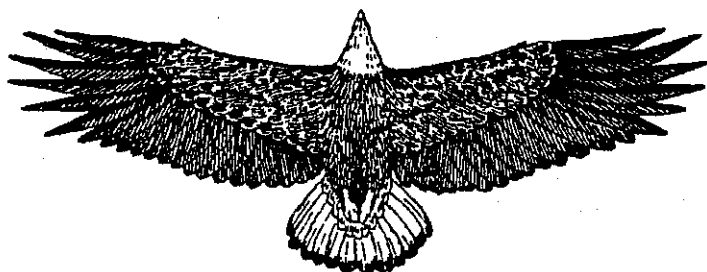


# ***Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter***

Winter 1993, Volume 20, Number 4



Dedicated to

**Cyril K. Coldwell  
1917 - 1994**



**BNS President 1975-76**

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## BNS Evening Programme

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**Monday Evening Meetings:** All meetings will start at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise indicated, will be held in **Room 221 of the Elliott Hall (Chemistry)** at Acadia University. [NOTE: THIS IS A NEW LOCATION FOR EVENING MEETINGS] All meetings are open to the public and BNS members are encouraged to bring friends and neighbours. Any changes in the place, time, or subject are announced on posters, Kings Kable notice board and The Kentville Advertiser and the The Hants Journal.

**21 February: Show and Tell.** Members and guests are invited to present their own interests, collections, or slides (up to 15) . We will be meeting in Room 308, Patterson Hall (Biology) of Acadia University.

**21 March: Stuart Tingley - Birds of the Antarctic, Falkland Islands and South Georgia.** Stuart is a tour leader for expeditions given by WINGS and lives in New Brunswick. Stuart has talked to us before and given us splendid views of the natural history of other parts of the world.

**18 April: Sherman Williams - The Annual Solar Eclipse of the Sun on May 10.** Nova Scotia is under the path of annularity of this Eclipse. Sherman will describe the circumstances of the eclipse and how to best observe it safely.

**16 May: Paul Comeau - Forest Decline in the Tropics.** - Paul is visiting Acadia from Trinidad. He has worked there for 11 years and has observed the conflict in resource use and Forest maintenance. Illustrated with slides.

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## BNS Winter Field Trips

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**12 March 10 am (Saturday): Local Geology and Rocks -** An indoors field trip in the Geology Department at Acadia University. Dr. Rob Raeside will describe their rocks and fossils and explain some studies being done by the Geology Department We will get a chance to see the oldest rock on Earth and even older rocks. Rock details will be examined under microscopes. Meet at the **University Avenue entrance of Huggins Science Hall.**

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## Editorial Board

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	<b>Nancy Nickerson</b>
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	<b>Judy Tufts</b>

"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

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, an Affiliated Member of the Canadian Nature Federation and a member of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation.

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations.

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# Cyril K. Coldwell

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**Cyril Coldwell**

**- A Tribute**

by Peter Austin-Smith  
Wolfville, N.S.

It is an honour for me to be asked to speak in tribute to Cyril.

Cyril was, as he said himself, born with an interest in birds, an interest that steadily grew through the years, nurtured by Robie Tufts, and other naturalists and outdoorsmen in Kings County. He was an old-time collector who followed in the path of that honourable tradition and the birds that he collected, he also prepared as mounts, using the taxidermy skills he learned as a young boy.

Cyril eventually took over the family farm. He was a successful farmer, but his heart really wasn't in it. Cyril wanted to work with birds.

That opportunity came in 1972, when he was asked to be curator of the museum in the Biology Department at Acadia University. Later the museum was named the Robie Tufts Laboratory of Ornithology and it was only right that one of Robie's proteges, or Robie's boys as Cyril proudly called himself, should take care of it.

From the time he first climbed up on the stool beside his work-

bench, it was clear that this was where Cyril was meant to be. Surrounded by a heady mix of odours, boiling pots, record books, study skins, and curious students, he was happily content. As his presence at Acadia became more widely known, growing numbers of people came to visit this remarkable man who offered simple, homespun truths while his deft hands prepared specimens for research and teaching. Dressed in overalls, shirt and tie, Cyril was the venerable, rural sage and for more than 21 years, he practiced the art of mentoring.

There are few natural opportunities to form mentoring relationships in our present world, but on the fourth floor of the biology department, this age-old method of passing on skills, knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another, the shaping of human values, was certainly thriving. His wisdom came primarily from experience, not books. He followed the precepts of the true mentor - he didn't play God, he practiced active listening, he was as often empathetic as sympathetic, he was nonjudgemental, and he knew that he really couldn't move mountains.

Cyril's work with birds of prey was truly where his heart was. He may have been among the first to rehabilitate injured birds and as

word spread of this farmer-fisher-man with a backyard full of hawks, owls and eagles, increasing numbers of schoolchildren, neighbours, tourists, birders and biologists came to visit him.

His farm also became an extension of the biology department, a place where students and staff, with his enthusiastic help, conducted research and banding studies on eagles and other birds.



Cyril was among the first to establish a feeding site for eagles on his farm, a practice that soon spread throughout Nova Scotia and elsewhere. These additional sources of winter foods eventually led to a dramatic increase in the provincial bald eagle population. It is fitting that a pair of eagles now nest within a short distance of Cyril's home.

And through all these years he was encouraged and supported in his work by his wife Frances and members of his family, who were drafted to feed his birds and undertake other necessary chores in his absence.

Each of us has vivid memories of time spent with Cyril, at his farm, at the university, on Brier and Bon Portage Islands, on expeditions to the Arctic and on many other field excursions. And those who have been encouraged and guided by him will take a little bit of Cyril's spirit with them wherever they go. It is telling of his worth, that his influence has reached far beyond this country, for his students, who are not only his friends but members of "Uncle" Cyril's extended family, now live on almost every continent.

Cyril was a devoted husband and father, a trusted and dependable friend and neighbour, a source of strength and guidance in his community. Never one for pretence, Cyril treated everyone equally and was "the same in the parlour as he was in the kitchen". He was a compassionate, warm-hearted man with a mischievous sense of humour. His high-spirited good nature revealed an exuberance for life, and it is that life which we now celebrate as much as we mourn his passing.

Cyril was an extraordinary man, a *rara avis*, a rare one indeed, - this beloved bird man from Gaspereau.

(Editor's Note: This tribute was read during his funeral service held in the Gaspereau United Baptist Church, Gaspereau, Kings County, Nova Scotia, on Friday, 7 January, 1994.)

## **Cyril's Birds**

by Merritt Gibson  
Canning, N.S.

Perhaps you've noticed a platform high in a maple tree as you drive into Melanson from Gasperreau. Have you wondered why it's there? One of Cyril's Great Horned Owls nests on it.

In 1982 a forestry company cut a tree that held an owl's nest with an owlet in it. The owlet was sent to the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, and in the autumn it was given to Cyril to look after. Cyril cared for it for about a year and a half and released it in the spring of 1984. It hunted in the neighbourhood during the summer and returned to Cyril's farm to winter in his barn.

That November in preparation for spring, Cyril had Bernard Forsythe build a platform in the tree with sticks placed on it so that: "it looked like a better owl's nest than the ones in the woods". The owl agreed and moved onto the nest in February, 1985. That year she laid two eggs, but neither hatched. The same thing happened again in 1986.

In 1987 she laid three eggs. However, thinking that the eggs might again be infertile, Cyril added two eggs that he had collected from wild nests. Two owlets hatched and later fledged, but one was killed when hit by a car.

In 1988, perhaps wanting a change of scenery, the owl moved

to an abandoned crow's nest beside a nearby brook. Two eggs were laid and two young were raised. In 1989 the owl returned to the platform nest where she raised two owlets in each of the next three years.

Cyril also operated a raptor rehabilitation centre on his farm. He established it in 1976 when an eagle that had been shot was brought to him. With the help of a veterinarian, the bird was x-rayed and the shot picked out. Cyril looked after the eagle for six weeks until it was strong enough to be released.

One of the last eagles that Cyril looked after was a bird picked up by the side of the road following an ice storm. The bird was so covered with ice that it was unable to fly. Cyril cared for the bird for a few days while the ice melted and then fed it until it had regained its strength and could be released.

Cyril was likely the first person in the Maritimes to operate a raptor rehabilitation centre. Through the years, he cared for about 35 Bald Eagles, one Golden Eagle and about 50 hawks and owls. Many of these birds recovered and were released.

Cyril enjoyed his birds and enjoyed telling people all about them.

## **Cyril, A Naturalist's Friend** by Bernard Forsythe Wolfville, Nova Scotia

There will be something missing with my enjoyment of the upcoming owl nesting season. Cyril Coldwell will not be quizzing me as to which owls are nesting this year, when the first egg was laid, or all the other details about some of his favourite birds. With his passing I have been thinking of the many people who have been helpful with my natural history pursuits.

During my youth, our neighbours the Erskines introduced me to the wonders of nature. Although I did not know Robie Tufts until his later years, his books had already inspired me. His descriptions of bird nests along with prompting from Rachel Erskine began the years I have spent searching out and recording our breeding birds. In the mid 1970's I found a long-eared owl nest. Shortly thereafter, a man dressed in striped overalls and tie paid me a visit. Cyril Coldwell wanted to see the owl nest. My birding experiences expanded rapidly into directions I had not ever dreamed of before.

Cyril introduced me to many of his students from Acadia. Although the students were working towards a degree while I was enjoying a hobby, I always felt welcome, and found it easy to learn from and with Cyril and his flock. Outings were arranged for visits to some of my nests while I

was in turn, invited to participate in several of their projects. Probably the greatest thrill was the opportunity for gaining hands on experience with birds. He showed great interest in my crow, raven, hawk and owl nests and had me banding all the young before they fledged. I was introduced to Brier Island where I learned about the study of bird migration. Many memorable trips to Boot Island involved climbing to great blue heron and cormorant nests and banding hundreds of young black-backed gulls.



Another of Cyril's studies that interested me was his work with ravens, carried out over many years. My evening visits would begin with a rough ride on the back of his tractor to the raven trap. Upon entering the trap the ravens would be caught, bagged and taken back to his famous basement. Here they would be measured, weighed, banded and released. Often a variety of visitors would show up and hours would be spent discussing natural history, among other things. A

book could be written about Cyril's basement.

Cyril was always conscious of the balance of nature and had many ideas on how to right some of the wrongs man has inflicted. In the 1960's he began erecting nesting sites for owls. He was likely the first in North America to have barred owls successfully nest in boxes placed for their use. When I told him of woodlots where there were barred owls with no place to nest, he soon had me involved in this project. It was so successful Mark Elderkin completed a Masters program on the owls using these boxes, while I was able to help study and learn more about the life of these nocturnal birds.

His experiments continued to the end. Late last fall he had me at the top of a large pine tree on his property building a platform in the hope a pair of eagles would use it for a nest. There was always concern over my welfare. Recently, we received an early morning phone call from Cyril. He had heard over the police scanner of a man falling out of a tree the previous evening. No, it was not me. His preferred perch was the top of his roof where he could look into the horned owl's nest he had me build in the maple on his front lawn. Who else but Cyril would think of feeding owls? With prompting from him, I began feeding a barred owl in my back yard. They now come regularly and nest

in a box only thirty meters from my house. My friendship with Cyril began and ended with owls, however his zest for learning will last my lifetime. One did not learn from Cyril, but with him.

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## Cyril and the River

by Mark Elderkin  
Wolfville, N.S.

"I live in a house by the river at the bend. The river is my trouble and the river is my friend." From a favourite song of Cyril's

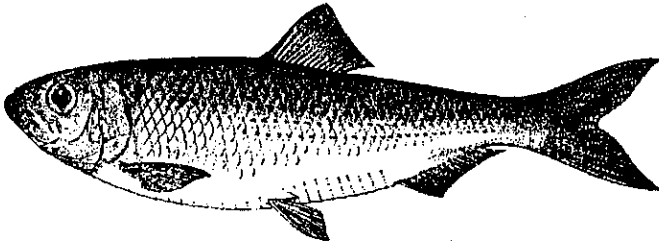
"Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters."

Norman Maclean - From "A River Runs Through It."

During my work related travels throughout eastern Canada I have come to know many of the beautiful rivers and the people who live out their lives beside them. Rivers are like living flowing arteries, connecting the vast terrestrial expanses of our planet to the boundless tracts of oceans. Throughout human history, men such as Cyril have been drawn to rivers like the Gaspereau.

Rivers shape the character of people and societies. Rivers





awaken in us something beyond ourselves that is intimately spiritual, something timeless - enduring in the constancy of its direction and its seasons. Everyone and everything is equal here. Cyril knew this. It is a feeling that given enough years, months and days in a lifetime to return to the embankments, a river will eventually be enticed to surrender her secrets. With the gulls, cormorants, eagles, tourists and other anglers - the old rivermen and their sons return each year in the spring with their rods and nets to fish for Smelt, Shad, Gaspereau, Trout and Atlantic Salmon. I can still see Cyril perched high on the "cat walk" overlooking his square net, his sharp eyes probing the flow of tea coloured water for fish - salt encrusted on his black rimmed glasses, tree swallows flying overhead.

Having lived in the valley all of my life, it has been a privilege to have had the chance to live and grow - to learn with and from pioneering naturalists like Cyril. Fond memories of his life experiences, observations, tribulations, personal victories and times spent together are like the prehis-

toric raindrops captured on the river rocks in Norman Maclean's novel - so indelibly etched on our consciousness that they live on.

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### **The C.K. Coldwell Memorial Fund**

Some years ago on an autumn bird banding trip to Bon Portage Island, a graduate student was lamenting at great length to Cyril about the heavy work load, departmental expectations and demands to complete a degree in wildlife biology at Acadia. Huddled up close to the fire, Cyril weighed the words carefully in silence. But as the student spoke, one corner of Cyril's mouth began to turn down as if in disbelief at what he was hearing. As he leaned forward, he wagged his crooked index finger at the student and snapped: "You're saying something there - but I'm not sure what it is? I'm not sure you know what it is? Boy - you should never take education for granted! I would have given my eye teeth to have had the chance you've had to go to university. You're young and have your whole life ahead of you.

Do it all - see it all - make the best of it - you won't regret it down the road!!"

Despite good grades when he graduated from school in his youth, Cyril missed the opportunity to further his studies at college. Perhaps it was for this reason he demonstrated such a strong commitment to the biology program,

and most especially to the students during his work at Acadia.

A memorial fund in biology bearing Cyril's name has been established at the university. Those who wish to make a donation should contact the Alumni office at Acadia University (Ph: 902-542-2201).

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## BNS Society Notices

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### Notes From The BNS Directors

by Tom Herman  
Kentville, N.S.

The BNS Executive met on November 24, 1993. Regular items of business, including reports from the Treasurer and Conservation Committee were Reviewed. A number of additional items were also considered.

We updated our list of Standing Committee Memberships. These committees do much of the work of the Society, and are always looking for input from BNS members. Anyone wishing to contribute suggestions or interested in serving on a committee should feel free to contact the Chair of that committee or one of the Directors. Committees include Conservation (Chair: Peter Austin-Smith), Program (Chair: John Harwood), Newsletter (Chair: Mark Elderkin), Robie Tufts Nature Centre (Chair: Harold Forsyth), Robie Tufts

Young Naturalists Award (Chair: Irene Wright), Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (Chair: TBA).

The Annotated Checklist of Birds of Kings County is completed and appears to be a great success. Merritt Gibson (and others) are to be commended for their perseverance. The project on species information sheets, funded by the Environmental Partners Fund, and carried out in cooperation with the Nova Scotia Museum, Acadia Centre for Wildlife and Conservation Biology and the Canadian Wildlife Service is well underway. A number of sheets will soon be available for critical appraisal and editing.

BNS's Short-Eared Owl project drew on the expertise and labour of the Mammalogy class from Acadia this fall in an assessment of small mammal (=owl food) habitats and abundance near the one confirmed nest site in the Canard Valley and at selected locations on the Grand Pre dykelands.

George Alliston is collating and summarizing the results. Watch the Newsletter for details of the class's findings.

BNS plans to organize a meeting in the near future to seek public input to a Cornwallis River Corridor project. This could be modelled after CARP (Clean Annapolis River Project). We have already applied for funding to support further mapping efforts (see last newsletter) along the corridor. The need for a comprehensive management plan for the river valley has never been more apparent.

Following a suggestion from BNS member Nancy Nickerson, the Directors also discussed the concept of designing and producing videos of Kings County Special Places. We find this prospect exciting. Any members who would like to get involved in such an endeavour should contact me or Merritt Gibson, our Special Publications Editor.

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## **BNS Conservation Committee Meeting**

**23 November 1993**

**by Peter Austin-Smith  
Wolfville, N.S.**

A meeting of the BNS Conservation Committee was held in the Biology Department, Acadia University, in the afternoon of 23 November 1993. Present were committee members Peter Austin-

Smith (Chairman), Larry Bogan, Lorna Hart and Tom Herman. Also present were Christianne Lafferty, special project student and former summer staff supervisor and Mr. Bruce McCarthur, representing the New Minas Recreation Department.

(1) The meeting was primarily called to meet with and discuss Christianne's Cornwallis River corridor project. Christianne noted that she had met previously with representatives of the BNS and Recreation Departments of the Municipality of Kings and Village of New Minas to determine the degree of interest and direction of the project. She then passed around copies of her research proposal and a detailed outline of topics to be included in the final report for review at the present meeting. After considerable discussion and volunteering of information on contact persons, etc., it was agreed that it was an ambitious but very worthwhile project, one that was timely, considering the extent of development that has already taken place in this part of the river valley. It also was agreed that the possibility of financial assistance for Christianne will be brought up at the next BNS Executive meeting. Christianne was encouraged to contact the BNS anytime for assistance in compiling information on the Cornwallis River.

(2) Tom Herman noted that John Leefe, MLA had written to

the BNS because of his concern that the government has delayed implementation of the provincial parks system. It was agreed on behalf of the society, Tom write to government, indicating our concern, with a copy to Mr. Leefe.

(3) It was noted that a new Environmental Act has been proposed by government. It was suggested that the Conservation Committee obtain copies of the proposed act, review it and pass its recommendations on to the Executive for further action.

(4) A letter was received, asking for financial assistance with a wildlife study. After discussing the merits of such a study, and the more general principle of providing grants from the BNS which itself depends upon grants to undertake projects, it was decided that the Conservation Committee recommend to the Executive that the BNS needs a policy on such requests. The policy might state that such funding requests would be considered if the objectives of the study proposal meet the priorities of the BNS. Alternatively, such a policy might state that the BNS does not provide financial support for unsolicited research projects under normal circumstances.

(5) The matter of the dykelands industrial park was raised again, but there is nothing new to report until another meeting has taken place with WBDC, Recreation, Town of Wolfville and other interested parties.

(6) A suggestion was received from Nancy Nickerson via Tom Herman that perhaps video tapes should be produced for each of the special places in Kings County. This idea elicited much discussion regarding the potential for making video tapes of Cape Split, Kentville Ravine, etc for showing at meetings, schools, etc. It was suggested that the idea be discussed at the forthcoming Executive meeting. Assistance with such a project could be solicited from interested BNS members who have some experience with video cameras.

The meeting adjourned at 1615 hrs.

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## **Treasurer's Annual Report 1992-93**

**by Harold Forsyth  
Wolfville, N.S.**

This year has been busy with the launching of a 'A Natural History of Kings County', the raffle in the spring and the hiring of students for the summer. The book sold well and produced a profit in the first year. As well, the raffle was a great success and we received a S.E.E.D. grant to help cover costs of the summer student so we were able to end the year with a profit of \$4,111. A big expense in the new year will be for the second printing of the Natural History book.

Membership is at it's highest

level ever with 184 paid up subscriptions representing over 400 members.

Special thanks go out to those who made donations to the Society during the year; Bernard Mason, Roy Bishop, Suzanne Lewis, Jack & Alice Hyslop, Ross Baker, Robert Ross, Mary Porter, David & Cindy Johnson, Ann Fraser, Kari Hjelkm, John Pickwell and Marjorie Fountain and to John Carruthers at Doane Raymond for auditing the books.

### Blomidon Naturalists Society

#### Statement of Operations and Surplus

Year Ended August 31

1993/1992



**Revenue**

Advertising income	\$ 500	\$ 830
Books	10,113	
Donations	218	289
Goods & Services Rebate	263	142
Grant - Government of Canada	3,578	3,606
Interest income	86	191
Membership dues	2,176	1,872
Raffle	3,957	
Other	126	
	21,017	6,930

**Expenditures**

Administration	234	91
Awards and meetings	241	214
Books	6,928	
Donations	1,500	77
Dues	255	155
Newsletter		
1,939		1,878
Other	218	128
Owl Project	326	
Panels, brochures and tide clock	1,348	868
Raffle	213	
Wages and benefits	3,704	4,129
	16,906	7,540

**Excess of revenue over expenditures**

(expenditures over revenue)      \$4,111      \$ (610)

Surplus, beginning of year	\$5,310	\$5,920
Excess of revenue over expenditures (expenditures over revenue)	4,111	(610)
Surplus, end of year	\$9,421	\$5,310

**Blomidon Naturalists Society  
Balance Sheet**

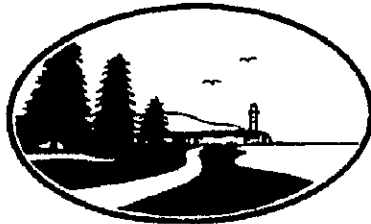
<b>August 31</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash	\$ 9,259	5,438
Accounts receivable	677	585
Inventory of books	1,406	
	<u>\$11,342</u>	<u>\$ 6,023</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Payables and accruals	\$ 1,921	\$ 713
<b>Equity</b>		
Surplus	9,421	5,310
	<u>\$11,342</u>	<u>\$ 6,023</u>

**A JOURNEY FROM FOREST  
TO SEA**

**23rd Canadian Nature  
Federation Annual  
Conference**

**Mount St. Vincent University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
August 4th - 7th, 1994.  
Hosted by the Halifax Field  
Naturalists**

As many of you already know, the Halifax Field Naturalists (HFN) will be hosting the 23rd Conference of the Canadian Nature



Federation (CNF) in Halifax during the period August 4 - 7, 1994. The theme of this year's conference is "A Journey from Forest to Sea." The Conference Committee of the HFN extends an open invitation for all BNS members to attend and participate. Volunteers are needed to assist with a variety of tasks. Drivers for field trips, helpers to assist with the children's Young

Naturalist programme, and others will be required to help with registration, collecting tickets and various duties. Those who wish to volunteer should contact Bob McDonald, Chair of the CNF Conference Planning Committee as soon as possible (Ph:433-5051 Home, or 457-6263 Work). Others who would like to attend the conference should write or call Peter Payzant, the Conference Registrar for more details at the address provided below.

This exciting conference promises such a broad range of activities for various age groups and interests that everyone is sure to enjoy. Field trips before and after the conference meetings to such beautiful locations as Kejimikujik National Park, Brier Island, and the Cape Breton Highlands include just a few of the many places where you can explore our province's natural history in the company of knowledgeable guides.

Lectures and illustrated talks given during the conference proceedings in Halifax will stimulate your ecological intellect and heighten your awareness of Nova Scotia's wealth of natural history providing a solid review and/or grounding for the pre/post conference field trips. During the conference, short excursions will be undertaken daily around Halifax and outlying areas for birds, flora and other natural wonders.

A registration package with full details will be available by January 15, 1994. Be sure not to miss this important event. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

For more information contact:

**Peter Payzant**

**CNF Conference Registrar**

**P.O. Box 2**

**Waverley, Nova Scotia**

**BON 2S0**

Tel: (902)861-1607 (before 10pm)

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## Natural History Reports

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### **Wolfville Christmas Bird Count**

**December 18, 1993**

**by Angus MacLean**

**Coldbrook, N.S.**

The period preceding the count day had been unusually mild and should have resulted in a number of late lingering species, but few

unusual species were found. Flowage areas remained relatively ice free, however lakes and ponds became at least partially frozen about a week before which caused water birds such as Common Loon and Pied-billed Grebe to move out. The lack of any snow certainly made finding ground feeding birds more difficult. Count day was very pleasant, sunny and

calm with the temperature rising to about  $-1^{\circ}$  C, thus excellent visibility.

Participants included 62 observers in 24 to 29 field parties, plus 61 observers at 41 feeders. The total party hours and party miles were similar to last year. Another excellent effort on everyone's part. Some of the 22 areas are still too large for one party however, so extra vehicle coverage may be necessary in future counts to do these more effectively.

The total of 76 species was the second highest count ever, only 5 behind last year's record. Only one other species, Short-eared Owl, was seen during the count week. The total of 71,468 individual birds was about 21,000 fewer than last year's record. Most of this resulted from lower numbers of Herring Gulls and Starlings. The species which recorded all time highs were Northern Harrier, Killdeer, Bohemian Waxwing and Common Redpoll. The latter two species are in high numbers throughout Nova Scotia this year, so it's a good opportunity to study both these interesting birds at length.

On the other hand, Bald Eagle numbers dropped significantly from 377 to 151. It seems noteworthy that over two weeks after the count, numbers still do not appear to have increased substantially. Red-tailed Hawk numbers were comparable to other years with 208 individuals recor-

ded. A special individual, an albino, was seen again - so be sure to watch for it!! According to our count figures, the Ring-necked Pheasant population continues to slide. However, this may simply be due to the lack of snow as they appear to be in good numbers now.

The one species new to the count was Dickcissel, found by George Alliston consorting with House Sparrows along the Gaspereau River, east of Wallbrook. This was also the first time this species has been found in Kings County!! Individuals are usually found mainly along the coast. Perhaps our bird found the river a suitable substitute for ocean?

The feeder-watchers contributed 35 species (although not all were seen at the feeders!). Eva Urban's feeder in Avonport yielded 120 Mourning Doves and in addition had the only Red-winged Blackbird and Northern Oriole found on the count. At Miriam Tams in Port Williams, a Pine Warbler put in an appearance, although a female Northern Cardinal seen at an earlier date stayed out of sight on the count day. Luckily a male Cardinal was located at the feeder of Don Coldwell in Gaspereau.

The post-count gathering at the Robie Tufts Ornithology Laboratory at Acadia was well attended and all enjoyed the chowder, chili and deserts. Thanks go to Tom Herman, the Thextons, Judy Tufts



and others for their organization of, and contribution to, this much appreciated event. Thanks in particular to all the participants for their good work in the field and

those who watched feeders. I would like to thank Jim Wolford for coordinating the feeder observers and my wife Stella, for tabulating and cross checking the data.

Red-throated Loon .....	1
Great Blue Heron .....	3
Canada Goose .....	731
American Black Duck .....	1911
Mallard .....	39
Common Eider .....	16
Oldsquaw .....	7
Surf Scoter .....	2
White-winged Scoter .....	29
Common Goldeneye .....	2
Common Merganser.....	21
Red-breasted Merganser .....	1
Bald Eagle .....	151
(79 ad., 71 imm., 1 unk.)	
Northern Harrier .....	11
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	11
Northern Goshawk .....	2
Red-tailed Hawk .....	208
Rough-legged Hawk.....	6
Merlin.....	1
Ring-necked Pheasant .....	137
Ruffed Grouse .....	8
Killdeer.....	3
Ring-billed Gull.....	81
Herring Gull.....	19,634
Iceland Gull.....	9
Great Black-backed Gull .....	4,550
Rock Dove.....	1,176
Mourning Dove.....	895
Great Horned Owl.....	1
Belted Kingfisher .....	2
Downy Woodpecker .....	67
Hairy Woodpecker.....	25
Northern Flicker.....	13
Pileated Woodpecker .....	5
Gray Jay .....	2
Blue Jay.....	763
American Crow.....	7,862
Northern Raven.....	257
Black-capped Chickadee.....	854
Boreal Chickadee.....	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	35

White-breasted Nuthatch.....	21
Brown Creeper .....	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	24
Ruby-crowned Kinglet .....	1
American Robin.....	11
Northern Mockingbird.....	3
Bohemian Waxwing.....	477
Cedar Waxwing.....	4
Unidentified Waxwings .....	140
European Starling.....	25,887
Pine Warbler.....	1
Common Yellowthroat.....	1
Yellow-breasted Chat.....	1
Northern Cardinal .....	1
Dickcissel.....	1
American Tree Sparrow .....	267
Savannah Sparrow.....	15
Song Sparrow.....	67
Swamp Sparrow.....	1
White-throated Sparrow .....	31
Dark-eyed Junco .....	616
Snow Bunting .....	223
Red-winged Blackbird .....	1
Common Grackle .....	4
Brown-headed Cowbird.....	25
Northern (Baltimore) Oriole.....	1
Pine Grosbeak.....	1
Purple Finch .....	63
House Finch .....	2
Red Crossbill.....	2
Common Redpoll.....	1,367
Pine Siskin.....	110
American Goldfinch .....	842
Evening Grosbeak.....	555
House Sparrow.....	934.

Total species = 76

Total numbers = 71,468



# Earthwhile Pursuits

## Valentine's Day Suggestions

-VICTORINOX SWISS ARMY KNIVES  
*key chain size; various models and colors*

-NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC Field Guide  
to the Birds of North America 2nd ed.

-ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIO TAPES  
AND CD'S



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# West Hants Christmas Bird Count

January 2, 1994

compiled by Ted & Karen  
Casselmann  
Cheverie, N.S.

Thirty-two participants from Kings, Hants, Lunenburg, Halifax counties and Great Britain were able to count a total of 67 species. This on a day which like last year, did not appear very promising when viewed from the night before. The intrepid birders ignored the forecast and what began as a rainy morning with well above freezing temperatures, turned into a glorious sunny afternoon. Temperatures fell below freezing but by then everyone was being well sheltered and fed at the Woolaver's. Our Department of Highways sanded and salted as we dined and everyone proceeded home safe, sound and decidedly full.

Highlights were two female Cardinals. The total number of birds was 9,682.

Common Loon.....	4
Great Blue Heron.....	2
Canada Goose.....	1
Green-winged Teal.....	1
American Black Duck.....	337
Mallard.....	2
Greater Scaup.....	1
White-winged Scoter.....	1
Common Merganser.....	31
Red-breasted Merganser.....	11
Bald Eagle(5 ad, 4 imm.).....	9
Northern Harrier.....	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	4

Red-tailed Hawk.....	35
Rough-legged Hawk.....	4
American Kestrel.....	1
Gray Jay.....	8
Blue Jay.....	543
American Crow.....	588
Common Raven.....	125
Black-capped Chickadee.....	679
Boreal Chickadee.....	8
Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	28
White-breasted Nuthatch.....	21
Brown Creeper.....	6
Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	36
American Robin.....	1
Bohemian Waxwing.....	166
Cedar Waxwing.....	23
Northern Shrike.....	1
European Starling.....	1,817
Northern Cardinal.....	2
Merlin.....	1
Gray Partridge.....	16
Ring-necked Pheasant.....	135
Ruffed Grouse.....	10
Purple Sandpiper.....	20
Ring-billed Gull.....	4
Herring Gull.....	828
Island Gull.....	2
Greater Black-backed Gull.....	251
Rock Dove.....	528
Mourning Dove.....	214
Great Horned Owl.....	2
Barred Owl.....	4
Northern Saw-whet Owl.....	2
Downy Woodpecker.....	19
Hairy Woodpecker.....	11
Northern Flicker.....	8
Pileated Woodpecker.....	7
American Tree Sparrow.....	207
Chipping Sparrow.....	1
Song Sparrow.....	14
White-throated Sparrow.....	1
Dark-eyed Junco.....	99
Snow Bunting.....	100
Red-winged Blackbird.....	1
Common Grackle.....	1
Purple Finch.....	3
House Finch (female).....	1
Red Crossbill.....	6
White-winged Crossbill.....	1
Common Redpoll.....	385
Pine Siskin.....	36

American Goldfinch.....	377
Evening Grosbeak.....	582
House Sparrow.....	1,308.

## Autumn Weather to Remember

by Larry Bogan  
Cambridge Station

I believe most everyone remembers this autumn as a long, mild one that we seem to be paying for with our cold, snowy January. I have included a graph showing the high-low temperature ranges for the days of October, November, and December of 1993. Notice how gradually the temperature decreased until the day before Christmas; after that there is a precipitous drop. On the 21st we had a high of +13.5 C but by the 24th we had a high of only -7.0 C and the 27th only got up to -17 C.

From the table of weather statistics we see that the three month period was only slightly cooler than normal. December was 1.5 C warmer than average and made up for the cooler-than-normal October and November. Since

December is always the coolest of the three months, its higher temperature resulted in our burning less heating oil and firewood than usual for the period.

The most dramatic deviation from normal for the period occurred in the precipitation statistics. We had three times the expected rainfall for December. In addition, there was above average snow fall during the month. When the above average rainfall in October is included, the three month period had 73% more rain (1-1/2 feet of rain) than a typical Autumn .

As might be expected, December was cloudy and we got only 4/5 of the expected bright sunshine hours for the month. November had an excess of sunshine and the three month period as a whole was about average in sunshine hours.

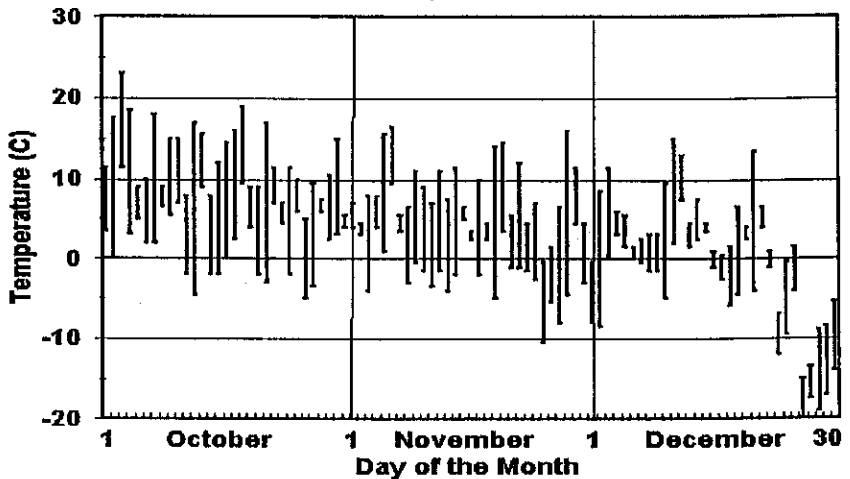
I do not have the weather records for January yet but I am looking forward to seeing the snowfall and temperature statistics for this month. I will discuss them in the next newsletter by which time we will have forgotten about the weather we have now.



## Weather Statistics - Kentville Agriculture Centre Kentville, Nova Scotia

Month	Mean THeat Days C	Rain mm	Snow cm	Sunshine hours	
October	7.5	326	142	154	
30 yr ave.	9.1	278	86	163	
November	-0.7	430	96	99	
30 yr ave.	0.2	442	106	84	
December	-0.9	586	221	60	
30 yr ave.	-2.4	631	73	74	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.99</b>	<b>1342</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>313</b>
30 yr ave. fraction	2.32	1351	265	69	321
		0.99	1.73	1	0.97

**Maximum and Minimum Temperatures  
October, November, December 1993**



### Short-eared Owl Project Update

by George Alliston  
West Brooklyn, N.S.

When I last reported on the short-eared owl project on

15 September 1993, "our" family of five short-eared owls were still confining their activities to the nesting territory and their activity patterns were quite predictable. As it turned out, 15 September was the last day this was true. Only a single short-eared owl was

observed during five observation sessions between 17 September and 1 October. Since the family had finally dispersed from the nesting territory, observation sessions were terminated on 1 October.

Field work for the 1993 short-eared owl study was concluded with an investigation of the densities of potential prey species in the various dykeland agricultural regimes and a comparison of overall prey densities between the home range occupied in 1993 by the pair of nesting short-eared owls (central Canard) and the eastern Grand Pre dykelands where short-eared owls have previously nested.

This investigation was conducted by the 16 students of Tom Herman's mammalogy class at Acadia University. As part of their course work students are required to conduct a small mammal census program and whenever possible their class project is integrated into an ongoing investigation.

Field work was conducted between 24 October and 27 October. A total of 18 trap lines was established in all agricultural regimes except pastures. All pastures were in use and, fearing possible damage to traps, bovines or students, we decided to forego this portion of the program.

A total of 295 small mammals of six species (meadow vole, white-footed mouse, short-tailed shrew, masked shrew, short-tailed weasel

and striped skunk (a prank, I think!)) was captured. One hundred and ninety

six of these were live-trapped and released. Dead animals were collected and further analyzed. Of all the animals captured, 87 percent were meadow voles. From our analysis of short-eared owl pellets collected during this study, it was apparent that the owls' diet consisted virtually entirely of meadow voles. We therefore used the number of meadow voles captured on each trap line as an indicator (or "index") of vole density within that agricultural regime.

The field study confirmed marked differences in vole densities among different agricultural regimes and within different phases of the same regime (see Table 1). Highest vole densities were found in well vegetated fields that had been or were being used for forage crops. There were similarly high vole densities in early succession old fields (36), forage fields that had not been harvested this year (41) and forage fields last harvested in June 1993 (38 and 38). Lowest vole densities (0) were found in annual crops (stubble), landscape sod and forage fields last cut in August/September 1993 -- no small mammals of any species were captured in these areas.

Moderate densities were found in early succession old fields (from annual crops) (22), advanced suc-

**Table 1**  
**Vole Density Indices**

Agricultural Usage	Central Canard (owl territory)	East Grand Pre
<b>Forage Crops</b>		
- unharvested in 1993	41	NP
- harvested June 1993	38	38
- harvested July 1993	14	0,0
- harvested Aug/Sep 1993	NS	0
<b>Old Field</b>		
<b>Early Succession</b>		
- forage/pasture	36	NP
- annual crops	22	NP
Advanced Succession	11	19
<b>Drainage</b>	5,5	5,23
<b>Annual Crops (stubble)</b>	0	0
<b>Landscape Sod</b>	NP	0

NP - agricultural regime not present

NS - agricultural regime present but not sampled

cession old fields (11 and 19) and some fields of forage crops last cut in July (14; 0; 0). Low densities were found along most drainage areas (three separate indices of 5) even though one of these areas bordered a field of forage crops that yielded the second highest density recorded in our study (38). One drainage area yielded a vole density (23) almost five times that of the other drainage areas. This drainage area was adjacent to a field of uncut hay that had been ploughed under about ten days before our trap lines were set. We believe that the density index for this area

that are not killed or taken by predators (gulls, crows, ravens) during harvest disperse into adjacent areas and vole densities in the harvested field drop to zero. If harvest occurs in late spring or early summer, and weather conditions are right, within a matter of weeks growth of the forage crop is again sufficient to support vole populations. The vole stock required to repopulate the field must come from adjacent areas; hence whether, and the speed with which, recolonization can occur is related to vole populations, and hence to the agricultural regimes, in adjacent areas.

was inflated by an influx of refugee voles from the adjacent ploughed field.

The large variation in vole densities in forage crops is related to agricultural activity in these areas. The study demonstrates that highest vole densities are found in heavily vegetated forage crop fields. However, when a field is harvested, both food and cover required by the voles are removed. Voles

In the two fields surveyed that had been last cut in June, recolonization had occurred and vole densities had built to the same levels as in fields that had been unharvested for from one to several years. As it happened both of these fields were adjacent to "old fields" that could provide stock for recolonization.

Results from fields last harvested in July indicated that voles had begun to repopulate the field surveyed in Canard but recolonization had not begun in the two fields surveyed in Grand Pre. We do not know whether the apparent difference in recolonization bet-

ween east Grand Pre and central Canard represents a real difference between these areas or is simply an artifact of the small numbers of fields sampled. In all other agricultural regime classifications where a comparison can be made between Canard and Grand Pre, vole densities appear to be very similar.

If we assume that voles show the same affinities for agricultural regimes in the spring as they demonstrated in our autumn study then, by using the information obtained from our mapping of agricultural regimes in the spring of 1993, we can compute and

compare overall vole density indices in the short-eared owl nesting territory and the dykelands of east Grand Pre. The breakdown of agricultural usages in these two areas is presented in Table 2.

The proportions of these two areas in forage

**Table 2**  
**Agricultural Usage of Dykelands - Spring 1993**

Agricultural Usage	Central Canard (owl territory)		East Grand Pre	
	ha	%	ha	%
Forage (sub-total)	191	(60.6)	362	(58.8)
- uncut	15	(4.7)	0	(0.0)
- cut	176	(55.9)	362	(58.8)
Pasture	31	(9.8)	61	(9.9)
Old Field (sub-total)	40	(12.7)	3.5	(0.6)
- advanced succession	18	(5.7)	3.5	(0.6)
- early succession				
- from forage	14	(4.5)	0	(0.0)
- from annual crops	8	(2.5)	0	(0.0)
Annual Crops	37	(11.8)	106	(17.2)
Landscape Sod Production	0	(0.0)	53	(8.6)
Drainage	16	(5.1)	30	(4.9)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>	<b>615.5</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>





crops, pasture and drainage are very similar, accounting for about 75 percent of each of these areas. It is noteworthy, however, that in the spring of 1993 there were 15 ha of uncut forage in the owl territory vs. none in east Grand Pre.

In the remaining 25 percent of these areas agricultural usage varied quite significantly. In the owl territory there was substantially more old field, substantially less in annual crops and no landscape sod production.

Derivation of comparative overall vole density indices for the two dykelands suffers from lack of information on vole densities in pastures (which fortuitously comprised identical proportions of these two areas). Lacking precise information, we must also assume that the harvest chronology of forage crops in 1992 was similar to that observed in 1993.

Using the data and assumptions outlined above we estimate that the overall vole density in the owls' territory was at least two and one-half times as high as the overall vole density in east Grand

Pre. We cannot, however, infer from this that vole populations at east Grand Pre were insufficient to support nesting owls in 1993.

Our observations of the pair of short-eared owls confirms folklore's attribution of sagacity to owls. This pair wisely chose an abandoned field in which to build their nest and thus were not subjected to disturbance or inadvertent nest destruction by human activity. They wisely chose to establish their territory in the area that probably held the highest density of prey in either of the two major dykelands of eastern Kings County. They appeared to cleverly take advantage of farm activity in the area by focusing their hunting activity in areas where forage fields were being harvested -- presumably taking advantage of vulnerable concentrations of refugee voles displaced by the harvest. These birds were successful in raising their three young into vigorous (and rather playful) juveniles. By "not reading the books" and confining their activities until well after sunset these clever birds came frustratingly close to avoiding detection by the prying eyes of our surveyors!

Our 1993 investigation was successful in establishing conclusively the status in 1993 of nesting short-eared owls on the dykelands of eastern Kings County. While it was disappointing that only a single pair nested in these dyke-

lands, it was encouraging that their nesting attempt was successful. Our 1993 efforts provided us with background and insights into how our investigations might proceed in the future. More work will be required to develop a more complete picture of the status in this area of this somewhat irruptive species.

I would like to thank all volunteers and conscripts (a total of more than 50 people!) involved in our 1993 efforts. The conscientious efforts of surveyors have made it possible to make a definitive statement concerning the status of the short-eared owl in our area in 1993. Special thanks also go to Tom Herman, Glen Parsons, Jim Wolford and the Acadia Biology 4123 class whose efforts provided valuable information concerning small mammal populations in the various dykeland agricultural regimes. The students uncomplainingly (and conscientiously) set up their trap lines on a cold Sunday afternoon, tended them in the predawn hours of cold October mornings, dismantled them in a downpour, and conducted postmortems on the somewhat malodorous specimens collected.

Special thanks also go to the farmers who were far more willing to cooperate than we have a right to expect, with this strange group of naturalists/biologists invading their properties to look for owl nests or to trap mice.

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## **Hungarian Partridge Census Underway**

by Peter MacDonald &  
Barry Sabean

Department Of Natural  
Resources, Bridgewater &  
Kentville, N.S.

The Department of Natural Resources is once again seeking the assistance of the public in conducting a winter survey of the Hungarian or gray partridge. Anyone spotting any of these birds is asked to call the Kentville office at 679-6091 or the Windsor office at 798-2796 and let them know the date, number of birds and location.

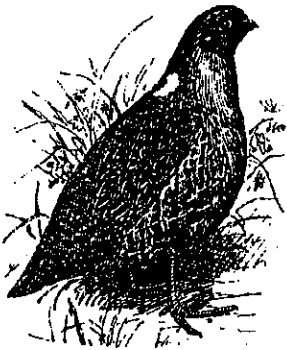
Requests for help have been well received in previous years. Enthusiastic observers helped

### **Short-eared Owl Project - 1994 Request for Volunteers**

A large number of volunteers is required to execute this project successfully. If you would like to participate, contact George Alliston at 542-3651 for details.

Natural Resources locate 20 flocks totalling 150 individuals in 1991, and 30 flocks totalling 251 birds in 1992. These flocks were located in the Windsor area and in a triangular area bounded by Canning, Port Williams and Waterville. A winter survey was not conducted in 1993.

About the size of a pigeon, Hungarian partridge appear



almost round when standing. They are brown and gray with a horse-shoe shaped dark brown patch on the breast. In flight, the tail is reddish. In winter the birds travel in flocks or coveys and spend all their time feeding or roosting on the ground.

Originally introduced to the province from Europe in the 1920's and 30's, a strong population established itself in the Annapolis Valley as well as around the Truro and Amherst areas. The Amherst population has since disappeared and the Valley birds have been at low levels in recent years.

Huns, as they are commonly called, prefer an open landscape and can do well in areas with extensive agricultural activity, particularly the growing of grains and hay. They survive and reproduce well on the "leftover" habitat normally associated with modern agricultural activities. Clutches are large with 15-27 eggs being normal for Nova Scotia. The nests, located on the ground, are well concealed by vegetation and made entirely of grass.

During the winter, Huns are usually found in flocks of up to 20 individuals. These family groups rely on grain and weed seeds at this time of year. They also seek out windswept knolls or bare areas around trees where they can find green grass. In soft snow they may tunnel to find food or seek shelter from cold winds.

Severe winter weather - notably heavy snow and sleet storms - have been reported as being partially responsible for the overall provincial decline. Reasons for the continuing low populations are unclear and Natural Resources biologists are anxious to monitor their progress.

People lucky enough to have a flock of Huns wintering in their neighbourhood can assist the birds by providing grain and grit at feeding stations during the peak of the winter season. Digging down through the snow to areas of green grass, particularly when the snow is crusted, also helps.

# TRIVIAL TIDBITS

## of Local Natural

### History

mid-September 1993

to early January 1994

selected and compiled

by Jim Wolford

Wolfville, N.S.

### Fungi

Fall/93 - Karen Casselman reports a rare lichen for eastern North America, *Evermia prumastii*, found on the ground in her Cheverie yard, after strong winds (now has been found there 15 times) (KTC).

### Flowering Plants

Nov. - Does everyone recall the newsletter's request for information on chestnut trees? (see Autumn/93). Along Wolfville's east Main Street, Brenda Thexton found some leaves, probably of the Old World Carpathian chestnut (BBT, SVK, RN).

Dec. 15 - Seeds of a bed of garden chickweed attracted 200 common redpolls on Gaspereau Mountain (RM).

Dec. 18/93 - Lots of expanded fuzzy pussy willows on one bush at White Rock (JWW).

Late Dec. - Stormy conditions resulted in 40 northern ravens being attracted to the Harwoods'

feeder at Woodside. Picture four huge ravens on a small platform and trying to open sunflower seeds! Also one raven perched in a chokecherry bush was chased away by a cheeky red squirrel (AJH)!

### Invertebrates

Oct.12 - thousands of "sea gooseberries" (comb-jellies or ctenophores) freshly stranded on beach sand at Sandy Cove, Digby Neck (DG, JWW).

Dec. 12 - slugs, sowbugs, spiders, and a stink bug all active at White Rock (RW).

Oct. 18 - a large giant water bug found dead in a warehouse in Hantsport (DS).

Dec. 2 - a very active mosquito inside a Cheverie house - outside temperature 10° C (KTC).

mid-Oct. - At Bear River, 2 fresh (recently emerged) adult monarch butterflies - one died, other one weak from hunger and cold (JT).

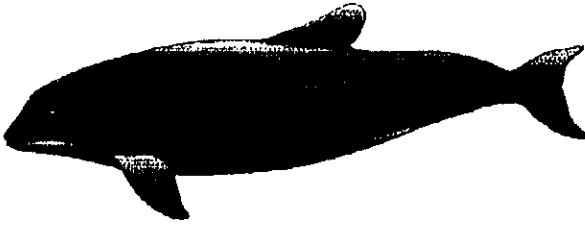
Oct. 27 - many sulphur butterflies still active on Grand Pr dykelands (JWW et al.).

Nov. 13 to 29 - lots of adult male winter moths flying in Wolfville on nights with temperatures slightly above freezing (JWW - identification assumed by time of year, and females are wingless).

Dec. 6 - one winter moth flying at a light in Wolfville in evening at 0° C (JWW).

### Amphibians

Nov. 1 - A 15 cm. yellow-spotted salamander in the base-



ment of a house at New Germany (GB).

Sept. 24 through Nov. 7 - Several tiny red eft (juvenile red-spotted newts) observed near a pond in Wolfville - one dug up at 8 cm depth in a garden on Oct. 16 (DT).

Nov. 16 and 18 - A very large red eft and then a small one found in a woodpile on Wolfville Ridge (DJ).

Dec. 11 - A spring peeper "singing" in woods on Wolfville Ridge (JGT).

### **Mammals**

Sept. 24 - A large *Lasiurus* bat, probably a hoary bat, flying at 7:45 p.m. on Bon Portage Island (TBH).

Oct. 27 - Three probable little brown bats seen at dusk in Wolfville (BBT).

Nov. 1 - Gerry Trueman of Wolfville reports a novel, but unintentional way to get rid of a mischievous red squirrel - a service-station attendant at Greenwich was startled by the living, escaping squirrel when he lifted the hood of the Truemans' car (GT).

Oct. 26 - A short-tailed weasel still in summer pelage on Grand Pre dykelands (JWW et al.).

Oct. 25-26 - A red fox seen well on Grand Pre dykelands (HB, JWW).

Nov. 11 - A silver fox (red fox colour-phase) seen near Bear River (BLF).

Nov. 7 - Two beautiful large coyotes seen together at Wellington Dyke (DJD).

Jan. 1/94 - Again two coyotes seen at Wellington Dyke - one had a freshly killed muskrat - other apparently hunted small mammals - eventually both fed on separate parts of the same muskrat (BLF).

Sept. 29 - A very active group of perhaps 20 harbour porpoises seen off Brier Island. Also seen there were 2 minke whales, a finback whale, and 6-7 humpback whales. Of the latter, we had close views of 4 humpbacks repeatedly feeding cooperatively within bubble-nets (for krill? or small fish?) (TBH, BIOS, JWW, et al.).

Oct. 10 - A stranded dead minke whale, fairly fresh, a 7 metre male, along the Kennetcook River at Mosherville (SAC, SW).

Contributors to  
TRIVIAL TIDBITS

GB - Gordon Bezanson  
HB - Hughie Broders  
KTC - Karen & Ted Casselman  
SAC - Sheila Connell  
DJD - Debbie & Jim Daigle  
BLF - Bernard Forsythe  
DG - Darrel Grund  
AJH - Avril & John Harwood  
TBH - Tom Herman  
DJ - Dave Jones  
BIOS - Brier Island Ocean Study  
DS - Don Sheehan  
BBT - Brenda & Bill Thexton  
DT - Dianne Thorpe  
GT - Gerry Trueman  
JT - Jean Timpa  
JGT - Judy & Gordon Tufts  
SVK - Sam VanderKloet  
RW - Rick Whitman  
SW - Sherman Williams  
JWW - Jim Wolford  
RM - Rosaleen McDonald

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**BNS BIRD NEWS**

September 1 to December 15,  
1993

by Richard Stern  
Kentville, N.S.

**Wilson's Storm-petrel** BLF saw one off Port George 10 Oct. This is a common species off Brier Island and in the Gulf of Maine, but farther up the Bay of Fundy is more likely to be a storm-blown stray. The species breeds in vast colonies on islands in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica, and winters (our summer) off our

coasts, unlike the Leach's storm-petrel, familiar to visitors to Bon Portage Island, which does the opposite.

**Cattle Egret**

One was seen by JOW in Windsor from 16-20 Oct. A relative rarity whose range is expanding.

**Canada Goose**

50+ were at Grand Pre Nov.27 (BBT). I heard several reports that "a very large flock" was at Pereau around the same time.

**Snow Goose**

A group of 4 adult and 5 immature birds were present at the E. end of the Grand Pre dyke Oct. 8 (RBS). This is larger than the usual single vagrant, and is interesting in view of the apparent increasing numbers seen in the province this and last year. Apparently the flocks migrating south through Quebec have reached unprecedented numbers, and our birds may be a small spill over from them.

**Dabbling ducks**

The usual numbers of **Black duck, Mallard, American wigeon, Pintail, and Green-winged teal** (especially) were around this fall on Harris's, Saxon St. and Canard Ponds (several obs.).

**Lesser Scaup**

A scaup, felt to be a lesser on the basis of head shape, was present in Canard Pond Oct.3 (JWW). The Greater scaup is far more common in the province, but

nearly always occurs on the ocean, while the Lesser is more frequently a fresh-water bird. Although the markings are extremely similar, they are not too difficult to tell apart if a good view of the head shape is obtained. The Greater has a smoothly rounded head, and the Lesser has a slight peak toward the rear.

### **Bufflehead**

1 was at Wolfville Sewage pond Nov.28 (BBT). In Nova Scotia this species is usually seen offshore.

### **White-winged scoter**

20+ off Grand Pre at high tide Oct.15 (RBS).

### **Rough-legged Hawk**

2 light-phased birds at Grand Pre Nov.14 (JWW).

### **Northern Harrier**

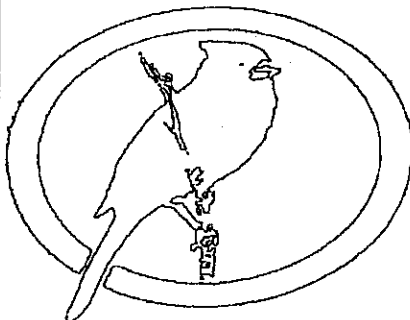
5-6, including 2 adult male plumaged birds, at Grand Pre Oct.15 (RBS).

### **Northern Bobwhite and Chukar**

Apparently the N.S. Chapter of the North American Bird Dog Breeding Assn. released some of these species of game bird (native to points far south and west of here) across from Canard Pond. Most were shot, but some got away, to be sighted by birders. (MAG). 2 of the former appeared at a New Minas feeder for several days!

### **Stilt Sandpiper**

1 individual of this rather rare shorebird species was at Grand Pre Nov.9 (PCS).



### SUNFLOWER SEEDS

GREY STRIPED	50 lb	\$19.75
GREY STRIPED	25 lb	\$10.50
BLACK OILED	50 lb	\$19.75
BLACK OILED	25 lb	\$10.50

### MILLET SEED

WHITE	50 lb	\$23.50
RED	50 lb	\$23.50
PEANUTS	10 lb	\$14.70

### SUNFLOWER CHIPS

MEDIUM	50 lb	\$61.50
NIGER SEED	23 Kg	\$66.35

### SHUR GAIN PREMIUM MIX

WILDBIRD	9 Kg	\$ 8.35
WILDBIRD	18 Kg	\$14.95

\*PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE  
WITHOUT NOTICE

**PREMIUM MIX**  
**26% SUNFLOWER SEED**

JOIN OUR WILDBIRD CLUB  
AND BEGIN TO SAVE NOW.

### **Greater Yellowlegs**

47 at Harris's Pond Oct.2 (JWW).

### **Pectoral Sandpiper**

7+ at Pt. Williams sewage plant Oct.2 (JWW), 15+ at Saxon St.Pond Oct.16 (RBS), 6 at Canning aboiteau Oct.17 (JWW), 3 at Grand Pre Nov.9 (PCS).

### **Purple Sandpiper**

18 were at Kipp's Beach Rd., Cheverie Dec.10 (KLC). This species is unusual for a shorebird in our area, as it is a winter visitor rather than a fall transient, and is always to be found on rocky shores rather than mud-flats or marshes.

### **Iceland Gull**

Several of these winter visitors have been at the Kentville sewage lagoon in early Dec.(RBS, AM). They are recognizable in all plumages by their all-white wingtips, although the usual race ("Kumlein's gull") has variable amounts of gray on the primaries, visible only when closely seen. This species in particular poses great interest for the careful observer, as there is much variation in size, shape and plumage between different birds, even allowing for age plumage differences, and there is much confusion over the taxonomy of the various races ("nominated", "Kumlein's" and "Thayer's" gulls - are they all variants of one species, or are the latter two really "splits" or is Thayer's a separate species after

all? - the verdict is apparently still out.).

### **Common Tern**

A rather late, but clearly identified basic-plumaged bird was over the high tide at Porter's Point 14 Oct. (RBS).

### **Short-eared Owl**

3 on the Grand Pre dyke Nov.9 (PCS), 1 seen there Nov.14 (RBS), and 4 there in early Dec. (BBT).

### **Barred Owl**

1 was seen at Aldersville Nov.15.

### **Hummingbird sp.**

A Hummingbird appeared on Nov.6 at Avonport (SW, EU). Unfortunately it was not closely studied, but the chances are that at that late date it could well have been a western vagrant, such as a Black-chinned, Anna's etc.

### **Common Crow**

The usual 10,000+-strong winter flock has again been frequenting Kentville. SM saw an estimated 10,000 birds near her home close to the Wolfville Dyke Nov.18.

### **Eastern Bluebird**

BLF saw a (? family) group of 5 near Melvern Square Oct.10. This species is holding its own in our area, although numbers remain low, and traditional sites seem to have been held over the last 2 or 3 years. Bluebird boxes and trails will certainly help.



### **Northern Mockingbird**

4 were present where the railway tracks cross Cherry Lane, Wolfville 27 Sept.(LH). 2 were still there 2 days later, and were determinedly chasing a large flock of starlings away from there roost tree. This species seems to be spreading, and is being sighted more often in our area. They occur all year round, although the summering birds probably leave, and are replaced in the fall and early winter by strays from further south and west.

### **Bohemian Waxwing**

JT has so far seen 40-50 on Nov.10, and a flock of 150+ in Wolfville, late Nov. It promises therefore to be a good winter for this attractive, irruptive species from the west.

### **Pine Warbler**

One briefly visited JWW's feeder Nov.20. It was nice and bright, and well seen. This species is an uncommon winter visitor.

### **Yellow-breasted Chat**

This brightly coloured and noisy (in the breeding season) bird is the largest warbler, and is a regular early winter vagrant from the south to Nova Scotia. They tend to like thick undergrowth, and appear very briefly. One was in GT's back yard 27-8 Nov.(GT, JCT, RBS).

### **Northern Cardinal**

This fall has seen quite an influx of the species, with many being reported around the pro-

vince, mostly in Shelburne, Yarmouth and Digby Counties. Examples in our area have included a female at PD's feeder (Port Williams) 1st week in Oct., a female at GT's feeder (Wolfville) in late Nov., and another at MT's in early Dec. Of course they could all be the same bird! In addition there was a male at DDC's in Gasperreau Nov.21-22.

### **Tree Sparrow**

BBT saw 2 flocks of 15+ each at W.Grand Pre Nov.28. They seem to me to be particularly abundant in appropriate habitat this fall and early winter.

### **Evening Grosbeak**

There have been just a few small flocks seen in the area so far this fall, judging by most reports.

### **Pine Siskin**

The only large flock reported so far this winter was approx. 100, seen in Wolfville by PCS Nov.26.

### **Common Redpoll**

This is an irruptive species, from farther north, and some winters are devoid of sightings, while others have large and frequently seen flocks. They have been seen frequently around the province this late fall. Some have been seen in Wolfville (JT, SB), and 50+ at Grand Pre late Nov. (BBT).

### **Crossbill sp.**

2 Red and 25 White-winged were seen by PCS in Wolfville, Nov.26.

## House Finch

A female has been visiting NN's feeder (Port Williams) this fall. Looking and sounding quite like the Purple finch, but easily distinguishable with good looks, this species is rapidly expanding its range in the north-east, but is still rare in N.S.

## Contributors to Bird News

SB - Sherman Blakeney

KLC - Karen Casselman

DDC - Don and Dawn Coldwell

PD - Pat Davies

BLF - Bernard Forsythe

MAG - Merritt Gibson

LH - Lorna Hart

AM - Angus MacLean

SM - Shirley Margeson

NN - Nancy Nickerson

PCS - Peter Smith

RBS - Richard Stern

MT - Miriam Tams

BBT - Brenda and Bill Thexton

JT - Jean Timpa

GT - Gerry Trueman

JCT - Judy Tufts

EU - Eva Urban

JOW - Joyce Weaver

SW - Sherman Williams

JWW - Jim Wolford

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# BNS Field Trip Report

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## BNS/AFNS/NSBS Joint Field Trip

### For Wolfville Area Birds

October 3, 1993

by Jim Wolford

Wolfville, N.S.

We had a very warm day, but windy, and the sky was ominously dark when we started. About a dozen people participated, from all three groups (Blomidon Naturalists Society, Annapolis Field Naturalists Society, N.S. Bird Society). A bonus was the presence of a CBC-TV "Land and Sea" crew for the entire trip.

Our first stop was for a walk into the Port Williams sewage ponds. At the same time a light, wind-driven rain made our day look very unpromising. There we

got excellent views of pectoral sandpipers and a lesser yellow-legs. Nice bonuses were 2 immature bald eagles that flew over us, and then a full rainbow over Port Williams. We then drove to Canard Pond, where we were lucky that 2 northern pintails and a female or immature scaup (very probably a lesser) were close to the road. Also several robins flew over us.

We motored on to our lunch-location, Harris' Pond in Canning. We had good looks at 2 common snipe, about 10 greater yellow-legs, a great blue heron, 15 American wigeons, 3 mallards, 2 green-winged teal, black ducks, and 4 pheasants.

In the Habitant River at the Canning Aboiteau, there were 4

---continued on page 36---

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Please enclose a cheque or money order payable to "Blomidon Naturalists Society" and forward to:

**Harold Forsyth**  
R.R. 2 Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0

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immature double-crested cormorants, 2 hooded mergansers, and a female or immature bufflehead.

Finally, on the Grand Pre dykelands we saw a male and a female northern harrier and a

dowitcher.

Just as we disbanded in late afternoon, there was a downpour. So we were very lucky during the day. Now we'll have to watch for a "Land and Sea" production of this field trip.

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