Blomidon Naturalists Society

FALL 2014 NEWSLETTER

Volume 41 · Number 3

THE 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

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a member of the Sable Island Preservation Trust and the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (Nature Nova Scotia) and is an affiliate member of the Canadian Nature Federation (Nature Canada). The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts (for income-tax purposes) will be issued for all donations. (Registration number: 118811686RR0001)

THE BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2350
WOLFVILLE, NS B4P 2N5

BNS Newsletter

The Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter is published quarterly (March, June, October, & December) by The Blomidon Naturalists Society.

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BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY members are encouraged to share unusual or pleasurable nature stories through the pages of the *BNS Newsletter*. If you have a particular area of interest, relevant articles and stories are always welcome. Send them to Jean Timpa:

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WOLFVILLE, NS B4P 2C5
jtimpa@ns.sympatico.ca

Digital photographs should be submitted to *doug@fundymud.com*

Submission deadline for Summer: November 30, 2014

Out & About

Jean Timpa, editor

As summer slips away into autumn, we too often feel a sense of sorrow and loneliness as we realize that most of our familiar plants and animals will disappear in one way or another for a few months. Fortunately, it is usually a gradual process that can be interesting to observe and contemplate. Migration of most birds and some species of butterflies, especially the well-known Monarchs, began as early as mid-July from the muddy beaches of Minas Basin. In a few more weeks other bird species will arrive. However, they will not move on but settle here, for we are their Florida or Central America for the next few months. So if the weather shows up with a vengeance – and of course we hope it will not be another repeat of last year's wrathful, drawn-out misery – just remember how grateful the snowbirds are to be here and not in the Arctic. Self -hypnosis sometimes works wonders while out shovelling in the teeth of the winter gale. Stay well, warm, and active, and enjoy the natural wonders under all its circumstances, for every season is a wonder if you take the time to observe.

Many of us have felt sad, too, that the Green Dragon program had to be abandoned this summer, but that is not really what has happened. Please just think of it as taking a nap or a sabbatical until some reorganizing can take place. I've just come up with a list of seven small groups in eastern Kings County who are very keen to promote and organize natural history education for children. What we obviously need to do is band together and use one another's strengths to form a unified, energetic group that is more likely to be constant and able to survive over time. Forty years from now I hope it will still be a going concern and recognized for its value in a wider com-

munity. We need to spread our passion for the great outdoors and the remarkable biodiversity not only here in Kings County but in all of Nova Scotia. It would indeed be a wonderful lasting legacy. The Green Dragon will rise again to smile upon the little faces of those discovering how wonderful it is to be outdoors.

MANY THANKS FOR MANY WONDERFUL DEEDS ...

Our 40th anniversary as a natural history group is going by smoothly, and all too fast. It could only have been accomplished with the outstanding effort by all of you for your many usual tasks, but this year there have been additional duties connected to the celebrating. See especially the report in this issue on the picnic at the Kentville Research Station. What should we do for year 50?

WANTED! AN ASSISTANT EDITOR TO THE BNS NEWSLETTER

I should be a retiring editor sooner than later, so I would like to have someone work with me – planning the newsletters for a few issues – until we both feel secure enough to make the final transition. Ideally, my successor will have previous experience doing the initial planning and organizing of material to go to the copy editor, who does all the grammar, spelling, and stylistic correction, prepares the content for production, formats illustrations, and proofreads the galley proofs. Finally, the Gaspereau Press crew typeset it, and off the press it rolls. My successor will take my place on the BNS board of directors, which meets four times a year. Most importantly, you should be able to attend most of the meetings and field trips so that you will become well acquainted with the membership. There you will find your wealth of writers, artists, and photographers. You will also work closely with the program and field trip committee. The glue of any organization is its newsletter; its strength, vibrancy, and timing very much determine the survival of the organization. As a found-

ing member of BNS, I will always want to see us surmount the tests of time, but I really must turn this fine task over to someone younger, with new ideas and outlook. I know you are out there!! Don't be bashful. Please call me at 902-542-5678 for a chat!

2015 BNS Natural History Calendar

The 2015 Blomidon Naturalists Society natural history calendar is well into production and will be available soon. This is the 18th year of publication for this unique calendar, and as always it will contain exceptional pictures by local photographers, daily tide times for the entire year, current and historical events, and lots of fascinating natural history information.

Calendars will be available at the following retail outlets:

WOLFVILLE – Herbin Jewellers, EOS Fine Foods, and Blomidon Inn.
GREENWICH – Hennigar's Farm Market, Elderkin's Farm Market, and Noggins Corner Farm
PORT WILLIAMS – Shur Gain Feeds & Needs
HANTS BORDER – R&G Family Restaurant

These outlets sell the calendar for our benefit at no profit for themselves, and we thank them for that and encourage you to patronize these fine establishments.

Calendars will also be available at BNS monthly meetings, our booth at the Acadia Christmas Craft Fair, and from our treasurer, Ed, at edmasulis@ns.sympatico.ca. The price is still only $15 each.

Don't forget, calendars make an excellent Christmas gift, especially for those from away.

Board of Directors Report

By John Owen, BNS president

Your board had a regular meeting on August 21, 2014.

BNS Award: BNS has a revised application form for what is now called the Blomidon Naturalists Society Award. It was decided to change from a bursary to an award so that BNS can manage the candidate selection and monies, not the university. A candidate for the BNS Award has been selected and should be announced at the September meeting.

BNS 40th anniversary: The picnic went well. Denyse Kyle was thanked for the organization, and she thanked all those who helped. There were approximately 70 people registered. The anniversary cake was well done, and Larry Bogan and Roy Bishop made the first cut. The roast pig was good and there was plenty of food. The total cost was $989.55, substantially less than the $2000 that had been budgeted. A notice should be put on the website and an e-mail asking that photos be submitted.

Finance & Membership: The picnic invitation went to all members from 2013 and 2014. This added three membership renewals. The 2014 membership is approximately 140. This is 15 short of previous years.

The financial report is being prepared for submission to CRA by mid-January. Our financial position is good, with all bills to date having been paid.

AGM: The annual general meeting is scheduled for the November monthly meeting.

The main challenge for the nomination committee is to find new board members for 2015, as many of the present members have been

in place for some time. It is time for BNS to find some new blood, as the expression goes, to carry BNS for the next 40 years.

Two key positions, secretary and Newsletter editor, will require replacements. Current Newsletter editor, Jean Timpa, would like to work with a new volunteer to "learn the ropes" and to take over as editor after one year.

The next BNS board meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2014.

Upcoming Events

We will be holding several special events in 2014 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of BNS. Watch the Newsletter, our website (www.blomidonnaturalists.ca), the BNS and NatureNS e-mail lists, BNS Twitter feed (@bns1974), and other local media for information as the schedule of events unfolds. We will also be holding a special speaker series throughout 2014 – *BNS: 40 Years and Counting* – featuring local experts reflecting on changes observed since the early days of BNS and providing vision for the decades to come.

MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at 7:30 p.m., usually on the third Monday of each month, in Room BAC241 of the Beveridge Arts Centre of Acadia University on the corner of Main Street and Highland Avenue, Wolfville. Please note that the December meeting is scheduled for ***December 8*** *to avoid the Christmas rush. Parking is available off Highland Avenue, on Acadia Street, and at the parking area around the Robie Tufts Nature Centre. Everyone is welcome.*

Monday, October 20, 2014 – *Wicked Plants – a Halloween Special*, with Twila Robar-DeCoste. Note: This talk takes place in room BAC244. It is a joint meeting with the Valley Gardeners. Come and explore the *dark side* of some of our well-known plants.

Twila has illustrated numerous books and publications for such clients as Nova Scotia Tourism, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Agriculture Canada, Ducks Unlimited, *Canadian Geographic*, and several natural history books for local naturalists such as Dr. Merritt Gibson.

☞ BNS: 40 YEARS AND COUNTING ☜

Monday, November 17, 2014 – *Four Decades of Adventures*, with Bernard Forsythe.

Many great scientists and naturalists have been spawned in the Annapolis Valley this century, and Bernard Forsythe is one of the most knowledgeable, passionate, and highly respected of them. He has made great contributions to our knowledge of local flora and fauna through long-term involvement in the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme (he has submitted over 3,000 records), Barred Owl nest-monitoring programs, and orchid and wetlands excursions. His commitment to field research is paralleled by his passion for disseminating knowledge to others. In 2013, the Canadian Wildlife Federation gave Bernard the Stan Hodgkiss Canadian Outdoorsperson of the Year Award, presented to an "outstanding individual in the field of conservation." Bernard has been a member of the Blomidon Naturalists Society since 1975 (year 2) and in that time has given many presentations and led many field trips.

In this talk Bernard will reflect on more than four decades as a naturalist in Nova Scotia and what he has seen in that time – for better and for worse. His stories of adventure will be told using imagery cast by the warm glow of a slide projector.

Monday, December 8, 2014 – *Big Meadow Blues and the Road to Recover One of Canada's Rarest: The Endangered Eastern Mountain*

Avens, with Nicholas Hill. The Eastern Mountain Avens is a globally rare (G2) Arctic-alpine plant that only grows in alpine New Hampshire and in fens and swamps at sea level on the Digby Peninsula. There its stronghold is the fens around Big Meadow Bog. However, we are fast losing this habitat, the delayed reaction to a failed agriculture that made a series of deep ditches running the length of the bog in 1958. Nick will speak on current collaborative recovery work, which promises to hold many benefits for the species, the peatland ecosystem, and the village community.

Nick Hill is a plant ecologist at the Fern Hill Institute for Plant Conservation – an ecological consultancy that specializes in wetland and plant conservation issues. Its mission is to better understand and protect the diversity and integrity of native Nova Scotian ecosystems, with particular attention to wetland functions. http://fernhillns.ca/fernhillnsWP/

Monday, January 19, 2015 – *Topic to be announced*. Michael Stokesbury.

Mike is Assistant Professor, Tier II Canada Research Chair in the Ecology of Coastal Environments, and Director of the Weston Animal Care Facility at Acadia University. The focus of Mike's research program is to quantify how human activities in the coastal zone may affect the spatial behaviour of fishes. The results of the program can be used to mitigate the negative effects of human activities on fish populations.

FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER NATURE EVENTS

Saturday, October 11, 2014 – *Kingsport Mudflat Critters* (*shells, snails, clams, worms, crabs, mud shrimps, sand shrimps, etc.*). Jim Wolford (902-542-9204) will lead us on a hike to the bottom of the Minas Basin at low tide to see the incredible diversity of life on the mudflats. Rubber boots or old washable shoes are a must (we can hose them off afterwards at a nearby house). Also bring shovels and pails (but not for collecting of live critters). The low tide (range approximately

14.8 m) will be early, so meet at the Wolfville Waterfront at 7:30 a.m., or at the Kingsport Wharf at 8:15 a.m.

Saturday, October 11, 2014 – *Observing Session at Grand Pre.* A joint event with the Minas Astronomy Group, Valley Family Fun, and BNS. Join astronomers Roy Bishop, Larry Bogan, Pat Kelly, and Sherman Williams at 7:15 p.m. for a tour of the night sky. Location: The old parking lot at Grand Pre National Historic Site, on the east side of the road next to the dykelands. The tour will start with the planet Mars, possibly Saturn very low in the southwestern sky, and the brighter stars visible to the unaided eye. Later, Neptune and Uranus are on the agenda, together with star clusters and galaxies. (Rain/cloud date: the next evening, October 12.)

Sunday, October 19, 2014 – *Wallbrook Fall Colours, Late Wildflowers, and a Beautiful View*. George Forsyth (902-542-7116). A walk at Ralph Stirling's in Wallbrook. Have you ever seen the view of Melanson and the Minas Basin from the Wallbrook Tower? Many people have seen this tower when driving by, but few have been near it or even inside. Well, George will have the key. At this time of year we will also see some spectacular hardwood trees in fall colours and some late wildflowers. Meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre (Front Street, Wolfville) at 1:00 pm, to drive to Wallbrook, or meet at Ralph Stirling's at 1:15 pm. This will be an easy walk suitable for all, especially young people.

Saturday, November 1, 2014 – *Blomidon Trail Hike.* Colin and Ellen Darlington (902-445-5447). Join the Chebucto Hiking Club for a moderate 13 km hike at Blomidon Provincial Park. This hike is suitable for all ages and is rated 4C – a good deal of significant hill climbing and a significant part of the walk takes place on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky, rooted paths). We will meet at the Blomidon Provincial Park lower parking lot at 11:00 am. Please bring a lunch and lots of water.

Saturday, December 20, 2014 – *Wolfville Christmas Bird Count*. The Christmas bird count has been an annual tradition since 1900, now with over 50,000 participants from all across North America. A vast pool of bird data has been created on the status and distribution of early winter bird populations. The count area is a circle 24 km in diameter where volunteers count all the birds they see on the count day. All levels of birders are invited to participate in the Wolfville count. You may be assigned your own area within the circle or join with others who may be more experienced. To participate, contact Alison Bogan, the compiler, at 902-678-0446 or alison@bogan.ca or at a BNS meeting before the count. There is no longer a $5 fee for participants, but free-will donations can be made to Bird Studies Canada.

Those with bird feeders in the count area (12 km) from Hennigar's Farm Market) who prefer to count from home are invited to keep track of the birds at their feeders for all or any part of the count day and get that information to Jim Wolford at 902-542-9204 or jimwolford@eastlink.ca. Following the count, around 5:00 p.m., all participants are invited to Richard and Liz Stern's for a tally count and chowder/chili supper. The address is 317 Middle Dyke Road, north from the lights at the intersection of Belcher Street and the dyke road from New Minas, just before Chipmans Corner. Richard and Liz can be reached at rbstern@ns.sympatico.ca or 902-678-1975. There is lots of room for parking and everyone is welcome.

Sunday, December 21, 2014 – *Winter Solstice Family Frolic* We invite everyone to welcome the winter season and continue the 5000-year tradition of celebrating the return of the Sun after the longest night of the year. We will meet around a roaring bonfire at Noggins Corner Farm and set off for a hike through the centuries-old pine and hemlock forest. We will pass an 18th century Acadian cellar, Poor House graveyard and a huge Bald Eagle nest. We will look for tracks and signs of wildlife, call for owls in the deep woods, and view the stars from the dykes (weather permitting). We will make our way back to the bonfire for hot apple cider and share a toast to a winter season

full of light and good cheer to all. Charlane Bishop (902-542-2217) and Harold Forsyth (902-542-5983) will be the leaders. Meet at Noggins Corner Farm in Greenwich at 6:30 p.m.

Friday, December 26, 2014 – *47th Annual Kingston Christmas Bird Count*. Wayne Neily (902-765–2455, neilyornis@hotmail.com) will be compiling the count again this year. It is a 12 km radius circle centred at the intersection of Main and Bridge Streets in Kingston. All are welcome to participate as field observers, or, if you live within the circle, as feeder observers, but you must contact the compiler in advance so that you can be included in the planning.

Sunday, December 28, 2014 – *West Hants Christmas Bird Count.* Patrick Kelly (902-472–2322, patrick.kelly@dal.ca) will be compiling the count again this year. All are welcome to participate, but please contact the compiler as soon as possible so that you can be included in the planning. Following the count, around 5 p.m., all participants are invited to a tally and potluck supper at 159 Town Rd, Falmouth.

Saturday, January 17, 2015 – *Winter on Snowshoes*. Snow transforms the landscape into stories that unfold as we follow tracks of foxes, mice, and other mammals. A Snowshoe Hare hops along and is pounced on by a Great Horned Owl. Without snow to show us the tracks, wing marks, and perhaps a drop of blood, we would not have known the drama took place. Soren Bondrup-Nielsen (902-582-3971) will lead this hike on snowshoes or skis, and we will explore the properties of snow (its insulative value, for example). By studying the characteristic imprints made by different organisms we will interpret the various stories that have unfolded. Meet at the Wolfville waterfront at 10 a.m. for a two-hour, non-strenuous hike at a nearby location to be determined by weather and snow conditions.

☞ *BNS: 40 Years and Counting* ☜

40TH ANNIVERSARY PICNIC

Saturday, august 9, 2014, Kentville Research Station picnic ground and Kentville Ravine – Denyse Kyle and her committee of all things magic put together a wonderful celebration at the Kentville Research Station picnic ground. The picnic attracted 70 celebrants, a marvellous turnout. Activities (see following reports) included a scavenger hunt for kids, measuring tall trees, hunting for mushrooms, and in the evening looking and listening for things that go bump in the night. Best of all was the supper, the cake, and the exclamations that we really ought to do this more often! Three cheers for Denyse and all others who have in any way helped us so grandly march on through recent special months.

For more photos, see the BNS website: http://blomidonnaturalists.ca/node/516

KRISTINA LEHTONEN

KID STUFF
by Marina Myra

August 9, 2014 – Twelve children attended the BNS picnic with their parents or grandparents this year. They were entertained by some activities that I helped organize [Marina is from the Young Naturalists Club – ed.]. First we played some classic games like Turtle Tag, where the designated coyote runs around on all fours and tries to flip over the turtles that are trying to scurry out of reach. Once a turtle has been tagged and struggles in vain on its shell with its legs wiggling in the air, another turtle must help it to right itself. You can imagine the laughter as the turtles lie in the grass with legs in the air, yelling for a comrade to lend a hand.

We then used Touch Boxes to find textures in the forest. The boxes are made from egg cartons with different texture words written in each cup. The children ran around in pairs, and after filling their boxes the group circled-up and shared what they had found. The objects in the boxes were then offered back to the forest.

There was another scavenger hunt at 5 p.m., and forest features – such as Neat Mushroom, Swamp Smell, Animal Poop – were explored This activity kept the young people occupied until the delicious food was ready at 5:30.

BIG TREES AT KENTVILLE RAVINE
by Larry Bogan

August 9, 2014 – The object was to observe and measure the size of a few of the big trees that grow in the bottom of the Kentville Ravine. Ed Sulis had selected an Eastern Hemlock and a Sugar Maple of impressive size. I led the group and demonstrated my method of measuring. All that was required was a long steel measuring tape. The tree diameter was determined by measuring the circumference at breast height and dividing by 3.14. Measuring the height of the tree is more challenging. Briefly, the method is as follows:

JANET WHITMAN

Founding members Larry Bogan & Roy Bishop

1. Measure a distance away from the base (typically 100 ft., 30 m, or an equivalent number of your measured paces – mine is 5 ft. for each two steps), where the top and base of the tree are both visible.
2. Hold the tape vertically at arm's length and sight the top and base on the tape. That distance on the tape is proportional to the height of the tree.
3. Measure the distance from your eye to the tape (use the tape).
4. Calculate the height = (distance from tree) × (tree height on tape) ÷ (distance to your eye). [The height will be in the same units as the distance.]

We also took pictures of the tree with a person beside it for scale, and we determined is location by GPS.

The trees in the ravine are not the biggest in diameter, but they are some of the tallest around. We also found an impressively tall White Pine (the tallest tree I've ever measured in Nova Scotia). The results:

	diameter (cm)	height (m)	NSFT score (NS Forest Technicians method)
Eastern Hemlock	80	31	111
Sugar Maple	69	37*	106
White Pine	98	41	139

*NOTE: height uncertain – base could not be seen

Besides viewing and measuring the trees, we all enjoyed the environment of the ravine with its green, lush environment and quiet solitude.

FUNGUS FORAGING
by Ken Harrison

AUGUST 9, 2014 – Bill Shaw and Ken Harrison led a group of about 28 enthusiastic people to look for mushrooms and other plants along the edge of the Ravine trail from the Picnic Grove down to Elderkin Brook. The rains of July weren't perfectly timed, so the numerous *Russula* and *Lactarius* were overmature and in poor condition.

A number of young, tiny and dark-coloured black trumpets, jelly babies, and earth tongues (all less than 2 cm tall) challenged the sharpest eyes in the group. The leaders were able to identify some Blue-stain Fungus (*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*) on decaying wood. A few of the very small garlic-scented *Marasmius scorodonius* were collected from the needle litter. One very small *Amanita* was found. It wasn't one of the pure-white deadly poisonous species, but we were able to point out the swollen stem base (volva) that is hidden below ground level. That volva on the deadly white amanitas can be broken off and left behind by inexperienced collectors, which can lead to fatal consequences. That actually happened in the Hantsport area in the early 1930s, causing three fatalities.

KRISTINA LEHTONEN

NIGHT HIKE
by Bernard Forsythe

August 9, 2014 – The final event of the celebration was a walk at dusk along the Kentville Ravine. Although I had not recently been to the area after dark, I agreed to see if we could find anything of interest. After 8 p.m. a dozen of us, several from as far away as Halifax, met at the picnic ground. As the sky darkened, a couple of crickets began their evening song. Up in the Red Oaks an Eastern Wood-Pewee continued singing until it was dark enough for us to use flashlights.

The ravine trail, with fallen logs, has perfect habitat for Red-backed Salamanders. We turned over several logs, revealing two of these terrestrial amphibians. The logs and salamanders were returned to where they were found. James Churchill turned on a bat detector, getting no response. At the base of a tree a constant tiny fluorescent-like light was spotted and examined. It may have been the juvenile stage of a firefly.

Barred Owls will often respond to an imitation of their calls. After a few tries I got a reply from a deep-voiced male Barred Owl. In no

time the higher pitched calls of a female joined in, to the delight of our group. The male flew to a tree directly over our heads. To the owls, my calls were a possible intruder into their territory. What followed was a long series of eight *whoo* calls mixed in with simple loud *whooah*s as well as more complicated calls.

Standing in dark woods enjoying this wilderness was new to several on this outing. When I suggested it was time to head back out of the shadows a reply came: "Oh no, not yet." As we headed up the bank to the picnic grounds a bright Moon shone through the tops of the tall hemlocks. Keen participants in no hurry to leave the woods helped me realize we really had found things of interest.

FIELD TRIP

Cape Split

by Patrick Kelly and Jim Wolford

TRIP 1

Sunday, may 11, 2014 – The first trip was a joint walk between the Blomidon Naturalists Society and the Halifax Field Naturalists, and although there were a few people from the Halifax area, none appeared to be HFN members. We had 15 total participants, including two very energetic young girls; Mark Thompson (whose partner Molly MacGregor was a student of Jim Wolford's from long ago); Douglas Guptill from Dartmouth, who usually comes out for canoe trips, so his presence was a nice surprise; and naturalist–photographer Paul Murray, who later sent us a link to a number of the photos he look along the way. They may still be viewable at http://tinyurl.com/mjjqqnb.

We had dense fog for the drive there. On the way out we could hear foghorns, possibly both from the Parrsboro shore and from Baxters

Harbour. It remained cool and overcast until early afternoon, when the Sun finally broke through, causing many of the Spring Beauties to open up. We saw a Snowshoe Hare early in the walk, and several Red Squirrels were seen or heard.

Besides the zillions of Spring Beauties in flower, other flowers included Purple (or Red) Trillium (nearly all were still closed up, but at least one open flower was photographed), toothwort had flower buds, Wild Lily-of-the-Valley had leaves up, a tiny patch of white violet flowers was seen, and Beaked Hazelnut shrubs were in bloom. One barkless tree trunk showed the black strap-like rhizomorphs of the Honey Mushroom. Two recently cut surfaces of some birch branches (trail clearing) were covered with a creamy, frothy, foamy layer, which we could only guess was some sort of fungus.

Birds listed included Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, and raven. Double-crested Cormorants were at nests at the end of the Split, as were Great Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls. As we started back, we had a great view of a Broad-winged Hawk circling the area. Paul got some great photos, which aided in identification. After the walk, Jim checked the Bald Eagle nest on Huntley Road (in Scots Bay). He noted that while an adult was standing on/in the nest, and a few times showed interest in something in the cup – probably at least one small eaglet – he never definitely saw a chick in 15 minutes or so of observing.

TRIP 2

SATURDAY, MAY 24, 2014 – Sherman Williams was going to co-lead this trip, but a recent ankle injury prevented that, so it was nice to have Jim Wolford along even if we only had two others with us, namely Sandra and Bernard Forsythe. It was a cool morning but with bright overcast, much better than the dense fog on May 11. The wind was fairly strong and from the north. Jim noted that the whole length of the trail had as much bird song as he had ever heard there in 35 years of annual spring walks. Birds spotted included raven, Blue-headed Vireo, American Robin, Black-and-White Warbler, Yel-

low-rumped Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Ovenbird, a very probable Prairie Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Parula, American Redstart, and White-throated Sparrow. Other birds recorded included Double-crested Cormorant (about 20 nests at the Split, some noticeably with youngsters), Great Black-backed Gull (60+ nests, and chicks present), Herring Gull (10 nests seen, but more nests on cliffs not viewed), 1 Common Eider, a Spruce Grouse (heard drumming by Patrick on the return trip), Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Least Flycatcher, Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Purple Finch. Jim was able to hear a lot of their songs, including many of the warblers, which made him feel quite good!

On the upper section of the trail, the trilliums and Dutchman's-breeches were in full bloom; what a change two weeks can make! On the way out we saw two Snowshoe (Varying) Hares. The first one was on the path; as we slowly approached it was quite content to hop to the side and continue eating. It was only when we got a metre from it that it (and the second one we had not originally seen) bounded off into the woods. As on the previous trip, we saw quite a few chipmunks and Red Squirrels.

The bright morning overcast had lots of the Spring Beauty flowers open, but then partly sunny conditions in the afternoon opened them all, and the white carpets on the forest floor were impressive. Jim's list of plants in bloom or otherwise notable includes Spring Beauty, Goldthread, Common Dandelion, American Fly-honeysuckle, Toothwort (including a cut-leaved form that may be a sterile hybrid but had flowers like the common toothwort), abundant Purple Trillium (and we saw about 20+ creamy white flowers with reddish centres), Dewberry (or trailing raspberry), Small-flowered Crowfoot (a buttercup), Dutchman's-breeches, Blue Violet, Red Baneberry, Rosy Twisted Stalk (and possibly several White Twisted Stalk – we need to study the identification marks next time before going out there!). Bernard spotted some wild Solomon's Seal in a couple of places, *Clintonia* (or blue-bead lily) with flower buds, Hobblebush (just one plant, central small flowers not open yet), wild

aralia with flower buds, alder with open catkins, Beaked Hazelnut with finished male catkins still on plants, Cuckoo Flower, and wild Strawberry.

Compared with our first walk, the ferns were much more developed and everywhere along the way. Abundant were wood fern, Lady Fern (both green and red forms), Beech Fern, Sensitive Fern, Cinnamon fern, Christmas Fern, and others.

A check of the Huntley Road eagle nest on the way home showed an adult eagle, but no youngsters were visible.

FIELD TRIP

Herbert River Trail

by Patrick Kelly

Saturday, June 15, 2014 – This walk is done as an event for two groups: the Blomidon Naturalists Society and the Nova Scotia Bird Society. It is usually a popular walk, as it covers varied terrain and, being on a long-abandoned rail bed, is easy walking. The poor weather forecast for the morning likely deterred a lot of people; only four showed up besides me: Richard and Liz Stern, Mira Furgoch (a geneticist from New York doing an internship at the IWK hospital), and Chase Mosher (originally from the Sheet Harbour area, visiting from his home in Quebec). The heavy rain had stopped by 8 a.m., and by the time we started the weather was nice.

We saw 34 bird species, typical for this trip, though not everyone saw all of them. We didn't' see the Common Merganser (and young) seen on the river the last two years. As usual, one of the dead trees had a Ruby-throated Hummingbird perched on a branch. Almost a dozen Cedar Waxwings were seen up and down the trail, and they seem to be there every year. Another regular on this trip is the Rose-

breasted Grosbeak. We saw two, including one male who sang for 5–10 minutes from a treetop beside the trail. We saw evidence of breeding: Alder Flycatcher carrying nesting material and both Yellow and Chestnut-sided Warblers carrying food. We also got great views of a Snapping Turtle that was able to hunker down into a small wet patch so that is was completely hidden. Usually Bernard Forsythe is on this trip, and he is very good at rooting out rare plants, but this year we had to make do with the more common plants, including the Bloodroot that is prevalent near the river.

Returning to the start of the trail, we popped across the road to St. James Cemetery to see the large oak and Black Locust trees, and we had the added bonus of a great view of a curious Black-and-White Warbler. Richard and Liz had to leave, so I took Chase and Mira to a nearby house on Belmont Road that has lots of feeders. There we added White-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpecker. Our last stop was to a gravel pit / topsoil quarry near the intersection of Belmont Road and Ferry Road. While covering this area for the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas, I had come across a colony of Bank Swallows in the face of the area from which the topsoil was being taken. The owner was there, and so was the colony! He said that they had been there for over 60 years, as he recalls them from when he was a child and his father showed them to him. He always keeps clear of that area while they are around and said we could have a

BRIAN MCKIBBIN

closer look for about half an hour until a dump truck was due. He did caution us against getting too close, unless we didn't mind being splattered with droppings! There were about 20 swallows coming and going from the nest holes, including about eight that had been covered the previous afternoon when a section of the soil gave way. It was amazing that they were able to rebuild their nests so quickly.

FIELD TRIP

Marsh Madness!

by James Churchill

June 21, 2014 – Miner's Marsh: the Valley's best known secret? An ecological stronghold in the urban jungle? It depends on whom you ask – but Miner's Marsh is a biodiversity hotspot in the heart of downtown Kentville. It is a great location for discovering resident wildlife, ephemeral migrant waterfowl, songbirds and shorebirds, basking Eastern Painted Turtles, and the occasional mink. It has its own Facebook group: Friends of the Miner's Marsh. It has its own resident family of Raccoons that is either adored or maligned. It is a resource for many bird species of conservation concern: Peregrine Falcon, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Canada Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Chimney Swift, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern. Recently it has also been visited by some special species for our area, such as Mourning Warbler, Little Blue Heron, Great Egret, Marsh Wren, and Black-necked Stilt. [For a more comprehensive list of bird species observed at the marsh visit eBird: http://ebird.org/ebird/canada/hotspot/L2088179.]

Marsh Madness! was born in hopes of raising awareness of this special place and encouraging exploration and discovery of wetland systems among local residents and young families. On the morn-

ing of June 21 about 70 of us convened to explore and document the biodiversity of the marsh: young families, Valley and Berwick Young Naturalist Clubs, students, scientists, passersby. Representatives of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, the Fernhill Institute of Plant Conservation, the E.C. Smith Herbarium of Acadia University, and the Blomidon Naturalists Society helped kids and locals comb the marsh for wildlife. A Purolator Tackle Hunger barbeque successfully raised a whack of money for local food banks. The winner of the morning draw for a free BNS family membership was Sophia Swinamer (did you know this, Sophia?)

Many discoveries were made, many were reported on our "sightings board" (something the marsh could use), and many more observations are still rolling in. We hope to soon have a list to share.

At dusk, about 60 of us – including many kids past their bedtimes – congregated at the marsh for an exploration of night life, led by Andrew Hebda of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History. Early raindrops did not dissuade the crowd, and with an ultrasonic bat detector and black light in tow, our large group crept (?) around the marsh. Andrew taught us about phenology and behaviour of crepuscular and nocturnal species. Though it was generally a quiet night, we heard Spring Peepers and Bullfrogs. An Ovenbird was giving its complex night flight song. Locally resident Chimney Swifts and Sora were not detected. While the crowd was still gathered, one bat was picked up by the detector. The crowd went silent, and flashlights revealed it fluttering and foraging around the forest edge on the north side of the marsh. Andrew identified it as a Little Brown Bat. A check on the black light set up on the spit was, unfortunately, relatively unfruitful, and Andrew explained that surveys on other nights would likely uncover more species. When the crowd had dissipated, three more Little Brown Bats were picked up foraging at the forest edge on the west side of the marsh, and a striking Cecropia moth was found flying around the lights at the marsh entrance.

Numerous people commented that this should be an annual event. We will see you again next year, folks, with some new twists and maybe some Tree Swallow nestboxes to check as well.

Swift Night Out 2

by James Churchill

July 25, 2014 – Over the past several decades, numerous local naturalists have contributed to knowledge and fanaticism around the now provincially endangered, nationally threatened Chimney Swift (*Chateura pelagica*). In 1975, when my parents were still basking in child-free years, Jim Wolford first perched by the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, counting blurry, fluttering birds dropping into a chimney at dusk. Over the years, many local scientists and naturalists have been there to count birds and fight for this Wolfville chimney.

To help perpetuate swift fever in the area we joined forces with Maritimes SwiftWatch of Bird Studies Canada (Holly Lightfoot) and the Nova Scotia Bird Society (Dave Currie, Kate Steele, Chris Pepper). About 30 people congregated at the BAC to hear Holly and Jim's talks about the natural history, monitoring, research efforts, and history of swifts in the area. A highlight was that Bernard Forsythe brought photographs of a nest site he had discovered and monitored in the Black River Lake / Methals Lake area many years ago – one of the very few natural nest sites known in Canada.

[As a side note, a recent paper in the Canadian journal *Avian Conservation and Ecology*, "Tree cavity use by Chimney Swifts: implications for forestry and population ecology" (found online at: www.ace-eco.org/vol9/iss2/art1/), provides dimensions for the very few natural roosting/nesting sites, including Nova Scotia sites first observed at Methals Lake in 1905 (R.D. Elliot), the Liscomb Game Sanctuary in 1947 (A.W. Cameron), Black River Lake near Dead Brook in 1979 (B. Forsythe), Methals Lake outlet in 1980 (B. Forsythe), and Butler Road near Black River Lake in 2010 (R. Whitman).]

Discussion also ensued around exciting recent observations of barn-nesting Chimney Swifts in the East Dalhousie area. Although the first observations of this phenomenon were made by Greta and Donna Crossland in the 1980s, recent investigations, primarily by Mark Elderkin (NS Dep't of Natural Resources) and Donna Crossland, have turned up evidence of at least six currently or recently active nest sites in that area. As a result, 2015 promises to hold great opportunities for research and discovery related to swift site selection, movement, and behaviour. Will these findings challenge us to rethink Chimney Swift conservation and recovery?

Around dusk we paraded down to the Robie Tufts Nature Centre chimney, where a crowd of about 100 swifts entertained a crowd of about 100 humans. Tables full of coffee (courtesy of JustUs!) kept us awake and jittery, which might have led to some counting errors.

FIELD TRIP

Monarch Butterflies

by Larry and Alison Bogan

August 2, 2014 – This trip took place at our property on Brooklyn Street north of Cambridge, Kings County. Our home is on a 2 ha wild field that contains abundant Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). The Monarch larvae feed on the plant, and adults breed in the field. It has attracted Monarchs for over eight years, and we have taken to raising some of them in our home. We showed visitors our methods as well as the product of our activity. The Monarchs started laying in early July this year, and we took dozens of eggs and larvae inside to protect them from predators in the field. Most of the larvae were in the last instar or pupa stage, but none had evolved to the adult butterfly stage yet.

From 10 a.m. to noon, participants heard about

- the history of the site, which was allowed to go wild in 2006, the milkweed subsequently spreading naturally
- the maintenance of the field for Monarch raising
- some of the Monarch life cycle and how to raise a butterfly
- how to establish a Monarch Waystation (ours is #5020) from Monarch Watch (monarchwatch.org)
- the best flowering plants to provide nectar for Monarchs and other butterflies to create a butterfly garden such as Alison's

Some key plants are Bee Balm (*Monarda*), sedum, Coneflower (*Echinacea*), and Gay Feather (*Liatris*). Red Clover and goldenrod grow wild in the field. Examples of other milkweeds in the garden were Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and Buttefly Weed (*A. tuberosa*).

We encouraged participants to explore the paths mowed around the perimeter and through the field.

The day was overcast but warm, and the butterflies were active in the field. We saw Wood Nymph, Great Spangled Fritillary, and Clouded Sulphur, as well as Monarchs. Two of the Monarchs were coupled and flying across the field. Some saw more Monarchs, estimating that there were possibly six or seven there. Participants were encouraged to look for eggs and caterpillars of the Monarch, and many were discovered.

Thirty-six people attended, including several families with children, who loved to see and take pictures of the display of caterpillars and chrysalises. They also observed caterpillars in the wild and captured butterflies with their nets. Several people took wild caterpillars home, along with milkweed to feed them and milkweed plants to grow on their properties.

Later in the day I watched a Monarch fly from milkweed to milkweed, stopping briefly. On examination, there were eggs attached to the under-leaf. More Monarchs to grow.

Addendum (22 Aug): Immediately after the field trip, on August

4, the Monarchs started eclosing (emerging from their chysalises). The sex distribution was August 4: 1 F; 6: 1 M; 7: 2 M; 12: 1 F; 13: 4M 4F; 14: 2M 7F; 15: 1M 7F; 16: 7M 5F; 17: 3M; 18: 1M 1F; 21: 2M 2F; 22: 1M 1F. The 12 released on the 16th were the most we have ever handled in one day. Of all 52 we released so far we have tagged 20. Monarchs are still laying eggs as of the 21st, and we have nine chrysalises, seven caterpillars, and one egg under protection in our house. Although we protect the Monarchs as much as possible, we lose some: one to a spider, one to a unknown predator, two chysalises damaged in handling, and one caterpillar died for unknown reasons.

[Update September 23: For the season, the Bogans raised and released a total of 71 Monarchs – ed.]

FIELD TRIP

Shorebirds and Stewardship

by Rick Whitman

Saturday, August 16, 2014 – I led this field trip from the Evangeline Beach parking area. The trip was primarily for shorebirds, and we certainly saw many thousands of them. George Alliston and I felt that we saw on the order of 30–50,000 peeps in total, most of which would be Semipalmated Sandpipers. We also had several hundred Semipalmated Plovers and modest numbers of Least Sandpipers and White-rumped Sandpipers. Everyone who stayed for the entire trip was able to get good views of all four species.

We started out with 20 participants. We moved slowly east along the beach and also ventured out into the silt. It wasn't long before we found two Peregrine Falcons, perched on rocks, and everyone was able to view them through Larry Bogan's scope. I'm sure this was a lifer for several participants. Later we observed several flypasts from

KRISTIINA LEHTONEN

the Peregrines and half-hearted attacks that did not seem very serious. Perhaps a young bird was being trained. These "attacks" did not clear the peeps from the beach, although they were always put into the air.

We walked about 1 km to the east and then reversed direction as the tide slowly but surely advanced. We were not rushed as the shorebirds were pushed in closer and binoculars became more useful. Roy Bishop invited the reduced group up onto his cottage lawn, where the viewing angle was great and the birds were steadily closer. This is where the lesser-known Leasts and White-rumps were viewed the best, and everyone present was shown how they could be picked out from the crowd. We finally walked back to our cars after about 3½ hours of fine shorebirding.

On a related note, the BNS Minas Basin Important Bird Area Stewardship Committee has been active for a third year. The members are Roy Bishop, Richard Stern, Jim Wolford, Donald Sam (NS DNR), Sue Abbott (Bird Studies Canada), and myself as chair. Three of us make our greatest contribution simply by making numerous population estimates over the southbound migration period and reporting them on eBird or NatureNS. We are concerned about trash

left at East Point by people who clearly love to be outdoors but do not respect it. I have done a total cleanup at East Point in spring of 2013 and 2014. By mid-summer you would have no idea that it had been cleaned up. The Department of Natural Resources is genuinely interested in this problem. There is also concern within the Striped Bass fishing community, but whether that concern can be communicated to the individuals causing the problem remains to be seen.

NATURAL HISTORY

BNS 2014 Science Fair Award

by John Belbin

One of the many causalities of our never-ending winter was the regional science fair, which covers the three local counties of Annapolis, Kings, and West Hants. Students who had already been given awards at their own school fairs were entered into the regional one; from there a select few may make it into the national competitions.

This year the regional science fair in Middleton had real problems. It was cancelled twice because of the weather and the schools and colleges being shut down on the two normal judging days of March 26 and 27. Some students had managed to set up their projects before the vicious storm on March 25; those that hadn't were out of luck. We wound up doing three days' work in one day, and many students could not be present because of the rescheduling. It was sad to see a number of projects just standing there with no one to explain them. However, on the plus side were a number of students and projects from the Bridgetown area, which had been missing from recent science fairs.

There was no public viewing, and students took their projects home as soon as they were judged so that the staff could set up the room for the prize-giving that evening. This meant that the few judges available were mostly unable to check out any of the projects other than those they were assigned to formally evaluate. Lots of judges that would normally have come did not make it, and those few that were there had a heavy load even with the few projects present. The lack of judging was severe during the morning session at which the elementary projects were evaluated; however, Kings Edgehill School jumped in to fill the gap at the last minute.

A number of senior science students volunteered to become judges and did exceptionally well. I thus had the pleasure of sitting next to Eleanor Gallant, winner of the 2011 BNS Science Fair award. Her project, done when she was in grade 8 at Hantsport, was "Goldie vs. Goldie," a study of the learning abilities of her dog Sunny (a Golden Retriever) and her goldfish Angel. Her younger sister, Grace Gallant, had an entry in this fair, "Poo Power," which got a great deal of attention. She had actually constructed a working methane generator in her basement powered by cattle manure. The Gallants must have the ultimate in supportive parents!

I decided not to give an award to projects I had not properly evaluated, and as there was no one else to contribute opinions, there were very few options this year. As a result I only gave out one BNS award instead of the normal two.

The 2014 BNS Science Fair award went to Heidi Maxner of Hantsport for her project "Why budgies fly well and chickens don't." She spent a lot of time informing and showing me the function of all the various feathers found on her two kinds of birds. She had the differences and similarities down cold as well as the proportions and sizes of the two subjects. She was enthusiastic and had clearly done a detailed study on this subject. Her project was well illustrated, and she had lots of samples to illustrate her points. This young lady will go far.

A Rare Raptor Sighting

by Richard Stern

Brier island, at the end of Digby Neck, the western tip of Nova Scotia, is well known as a bird migration hot spot in spring and fall, and as a hawk migration area in particular. Hawks funnel down along the edge of the Bay of Fundy before heading farther south. They like to take advantage of thermals from late morning on, to soar and gain height before heading off.

On June 1, two keen birders and BNS members, Rick Whitman and I, went down there for the day, partly because I had to attend to some plumbing issues in my cabin, which is at the western end of the island close to Pond Cove, and also to see if we could find some good birds. We noticed a few adult Broad-winged Hawks soaring over the Village of Westport – with their striped tails and brown breast streaking. One was being harassed by a Common Grackle. We went down the lane to my cabin, where I spent the next half hour attending to my plumbing system. Rick, who was birding outside, suddenly called out, and then, "Richard, get out here right now! There's a large hawk with a striped tail that I can't really identify." "I can't, I'm in the middle of a very delicate procedure." "Richard, just get out here NOW." So I abandoned the delicate procedure, grabbed my camera, almost fell outside, and realized that there was a bird that looked like, and had the flight style of, a Turkey Vulture (common in that location), but that had prominent black and white stripes on the tail. It was soaring, but heading away with three more Broad-winged Hawks, which were considerably smaller.

Luckily, the bird decided to circle around, and I was able to get more photos from a better angle before the small flock headed off in

RICHARD STERN

Zone-tailed Hawk, Brier Island

an easterly direction over Pond Cove and disappeared. Neither of us could believe what we had seen initially, so we sat down and carefully studied the photos still in my camera. We noted the striping on the tail, the yellow cere and legs, the black head and body, axillaries and underwing coverts, and the fine vermiculations on the flight feathers. We consulted several field guides. Despite the extreme unlikelihood, the only possibility was *Zone-tailed Hawk*.

This bird normally occurs in North America only in southern Arizona, New Mexico, and west Texas, and is rare even there. Its range extends into mountainous areas in central and northern South America. It is partially migratory. Its hunting technique is a good example of animal mimicry. Turkey Vultures are very common in the bird's range, they soar with little flapping and a characteristic rocking motion, and as they only eat carrion, are no threat to live small mammals, which ignore them. And to a live small mammal a Zone-tailed Hawk looks just like a harmless Turkey Vulture until it's too late.

Although this is a totally unexpected rarity, there has been one previous sighting in Nova Scotia; in late September and early October 1976, one was seen and photographed around Musquodoboit

Harbour. It also follows on another totally unexpected southwestern raptor, a Northern (Crested) Caracara that was seen in various parts of the province in 2013. According to information on line, this was only the fourth confirmed sighting of Zone-tailed Hawk in eastern North America. Coincidentally, there was another sighting over Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, at around the same time, and subsequent comparisons of photos suggest that they were two different birds.

The photos of this bird were widely published on line and were thus vicariously enjoyed by many. This brings to 18 the number of raptor species I have seen on Brier Island (can you guess them all?). And with the subsequent extensive use of Drano, the plumbing procedure was eventually successfully completed!

NATURAL HISTORY

Banded Piping Plovers

by Bernard Forsythe

With declining numbers of several species of birds, Environment Canada is conducting research projects to understand the causes. Various standard metal plus coloured bands have been placed on the legs of shorebirds. Birders should get into the practice of checking and reporting any bands they spot. The type of band, colour, and placement on each leg should be noted, along with date and location. Photos are also welcome.

On August 20, 2014, Sandra and I walked Cherry Hill Beach, Lunenburg County. We found a Piping Plover with a metal band on its upper left leg. Its upper right leg held a black flag. The plover kept running with the flag in its shadow, so I was not able to read

any numbers. I found Sylvia Fullerton and joined her on her regular shorebird tally of Cherry Hill Beach. Sylvia had recorded several shorebird species, but most were in low numbers on this day. Our best find was a Baird's Sandpiper, a species I don't see every year.

As we returned along the beach, ahead of us were two young Piping Plovers. Each had a metal band high on its upper right leg. Each also had a grey flag on its upper left leg. These two were known to have been hatched and banded this year on Cherry Hill Beach. The earlier black-flagged Piping Plover was from elsewhere and on migration, possibly from PEI.

Send any sightings to:

Cheri Gratto-Trevor
Research Scientist, Shorebirds
National Wildlife Research Centre
Environment Canada
Ottawa ON K1A 0H3
E-mail: Cheri.Gratto-Trevor@ec.gc.ca
Phone: 1-800-327-2263 (1-800-327-BAND)

NATURAL HISTORY

Newfoundland Ice: Early Summer 2014

by Ed Sulis

A PLANNED trip to sail from Lewisporte to St. Anthony in late June became impossible because of massive ice floes blocking the northwest coast and preventing access to stopover ports such as

ED SULIS

Little Bay Islands, Baie Verte, Conche, and other small harbours. We continued to watch the ice charts daily, completed boat maintenance, and then on a beautiful sunny day, we decided to try our luck.

From Lewisporte north through Bay of Exploits, many icebergs of all sizes and shapes were there for us to admire in the sunshine. After turning west into Notre Dame Bay, we approached the long fingers of ice floes as they appeared on the horizon. A couple of leads that extended shoreward became dead ends, forcing us to return east. The ice floes are packed blocks of ice 1 or 2 metres out of the water and 20 m or less in length, impossible to navigate through with a sailboat.

Icebergs are scattered throughout the ice floes, but most travel in the ocean currents and stay separated from pack ice, which is more affected by wind. On returning east we observed the icebergs closely but always kept a good distance. One large iceberg was rocking gently in the ocean swell. It had formed a long shallow beach upon which the ocean swell was rolling up and breaking, putting the iceberg in motion. Amazing and scary to observe. Other icebergs had sections collapsing, seldom seen initially but heard as a very loud report, thus

directing our attention to the collapsing location. The collapse would extend several seconds, producing many smaller bits and creating a small advancing tsunami.

The good weather and good wind prevailed as we sailed east, eventually into Iceberg Alley, as the way into Twillingate Harbour has become known. The locals told us that this year has the record for the most ice and the greatest number of icebergs that they have ever experienced. The long-range expectations promise the same for the next two years.

Western Greenland glaciers such as Dodge and Brother John calve near Cape York, spilling their bergs into the northern end of Baffin Bay. These bergs are some of the fastest moving in the world as they enter the Labrador Current and travel south to reach Newfoundland within two-years. Here are a few notes about our icebergs:

- Source location, near Cape York: 75° 56.0' N, 65° 25.0' W. Destination, Iceberg Alley near Twillingate: 49° 40.0' N, 54° 45.0' W, for a straight-line distance of some 1600 nautical miles (3000 km) at a heading of about 170° true.
- The Arctic icebergs can be kilometres in length and 150 m high.
- The iceberg is frozen pure fresh water, with an internal temperature of –15°C to –20°C.
- The icebergs that do reach the coasts of Newfoundland after their long travel come to an end rather quickly by collapsing and melting in the warmer waters.
- The melting ice makes a fizzing sound as air bubbles, which were trapped in the snow layers thousands of years ago and compressed to form glacial ice, are released, giving them the name "bergy seltzer."

A beautiful time of year to visit the Rock for spectacular scenery and spectacular icebergs. A favorite destination will be Twillingate. Why travel elsewhere? Visit Newfoundland and Labrador and the Arctic for an unforgettable experience.

Nova Scotia Migration Count (NSMC)

by Larry Bogan

Saturday May 10 – For the 2014 Nova Scotia Migration Count, we did not have the best weather; clouds and rain were predicted but held off until later in the day, and the net count was good. The temperature varied from 11°C at 7 a.m. to 17°C at 2 p.m. The wind picked up during the day and hampered the count in the afternoon (gusts to 54 km/h). There were 36 participants at feeders and in the field.

Species	Regular	Feeder	Total
Snow Goose	2	0	2
Canada Goose	42	0	42
Wood Duck	4	0	4
American Widgeon	3	0	3
American Black Duck	43	5	48
Mallard	92	0	92
Green-winged Teal	10	0	10
Ring-necked Duck	9	0	9
Common Eider	15	0	15
Surf Scoter	4	0	4
Black Scoter	9	0	9
Hooded Merganser	2	0	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	102	5	107
Ruffed Grouse	6	0	6
Common Loon	2	0	2
Red-necked Grebe	1	0	1
Double-crested Cormorant	67	0	67
Great Blue Heron	2	0	2
Turkey Vulture	1	0	1
Bald Eagle	29	0	29
Northern Harrier	1	0	1

Species	Regular	Feeder	Total
Northern Goshawk	1	0	1
Red-tailed Hawk	3	0	3
Merlin	5	0	5
Peregrine Falcon	2	0	2
Killdeer	2	0	2
Spotted Sandpiper	4	0	4
Greater Yellowlegs	1	0	1
Willet	2	0	2
Wilson's Snipe	1	0	1
American Woodcock	4	0	4
Herring Gull	1260	0	1260
Iceland Gull	1	0	1
Glaucous Gull	1	0	1
Great Black-backed Gull	133	0	133
Black Guillemot	2	0	2
Rock Pigeon	46	3	49
Mourning Dove	91	28	119
Barred Owl	5	1	6
Chimney Swift	25	4	29
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0	1	1
Belted Kingfisher	6	0	6
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	14	0	14
Downy Woodpecker	30	14	44
Hairy Woodpecker	21	7	28
Black-backed Woodpecker	1	0	1
Northern Flicker	92	3	95
Pileated Woodpecker	10	1	11
Least Flycatcher	4	0	4
Eastern Pheobe	7	0	7
Blue-headed Vireo	34	0	34
Red-eyed Vireo	1	0	1
Blue Jay	104	25	129
American Crow	207	17	224
Common Raven	86	4	90
Tree Swallow	274	5	279
Bank Swallow	2	0	2
Cliff Swallow	1	0	1
Barn Swallow	51	0	51
Black-capped Chickadee	182	50	232
Red-breasted Nuthatch	43	0	43
White-breasted Nuthatch	5	1	6

Species	Regular	Feeder	Total
Brown Creeper	1	0	1
Winter Wren	1	0	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	6	0	6
Veery	5	0	5
Hermit Thrush	10	0	10
American Robin	302	22	324
Grey Catbird	3	0	3
European Starling	457	63	520
Cedar Waxwing	31	0	31
Nashville Warbler	1	0	1
Northern Parula	25	0	25
Yellow Warbler	7	0	7
Chestnut-sided Warbler	4	0	4
Magnolia Warbler	3	0	3
Yellow-rumped Warbler	117	1	118
Black-throated Green Warbler	20	0	20
Palm Warbler	10	0	10
Black-and-White Warbler	40	0	40
American Redstart	10	0	10
Ovenbird	33	0	33
Northern Waterthrush	3	0	3
Wilson's Warbler	1	0	1
American Tree Sparrow	0	2	2
Chipping Sparrow	32	15	47
Savannah Sparrow	23	0	23
Song Sparrow	284	15	299
Swamp Sparrow	3	0	3
White-throated Sparrow	62	3	65
Dark-eyed Junco	42	3	45
Northern Cardinal	25	18	43
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	1	4
Red-winged Blackbird	214	9	223
Rusty Blackbird	2	0	2
Common Grackle	170	12	182
Brown-headed Cowbird	0	1	1
Purple Finch	46	42	88
American Goldfinch	303	225	528
Evening Grosbeak	17	2	19
House Sparrow	6	0	6
Totals	5532	608	6140

- **Total Species: 101**
- Feeder Watchers: 19 (36 hr. watching)
- Field Observers: 21 (52.5 hr. on foot, 113 km on foot, 24 hr. by car, 366 km by car)
- Participants (alphabetical by first name): Adele Shutler, Alison Bogan, Andy Dean, Angus MacLean, Avril Harwood, Barry Yoell, Bernard Forsythe, Brenda Thexton, Chris Ross, D. Mander, Dave Shutler, Dave Tracey, Dianne Thorpe, Doug Linzey, E. Howard, Elizabeth Yoell, Gary Ness, George Alliston, George Forsyth, Gordon Thorpe, Harold Forsyth, Jean Timpa, Jim Wolford, Judy Tufts, Larry Bogan, Lisa McGarvie, Lois Tracy, Margaret Alliston, Richard Stern, Ruth Newell, Sam Bissix, Sheila McCurdy, Sherman Williams, Soren Bondrup-Neilsen, Sue Bissix, Walter Urben

NATURAL HISTORY

Growing Futures

by Melanie Priesnitz, Conservation Horticulturist,
Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens

Latin is alive and well at the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens. Walking into the lunchroom this summer, it was not unusual to hear our seasonal staff quizzing each other on the Latin names of native plants.

Plant identification, taxonomy, and nomenclature are just a few of the skills that our seasonal native plant conservationists Aaron Ashcroft Staples and Jasmine Cress had an opportunity to learn during their four-month work placement at the gardens.

They were able to work for us thanks to the Heritage Canada Young Canada Works program, which allows students opportunities to work in heritage sites across Canada. Having these young people

work with us to support the preservation of our living collection of local native plants has been very beneficial to our organization, the community, and the Acadian Forest Region as a whole.

Jasmine is studying Horticulture at the Dalhousie University Faculty of Agriculture and chose to work at the gardens this summer with the hope of an educational and rewarding work experience. She feels she has gained additional skills that she can apply to her future career working with plants. Jasmine hopes to pursue internships at botanical gardens overseas to continue her hands-on learning. She said that working here has given her "new knowledge of the cultural heritage contained within the Acadian Forest Region in Nova Scotia." She enjoyed learning about traditional uses of native plants as well as plants – brought by the Acadians and Planters – in our ethnobotany collection.

Aaron, a student of the Nova Scotia Community College horticulture program, feels that working at the gardens has positioned him well for entering into a future career: "The botanical gardens represented the perfect opportunity to explore the importance of our native habitats and plant life. It was important to me to cultivate an understanding in this area to better integrate strategies for sustainability into all my future endeavors in the horticulture industry."

The energy, commitment, and positive attitudes that both Aaron and Jasmine brought to the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens were greatly appreciated by the staff and visitors who had the opportunity to engage with them. In keeping with their new-found interest in the Latin language, we wish our summer students *vale et bonam fortunam referebat* (good bye and good luck).

Eco-Kings Update

by Janet Whitman

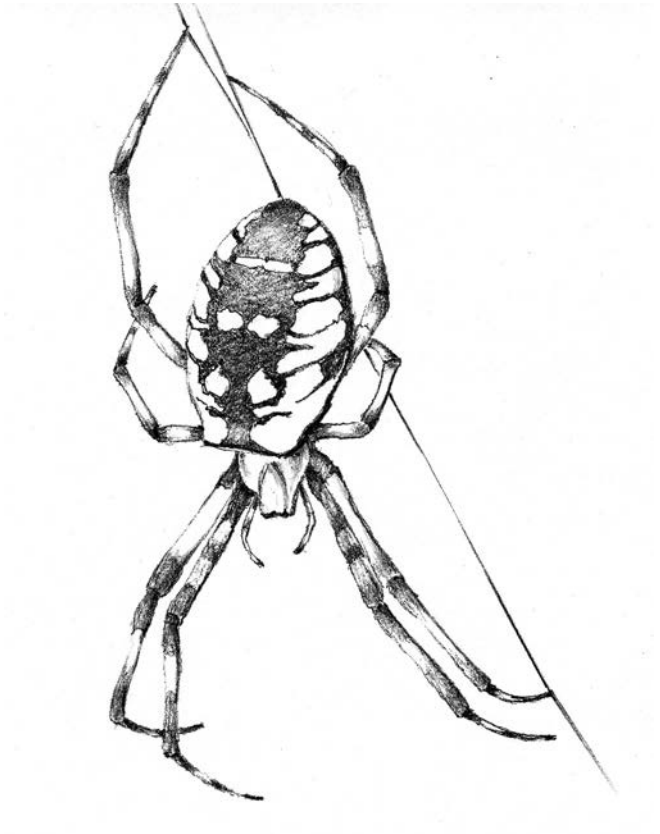
Eco-kings accomplished quite a bit over the summer, owing in large measure to the efforts of Acadia student Tzomi Burkhart, the regional sustainability coordinator whom we were able to hire with funding from the Kings County municipalities and the Service Canada Summer Jobs Initiative. She had a busy summer, spending time in each of the four municipal offices, working on a variety of local projects. Eco-Kings also benefited from her position, as she set up a new Eco-Kings website and maintained it throughout her work term. One of her first initiatives was to organize a Father's Day cycling awareness ride and help create a cycling awareness pamphlet. Over the summer she also developed a regional bike-trail map showing the rail trail and other important cycling landmarks between Wolfville and Berwick.

Along with Debbie Nielsen, sustainability coordinator for the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, Tzomi prepared and distributed an energy and climate change survey for the four municipalities to assess both areas of success and those that need improvement. The survey results will help identify both sustainability-related projects for the future and potential actions to decrease the carbon footprint of the municipalities.

Tzomi also helped evaluate proposals for the rapid transit / express bus feasibility study that Eco-Kings has undertaken with funding from Nova Scotia Moves and the Green Municipal Fund. She prepared a background information presentation for the MMM consulting group that has been engaged to carry out this study, and she promoted the survey that they developed to obtain public input. The project, which is assessing the feasibility of an express bus between

the Annapolis Valley and Halifax, is underway now and will continue through the fall. As well, Tzomi helped Kings Transit by developing and carrying out a survey to gather information about transit users, assess satisfaction with the current service, and propose changes that might increase ridership and efficiency.

Tzomi did a lot of public outreach work and really helped to facilitate communication about issues related to environmental sustainability. What we learned from the experience of having her working as a regional sustainability coordinator for the summer is that it would be very valuable to the municipalities to have someone working full time in this capacity.



JACK MCMASTER

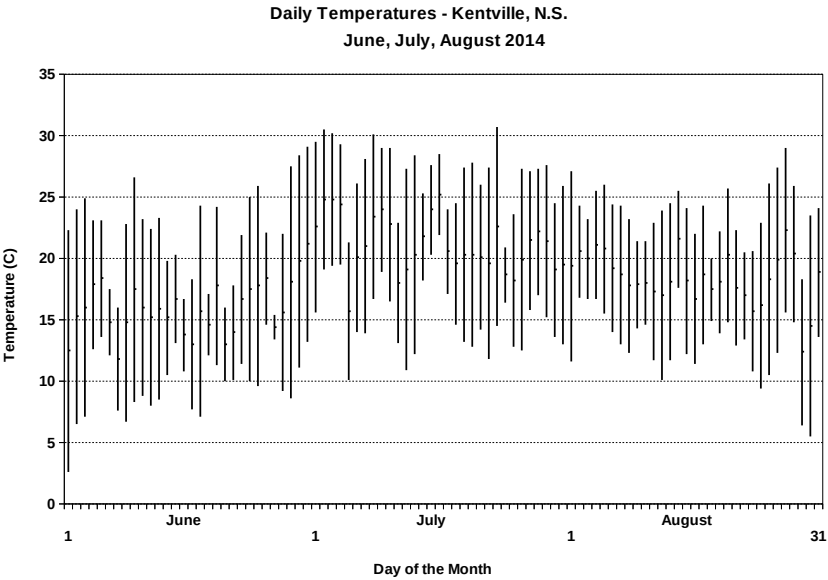
Summer Weather 2014, Eastern Annapolis Valley

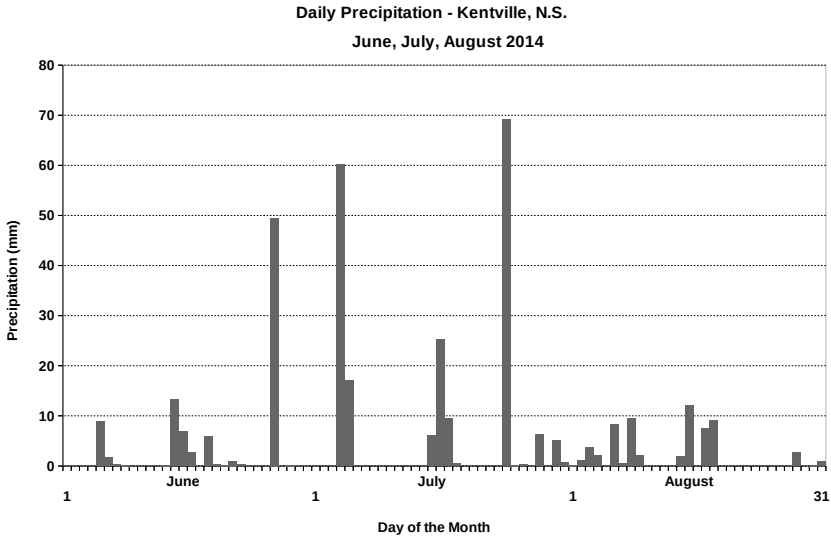
Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station

	Temperature			Precipitation
	Max (°C)	Min (°C)	Mean (°C)	(mm)
June 2014	22.0	9.9	16.0	91.0
(30 yr. average)	(21.5)	(10.4)	(16.0)	(82.0)
July 2014	26.9	15.3	21.2	200.0
(30 yr. average)	(24.9)	(14.0)	(19.5)	(84.0)
August 2014	23.8	13.0	18.4	61.0
(30 yr. average)	(24.3)	(13.6)	(19.0)	(77.0)
Season	24.3	12.8	18.6	352.0
(30 yr. average)	(23.6)	(12.7)	(18.2)	(243.0)

Source: Environment Canada data for Kentville, NS (http://weatheroffice.gc.ca) and Canadian Climate Normals and Averages (Kentville).

I wish the records of the local weather contained relative humidity because I think that is what would define this last summer. The temperatures were high, but the high humidity is what made the days less comfortable. July was both hot and wet, so the humidity was high.


Daily Temperatures - Kentville, N.S.
June, July, August 2014
Temperature (C)
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
June
July
August
1
1
1
31
Day of the Month


Daily Precipitation - Kentville, N.S.
June, July, August 2014
Precipitation (mm)
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
June
July
August
1
1
1
31
Day of the Month

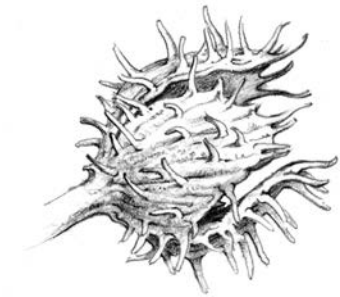
TEMPERATURES

The summer season was a little warmer than normal by only 0.4°C. July was the most extreme of the summer months, 1.7°C warmer than the average, primarily due to the average high temperature exceeding the normal by 2°C. August was a little cooler than normal (by 0.6°C), which kept the whole season from being as extreme as July.

PRECIPITATION

The summer was wetter than normal by 45 percent, July having the most extreme precipitation. July, with 200 mm, had more than twice the 30-year average rainfall, while August had only one-third of that amount, or 80 percent of the average for the month. On the other hand, August had 13 rain days compared to only 10 in July. The rainfalls in August were all of 11 mm or less, while three-quarters of the rain in July fell in three days.

One of those heavy rainfall days was July 5, when tropical storm Arthur hit the Maritimes. On July 4 and 5, 77 mm of rain fell on Kentville. The winds on the 5th were from the southeast in the morning but shifted to westerly in the afternoon and increased dramatically. Kentville recorded gusts to 83 km/h, but Greenwood had some to 140 km/h, and that is when all the wind damage occurred.



JACK MCMASTER

What's in the Sky?

by Roy Bishop

HIGHLIGHTS FOR OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER 2014

October 8: Full Moon (and a total lunar eclipse, see below)
October 8, 9, 10: Large tides
October 23: New Moon (and a partial solar eclipse, but not from NS, see below)

November 2: Standard time begins (set clocks back one hour)
November 6: Full Moon
November 6, 7, 8: Large tides
November 22: New Moon

December 6: Full Moon
December 9: Earliest sunset of the year (16:35)
December 13/14: Geminid meteor shower
December 21: Solstice, winter begins at 19:04 AST, shortest daylight of the year, and New Moon 21:36 AST
December 23, 24, 25: Large tides

A LUNAR ECLIPSE VANISHES

A full Moon will light the night of October 7/8. However, as dawn twilight begins the next morning in Nova Scotia, the bright Moon, lying low in the western sky, will fade as it begins to enter Earth's shadow. The upper left side of the Moon will vanish first. As the dawn sky brightens, and the Moon slips further into Earth's shadow, the Moon will gradually disappear from view. Moonset occurs at 07:25

but that event will not be visible because by then the Moon will be entirely within Earth's dark umbral shadow and the sky will be bright with morning daylight. From British Columbia the dim, red, eclipsed Moon, still high in a dark sky, will be a beautiful sight.

A SOLAR ECLIPSE ECLIPSED

On October 23, fifteen days after the dawn lunar eclipse of October 8, a partial solar eclipse will be visible from most of North America, except Atlantic Canada. From our region, Earth itself will eclipse both Moon and Sun. In other words, the solar eclipse of October 23 happens after sunset in Nova Scotia.

BRIGHT PLANET POOR

The autumn of 2014 is planet poor. There are no bright planets well-placed in the late evening sky. The brightest planet, Venus, has decorated the dawn sky since late January, but vanishes into the twilight early in October and passes behind the Sun on October 25. Venus reappears low in the southwest evening sky in December. Bright Jupiter, spends most of the autumn in the morning sky. By December, Jupiter will be visible in the eastern late evening sky. Saturn is buried in the western evening twilight during October, passes behind the Sun in mid-November, and is low in the eastern morning twilight during December. Mars remains low in the southwestern evening sky all autumn, moving quickly eastward against the background stars as it fades and recedes in the distance, while trying valiantly to keep up with our faster moving planet.

Of the bright planets, only tiny, Sun-scorched Mercury is favorably placed this autumn. However, because Mercury moves so fast, its favorable placement lasts only three weeks: the last week of October and the first two weeks of November. Mercury will then be visible in the dawn twilight before sunrise. The first week of November is best for seeing Mercury. Look between 05:45 and 06:00 Standard Time, low near the horizon, a bit south of east. The only other bright

object in the eastern sky will be the star Arcturus, higher up, further to the left.

DIM PLANET RICH

In contrast to the unfavorable viewing geometry this autumn for the bright planets (see above), the two planets that are visible only with binoculars or a telescope are well-placed in the late evening sky. Neptune was at opposition (opposite the Sun, and thus highest in the sky near midnight) on August 29. Uranus is at opposition on October 7. Also, for observers in Nova Scotia, both of these giant planets are higher in the sky than they have been for many years.

Most people have not seen either Uranus or Neptune. The discovery of Uranus by William Herschel in the 18th century created a worldwide sensation. The prediction of Neptune and where it would be found, by Urbain Le Verrier, and its resulting sighting by Johann Galle in the 19th century, was a triumph for Isaac Newton's theories of gravitation and dynamics.

If you would like to see these two famous planets, on a clear evening this autumn, call someone who has a telescope and knows the night sky. [Or attend the Grand Pre observing session on October 11 – ed.]

THE CHANGING SKY

As Earth makes its annual trek around the Sun, its 23-degree tilt causes the height of the noontime Sun over Nova Scotia to vary dramatically, from high overhead in June, to low in the south in December. The resulting variation in the Sun's heat causes our seasons.

A more subtle annual cycle is apparent to anyone familiar with the night sky. However, it is not Earth's tilt that is responsible; relative to the stars in the night sky, the orientation of that tilt is practically fixed during a human lifetime. The night sky changes with the seasons because Earth orbits the Sun. Every three months our view of the midnight sky has swung through an angle of 90 degrees. On

any given night we look upon the universe in the opposite direction from which we did six months before. Late in the evening on a May night, the bright star Altair is rising in the east. Six months later, the star Procyon, on the opposite side of the starry vault, is rising in the east. On a frosty January night, Orion sparkles high in the south. On a warm July night the teapot of Sagittarius lies above the tree tops in the same part of the sky.

The Milky Way, our edge-on view of the galaxy within which our solar system is located, is another feature of the sky that varies with the seasons. The angle of that mottled, glowing band of stars in our evening sky is a result of three geometries: (1) our location in Nova Scotia, halfway between the equator and the north pole; (2) the 23-degree tilt of Earth's equator to the plane of its orbit; and (3) the steep tilt of Earth's orbit to the plane of the galaxy.

On a January night in Nova Scotia, the Milky Way arcs high overhead and we gaze directly through the outer rim of our galaxy. On a May evening the Milky Way lies almost hidden close to the northern horizon, while high overhead our view is toward the star-sparse region near the north galactic pole. On an August evening, once again the Milky Way spans the sky overhead, and low in the south the galactic centre lies behind the glowing star clouds of Sagittarius. By November evenings the bright, central region of our Milky Way Galaxy has vanished below the western horizon, while low in the south our view is toward the star-sparse region near the south galactic pole.

We are passengers on a celestial carnival ride. Our tilted seat, spinning once a day about a slanted axis, is being carried on a steeply inclined platform, revolving once a year, as we look out across the countless starry lights of the immense theme park we call the Milky Way Galaxy. How we got in this predicament is a perennial question. Unfortunately, because of the growth of light pollution over the past century, most people in or near cities and towns can no longer see this grandest of spectacles.

SOURCES OF LOCAL NATURAL HISTORY

Compiled by the Blomidon Naturalists Society

TOPIC	SOURCE	OFFICE OR HOME TELEPHONE	
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney	H: 542-3604	
	Jim Wolford	H: 542-9204	
Astronomy	Roy Bishop	H: 542-3992	
	Sherman Williams	H: 542-5104	
	Larry Bogan	H: 678-0446	
Birds – General	Bernard Forsythe	H: 542-2427	
	Richard Stern	O: 678-4742	H: 678-1975
	Gordon & Judy Tufts	H: 542-7800	
	Jim Wolford	H: 542-9204	
	Jean Timpa	H: 542-5678	
Butterflies & Moths	Jean Timpa	H: 542-5678	
Fish & Wildlife	NS Department of Natural Resources	O: 679-6091	
Flora:	Ruth Newell	O: 585-1355	H: 542-2095
Fungi:	Nancy Nickerson		H: 542-9332
Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe	H: 542-2427	
Indian Prehistory & Archeology	James Legge	H: 542-3530	
Mosses & Ferns	Ruth Newell	O: 585-1355	H: 542-2095
Mammals	Tom Herman	O: 585-1358	H: 678-0383
Rocks & Fossils	Geology Dept., Acadia University	O: 585-2201	
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney	H: 542-3604	
	Jim Wolford	H: 542-9204	
	Michael Brylinsky	O: 585-1509	H: 582-7954

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

2014 Membership Fees & Order Form

Members receive four issues of the BNS newsletter annually.
As a registered charity, BNS issues receipts for all donations.
Members may also join Nature Nova Scotia through BNS.
(Neither BNS nor NNS membership is tax deductible.)

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTAL CODE

E-MAIL TEL

In signing this membership application, I/we hereby waive & release the Blomidon Naturalists Society, its executive committee and members, from all claims for injury and/or damage suffered at any function or field trip organized by the Blomidon Naturalists Society.

SIGNATURE DATE

No.	Description	Price	Total
_____	Individual/ Family Membership	$20.00	$_____
_____	Junior (under 16 years) Membership	$1.00	$_____
_____	Nature Nova Scotia Membership	$5.00	$_____
_____	2014 BNS Calendar	$15.00	$_____
_____	Natural History of Kings County	$14.00	$_____
_____	Within the View of Blomidon	$20.00	$_____
_____	Checklist of Kings County Birds	$5.00	$_____
_____	Blomidon Naturalist crest	$5.00	$_____
_____	Blomidon Naturalist hat	$15.00	$_____
_____	BNS Calendar Photos (Screensaver)	$10.00	$_____
	Postage: (calendar $2) (parcel $6)		$_____
	Tax-deductible Donation		$_____
	(Registration number: 118811686RR0001)		
		TOTAL	$_____

Address cheques or money orders to Blomidon Naturalists Society for membership and other purchases to: **Ed Sulis, 107 Canaan Avenue, Kentville, NS B4N 2A7.** Due date is January 1 of current year.

Semipalmated Plover, East Point, North Grand Pre RICK WHITMAN