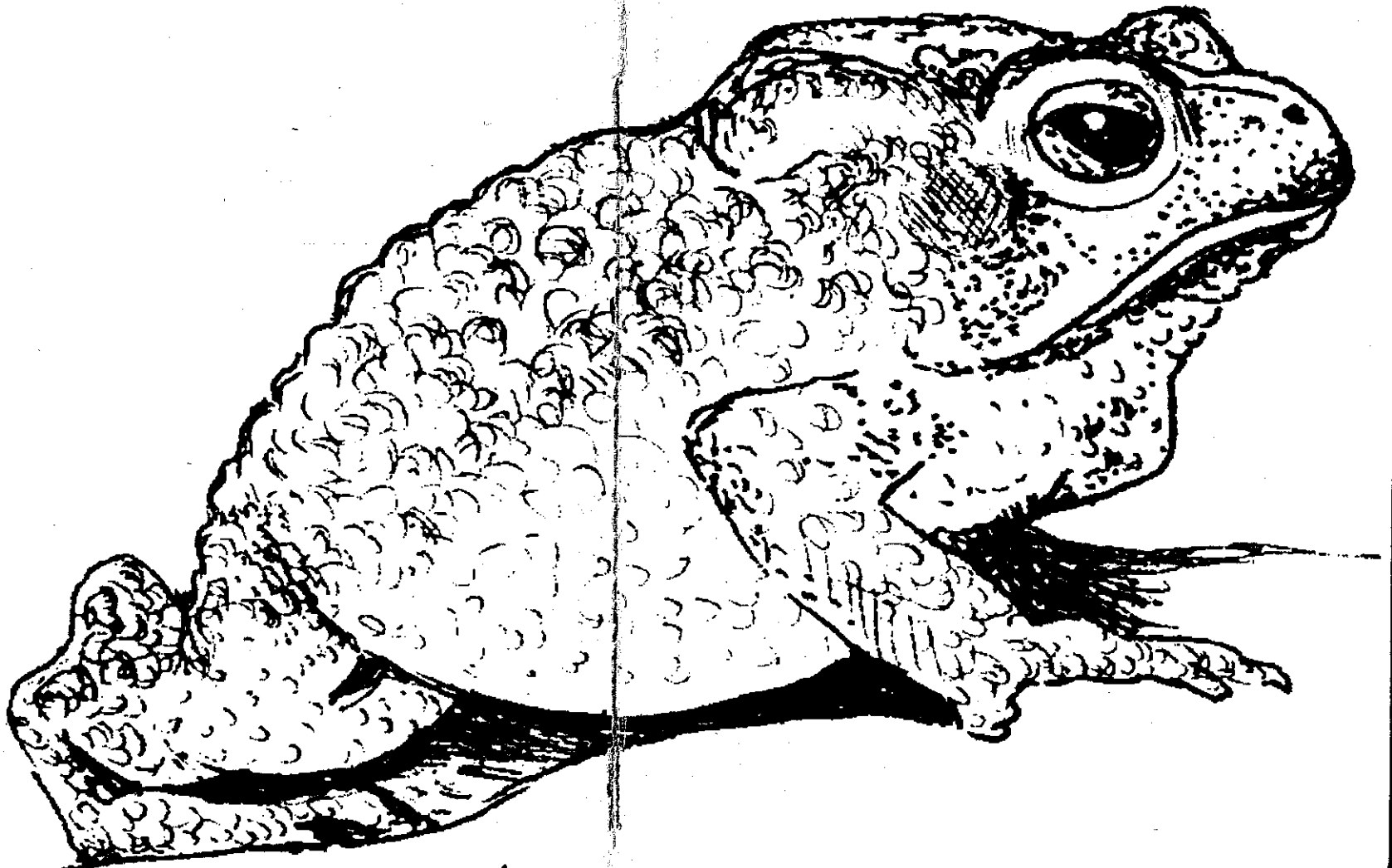


Harry Bog an



Blomidon Naturalists Society

Summer 1998 - Volume 25 Number 2

Blomidon Naturalists Society

*"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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The Blomidon Naturalists Society
P.O. Box 127
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The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts (for income tax purposes) will be issued for all donations.

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<http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/home.htm>

SUMMER AND EARLY AUTUMN PROGRAMME, 1998

MONDAY EVENING MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held on the third Monday of the month and start at 7:30 p.m. at Acadia University in Room 244 of the Beveridge Arts Centre. All meetings are open to the public and BNS members are encouraged to bring friends and neighbours.

(Note: there are no Monday evening meetings during July and August)

Sept. 21 **LINDA and PETER PAYZANT.** *The Delight of Butterflies.* Linda and Peter have been enjoying butterflies for many years. Tonight they will show their appreciation for these amazing insects as they reveal secrets of butterfly biology and behaviour. Peter is President of the Halifax Field Naturalists.

Oct. 19 **MIKE JAMES.** *Leatherback turtles: Summer Visitors to Nova Scotia.* Leatherback turtles are sighted off Nova Scotia between June and October. The natural history of these large, pelagic reptiles is not well understood. Mike is a graduate student in biology at Acadia working on leatherbacks. He will report some surprising information, beautifully illustrated with slides and videos. Come and enjoy the leatherbacks.

FIELD TRIPS

Note: RTNC is the Robie Tufts Nature Centre on Front Street in Wolfville.

July 11 Gaspereau River Flower Walk. Search for the large variety of wild flowers that grow along the upper Gaspereau River. Meet at the RTNC at 9 a.m. or at the White Rock bridge at 9:30. The walk will continue into the afternoon, bring a lunch. Leader: Ruth Newell.

July 25 SHOREBIRDS OF THE MINAS BASIN. An afternoon of watching shorebirds - one of the highlights of our birding year! Flocks numbering well into the thousands of birds and up to 20 species! Meet at the RTNC at 12:30 p.m. Wear clothing suitable for a muddy beach. Leader: Judy Tufts.

Aug. 12 TOUR THE SUMMER SKY with Larry Bogan and other BNS stars. A good night to see the Perseid Meteor Showers plus other fabulous celestial objects. Meet at RTNC at 8:30 or at Grand Pré Park at 9 p.m. (Cloud date is Aug. 12)

Sept. 12 HORTON FOSSILS. Join Sherman Williams on a walk along the beach at Horton Bluff in Avonport to look for fossils. Meet at RTNC at 1 p.m.

Oct. 23 THE AUTUMN SKY. Larry Bogan, Roy Bishop and Sherman Williams will guide you across the autumn sky. A good night to see planets. With telescopes see Saturn with its rings and Jupiter with its four moons. Meet at RTNC at 7:45 p.m. or at Stile Park, Wolfville Ridge, at 8 p.m. (Cloud date is Oct 24.)

Notes from the Editor

Thanks to Jim Wolford for the field trip reports, and the extended trivia column; to Matt holder for the piece on the bat-eating accipiters, to Sherman Bleakney for Haliburton, and to Mary Pratt for illustrations -- including the cover toad.

Enjoy the rest of the amazing 1998 summer and see you in the fall.

Susan Montonen (542-0437)
susan.montonen@acadiu.ca

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SOCIETY NEWS

A HERP ATLAS FOR NOVA SCOTIA

The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists announced at their annual meeting in Antigonish, that they will embark on a new, province-wide project to map the current distribution of reptiles and amphibians in the province of Nova Scotia. The Atlas-type program is much like the bird atlas project -- observers are encouraged to go into the same 10 by 10 km 'squares' and record on a special card all of the herptiles that they observe on a given day.

The project is being run in co-operation with the Nova Scotia Museum in Halifax, and anyone can participate. Just contact Tom Herman (585-1469), Fred Scott (585-1720) or Phil Taylor (585-1287) at the Biology Department, Acadia University,

Wolfville to get a set of cards, and a full instruction sheet. We'll be providing updates as to our progress in a future newsletter.

We hope to see as many cards as possible from Blomidon members -- and remember, every record is important, even from your own back-yard.

A CATASTROPHE FOR BIRDS

Conservationists and scientists have believed for many years that free-roaming domestic cats were significant predators of birds and other wildlife. But until recently, no one had tried to quantify just how many birds are killed by cats each year. Researchers Dr. John Coleman and Dr. Stanley Temple of the University of Wisconsin conducted a four-year field research study on rural cats in the state. According to Dr. Coleman, "Our study indicates that rural cats in Wisconsin are killing an estimated 39 million birds each year. That's a significant take."

Cat predation studies over the past 50 years show that 60-70 percent of cats prey are small mammals, 20-30 percent are birds, and up to 10 percent are other animals such as reptiles, amphibians and insects. The sheer number of cats in this country is a major part of the problem. According to the Pet Food Institute, there are at least 65.8 million pet cats in the U.S., although one survey suggests that over half of these are kept indoors. In addition, millions of stray and feral cats roam our cities, suburbs, farms and natural areas.

Increasingly, parks and wildlife refuges near heavily populated areas are reporting cat predation problems. There are documented cat kills of endangered species, such as Western Snowy Plover, California Gnatcatcher, and Light-footed Clapper Rail. Domestic cats can be particularly deadly to bird populations when released on islands. Eight species of birds are extinct primarily due to cat predation, and cats are mainly responsible for the elimination of over 40 species of birds from New Zealand islands.

In January 1997, ABC [American Bird Conservancy] began an exciting initiative to curb domestic cat predation on birds and other wildlife. ABC invited representatives from the animal welfare, science and veterinary communities to join in a citizen education and outreach effort. The primary focus of the campaign is to encourage cat owners to spay or neuter their cats and keep them indoors because it benefits wildlife, cats and people.

"Like many cat owners, I thought my cat was supposed to roam outside" said Linda Winter, coordinator of ABC's new Cat Predation Campaign. "After all, that's what my neighbors did with their cats. It wasn't until I saw an article in National Wildlife that I realized there were millions of cats in the United States killing millions of birds and other wildlife each year, and I was part of the problem. I keep my new cat inside. He's healthier and just as happy as my old cat, and he's not killing any birds," said Winter. .. (Excerpted from an article published in Bird Conservation, Summer 1997)

For more information contact:

ABC, 1250 24th St., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20037, USA. Abc@abcbirds.org.

Or check out the Web-page: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cat/>

OBITUARY

Rachel Erskine (1903-1997)

Rachel Erskine cared about nature and the environment long before it became fashionable. This wonderful lady who did things in her own inimitable way died in Sackville, NB on October 30, 1997, aged 94. Rachel lived in Wolfville from 1936 until 1987. Her husband John Erskine, who enriched our knowledge of Nova Scotia's natural world and its unique pre-history, died in 1981. Both John and Rachel Erskine were charter members of the Blomidon Naturalists Society and the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

BNS and Bird Society member Bernard Forsythe was the Erskines' next door neighbour for more than 40 years. "John was the bird person," says Bernard, and "Rachel loved plants, although it was Rachel who started me collecting nesting records, as well as my 21 years of running a Breeding Bird Survey. And it was she who started me on my long love affair with orchids. Few people cared about nature in those days but I was lucky enough to live next to the Erskines and they shared their knowledge and concern with me." Family members recall Rachel Erskine's three loves – nature, music, and corresponding on an almost daily basis with friends all around the world. Rachel Erskine enriched the lives of her community, family, and friends in Nova Scotia and beyond.

Reprinted from Nova Scotia Birds, Spring 1998.

DIRECTORS OF THE BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1997-98

President — Randy Milton 542-176; Vice-President — Phil Taylor 542-0437; Past-President — Roy Bishop 542-3992; Secretary — Neil Cloghesy 542-4525; Treasurer — Harold Forsyth 542-5983; Directors at Large — Sue Bissix 542-9138; Merritt Gibson 582-7569; Lorna Hart 542-4470; Tom Herman 678-0383; Stan Riggs 679-9746

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Sunday, April 26, 1998

**“Pond-Hopping” for Spring Birds in Wolfville Area
(NSBS/BNS)**

by Jim Wolford, Wolfville

Overcast skies and chilly winds didn't deter about 25 participants, in 10 cars, from Halifax, Bridgewater, Annapolis, Kingston, Coldbrook, and elsewhere. First we had a short warm-up walk to Wolfville Harbour, where expected willets still had not arrived. Then we drove to the Acadia campus to view a red-tailed hawk incubating on the new, larger nest on the same Univ. Hall ledge that was successfully used last year. (For anyone who wants to see this year's youngsters, the date of fledging last year was June 29.) [Ed: The fledglings have fledged as of July 1].

Next stop was Noggins Farm at Greenwich, where a very large nest with a bald eagle incubating is visible from highway #1. Since its inception in 1990, this nest has produced youngsters every year. We then caravanned to the New Minas Sewage Ponds, where we had another cold walk to view a single mute swan -- presumably the one that couldn't be caught in March in Bedford Basin, this bird has been at New Minas since April 5 -- and 3 Iceland gulls (2 adults, 1 imm.).

Next, by popular demand, we had a “pit-stop” at Burger King/Tim Horton's in New Minas. Then north on Middle Dyke Road to a pond just south of Chipman's Corner, where there was a great blue heron, 3 tree swallows, and a female red-winged blackbird (plus 2 painted turtles).

At Canard Pond we huddled in our cars and ate our lunches, while viewing 24 ring-necked ducks (19 males, 5 females), several green-winged teal, a few black ducks, and a perched adult bald eagle. North of there we stopped the caravan for several

ravens that were aerially interacting in pairs (immatures learning courtship antics?) plus lots of gulls soaring in the stiff, cold wind.

At Saxon St. Pond (west of Sheffield Mills) there was a large flock of perhaps 200 tree swallows, feeding presumably on a "hatch" of midges from pupae. I couldn't spot any barn swallows among them, but I'll bet at least one was there (and the next day one appeared at Port Williams).

North of there at Hennigar's Marsh, a cattail-lined stream, we spotted 3 blue-winged teal (a pair and a lone male) and a kingfisher. In Canning, we found nothing in Harris' Pond, but there were three nice highlights along its edge: a black-capped chickadee was oblivious to us as it cleaned out a nest-cavity in a stump; a beautiful male yellow-rumped/myrtle warbler appeared; and, very uncharacteristically, a swamp sparrow conspicuously posed for us for several minutes on top of a cattail fruiting stalk!

Also we saw 2 muskrats in the pond.

Our last stop was at the new riverside park just east of downtown Canning, where we had a close look at a posing greater yellowlegs, presumably just arrived, and a more distant view of at least 110 Canada geese on the riverbank -- these geese will probably be leaving very soon. Also I saw 2 common mergansers.

After disbanding the trip in mid afternoon (without attempting a "trip-list" of species seen), four of us found two interesting large stick-nests in the Canard area. One had an incubating red-tailed hawk on it, and the other seemed to have a possible barred owl incubating (our view was too poor to be sure).

However, a couple days later I told Bernard Forsythe about the latter nest above. He promptly visited it, and a red-tailed hawk flushed from it. Bernard told me that in 1997 that same woodlot contained a red-tailed hawk nest, and the presently occupied nest had just been built this year, curiously in a dead larch among many other dead trees.

P.S. Another highlight for me came in mid-May, when I was delighted to receive a thank-you note from a grateful participant. The note contained an update on the Bedford mute swans. Two of them have a nest & eggs (presumably infertile) now, and the other two are often nearby. As of this writing on June 3, the

remaining fifth swan continues to live at the New Minas sewage ponds or in the river-mouth at Port Williams.

Sunday, May 31, 1998 -- Parks Are For People
by Jim Wolford, Wolfville

We had a beautiful sunny and warm day for this **Parks Are For People** walk in Blomidon Provincial Park, led by me. There were about 25 participants in 10 cars.

Since the Park doesn't open until mid June, I had previously arranged for a Park key. I opened the gate, and we all drove up to the northeast corner of the campground.

As we began our mile-long easy walk along the cliff trail, mosquitoes were abundant and hungry. The forest floor and trees were very well advanced in greening up and leafing out.

I pointed out the rare wild leeks, whose leaves were conspicuous. Flowers seen included mountain maple, starflower, bunchberry, Wild Solomon's-seal, blue violets, and a single yellow violet. The red trilliums (trillia?) were all finished flowering.

The few bird-songs (heard by me) included an ovenbird, a blue-headed vireo (solitary vireo), and a bay-breasted warbler. The latter was very close to us, and I was delighted at being able to hear it well; we also were able to see it toss its head back and open its beak to sing, but this required a bit of suffering from "warblers' neck"! Also we saw a black-throated green warbler foraging on the ground.

Our walk quickly got us to my main objective, a large, temporary, woodland pond that fills up from runoff in early Spring and then usually dries up, partly or totally, in late Summer.

This year, thanks to last year's drought plus our dry Spring, this pond was much smaller and shallower than usual. I filled an enamel pan with pond-water and placed this "pond" on top of an upturned bucket. Then a few random sweeps through the water with a dip-net produced oodles of pond creatures for our viewing.

There were lots of fairly large tadpoles, probably of wood frogs. Also we saw several bright-green masses of jelly, which were the remains of already-hatched frog eggs, with a symbiotic micro-

scopic but abundant algae which produces oxygen and speeds up the development of the embryonic tadpoles.

Aquatic insects included a tiny larva of a dragonfly, several large damselfly larvae, many caddisfly larvae in cases made from bits of aquatic plants, many transparent larvae of phantom-midges, one regular midge larva, a small adult diving beetle, a large and predatory larvae of a diving beetle, and one other beetle larva. Numerous empty pupal cases floating on the surface were from some kinds of midges or mosquitoes that had emerged (and were now bothering or feasting on us!).

Several small water mites were present, plus a few of the now-full-grown, and very special, **fairy shrimp**. The latter are about 2 cm. long, coloured green and reddish, and have numerous pairs of undulating legs with which they slowly swim "upside-down" on their backs. This is Nova Scotia's only known spot for these crustaceans (although a newly suspected pond near Berwick needs confirmation as the second locale). These shrimps lay their eggs in late Spring (now). The eggs are resistant to drying and to freezing, and they'll hatch when flooded in the following Spring.

We followed the trail a bit further to a lookoff, where we could see Five Islands Provincial Park across the Minas Basin. See the **Parks Are For People** brochure (available at tourist bureaus) for dozens of interesting outings at Five Islands, Blomidon, and numerous other Parks across Nova Scotia.

Then we reversed direction and walked back to our cars. This excursion was over well before noon.

NATURAL HISTORY NEWS

Sharp-shinned Hawk Preys on Bat by Matt Holder, Biology Dept., Acadia University

Although most naturalists have seen bats before, the vast majority of observations involve watching their silhouettes in the twilight of a summer evening. Of course, bats that we have in this area have evolved to be active between dusk and dawn, a means of partitioning the niches that they occupy. In essence, they can share the same food sources and foraging areas with diurnal

animals without directly competing with them, due to their different periods of activity. Being active in darkness also helps them avoid diurnal predators, such as hawks. Due to its nocturnal habits, seldom do we have the opportunity to study the pattern of a bat's face or the colour of its fur. Indeed, it is a rare occasion to watch a bat flying during the day, when it has either been disturbed from its daytime roost or caught in daylight on migration. Seeing one in the bright sunlight of a late April afternoon gave Andrea Kingsley and myself more than enough reason to stop and admire this interesting creature.

Our observation took place just south of Scots Bay, Kings County, on a day in April at approximately 3:00 p.m.

We watched as the bat, which we identified as a Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), patrolled 3-4 m above the ground in a small area near the road and a stream. Its constant circuit of the opening in the surrounding second growth was almost mesmerizing to watch, and we watched its repeated movements for several minutes, sometimes from as close as three feet while it foraged over our heads. It was only the sudden appearance of a male Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) on the scene that broke the spell and brought us to our senses.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk had flown out of the adjacent forest and chased the bat in midair. Dropping to the ground like a stone, just like some of the moths that it had chased earlier in life, the bat took evasive measures in an attempt to escape the talons of the accipiter. Fortunately for the hawk, it was more agile than the bat and caught its prey while following it to the ground. After



securely grasping its meal, the hawk carried it into the thick alders on the other side of the road, as we stood speechless only three metres away. It was with great excitement that we then jotted down all of the pertinent details for our notes.

It has long been known that accipiters and other hawks occasionally prey upon bats; in fact, there are several species in the world that specialize in doing so. At Point Pelee, Ontario, numbers of hunting accipiters have been known to aggregate near the tip of the peninsula where Red Bats (*Lasiurus borealis*) are also concentrating during their southward migration in the autumn. There are many other instances of hawks, and indeed other predatory birds, catching bats, but since day-flying bats are the exception and not the norm in this part of the world, these reports detail encounters which are opportunistic in nature. This was certainly the case with us. The Sharp-shinned Hawk may not have realised that its prey was a bat instead of a songbird during the chase and capture, but would have found it to be a meal all the same.

Our observation on that warm April afternoon was special in several ways. Firstly, it is always nice to see bats well, and one often doesn't get the chance to see them during daylight. Secondly, watching a Sharp-shinned Hawk catch a bat in midair a few metres from you is something that happens very few times in a lifetime. Finally, if we hadn't stopped to admire and watch the bat flying over the road, and taken the time to study it, we would have missed this unique event. Much too often, people see something unusual and tick it off on a list or in their head, then move on in fear of missing something even better. Our observation reinforces our belief that it is almost always better to take good solid looks at things, for fear of missing something even better.

Birds catching bats are unusual enough that many people have written up anecdotes pertaining to them. Below is a select list of references that some may find useful for further reading:

- Allan, P.F. 1947. Blue Jay attacks red bats. *Journal of Mammalogy* 28: 180.
Byre, V.J. 1990. A group of young Peregrine Falcons prey on migrating bats. *Wilson Bulletin* 102: 728-730.
Downing, S.C., and D.H.Baldwin. 1961. Sharp-shinned Hawk preys on red bat. *Journal of Mammalogy* 42: 540.
Holder, M. 1994. Herring Gull predation of red bat. *Birders Journal* 3: 105-106.
Pittaway, R., P.Burke and D.Brenner. 1992. Bat as food of Northern Shrike. *Ontario Birds* 10: 30-31
Van Zyll de Jong, C.G. 1985. *Handbook of Canadian Mammals*. Volume 2. National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa.

“...An Assemblage of Objects...”

by T.C. Haliburton, 1829.

submitted by S. Bleakney.

If you have ever driven from Windsor to Wolfville, if you've ever looked out over the Grand Pré from the adjacent hilltop, if you've ever followed the course of the Gaspereau River, then you will readily acknowledge the timelessness of these evocative descriptions penned by a peripatetic and poetic T.C. Haliburton in his 1829 book *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*. (pp 115-120.).

“After leaving Falmouth, and proceeding on the great western road, the attention of the traveller is arrested by the extent and beauty of a view, which bursts upon him very unexpectedly as he descends the Horton mountains. A sudden turn of the road displays at once the townships of Horton and Cornwallis, and the rivers that meander through them. Beyond is a lofty and extended chain of hills, presenting a vast chasm, apparently burst out by the waters of nineteen rivers that empty into the Basin of Minas, and here escape into the Bay of Fundy. The variety and extent of this prospect, the beautiful verdant vale of the Gaspereaux; the extended township of Horton interspersed with groves of wood and cultivated fields, and the cloud capt summit of the lofty cape that terminates the chain of the north mountain, form *an assemblage of objects*, rarely united with so striking an effect.”

“The views in this neighborhood are remarkable fine, and the formation of the land, such as to present great variety in the landscape. No part of the Province can boast more beautiful and diversified scenery, than the township of Horton. Beside the splendid prospect from the mountain just mentioned, and those in the vicinity of Kentville, there are others still more interesting at a distance from the post road. It would be difficult to point out another landscape, at all equal to that which is beheld from the hill, that overlooks the site of the ancient village of Minas. On either hand extend undulating hills richly cultivated, and intermingled with farm houses and orchards. From the base of these highlands, extend the alluvial meadows, which add so much to the appearance and wealth of Horton. The Grand Prairie is skirted by Boot and Long Islands, whose fertile and well tilled fields are sheltered from the north by evergreen forests of dark foliage. Beyond are the wide expanse of waters of the Basin of Minas, the lower part of Cornwallis, and the isles and blue highlands of the opposite shores. The charm of this prospect consists

in the unusual combination of hill, dale, woods and cultivated fields; in the calm beauty of agricultural scenery, and in the romantic wildness of the distant forests. During the summer and autumnal months, immense herds of cattle are seen quietly cropping the herbage of the Grand Prairie; while numerous vessels plying on the Basin, convey a pleasing evidence of the prosperity and resources of this fertile district."

"The River Gaspereaux rises in the south-west part of the township, in a lake of the same name, situated near the source of the Gold River, in Lunenburg County. For the first few miles, and as it flows through the settlement of Canaan, there is a wild grandeur and beauty in the scenery. It rushes impetuously between two lofty and almost perpendicular hills -- its bed resembling a chasm made in the heart of the mountain, by some violent convulsion of nature. From this place the course of the stream is so serpentine, that within a small space, the horizon is bounded on all sides by the hills, that in their circumference recede from the river, which, in this deep recess, appears like a small central point. Here a narrow foot-path winds down the precipitous steep, by which the traveller, with much exertion and some danger of a more rapid descent, reaches the margin of the stream, where a scene of indescribable beauty is presented to view. As the river pursues its course, the hills become more accessible, and admit of cultivation; at length the mountains recede, and alluvial meadows form the peaceful valley of the Gaspereaux, through which, as if resting from the rapidity of its previous course, the river meanders with gentle current until within a short distance of the post road, where salt marsh is formed by the mingling of its waters with the returning tide."



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TRIVIAL TIDBITS of Local Natural History

compiled by Jim Wolford
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March to Late June 1998

HUMAN HISTORY

Mar. 8 - on the same day as they discovered a baby hooded seal, Terry Murphy and Larry Hartlin found, in the salt-marsh just beyond the west end of the cottages of Avonport Beach, the exposed crib-work of spruce? trunks that had supported an **old Acadian dyke**.

WEATHER

late March - the **stream** in the lower part of Kentville Ravine **overflowed its banks** onto the outer field (JP).

Apr. 15 - most of the **ice** in the Kentville Ravine was gone (JP).

SEAWEEDS

June 12 - a large clump of "**sea fleece**" (*Codium fragile*), an alien invading algae which has been spreading along our South Shore since the early 1990s, was found washed up on Hirtle's Beach, Lun. Co. (JH,RF). (This seaweed and its invasive habit and probable effects on kelps and fisheries

was the subject of CBC-TV's "Land and Sea" show on June 15/98 (JW).)

FUNGI

May 11 - 4 **thick-stalked false morels**, *Gyromitra fastigiata*, found in Kentville Ravine (JP).

June 15 - conspicuous orange patches of a **rust fungus**, probably **crown rust of oats**, seen on the leaves of common buckthorn shrubs (*Rhamnus cathartica*), in Wolfville -- many rust fungi have complicated life-cycles that involve alternating between two species of hosts (JW).

NON-FLOWERING PLANTS

Mar. 17 - in the Kentville Ravine, a lot of wood down from the Jan. **ice-storm**, and the **pin**es seem to have taken the most damage. Also a lot of **lichens** down with the branches: *Platismatia glauca*, *P. tuckermanii*, *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Usnea* spp., and others (JP).

Apr. 26 - sporangia-bearing

stalks of **field horsetail** up along roadside at Chipman's Corner (SH).

Apr. 17 - most of the **ever-green ferns** in the Kentville Ravine were in very good shape after the winter -- two **hybrid ferns**, *Dryopteris intermedia* X *marginalis*, had fronds from last year in very good condition, and one showed signs of this year's growth (JP).

May 1 - **fiddleheads** of four kinds of ferns (ostrich, beech, Boott's *Dryopteris*, and the red form of lady fern) up in Kentville Ravine (JP).

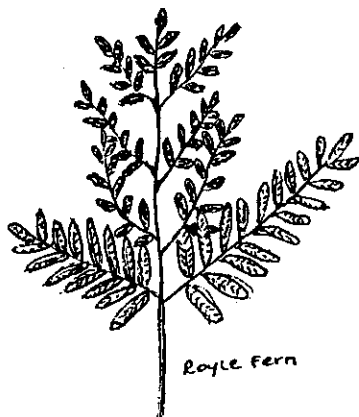
May 5 - many **fiddleheads of Ostrich fern** up quite high already (20-25 cm.?) along the Gaspereau River at White Rock (JW); **bracken fern** shoots about 10 cm. high in Kentville Ravine (JP).

May 6 - finally *Dryopteris cristata* **fiddleheads** are up in Kentville Ravine (JP).

May 8 - *Botrychium lanceolatum*, **lance-leaved grape-fern**, plants just showing above ground in Kentville Ravine (JP).

May 11 - a single plant of **Braun's holly fern**, *Polystichum braunii*, the only one of these ever seen in the Valley by JP, was checked because it had

been damaged by flooding in Spring 1997; it seemed dead, with no sign of life, but the rootstock was still there; it does grow on the North Mountain (JP).



June 14 - lots of **royal fern** with ripening sporangia along Herbert River, Hants Co., and beautiful **cinnamon ferns** with ripe sporangia at a farm there (JW).

FLOWERING PLANTS

Mar. 30 - **common dandelion** in bloom beside Greenwood Mall (SH).

Apr. 6 - **trembling aspen** catkins open from Wolfville to New Minas (JW).

Apr. 7 - **American elm** flowers open in Wolfville (JW).

Apr. 8 - about 25 beautiful flower-heads of **coltsfoot** in the Gaspereau Valley, on a south-

facing bank west of Gaspereau (JW).

Apr. 14 - **trailing arbutus** or **Mayflower** with flower-buds, under leaves in woods, at Greenwood (SH).

Apr. 25 - **coltsfoot** in bloom along hwy. 101 in Halifax County (SH).

Apr. 30 - unbelievably early, already there were carpets of **spring beauties** at Cape Split (STi).

May 1 - **shadbush** in bloom (very early) at Greenwood and Tremont (SH); **sugar maple** and **Norway maple** both in bloom in Wolfville (JW).

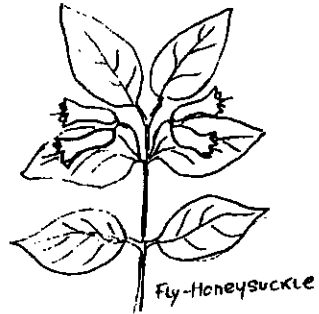
May 3 - Two species of **shad-bush** flowering in Wolfville (JW); **purple or red trilliums** in bloom in Kentville Ravine, and **nodding trilliums** with flower-buds (but by May 6 something (deer?) had taken off many tops of the latter plants)(JP).

May 4 - **white violets** flowering in Kentville Ravine (JP).

May 5 - at White Rock, in bloom were **wild strawberry**, **pussy-toes**, **purple or red trillium**, **toothwort** (very nearly), and **lowbush blueberry** (nearly)(JW).

May 6 - in bloom near the

Acadia Biology greenhouse were **trout lily**, **white trillium**, **bellwort**, and **Dutchman's breeches** -- also **fly honey-suckle**, which had begun blooming much earlier (JW).



May 6 - **pincherry** bushes suddenly in bloom all over Wolfville (JW).

May 6 - **henbit**, **field penny-cress**, **common strawberry**, and **chokecherry** in bloom at Tremont or Greenwood (SH).

May 8 - **toothwort** in flower in Kentville Ravine (JP).

May 9 - **red elderberry** in bloom at New Minas and Canning (JW); **rhodora** flowering along road at Aylesford (SH); **cuckoo flower** blooming in a field along Kentville Ravine (JP).

May 11 - **common speedwell** and **apple trees** in bloom s. of Greenwood (SH); in Kentville Ravine, **nodding trilliums**, **blue-bead lilies** (*Clintonia*), **rosy twisted-stalk**, and **jack-**

in-the-pulpit (almost) flowering (JP).

May 13 - Windsor mudflat salt-marsh already "greened up" (JW).

May 15 - **horse-chestnut** trees starting to bloom in Wolfville -- very early (JW) in Kentville Ravine, **coltsfoot** seeds are ripe and starting to blow away (JP).

May 17 - **pink lady's-slipper** or **moccasin-flower** in bloom in Wolfville (DT).

May 18 - **cuckoo-flowers**, **yellow rockets**, and **common dandelions** in monoculture-like carpets in fields from Berwick to Grand Pré (PM, JW).

May 19 - **oxeye daisy** flowering at Harmony (se. of Greenwood) (SH).

May 21 - an **early or northern coral-root orchid** found in the upper swamp of the Kentville Ravine (several more found May 28) (JP).

May 24 - **yellow violets**, **nodding trilliums**, and **blue cohosh** in bloom along the Meander River in Smiley's Prov. Park (PM, JW).

May 25 - **red oak**, **white ash**, and **sycamore maple** trees in bloom in Wolfville -- the maples are planted along Univ.

Ave. on the Acadia campus (JW); **lowbush blueberry** flowering s. of Greenwood (SH).

May 26 - **charlock** or **wild mustard** in bloom s. of Greenwood (SH).

May 28 - **wild caraway** in bloom at the Guzzle at ne. Grand Pré (BBT); **common cinquefoil** flowering at Greenwood (SH).

May 30 - **mouse-ear hawkweed**, **blue-eyed grass**, and **English plantain** in bloom s. of Greenwood (SH).

May 30 - several **ram's-head lady's-slipper** orchids in bloom along the Meander River, Hants Co. (and blooms were noticed two weeks earlier by PS! (very early) -- also **yellow lady's-slipper** flowers were seen in two locations on gypsum in the Brooklyn area, and this too is extremely early (JW *et al.*).

May 31 - in Blomidon Prov. Park, **wild leeks** abundant and conspicuous (leaves only), and in bloom were **wild Solomon's seal**, **mountain maple**, **star-flower**, and **bunchberry**, while **purple trilliums** were all finished (JW *et al.*).

June 2 - **common buckthorn** (*Rhamnus cathartica*) trees in bloom in Wolfville (JW).

INVERTEBRATES

June 9 - **painted trilliums** all finished with flowering at Sherbrooke Lake (very early) (JW).

June 11 - **white violets** still in bloom in woods at Sherbrooke Lake (JW).

June 14 - at a Hants County farm along the Herbert River, **bluets, garden columbine, one-flowered wintergreen,** both native and introduced **wood sorrels** flowering (JW).

June 16 - "**acacia**" or **black locust** trees flowering at New Minas; and a **tulip tree** starting to bloom in Wolfville (lower Kent Ave.)(JW).

June 19 - **bristly locust** in bloom in Wolfville, and **clammy locust** flowering in several local communities -- both species are also called "rose acacia"; also **common milkweed, white campion, and common St. John's-wort** starting to flower at New Minas (JW).

June 22 - **European alder-buckthorn** (*Rhamnus frangula*) and **multiflora rose** in bloom in Wolfville (JW).

June 25 - **evening primrose** and **toadflax** or **butter-&-eggs** flowering along Wolfville RR tracks (JW).

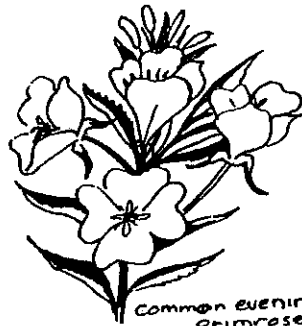
Apr. 17 - several **garden slugs** active in Wolfville on a warm & wet day (JW).

May 1 - a **tick** of an unrecognizable species, found indoors, at Tremont (SH).

May 9 & 11 - "**ticks**", 3 and 1 respectively, reported on people at Kentville and the Avonport area (RS,SW).

PLEASE, EVERYONE, it's not good enough to put reports of unidentified "**TICKS**" on the Internet. Those of you who know they are **wood ticks** (= **dog ticks**), say so. If unsure, or even if you're certain, collect one or more and get them to me or to Dick Rogers at the Kentville Agric. Res. Stn. Dick is still gathering reports for our area, and there's also a Canada-wide inventory about to begin (JW).

June 11 - a probable **dog tick** was found on a human above Skyview Drive in Wolfville (MJo).



Common evening-primrose

June 14 - a female **dog tick** (specimen collected) was found on a human at Black River Lake -- also at least two others were seen there on earlier dates this Spring (JHe). (We have had records of **dog ticks** in eastern King's County several years ago, followed by several years of apparently no or few reports here -- if we are in a general trend of climate warming, perhaps the dog tick will actually spread further north and east -- worse still, the **deer tick** (the host of **Lyme disease**) may soon be able to complete its life-cycle in Nova Scotia (JW).

INSECTS EPHEMEROPTERA

May 9 - one adult **Mayfly** seen at Van Nostrand's Pond, Star's Point (JW).

May 12 - a **Mayfly** seen at Greenwood (SH).

INSECTS - ODONATA

June 19 - four individual **12-spot skimmer dragonflies** seen on RR tracks at New Minas (JW).

INSECTS - HOMOPTERA

early June - Here's a piece of exotica. Glyn Bissix was in Columbia, Missouri, and witnessed a spectacular coincidence which will not

recur for another 225 years or so. Zillions of two different kinds of **periodical cicadas** (both **13-year** and **17-year**) had emerged together from the ground, and the males were calling at a deafening level from the treetops. (These early-summer cicadas are quite distinct from our **annual cicadas**, which call here in late summer -- JW.)

June 18 - underneath a leaf of common milkweed at New Minas, from large dark eggs were hatching small green nymphs of **aphids**, which were being tended by a few small **ants** (presumably for their honeydew) (JW).

INSECTS - NEUROPTERA

June 22 - one **green lacewing** seen in Wolfville (JT).

INSECTS - COLEOPTERA

Apr. 1 - an extremely early adult **June beetle** seen at a window at 10 p.m. at Tremont (SH).

Apr. 10 - a **2-spotted lady beetle** found indoors at Kingston (SH).

May 9 - during the N.Am.Migration Count (birds), many **7-spotted lady beetles**, and one unidentified lady beetle with 11 spots, were found in grasses and alfalfa

along the dyke east of Wolfville (JT).

May 16 - one **7-spotted** and seven **14-spotted lady beetles** (both **aliens**) found by random sweeps of an insect net on the dyke east of Wolfville (JW).

May 17 - four **7-spotted lady beetles** found in grasses at tip of Cape Split (PM,JW).

May 19 & 21 - road-killed **June beetles** found at New Minas & Wolfville (JW).

mid to late May - for control of **elm bark beetles**, which spread Dutch elm disease, the annual Acadia Univ. spraying of Dursban 4E (an organophosphate), was scheduled for either May 16-17 or 23-24 weekends (JW)

INSECTS - LEPIDOPTERA

Dec. 31/97 to Feb. 20 - noctuid moth **caterpillars** found by Jean Timpa *et al.* were **incorrectly reported** in our last issue as probably of the yellow-banded underwing, *Catocala cerogama*. This happened because of mixed-up communications between myself (to blame) and Dick Rogers. Since then, Dick tells me they are very probably **large yellow underwings**, *Noctua pronuba*, which is a recent immigrant from Europe. (I have colour illustrations of

the caterpillar and moth in a field guide to caterpillars of Britain and Europe. The caterpillars eat a variety of herbaceous plants, including dandelions.)

Mar. 30 - a probable **mourning cloak butterfly** seen in a Wolfville back yard (LH).

Apr. 12 - an adult **mourning cloak** flying near Sunken Lake (PM,JW).

Apr. 12 - at least two, prob. more, **mourning cloaks** seen in Wolfville -- in the afternoon, two were seen in a tight spiralling flight upward (prob. an already-mated female trying to discourage an amorous male)(JT,ST).

Apr. 12 - a very early adult **cabbage white butterfly** was seen flying very slowly, as if it wasn't quite warm enough?, in downtown Wolfville (JT).

Apr. 27 - one **mourning cloak** flying on dykelands east of Wolfville (JW).

Apr. 28 & 30 - single **caterpillars** of **large yellow underwing** found in Wolfville -- the one on the 30th went into soil, presumably to pupate, a couple days later (JT).

May 1 & 5 - one and then several **cabbage butterflies** seen in Wolfville (JW).

May 4 - single adult **mourning cloaks** seen at New Minas and Avonport Beach (JW).

May 9 - a male **eastern black swallowtail** seen flying along top of dyke near Wolfville sewage ponds -- also a **mourning cloak** flying there (JT).

May 9 - a very early adult **arched hooktip moth** found on a back door in Wolfville (see Peterson field guide to Eastern Moths)(JT).

May 17 - a **silvery blue** (butterfly) seen s. of Greenwood (SH).

May 18 - a **tiger swallowtail** seen at Auburn (SH).

May 18 - a very early adult **one-eyed sphinx moth** found on a porch-window screen in Wolfville (JT).

May 20 - a **mourning cloak** seen at Grand Pré (JW).

May 25 - a **tiger swallowtail** and a **sulphur** sp. (or **alfalfa?**) (butterfly) seen in Wolfville (JW).

May 28 - a **dreamy dusky-wing** (a skipper) seen in Kentville Ravine (JP).

June 10 - 2 **viceroy butterflies** seen at flowers in Wolfville (JT).

June 12 - 2 more **viceroy**s seen at New Minas, plus some unidentified **blues** (JW).

June 16 - a **small-eyed sphinx moth** found on the side of a Wolfville house (JT).

June 17 - a **northern (pearl) crescent** and a **Hobomok skipper** seen in Wolfville (JT).

June 19 - along New Minas RR tracks, 4 fresh new-looking adult **banded purples or white admirals** (butterflies) -- on June 17, at Sherbrooke Lake, I found wings from one that had probably been caught and eaten by a bird (JW).

June 20 - a **twin-spotted sphinx moth** found on a Wolfville porch-screen; also a wing from a **polyphemus moth** found in Wolfville (JT).

June 21 - at Wallbrook, a worn **mourning cloak**, a **northern (pearl) crescent**, and an unidentified **fritillary** seen (PM,JW).

June 22 - a **luna moth** found on a screen-door of a house in the Sheffield Mills area (RHe).

June 26 - a dead female **luna moth** found in a parking lot at Acadia Univ.'s Biology Bldg. (MS).

INSECTS - DIPTERA

Apr. 24 - a presumed "hatch" of adult **midges** (mosquito-like, non-biting flies) from pupae attracted at least 50 **tree swallows** at Saxon St. Pond (west from Blueberry Acres)(JW).

Apr. 27 - at least a few dozen large **midges** in mating swarms of males along shore of Port Williams sewage ponds, and only two **swallows** there to take advantage (JW).

May 5 - **houseflies** are much more abundant than in previous years, for this time of year, at Grand Pré Hist. Park (MC). Tonight at Hortonville there was a public meeting, at which Dick Rogers talked again about proper handling of manure, among other things (JW). Later this early abundance of filth flies dwindled to more normal seasonal levels (MC).

June 9 & 11 - at Sherbrooke Lake, unbelievably, relatively extremely few **blackflies** -- another sign of our very early Spring (JW,SW). Also a few **deerflies** and larger **horseflies** seen there (JW).

June 11 - oodles of hungry **no-see-ums (biting midges)** in Wolfville at dusk (DM).

June 15-20 - several unidentified **craneflies** seen in

Wolfville (JT).

June 19-20 - oodles of hungry **no-see-ums** again in Wolfville (JW *et al.*).

I N S E C T S HYMENOPTERA

April 11 - a **bumblebee** seen flying close to the ground near Greenwood? -- it had an orange stripe on its lower abdomen -- perhaps *Bombus americanus?* (SH).

May 6 - a **black-and-yellow mud-dauber wasp** and a **hornet (bald-faced?)** seen at Tremont, s. of Greenwood (SH).

June 15 - lots of single mud-nests, some complete and many incomplete, of the **black-and-yellow mud-dauber wasp**, were found inside empty cardboard boxes that were closed except for a single small circular opening, inside a laboratory in Acadia's Biology Building -- many of the nests were provisioned, as usual, with small anesthetized spiders (food for the wasp larvae)(AW).

FISHES

Apr. 11 - the annual upstream spawning run of **smelt** began in the Gaspereau River at Gaspereau (KR).

Apr. 17 - in the stream through the field of the lower Kentville Ravine, in a deep pool at the base of a large pine tree, there was a large (23-30 cm.) **trout** (brook trout?) plus several smaller ones (JP).

Apr. 18 - this year's start of the **gaspereau** spawning run at Gaspereau/Melanson was extremely early, and, despite most of the run occurring during the legal season for netting them (to June 1), only a very modest catch was made overall (KR).

early May - **sticklebacks** seen in a cattail pond, and several **trout** (brook?) in the stream, in Kentville Ravine (JP).

AMPHIBIANS

Mar. 28 - **spring peepers** heard after dark at Tremont, near Greenwood (SH).

Mar. 30 - 8 **green frogs** basking in a very small garden pond in Wolfville (LH).

Mar. 31, April 1, & April 12 - choruses of **wood frogs** and **spring peepers** in a woods pond at Maple Lodge, near Sunken Lake -- choruses announce times to tap the sap of sugar maples (rock maples) (PMu).

Apr. 17 - in a path-side pond just below the woods of the

Kentville Ravine, **wood frogs** were very active, **calling** and splashing, and at least two clumps of their **eggs** were present (JP).

Apr. 27 - several **leopard frogs** emitting a daytime chorus of snoring calls and chirps in Van Nostrand's Pond (Starr's Point) (JW).

early May - **green frogs?** calling in a small artificial pond in a Wolfville back yard (LH) -- I'm skeptical about green frogs calling this early in Spring, but the only frogs I saw there later were greens (JW).

May 5 - in New Minas, in yard litter at the edge of a residential house, an apparently still-hibernating **spring peeper** was found while raking -- it was very pale-coloured when first found, and then gradually became normally pigmented after it became active (LC).

May 9 - **leopard frogs** heard calling at Van Nostrand's Pond (Starr's Point), Saxon St. Pond, and Hennigar's Marsh west of Sheffield Mills (JW).

May 9 - one **American toad** calling with a very rapid trill at Saxon St. Pond (JW).

June 9 - a few hatchling larvae of **yellow-spotted salamanders** (from egg-masses bright green with symbiotic

algae) in two ponds at Sherbrooke Lake -- also present were adult **green frogs** (glunking) and subadult **bullfrogs** -- pond water-levels very low or non-existent this year, and existing ponds have over-abundances of tadpoles (prob. **wood frogs**)(JW).

REPTILES

Apr. 21 - 9 + 5 **painted turtles** basking at ponds near Chipman's Corner and in Canning, respectively (JW).

May 14 - with several expectable **painted turtles**, an adult **red-eared slider** was basking at Hennigar's Market Pond, at Greenwich -- this is an alien species and probably comes from someone unthinkingly releasing a pet turtle (JW).

June 1-2 - overnight there were two female **Blanding's turtles** that dug nests and laid eggs in Kejimikujik Nat. Park -- these are the earliest ever recorded, by about two weeks -- viva El Nino! (TH,SMo).

June 17 - in early a.m., a **snapping turtle** was found at the end of her egg-laying and nest-covering, on the sandy beach at Sherbrooke Lake Camp (RH *et al.*); also 2 more **snapping turtles** seen on roads that day (a half-grown living one just n. of Sherbrooke Lake, and a smashed adult on hwy.

103 n. of Chester (JW).

Apr. 19 - a **red-bellied snake** seen crossing a road near Lumsden Reservoir (RRSN).

May 10 - a one-metre **garter snake** seen in w. Kentville, at the waterfowl sanctuary (VDS).

June 11 - a two-thirds-grown **garter snake** seen at Sherbrooke Lake (JW).

MAMMALS

Apr. 17 - three **little brown bats** flitting around a yard at Delhaven in mid afternoon (JN). He wonders if bats arouse from winter hibernation and begin moving regardless of time of day? Interesting selective-pressure question.....

approx. April 18,19, or 20 - in the daytime, a flying **bat** was seen to be captured by a **sharp-shinned hawk** (MH). [See article in this newsletter]

Mar. 29 - an active **chipmunk** was seen at Lumsden Reservoir (BBY).

Apr. 8 - a young (yearling) **muskrat** was road-killed on Bay St. in Wolfville (JT).

May 8 - a **muskrat** emerged from the Kentville Ravine stream, climbed the bank and foraged for green leaves, then

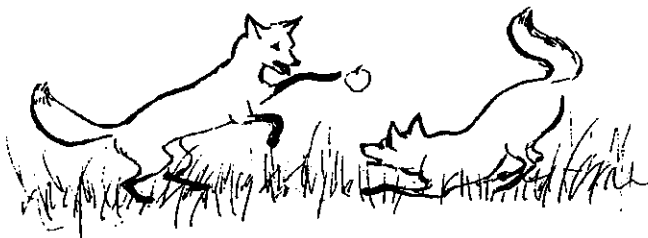
returned to the stream with its mouth full (JP).

Apr. 14 - a **woodchuck or groundhog** seen on a grassy lawn along Rocknotch Rd. at Greenwood (SH).

May 29 - **two road-killed beavers** seen fairly close together on the same day, along hwy. 101 -- a large adult at Drain Lake (Hfx. Co.) and a smaller individual near the exit to the now-closed Sackville landfill site (FS).

June 1 - 2 adult **red squirrels** plus a litter of 6 cute youngsters, all eating sunflower seeds at a feeder at Murphy Lake (MT).

Apr. 18 - a road-killed **skunk** at Grand Pré (JW).



June 21 - another flattened **skunk** at Grand Pré (JW).

approx. Apr. 10 - a **domestic cat** brought home a dead "stoat" (weasel) at Port Williams (VDS).

June 11 - a young **short-tailed weasel** was found, possibly

cat-caught? and weak but alive and very hungry; it was fed dog-food and released; between Gaspereau and White Rock (MS).

Apr. 17 - single road-killed **raccoons** in Wolfville and at Hantsport (JW,SM).

May 30 & June 3 - more **raccoons** road-killed at Grand Pré & Wolfville (JW).

June 20 - 2 more flattened **raccoons** from Windsor to Kentville (JW); obviously we need some reports of living raccoons!?

Apr. 8 & 10 - two **red foxes** were seen playing with each other (running & jumping, mouthing and tossing an apple?, etc.) at Mount Denison in early a.m. (CP). (My guess is that, since this was too late for adult courtship?, prob-

ably these were two yearlings and/or siblings going through the motions and learning the ropes?(JW).

May 20 - a **red fox** crossed a road from woods into a meadow at 4 p.m. south of Greenwood (SH).



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May 25 - a large male **coyote** road-killed on the Windsor Causeway (FS).

Apr. 8 - hundreds of dead **harp seals** washed in on shores of Prince Edward Island -- some think they died of natural causes?, perhaps related to ice conditions?, and not to the seal hunt (ATV).

June 20 - a dead 13-m. **sei whale** found floating in Shubenacadie & Stewiacke Rivers near Stewiacke (MG,ATV).

Apr. 10 - a very heavy, probably pregnant, doe **white-tailed deer** was road-killed between Windsor and Hantsport (MJ).

Mar. 17 - a **white-tailed deer** was observed for several minutes in a residential yard and garden in east Wolfville (BBT).

May 16 - five **white-tailed deer** seen in an open field at Torbrook Mines, Ann. Co. (SH).

June 14 - a **white-tailed deer** was discovered at the northeast corner of the Grand Pré dykelands, *i.e.*, it ran from the Guzzle to the Palmetter farm (TMi).

mid June - 2 **white-tailed deer** sighted twice in a week on the dykelands n. & e. of Wolfville (SB).

CONTRIBUTORS

GB - Glyn Bissix
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MC - Mike Charlton
RF - Ray Fielding
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STi - Sean Timpa
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AW - Anne Woolaver
JW - Jim Wolford
SW - Sherman Williams
BBY - Betty & Barry Yoell

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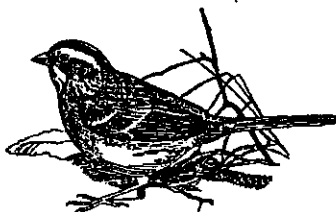
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Elderberry	Highbush Cranberry

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Sources for Local Natural History
(compiled by Blomidon Naturalists Society)

Information	Source	Office	Home	
Rocks & Fossils	Geology Dept. Acadia U.	542-2201		
Fish	NS Dept. of Natural Resources	679-6091		
Flora - General	Ruth Newell	585-1355	542-2095	
	Fungi	Darryl Grund	585-1252	542-9214
		Nancy Nickerson	679-5333	542-9332
	Lichens	Karen Casselman	424-7370	633-2837
	Seaweeds	Darryl Grund	585-1252	542-9214
Mosses & Ferns	John Pickwell		681-8281	
Birds - General	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427	
	Richard Stern	678-4742	678-1975	
	Gordon & Judy Tufts		542-7800	
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-7650	
	Jean Timpa		542-5678	
Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427	
Falcons & Eagles	Peter Austin-Smith		542-2109	
Mammals	Tom Herman	585-1469	678-0383	
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604	
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-7650	
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604	
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-7650	
	Michael Brylinsky	585-1509	582-7954	
Indian Prehistory & Archeology	Ellis Gertridge		542-2816	
	James Legge		542-3530	
Astronomy	Roy Bishop		542-3992	
	Sherman Williams	542-3598	542-5104	
	Larry Bogan		678-0446	