



BLOMIDON NATURALIST SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, No. 3

September, 1977

COMING EVENTS

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| <p>Monday December 5th 8 p.m. Rm. 241, Beveridge Arts Centre, Acadia University</p> | <p>Mr. Tony Erskine Canadian Wildlife Service Sackville, New Brunswick</p> <p>"The Boreal Forest and its Birds"</p> |
|---|---|

Mr. Erskine will illustrate his talk with his own slides, mostly of the various habitats found in the Boreal Forest across Canada. The talk will be based upon two summers work in northern New Brunswick, two summers in the "Clay Belt", an area on the Quebec-Ontario border, two summers in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and two summers in northern, coastal British Columbia.

Kejinkujik National Park Outing

Ella Roland, Truro, N.S.

On May 28th, a cool day with variable cloudiness, about 50 people gathered at the Park for a weekend outing.

First we went to a stillwater behind the Administration Building to see the many swallows hawking for insects over the water. We could pick out Barn and Tree Swallows and the occasional Swift, but we failed to spot the 3 Rough-winged Swallows which had been reported from there the day before.

Next, we drove some distance out the road beyond the Fish Hatchery, parked our cars and walked still farther into the woods. Here we tried to get our untrained ears tuned in to the warbler songs. It was a good day for Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Many others were around, too, but no one kept a complete list. The highlight of the morning was the male Scarlet Tanager; he came close and grew excited when Peter Hope played his song back to him on a tape recorder. He was certainly a beautiful bird!

After a picnic lunch, the party hiked out the Peter Point trail where various woodland communities were observed.

Unfortunately, the evening events were cancelled because of a downpour of rain.

Sunday morning the weather was cool and quite clear again. Since many people had come for the first day only, the number who gathered at Jacques Landing for a day on the water was small. Some half dozen canoes and a kayak started off on a leisurely paddle up the Mersey River where we observed the numerous forms of living things along the way. Our whole group gathered for

lunch on the river bank, and there it was interesting to compare notes on our observations. The last event of the day was being taken by our leaders to see the Barred Owls nesting in the campground. One of the owls sat still on a limb for some little time and stared stupidly down at us curious bird-watchers staring up at it.

Our thanks to the leaders who gave us such a pleasant weekend. We will long remember the woods, the birds, and especially the people we met.

OUR SOCIETY OUTINGS

1977

Larry Bogan, Pres.

From cool days of April through our warm August, the programme committee had scheduled 12 occasions when members and interested persons could have observed our native natural history in its own environment.

Of them all, three were cancelled due to rain and for cloudy weather, two were in conjunction with other Nova Scotia societies, two I missed, and there are five that I enjoyed sincerely. I report on those five here.

The night of April 16th was clear, cool, but calm and provided an ideal environment for observing the moon, stars, and planets. More than 20 other persons, including children, were there. Roy Bishop pointed out constellations, and provided interesting facts about the stars. There were three telescopes being pointed at various objects in the sky to show detail. The big hits were the Rings of Saturn and the craters of the moon, but I enjoyed seeing again close ups of the Orion nebulae, various galactic clusters of stars and a few little fuzzy images of globular clusters. There appears to be quite an interest in star observing, and we shall have to have more frequent outings of this type. One later in the summer was clouded out.

I remember April 30th as a cold, clear, very windy Saturday, when my family and I got a tour of the Coldbrook Fish Hatchery with two other B N S members. The children were excited to see the various stages of growing trout and bass from the tiny stages in tank indoors to the almost fully grown fish in the outdoor pools. We all felt a little uneasy when during the discussions of stocking lakes; it was realized that these fish would probably not last the summer in their free state. New fish would have to be put in next year. Maybe we should stop the silliness of the put-and take system so that more people would recognize how we have depleted our environment of fresh water fish.

May and June were bad months for outings, and except for the outing to Kejimikujik Park (Reported by Mrs. Roland elsewhere in this Newsletter) all were cancelled for various reasons.

The best outing, in my book, this year (so far) was the one to Mud Lake led by Sam Van der Kloet. I think the main reason I liked it, was that it introduced to me a small, beautiful, isolated, natural bog that has not been disturbed for a long time. We got to the lake from a dirt road, after a short $\frac{1}{2}$ mile hike and a little bushwacking. At this time of the year (July 17) we caught many of the bog plants in flower, and there seemed to be a wealth of them. They were, the two water lilies, orchids (Calapogon, and rose pogonia, and northern green orchis), bladderwort, the insect-ivores (sundew and pitcher plant), Laborador tea, and many woody plants (cranberries, huckleberries, laurels, and others). After exploring the perimeter of the lake, we hiked up to a scenic outcrop of rocks, where we could look down on the bog and see much of the surrounding area. Later in the summer, I took my family back to these spots; the flowers were gone; but they retained their quiet, wilderness-type atmosphere.

Two weeks later (July 31), Sherman Williams and Tom Haliburton led another healthy group of naturalists through an entirely different environment. With boots and barefeet, we slogged out onto the mud

flats of Avonport, to visit the stumps of 2000+ year old pine trees. At low tide the flats extend at least a quarter of a mile from shore (my guesstimate) and exposed these preserved specimens of a time when the coastline was higher and trees grew where mud and water now dominate. Salt water and mud are good preservatives. We took advantage of the trek to observe the change in marine animal communities as we hiked through the intertidal zone. Bank swallow nests, emerging stars in a clear sky, pleasant discussion, and tea ended this outing. One last note- that mud is sticky, and if you venture out on the mud be prepared to exert yourself and possibly lose your balance and/or your boots-- some did it on this outing - but no one complained, in fact compliments issued from all participants.

The final outing of the summer season, occurred on an ideal day. As a small group we set out to look at the wild shrubs, flowers, and berries, with Rachael Erskine as our resource person. Walking along a dry, dusty dirt road on the South Mountain, in the bright sunshine, we not only saw the plants but hawks circling overhead. Chokeberry, Pin Cherry, Shad bush, Alder, Viburnum, and Nightshade (Bittersweet) are common here. Later we drove to a wooded location and found fewer bushes but identified bunchberry, partridge berry, hazel nut, wild rose, creeping blackberry, a good variety of ferns, indian pipes, and many other wild plants. This year there seems to be a smaller quantity of berries present on bushes. After this August 21 outing, I surveyed another habitat near a stream through the sandy areas of the valley, and I found some elderberry bushes and of course several kinds of blueberries.

So far, I have had requests for more astronomy, geology, and mushrooms. I find that I enjoy any outing, but it does help to know what other BNS members prefer - send your requests to the programme committee orally or in writing. (L. Bogan, P. O. Box 753, Wolfville, N. S., 542-9433).



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our indebtedness is extended to all those who led field trips throughout the summer; to Andy Dean for starting off our lecture series in September with a stunning presentation (no one should have missed it!); to Duncan Keppie for the October lecture and field trip- placing Nova Scotia within the continental drift theory; and to all those persons who contributed articles to this issue of the BNS Newsletter or otherwise contributed time and effort to its production.

Autumn Skies

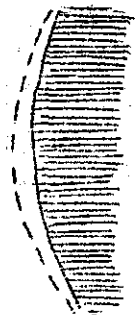
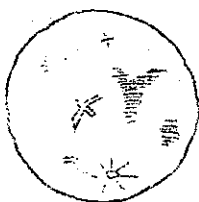
Roy L. Bishop, Maktomkus Observatory,
Avonport, N.S.

Fall is a time of change. The warbler and the thrush have left the countryside to the crow and jay. The green of summer has turned to the gold and red of autumn, soon to be followed by the white of winter. The nocturnal performances of cricket and katydid have closed with the fall of a frosty curtain. Another busy animal is preoccupied with insulation and snow tires.

One change, as much a part of autumn as the falling leaves, takes place in the evening skies. The mottled southern Milky Way so characteristic of summer nights droops low in the twilight leaving the eastern sky to a dimmer, less spectacular array of celestial lights. Yet the interlude is brief, for with the first snows there appears in the east a spectacular array of stars. Preceded by the Pleiades, a small misty asterism, Taurus the bull backs into the sky as Orion the hunter drives him westward. Canis Major and Canis Minor, the hunter's faithful dogs, soon appear near their master. More toward the north-east Gemini, the twins, watch Orion's advance. All of these constellations contain some of the brightest stars in the sky: ruddy Aldebaran, the eye of the bull; Rigel, Bellatrix and Betelgeuse, the shining armor of Orion; Castor and Pollux, the heads of the twins; and Sirius, the tag of the larger dog flashing in the frosty night. The night sky will be particularly striking this winter since the next three wanderers beyond Earth, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, are pursuing their silent orbits against this stellar backdrop. Each appears as a bright, un-twinkling star: Mars, reddish and noticeably shifting from week to week; Jupiter, bright with a hint of yellow; and Saturn, farthest to the east and with a dimmer, dusky light.

During the last full week of October the Hunter's Moon will shine down on the bare woods, although it will have left the early evening sky before the spirits of Halloween emerge. Full Moon occurs on the 26th and again on November 25th. In December the Moon will be full and riding high in the night on Christmas Eve. If the sky is clear and the ground is white this will be a memorable night - provided one is away from the baleful glare of street and yard lights.

On December 10th the Moon will be new within a few hours of perigee, which is the point in its elliptical orbit closest to Earth. Also, the December perigee is the closest on in 1977. In addition, Earth will be within one month of perihelion, its closest approach to the Sun. The coincidence of these four conditions will produce much larger tides. Because the tides lag the astronomical factors by a day or two, the highest tides will occur on December 11th or 12th. Residents of the Wolfville area will recall the flooding which occurred last April 6th. The astronomical factors are more favorable for a high tide this December than they were in April; however, before running for sand bags one should recall that last June predictions were also more alarming than in April. Remember the night of June 2 - 3? Cars roamed the countryside, crowds gathered beside the world's smallest harbour, and CKEN stayed on the air all night. And what happened - absolutely nothing. The one factor that most people overlooked and the one which could not have been included in the tide tables for last April was the weather. On the night of the April flood the atmospheric pressure was very low. Relieved of part of the weight above it and pushed by a strong south wind, the tide inundated our area. It is unlikely, but if similar weather conditions occur on December 11th or 12th, look out!



Bird Nest Survey 1977

Bernard Forsythe
Wolfville, N.S.

With a little luck and a lot of walking I was able to fill out 154 nest cards this year for the Maritime Nest Records Scheme. Of the 39 species involved 10 were new to my own list of nests found.

Our wet cold weather in June seemed to hold up nest proceedings of our song birds. For example, on May 31 I found a Yellow Warbler nest about half built. However it was June 16 before the first egg was laid. They successfully raised four young. I noticed most other small birds were a little late in getting their nests started but did better later in the summer.

On May 16 I found where a predator had killed a Ruffed Grouse. Nearby under a log was the nest containing 10 Grouse eggs plus 5 Pheasant eggs. The Pheasant had used the Grouse nest for a dump nest which sometimes happens, but it was the first time I had seen it.

As the red squirrel population is up they destroyed a few of my nests this year. As well, some young crows were lost to raccoons. By far the worst predator again this year was the Cowbird. Only one young Red-eyed Vireo was fledged from three Vireo nests containing Cowbirds. Cowbirds were also found in the nests of the Veery, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Redstart, Junco, and White-throated Sparrow.

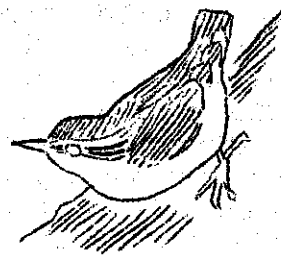
On May 5 I watched a male Hooded Merganser at a pond in Black River. On May 7 the nest was found, and the female refused to flush providing positive identification. This was my favourite find for the year as very few have been found in Nova Scotia. Dr. Tufts told me it was a first for Kings County. Another unusual find was a Goldfinch nest in which the six eggs were pale bluish-white with light brown specks scattered over them. All my reference books state that Goldfinch eggs are pale bluish-white unmarked except for Tufts "The Birds of Nova Scotia" that says they rarely have brown specks.

Even our dog helped the birds this year. A Chipping Sparrow and two different Black-capped Chickadees gathered hair shed by our dog and lined their nests with it.

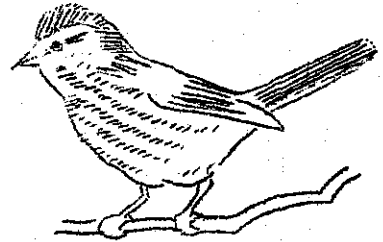
Red-breasted Nuthatches have an unusual habit of lining the entrance to their cavity nest with sticky balsam. This summer I found a nest, and it had this balsam around the entrance. When I stood quietly near the nest both adults would fly to it with insects in their beaks, hover momentarily, hummingbird style, at the entrance and then fly into the cavity without landing in the balsam.

Most nests found have their own little story; however it would take too long to tell them here, so I will end with a list of nests located this year.

| <u>No. found</u> | <u>Species</u> | <u>S=successful; F=failed</u> |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Hooded Merganser | S |
| 1 | Common Merganser | F |
| 2 | Goshawk | 2S |
| 2 | Ruffed Grouse | 2F |
| 2 | Ring-necked Pheasant | 1S; 1F |
| 1 | Long-eared Owl | F |
| 1 | Belted Kingfisher | S |
| 5 | Common Flicker | 4S; 1F |
| 6 | Traill's Flycatcher | 4S; 2F |
| 7 | Bank Swallow | 5S; 2F |
| 5 | Barn Swallow | 4S; 1F |
| 1 | Gray Jay | F |
| 3 | Blue Jay | 2S; 1? |
| 3 | Common Raven | 2F; 1? |
| 9 | Common Crow | 7S; 2 F |
| 6 | Black-capped Chickadee | 6S |
| 2 | Boreal Chickadee | 2F |
| 1 | Red-breasted Nuthatch | S |
| 4 | Gray Catbird | 1S; 2F; 1? |



| <u>No. Found</u> | <u>Species</u> | <u>S = successful; F = failed</u> |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 17 | American Robin | 5S; 12F |
| 1 | Hermit Thrush | S |
| 5 | Veery | 1S; 4F |
| 6 | Starling | 5S; 1F |
| 4 | Red-eyed Vireo | 2S; 2F |
| 1 | Black-and-White Warbler | S |
| 2 | Yellow Warbler | 2S |
| 4 | Chestnut-sided Warbler | 1S; 3F |
| 2 | Ovenbird | 2F |
| 8 | American Redstart | 1S; 7 F |
| 3 | Red-winged Blackbird | 3? |
| 12 | Brown-headed Cowbird | 4S; 8F |
| 1 | Rose-breasted Grosbeak | F |
| 3 | American Goldfinch | 3S |
| 1 | Savannah Sparrow | F |
| 5 | Dark-eyed Junco | 5S |
| 2 | Chipping Sparrow | 2S |
| 3 | White-throated Sparrow | 1S; 2F |
| 1 | Swamp Sparrow | S |
| 11 | Song Sparrow | 7S; 2F; 2? |



THE BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

is published quarterly by the Newsletter Committee of the Society.

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"...the primary object of the Society shall be to encourage and develop in its members an understanding and appreciation of nature. For the purposes of the Society, the word 'nature' will be interpreted broadly and shall include the rocks, plants, animals, waters, air and stars..." from the BNS Constitution.

A Small Brown Seed

Edgar B. McKay
 Bear River, N.S.

On a crystal clear June morning, after days of rain and cloud, I first saw him, a tiny fluff of dark green. His perch was one of the small twin spires of the old, gray Baldwin stub that stands near the hedgerow, west of the cottage. He sat motionless for several seconds, then turned ever so slightly toward the sun. It was then I could see the gleaming red of ruby throat.

He remained on the perch for a few moments longer, then streaked over the road toward the grove of tall pine. Soon he was back. Then he disappeared down over the hedgerow, a tangle of thorn, wild cherry, shad bush, flowering dogwood, and oak.

For the next several weeks he or his mate returned to the high perch; sometimes the two humming birds together would perch on the twin spires, then dart either to the pines or the hedgerow.

Other birds made use of the old stub during the summer months as resting place, look-out, or in search of insects - robins, swallows, kingbirds, woodpeckers - hairy and downy, assorted sparrows, a Baltimore oriole.

No birds used the old stub for home this year but in the recent past several families of swallows raised their young in its shelter, and three years ago a pair of flickers produced their brood in one of larger knot-holes half way up the old tree.

Two years ago swallows attempted to nest in the tree. I observed a marauding cat early one evening part way up the tree as the frantic parent birds fluttered about noisily. I directed the cat's attention homeward and erected an inverted barrier of sheet aluminum about four feet up the tree trunk. This was later reinforced by a tangle of barbed wire. Neither sheet aluminum nor barbed wire add to the stark beauty of the old stub, nor do they insure that birds will again make their home there. But they almost guarantee that no cats will ever assail the heights in the future.

It is autumn and my old gray Baldwin stub stands alone in the rain and northeast gale. Yet it is not alone, for its hundreds of companions, scattered throughout Nova Scotia and eastern North America tell a similar story.

It does not matter by what name they were known - Astrakhan, Baldwin, Gravenstein, Bishops Pippin, Northern Spy, Russet or other. Each had its unique conformation and flavor and time of bearing. But each has provided food and shelter for insects, birds, and man in its own way. My tree tells me the story of all these others.



The old stub was set out more than a century ago. Wind and sun and careful husbandry brought it into bearing, and it often yielded three or four barrels of apples in a good year. The best of the harvest found its way to England, but some always went into the cellar for family use. As it aged and insect pests moved in, and no spraying was done on small orchards in the area, the fruit became less usable. But for some years it flowered in pink and white beauty each spring, until storm and decay won out and bark slipped off and branches fell, leaving it gray and bare.

It may be, if all goes well, that the old stub will be home to some birds another year. Or if the main branch should bend and break in a winter storm it may end its long life by giving heat in the fireplace.

From the burning I shall have warmth. But I shall also see in the flames its blossoms and its fruit and the birds and always its own stark shape as it stood. And I shall have a sense of wonder how all this could come from the miracle in a small brown seed.

Letters to the Editors

To the Editors:-

I thought you might be interested in a book review of a book I bought in England. Mrs. Sircom of "The Box of Delights" assures me that she has ordered it in but is unsure of the price yet - about \$15.00.

The book is called The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady by Edith Holden, published in Great Britain by Michael Joseph, Ltd., in association with Webb and Bower, Ltd.

"It is a facsimile reproduction of a naturalists diary for the year 1906. Edith Holden recorded in words and paintings the flora and fauna of the British countryside throughout the changing seasons of the year."

"Edith Holden's words, all carefully written by hand include her favourite poems, personal thoughts and observations on the wildlife she saw surrounding her home in Warwickshire, and on her travels through England and Scotland. The exquisitely beautiful paintings on every page of birds, butterflies, bees and flowers reflect her deep love of nature; they have been executed with a naturalists eye for detail, and the sensitivity of an artist."

"For seventy years, this enchanting and unique book has lain undiscovered; it is now being published for the first time in a full-colour facsimile edition that recaptures of the freshness, charm and beauty of the original."

"The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady is a book for all seasons, a gift for all times."

"The author, Edith Holden, was born at Kings Norton, Dorchester in 1871, one of seven children of a Midlands paint manufacturer. The family lived in the small village of Olton in Warwickshire, and it was there that she wrote and illustrated this book. After attending art school, she worked as an illustrator with her drawings (often of animals) being published in several books."

"She later moved to London, and in 1911 met and married Ernest Smith, a sculptor; they lived in Chelsea, and had no children. On 16 March 1920, in her 49th year, Edith died tragically by drowning in the Thames at Kew, while gathering buds from chestnut trees."

Everyone who has seen the book has enjoyed it so much that I felt I had to share it with the members of the BNS.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Stiles
RR 1, Port Williams, N.S.

Thanks very much for an interesting book review! We hope other members of the BNS will follow your example and share with us information on books and magazines of natural history which they enjoy.

Since you wrote this on October 4, I have been in "The Box of Delights" here in Wolfville. Copies of this lovely book are in and are priced at \$12.95. I don't know when I've seen such an attractive book, and am surprised that it is not quite a bit more expensive. I sincerely hope Santa brings one to our house! Hint! Hint!

Exerpts from "Outdoor Chat", a Regular
Column Which Appeared in the Shelburne Coastguard

Dr. Harrison F. Lewis
Sable River, N.S.

October 1953, No. 9

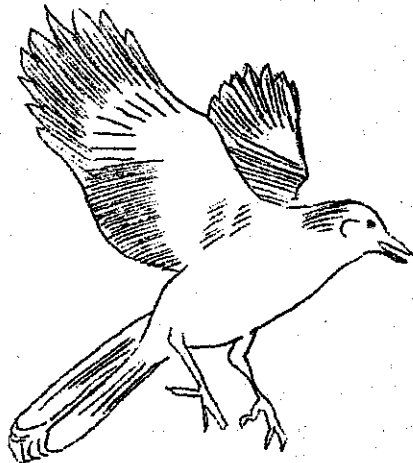
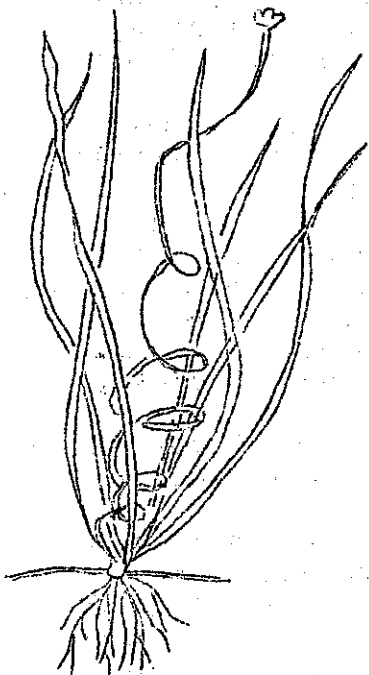
In fall and spring the coast in this vicinity is visited by a bird called the Ipswich sparrow, after Ipswich, Massachusetts, where it was first noticed. It is closely related to our common savannah sparrow and much resembles it, but is larger and of a lighter gray. The special point of interest about the Ipswich sparrow is its very

restricted breeding range. It is the only species of bird that nests only in Nova Scotia, but its breeding is confined to one small part of this province, namely, Sable Island. This isolated sandbank, with a total area of probably less than 40 square miles above water, is the home of this small bird, the only part of the earth's surface where it reproduces its kind. Ipswich sparrows winter along the coast of the northeastern United States, sometimes going as far as Georgia.

The bays and inlets of southwestern Nova Scotia have produced this year a heavy crop of eel-grass, much larger than that of last year. About twenty years ago this well-known plant of tidal waters, which had up to that time been abundant on these shores, was attacked by a strange and unprecedented disease that nearly wiped it out on the Atlantic coast of North America, as well as on the coast of Europe. For some years little eel-grass was to be found on those coasts away from the mouths of streams, where the discharge of fresh water seemed to give it some protection against the wasting disease. Eventually, however, the plant began a slow recovery, which still continues. This is welcome news, for eel-grass is valuable to residents of this region in a number of ways. It is the basic material for an important local industry that provides employment and distributes thousands of dollars annually to local people for what would otherwise be wasted. Around country homes it is used for banking buildings and for bedding domestic stock and thus builds up the supply of manure for crops. Its importance to our waterfowl is great, for both the seeds and the rootstocks are relished by them. Abundance of well developed eel-grass in shallow waters not frozen over means abundance of nourishing food for Canada geese and black ducks.

....

The mushrooms and toadstools lodged unattached in bushes and on tree branches, a few feet off the ground, are placed there by squirrels so that they will dry before being stored for the winter.



November 1953, No. 10

Shelburne County is an area where rare birds and delayed migrants are particularly likely to occur and the fall of the year is a season when they are especially noticeable. The past month has been marked by several interesting occurrences of this sort.

In Lockeport on November 3rd I had the good fortune to see a mockingbird, the golden-voiced and far-famed songster and mimic that we commonly think of as living among orange blossoms and pendant streamers of Spanish moss. Unfortunately, this Lockeport

mockingbird was silent during the five minutes or so that I had it under observation. Mockingbirds display a certain propensity to wander to Nova Scotia, which may or may not be taken to indicate that our climate is becoming more like that of Dixie. Birds of this species have been recorded in this province more than 20 times.

Mrs. Avarad P. Hamilton, of Ingomar, has furnished this column with a detailed description of a strange bird with yellow underparts that she saw in her home community on November 4th. Her description indicates that it was probably a western kingbird. The normal range of this bird is west of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, but, like the mockingbird, it shows a tendency to wander to the northeast in autumn.

Other bird wanderers that are worth mentioning are a killdeer plover at Hemeon's Head on October 30th and three mourning doves together at Lockeport on November 3rd. A tardy redstart, one of the wood warbler family, which would normally have gone southward from Nova Scotia not later than September, is remaining in West Middle Sable and was last seen on November 21st, when it was active and apparently well.

On October 30th I had the unusual experience of being attacked with vigour and persistence by a wild bird. The attacker was a red-throated loon that had been wounded in one wing (although protected by law throughout the year). Perhaps its recent unhappy experience with some other human had put it out of sorts with the whole tribe. Unable to fly, it had gone ashore and was resting on the top of the beach near Hemeon's Head. As I passed near, it repeatedly uttered a harsh cry, then scrambled to me with the aid of feet and wings and struck my high leather boots hard and repeatedly with its strong, sharp bill. Loons are so highly adapted to swift swimming that they cannot walk well, but this indignant bird accompanied me as best it could along the beach for 30 or 40 feet, spiritedly belabouring my legs. Tiring at last, it rested for a moment, then plunged into the surf. I wished it speedy recovery from its wound and improvement in its frame of mind.

....

In our home in West Middle Sable I have at no time seen any house mice or common rats. From time to time a few mice get into the cellar, but when trapped they always prove to be deer mice, attractive little native animals that are brownish above and white below, with white legs and feet.

Recently, however, a mouse-trap in the cellar killed a small animal of a very different kind. It was about three and one-half inches long, was clad in dense, soft, dark gray fur, and had a short, hairy tail and a conspicuous long, pointed snout. This little creature was a short-tailed shrew, one of the fiercest of North American mammals. In its own little world it is as ferocious as any tiger. It is also characterized by great activity, a high-strung and very sensitive nervous temperament, and an enormous appetite. It eats many kinds of insects, including grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, moths and butterflies, and also devours earthworms, salamanders, slugs, snails and centipedes. It does not hesitate to attack a mouse, even though such a victim may weigh twice as much as the shrew.

The saliva of the short-tailed shrew is poisonous. It is too small to be dangerous to human beings, but its bite causes an immediate burning sensation and subsequent discomfort may last for a week. Small prey creatures bitten by the shrew are poisoned so effectively, however, that they quickly lose the ability to resist or to escape. So fast is the pace of life for the savage, energetic shrew that if it meets with no mishap it dies of old age in less than a year and a half.

Do You Want to Save a Tree or Two?

Are you sick of junk mail? Recently on the Joan Kennedy programme on CKEN Kentville this annoying, wasteful problem was discussed. A gentleman phoned in the following address, saying that one should write requesting that your name be removed from the junk mail list:

Canadian Direct Mail Marketing Association
130 Merton Street
Toronto, Ontario
N45 1A4

It's well worth a few minutes to write out the request, envelope and stamp!

Turkey Vulture in Nova Scotia!

While returning from the annual Presidential Field Day (the Nova Scotia Bird Society) on Brier Island, Digby County, Monday, September 5th, Bernard Forsythe, Richard Elliot, Peter Hickling and others on Long Island suddenly realized that they were seeing a turkey vulture soar above them! They stopped their vehicle and took photographs. Hope they turned out well!

Bernard also reports white-ringed crossbills on the Ridge, the first in some years, lots of Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Grosbeaks, and a few Snow Bunting already. He has spotted several birds which he thinks could well be Bohemian Waxwings, but it seems so early that he is hesitant to say that it is a positive identification. The cone crop is very light this year, so the "winter birds" seem to be moving around more looking for food.

George Boyd, a technician with the N.S. Dept. of Lands and Forests in Kentville, came across a flock of 15 Long-eared Owls about a mile down the road to Porter's Point on the right hand side in a swampy thicket. (Take the right hand turn at Jaw Bone Corner if any of you wish to try to find these birds.) It is felt that this is quite unusual to see so many together as owls tend to be more solitary creatures. Not long after Mr. Boyd also saw three behind his home in Port Williams on Church Street.

Peter Austin-Smith also told me the following story of a Harbourville resident: Four Goshawks were pestering (to say the least!) the gentleman's domestic fowl, ducks, I believe. Noticing a fresh kill he went into the yard to retrieve the bird. Upon returning from his basement he noticed a second bird dead. While attempting to retrieve this he was repeatedly dived upon by one of the Goshawks and quite badly scratched on the arms as he shielding his head. Enough was enough and the offender was shot and presented to Lands and Forests personnel as well as an exhibit of the scratched arms for proof that once inawhile a raptor will attack man. Such rare, unfortunate incidents have given all these useful birds a bad name and they have, subsequently, been harassed to such an extent by man that many are now completely absent from former habitats or very rare and "endangered."

BNS Newsletter Deadline! - December 21, 1977

Don't wait for Christmas to sneak up on you! Write something for us NOW, please! The most "active" season for plants and animals is once again behind us. Surely there were some notable aspects of it which are worth sharing with us. Send your contributions to Roy L. Bishop, Avonport, N.S., or to Mrs. John W. Timpa, Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S. Remember, please, this Newsletter is only what its members make it by contributing to it. We can't afford paid reporters yet!

Blomidon Naturalists Society Membership

Membership in the Blomidon Naturalists Society is open to all persons by sending \$2.00/adult registered or \$1.00/student registered to the Secretary-Treasurer, John W. Timpa, Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S. A reminder to our 106 members from last year (1976-77): dues are being collected for 1977-78. We hope you'll all rejoin us!

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____
