

NEWSLETTER

BLOMIDON
NATURALISTS
SOCIETY

Volume 2 No. 2

June 1975

PLEASE NOTE!!!

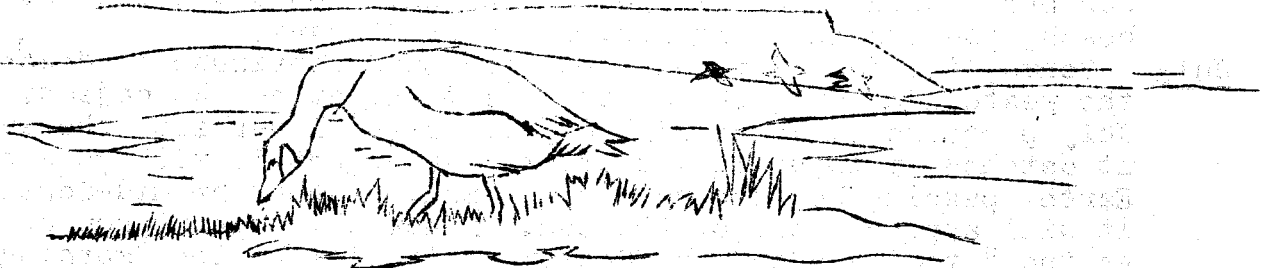
REVISIONS TO THE SUMMER PROGRAMME

Between the Tides Originally scheduled for June 14, this field trip on marine life at the low tide line will take place on Sunday, August 10. The tidal range will be more favorable on this new date. We will leave from the gym parking lot at 7:00 am for Black Rock. Bring your rubber boots. Our guide: Dr. Sherman Bleakney.

Summer Sky Monday, August 11 at Grand Pre (instead of the 9th at the Stile Park). This new date will avoid interference with the sleep of those who wish to attend the Black Rock field trip and will also ensure a richer display of meteors from the annual Perseid meteor shower (weather permitting!). Meet at the Grand Pre Park parking lot at 9:30 pm, and bring your binoculars. Leader: Roy Bishop

Aquatic Worlds (9 am, July 12, gym parking lot, Dr. Daborn)
Nature Lore (9 am, July 26, Gym parking lot, Sherman Williams)
Shorebirds (7 am, August 16, Grand Pre Park, Richard Elliot)

These three trips will take place as originally scheduled.



April 19 Goose Chasing Field Trip -Richard Elliot-

The Saturday afternoon that was set for the goose-watching trip was wet and cloudy, with frequent showers that discouraged most bird-watchers. However three brave souls did venture out to join leaders Cyril Coldwell and Richard Elliot.

The trip included a tour of the Grand Pre marshes to look for early spring migrants, followed by a walk down to the dyke between Canard and Starrs Point. We saw a total of twenty-one species of birds, including red-throated loons, red-tailed and sparrow hawks, double-crested cormorants and some late evening grosbeaks, 3 brant geese were seen very well behind Wolfville, mixed with a large flock of Canada geese, and the differences in size and pattern of the two species were clearly seen.

We saw 500 Canadas at Grand Pre, and 400 more at Canard, although the rain prevented us from staying long enough to see the flights arriving in the fields at dusk. We found an unusually large flock of thirty-six green-winged teal on the Canning River, but no sign of the fourteen glossy ibises that were seen in the area a few days later. Despite the poor weather, a very satisfying day.





May 17 White Rock Field Trip
-Richard Elliot-

Thirty-five people showed up at eight o'clock on this sunny spring day to accompany leader Oscar Morehouse along the trail beside the Gaspereau River, to the west of White Rock. Wes Hancock, a local resident who remembers the history of the area, was unable to attend, but the arrival of spring provided many birds and plants to hold our interest.

Thirty-four species of birds were seen, and we had good views of solitary vireos, bright rose-breasted grosbeaks, black and white warblers flitting from tree-trunk to tree trunk, and a glimpse of the elusive ovenbird.

The spring plants were just beginning, and we found the red trillium or wake-robin, and early Mayflowers. The trees were covered with thick buds that had not yet opened, which certainly made bird watching easier! All in all, it was a great day to be outside, and a most satisfactory trip.

ASTRONOMICAL CALENDAR - SUMMER 1975 - Roy L. Bishop

June 21, 9:27 pm The equatorial plane of Earth reached its maximum distance south of the Sun at this time to mark the beginning of summer. This day also had the longest period of daylight; however, the earliest sunrise occurred on June 15 and the latest sunset on June 27.

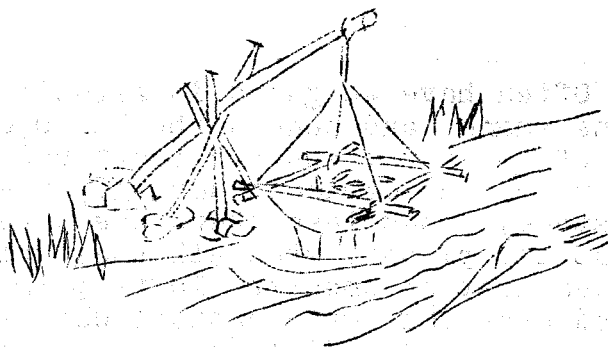
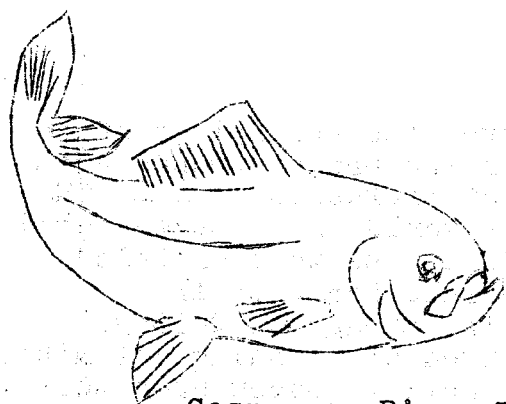
July 5 Earth reaches its farthest position from the Sun (aphelion) on this date. We will be some 5 million kilometers closer to the Sun next January, but if you are planning on a vacation at the beach, you should do it now, not next January.

July Venus, the second planet from the Sun, continues to decorate the western evening sky as the brightest star-like object. As July progresses, Venus will dip lower and lower into the sunset as it catches up to us in its orbit. In August it will go ahead of Earth, passing between us and the Sun, so that by mid-September it will appear ahead of the Sun. Hence although it now appears as the "evening star", by September it will be the "morning star" and will remain in the pre-dawn sky during next winter.

August 10 - 13 Perseid meteor shower. This is the best meteor shower of the year. Select a clear night and a dark country sky. Toward midnight several meteors per hour will trace their brief, bright streaks of light across the high eastern sky as they meet our atmosphere.

July and August Our Sun is one of one hundred billion stars in the vast disc-shaped galaxy which we call the Milky Way. Since we are within this flattened array of stars, we see it edge-on and surrounding us. During late, moon-less evenings in July and August, the brightest portion of our galaxy appears as a broad, hazy band of light arcing from the south high up above us in the sky. A clear, dark, country sky is essential for a good view of this colossal structure and binoculars will help to impress on the observer some idea of its beauty.

It is surprising how few people have seen the Milky Way. As civilization "advances", light pollution prevents more and more people from really seeing the night sky. Today even many people living in the country have erected their own mercury yard lights and thereby have prevented their children from knowing the mystery of a dark, star-studded night.



Gaspereau River Field Trip May 19, 1975 Cyril Coldwell

On Monday 19 a field trip was conducted along the Gaspereau River in order to obtain a bit of insight into the problems the Alewives encounter during their spawning run up the river and into the lakes.

First stop was at a square net operation at the farm of Ellis Gertridge where fish were observed being caught and salted in barrels being readied for the West Indies markets. The next stop was at the fish ladder at White Rock where the fish by pass a large hydroplant. From here the group journeyed to Gaspereau Lake where another fish ladder guides them to the lake where they find suitable gravel beds and life cycle begins again.

Distance covered by these fish from salt water to spawning beds would be approximately 20 miles. The day was sunny and warm and about 35 members took part.

A Touch of History Roy L. Bishop

Henry Thoreau once said: "A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art." Below are selections from a book published in 1836 entitled 'Remarks on the Geology and Mineralogy of Nova Scotia' and written by Abraham Gesner (1797-1864).

Gesner was born at Chipman Corner near Kentville. He was qualified as a medical doctor, geologist, sailor, musician and author, but is perhaps best known as the first man to refine kerosene. The first selection below concerns the view from Cape Blomidon; the second, Gesner's thoughts on the fossils along the Joggins shore. I find them interesting for both their subject (our local area), and their age (some 140 years). In addition to such considerations, these selections are a pleasure to read simply as examples of what writing can be. Few people today can express themselves as well as could this remarkable man.

The highest part of the cape (Blomidon) is six hundred and forty feet, the most elevated promontory in this part of the country. Having ascended the lofty cape, the visitor will enjoy one of the most splendid, varied, and extensive views the country affords. Looking over the frightful precipice, before him is the Basin of Mines studded in summer with the white sails of coasters, which in calm weather are hurried along by the rapid tide, and often in an opposite direction to their desired haven. On the right, the great valley already described, is seen stretching towards the far west, and decorated with scattered villages and fruitful fields, through which small rivers wind their serpentine way. Far beyond the chain-like villages of Horton and Windsor, the unfrequented hills of slate and granite rise in succession, until the sight is dimmed among their wave-like summits. Eastward a depression in the horizon marks the site of Truro: on the left the picturesque village of Parrsborough, points out a safe retreat for vessels in stormy weather. Still farther north, beyond the rugged peaks of shale, the more level coal fields of Cumberland, once shaded with the lofty palm and antediluvian pine, retires from the sight, leaving the imagination to complete the scene.

Often have we gazed in astonishment upon the precipices of the Joggins shore, and beheld the beach on which the broken trunks and limbs of ancient trees are scattered in great profusion _____ the place where the delicate herbage of a former world is now transmuted into stone. Doubtless there was a period in the history of this terrestrial planet, when all these plants spread forth their vigorous leaves; when the lofty palm with its umbrageous foliage, hovered over the leafy cactus; when the jointed and bending calamite, waved in the primordial breeze, casting its moving shadow upon the waters of some ancient lake or basin. In the examination of these relics, belonging to one of the kingdoms of living nature, the mind is transported back to an era forever gone, and the soul is aroused in its deepest recesses, by a faint ray of light, seeming to issue from the primeval world. Since their mighty vegetation covered the Earth, since their delicate leaves and blossoms had been expanded, their vast sources of multiplication unlocked, and their oderiferous exhalations emitted in a benign atmosphere, the climate has been changed, and they have been sealed up in the dark cemeteries of the dead.

The Maritime Coalition of Environmental Protection Associations,
Conservation, and the Blomidon Naturalists Society -Larry D. Bogan

At the April meeting of the Society, we were asked if we would like to join the Maritime Coalition of Environmental Protection Associations (MCEPA). The Coalition was formed Sept. 21, 1974 in Fredricton, N.B. with the purpose to "preserve the way of life and natural resources of the Maritime Provinces." Seven New Brunswick environmental groups and the South Shore Environmental Protection Association (SSEPA) started the Coalition and several others from both N.S. and N.B. joined later. At their first meeting they reviewed assembled literature and exchanged information, then drew up a resolution opposing the nuclear power plant at Point Lepreau in N.B. and a position opposing nuclear power in the Maritimes. The Coalition hopes to add weight to the espousal or condemnation of projects and to provide an organization to which conservation-minded groups can apply for support of policies and projects. They will do this with the circulation of letters, press releases, meetings and by inviting other like-minded groups to join them.

If the Blomidon Naturalists Society were to join the MCEPA, our principle commitment would be to keep other groups informed of environmental problems in our area of the Maritimes, and to endorse statements of the MCEPA. If there were an occasion when we did not concur with a statement then we could request in writing that our name be left off the list of supporting groups. Membership in the Coalition would provide us with the means of making our positions known on a particular subject and gaining support from other groups. We would get literature and descriptions of other conservation issues that are important in the Maritimes.

The membership of the BNS have not yet decided whether to join the MCEPA, but the question is being sent to committee for study and recommendation. At the May meeting the executive officers were asked to establish a Conservation Committee to handle such questions that might come up in the future. This committee has not yet been formed and names of persons are needed who would be capable and willing to work on the committee. The executive would also be interested in the opinions of the membership on the MCEPA question. Please send names and/or comments to the Secretary of the BNS, Larry Bogan, Box 753, Wolfville, N.S.

Anyone interested in the Maritime Coalition of Environmental Protection Associations or the South Shore Environmental Protection Association may write to Mrs. A. G. Wickens, RR# 1, Shag Harbour, Shelburne County, Nova Scotia.

Conservation Efforts of the BNS? - Larry Bogan

In the preceding paragraphs, an item of concern for the Society is presented that could have important implications for the directions that the Society should take. A similar decision was before those persons at the organizational meeting of the Society in March of 1974. A certain fraction then expressed the desire that the new organization should have the task of protecting our environment. The majority, however, felt that though this was a very worthwhile goal, the primary aim should be that of an educational one. They felt that through education, members and others would gain an appreciation for our natural environment and consequently a desire to preserve it.

If the society is to have some effect on preserving the environment, it must have the means and must make the commitment to act when it is necessary. The Conservation Committee, to be established, is the beginning of a means, and membership in the MCEPA might be the strong arm we need to make any effort more effective. In addition, the Society must have the desire to be a watchdog for possible degradation of the environment of our area, and it must decide that it will form opinions in these cases.

I hope that the Society will at least approach these questions and discuss them at length, because they should not be ignored. My opinion is that we should have some sort of an on-going conservation effort, but I think our main efforts should still be our field trips and meetings for the introduction to and study of nature.

However, let's not ignore the opportunity to let others know when their projects or actions may destroy something that is of extreme value to us and future generations. For example, will tidal power dams destroy valuable marine life and have some effect on our climate; will a hydro project on a free-flowing river destroy the spawning ground for fish; will the lack of a sewage treatment plant mean that the ecology of a bay area will deteriorate; will a large shopping centre create so much light pollution that we can no longer enjoy the sight of the Milky Way; will a vacation home development eliminate the chances of preserving a unique piece of Nova Scotia for a natural park? I could go on; roads destroying good farm land and valuable wetlands, too rapid a cutting of forests for them to replenish themselves, trailbikes destroying hiking trails, etc.

"Since the beginning of time each generation has fought nature. Now in the life span of a single generation, we must turn and become the protector of nature." Jacques Cousteau

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At this time we would like to extend special thanks to Peter Austin-Smith and Dr. A. E. Roland for their interesting lectures in April and May; to Cyril Coldwell, Richard Elliot, Oscar Morehouse, Sherman Bleakney, Ellis Gertridge, Sherman Williams, and Professor Reginald Moore for their assistance with our field trips recently, and to all those who have contributed articles or otherwise helped in the production of this Newsletter.

Projects for the Blomidon Naturalists Society? - Larry Bogan -

The by-laws of BNS state that "the primary objective of the society shall be to encourage and develop in its members an understanding and appreciation of nature." We have chosen the methods of public lectures, newsletters, and field trips. Some members may be interested in accomplishing our objectives by other means. I have been thinking that certain projects might be undertaken by the Society, and here are some of my ideas. You may have others, but let's consider them.

A Natural History Library: The BNS has accumulated some money in its treasury despite the small dues, which might be used to start a useful library of field guides or reference books on natural history. Books could also be donated. But, we would need a place to house this collection so that the membership could use it.

Hiking Trails: There are relatively few good marked hiking trails in this area for all the wild and interesting areas available to us.

If more trails existed, and their locations made known, then more people could enjoy nature. Considering the popularity of hiking, it is surprising that more have not been developed. It does take work; permission must be obtained to cross private property; the best route must be scouted and marked; then cleared. I think a good beginning project would be to improve the trail along the Gaspereau River up the gorge toward Gaspereau Lake. Or some ambitious people could run a trail down the Valley or across the South Mountain to the South Shore.

A Natural History of Our Area: Many studies have been made of the wildlife and natural history of our area, but it is scattered throughout the literature, and some is not easily available. I would love to have a compilation of this material, and I am sure others would also. Some ambitious persons in the Society could make a real contribution by arranging such a booklet. I am willing to help.

A Nature Preserve: Small natural areas within or near the towns in the Valley should be preserved to provide an area of easy access for education of children, and for the enjoyment of others. Perhaps the BNS could be instrumental in the establishment of these preserves and also by providing help and advice in establishing trails and guides. This is a rather ambitious project.

Others: The preceding and other worthwhile projects should be considered by the members. Let's discuss the possibilities at our next meeting.



Frog Walk and Salamander Meander May 3 - Larry Bogan-

A toad, wood frogs, spotted salamanders, a bat, and lots of spring peepers: that is what we saw on this field trip. It is amazing what life exists in a ditch beside the road, and that is where we saw most of the animals mentioned above. More than one driver along that road in the Gaspereau Valley slowed down to gape at the members who were there that night to listen to and observe the amphibians. I learned that one needs a very strong flashlight to look for these night creatures; that the spotted salamander is easy to see in the water; and that it isn't so bad to hold a wood frog in your hand.

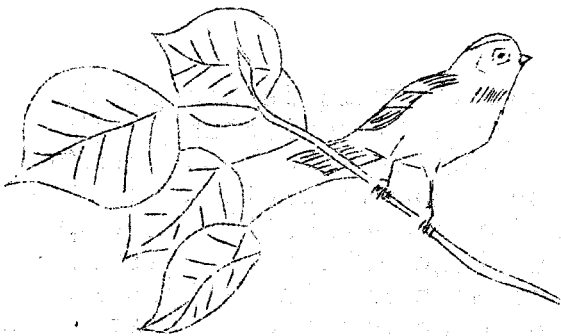
Prior to the field trip, Dr. Bleakney provided us with an informative introduction to the amphibians that appear in this part of Nova Scotia. The spotted salamander can only be found with ease at this time of the year and after that disappears into the ground. The spring peeper "peeps" by moving air back and forth from his lungs to a pouch in his neck and hence can even peep under water. Many more interesting facts were relayed before we went out to listen to the sometimes ear-splitting din of the spring peepers.

ILLUSTRATIONS!

A special thanks to Larry Bogan who volunteered to illustrate this Newsletter on an experimental basis. It's always nice to have such useful talent!

HELP! HELP! HELP!

We really do need more people to write articles for us, short or long. Please keep this in mind this summer as you travel to other parts of Nova Scotia, Canada, or the world. Then again many exciting things are going on right in our own back yards in the world of nature if we only take the time to look and appreciate the wonders. We would very much welcome comments, suggestions for changes in the Newsletter, our lecture or field trips. Send to Box 129, RR 3, Wolfville.



A Few Observations on Our Migratory Birds - Spring 1975

Jean M. Timpa

Some of our returning birds seem to have arrived a bit later than usual, but a long winter, cool spring, and lingering mounds of snow certainly did not provide a cheery welcome!

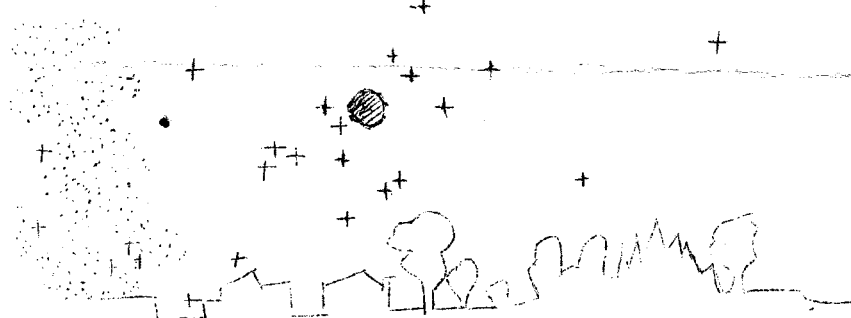
Around May 20 Dean Gertridge observed a huge flock of American Goldfinches in his orchard-between 150-200! Usually the bright yellow males were "lost" among the bright yellow dandelions on the ground, while the drabber females were well camouflaged against the bark of the apple trees. Sometimes they reversed positions and sometimes they did intermingle.

Oscar Morehouse believes he has seen representatives of most of the warblers normally returning to these parts, but definitely fewer in number. He wonders if the late May 1974 snowstorm also seriously reduced their numbers as well as the swifts, swallows, and other flycatchers. Oscar also commented on the unusual number of Veerys which are calling in Wolfville town limits, usually heard only in "wilder" areas. Marty Lake, their paper boy, recently found a small, interesting nest on the Acadia University campus, made entirely of hair thought to be either from a deer or goat! The Morehouses, however, are very concerned for the song birds in their area as nesting crows are carrying off fledgling song birds at a great rate. Already one of their warbler nests was completely emptied, and they are keeping watchful eye on one other very exposed warbler nest and catbird nest.

It was interesting to have 14 Glossy Ibis return once again this spring.

Does anyone else think there are a greater number of bobolinks than usual?

Finally, Anne Wickens of Shag Harbour, Shelburne County, has written less encouraging news about their birds. We hope things have improved since she wrote on May 24: "We have a dearth of song birds this year, and even crows and gulls seem to lie in short supply. Our ospreys are always here by this time and haven't come yet. I am keeping my fingers crossed for them. ...I hear a song sparrow doing a solo, but when I was first here there was such a chorus at this time of year there was no distinguishing the little singers. Silent Spring seems just around the corner, and I don't think I can hear it."



DID YOU SEE THE LUNAR ECLIPSE? LOOK FOR THE NEXT ONE! -Larry Bogan

This phenomena of nature on last May 25 could be seen from everyones own backyard, and that is where I saw it. It was not arranged for the most convenient time since totality did not begin until 1:00 ADT in the morning. Although the moon was already in the penumbra part of the Earth's shadow before that time, it did not appear any darker than a Full Moon normally does. Then the easterly edge of the Moon started to show shadow which spread slowly, until it fully covered the Moon's face at 2:03 ADT. At that time one could see the wispy Milky Way nearby in Sagittarius.

(The moon was moving from Libra into Scorpius) This is one of the more dramatic parts of the show; when the Moon is reflecting light into our atmosphere, the brightness of the sky is enough to wash out all but the brightest stars; then, when the Moon is blotted out all of those dim twinkling stars pop out for a contrasting display. The Moon grew darker until mid-totality at 2:48 ADT, then started brightening until the Easterly edge of the Moon hit the brighter light in the penumbra. At its darkest the Moon was a deep rust-colour or orange with a very dark central part and relatively brighter edge. When the total phase was over and the dim stars disappeared, I found the display less interesting and returned to bed.

The next Eclipse will be more convenient for those of us who don't enjoy getting up in the wee hours of the morning. In the evening of November 18 (mark it on your calendar!) at 6:03 AST, a total eclipse of the Moon begins again and will end at 6:44 AST. The moon will be in the Northeast since it will rise that day at about 6:27 PM. The sun sets at 4:43 PM, and evening twilight ends at 6:27 PM. The Moon will be in Taurus, and the beautiful naked-eye star cluster, the Pleiades, will be near-by. Unfortunately totality will be half as long as the one in May, and may interrupt your dinner.

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6:27 PM
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6:27 PM

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ~~BLMIDON~~ NATURALISTS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER!

September 21, 1975

Please put on your thinking caps. Don't forget us!

NOTE: Nature Lore Field Trip, July 26 _ Blomidon Park

On July 26, Sherman Williams will conduct an interpretive walk in Blomidon Provincial Park.

Interested persons should meet either at the Acadia Gym parking lot at 9 a.m. or in the lower parking lot at the entrance to Blomidon Park, 9:30 a.m. .

*Mr. + Mrs. Larry Berger
Box 753
St. John's, N.S.*

