

# BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 No. 4

December, 1975

## COMING EVENTS

### Continental Drift

January 19, 1976, 8:00 p.m., Huggins Science Hall, Acadia University. Professor George Stevens of the Acadia Geology Department will be discussing one of the more fascinating aspects of geology - continental drift. Also included will be a tour of the geology facilities.

### General Winter Field Trip

Weather permitting this will take place on Saturday, January 24th; if weather is not favourable it will be postponed to Saturday, January 31st. Meet at the Acadia University Parking Lot at 9:00 a.m. The trip will be out around the Lumsdan Dam area, and will attempt to take in as many aspects of nature in winter as time and talent permit. If snow is deep and anyone wishes, they may bring snowshoes. Thermoses of hot soup, coffee, etc. might also be welcome if you feel inclined to carry extra goodies. If in doubt about the weather call Oscar Morehouse at 542-5322 or Cyril Coldwell at 542-2854.

### Environmental Issues

February 23 at 8:00 p.m. in the Wildlife unit (Biology Dept., 4th floor of Patterson Hall, Acadia University), Professor Donald Dodds will discuss environmental issues which affect all of us. A tour of the recently renovated wildlife facilities and museum will also be included.

### Iceland

March 22 at 8:00 p.m., Wolfville High School, audio-visual room, Dr. Peter Smith will present a general overview of the Icelandic habitat with particular emphasis on the bird life. This will be illustrated with slides taken by Dr. Smith during the several summers he worked there.

Members' Night

A members' night, similar to the one held last March, will be held on a date to be announced later.

OUR THANKS

Since September we have had the able leadership of Dr. Kenneth Harrison, Fred Payne, Dr. Graham Daborn, Cyril Coldwell, Richard Elliott and Oscar Morehouse to guide us on field trips and/or provide us with more "food for thought" at our monthly lecture series, often illustrated with beautiful slides. We are fortunate to have such talent available to us. Our appreciation also to those who have made the production of this Newsletter possible.

CORRECTION

Page 5, Volume 2, # 3, September, 1975 BNS Newsletter, August 16 - Grand Pre Shorebird Trip: ... "and three koots which were well seen by all." should have read "and three knots!"... Profuse apologies to our bird friends for such a "feather-brained" error!

!!URGENT!!

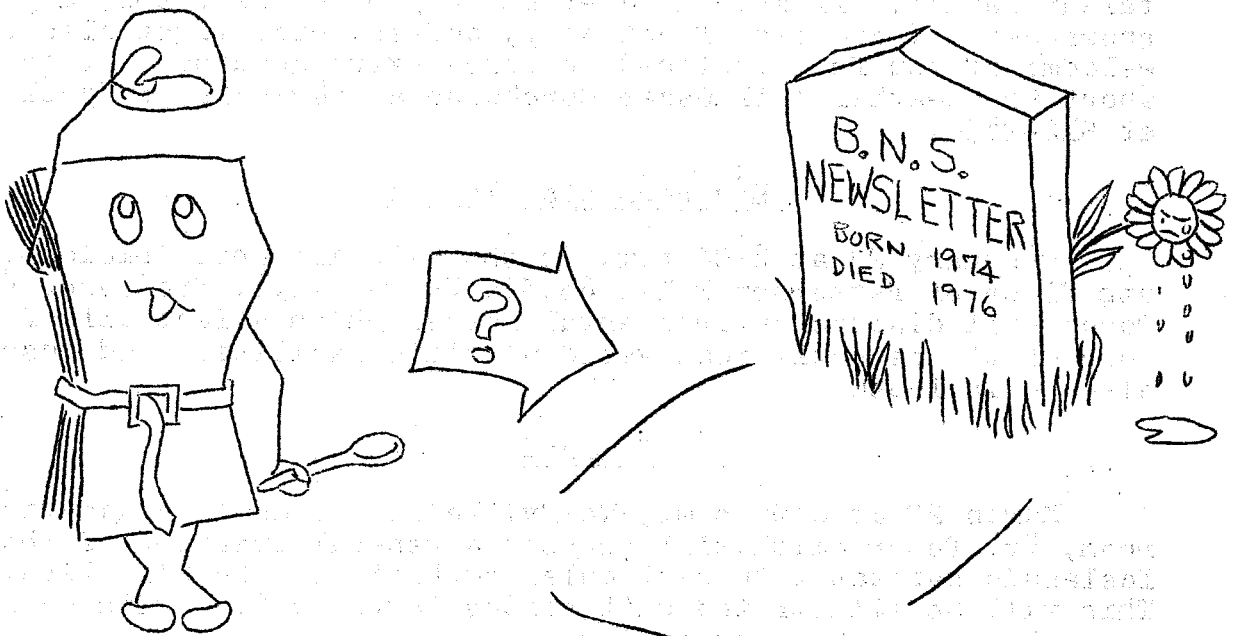
Deadline for BNS Newsletter - March 21, 1976!

It is becoming increasingly difficult to gather enough articles together in order to produce an issue of our Newsletter. The only way we can continue is to have voluntary contributions as has always been the case.

It is not right that the contributors should be the same people issue after issue. We definitely need variety of opinion and experience. Articles do not have to be long or about complex subjects, nor do they have to be of local or recent origin. It does not even have to be original - but be sure to quote your source, please, so we may give proper credit.

Our next deadline is March 21 -theoretically, that is, for until such time as enough material is sent in there will be no more Newsletters.

If you want to read the Newsletter, it's time you contributed! Send or give all articles to Roy L. Bishop, Avonport, N.S. or to Mrs. John W. Timpa, Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S.



The Story of Another Killey

Dr. Robie Tufts

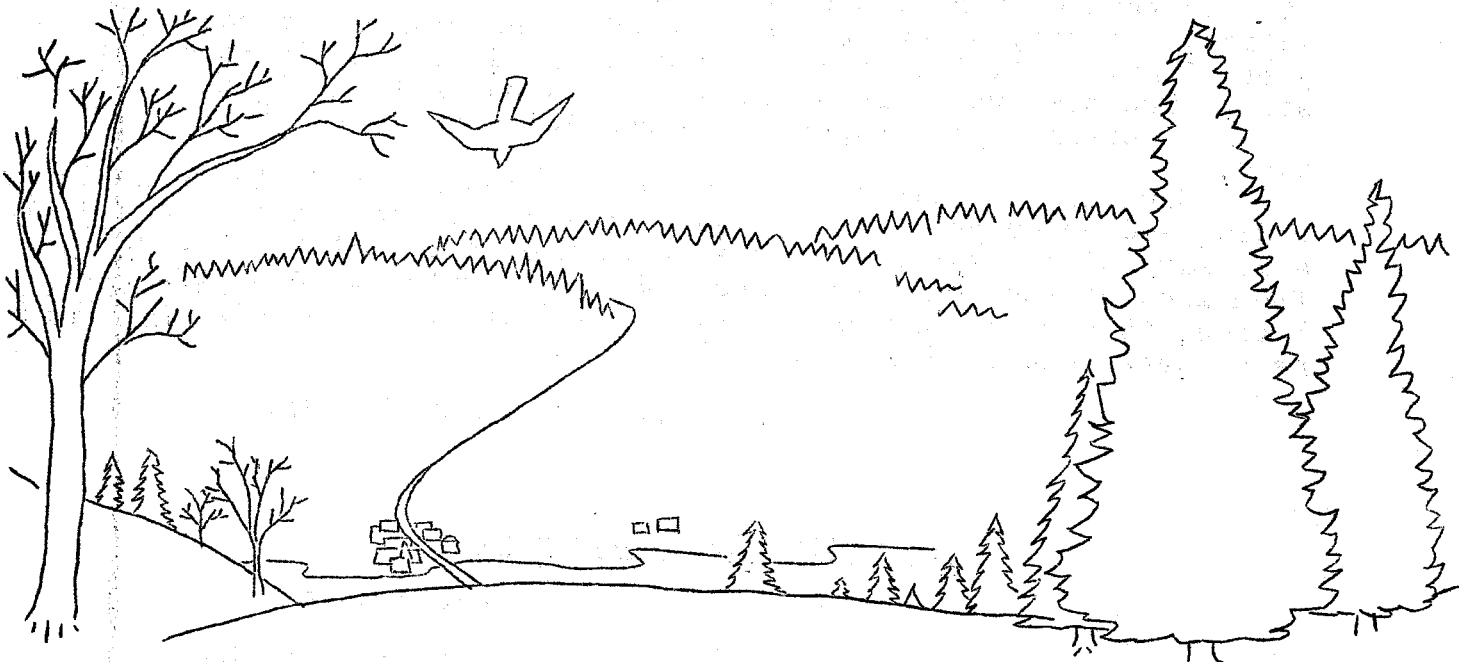
In the latest issue of the NEWSLETTER I told of a recent experience I had with a young Sparrow Hawk - "Killey" - which was presented to me early in July last. The experience I had with that bird brings to mind one I had of similar nature, details concerning which I find recorded in my notes back in 1939.

On July 19 of that year a young male Sparrow Hawk was found huddled in the grass under its nest high up in a dead stump from which presumably it had fallen. Its benefactor mentioned that the youngster was being wholly ignored by its parents and though he didn't like hawks of any breed he was loath to see this one die from neglect and starvation. That's why he brought it to me.

Despite its weakened condition, the result of an enforced fast, the little waif was full of vim and vigour evidenced by the way it struck at me with its talons when given the opportunity. When excited it would give the killey - killey - killey call - so characteristic of its kind - for which reason this one too was dubbed "Killey".

My notes indicate that his daily fare consisted of English sparrows, grasshoppers, and mice, but sparrows were his mainstay throughout, mainly perhaps because grasshoppers and mice were more difficult to come by. He gained rapidly in stature and by early August had acquired his rich, colourful adult plumage and in addition had lost completely his initial beligerency. So friendly and fearless had he become that I was privileged to take him out-doors for frequent airings. At such times he would be perched on my hand or shoulder quite free to take off at will. And because I feared he might do just that I attached to one of his legs an aluminum band-#34-403305 - just in case. However, after these strolls he seemed quite content to be returned to his accustomed enclosure in my cellar.

Shortly after Killey arrived on the scene my 8-year old grandson, Christopher, came to live with me and the novelty of having this beautiful bird as a pet pleased him greatly. Particularly was he intrigued when he saw me parading about my garden with the bird and its apparent willingness to stay with me rather than to fly away as it could so easily have done.



By mid-September Killey was fully developed and a decision regarding his release and return to the wild must soon be reached. It presented certain difficulties. The dictates of selfishness plus the bird's own preference or willingness to preserve the status quo, as cited above, told me to keep him as the delightful pet he had become. But a deeper sense or awareness of my responsibility regarding what would be the bird's ultimate welfare finally won out -

Killey must learn to forage for himself in the wild.

By this time the regular fall migration of Sparrow Hawks was well underway and numbers of them could be seen along the course of the Wolfville Ridge which was one of their long-established thoroughfares at that season. This would be an ideal setting for the 'good-bye ceremony and on Sept. 20, in company with Christopher, Killey was taken there. On arrival he was finally induced to take off but flew only a few yards to the nearest fencepost. There he sat facing us with an enquiring expression as though asking "what am I supposed to do now?" and despite the years that intervene I vividly recall that it was with deep emotional pangs which were shared by both of us, that we left him sitting there - helpless, in a sense - and drove away.

The day following Christopher suggested that we go to the Ridge to see if by any chance Killey might be waiting there to be fed. Forthwith we set out taking with us an English Sparrow in case it might be needed. Arriving at the designated spot I soon noted a Sparrow Hawk perched high up on the branch of a dead tree some 200 yards distant. Approaching it Christopher kept calling "Killey - Killey" but when we got about half way there the bird took off and flew out of sight. Obviously, it was not the one we were looking for and the little lad expressed his disappointment as we returned to the car. But it was to be short lived for at that moment I heard the familiar high-pitched Sparrow Hawk call and turning quickly we were both quite overcome at the sight of Killey coming in full tilt low over the open field. A split second later he was perched on my out-stretched hand and the fact that he was hungry was quite evident by the way he 'latched' onto the sparrow which Christopher proffered. But requiring a more stable base for the rough action which was to follow immediately, he took off with the sparrow in his talons and alighted on a fence-rail close at hand. When he left moments later he was busily engaged plucking some of the superfluous feathers which could be seen drifting off in all directions.

Though we returned to the spot several times during the following days we never saw him again and soon the incident of Killey's delightful stay with us had become but a pleasant memory.

But that's not the end of the story. During the latter part of January, 1940, a letter was received from the United States Biological Survey in Washington advising that my Sparrow Hawk - #34-403305 - had been shot on January 19 at Lovell, Florida. It was seen trying to enter a dove-cote on the premises of William Neal who, fearing for the welfare of his pigeons had taken what he felt was appropriate action. It was, of course, a case of gross misunderstanding on the part of Mr. Neal, for no Sparrow Hawk would attack a bird of that size. The hawk was merely revealing its natural instinctive interest in the aperture which suggested a possible nest site for one of his kind.

However, despite our distress on learning of Killey's untimely ending and under such tragic and senseless circumstances, we did find a measure of comfort from a realization of the fact that he did not die from lack of food but had responded to his natural instincts and learned to capture his own prey, for had it been otherwise he would never have reached Florida.

Wolfville, December 7, 1975

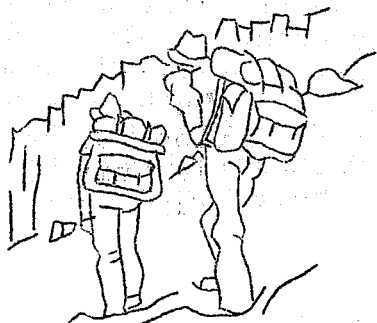
The Wolfville Outdoors Club

Larry Bogan

An outdoors club has recently been initiated by the Wolfville Recreation Department and may be of interest to members of our Society. The club will be sponsoring various outdoor activities in the form of day hikes, overnight outings, trips, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, canoeing, bicycling, and evening meetings. Everyone is free to join in these activities and can keep abreast of the activities scheduled by checking the bulletin board in the Wolfville Post Office or by calling the Town Recreation Office.

A family overnight at Sherbrooke Lake is planned for the weekend of the 17th and 18th of January. Transportation will be provided; the overnight accommodations will be in the lodge at the United Church Camp; and activities will include hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, and winter games. To register for and/or find out more about the outing, call the Wolfville Town Recreation Department.

Bill Reeves is the Town Recreation Director and the initiator of the Outdoors Club.



There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the lonely shore;  
There is Society, where none intrudes,  
By the deep sea, and music in its roar  
I love not man the less, but Nature more.

Lord Byron

Wing Beats

Oscar Morehouse

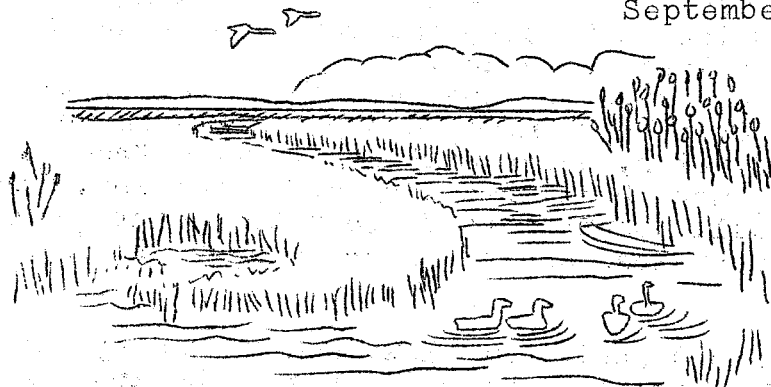
The morning skies are gray, threatening rain. A small group of people stand atop a dyke, in an area early settlers named Les Canards (the ducks). A rugged figure in their midst, his silvering hair wind ruffled, points to the Spartinas, the brown marsh grasses stretching away to the Basin. He tells of their inestimable value, of the nutrients they provide to permeate the ebbing waters to be deposited on the tidal flats, food for the myriad marine invertebrates there - an initial stage in one of this planet's great food chains.

Dozers nearby are being used to build a new aboiteau. He relates the history of the building of the dykes; and, of land reclamation, and with a gesture to the cornfields and grain stubble and pasturing cattle to indicate it's worth. Then adds: "there is growing evidence the land is being pushed beyond sustainable yields".....he recommends less raw chemicals, more organic fertilizers - manures with all their trace elements; high cash crops of wild rice on the wetlands by the headwater swales instead of massive drainage; in place of clear stripping leave shrub and sapling to save the soil from irreparable change.

Small skeins of ducks, black specks against the clouds, come down the wind. He glances up and says: "those are Green winged Teal... that's a Pintail...and those are Blackducks...." When asked how can he know, he smiles and with a twinkle in his eye, says "one learns to recognize the wing beats".

Who is this person, is he visionary or victim of modern circumstances? He's both and more. He's Man the wise naturalist looking to the future. He's biologist Fred Payne, Area Director of Wildfowl Management...A field day with him is a revelation!

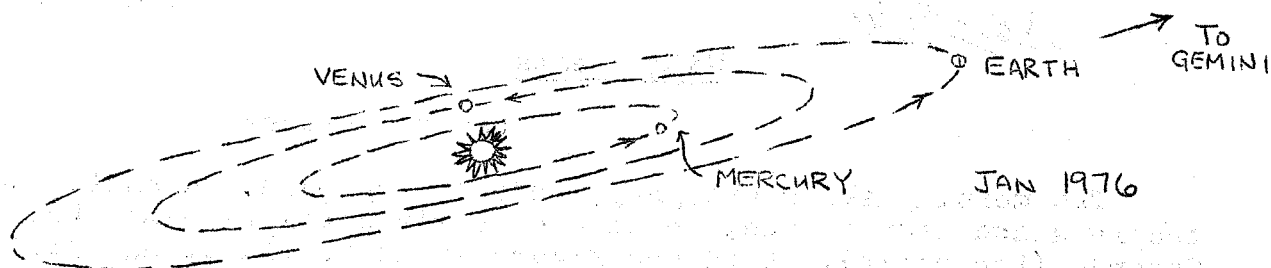
September 27, 1975



Halifax Field Naturalists

Jean Timpa

At this time we wish to offer our congratulations and encouragement to the newly formed Halifax Field Naturalists. With aims and objectives similar to our own (education and conservation of our natural resources) through lectures, field trips, and newsletters, perhaps it will be possible to have a few joint activities and swap talent. Anyone interested in joining this group should send the \$2.00 yearly fee to Halifax Field Naturalists, % N.S. Museum, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, N.S. Regular meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month, at 8 p.m.; in the lounge, fifth floor of the Biology Building in the Life Sciences complex at Dalhousie University. Field trips are held at least once a month, and their first Newsletter was published in November.



Astronomical Calendar - Winter 1976

Roy L. Bishop  
Maktomkus Observatory

The shortest day of the winter is already behind us. With each successive day now our Sun shines for longer hours and from a higher path in the sky. Yet winter is just nicely underway and we can expect the coldest weather late in January.

The same sort of delay occurs at other times of the year. For instance, the Sun's path in late March is the same as in late September, yet September is much more pleasant than March. Also, the Sun's heat is greatest in June, yet the warmest weather does not show up until late July.

This seemingly mysterious behaviour of our weather is really quite reasonable, however. One must simply remember that it is heat content, and not heat input, that determines the temperature of an object, be it the Earth's surface or a TV dinner in an oven. In the latter case the heat input to the frozen dinner is greatest when it is first placed in the hot oven; however, the dinner does not reach its maximum heat content (and hence maximum temperature) until some time later when the oven has cooled somewhat and the heat input has decreased. The temperature will rise as long as the heat input is greater than the heat loss, and the temperature will be highest when the input and loss are equal.

The same sort of reasoning applies to our winter weather. Although the Sun's heat input to our area is increasing during January, the land and water, being still a bit warm from last summer, are still losing more heat than they are receiving. Hence it is getting colder and will continue to do so until about February 1st when the decreasing heat loss and the increasing heat gain finally become equal.

Venus raced past Earth last summer and by next June will have gained half an orbit on us as it passes behind the Sun. This winter it is the bright ethereal, star-like object in the south-eastern pre-dawn sky.

When clouds were not rolling off the cooling Bay of Fundy, Mars provided a bright orange decoration high in the night-time sky during the Christmas season. Although fading as we leave it behind, Mars will continue to dominate the clear evening sky for the remainder of the winter. It is interesting to watch its position shift relative to the distant stars over a period of several weeks. This shift is due to the combination of Earth's motion and the motion of Mars as both planets orbit the Sun.

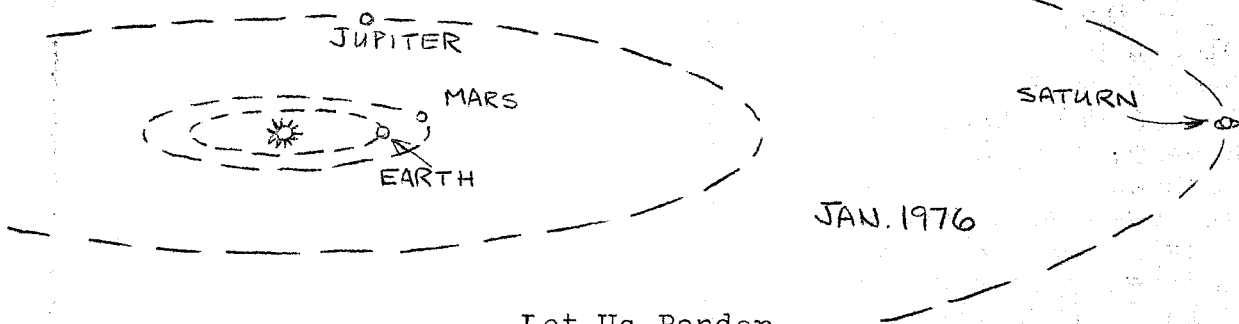
Jupiter, that immense planet whose mass is more than 300 times that of Earth, is the steady, bright, yellowish object high in the southern sky just after sunset. During the evening as we rotate eastward, Jupiter drops in the south-western sky and sets around midnight.

1975 was a special year for us in that there were two total eclipses of the Moon and both of these were well placed in dark transparent skies. I hope that you saw at least one of these lovely apparitions. There will be no total eclipses (either lunar or solar) visible from this area in 1976, or 1977, or 1978, or 1979, or 1980, or 1981. The next total lunar eclipse will be on July 6, 1982; but the next total solar eclipse in Wolfville will not be until April 14, 2200!

However, there are still lovely events occurring this year in the heavens. Among the most spectacular are those moments when the spinning Earth rolls Wolfville either away from or into view of the nearest star. In our quaint pre-Copernican way we refer to these events as sunsets and sunrises.

Another convenient and lovely sight is when the full Moon "rises". Mount a pair of binoculars on a tripod and catch the full Moon while it is still partly behind some distant trees. This is an opportunity that occurs several times each year and yet few people take the trouble to avail themselves of this sight. To aid those who might like to try this last suggestion, here are the rising times of the full Moon for three days around each of the next three full Moons:

January 16	4:56pm	March 14	4:58 pm
17	6:07	15	6:16
18	7:20	16	7:34
February 14	4:56		
15	6:11		
16	7:27		



"We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature, and living by complicated artifact, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they moved finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings. They are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth."

Wolfville Area Christmas Bird Count - 1975

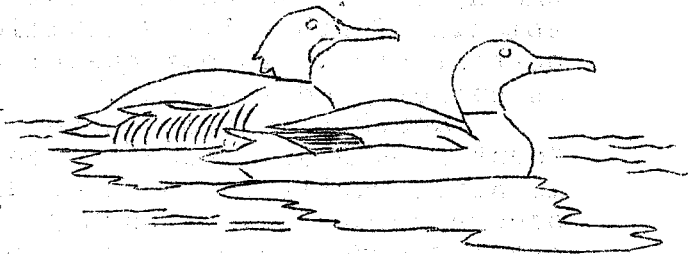
Jean Timpa

After a night of whistling south-easterly winds and drenching rains, December 27 dawned unseasonably warm and all too foggy for very good scope observation on the marshlands and waters of Minas Basin. The tides were not altogether favourable either. However, a record number of observers (28) scattered into the 7½ mile radius area (the centre being Nowlan's canteen) and by dusk had covered this large area as well as possible.

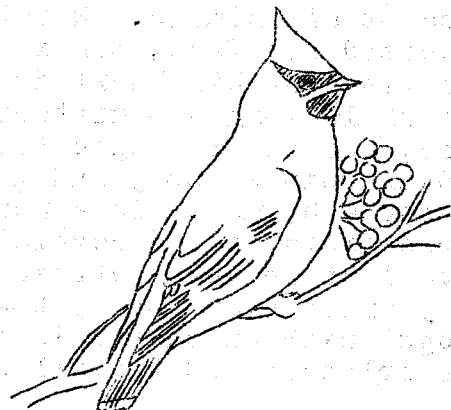
A comparison of the 1974 and 1975 count show some interesting population changes with some species, but the unusual weather and poor visibility in 1975 may have significantly prejudiced the results.

- \* considered to be unusual at this time of year, i.e., usually migrates south
- \*\* uncommon - rare at any time of the year
- \*\*\* generally unexpected in the Wolfville area
- W winters in the Wolfville area

Year:	1975	1974
Observers divided in to 12 groups	28	18
Feeding Stations:	4	1
Party Hours:	64½	62
Species:	48	51
No. of Individual Birds Counted:	10,838	10,363

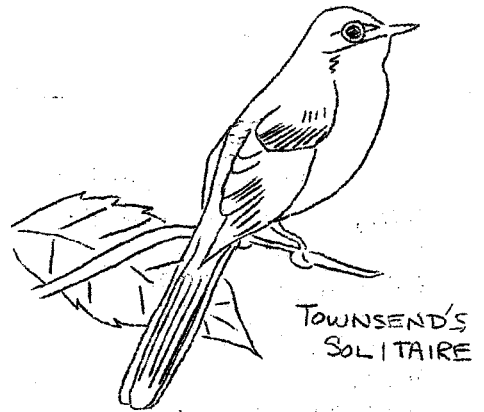
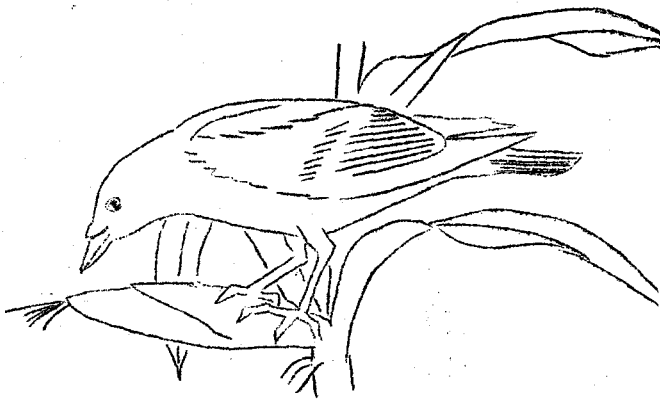


*Great Blue Heron	0	1
Canada Goose	18	178
Mallard	19	11
Black Duck	458	663
W Oldsquaw	0	7
W Common Goldeneye	11	0
Common Merganser	30	2
Red-br. Merganser	0	1
* Goshawk	1	0
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	1
Red-tailed Hawk	12	8
Rough-legged Hawk	3	1
Bald Eagle-adult	7	2
-immature	3	1
* Marsh Hawk	0	1
* American Kestrel	1	0
Ruffed Grouse	3	4
Ring-necked Pheasant	85	21
Gray Partridge	19	11
* Common Snipe	8	8
Grt. Bl. Bked. Gull	320	289
Herring Gull	420	908
Rock Dove	848	660
* Mourning Dove	0	2
** Short-eared Owl	2	1
** Pileated Woodpecker	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	6	4
Downy Woodpecker	11	6
Horned Lark	35	120
Blue Jay	203	139





	1975	1974
Common Raven	249	356
Common Crow	3755	3085
Bl. capped Chickadee	260	64
Boreal Chickadee	9	1
White-br. Nuthatch	3	6
Red-br. Nuthatch	2	0
Brown Creeper	2	1
* American Robin	73	6
Golden-cr. Kinglet	12	67
Ruby crowned "	0	2
* Cedar Waxwing	7	0
** Northern Shrike	0	1
Starling	1242	584
House Sparrow	1658	1278
* Rusty Blackbird	0	1
* Common Grackle	3	0
Br. headed Cowbird	412	52
Evening Grosbeak	112	28
Purple Finch	2	25
Pine Grosbeak	23	9
Pine Siskin	0	79
W Common Redpoll	82	0
American Goldfinch	20	39
* Savannah Sparrow	0	3
Dark-eyed Junco	266	160
W Tree Sparrow	49	57
* White-thr. Sparrow	7	5
Song sparrow	21	13
W Snow Bunting	28	20
*** Cardinal	1	0



a female at the feeder of the Merrit Gibson's in Canning.

Other interesting species seen during the Count Period, but not on December 27, include a Kingfisher, Barred Owl, Mockingbird, albino House Sparrow, 3 Mourning Dove, 2 Northern Shrike, and a flock of 40 Bohemian Waxwings. It is very unusual to have both Cedars and Bohemians in our area at the same time, but the particularly heavy crop of Hawthorn berries seems to have delayed some Cedars, and the Bohemians have made a rare (altho more common in recent years) eastward migration from their usual winter range, the western provinces.

By far the most startling discovery was made by Professor Sherman Bleakney on December 28 in his own backyard - a Townsend's Solitaire, a thrush, which usually winters in southern British Columbia. This seems to be the first "official" record of this species here in Nova Scotia.

Rachael Erskine (who with her husband, John, co-ordinated the Wolfville Christmas Bird Count for many years) has kindly given me some data on the past counts which is interesting to compare from one year to the next:

Count Year:	No. Observers:	Party Hrs.	Species	Individuals
1962	7	3 feeders	47	?
Rarities:	Gt. Blue Heron, Ring-necked Duck, Old Squaw, American Scoter, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Gyrfalcon, Pigeon Hawk, Iceland Gull, Savannah Sparrow.			
1970	5	16 hrs.	33	9737
Rarities:	Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Horned Grebe, Pigeon Hawk, Goshawk, Lapland Longspur.			
1971	13	24 hrs	36	4717
Rarities:	Common Eider, Iceland Gull, Barred Owl, Savannah Sparrow			
1972	12	62 hrs 3 feeders	37	2850
Rarities:	Pied-billed Grebe, Flicker, Northern Shrike, Eastern Meadow-lark, Baltimore Oriole.			

1973: 19 observers, 62 hrs., 3 feeders, 50 species and 10,923 individuals.

Rarities: Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Pintail, Snowy Owl, Goshawk, Iceland Gull, Flicker, Mockingbird, Myrtle Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Savannah Sparrow.

Organizers of this year's count were pleased to have the additional observers and hope that more, well-qualified people can be added each year. We quite freely admit that most of our areas were covered all too hastily and in-adequately. Much more could be learned more accurately about our wintering bird populations with more thorough coverage. Thanks to all those who did help.

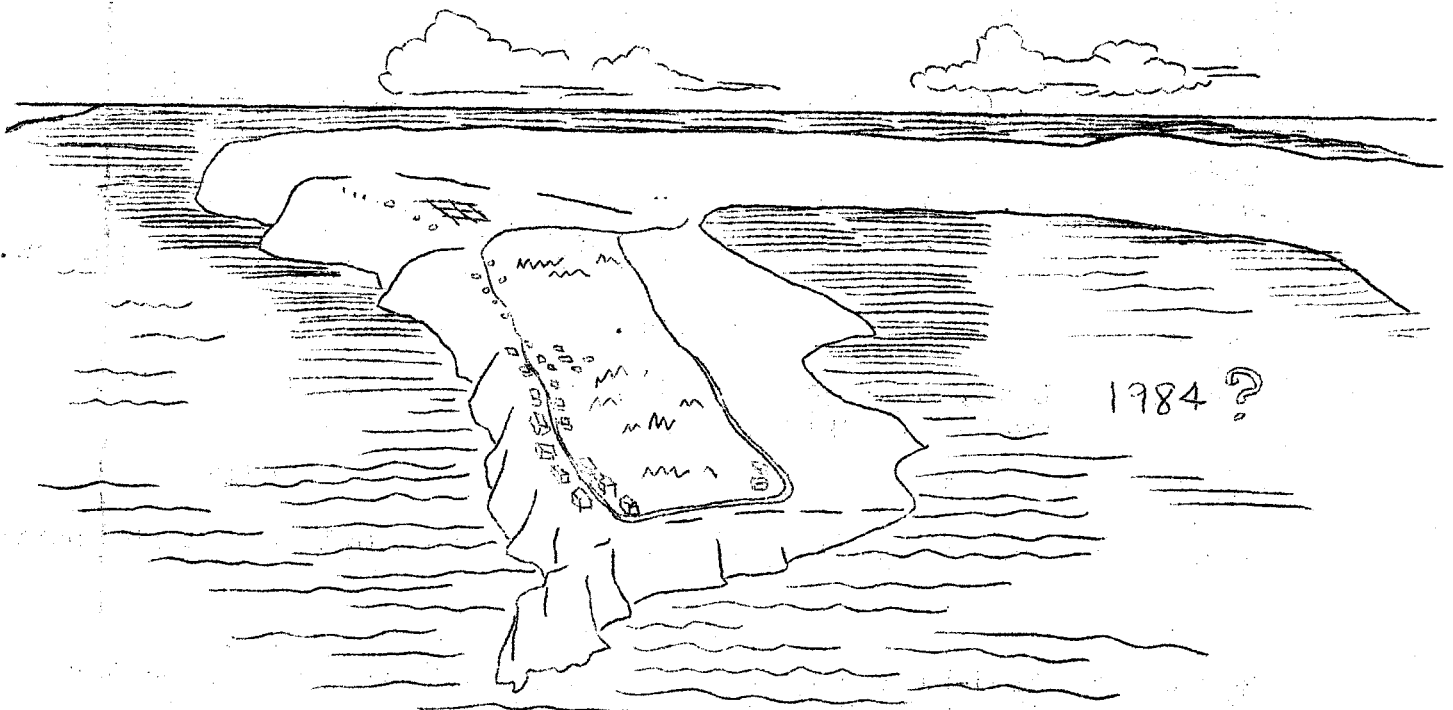
### Conservation Committee Meeting

Larry Bogan

At the first meeting of the Conservation Committee for the BNS, Thursday, Dec. 10, 1975, Sherman Williams, Jean Timpa and Larry Bogan decided on a preliminary itinerary of tasks for the committee. Of first concern were the consideration of whether the Society should voice an opinion on the preservation of the Cape Blomidon-Split area and whether to recommend that the Society should join such an organization as the Maritime Coalition of Environmental Protection Associations. In addition, the committee thought that they should look into the sprucebudworm spraying program and the throw-away bottle legislation for Nova Scotia.

Pertinate to the second item, Sherman Williams reported on attempts being made by various individuals and societies in Nova Scotia to create a province-wide organization to co-ordinate programmes in conservation and public education concerning the outdoors. Tentatively called "Outdoors Nova Scotia", the organization would also provide a base for presenting a united front on public issues of interest to its members. The first organizational meeting was last Fall; the next meeting is planned for February and a convention for May. The committee concurred that action on whether to join MCEPA should be delayed until more is known of "Outdoors Nova Scotia."

The committee is collecting material in preparation to discussion of the other three items at a future meeting. The committee invites comments from members on these and other issues concerned with conservation and our Society. Members interested in working on or with the committee are urged to contact one of the committee members.



\$\$ DUES \$\$

Since September 68 have already joined or re-joined the Blomidon Naturalists Society. If you have been caught up in the rush of Christmas or the confusion of the mailstrike and have forgotten to renew your membership with the BNS, do so now! Newsletters and notices of meetings and field trips cannot be sent to those who do not pay this nominal fee. See our secretary-treasurer, Mr. Larry Bogan, at the next meeting or use this handy form today!

Mr. Larry Bogan  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Blomidon Naturalists Society  
Box 753  
Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Bogan:

Please find enclosed \$ 2.00 as dues for the 1975-76 year for the Blomidon Naturalists Society.

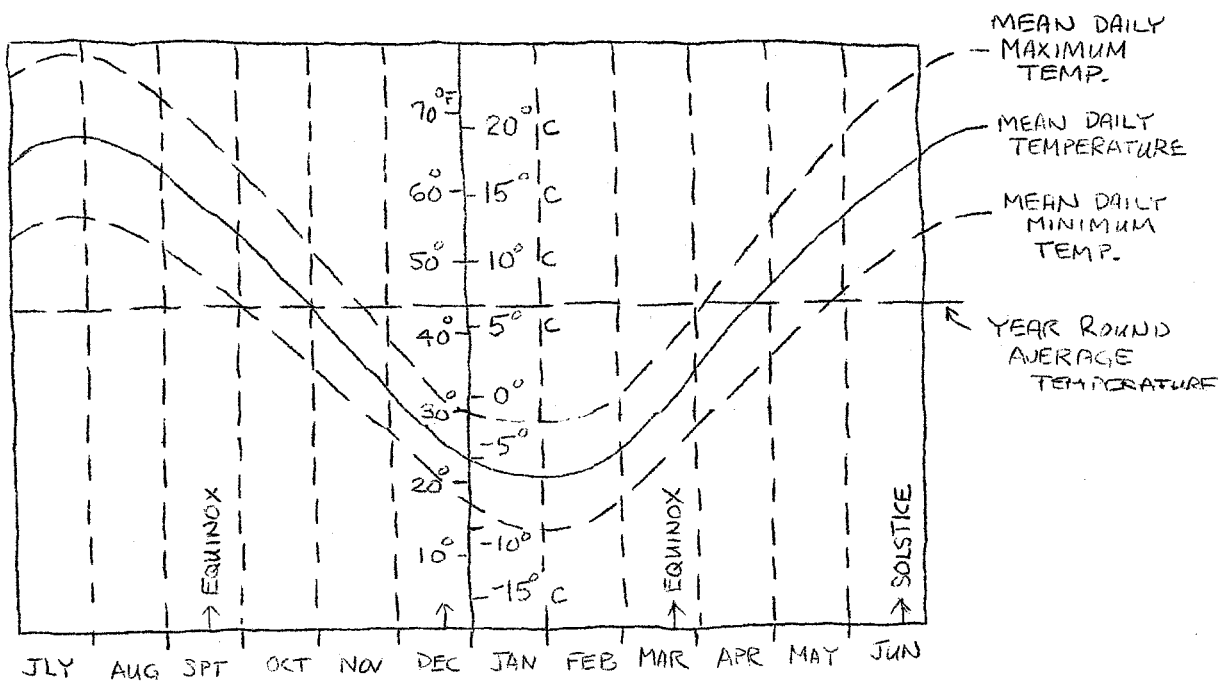
Name: (Please Print Clearly!) \_\_\_\_\_

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TEMPERATURES



DATA FROM  
CDA RESEARCH  
STATION  
KENTVILLE, N.S.