

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Notice of Next Field Trip

On September 7 Dr. Kenneth Harrison will lead a field trip through the Kentville Ravine to look for the common mushrooms of the area. Meet at the picnic grounds, Kentville Experiment Station at 9 a.m. Picnic will follow at noon.

Notice of Next Lecture

On September 16, 8 p.m., Wolfville High School Audio-Visual Room, Dr. Robie Tufts will join us for a talk on birds and their ways. Everyone welcome-bring a friend along!

Star Party - March 9, 1974

As night fell on March 29 approximately sixty members of the Blomidon Naturalists' Society converged on Maktomkus Observatory at Avonport. Four telescopes were available: an 8 inch reflector in the observatory and three refractors in the field below. Roy Bishop spent the evening in the dome as many groups of five or six came and went, while Sherman Williams and Larry Bogan operated the refractors and pointed out sights of interest for the unaided eye. The night was perfect - still, clear, and steady. Among the sights were the aurora, the first quarter moon, comet Bradfield, Mars, Saturn, Sirius, the Orion Nebula, and several of the more prominent spring constellations. Hot drinks and squares were enjoyed between observing sessions. * Roy Bishop

Wild Goose (Frog) Chase

During the evening of April 21, approximately 60 persons lead by Professor Sherman Bleakney explored Lower Canard primarily in search of wild geese and to listen to various frog calls. On the drier pastureland we were greeted by the songs of the Savannah and Song Sparrows. Once on the marshland, although there was disappointly little light left, we were able to detect flock after flock of geese by their silhouettes and honking as they flew from the fields back to the sea for the night. When one flock changed direction suddenly over our heads, the rush of air against their wings could be heard. As well, common snipe were frequently heard winnowing. Before leaving the gymnasium parking lot, Prof. Bleakney showed preserved frog specimens and played a tape recording of the various species songs. The tape was again played on the marsh but evoked only one or two peepers to speak out very briefly. Prof. Bleakney forewarned that the unusually cool spring evenings had dampened the frog choruses normally heard at this time of year. * Jean Timpa

Early Migratory Birds

Our April 27 field trip to observe migrant land birds was blessed with one of the few lovely days of spring we had. Leader Bob Lamberton and fifteen others were able to compile a 32 species list either by sight or song as follows: in the area of the Hell's Gate Power Station, robin, song sparrow, blue jay, starling, red-winged blackbird, eastern phoebe, an accipiter (hawk) of undetermined species, yellow-shafted flicker, tree swallow, white-throated sparrow, herring gull, dark-eyed (slate-coloured) junco, common grackle, kingfisher, raven, black-capped chickadee, crow, ruby-crowned kinglet, palm warbler, myrtle warbler, and double-crested cormorant; (and blossoms of the trailing arbutus or mayflower); further down the road before Gaspereau village, one adult American bald eagle sitting in a tree at about 200 yards, 5 glossy ibis flying down over the river, English sparrow, Savannah sparrow, rock dove; at John Miner's farm, evening grosbeak, ring-necked pheasant, black duck (mourning cloak butterflies); at Cyril Coldwell's farm, a pair of nesting sparrow hawks, common snipe, another Eastern Phoebe, (one dead great-horned owl and one turkey vulture shot in Cape Breton which Mr. Coldwell was hoping to mount); and on the dykes, black-backed gulls. I also had American goldfinch in my backyard on Pleasant Street when we arrived home. * Jean Timpa

CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS!

Please check your name and address on this newsletter for any errors or omissions. Necessary corrections should be forwarded to: Mrs. John W. Timpa, RR#3, Box 129, Wolfville, N.S., BOP IXO. If you know of any of your friends who would like to receive our notices of meetings or newsletters, please send their names and addresses along, too.

Gravel and Sand Pits Made Interesting

For those who accompanied Ron MacNeil on the Glacial Geology field trip of May 4, 1974, gravel pits, sandpits, little hills and the rocks of the area took on a more interesting light. It was interesting to learn that the many low rolling hills we see in the Grand Pre area are examples of these post glacial features known as drumlins. After the stop at a Melanson gravel pit to ~~observe~~ observe the story the gravel deposits had to tell, one could almost hear the melt waters rushing over a toe of the decaying glacier. Near White Rock we were interested in seeing yet another message from the Ice Age - grooves and plucking in the polished surface of the exposed bedrock. In a sandpit in Port Williams, where the melt waters of the ancient glaciers ran more gently and quieter a rewarding venture into the past came to a close.* Sherman Williams

May 12 Sunday Canoe Trip

A group of seven in three canoes put in at the Methals Dam on the Black River Lake and stroked their way up the lush, scenic channel toward Little River Lake. Multitudes of birds were singing on this cool, cloudy day; the Ruby-crown kinglets, solitary vireos, and many others. A Pileated Woodpecker was tapping out its distinctive message. On a small, rocky island in the Little River Lake we found a Herring Gull nest with one large, spotted egg, while overhead an Osprey was carrying a fish back to its nest but refusing to land while we were there. We stopped for lunch on the side of a canal leading to Gaspereau Lake and spied many ground birds, porcupines, and the works of beavers. After a short hike along the canal, we returned to the canoes and made a quick trip back to the cars. On the way we added the Grey (Canada) Jay, the Hermit Thrush, and the Spruce Grouse to our list of birds-seen. This was a very enjoyable trip and illustrates one of the best ways to sneak up on wildlife in the more remote areas of Nova Scotia.* Larry Bogan

May 18 Spring Bird Migration, Wolfville

On this bright, clear Saturday mornignx a small collection of BNS members of all ages strolled through the pleasant wooded area between University Avenue and Welsh-low. The horsetails were poking their mottled heads above the ground and the warblers were passing through this area. Oscar Morehouse, the leader, pointed out the nests of pairs of Ravens and flickers. At about the same time a trio of glossy ibis flew low over our heads. We continued our walk downhill to the sunward side of the small woods where we saw several common warblers, a hummingbird and a flock of evening grosbeaks. All the time we heard the calls of the ring neck pheasants that live in that area. No goldfinches had arrived yet but the yellow warblers were already in the bushes near the Wolfville hospital. To finish the walk, we looked for the "white" robin on the Acadia University lawns. I did not see it until later in the week in front of Seminary House. * Larry Bogan

June 8- Cape Split

On June 8, forty-seven, count them forty-seven, intrepid hikers gathered at the Acadia gymnasium parking lot to make the three and some odd mile trip out to the tip of Cape Split. The day was just about perfect and apparently BNS was not the only group to select this date for a hike. Several times during the day the trail out to Split began to resemble Highway No. 1: the popularity and use of the Cape Split hiking trail is growing by leaps and bounds. Sherman Williams and Roy Bishop, co-leaders of this field trip, had their hands full shepherding the disparate groups, each of whom had special interests to pursue. Some of us had made it out to the tip, eaten our lunches and enjoyed the birds and scenery by the time others of us had barely arrived at the end of the trail. Some of the early spring flower species observed on the trail were: spring beauties, Dutchman's Breeches and Trilliums. The birds included: many singing black-throated green warblers, at least one Blackburnian, Myrtles, Redstarts, Yellowthroats and assorted other warblers, winter wrens, nesting gulls, cormorants and a host of others. * Debbie Lamberton

Between the Tides

On June 23 Moon, Earth, and Sun arranged an extra low tide, giving Black Rock one of its maximum aerial exposures. Taking advantage of this situation was a group of 21 early Sunday risers led by Millie Evans. Their objective was to view some of the fascinating life-forms which live along the rocky shore between the range of the Fundy tides. Black Rock and its tidal pools was an excellent location for this objective. For many it was a first opportunity to observe live animals of the seashore in their natural surroundings. Millie's comments on the habits and inter-relationships of these animals deepened the experience of knowing these living things. Following are some of the species of animals observed on this most successful field trip: hermit crabs, green crabs, barnacles, dog whelks and their eggs, periwinkles, limpets, a chiton, isopods, amphipods, mussels, purple starfish, blood stars, large sun star, brittle star, moon snails and their eggs, sea urchins and a stranded lumpfish. * Sherman Williams

Contributions to BNS Newsletter

We would welcome articles or letters to the editors by other BNS members for inclusion into future newsletters. If you care to help us please contact Mrs. John W. Timpa, RR# 3, Box 129, Wolfville, N.S., BOP IXO or call 542-5678. Let's have participation by many of our members. What interesting experience could you share with us? It doesn't have to be recent necessarily or restricted to Nova Scotia. Articles will be kept anonymous if you wish.

Bog-Stream Field Trip-July 13

About 20 people attended the BNS field trip of July 13th. As the big bogs at Falmouth and Aylesford were too far for a half day trip, Dr. Daborn led us to a tiny floating bog behind Frail's Nursery at Centreville. We were lucky to find a beautiful Calapogon bog orchid in flower; also Pitcher Plant, Sundew, Yellow Water-lily, Purple Iris and many reeds and rushes. Later we visited the Canard River at a small bridge where there was a quantity of Water-cress and a big stand of Military Rush, some Bur-reed and floating Potamogeton, besides many unnamed reeds and rushes, etc. * Rachel Erskine

During the exploration of the fascinating small bog in Centreville and a branch of Canard River, Dr. Daborn dredged up some of the multitudes of animal life that live in these environments. In both situations we saw aquatic bugs (water boatmen and back swimmers), the nymph of the damsel fly, and water beetles. The stream was more prolific and produced the larvae of the caddisfly, leaches, small fish, and a fresh water shrimp. It is amazing what can be discovered with a kitchen sieve; my five year old son had a grand time skimming the waters and discovering all these fascinating water creatures. * Larry Bogan

Eagle Nests Rechecked

In the overcast of July 20 a small party of the BNS set out by canoe from the Methals Power Station. The group was accompanying Cyril Coldwell on his periodical check of Bald Eagle Nests in the Black River Lake area. Three eagles were sighted at two locations. One nest was checked out which apparently was not used this season. Worsening weather conditions prevented the checking of a second nest. At this point the event turned into an unscheduled adventure. A strong head wind, mist and a vigorous swell on the long sweep of the lake made canoeing a major struggle. Most of the party took shelter at an island cabin. Fortunately Neil van Nostrand was able to come to our aid with the help of a power boat. Nightfall saw all members back to the cars, none the worse for an interesting adventure with nature. * Sherman Williams

August 3 Shore Walk, Horton Bluffs

A large group (about 50) of members and visitors walked along the rocky beach below the Horton Bluffs. The leader, Dr. Roy Bishop, pointed out many interesting geological features and the common shore animals that live in the inter-tidal zone. J.W. Dawson in his Acadian Geology (1891) describes the features in this area-"a fine range of cliffs extending along the west side of the Avon estuary. At this place the beds do not dip regularly in the same direction, but have been broken into great masses which dip in different ways, and have been fractured and displaced by faults or slips of one mass of the other up or down, so as to break the continuity of the layers." One of the most interesting of the faults occurs near where the lighthouse stands. It was also near here that we saw part of the fossilized tracks of an ancient reptile that lived about 300 million years ago. We also saw fossilized roots, ripples, mudcracks, plants, and fish. Dawson says "This is the oldest fossil forest yet known in Nova Scotia, perhaps in the world. Small reptiles tenanted these forests, for Sir W. E. Logan found in 1840 few footprints of a small creature of this class-the first ever found in rocks of so great an age." The walk lasted from 6 PM through sunset and dusk, yet there was so much to examine that this writer will have to ~~return~~ return some day to explore more leisurely. The group left the shore at Blue Beach where there is a modern day example of beach formation. Shale fragments have been piled by water action up the Avon and cut off a small marshy estuary which was formerly exposed. * Larry Bogan

Thanks

Special thanks are extended to all those persons who have so willingly and ably given of their time and talents to lead our field trips. Thank you also to those people who have kindly contributed the reports on the various field trips in order to make our first newsletter a more interesting one.

Cape Split and Shore Birds Field Trips

Saturday, August 10, approximately ten members of the BNS, along with an equal number of representatives of the N.S. Bird Society and several families of visitors from outside the Province, made the hike to Cape Split from Scot's Bay. This walk was the first part of a weekend excursion sponsored by both societies. We were very fortunate to have mycologist Darrell Grund of Acadia University as leader for the day... the date had been carefully chosen to coincide with the normal peak of abundance of mushrooms and other fleshy fungi. However, the heavens failed us, and the tinder-dry woods had only a very few fungi (appreciated all the more for their paucity). It was an unexpected pleasure to have George Stevens, Head of the Geology Department at Acadia, join us to share some of his vast knowledge of the basalt flows which cap the Blomidon-Split peninsula, and the other formations which lie beneath. In spite of a magnificent day, birds were in nearly as short supply as fungi, and nearly as frustrating. One sensed immediately that the season was drawing to a close: mixed flocks of kinglets, chickadees and nuthatches foraged through the branches, just as they will be doing throughout the fall and into the winter months. Mixed flocks of warblers seep'd and chattered around us; but seldom allowed themselves to be seen. The only birds still singing were those that seem never to tire: Wood Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Purple Finch, Pine Grosbeak. At the tip of Split, the Great Black-backed Gulls and the Herring Gulls still had a few flightless young in their colony on the first pinnacle, and the Double-crested Cormorants were still using their nesting area as a roost, roost, but their young could be seen flying and fishing with adult birds, all around the cape. John Kearney was the leader of the Sunday expedition to Evangeline Beach and the Grand Pré dykelands. We arrived at 7 am, just after a 6:30 high tide, and the birds were extremely cooperative. We had several thousand Semipalmated Sandpipers, as well as Least and White-rumped Sandpipers, Dunlin, Red Knot, Short-billed Dowitcher, Hudsonian Godwit, Semipalmated Plover and Black-bellied

Plover. Both at Cape Split and at Evangeline Beach, we were met by reminders that the march of unthinking, uncontrolled development is an ever-increasing threat to the natural beauties of the area. At the Scot's Bay end of the Split trail, we were asked to fill out forms for a land-use survey. The BNS executive has been in touch with the people who have undertaken this survey and the Society intends to exert its influence to push for appropriate preservation measures for this magnificent area. At Evangeline Beach, people and shorebirds compete annually for the sandy beach, and it is safe to predict that the shorebirds will be the losers unless some action is taken to curb the development of the beachfront. I believe all of us who were able to enjoy the spectacle of the Minas Basin shorebirds that bright August day would agree that, if the sandpipers and plovers lose their feeding and resting areas, we all lose something of great value. *Bob Lamberton

The Perseid Meteor Shower - August 12, 1974

Every year from August 10 through 14, a meteor shower occurs, appearing to radiate from the constellation Perseus. The meteoroids that hit the Earth's atmosphere and burn up to produce the "shooting stars" or meteors, come from debris left in space by a comet that appeared in 1862. Although there are many meteor showers during any one year, the Perseids attract the most attention because of their brilliance; sometimes as many as 40 meteors per hour have been observed. The 1974 Perseids were observed by the 20-30 persons who gathered at the Rotary Park on the Wolfville Ridge. Here we had a good view of the whole sky. The only hindrance was the new light installed at the park. The group watched from a field near by, and saw not only the meteors but many artificial satellites (5 or more) as they moved from the twilight sky into the darkness of the Earth's shadow. The planet, Jupiter, rose slowly in the southeast and we were able to see its disc and four largest moons through a couple of small telescopes that were available. The many ooh's and ahh's when bright meteors flashed across the sky indicated that meteor watching can be an enjoyable experience for most people.

The next meteor showers of note are the Orionids of October 21 and the Germinids of December 13. The latter shower has a rate as large as the Perseids. *Larry Bogan

Glossy Ibis

Robie Tufts in his book, The Birds of Nova Scotia, states that the Glossy Ibis is a rare and equally irregular occurring bird in N.S. For a short period this spring a number of these native inhabitants of tropical and sub-tropical regions were seen by several fortunate observers. The birds were observed feeding in pond and wet areas about Canard, Port Williams, Grand Pre and Gaspereau. The largest number seen at one time was reported by Cyril Coldwell who observed a flock of 37 birds in one flight over the Starr's Point area. One banded bird was picked up dead; Robie Tufts is awaiting further information resulting from this find. Participants in two BNS field trips were able to observe these rare birds. We understand that some individuals were fortunate to photograph them. Although it was speculated that the Glossy Ibis may be about to extend its nesting territory into N.S. (as it already has into Maine) the last reported observations seem to have been around mid-May. Apparently the birds have returned to their more southerly nesting grounds. *Sherman Williams

Regrets /

As this newsletter goes to print our secretary-treasurer, Larry Bogan, will be taking up a new position at the University of Connecticut. The remaining executive receive this resignation with regret. Larry served well in his position as secretary and contributed a great amount of ~~enthusiasm~~ enthusiasm and effort toward seeing the Blomidon Naturalists' Society become a success. Before leaving Larry left us two letterheads for this and future newsletters. We would like him to know that his interest and efforts in the Blomidon Naturalists Society have been much appreciated.