
5. Sunday, August 3 - BNS/HFN - Evangeline Beach Early Shorebirds. Leader: Jim Wolford. 11:45 a.m. or 12.00 noon at the Grand Pre Park parking lot.
6. Saturday, August 9 - New Ross area, hopefully for lots of snakes! Leaders: Ian Ross and friends. 12:45 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. at the Ross Farm Museum parking lot.
7. Tuesday, August 12 - Wolfville Recreation Star-gazing. For information, telephone 542-2400.
8. Sunday, August 17, Cadden Beach, near Port Joli, to see piping plovers. 8:00 a.m. All day trip; bring lunches. The hike will begin at the parking lot near the end of the road south from Port Joli.
9. Sunday, August 24 - Horton Bluff Prehistoric Tracks. Leaders: Sherman Williams and Roy Bishop. 9:30 a.m.
10. Saturday through Monday, August 30 through September 1 - Labour Day Weekend at Brier Island. Hopefully, a pelagic trip to see whales and seabirds. For details phone Richard Stern (678-1975). \$25 per person for the boat trip.
11. Sunday, September 14 - HFN/BNS - Shorebirds etc. at Evangeline Beach. Leader Jim Wolford. Two meeting times: 7:45 a.m. (or 8:00 a.m. at the Grand Pre Park parking lot) for migrant warblers, etc. and 9:45 a.m. (or 10:00 a.m. at the Park parking lot) for dykeland and beach stroll.
12. Sunday, September 28 - canoe trip from Sheffield Mills to Canning Aboiteau. 8:00 a.m.
13. Sunday, October 5 - Delaps Cove Trail in Annapolis County and possibly another trail near Annapolis. 8:00 a.m.
14. Sunday, October 12 - local geology tour. Details to be announced at the September 15th meeting. *David Hope Simpson*
15. Sunday, October 19 - Late Shorebirds at Evangeline Beach. Leader: Jim Wolford. 2:15 p.m. (or 2:30 p.m. at the Grand Pre Park parking lot).



## Dues

If you have not paid your dues or wish to join the Blomidon Naturalists' Society, please send your name and mailing address to Martha Dodge, R.R.# 3, Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0 before August 20, 1986 with \$5.00 if you are over 16 years of age or \$1.00 if you are 16 or younger. Martha is moving to Halifax after this date to resume her studies. Our thanks to her for a very effecient job as BNS Treasurer. We'll miss her.

## BNS Newsletter Deadline - September 21, 1986

Please send all contributions to Jean Timpa, P.O.Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0 or give them to me or other Newsletter staff or BNS executive members at meetings or during our field trips. Articles, trivia, poetry, and letters to the editors are all welcome. Trivia may also be sent or given to Jim Wolford as he is the compiler for that particular column, (c/o. The Biology Dept., Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0). You may notice that Jim has written at least 95% of this Newsletter which is not exactly fair to him as much as we enjoy his discourses on natural history. Can some of the rest of the membership on field trips volunteer to write up that particular excursion? That way Jim will know that they are being covered and the variety of authors will add a little spice to our Newsletter.



## Acknowledgements

Bouquets of thanks to all who have assisted in any way in making this Newsletter possible, to the refreshment committee for their outstanding temptations and hospitality, to those who have led field trips this past spring. (Roy Bishop, Karen Casselman, Judith Kennedy, Dr. Wolfgang Maass, Alex Wilson, and Jim Wolford), and to our wonderfully talented and entertaining speakers (Dr. Donald Bowen, Karen Casselman, Peter Neily who kindly and skillfully agreed to replace Gary Saunders at the last minute, and Nan Geizer). Without your skills and knowledge and your hours of volunteer help we just would not BEE!

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FIELD TRIP REPORTS  
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Owl Listening Trip  
March 25, 1986

by Bernard Forsythe  
Wolfville, N.S.

About twenty-five people set out in seven cars at 7:30 p.m. on March 25, in an attempt to hear owls calling. During last year's trip in late March saw-whet owls were heard calling at several locations. This year's trip was scheduled early in the hopes that they would repeat the show. However, severe weather in mid-March delayed owl breeding activity and was especially hard on saw-whets. Several were found dead in our area, and none was heard calling by March 25. As it was a pleasant evening with no wind, we headed for the South Mountain, counting on at least the barred owls making their presence known.

The first stop was at Cyril Coldwell's for a look at the artificial platform in the large maple tree on his front lawn. A female horned owl had begun incubating on this platform in early March. I was later told that five minutes after we left, the male brought food to the incubating female. Several stops were then made at Greenfield and Lumsden, but no owls were heard. The last stop at Newtonville finally produced an owl. A barred owl was heard giving its 8-hoot call in the distance. A tramp through snow towards a known site brought a barred owl in closer; however, after giving a few calls it did not show itself. Arriving back at the cars we could hear the owl giving off a few single note calls as though proud of the fact that it had made us leave the area. Although the owls did not cooperate fully, the outing provided a good excuse to get out and enjoy a beautiful late winter evening.

A TRIP TO COLDBROOK FISH HATCHERY  
April 19, 1986

by Helen Smith  
from Halifax Field  
Naturalists' Newsletter

On a cool but sunny morning, eight members of HFN, led by Chris Corkett, took off for Coldbrook Fish Hatchery, nr. Kentville, where we were joined by 12 members of Blomidon Field Naturalists with their president, Jim Wolford.

The hatchery manager, Mr. Glenn Penney of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, gave us the life history of the smolts (1-2 year old Atlantic salmon) which had been hatched inside in the nursery, and were now able to be outside in holding ponds. In each of the dozen or so ponds, we were told that there were between 1600 and 2000 young Atlantic salmon, the majority of which will reach a size suitable for releasing into the Gaspereau, Stewiacke and Annapolis Rivers. The prime purpose of the hatchery, opened in 1938 by the federal government, is to increase the salmon stock in the natural breeding rivers of Nova Scotia, and so help to preserve the species.

The water used at the hatchery is spring fed and good for holding other broodstock, such as speckled (brook) trout, a native of Nova Scotia, and rainbow trout which are imported from West Virginia. The latter are reared at the hatchery and can be bought by aquaculturists for fish farms and ponds.

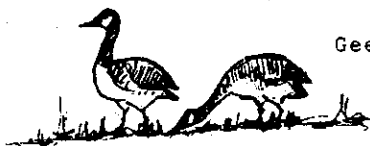
Inside the hatchery building were more tanks, each with its quota of fingerlings or fry. Glenn showed us one or two with large heads and thin bodies, wasting away by subsisting on their own flesh, but the majority are strong and lively. The one exception was a tank with small dark salmon fry about 2 cm. long. Their empty yolk sacs were still attached but the fry were lethargic and would not feed so were expected to die. They represented the eggs of five salmon and had been hatched in a relatively warm atmosphere. When put into the tanks the incoming water proved to be very chilly this year, too cold for these little fellows, and they lacked the energy to move around in search of food. The cold water does not appear to bother the trout fry.

Another anomaly showed to us by Glenn was (or were?) two small fry joined together just above the tail and sharing one yoke sac. These too, could not be expected to survive.

As usual we visited Cyril Coldwell's bird hospital behind the barn; there were two brown owls, a snowy owl, one hawk and several bald eagles, including 4 adults and an immature. Some of these birds can never be returned to the wild. The hawk gets very agitated when humans are around but it is obvious that they are all well fed and cared for, whether convalescent or resident.

To round off the day we followed Tim Randall to Smiley's Intervale and the Meander River. The spring run-off provides an excellent habitat for our native bloodroot. Cautioned by Mary Primrose to tread softly, we found on close examination, myriads of bloodroot pushing up through the debris left by the flood waters - many of them showing their fragile pink buds, and not a few were in full bloom, like white stars amid the muddy debris.

Our thanks to Chris Corkett for leading us to the fish hatchery, and to Mary Primrose and Tim Randall for the side trips to Harvey's farm on the Meander River and to Smiley's Intervale. We had a very interesting day.



Geese at Wellington Dyke  
April 23, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

Every year the Canada geese arrive in mid-March and put on a show every evening from late March through mid-April. They seem to forage during the day in various locations along the Canard River, mainly in fields of waste grain or new winter wheat. From about sunset until dark, the flocks fly down the valley, over the Wellington Dyke, and out to the mouth of the Canard River to roost overnight on the water.

We had low expectations because of the late date (remember that for next year), the drizzly and cold evening, and the lack of recent sightings of numbers of geese. But six of us went anyway - any excuse for an outing! - and we arrived on the dyke just in time to see a couple of flocks going over. We sat in the cars, watching and "counting" flock after flock as they passed over. A total of 400 birds was counted and flock size ranged up to 40 birds.

Two of the flocks contained intriguingly "different" birds. One individual was tiny compared with its flock-mates, perhaps a brant? Another goose was white-bodied. It had dark markings on the wings, and I suspect it was a near-albino Canada goose similar to or the same as the one seen there March 23 and 24.

It's always an entertaining bonus to watch the flocks break up, with individuals dropping and tipping erratically and acrobatically as they approach the open water.

Local Birding - BNS/NSBS  
April 27, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

Although the morning looked ominously dark and rainy, about twenty six people in a ten-car caravan took a chance, and we all "lucked out" with an overcast, cool morning and then a sunny afternoon.

At Grand Pre we saw two rough-legged hawks (and there was a mini-controversy over whether some saw a harrier), about fifty brant, and three snipe. Double-crested cormorants and a few great blue herons were flying to and from Boot Island. Port Williams, the Canard Valley, and Starr's Point provided about two hundred and fifty Canada geese. Some of the flocks showed many individuals breaking away to wildly drop and recover as they approached their landing sites. We often see this behaviour during their roosting flights. Also seen were green-winged and blue-winged teal, mallard, and a kestrel.

The sky cleared while we relaxed in Merritt and Wilma Gibson's home in Canning, and enjoyed the comfort and delicious fish chowder and a variety of pies and birds at their feeder and elsewhere on their property. There were lots of pine siskins, purple finches, and evening grosbeaks. We tried to locate their overwintered mockingbird, but only two people were able to see it (we needed Fulton Lavender!).

After lunch, Canard Poultry Pond provided a few dozen tree swallows, a common goldeneye, and a pair of American wigeon, but no shovelers have been seen yet this year, which is unusual.

Finally, at Cyril Coldwell's home at Gaspereau, we viewed his various caged raptors, which included a permanently crippled snowy owl, and the platform in a tree in his front-yard that was being used as a nest site by a pair of great horned owls (female hand-raised at Shunenacadie by free-ranging, male presumably wild); the nest a week later was deserted.

Other noteworthy items of natural history included basking painted turtles, "snoring" leopard frogs, and trilling American toads in several locations. Also one birder, (?) who was looking down instead of up, spotted a large metallic-blue flightless insect that turned out to be an "oil beetle" or "short-winged blister beetle".

Thanks once again to the Gibson's and Betty Rockwell for their Valley hospitality and caloric delights!

Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas with Coordinator Judith Kennedy  
May 3, 1986

by Jean Timpa  
Wolfville, N.S.

About twenty-five people from as far away as Clementsvalle and New Ross assembled in room 244 of the Beveridge Arts Centre to hear Judith speak about the Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas. This was accompanied by a video tape and slides and followed by a question period.

It was our intention to then go into field and forest and practice our atlassing techniques. However, Mother Nature had other ideas in mind and had showered upon us the most unpropitious weather possible for May 3rd - high cold winds and even snow flakes! We did see several raven's nests, a pair of white-breasted nuthatches, several starlings entering cavities of dead tree branches, and the great-horned owl on the nesting platform in front of Cyril Coldwell's house. I had hoped we could walk up through his orchard to the woods, but there was no need for that. Neither birds nor humans were venturing out in that weather.

This has been the first season of the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas, and although the actual breeding season is nearly over it is still quite possible to do some work on a square, or at least sign up "your very own" parcel (10 x 10 km) of Nova Scotia for the next four years.

If you live in or wish to work in the Keji-South Shore area please contact:

Ian and Christine Ross,  
R.R.# 4,  
New Ross, N.S.  
BOJ 2M0  
902-678-0515 (H)  
678-7381 ext. 288 (W)

If you prefer the Valley from Cape Split to about Meteghan then please contact:

Jean Timpa  
Box 1382  
Wolfville, N.S.  
BOP 1X0  
902-542-5678

Even if you do not feel that you can atlas personally, but know of people in these regions who are keen birders please give their names and addresses to us, as we might not yet have found out about them.



Smiley's Intervale Provincial Park  
(5 km. east of Brooklyn, off Hwy. 14)  
May 10, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

A large turnout of 30 people was perhaps related to the lovely warm and sunny day. One highlight occurred before the group convened: Becky Forsythe found a very nice arrowhead at the river's edge in the park.

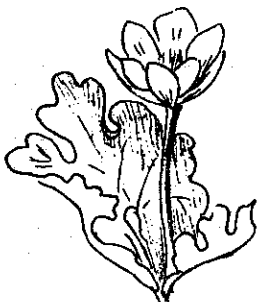
Alex Wilson, botanical curator of the Nova Scotia Museum, met us and commented upon the sparse distribution of intervale habitats in Nova Scotia and the resultant importance of the lower Meander River. He also said that this is not a great year for bloodroot, since the relatively wet spring inhibited flowering and, of the plants that could bloom, many had already done so and showed young fruits. Nevertheless, everyone saw oodles of bloodroot plants, and other intervale plants including nodding trillium and a single specimen of blue cohosh. I made a list of plants that were in bloom or had bloomed, and it totalled 14 species. These species included coltsfoot, wood rush, a sedge, shadbush, mountain fly-honeysuckle, bluets and yellow violets.

Alex pointed out several ferns and their "crosiers" or "fiddleheads" (young curled leaves). Those of the sensitive fern had been badly frost damaged (hence the common name). Also noted were edible polypore fungi, "Dryad's saddle" growing on a stump.

Insects noted were pretty green tiger beetles, a few early blackflies, three kinds of butterflies, and, in the river, a large dragonfly nymph and caddisfly larvae in their movable cases.

At our last stop, outside the park, we gazed across the Meander River to the Nova Scotia Museum's proposed ecological reserve for intervale habitat and flora. The site appeared suitably inaccessible, until a bit further downstream we were disturbed from our fiddlehead gathering by two youngsters on noisy trail-bikes that were freely crossing the river. I can't help feeling a teensy bit guilty about the fiddlehead gathering; however, they were delicious!

This was a sour note on which to end this excursion, but thanks are due to Alex Wilson and also Tim Randall for guidance and sharing their knowledge.



Amphibians at Gaspereau  
May 5, 1986

by Jim Wolford,  
Wolfville, N.S.

A cool night after several cold, dry days is decidedly less than ideal for activity of spring amphibians. Nevertheless, seven of us listened to taped calls of peepers, frogs, (six species), and toads; then we visited two of my favorite sites west of Gaspereau.

On a roadside ditch (spring fed, but now dries up every summer), we saw very young tadpoles in a hatching mass of wood frog eggs. Nearby was a large aggregation of many bunches of variously-aged spotted salamander eggs. Many eggs showed symbiotic green algae. A water strider was also seen, and a few spring peepers were barely audible in the distance.

In "Bleakney's Pond" (my name for a spring-fed pond at the foot of the North Mountain), there were lots of more freshly-laid, undeveloped eggs of spotted salamanders. Also common were overwintered larvae of the same salamander, but adults were not seen since their egg-laying season was over. We heard a single chuckle of a probable wood frog. Most of them, too, have abandoned the ponds/ditches until next April.

In most years, this pond holds many large, overwintered tadpoles of green frogs (which "clunk" and breed in June through August), but we saw none. What we did see in abundance were snails, and aquatic insects such as backswimmers, water boatmen, two kinds of caddisfly larvae in their cases, two kinds of mayfly nymphs, midge larvae ("bloodworms"), small water beetles (Jean Timpa saw a giant diving beetle), and a small shrimp-like amphipod.

For information on Nova Scotia amphibians, phone the Nova Scotia Museum (1-429-4610) and ask for their INFO sheets on Salamanders and Frogs (and Turtles and Snakes); or consult Canadian Geographic magazine (April/May, 1986), the BNS Newsletter of March 1982 (info from me), or recent detailed book (Amphibians and Reptiles of Nova Scotia, 1984, N.S. Museum).

Lichen Field Trip  
May 11, 1986

by Karen Leigh Cassleman  
Cheverie, N.S.

Cool weather and a strong wind on Sunday, May 11, failed to deter occupants of the five cars that drove in, around and through Shubenacadie to rendezvous at the Gibraltar bridge on the Musquodoboit River. Dr. Wolfgang Maass, National Research Centre Laboratory, Halifax, led the lichen field trip at a geologically and botanically interesting spot quite different from the usual setting for BNS outings. The site chosen, on east-facing slope rising away from the river, is strewn with large, granite boulders stranded after the last ice age. This provided an excellent habitat for saxicolous lichens such as

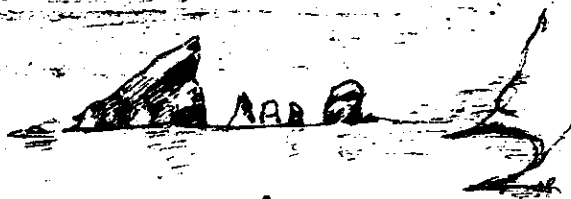
Lasallia papulosa and Actinogyra mühlenbergii, which were much in evidence near the road. Deciduous trees growing on the slope itself (mainly Beech, Maple, Yellow Birch and some Hemlock) made for the familiar macrolichens such as the easily-recognized Lobaria pulmonaria, which Dr. Maass used to illustrate the difference between isidea and sorelia, lichen reproductive propagules on the upper surface of the thallus. Also seen were the less common L. querzicans and L. scrobiculata, growing not only on the trees but on a rock as well. Field trip participants tasted the very bitter crostose species Pertusaria amara but used their eyes to identify the familiar beard lichens Usnea trichodea and the much less common U. longissima, which was 14 inches overall. The humus rich soil supported muscicolous varieties like Peltigera rufescens, a sub-species of the more common 'canina', and Cetrelia olivetorum, which grows to a large size on moss-covered rocks or soil. Among the many liverworts and mosses seen was Pellia epiphylla, and wildflowers included Epigaea repens (Mayflower) and Coptis trifolia (Goldthread). Atop rock outcroppings were large colonies of Cladonias, the so called "Reindeer Moss", including C. stellaris which resembles miniature trees, common "rangiferina", and the ashywhite C. arbuscula. The extravagantly-spikey C. maxima, which was fruiting, occurred regularly amid thick moss; one specimen collected was over 3 inches high. Dead trees yielded the spectacular yellow-spotted Pseudocyphellaria crocata and the uncommon Sphaerophorys globosus; bluish-white when growing in the shade and tan in its sun-form. That among the Hypogymnias was the often-overlooked 'vittata', that has a conspicuous black margin. A total of 45 species were identified and it was felt the unusual landscape and distorted trees (including a young birch clump growing up, around and over a seven-foot boulder) made for an interesting outing despite the chill.

Cape Split  
May 25, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

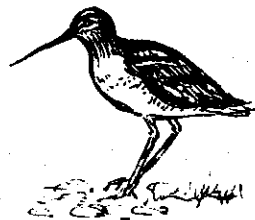
Three major highlights this year: first, my car's engine had a massive hemorrhage of oil as we arrived at Scots Bay (happily it has been resurrected now at no major inconvenience); the youngest two of our 13 walkers were missing for a while (their parents were then missing even longer); and Ellis Gertridge became popular with the youngsters, and unpopular with the keen birders, by making whistles out of alder branches.

The birding was rather sparse (only 28 species seen or heard by me), but several species of warblers were seen very well in the act of delivering their unique songs. On Squaw Rock at the tip of the Cape, the black-backed gulls and double-crested cormorants were on their nests (a few downy gull chicks were visible). A few black guillemots were seen in the water below.



I listed 20 plant species in bloom, but I strongly recommend an earlier date for the trip, say May 10 or 15, for really spectacular flowers. In addition to the spring beauties were red trillium (one nearly white flower was quite unusual), Dutchman's breeches (nearly all finished), rosy twisted stalk, golden saxifrage, baneberry, star-flowered Solomon's-seal, roseroot, gooseberry, dewberry (low raspberry), etc.

Other observations included lush growths of epiphytic plants on tree trunks (lichens, mosses and liverworts), several kinds of jelly fungi (e.g. "witch's butter"), signs of porcupines but no sightings, one chipmunk, red-backed salamander under logs and lots of funnel-webs on the ground.



Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary  
June 1, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

At our starting time of 10 a.m. at APBS, there was quite a diverse chorus of singing birds. But we should plan on earlier starts in future years, because that chorus ended quickly after 10 a.m. One of the singers, only noted by a few birders, was a very probable Lincoln's sparrow.

Our super highlight occurred in late morning. Seven of our party of twelve were standing, idly chatting between two adjacent impoundments, when out of nowhere "something" landed in the shallow water at the end of the cattails literally at our feet. We never saw or heard that "something" again, but three of the people present said they saw white patches in the wings. This and the elusive behaviour strongly suggested a yellow rail.

Judy and Gordon Tufts went back the next morning and managed to flush the bird and see its features well in flight. Yes, indeed, it was a yellow rail, which is supposed to be nearly impossible to flush or to see at all.

In that same spot we heard some peculiar grunting notes, which may have been a different species of rail. Also, we heard calls of the sora rail, which is abundant in APBS, all day long in several places, as well as the haunting calls of pied-billed grebes.

There were two pairs of ospreys and three nests on powerpoles. Two ruffed grouse were heard drumming, and a third individual was seen.

After lunch at our cars, we walked to a pond in the John Lusby Marsh, where we were all able to observe a variety of ducks and shorebirds. A pair of Canada geese with a brood of large goslings was a treat.

Our afternoon back in APBS, on the dyke along the largest impoundment, was a bit miserable because of a very strong wind. Therefore, few waterfowl were seen, (no coots seen at all). The many hundreds of swallows did not seem to mind the gale. We watched a raven foraging in the cattails, apparently taking red-winged blackbirds eggs. The blackbirds mobbed the scavenger but to no avail. The raven dropped one egg, but then hunted some more and found another and carried it away while many angry blackbirds pursued. We also saw an adult dragonfly that had just emerged from its nymphal skin.

On our way to or from Amherst, several of us stopped at Oxford to see the purple martin colony at the N.S. Lands and Forests office, which is easy to find on the main road to Oxford.

Kingston/Aylesford Sand-barrens/Bog complex  
June 15, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

When a dozen of us left the Acadia gym on this unpromising, overcast morning, willets were loudly calling. On our way west, as the day gradually brightened, the landscape from Berwick to Aylesford was very colourful with bright patches of red and pink in ditches and damp meadows - flowers of ragged robin, an introduced campion.

Just west of West Kings High School along Highway No.1, the sand-barrens, with their very showy patches of yellow flowers, became obvious. The flowers belonged to golden heather. Also, on the sand were broom-crowberry, bearberry, blueberry, sweet-fern, bracken fern, hawkweeds, poplars, and red pines. We examined the pines (red, white and especially some planted Scotch pines) and noted both the male cones and three different ages of female cones, i.e. tiny cones being pollinated, yearling half-grown cones, and mature cones that opened this spring.

We walked into a lower boggy area, where we noted many of our normal bog plants. Labrador tea was especially notable for its showy white blooms. Also present were rhodora, leatherleaf, bog laurel, sundews, pitcher plants, bog cranberry, etc., On a black spruce we noted lots of "pineapple galls" caused by spruce-aphids; much less conspicuous were clusters of large black aphids under the branches, feeding on the sap through the bark, and tended for their "honeydew" by large ants. Both John Pickwell and I were later bitten by large ants, whose large colonies are everywhere in this sandy country.

In a second area of the sand/bog complex near Aylesford, we saw a deer, a hummingbird, a harrier, an olive-sided fly-catcher, and an adult acraea moth (a white tiger moth) with very short wings that were probably still elongating after its emergence from the pupal case.

Our day turned out to be sunny and hot with no wind, and a variety of biting flies made us a little uncomfortable. However, I believe we were adequately compensated by the ragged robin and golden heather.

Poplar Grove & Yellow Lady's-slipper Orchids  
June 22, 1986

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

About twenty people in six cars caravanned to Poplar Grove, to our traditional spot about five km. past the Kennetcook River, just short of Sherman Hines' beautiful stone house, along the road to Cheverie/Noel Shore. Then we walked into the forest about a mile, to an area of up-and-down karst topography. An old gypsum quarry is our favorite site. We were a bit worried that we might have missed the peak of the flowering season this year but there were oodles of the pretty yellow orchids, especially on the steep hillsides. This year several plants were noted with two blossoms. On one spot something, perhaps a deer, had systematically nipped off just the flowers from the stem-tops of several clumps.

We revisited the sites where the much rarer ram's-head lady's-slippers grow but their flowering period had finished in early June. Many other flowers were noted on our walk, among them, marsh speedwells showing flowers with either four petals (normal) or five petals, garden columbine, dogwood and blue flag. A few mushrooms were seen and many rust-caused witch's-brooms on firs.

Larry Bogan (welcome back!) spotted an adult wood frog along the trail. Their life on land is mostly a mystery, even though most of their year is spent there.

A flock of white-winged crossbills was seen and heard repeatedly. Other birds noted were pine siskins, singing wood-pewees, an olive-sided flycatcher, cedar waxwings, rose-breasted grosbeaks and several singing and chasing bobolinks.

After lunch at the cars and ice-cream cones at Sweet's Corner, Bernard Forsythe led a few of us deep into the ravine below the Kentville Agriculture Station, where he had recently heard and seen scarlet tanagers. The song of one male was heard well, but we couldn't spot him in the dense, high canopy. On our way out we saw and heard a great crested flycatcher.



Subenacadie Wildlife Park  
July 6, 1987

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

The seven of us had our first highlight at the gym parking lot. We watched a chipping sparrow feeding its own fledgling and a much larger fledged cowbird. This led to some discussion of "good" vs. "bad guys" in nature; morality, of course, is a human invention and shouldn't be applied to creatures around us. Personally I feel there are no bad guys out there at all, with the possible exceptions of organisms that have gotten here or are superabundant because of human activities. Obviously nest parasitism in cowbirds is an interesting and effective adaptation, usually at a modest cost to their hosts.

Another highlight occurred near Brooklyn, where "Woolaver's Pond" held a young brood of ring-necked ducks and a common moorhen or gallinule, that was seen very well in the open.

At the Park, notable memories included: several wild turkeys (one had a chick); in the enclosure for red deer, a woodchuck was in the feeding trough eating deer food and under the trough was a baby woodchuck; two Norway rats were seen in a shed of hay; cougars had one small playful cub and a robin with a road-killed green snake appeared a bit puzzled as to how to consume it!



TRIVIAL TIDBITS - RECENT SIGHTINGS - 1986  
Selected and compiled by Jim Wolford

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number &amp; Location</u>	<u>Observers</u>
March 6	- a raccoon scavenging in morning at Wolfville feeder	HO
March 15	- severe ice-storm, results very picturesque	
March 16	- partial albino starling at Grand Pre - male house finch still at Avonport (and still there May 6)	JW EU
March 17	- female red crossbill at Wolfville feeder	GT
March 18	- 3 white-winged crossbills in Wolfville	JSB
	- female northern cardinal at Coldbrook - (Mrs. Wright)	(JT)
March 19	- 2 road-killed skurks near Truro	BBT
March 20	- 75 redpolls at Grand Pre	BBT, GT
March 23	- lots of snow buntings at Wolfville	JST
March 23	- a snowy owl at Grand Pre	RM
March 23&24	- a white-bodied partial albino Canada goose	
March 24	- 4 short-eared owls at Grand Pre	RS
March 26	- a dead ringed turtle-dove in Wolfville (hit window)	JSB
March 27	- coltsfoot flowers in Gaspereau Valley	JW
	- 2 Eurasian siskins at Halifax feeder	IAM
	- (pine siskins invaded Wolfville in numbers in early March)	JST et al)
March 29	- 28 purple sandpipers at Port George	BBT
March 30	- hazelnut flowers opening in Wolfville - a mourning cloak butterfly in Wolfville	JW
	- 10 painted turtles out basking in Wolfville	JW
	- 2 blue-winged teal in Wolfville	JW
	- a muskrat gathering apples in a Canard orchard	JW
March 30&31	- overnight one male spotted salamander in Gaspereau ditch	JW
April 1	- a yellowjacket hornet flying in Wolfville	JW
	- a pigeon on nest at Acadia Univ.	JW
April 2	- lots of spring peepers calling at Gaspereau	CKC
April 4	- large predacious beetle found at Acadia Univ. - bit student who picked it up	LW





<u>Date</u>	<u>Number &amp; Location</u>	<u>Observers</u>
April 6	- a singing mockingbird at Greenwich - (mimicked killdeer, blue jay, & phoebe)	BLF
April 7	- barred owls at Gaspereau have one egg- (horned owl on one egg at Greenwich March 23)	ME BLF)
April 8	- blizzard of wet snow - a very early barn swallow near Round Hill	BS
April 9	- a juvenile red crossbill in Wolfville-	JSB
April 10	- a glaucous gull at Grand Pre	BBT, GT
April 11	- aspen and alder flowers open in Wolfville	JW
April 11/ 12	- in Gaspereau ditch, a male wood frog clasped to a male spotted salamander!	JW
April 13	- a woodchuck seen near Gaspereau - a strong chorus of wood frogs at Harbourville - a long-eared owl hooting on Wolfville Ridge	JW JW JW
April 17	- a male indigo bunting at Avonport	BLF RB
April 19	- smelt starting running at Gaspereau - piping plovers and sanderlings at Cadden Beach	CKC NSBS
April 20	- 200 + tree swallows at Canard Poultry pond - a red-breasted merganser at Canard Poultry pond	BLF LL
April 22	- a snowy owl at Grand Pre	GA et al
April 26	- at Halls Harbour, a turkey vulture, a peregrine falcon and a male indigo bunting	JGT, JST
April 28	- spring peeper eggs hatching in Jean Timpa's home aquarium ("Pollywog Hilton") - Halley's Comet easily found with binoculars	JST JW
April 29	- starlings nest-building in a High- land Avenue mailbox! - 3 surf scoters at Canard Poultry pond-	BLF LL
April 30	- a pair of eastern bluebirds near Sunken Lake (These bluebirds occupied BLF's nest-box for about 3 weeks, then disappeared - later the same pair (?) appeared and then nested in a natural cavity at Bishop Pond - BLF)	BLF



<u>Date</u>	<u>Number &amp; Location</u>	<u>Observers</u>
April 30 to		
May 3	- heavy run of gaspereau in Gaspereau River, unusually early	CKC
May 1	- 40 adult northern gannets at Harbourville	MT, JW
May 2	- 2 northern shovelers at Canard Poultry-	BBT
May 3	- a female rusty blackbird with other blackbirds in Canard Valley	JW
May 3	- a peregrine falcon on Brier Island	LL
May 4	- 3 pairs of purple martins at Oxford colony	MT, JW
	- 10 pied-billed grebes, 8 gadwalls, 20 courting red-breasted mergansers, 1 black scoter, 5 coots, 2 swamp sparrows at Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary	NSBS
May 5	- a false morel (mushroom) nr. Melanson-	AA
May 7	- a female purple martin at Gaspereau	CKC
May 9	- an otter, an indigo bunting, and a northern harrier (being mobbed by crows) near New Ross	IR
May 11	- a male house finch in Wolfville	BBT
	- scarlet cup fungi near Brooklyn	JW
May 15	- a swimming woodchuck near White Rock Power Plant	JSB
May 16	- census of birds nests on Boot Island (1274 great black-backed gulls, 727 herring gull, 201 double-crested cormorants, 61 great blue heron, 1 American crow	CWS
	(also 75 purple sandpipers + 18 dunlins seen)	
May 17	- a wood chuck and a cliff swallow at Port Williams	JW
	- (also an undocumented report of a pair of wood chucks at Centreville) (the Frails)	
May 18	- a yellow-bellied flycatcher at Starr's point	RS
	- mallard with 13 ducklings at Port Williams	JW
	- 500 + chimney swifts in University Hall chimney after dusk	JW, MT
	- an orchard oriole near Gaspereau	LL
May 19	- a sora rail calling in Kentville	JW
	- a nighthawk seen in Kentville	BLF, RS
May 20	- a large female bullfrog near Gaspereau- (bullfrogs calling May 17 at Starr's Point - BBT)	JW
May 21	- a singing scarlet tanager on Wolfville Ridge	BLF



<u>Date</u>	<u>Number &amp; Location</u>	<u>Observers</u>
May 22	- 8 black scoters at Kingsport	- LL
	- a female Wilson's phalarope at Kingsport	- LL
	- a great crested flycatcher at Kentville	- LL
May 24	- litter of baby raccoons in a Wolfville chimney	- HO
May 25	- a whitish flower of the purple trillium at Cape Split	- BNS
May 27	- a great crested flycatcher at Greenwich	- LL
May 28	- 9 immature northern gannets at Black Rock	- JW
May 29	- yellow violets and nodding trillium abundant in Smiley's Park, Brooklyn (also blue cohosh in bloom)	- JW
	- ram's-head lady's-slippers in bloom near Windsor	- JW
May 31	- (also yellow lady's-slipper in bloom) an immature yellow-crowned night heron and 2 female eastern bluebirds on Brier Island	- LL, RRN
early June	- an adult white ibis near Yarmouth	- NSBS
June 1	- a very probable Lincoln's sparrow singing at Amherst Point	- BLF, HF, GF
June 1&2	- a yellow rail at Amherst Point	- BNS, JGT
June 1	- a pair of merlins nesting at Avonport- (male is a brown yearling; 4 eggs in old crow nest)	- PM, GA, BLF
June 4	- one morel found near Brooklyn; also lots of sulphur polypore fungus	- TH
	- courting waxwings using petals in Wolfville	- BBT
	- (could these be bohemians?-one showed white on wing)	
	- a chuck-willis-widow on island near Sheet Harbour	- RM
June 5	- skunks abundant in Canning - MG & Canning police	- MG
June 6	- raven caught a living pigeon in Wolfville- a male scarlet tanager and great crested flycatcher on Wolfville Ridge (tanager still there June 15)	- JGT
June 7	- Carboniferous plant fossils (club-moss & horsetails) in shale at Grand Pre	- PM, MT, JW
June 8	- goshawk at nest with nestlings near Gaspereau	- BLF, NSBS
June 9	- painted turtle digging nest at Sherbrooke Lake, also a few fireflies seen	- (camp-leaders)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number &amp; Location</u>	<u>Observers</u>
June 12	- pretty underwater fungus (Vibrissea) in stream near Gaspereau Lake	- MT
June 14	- palm warblers abundant, cliff swallows nest-building, and a deer fawn seen near New Ross	- JW, NSBS
	- 3 scarlet tanagers in Kentville Ravine- (at least one still there June 22-BNS)	BLF
June 16	- a pair of nesting eastern bluebirds at Kingston	-(news-report)
June 17,	- many tall willows heavily diseased by willow blight fungus in Wolfville, Canning etc.	- MG, KH et al
June 19	- 2 red-throated loons (immature?) at Harbourville	- JW
	- mason wasps(?) delivering paralyzed caterpillars to mud-nests in basalt crevices, at Harbourville	- JW
June 21	- 2 Canada geese with 5 goslings in Chester Basin	- JSB
June 24	- an adult small-eyed sphinx (a hawk-moth) on Wolfville Ridge	- JW
June 25	- a giant ichneumon wasp in Wolfville	- JSB

CONTRIBUTORS (thank you all)

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Follow-up to the Meeting of May 12, 1986

Peter Austin-Smith received the following memo from Peter-Neily, our speaker on May 12, 1986. If you wish to read the J.S. Rowe publication, please contact one of the BNS Executives.

Regarding a question on the natural predators of the spruce budworm; A new handbook is just available complete with illustrations. The author states that "predators may affect budworm populations before, during, and after outbreaks. The absence or lack of predation may be instrumental in releasing budworm populations from endemic to epidemic levels. Predators and predation have received much more attention during an epidemic than before or afterward. Parasites and predators play a minor role during an outbreak, but that at the end of an outbreak they effectively destroy most stragglers. When the number of budworm is reduced by starvation, the percentage of budworms destroyed by parasites and predators reaches 85 to 95 percent.

Perhaps you could pass this information on to the members.

Attached is some information I did not have available at the time when responding to a couple of questions from the membership.

Regarding Mr. Gordon Tufts' question on the Acadian Forest Region: There are 13 districts within the Acadian Forest as classified by J.S. Rowe in his publication Forest Regions of Canada (excerpt attached). Seven of these districts are in Nova Scotia. The Acadian Forest Region occupies all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island and all except Northern New Brunswick. Principal tree species are red spruce, balsam fir, red maple and yellow birch.

The latest forest inventory of Nova Scotia reports that 52% of the forested area is comprised of the softwood cover type, 27% mixedwood and 21% hardwood. Current forest practices are not decreasing the hardwood cover type as there is an increase in the mixedwood forest as many of the clearcuts regenerate to a mixture of softwoods and hardwoods. As well the spruce budworm is destroying the softwood stand component in many areas leaving stands partially stocked with hardwoods.

#### PREDATORS OF VARIOUS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF SPRUCE BUDWORM

	Eggs	Small Larvae	Large Larvae	Pupae	Adults
Phalangids	x	x			
Mites	x				
Spiders	x	x	x	x	x
Mirids	x				
Lacewings	x				
Beetles	x	x	x	x	x
Ants	x	x	x	x	x
Birds(details below)	x	x	x	x	x
Dragonflies			x		x
Robber flies					x
Spruce coneworms			x	x	
Syrphid flies				x	
Wasps			x		
Deer mouse			x	x	
Red Squirrels			x	x	

#### BIRDS

Pine siskin(m)	x				
Black-capped chickadees		x	x	x	x
Red-breasted nuthatches		x	x	x	
White-throated sparrows			x		
Blackburnian warblers			x	x	
Nashville warblers			x	x	
Golden-crowned kinglets			x	x	x
Solitary vireo			x	x	
Swainson's thrush			x		
Black-throated green			x	x	
Yellow-rumped warbler			x	x	x
Bay-breasted warbler			x	x	x

Eggs	Small		Large	
	Larvae	Larvae	Pupae	Adults
Magnolia warbler		x	x	
Tennessee warbler		x		
Cape May warbler		x	x	x
Purple Martin			x	
Red-winged blackbird			x	
Common grackle			x	
Evening grosbeak			x	
Pine grosbeak			x	

(Birds have been observed to consume only about 2% of the epidemic population)

From: Jennings, D.T. and Crawford, H.S. 1985 Predators of the Spruce Budworm. USDA Forest Service, Agriculture Handbook No. 644

### The Land of Moss.

by J. S. Erskine  
 from Journal of Education  
 June 1957 (pp. 22-27)

"CONTINUED"

At high tide on a calm day the Tusket Islands look like a holiday sea, for the swell of the Atlantic and the Gulf of Maine is broken into a myriad of minor swells fanning out from the channels between the islands, a disconcerting unevenness but nowise unpleasant. It is surprising how even the last remnants of the flow carry one's skiff out of its course, so that it is necessary to hug the shore of the islands. Then, here and there, the waves disappear, the sea becomes smooth and grey for acres together, and the drops from one's oarblades scurry glistening across the surface like rain on a duck's back. Vortices spin and spiral down, and about the rim of the great eddy, where the rising water is edged by waves, a screaming cloud of graceful terns wheel on angled wings and hover and dive for fish brought up by the current, and then, transformed suddenly from arrowy sprites of the sea into purposeful housewives, they flap heavily away towards the land, a sprat gleaming in each crimson beak.

The Bald Tusket stretch out towards the ocean, a line of treeless small islands, the last survivors of hundreds of glacial drumlins which once filled the sea for twenty miles from the shore. Each is a smooth slope tilted upwards towards the sea and crowned with a lush knee-deep growth of goldenrod or sea-lovage or raspberries and is edged with a steep drab bluff of clay and rock-flour and embedded blocks of granite above a steep white beach of rolled pebbles. On these tops the terns nest, and a few belated young ones, full-grown but not yet air-worthy, grate threateningly before they take to heavy wing, only to crash into the grass at the first gust of wind. Here are the forktailed petrel-chicks, also full-grown, yet lingering in their musky burrows when their parents have already deserted them. Even on

these barren tops now and then one meets unnatural conical holes in the smooth surface of the ground, the winter wells of hardy fishermen who long ago used these barren islands as bases for their winter fishing. But today only the gulls laugh mirthlessly overhead, and in the tide-rip beyond Outer Bald the tuna boats hang in long line at their sport, and the black ranks of the eider ducks ride the outer surf.

The tide turns. The great wave that six hours before spilled into Fundy and rose fifty feet in its upper estuaries, now rushes out again. The Tittle between Big Tusket Island and Harris Island rages like a river in flood, and powerful motorboats swing uneasily through the great riffles that tell of submerged boulders, and at times hang quivering before gathering force to creep out into the bay. Where there had been only water an hour before, a flat green salt-marsh emerges, and herons, grey as the fog, flap heavy-winged to the shallows to stalk in the retreating tide. Whitewinged willet come screaming down the Tittle, and a host of tiny sandpipers wheel in to scavenge the changing shore.

Now, hour by hour, the mossmen set out to sea. There are many grades of them according to their equipment. The most prosperous have motorboats which can master even these channels where the tide may run at eight knots, and such may spread and turn their moss until a few minutes before the falling water brings the boulders within reach of their rakes, and then they can choose their island and spread their dories among the emerging rocks. But those who work only with dories must make use of the tide, going out on the ebb, dodging the swiftest rips and channels, must find an unraked island, work through low water and return on the flow to spread their boatload of moss to drain and dry. Poorest of all, the tramps of the sea wander in home-made boats among the islands, ill-equipped, scratching the moss with their bare hands, depending upon others for food and rescue in case of fog or storm, wringing a bare living from a dangerous shore.

The tide runs out, and now the flat, green with eel-grass, is edged with brown boulders and the umber and bronze of floating rockweed. Here the least sandpipers gather, riding the bubble-floated fronds, pecking the tiny snails that infest the weed, flipping into the air when the seventh wave, too high for the weed to master, curls to break over them. They talk eternally to each other in thin shuddering voices, and their backs now seem grey against the bronze weed as on shore they were brown against the sand. Long-billed dowitcher probe the wrack on the beach, and gay turnstones sweep up and drop into invisibility among the rounded pebbles.

The tide runs out. Among the Bald Tusketts one has the impression of standing in open sea, yet from one side the water is rushing grey between the islands, and the roar of a rapid is mingled with the scream of innumerable grinding stones. Terns shriek and grate overhead, still agitated about their empty nests. In the tide-rip a gull-mot, fat and black with a white patch in each wing, is playing with the current, swimming at full speed upstream yet being swept backward faster than a man can walk, and when he reaches the

bottom, he flies up to the top to do the same again. Now he tires of the game and dives to bring up a fish, or turns on his side, preens his feathers and bathes himself in a scurry of short wings. Along the shore the kelp begins to show, brown frills that lift for a moment like the backfins of sea-serpents, gristly stipes arching above the water, leisurely and yet convulsed like the arms of a sleeper stirring in an uneasy dream.

The rockweed is now far up the shore. One eases one's skiff down from the scoured white pebbles of the upper beach, over the first boulders where the green and brown weed is parted from the crown like the hair on the head of an emerging diver, over the tough slippery rockweed and pools gleaming with the waving green fronds of sea-lettuce, to where the moss is now emerging from the water in which brown strops of kelp roll and writhe and the serpentine whips of Chorda wind and untwine in the depths. The empty sea has come to life with the thrum of motors, and every shore seems suddenly to be edged with skiffs and doxies, yellow and green and brown, and with mossmen in drab waders, tartan shirts and blue jeans, raking away diligently at this strange bounty of the sea.

The tide turns without a pause for a rest, and where a moment ago that rock was being bared, now it is sinking again. The mossmen scratch on. Soon they are in their boats, plunging their long-handled rakes. But the tide is on the run, rising at two feet an hour, roaring back through the rip to fill the yawning gap of Fundy. The rakes come in and the oars go out, and with the short chopping stroke of the deep sea the mossmen follow the rising tide towards their homes.