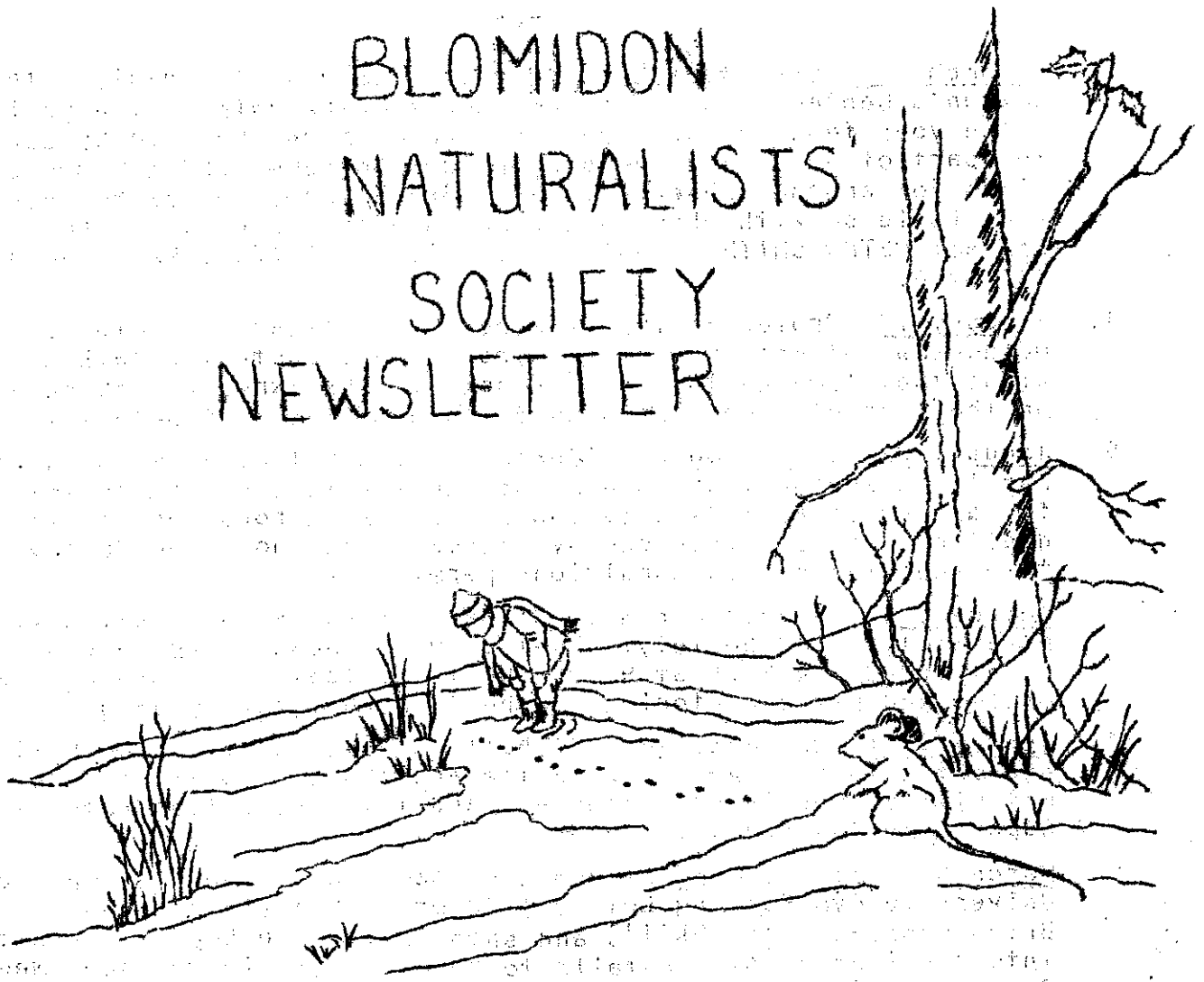


LARRY BOGAN

# BLOMIDON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Vol. 9 No. 3

September, 1982

The BNS Newsletter is published on the equinoxes and solstices.

EDITOR: Jean Timpa  
ART: Twila Robar - DeCoste  
PRODUCTION: Larry Bogan

The primary objective 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

## FALL-WINTER PROGRAMMING

- All meetings will be held in Room 244 of the Beveridge Arts Centre, Acadia University at 8:00 p.m. unless otherwise stated.

- For last minute changes consult local Cable TV announcements, CKEN radio, the Kentville Advertiser, or call Jean Timpa at 542-5678.

1. November 24, a WEDNESDAY NIGHT SPECIAL - ANDY DEAN and 45 minutes of Prince Edward Island. Andy has already put together a slide-cassette show of PEI and is looking forward to sharing this with us while he is here in Nova Scotia.
2. December 13 (Please note, this is a week ahead of the regular meeting time to avoid a meeting too near Xmas!) - It will also be in Room 308 of Patterson Hall, Acadia University. Dr. Barry Moody, Professor of History at Acadia "Early Forms of Housing in the Annapolis Valley" - illustrated. We hope you'll make a special effort to turn out for this programme despite the Xmas rush.

3. December 27 Christmas Bird Count. With a 7 mile radius (from Nowlan's Canteen) to cover, we need all the help we can get! Watch your feeders, or yards, or become more involved by surveying part of an area or help by recording names and numbers of birds for another observer. For more information as to where you should be with whom, and when (and the necessary forms) contact PETER SMITH, Acadia University, 542-2201, Ext. 354 or 542-5998.
4. January 17 Professor Ian MacLaren, Department of Biology, Dalhousie University. "Rare Birds"; an illustrated talk on the birds that turn up in our province off the expected course and on the current trends or significance of these itinerants.
5. January 22 Larry Bogan. "Energy in the Valley." Bring a brown bag lunch and meet at 10 a.m. at the Acadia Gym Parking lot for a tour of Larry's wood and solar heated house and other dwellings using unique energy sources throughout the Valley as time and winter road conditions permit.
6. February 6 "Winter Birds". Richard Stern in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Bird Society. Meet at 9:15, Acadia Gym Parking Lot or at Grand Pre Park at 9:30. We'll basically be looking for the eagles and hawks wintering in the Gaspereau Valley area.
7. February 21 Corporal John Nicholls of the New Minas RCMP will present a Talk on Arctic Wildlife and the Native Peoples he met will posted in Frobisher Bay and Iglovik. Illustrated with Super 8 movies and prints.
8. March 5 Winter Outing at Bogan's, Cambridge. Meet at the Acadia University Gym Parking Lot at 1:30 or at Larry's at 2:00. Bring Cross-Country Ski's and snow shoes. We hope to turn this into a weiner roast. Details to be announced in December Newsletter Pray for SNOW!
9. March 21 Dr. Ian Manning who works for the Zambian Government as a Biologist will present an illustrated talk on some aspect of the jungle environment in which he works. More details to follow.
10. Meetings on April 18, May 16 and June 20 are still being arranged. Do you have any suggestions? Are there any volunteers among our membership? For field trips, too!??? Please contact any one of the new executive listed in this issue.

---

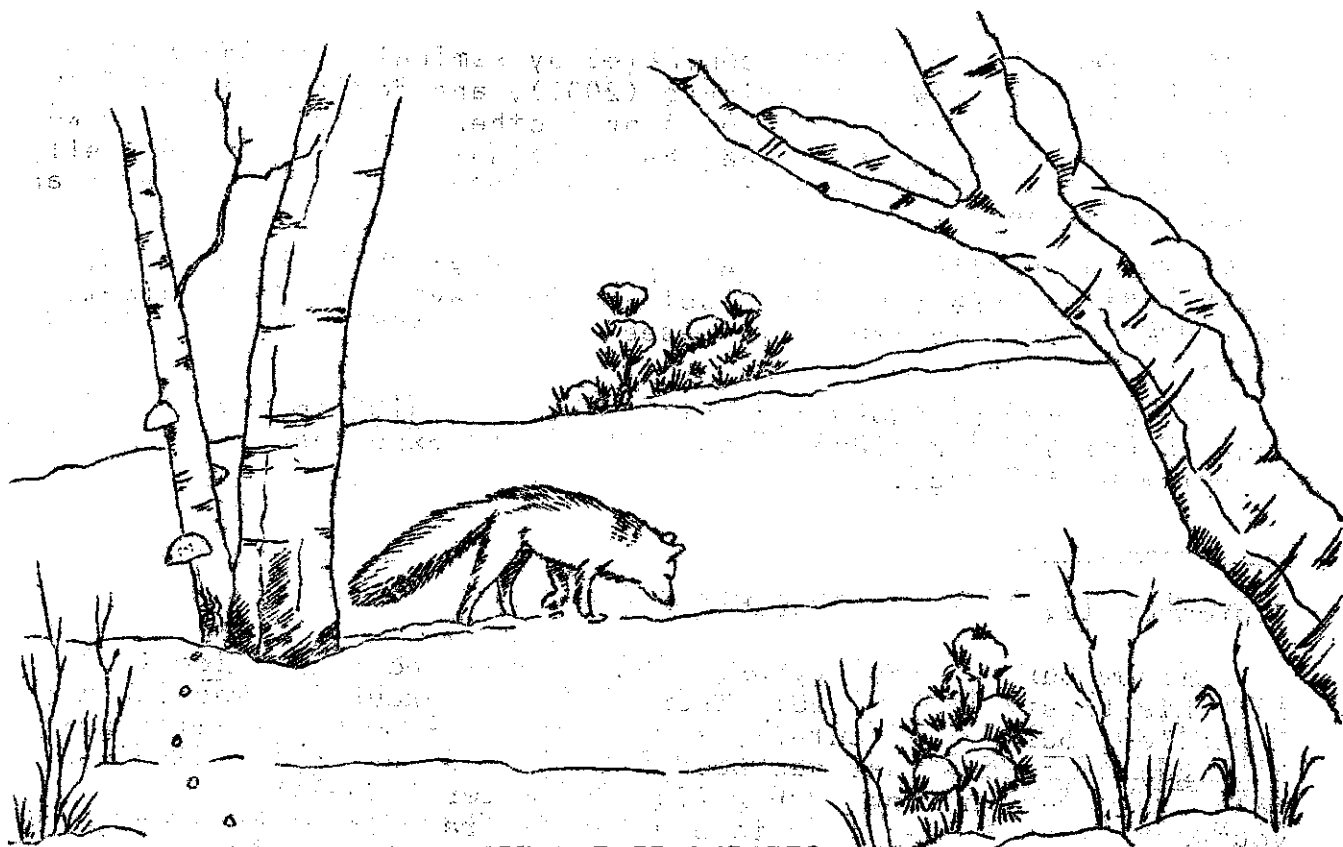
Don't forget to bring friends along to our meetings and field trips. We have always tried to discourage a member's - only policy and encourage as many new curious faces among us as possible.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since June there have been many individuals who have contributed to the ebb and flow of our doings and so to them our heartfelt appreciation. Particularly we wish to single out our retiring executive who have worked so well together to strengthen our group: Peter Austin-Smith, Sherman Williams, Mary Miles, Roy Bishop and Lynn Coldwell who made the Newsletter bloom! Never to be forgotten either is Rachel Erskine's untiring organization of refreshments (there's no coffee like it!) after our meetings; talks and slides by Larry Bogan and Russ Shearer of the Environmental Protection Service; the ever-intriguing field trips led by Sam Vander Kloet, Jim Wolford, Roy Bishop and Ken Harrison; and all those who have in one way or another contributed to this Newsletter.

BNS NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - DECEMBER 21

Please remember your Christmas present to BNS! Even if it is just a three or four line observation or short poem, your contribution will make the next Newsletter of greater interest and quality for all of us. Send to Jean Timpa, Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S.



FIELD-TRIP REPORTS

July 24, 1982 --- "Mud Lake" (quaking bog)

As reported before in this newsletter, whoever named this piece of real estate ought to have been lynched! Our object is a youthful Sphagnum bog; the only thing that is lake-like is the open water in the bog's center, and the only mud is on the dirt trail that takes us to the bog.

Approximately 25 people joined Sam Vander Kloet for this trip. But the 7 cars were a bit of a problem, since there is no parking lot by Black River Lake. After pushing Wolford's car out of the ditch(!), the gang hiked into the bog, first stopping briefly on a high granite outcrop. In and on the quaking Sphagnum-moss mat, we saw the usual array of interesting bog plants, including 4 kinds of orchids; especially impressive were the large numbers of white bog orchids, Habenaria blephariglottis. Yellow flowers of bladderwort were also very abundant. (Also Sam distributed a souvenir list of our common bog plants.) At the edge of the open water, we found large numbers of tiny transforming spring peepers.

Back near our parked cars, Sam did an imitation of Bernard Forsythe by finding a nest of a hermit thrust (containing three small nestling) under blueberry foliage, of course! Actually, over the past few years Sam has become adapt at locating nests, but only of hermit thrushes.

Thanks again to Sam. For any of you who are contemplating this trip for next year, make a mental note to bring rubber boots, even if not recommended in the newsletter!

Jim Wolford

August 1, 1982 --- Shorebirds

Since we had a bit of time before high tide, I took the seven participants up to the Acadia Biology building to show some study-skins (stuffed birds), maps, bottles of sandpiper foods, and a short slide-show.

Then, instead of going for our usual walk along Evangeline Beach, we went to the village of Kingsport. On our way, on the Canard dyke-lands we saw a hen pheasant with eight chicks. Then, at the east end of the extensive Kingsport salt-marsh, we stood at the end of a sandy beach and watched the roosting shorebirds become active as the tide began to ebb.

The shorebirds seen were dominated by semipalmated sandpipers (perhaps 5000?), least sandpipers (200?), and dowitchers (short-billed) (200?), with smaller numbers of 5 or 6 other species. Also we were fortunate to spot a "semi" that had a bright pink breast and belly and a yellow streamer-band on its leg. This bird had been dyed and banded in Maine.

On the sand with us were perhaps 300 roosting bank swallows, tiger beetles were common and active, sea lavender was in bloom, and fair numbers of bloodthirsty no-see-ums were somewhat annoying as well!

This was one of those lazy situations in which we let the birds come to us, and I believe it was a pleasant experience for everyone in spite of the bugs.

September 12, 1982 --- Shorebirds Again

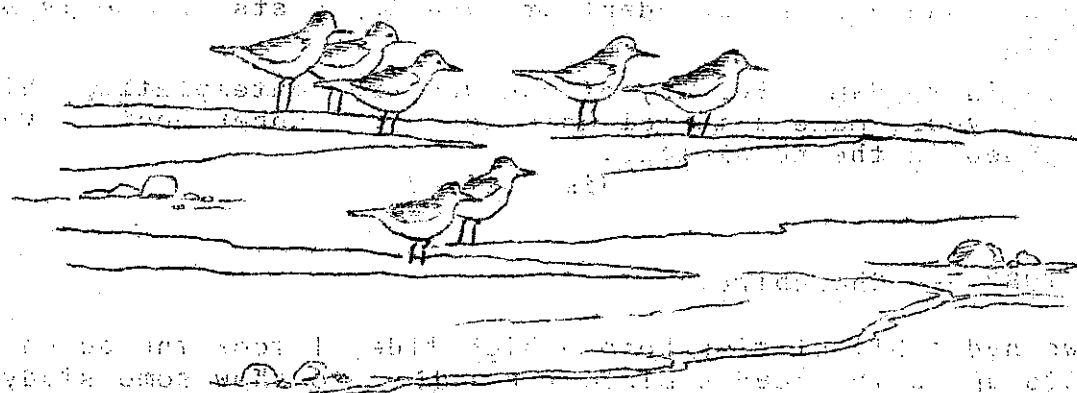
Somehow our "leader" (yours truly) chose the wrong tide (low) from his trusty tide-table! Therefore, the excursion was ashamedly cancelled, but coincidentally I was able to show off a litter of baby garter snakes that had been born in the lab on the previous day. The 31-inch-long mother (79 centimeters) delivered 30 youngsters, 25 alive, each in a delicate transparent membrane, and each measuring up to almost 7 inches (17 cm.) in length.

The cancelled trip was rescheduled for September 19 on the afternoon high tide, but the publicity was nearly zero, and only three people showed up. It was a sunny, but windy and chilly day, and we found a protected spot at the far east end of Evangeline Beach. There we saw no large numbers of shorebirds, but we did see 8 species. Highlights were a merlin (pigeon hawk) chasing small sandpipers, and at least 4 whimbrels (Hudsonian curlews).

Jim Wolford

PERSEID METEOR SHOWER - AUGUST 11

Between 40 and 50 people showed up for this annual event, so it was encouraging to note such an interest in astronomical phenomena. Unfortunately, though it was possible to observe some of the heavenly bodies for a time, the clouds did not co-operate, and the event was terminated sooner than had been intended.



### QUICK NOTES

Peter and Carolyn Smith (Wolfville) and Merritt Gibson (Canning) have mocking birds in their yards as regular visitors.

Jim Wolford has had a pair of Northern (Baltimore) Orioles in his backyard recently and on November 6 was thrilled to see a Yellow-breasted chat, the largest of our warblers. Brenda and Bill Thexton, Dr. and Mrs. Stern and Jean Timpa were also fortunate to observe it later in the afternoon, as well as one Cedar waxwing. Jim, in the meantime, was happily watching eight species of ducks at the Canard Poultry Farm Pond (Wood, Hooded Mergansers, Pintails, Ring-necked, Golden-eyes, Mallards, Green-winged Teal and Black). After seeing the Chat, Richard and his wife put the frosting on the cake by driving to Grand Pre where an immature Peregrine falcon kindly flew over their heads for a good viewing.

November 14 was a rather raw miserable day, so the ducks were fewer and not so interesting at the Pond. Bernie Forsythe and family saw about 200 Snow Buntings and 1 Horned Lark and the Thextons and Jean Timpa between 30 and 40 Horned Larks.

On November 15 and 16 an immature Cattle Egret was observed in Canning.

Please let us know of your observations by December 31st. Hopefully there will be something of interest besides birds, too!

### CALL FOR BIRD FEEDER AND HOUSE DESIGNS

A new book, tentatively titled The Audubon Society Handbook for Attracting Birds, will include innovative homemade designs for bird feeders, houses and baths. The author, Stephen W. Kress, is looking for improvements to standard models of feeders and houses and original designs for any homemade bird attracting creations. Novel approaches to repelling squirrels, cats and nuisance birds are also welcome. In addition to the handbook, some of the submitted material may be selected for articles in the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's new magazine, The Living Bird Quarterly. The designers of selected plans will be acknowledged in the book and articles.

Mail detailed plans with measurements (and photographs if available) to:

Dr. Stephen W. Kress  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca New York 14850

### CONTEST FOR THE BIRDERS

Please keep a list of all birds (with approximate numbers) seen on your property from December 1st to April 30. Please send results to Jean Timpa, Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S. (or give the reports to me at meetings) after April 30 for a summary in our June Newsletter. Who has the most species? The greatest numbers? The most unusual? How many species can we all total in this area? Reports from outside Kings County are most welcome, too. For rare bird alerts throughout the winter please phone in the report to Jean Timpa, 542-5678.



Bird Nesting Survey 1982  
 Bernard Forsythe, Wolfville Nova Scotia

As the years go by my desire to find as many nests as possible is being replaced by the challenge of the hunt for the handful of nests of species nesting in our area that I have not already recorded. Some of these are very difficult to locate, and it will take many seasons before I get to see some of them such as Nighthawk, Winter Wren, Pine Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Crossbills, or Sharp-tailed Sparrow. However, I still record most of the nests that I come across if time permits.

Every season is different, and this year the biggest change was with the Owls, probably due to a low in the vole cycle. Short and long-eared Owls virtually disappeared while Barred Owls failed to lay eggs. The one bright spot with Owls was that the two Great Horned Owl nests located both fledged two young. Another change was in the numbers of cowbirds around this summer. They were not as noticeable around the fields, and I only found their eggs in five of my nests. By late summer though several young cowbirds were seen being fed by Song Sparrows and Juncos.

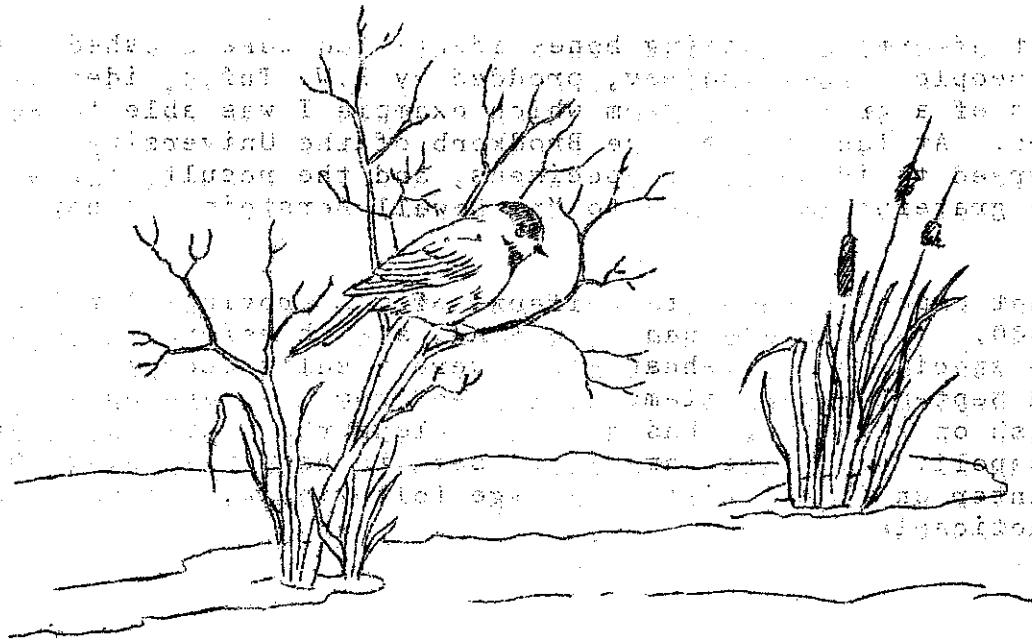
The Tree Swallow nest box on our lawn contained 9 eggs, probably laid by two females. Of these 8 hatched and fledged. Another unusual number of eggs was a chipping sparrow nest that held 5 eggs. Chipping sparrows usually lay 4 eggs, black-capped chickadees lay their eggs in May. This year in late July a family group of Black-caps was around our yard. The adults began lining the nest box behind my house. On August 2 the first egg appeared. Four eggs were laid after which the adults went into the box for a few days without incubating and then left with their first family.

Most of June was spent on the Warbler family. They are our most common summer birds; however, few people find many, or any of their nests. When the adults first return they can be found anywhere. To find a nest one must learn the habitat each species requires and spend many hours following the adults. It is a great help to learn the songs, as a male singing in June is probably very near its nest. This year I added 4 new Warbler nests to my list. They were: Tennessee, Nashville, Northern Waterthrush, and Canada Warbler. I consider the Waterthrush nest as my best find this season.

As I am writing this, my nest cards are not completed yet. Therefore the following is only a partial list of nests found. Some of the common ones such as Crown, Raven, Starling, and Robin are not included. There will be around 115 nest cards representing about 42 species of birds to send in.

No. found	Species	S-successful; F-failed
1	Goshawk	F
1	Ruffed Grouse	S
3	Killdeer	2F; 1?
2	Great Horned Owl	F
1	Pileated Woodpecker	S
1	Eastern Phoebe	?
3	Eastern Pewee	2S; 1?
1	Blue Jay	S
2	Hermit Thrush	1S; 1?
1	Swainson's Thrush	F
3	Veery	2S; 1?
1	Solitary Vireo	?

- 2 Red-eyed Vireo 1S; 1F
- 2 Tennessee Warbler 1S; 1?
- 1 Nashville Warbler S
- 1 Parula Warbler ?
- 6 Yellow Warbler 3S; 3F
- 2 Chestnut-sided Warbler 2F
- 1 Northern Waterthrush S
- 1 Canada Warbler F
- 2 American Redstart 2S
- 4 Rose-breasted Grosbeak 2S; 1F; 1?
- 2 Chipping Sparrow 2S
- 4 White-throated Sparrow 4S
- 2 Song Sparrow 1S; 1F



SKUNKS AND GROUNDHOGS

The contest is officially over, but if you still have stories about these animals, especially recent sightings. We still very much welcome the information.

CONTEST FOR ALL

Most of all of us at one time or another have run into the unusual, unbelievable, AMAZING or humorous phenomena in the natural world. Many of you are terrific story tellers, and it should be put down for others to enjoy. Our skunk story contest was one of the greatest things to happen to the Newsletter. Sure hope you'll all try at least one little anecdote, and longer tales if you are so inclined will be welcomed, too. We'll start publishing some in the December Newsletter.

BIRDS OF YESTERDAY

By J. S. Erskine

We know remarkably little about the birds of former times, especially in Nova Scotia where we have bone-devouring soils. There is, however, one limited source of knowledge which seems not to have been exploited before, the prehistoric shell-heaps.

Indians have occupied parts of Nova Scotia probably since the first melting of the ice about 13,000 B.C., but they seem to have given all their attention to fish and big game and to have ignored the immense reserve of shellfish. About 500 B.C. a shellfish exploiting culture spread into the province from the New England direction and reached its maximum extension in a very short time. Shell-heaps of the earliest period have been found in Pictou County, Annapolis County and Queens County, those of later date as far east as Halifax. Prince Edward Island was full of them, but they are not known from eastern

mainland Nova Scotia or Cape Breton. The drying of clams, or preferably oysters where these were available, continued until about A.D. 1400 when it ceased as abruptly as it had arisen.

The lime in these tons of shells in a shell-heap satisfied the hunger of an acid soil, and the mixture of shell and beach sand with which wigwams were often carpeted helped to keep the sites well drained, and bones, even many fish-bones, have been preserved through two thousand years. When I began to dig in the shell-heaps with the aim of restoring the lost history of the province, I realized that every detail of the environment must have been important to people at the mercy of climate and a fluctuating food-supply and that these details could only be learned from every fragment remaining. So I gathered and preserved all bird bones.

My first efforts at getting bones identified were brushed off by very busy people. Earl Godfrey, prodded by R.W. Tufts, identified the humerus of a great auk, from which example I was able to name many others. At last Dr. Pierce Brodkorb of the University of Florida agreed to identify my specimens, and the result, for which we must be grateful to him and to Mr. Lowell Bernstein, is now available.

We cannot expect a complete avifauna of the province for 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500. These birds had been food, and therefore belonged to the larger species. Shell-heap sites were usually occupied in August and September when clams were free from eggs and when the runs of fish on the rivers had ceased. Along the South Shore and on the Annapolis Basin the same sites seem to have been used throughout the winter until the Little Ice Age following A.D. 1100 made this impracticable.

#### SITES:

##### Bear River #2 and #3; 500 B.C. - A.D. 300.

Common loon, red-throated loon, red-necked grebe, sooty shearwater, double-crested cormorant, Canada goose, common eider, oldsquaw, razor-billed auk, common goldeneye, osprey, herring gull.

This confirms the evidence of deer antlers, human burials and fish bones that this site was used alternatively in winter and summer. The shearwater is a surprise.

##### Brighton, Digby County: confused by ploughing but old.

Common loon, Canada goose, black duck, common goldeneye, razor-billed auk.

This was a weir-fishing camp used in winter.

##### Port Joli #8; 100 B.C. - A.D. 1100.

Red-necked grebe, gannet, Canada goose, brant, black duck, common goldeneye, common eider, red-breasted merganser, thick-billed murre.

This was a remnant of a large site with a run of gaspereaux but also used in winter.

##### Port Joli #3, Queens County: A.D. 1-400 - A.D. 1400.

Common loon, great cormorant, Canada goose, brant, black duck, green-winged teal, common goldeneye, oldsquaw, common eider, common merganser, red-breasted merganser, ruffed grouse, thick-billed murre, black guillemot, passenger pigeon, raven, great auk.

The main site was an immense clam-drying complex overlying a one-wigwam fishing camp of a thousand years earlier. The range of birds suggests either a colder climate or an occupation later in the season than its use implies.



Whynacht Cove, Mahone Bay: A.D. 700-1100.

Common loon, red-necked grebe, horned grebe, gannet, Canada goose, black duck, common goldeneye, oldsquaw, common eider, red-breasted merganser, ruffed grouse, herring gull, great auk, razor-billed auk, thick-billed murre, black guillemot, great horned owl, red-throated loon.

Everything in this extensive list points to winter occupation before the Little Ice Age. The fuel of red oak confirms the season.

Port Joli #2: A.D. 900-1200.

Ruffed grouse.

Matthews Island, Yarmouth County: A.D. 1000-1300.

Gannet, double-crested cormorant, Canada goose, black duck, great auk, common puffin.

This was a seal-hutting camp, usually a winter activity.

St. Margaret's Bay, Halifax County: A.D. 1300.

Common loon, greater shearwater, Canada goose, common eider, red-breasted merganser, razor-billed auk, great auk, thick-billed murre, bald eagle.

This was a late site for sea fishing in late summer. The shearwater suggests more adventuring into open sea than we have other evidence of. The murre suggests that the climate was colder than today, but the bay has a good run of tom-cod in January which may have tempted winter occupation.

Waterside, Pictou County: A.D. 1800.

Canada goose.

This was a pocket in a large site of which the top, which showed contact with the French, had been ploughed out of existence. It seems to have been a fishing site.

To sum up the record, such as it is, we find an avifauna recognizably the same as it was before gunners set about exterminating our birds. It gives some shaky confirmation to an influence of the Little Ice Age upon the climate of the province but does not suggest drastic changes.

The comparative abundance of the species represented by the 118 individuals identified is also of interest: Canada goose 17; common eider 12; common loon 11; great auk 11; oldsquaw 8; black duck 7; brant 5; razor-billed auk 5; common goldeneye 5; red-breasted merganser 4; thick-billed murre 4; red-necked grebe 3; gannet 3; ruffed grouse 3; red-throated loon 2; double-crested cormorant 2; herring gull 2; black guillemot 2; horned grebe 1; greater shearwater 1; sooty shearwater 1; great cormorant 1; green-winged teal 1; common merganser 1; bald eagle 1; osprey 1; puffin 1; passenger pigeon 1; great horned owl 1; raven 1.

My impression is that many shore birds must have escaped identification, as well as herons which I thought I had identified among the bones, but, taking the list gratefully for what it contains, we have a picture of a very different pattern of water-fowl from that of today. Only two herring gulls and no other gulls have been identified out of 118 determinable individuals. As Fisher has pointed out, our immense gull population is a by-product of our fishing industry. In former days far more birds caught their own fish, far fewer depended upon human wastefulness.

This is a small glimpse into the past but perhaps better than none.



BNS BUSINESS REPORT

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 1982-83

President	Richard B. Stern	Kentville
Vice-President	Merritt A. Gibson	Canning
Treasurer	Norman W. McGuinness	Wolfville
Secretary	Robert G. Thexton	Wolfville
Past-President	Peter Austin-Smith	Wolfville
Director	Roy L. Bishop	Avonport
Director	Bernard L. Forsythe	Wolfville
Director	Jean E. Timpa	Wolfville
Director	James Walford	Wolfville

SOCIETY NOW INCORPORATED

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is now incorporated under the provisions of Chapter 286 of the Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1967, the Societies Act. The date of our incorporation is the first of June, 1982.

APPLICATION FOR THE SOCIETY TO BECOME A CHARITY

The Blomidon Naturalists Society has made application with the Department of National Revenue, Taxation, for registration as a charity for purposes of the Income Tax Act.

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

AUGUST 31, 1982

AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of Blomidon Naturalists Society

I have examined the statement of financial position of Blomidon Naturalists Society as at August 31, 1982 and the statement of expenditures and equity for the three months then ended. My examination was made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, and accordingly included such tests and other procedures as I considered necessary in the circumstances.

In my opinion, these financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Society as at August 31, 1982 and the results of its operations for the three months then ended in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Wolfville, N.S.  
October 15, 1982

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY  
(Incorporated under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia)  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
AS AT AUGUST 31, 1982

ASSET

Cash \$229

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable \$ 60

SOCIETY'S EQUITY

Equity 169  
\$229

Approved by the board:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

BLOMIDON NATURALIST SOCIETY  
STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURES AND EQUITY  
FROM THE DATE OF INCORPORATION ON JUNE 1, 1982 TO AUGUST 31, 1982.

EXPENDITURES

Bank charges	\$ 10
Newsletter	47
Professional fees	50
Stationery	<u>98</u>
	205
Net assets contributed by the unincorporated society	<u>374</u>
EQUITY, END OF PERIOD	<u>\$169</u>

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY: 1982/83 DUES

DUES ENCLOSED:  \$5.00 REGULAR

\$1.00 YOUTH (UNDER 16)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO: Dr. Norman McGuinness  
c/o School of Business  
Acadia University  
Wolfville  
Nova Scotia  
BOP 1X0



01  
02  
03  
04  
05  
06  
07  
08  
09  
10  
11  
12

WAVE  
EQUINOX