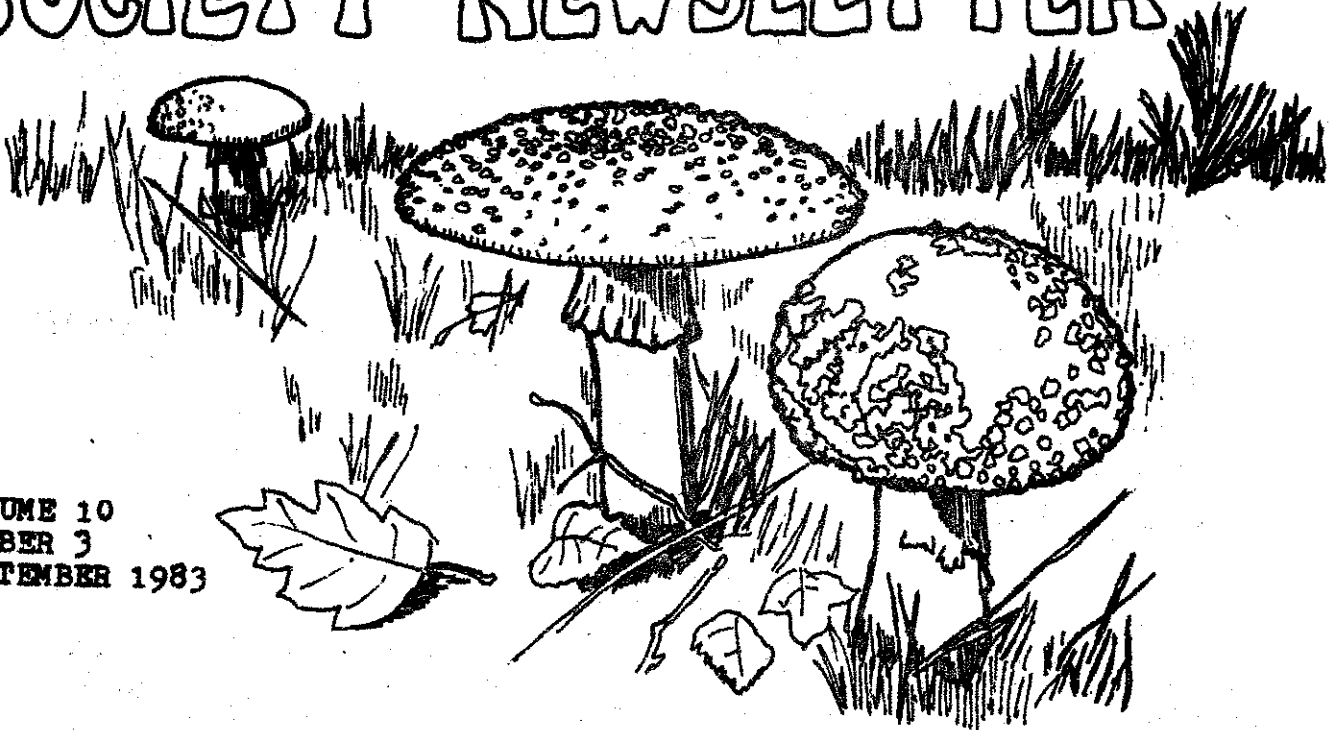


BLOMIDON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 10
NUMBER 3
SEPTEMBER 1983



The BNS Newsletter is published on the equinoxes and solstices.

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ART & PRODUCTION: Larry Bogan
DISTRIBUTION: Lana Churchill and Brenda Thexton

The primary objective of the Society shall be to encourage and develop in its members an understanding and appreciation of nature. For the purpose 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

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AUTUMN-WINTER

1. November 21, Monday. Jim Wolford will give a slide presentation and talk on: The Straight Goods on SPIDERS: Harmless? (Nearly) - Useful? (Doubtful) - Interesting? (Find Out!). Beveridge Arts Center, Room 244, at 7:30 p.m.
2. November 26, Saturday. A trip to the Nova Scotia Museum to see not only the usual displays available to the public but also behind-the-scene-workrooms where the real action is! Meet at the Acadia Gym Parking Lot at 9 A.M., or at the Museum information desk at 10:30 A.M. The Museum will provide a tour guide. Plan for a noon meal "out" in Halifax.
3. November 28, Monday (if cloudy on Monday, meet on Tuesday, Nov. 29) A star observing session meeting at the Wolfville Ridge Park at 8 P.M. We shall try again to see the stars if clouds allow. This is a colder time of the year but usually the skies are clearer. Dress very warmly since we will be gazing and looking through telescopes for about an hour. If you have binoculars, bring them. Lead by Larry Bogan 678-0446.
3. December 12, Monday. Our annual Members Night. Please bring displays of your favourite nature hobbies be they birds, bees, rocks, or spiders, etc. Tables will be available in the Physics Lab for these. A slide show of your favourite slides will also be arranged (projector and screen provided). Please limit your favourite slides to 10 maximum. Room 52, basement of Huggins Science Hall, 7:30 P.M. Direction signs will be posted!

4. December 18, Sunday. Annual Christmas Bird Count
We need as many helpers as possible to survey our large area. By the way, everyone is qualified who can walk, tolerate unpredictable weather, and can push a pencil! Those of us who can identify the birds sincerely appreciate the companionship of those who are less qualified, but keen, and can keep the records so we can keep our scopes and binoculars busy. If the weather chooses not to cooperate, we still go. As the date nears, call Peter Smith at 542-2201 Ext. 354, or 542-5998 to find out your territory and companions. More information on this will be available at the Members Night meeting as well.
5. January 16, Monday. Richard Stern will give a talk and slide presentation on Birding as a Hobby. BAC 244, 7:30 P.M.
6. February 5, Sunday. Richard Stern will lead a field trip in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Bird Society, to see Raptors and other winter birds. Meet at the Acadia Gym Parking Lot at 9 A.M.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Lynn Coldwell, Lana Churchill, and Brenda Thexton for joining the BNS Newsletter staff and to Larry Bogan for his continuing efforts with production and art. Thanks to Jim Wolford and Larry for leading field trips in August and September, and to Dr. Ken Harrison for our annual foray into the Kentville Ravine for mushrooms in early October. Now that our monthly lecture series has begun once again we are also greatly indebted to Roy Bishop for starting off our season with a great BANG(sorry about that!), and to Bernie Forsythe for turning the hum-drum of our annual meeting into such a delightful evening of bird nesting.

BNS NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - Dec. 21

We do need more articles, observations, poetry!!! Our file is scandalous thin! Your Newsletter will soon look the same.

Jim has been cajoled into starting an "observation of special natural phenomena" column. So, gang, between now and Dec. 21 please keep note of all unusual sightings, i.e. snow geese, blue grosbeak, house finch, cattle egret, Blanding turtles, cougars, Loch Ainslie monsters, comets, unusual plants, albinism, and such. Date, place, observation conditions, field marks, collaboration by anyone else, are all pertinent, as is the possibility of some of the rest of us seeing it.

If it is an unusual bird, please phone 542-5678(Jean Timpa) immediately and the "bird hot line" will go into effect. If you want to be called about unusual birds, call Jean to be put on the list.

Send your lists for Jims' column to Jim c/o Biology Dept., Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0 by Dec. 15.

ANNUAL MEETING 1983

Our annual meeting was held this past October with the re-election of the previous year's slate of officers.

Peter Austin-Smith	Past President	542-2109
Dr. Richard Stern	President	678-1975
Dr. Merritt Gibson	Vice President	582-7569
Dr. Norman McGuinness	Treasurer	542-7235
Bill Thexton	Secretary	542-3722
Directors:		
Dr. Roy Bishop	542-3992	
Bernard Forsythe	542-2427	
Jim Wolford	*****	
Jean Timpa	542-5678	

We welcome members contacting us with ideas for programmes, field trips, and other suggestions about the BNS. Please don't be afraid to volunteer a talk or a field trip.

We were also informed at the meeting that we have finally been issued with a Charitable Organization tax number, so that our treasurer can now put this number on all receipts for dues and donations to the BNS.

REPORTS OF OUTINGS

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Jean Timpa, Wolfville

On the evening of August 7 and early morning of August 8, the northern lights, or more properly, Aurora Borealis, put on a spectacular display reaching way into the southern sky. Roy Bishop called me about 11:45 P.M., so I routed out Sean who lay on his back on his sleeping bag in our backyard and enjoyed them and many meteorites as well, as it was also approaching peak activity for the annual Perseid Meteor Showers.

Meanwhile I contacted seven or eight other interested parties, and we all enjoyed the heavenly phenomena for awhile until they died down. I was told later they peaked again near four A.M.

In the past we have had a Northern Light watch service, so that if Roy or I notice that the Aurora Borealis is putting on a good show we will call you. But be forewarned before you give us your name and number, that call could come at 2 or 3 or 4 A.M. We spare no time limits! Either call me at 542-5678 or write me (Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0) or see me at a meeting. I will put you on our list of special people to call. It probably won't happen that often.

NOTE-----

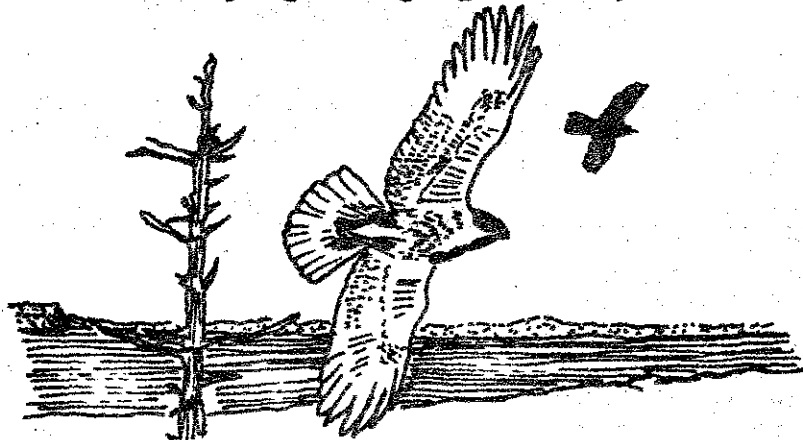
On this same evening Larry and Lynn Coldwell were camped out in Forillon National Park in the Gaspé region of Quebec. "We prepared to settle down for a good nights' sleep after a day of assorted adventures. But it never got dark. We lay in our tent, waiting..Conversation turned to the clarity with which we could see items around us in the tent. Larry suddenly had a 'bright' idea. That was an aurora and he dashed out to photograph the display. He managed to capture quite a few good pictures: the aurora dancing over the flat ocean surface, some meteorites passing through the waves of light, our dying campfire under the northern light's steady pulse. I crawled out at about 2 A.M. when he retired and continued our watch of the most dramatic aurora I have seen to date. That night on the Gaspé Shore is a real treasure in our memories of summer 1983."

SHOREBIRDS AT GRAND PRÉ - Sept. 18, 1983

with the N.S. Bird Society

Jim Wolford, Wolfville

It's a good thing that local farmers stayed off the Grand Pré dykelands on this Sabbath, because our impressive caravan of 15 cars would have been a serious road obstruction for them. On this cool, breezy, but thankfully rainless day, the 30+ birders (plus a poodle) first searched the open fields on the dykelands at high tide. There we saw hundreds of roosting black-bellied plovers with smaller numbers of red knots, pectoral sandpipers, golden plovers, ruddy turnstones, and least sandpipers plus herring, black-backed, and ring-billed gulls. We also had a good look at a low-flying foraging merlin, some harriers, a



good look at a lowflying foraging merlin, some harriers, a bald eagle, and a red-tailed hawk; the latter was an immature bird and it generated lots of entertaining speculations as to its identity!

We had our lunches on a bluff overlooking Evangeline Beach, where we could see good numbers of varied shorebirds getting active as the tide receded. Then we walked the beach where we were able to view the abundant black-bellied plovers plus good numbers of knots; with them were dunlins (many still showing black bellies), semipalmated sandpipers, semipalmated plovers, sanderlings, and dowitchers.

We also had another look at a merlin being harassed by a crow. Some distant offshore ducks in the choppy water provided lots of interest and guessing, but in our final conclusion (definite?) they were molting male common eiders.

One highlight unrelated to birds was the discovery of some fossil plants in the shoreline slate (from ?); these were stems of Carboniferous clubmosses, Lepidodendron.

After the group disbanded, some of us located some whimbrels and water pipits on the dykelands, but we couldn't find the buff-breasted sandpipers that we suspected were still there.

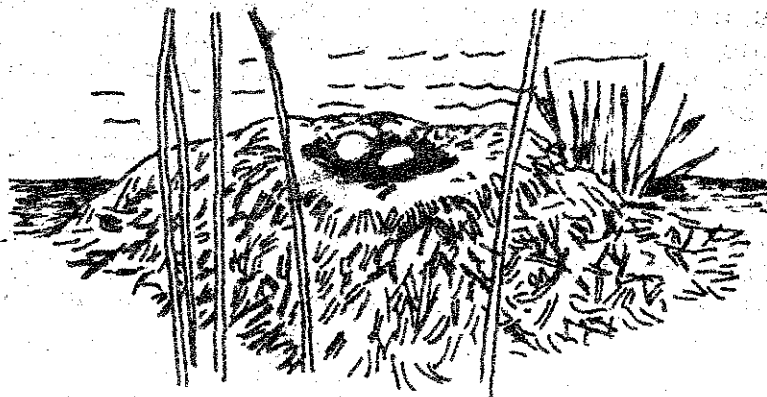
BIRD NESTING SURVEY 1983

Bernard Forsythe, Wolfville

As usual March and April were spent in various woodlots on the trail of Raven, Hawk, and Owl nests. Ravens did very well, and in no time I had located 9 nests. Two Red-tailed Hawk nests, one in Greenwich and the other in Gaspereau, both held eggs by April 1; very early egg dates as Red-tails usually do not lay until late April. There was a pair of Long-eared Owls at Canard and 2 or 3 Short-eared Owls on the Grand Pré Dyke; however I had no evidence that they nested. Maybe next year they will nest as the vole cycle is on a comeback. Barred Owls had a great year as I had 8 pairs lay in nest boxes. However, their arch enemy, the racoon, destroyed 4 of the nests, so only 50% of the nests fledged young.

By the time the songbirds were nesting in June so many nests were located that time just did not permit revisiting them all. Two new warbler nests were added to my list, that of a Black-throated Blue and a Blackburnian, so that I now have nest records for 18 species of warblers in this area. This season Mark Elderkin and I had several field trips, and some of the songbird nests were his finds. He also showed me a Nighthawk nest. It was very interesting to see the adult with its large white wing patches at close range.

Very little is known about the nesting habits of Evening Grosbeaks in Nova Scotia, so I became very excited when I found a pair building a nest at the top of a wire birch. After more than a week passed the nest was checked but proved to be empty, a disappointment. Later the nest was collected, and I found a Grosbeak egg in the base of it, below the nest cup. It was laid before the nest was completed.



A total of 160 nest cards were filled out representing 67 species of birds. That is my highest species total for one year. The following list gives the results.

No. found	Species	S-successful; F-failed; ?-unknown
1	Common Loon	?
1	Common Merganser	F
1	Hooded Merganser	F
1	Sharp-shinned Hawk	S
1	Northern Goshawk	?
2	Red-tailed Hawk	2S
1	American Kestrel	S
1	Ring-necked Pheasant	S
1	Ruffed Grouse	F

No. found	Species	S-successful:F-failed:?-unknown
1	Killdeer	S
1	Spotted Sandpiper	?
1	Herring Gull	?
2	Great Black-backed Gull	2?
1	Mourning Dove	F
8	Barred Owl	4S;4F
1	Common Nighthawk	S
1	Chimney Swift	?
2	Belted Kingfisher	2S
1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	?
1	Downy Woodpecker	F
2	Northern Flicker	1S;1?
1	Eastern Wood-pewee	F
1	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	?
1	Alder Flycatcher	S
4	Eastern Phoebe	2S;2F
1	Eastern Kingbird	S
4	Tree Swallow	1F;3?
1	Bank Swallow	1 colony card
1	Barn Swallow	S
2	Blue Jay	2S
4	American Crow	2S;2?
9	Common Raven	4S;2F;3?
3	Black-capped Chickadee	3S
3	Brown Creeper	2S;1F
1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	S
1	Veery	F
1	Swainson's Thrush	S
1	Hermit Thrush	S
11	American Robin	3S;3F;5?
1	Gray Catbird	F
1	Cedar Waxwing	S
6	European Starling	1S;4F;1?
2	Red-eyed Vireo	2F
1	Northern Parula	S
5	Yellow Warbler	4S;1F
1	Chestnut-sided Warbler	F
2	Magnolia Warbler	2F
1	Black-throated Blue Warbler	S
2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1S;1?
1	Black-throated Green Warbler	S
1	Blackburnian Warbler	S
1	Bay-breasted Warbler	S
2	Black-and-white Warbler	2S
4	American Redstart	2S;2F
4	Ovenbird	2S;1F;1?
1	Northern Waterthrush	S
2	Common Yellowthroat	1S;1F
3	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2S;1F
1	Chipping Sparrow	S
3	Song Sparrow	3F
7	White-throated Sparrow	3S;3F;1?
6	Dark-eyed Junco	2F;4?
2	Red-winged Blackbird	2?
4	Common Grackle	2F;2?
9	Brown-headed Cowbird	4S;4F;1?
4	American Goldfinch	3S;1F
1	Evening Grosbeak	F

THE ANNUAL MUSHROOM WALK

Dr. Kenneth Harrison, Kentville

October 1 was a beautiful day for a tramp through the Kentville Agricultural Research Centre ravine but was after too long a dry spell to favour the mushrooms and fungi that we need for an interesting foray. There was the usual good turn out. One of the groups was eight or ten grade 5 students from Kentville under the supervision of their teacher. These provided a very enthusiastic number of searchers and oddly enough one of them spotted a round yellow nut-like object and brought it back. It

was recognized as Rhizopogon cokerii, a rare North American species, that grows under the forest duff against the surface of the soil. It is a strange fungus that is greatly appreciated by the squirrels as a source of food. The squirrels assist in the spread of the Rhizopogons by distributing the spores when they carry the 'nuts' around and hide them for a future meal.

We were not overwhelmed by the variety of fungi, but samples were found of a number of interesting species. The Destroying Angel was found by several in rather dilapidated conditions but with enough macroscopic features to be able to demonstrate the "death cup" at the base of the stem and the annulus or ring around the upper part.

An interesting find was the Abortive Entoloma. The rounded whitish lumps near the Entoloma have been a mystery for years, and it is only recently that researchers have discovered that they are produced when mycelium of the Honey Agaric attacks the mycelia of the Entoloma. The Honey Agaric has been well known as a destroyer of living trees. This year the edible Honey Agaric was not common.

Changes have taken place this year in the ravine. One or two unusual habitats were lost when workers "improving" the ravine for the public, cleared up tangles of alders and widened walks, removing old logs that are essential as habitats for various specialized fungi. However most of their efforts are appreciated because this ravine is one of the few forested areas available to the public in the Kings County area. Some of the trees have been dated as seedlings in 1755.



WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIG TREES GONE? Larry Bogan, Cambridge.

I love trees, especially big, old trees with character. Nova Scotia, being a province of trees with 80% of its land forested, should be an excellent place to see these trees. Unfortunately, most of the trees I walk under are smaller, less stately plants. I would like to have a place where there are groves of large, towering, impressive trees.

In my days I remember two places, maybe three, where I experienced the awe and reverence provided by large trees. The first one I'll mention is farthest from home in New Zealand, where the residents are proud of their trees and make an effort to preserve the old large ones. In touring that country I was pleased to find large trees of several species noted on maps for people to visit. I saw Kauri "pines" up to 46 feet in girth and 167 feet tall, and 1200 years old; I saw large old Totara trees in a virgin forest; a large Matai, and the oldest Puriri (a hardwood). In New Zealand there are abundant nature reserves set aside to preserve such trees and other native habitats.

The second spot that comes to mind was in the rain forest of Olympic National Park in the state of Washington, where magnificent Douglas Fir grow. But even closer to home I stood beneath a stand of 200 year old pines in Northwest Connecticut and was awe-struck. They towered 150 feet above me, and the forest floor was open and scattered with pine needles and a few shrubs. The quiet magnificence of this site has given the name to the trees of "Cathedral Pines". They are near Cornwall, Connecticut, and are probably the best stand of trees in New England.

My question is: Why can't we have something like these sites here in Nova Scotia? What happens to such trees that surely existed in the original Nova Scotia forests? Even though our for-

ests have been cut since 1632 when the Frenchman, Nicholas Denys, first started fishing and lumbering here, surely something original is left or at least regrown to a respectable size.

How have our forests been treated in the past to give us what we have? Denys only lumbered on the South Shore for three years in a small way, and it wasn't until the 1760's when the number of mills grew significantly. Earlier in 1728 the British extended the "Broad Arrow" policy of New England to Nova Scotia. All white pines two feet in diameter, 12" above the ground were reserved for masts for the British Navy and were marked with a broad arrow slash mark. The woods also supplied other Naval Commodities such as rosin, pitch, tar and planks. Large oaks were eagerly sought for planks and knees. At the time there were many oaks with girths of 9-12 feet and heights to first branches of 20-30 feet. By 1767 the New England planters had 27 lumber mills in Peninsular Nova Scotia and were exporting wood to England, the West Indies and to South America.

However, this was still a small industry, and it was not until the Napoleonic Wars that cutting of the forests really accelerated. The traditional source of wood for Britain was the Baltic countries, but Napoleon blockaded these, and Britain turned to North America for its supplies. Although most timber came from the Canadas and New Brunswick, cutting in Nova Scotia increased significantly. In 1800, only 604 shiploads left Nova Scotia whereas by 1818, 28,000 shiploads were leaving per year. Permission to trade with other countries in 1824 further increased use of the forests. Between 1831 and 1838 Nova Scotians built thousands of large vessels (about 100,000 tons/vessel), and this continued as a trend until the late 19th century when steam and iron replaced wind and wood on the high seas.

In about one century the forests were changed in character. The cleared land was taken over by faster growing, shorter lived trees such as fir, red maple, and aspen. Fire was not carefully controlled and was frequently started by operations in the woods (coal burning locomotives being the prime source). Not until the 1940's did preventive and control measures become common place. As a result, some areas in the dry granitic counties of western Nova Scotia have been degraded to heath land and rock barrens. To add to the destruction, white pine blister was imported accidentally in 1900 on nursery stock, and beech bark disease decimated the beeches in 1930.

Methods of harvesting did not promote a strong healthy forest. The biggest and best shaped trees were taken while the poorly formed, short, weak trees remained to make the next generation of forest stock. The Department of Lands and Forests was enacted in 1926 to start fire control and reforestation of Crown Lands. However only 30% of the forests were in Crown hands, because much had been sold or given away in the past. Regulations on forest harvesting were first attempted after World War II when lumbermen in western Nova Scotia became alarmed at the overharvesting. The result was the "Small Tree Act" that did more harm than good, because it required a minimum cutting size. This just led to more high grading of the forests. Finally, in 1965, the Forest Improvement Act was passed and only recently (1977) has federal and provincial money been available to encourage private land owners to practice good forest management.

What are our trees like after 200 years of exploitation? The Dept. of Lands and Forests does a comprehensive forest survey every ten years that yields information on forest growth, age range of trees, species, and forest volumes.

Unfortunately the survey will not direct me to groves of stately old trees of various species. And I'm afraid that if they do exist they would be cut down because they are over mature and are growing too slowly to justify their existence. Nature reserves are needed to set aside unique and valuable habitats including old trees (maybe mature is a better adjective) beyond the National and Provincial Parks that we have. But do we know where to find the "best" trees? The American Forestry Association has a list of championship trees with locations. Do we? No, but one has been started by the Nova Scotia Forest Technicians Association and I have included their results of their big tree contest as of 1980.

BIG TREE CONTEST: N.S. FOREST TECHNICIANS ASSOCIATION

Species	Circumference	Height(ft)	Location (county)
Balsam Fir	5'3½"	73	Upper Middle River (Victoria)
Red Spruce	4'7½"	58	Kaizers Meadow (Lunenburg)
	6'8"	82	Kelly Lake, Cal. (Hants)
	8'4"	--	Falmouth Mtn. (Hants)
White Pine	6'7"	85	Big Indian Lake (Hants)
	9'10"	78	Waugh's River (Colchester)
	11'6"	116	Watford (Lunenburg)
Red Pine	6'8"	92	New Minas (Kings)
Larch	4'6"	56	Perry Road (Yarmouth)
	4'11"	60	Lake Annis (Yarmouth)
Hemlock	9'7"	74	Panuke Lake (Hants)
	10'10"	76	Meteghan River (Yarmouth)
Yellow Birch	7'6"	74	Panuke Lake (Hants)
	14'5"	--	MacNutts Island (Yarmouth)
Beech	4'8"	--	Falmouth Mtn. (Hants)
	4'4"	55	Lake Annis (Yarmouth)
Elm	17'3"	60-65	Wanglis' River (Colchester)
	13'1"	71	Kempton Crown (Hants)
	17'8"	70	Brookside (---)
White Elm	8'9"	74	St. Croix (Hants)
Sugar Maple	9'4"	--	Northfield (Queens)
	11'8"	60	Lays Lake Road (---)
Red Oak	14'9"	89	Waugh's River (Colchester)
	15'7"	---	Oakdene School (Digby)
Ash (White?)	9'9"	--	Caledonia (Queens)
	10'8"	35	Cole Harbour (Halifax?)
Horse Chestnut	14'	55	Concession (Digby)

I suggest that the Blomidon Naturalists should start a similar list so that we can either add to the one above or at least locate the largest trees in our area. Note that the red pine listed above is in New Minas. Also note that not all the species growing in Nova Scotia are in the list. We could add largest trees of other species such as White Spruce, Jack Pine, Black Spruce, Trembling Aspen, White Birch, Blackcherry, Red Maple, Hawthorn, White Oak, etc.

My property includes 22 hectares of woods which are typical cut over forest, but here and there are some trees left because they did not size up to the standards of the time. As a result they are now the largest trees I have. My champion, of course, is a scarred, lopsided old white pine. I've measured it to be 9'7" in circumference and 70 feet tall. Nothing else I have comes close to its size, and I love to walk around it and look up its trunk to the sky. I have a few red pine, and the largest of these is almost as fat as the big tree in New Minas but not nearly as tall. It is 6'3" in circumference and 60 feet tall. It is nicely shaped and a handsome tree that I have nicknamed the "Party Tree". The only other large trees on my property are some big-tooth aspens that look as if they will topple over any day, but it should be fun to measure their sizes.

To get estimates of tree sizes, a tape measure and a 45° triangle will work. Measure the circumference at breast height with the tape and estimate the height by moving away from the tree until the top and bottom of the tree are 45° apart, as viewed by you (sight along the triangle to judge this). The height is just then the distance you are from the tree and can be measured with the tape.

So I would like to hear from the membership on the trees we have in our area and hopefully visit them. Please send your large tree candidates to the editor of the Newsletter or to me Larry Bogan, R.R.2, Cambridge Station BOP 1G0.

If you are interested in more details on the history of our forest the Nova Scotia Dept. of Lands and Forests have a few useful publications:

- "Historical Highlights - N.S. Crown Lands 1603-1972" Bulletin 36
- "Lumbering in Nova Scotia 1632-1953" Bulletin 26
- A more definitive history is being prepared for future publication.

Edgar B. McKay, Bear River

"THE TIME HAS COME, THE OLD MAN SAID,
TO TALK OF MANY THINGS,
OF BIRDS AND FISH AND BEASTIES,
AND WHETHER BEARS HAVE WINGS."

with apologies to Lewis Carroll

Years of fishing for trout -- over 70 years -- in the streams and lakes of southwestern Nova Scotia have yielded more than adequate creels of fish. They have also produced unusual experiences that have added zest to the trips and a fund of fond memories of the varied wildlife in our province. I would assume most fishermen have had experiences that would be worth the telling. Certainly we have caught our flies in treetops or on snags or had leaders break or lost the "big one". Perhaps in unfamiliar territory we knew we were not lost, but the tent or camp was lost. These tales might be worth telling. Even here I digress or wander and must get back to camp before sundown!

The secret pool on the East Branch had given up two or three fair trout for the frypan, and the old man and the teenage daughter had climbed the steep bank up to the old road leading to the village two miles distant. The rays of the setting sun were just touching the highest trees on the hills above. From across the river a high pitched squawk broke the stillness of the air. We stopped to listen. Another nearer squawk and soon another as we saw the woodpecker in full flight just a few feet overhead, pursued by a dark speck. Again we heard a squawk as the dark speck, an irate hummingbird -- a ball of feathered fury -- zeroed in on the stern area of the woodpecker. It was nature's spitfire at the rear assembly of the giant bomber. In a few moments, both sight and sound vanished in the shadows of the darkening valley.

Most of us, of course, have seen smaller birds pursue would be predators, such as crows or ravens, in defence of young on their home territory. Sometimes we have seen cats, dogs, and humans buzzed by cornered feathered parents. All wildlife has its own protective instinct and methods of defence. At times this can be disconcerting or even dangerous to humans unless they exercise caution in the forest. Occasionally, there may be only a thin margin for the use of discretion -- what may be called a "near miss". Then again, the happenings may have an element of humour. Always these encounters with woodland "beasties", whether furred, feathered or finned, enrich the life of the forest wanderer as he or she seeks relief from the strictures of urban living.

Who will not admit to a nervous start at the thunder of partridge wings as the bird explodes from a nearby thicket? Who has not nervously jumped, just a trifle, as a deer "blows" or snorts the danger signal to other deer then crashes off in the gloom? One can smile afterward, while admitting inwardly that any moise in the quiet forest does something to one's nerves.



The time was late June, 1936. I was with Watson Peck of Bear River. We were canoeing down the long stillwater about a mile above Irving Lake on the Shelburne River in the Tobetic. It was late afternoon. Suddenly from the right hand bank of the stream came a flurry of splashing, hissing and snarling as a mother otter made straight for the canoe. Two baby otters swam into hiding under the overhanging hardack bushes on shore. Mother otter dove and rose nearer, snarling and hissing. She repeated the performance. Watson suggested I take her photograph. I insisted my bow paddle would be more useful in the forthcoming encounter. By this time mama otter was within reach. I struck. She ducked and came up a few feet further out. I slapped the paddle toward the lake. I was sure I heard Watson chuckle at my apparent discomforture.

We had gone only a short way downstream around a bend when we saw a sight that puzzled us both. On the very edge of a grassy point, lay a mottled dark gray and white object over three feet long. Could it be an Atlantic salmon? We knew better. It was motionless -- dead perhaps. We drifted in silently and as we got within a few feet of it we were certain it was a dead loon. I was about to touch it with my paddle when, with a shrill squawk, it literally exploded into the deadwater and swam only a short distance away, protesting all the while our intrusion in its nesting site. I took a photo of the two eggs in the nest. Then as Watson let go of the hardack bushes he had been holding, in order to steady the canoe, an overgrown bullfrog combined splash and voice within inches of the stern of the canoe. There was a perceptible tremor and an exhalation of air from the rear of our craft. It was my turn to laugh just a bit.

Even very small "beasties" are a source of wonder and amusement. This was the case of "minnie mouse" as we christened her or him or it! We -- my wife, daughter Jean (aged 9), and I -- were at the Whitesand Lake Camp in 1951. Supper dishes had been cleaned, candles lighted and we were preparing to get into sleeping bags. Suddenly we heard a rattling of the tin cover of the still warm stewed prunes set out on the camp porch to cool. Again it occurred and a thump of body or feet. On a quiet black night the atmosphere and imagination can easily magnify the situation. Finally I assembled courage and flashlight. Opening the camp door a crack, I focussed the light, not on a bear, nor even on a racoon. There was a wood mouse and, in spite of the light, it persisted in jumping at least six inches and hitting the overhanging tin cover with its nose. Apparently Minnie was enthralled with the odour of prunes, but we had other plans so brought them inside to a safe haven.

Whether it was Minnie who kept other tinware rattling on the table during the night doesn't matter. We are convinced it must have been. We decided action must be taken. When we discovered a box of mouse seed on a window ledge in the morning, we knew we had the solution.

A generous supply of the guaranteed poison was mixed with peanut butter and made into an attractive roll. It was placed on the floor near the table at bedtime and we retired as usual. Not long after the candles were blown out, we heard the noise of very small feet, then quiet. I put the flashlight beam on the scene, and Jean and father watched while Minnie feasted. Rodent control was made easy!

When early morning came however, there still seemed to be metallic sounds from the table top. Where the peanut butter roll had been was something quite unexpected -- a most orderly mound of mouse seed, licked clean. We felt sure that every seed we used in the roll was there and not one was cracked or chewed in the least. There was only one thing to do about Minnies for the next few days at camp. We did it. We fed her rolls of clear peanut butter each night. Minnie showed her appreciation by rattling tin dishes on the table every night. We called it a draw! Minnie had the meals; we had the amusement.

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These tales of wildlife encounters by Edgar McKay will continue in the next issue of the Newsletter.

WINTER FEEDER LISTS

Have you started your winter bird feeding record??
November 1 has passed. That was the start up date for this winter's enthusiasts. See page 13 of the last BNS Newsletter for more info...

Nov.1 - April 15

CAN YOU BEAT IT?

The Sircoms, Hantsport

The Sircom's report a "flock" of hummingbirds on their horse chestnut tree when it was in flower in early June. In the evening at least twenty-five were counted and there were obviously more as it was difficult to count more than one side of the tree at a time. This was a particularly good year for horse chestnut blossoms and the birds came back in lesser numbers on the two following evenings.

DUES FOR 1983-83 NOW DUE!!

At our annual meeting in October our membership voted to keep the BNS dues the same as in the previous fiscal year. The fees are \$5 per person or \$1 for persons 16 years of age or under. Please send your dues to:

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

Dues may also be paid in person to the treasurer at our November meeting, BAC 244.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____

