

# BLOMIDON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 10  
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The BNS Newsletter is published on the equinoxes and solstices.

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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 WINTER-SPRING 1984

1. Monday, January 16: "Birding as a Hobby", a talk and slide show by our president, Dr. Richard Stern. BAC 244, 7:30 pm.
2. Sunday, January 22: A winter walk(field trip) in Kejimikujik National Park under the guidance of park interpreter Dave Lawley. Meet at the Gym parking lot at 9:00 a.m. or at the Park Headquarters at 11:00 a.m. Bring your own lunch and skis, snowshoes, or boots. The Halifax Field Naturalists will also be in attendance.
3. Sunday, February 5: A field trip in conjunction with the N.S. Bird Society to see raptors and winter birds. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Acadia Gym parking lot.
4. Monday, February 20: "Of Mice and Men", a talk by Dr. Tom Herman of the Acadia Biology Dept., and possibly Fred Scott of the N.S. Museum. BAC 244, 7:30 p.m.
5. Monday, March 19: "Wildlife Art", an illustrated talk by well-known South Shore artist Don Pentz, to help us celebrate our 10th Birthday!! BAC 244, 7:30 p.m.
6. Monday, April 16: "Rhododendrons", by Dr. Don Craig, a talk accompanied with slides. Dr. Craig is a scientist who spent many years breeding new varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas at the CDA Research Station in Kentville. BAC 244, 7:30.
7. Sunday, April 29: Local birding with Jim Wolford and the N.S. Bird Society. Meet at the Acadia Gym parking lot at 9:45 a.m. or at Grand Pre parking lot at 10:00 a.m.

8. Monday, May 21: "Trekking the Sahara", a multi-faceted presentation by Scott Cunningham, relating highlights of his desert adventure. BAC 244, 7:30 p.m.
9. Monday, June 18: "The Natural History of Fishes of the Minas Basin", a talk and slide show by Mike Dadswell, Fisheries Biologist at the St. Andrews, N.B. Biological Research Station. BAC 244, 7:30 p.m.

Please encourage or bring with you non-BNS members in hopes they will become sufficiently interested in making a formal commitment to us, i.e. subtly point out Norm McGuinness!

Also please note that this is by no means a final programme until June. Changes and additions will be announced at meetings and in the March Newsletter, especially field trips. If anyone has any suggestions for field trips or is willing to lead one, please contact any member of the BNS executive soon as we plan to meet shortly to finalize the spring trips.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks this quarter to those who provided displays or slides for the Members Night presentations in December, to Larry Bogan for leading an astronomy programme on Nov. 28, to Debbie Burleson who gave us a most interesting tour of the N.S. Museum on Nov. 26, to Jim Wolford who miraculously made spiders seem at least half-nice and very fascinating, to Rachel Erskine for her continuing supplies of goodies after talks, and to all those who have made the Newsletter possible.

#### BNS NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - MARCH 21

We are very much in need of articles, observations (Jim Wolford 542-2201 Ext. 391), and poetry. PLEASE give your Newsletter a boost now!

#### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - Dec. 18, 1983

It was a successful day despite the cold and wind. Wilma Gibson's end-of-the-day party soon made up for the chill. A final tally of 56 species and 5 or 6 others was made during the count period. Peter Smith has promised a full evaluation, so watch for it in the March Newsletter.

#### NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM FIELD TRIP

Approximately eighteen of our membership met at the N.S. Museum in Halifax on Saturday morning, Nov. 26. Debbie Burleson first gave us a brief talk on the museum system in the province, which includes the main complex in Halifax as well as 21 branch museums around Nova Scotia. She explained the various functions of the museum including collecting, preservation and classification, restoration, and setting up educational displays and talks.

We were then allowed the privilege of "going behind the scenes" to see the science laboratories where the main collections are classified and stored - everything from minerals, eggs, birds, mammals, insects, to pickled frogs. We wound up our tour by looking at the public displays including the lovely dioramas. It is good to know there is such an institution in our province where our scientific as well as our historic heritage can be "organized" and then presented to the public.

#### SKY OBSERVING FIELD TRIP, November 28, 8 p.m. Larry Bogan, Cambridge

The sky was clear, dark and starry for our outing on Wolfville ridge. It was a cool evening as might be expected for a late November date so the session lasted less than an hour. (My Max-min thermometer of that date read 24°F and 37°F). In addition to the five BNS members present we had about 10 guests from the Waterville Rehabilitation Centre. After surveying the constellations and bright

stars from Cygnus in the West to Orion in the East we used my 150 mm diameter reflecting telescope to observe at least one of every kind of deep sky object. Galactic open clusters of stars (M-38, h & X persei, the Pleiades), Galaxies (M-31, the Andromeda), Double Stars ( $\gamma$ -Andromeda), Globular star clusters (M-15) and Gaseous Nebula (the Orion Nebula). Unfortunately, there were no planets above the horizon to be observed. A gathering haze as well as the cold ended our session.

#### A WEASEL VISIT

Martha Dodge, Hortonville, N.S.

In mid December we spotted a short-tailed weasel or ermine in a pile of boards behind my shed. We watched him for a few minutes from the kitchen window, then went outside and approached the lumber pile. He seemed to be equally curious and soon darted out on a board within a few feet of us where we had an excellent look at him in his winter coat - all white, just the end of his tail black, and gleaming, black eyes. He darted out of sight several times, always reappearing to take another look at us, and moving so quickly that it was impossible to keep track of him.

Finally the cold drove us inside, but several times during the afternoon we glimpsed him again from the house. We wondered if he had his home there, but on most days my regular flock of sparrows have used the boards as their resting spot between trips to the feeder, so it seems likely that the ermine has gone.

#### RECENT SIGHTINGS OF INTEREST

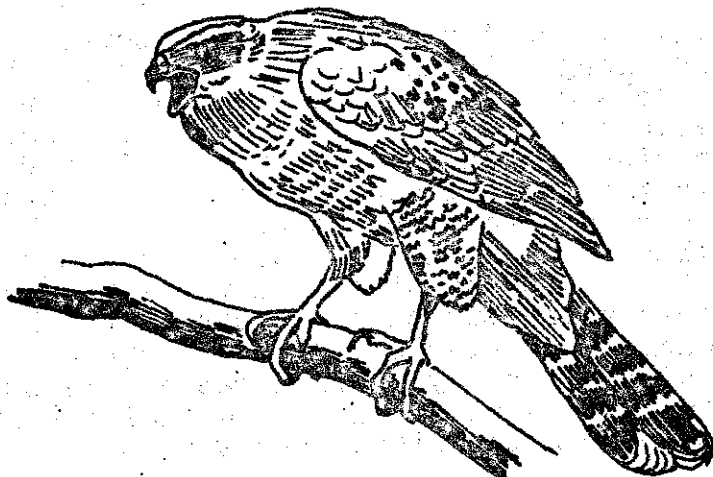
A very large female grackle near Annapolis Royal has caused considerable interest and speculation, and has brought observers from, believe it, Toronto to see it! The prevailing theory is that it is a Great-tailed Grackle which would be a first record for Canada: how appropriate for Canada's first town! Hopefully Jim can give us a more detailed and definitive description of it in the March Newsletter as he has been following its identification with interest and has seen it several times.

A Rufous-sided Towhee in Canning was unfortunately done in by a family cat.

A very dark brown-blackish phase Gyrfalcon was identified on the Grand Pre Dyke Dec. 28 and again Jan. 1 by Mark Elderkin, Cyril Coldwell, and later by Richard Stern.

A very busy winter so far for Pine Siskins today, Jan. 5 I have between 5-60 at my feeder. They are outnumbering the Evening Grosbeaks which have almost disappeared lately (9 today), although there were flocks of 75-100 in late November and early December. It will be interesting to see if the numbers build up again. The Siskins are often accompanied by 20-25 Goldfinches and 5-6 Purple Finches.

A possible Laughing Gull was seen twice on Dec. 31 by Lana Churchill, and on Jan. 4 by Jean Timpa and Brenda Thexton in its adult summer plumage, i.e. conspicuous black head. The bird was large and had no wingtip markings. The sighting was in the Port Williams-Canard River mouth area. Richard Stern disagrees with this report, and thinks it is most likely an immature herring gull.



Canada Geese are numerous as of Jan. 5 on the Wellington Dyke near the mouth of the Canard River. Near high tide they sit in the fields quite near the road and were numbered around 900 by Merritt Gibson. Canada Geese are common enough, but not usually in large numbers this time of year, unless the weather has been quite open.

Two Iceland Gulls have been seen by Lana Churchill in the Port Williams area and at the Canard Pond. Bernie Forsythe and the Thextons also saw two at the Wolfville Sewage Pond.

Sean Timpa spotted a lovely Yellow-breasted Chat Dec. 18 on the Christmas Bird Count on Hillside Avenue, Wolfville. Peter Austin-Smith also found 56 Bohemian Waxwings on that blustery day.

Merritt Gibson reports a female Cardinal from Hillaton, many Mockingbirds (Sheffield Mills, Kentville, Aylesford, Melanson) 6 Vesper Sparrows in a flock in Sheffield Mills and a Flicker which has stayed behind in Kingsport.

As for the traditional winter Bald Eagle Count Cyril Coldwell so far has only 6 in Gaspereau which is low. Lana Churchill has seen up to 15 Eagles at the Hennigar Turkey Farm in Sheffield Mills where a feeding station has been set up as well as several kinds of hawks.

Recently Peter Austin-Smith and Fred Payne of the N.S. Dept. of Lands and Forests counted Red-tailed Hawks in the Valley and came up with 62! There are several Rough-legged Hawks on the Grand Pre Dyke and in the Canning area and still two Northern Harriers hanging around.

Richard St. rn and Brenda Thexton saw a Merlin by Van Nostrands pond in Port Williams on Jan. 5, in the afternoon.

Lana Churchill has had a Rusty Blackbird at her feeder on both Jan. 12 and Jan. 13.

#### THE BEST AGAVE IS MEXICAN!

Ellis Gertridge, Gaspereau, N.S.

Recently my wife and I visited Mexico. During our travels we drove about the Yucatan Peninsula. This area is very flat and only about ten metres above the sea level. Once the land was below sea level and is composed of porous limestone with shallow topsoil and many broken rocks. This makes for an unusual landscape, because even though it has heavy rains in season, there are no rivers, brooks, or ditches. The weather is hot in December, like our summer.

Over many kilometres the vegetation was low with many fields of shrubs that had been cleared of most rocks; with the rocks fences had been built. Plantings had been made of agave plants, of the amaryllis family, either sisal or henequen, spaced about ten feet apart and in rows. This plant is like a giant top of a pineapple. The blade-like leaf is up to five inches thick at the base. After fourteen years the plant produces a spike, up to twenty feet high, and blossoms, producing seeds, then dies.

New plants are formed from the roots, under the plants during its life and are called "children". Farmers remove them and grow them in nurseries from which new plantings are set out.

After the sisal plant has been planted and cultivated for about four years, the farmers (rancheros) start to harvest the longest lower leaves. These are between four and five feet long and are tied into bundles that can be handled by a man and are piled on trucks much as we here in Nova Scotia pile hay or straw.

Loads, I would judge, would be from three to six tonnes.

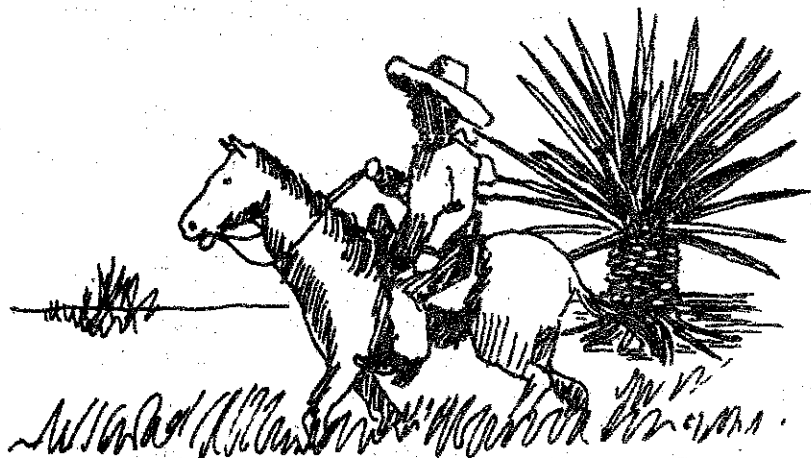
We visited a processing establishment. This plant had about five full time workers that had technical jobs, but all other workers were farmers who were waiting for the sisal leaves to grow to the proper size. Each sisal plant is visited three times a year, and only the large leaves are cut. The processing factory is really a coop, and the farmers are paid on that basis.

When the trucks loaded with the crop comes to the processors, it is unloaded far out, at one end of the factory, near a long endless chain. The leaves are put on the chain in bunches, with the ties, cut, and bunches are singled out by scrapers to enter the roofed-over area of the factory. Sisal leaves are carried singly to a machine that has jets of water and flailing fingers that beat the green pulp from the fibres and washes them clean.

It is called a decorticator. The water used is pumped up from beneath the factory and comes from an underground river.

From the decorticator the fibres hang, suspended from the middle, on an endless rope that is about an inch in diameter. A worker picks off the bunches of wet fibres and places them on another endless conveyor that takes it through a dryer. This dryer is about fifty feet long and heated by oil fires. As it leaves the dryer, hot and dry, another man with gloves and mask puts the fibres into a baling machine that puts up large bales of about five hundred pounds. The bales are either stored or loaded on trucks for transportation to a city, in this case, Meridia, to further process it into baler twine, rope, etc.

The pulp that is beaten and flushed off is piped to an outdoor evaporator and the dried pulp is used in pharmaceutical laboratories to obtain drugs.



AGAVE RIGIDA

To remove some of the wastes a mule hitched to a two-wheeled cart that runs on rails is used. It seems so primitive after watching an otherwise mechanized process.

Outside the factory were a few unharvested sisal plants with the "children" growing beneath for visitors such as us to view and take pictures of.

Also as a further tourist attraction a farmer was selling placemats, woven and dyed in many colours that could be purchased as souvenirs. The man could speak only Spanish but had written the price in pesos, so it could be understood by anyone.

Now as I use baler twine and rope on the farm I have a far greater understanding of the product. Our guide told us that sisal is native to the area and has been used by the Maya for over two thousand years. Nowhere are the fibres as long and strong, even though it is produced in great quantities in many countries of the world.

The following is the conclusion of the tales of Wildlife Encounters, by Edgar McKay.

Close encounters with larger animals may sometimes give cause for mirth in the telling of the tales years after the events but at the time of danger, there may be good reason for apprehension and fear. A she-bear with cubs is not to be treated lightly, and a cow moose with a calf can be a risk to human life if a person is careless or surprised.

On one occasion my wife, Ruth, and I had gone to Whitesand Lake with Watson Peck in July, 1936. It had been a long day of paddling and carrying from Lake Jolly to our destination. The sun was low in the west as we came into the lake and headed to our tenting area at Moosehide Stream Carry. Far down Whitesand Lake we saw two dark objects in the water. As they emerged onto the beach of brilliant white sand, we identified them as a cow moose and her calf. They soon disappeared in the maple swamp behind the beach and we, thinking little more of the sighting, paddled on to our campsite on another part of the lake.

It was but a short time and we had the tent up, fir branches cut for a bough bed, and the canoe overturned for a table in front of the tent. The packs had only been partly opened. Watson said he would go over to the tiny spring brook with the two

quart lard pail for fresh water, while Ruth and I got the bedding in order. The way to the brook was across a short sand beach nearby.

Ruth and I were inside the tent when the strident yell came, "Get the canoe, quick!". I popped out of the tent, turned the canoe over, grasped it by the middle thwart and looked up. What I saw chilled me. Watson was dashing across the beach in classic Olympic sprint form with mother moose gaining at every step. She looked ugly -- ears back, teeth bared, eyes flashing hatred. Watson stooped quickly and picked up a piece of wood and hurled it over his shoulder. The moose hesitated for only a fraction of a second, but maybe just long enough. For Watson literally flew up on a large granite boulder, and the old cow turned by the side of the rock, thundering up over the barrens away to her hidden calf.

At the time however, we were not sure of her plans and wondered if the tent might not be a tempting target. So we assembled an arsenal of rocks just in case there might be another encounter. There was none. I think I did not sleep that night as soundly as usual, and we were really not amused.

I asked Watson how it all began. He said he was bending low over the water pail, having it nearly full, when he heard a limb snap just a few feet away. There was mother moose with her head poking through the alders. He threw the pail at her, turned and ran. We saw the rest.

Another time Watson and I were at Sporting Lake. We had taken enough trout for supper below the old wooden dam and were paddling in mid-lake toward the log camp. It was misty that evening and we could just make out the shapes of a cow and calf moose wading along the southwest shore of the lake.

The next morning the overcast was beginning to let in some sunlight as we headed for the dam in order to get a few trout for the home frypans. As we rounded the point toward the dam, there on a grassy area, with sparse bits of alder, we were within a hundred feet of the two moose. My first thought was to get pictures. I asked Watson to be the judge of distance. Our plan was to move the canoe in, he feathering his paddle so as not to make the mother moose any more nervous that she already was. The old Kodak camera could not be focussed for distance, so Watson would estimate the footage and say "Now", and I would snap the shutter and roll film.

We started at 50 feet and then backed off. We repeated at 40', 35', 30', 25'. I might say that one or two of the photos are most pleasing, as the calf was a veritable "butterball", although mother was homely and gaunt. All the while her ears were flat back, and she was grunting or moaning while walking around her baby.

I said to Watson, "Let's try 20 feet". I looked through the finder. The canoe moved forward slowly. It was not quite 20 feet -- not quite time to shoot, when suddenly I saw mother moose rear into the air and leap forward into the lake, not more than 12 or 15 feet from me. Had there been a less able man with paddle in the stern, I might not be telling the story now. The instant the cow reared Watson had the canoe in reverse at good speed. Camera was exchanged for paddle and we retreated even more rapidly as the lake was shallow. However the cow returned to her calf and we turned our attention to trout.

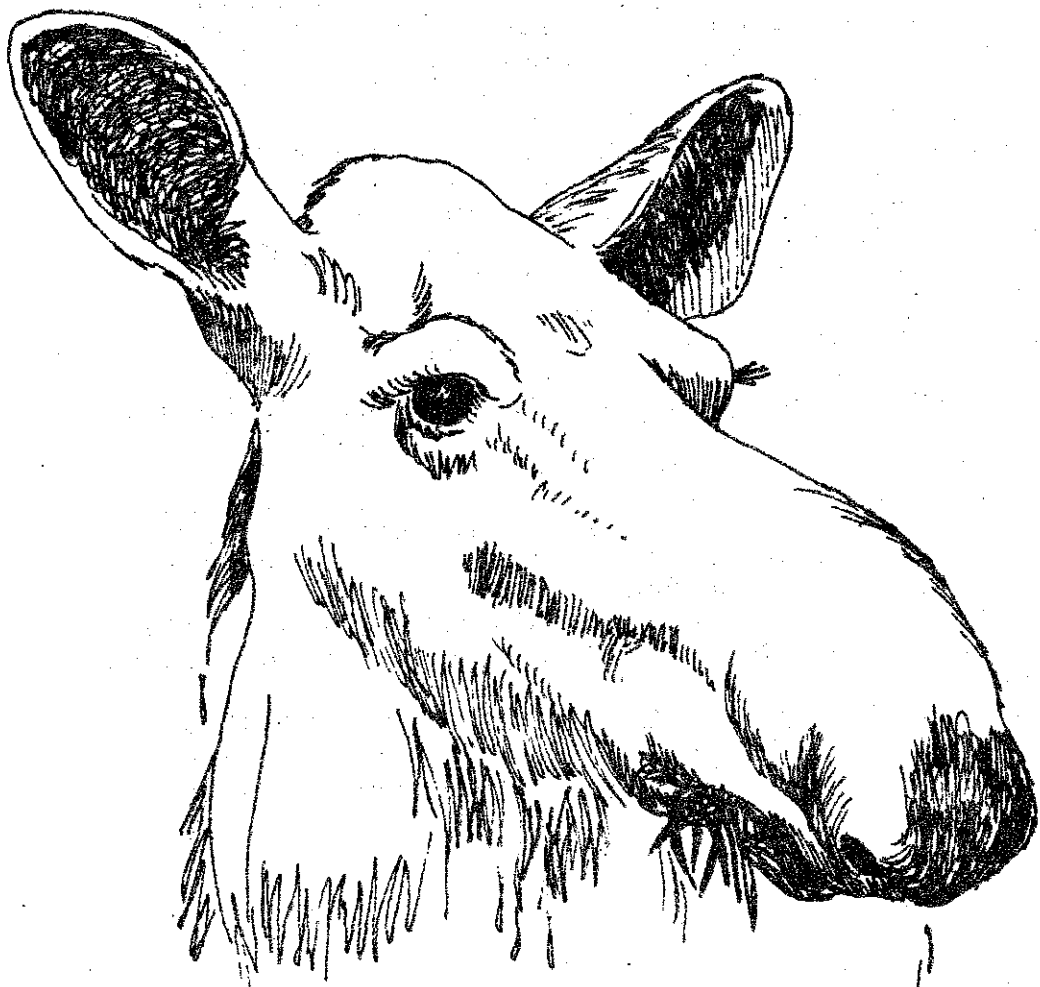
Bears, according to all accounts, are versatile animals. They can easily outrun a man, climb trees with great dexterity, are omnivorous, but are especially fond of grubs, ants, berries and honey. They may suddenly appear out of nowhere and may also quickly and silently vanish in the shadows of the forest. They may also appear to bounce if conditions are right.

Les Rice, of Bear River, and I were on our way back to his sporting camps on 6th Lake Stream some years ago. We were canoeing the long stillwater about two miles from the camp on a gray, misty day and had paused to fish a pool near a beaver house where a tiny stream flowed from a bog. We had taken one or two small trout on the flyrod when Les exclaimed, "Look up on that low ridge to the left". There came a bear, nosing along in the bracken. He weighed in the neighbourhood of 200 pounds and was obviously exploring for any kind of food available. He didn't hurry. Les spoke again, "Put up your rod, and we'll stick our paddles in the mud to steady the canoe. When he gets read close, we'll have fun. When I say 'now', we'll both stand up and yell".

The bear came ever nearer and we had the wind in our favour. We were motionless. When he was within about 30 feet, Les whispered "Now". We both stood and yelled. The bear stood up straight for a brief moment, then turned a backflip and was away up the long stretch of bog, his hind legs literally reaching beyond his ears as he strove to put distance between himself and the weird monster that had risen up from the stream. How I wished for a movie camera to record the flight. He didn't run -- he bounced; his bounces were high and long for the full time he was in view. Les grinned, "Guess that bear didn't like what he saw or heard. Maybe he'll be more careful next time".

"And whether bears have wings"? If the walrus could wonder about pigs, perhaps the old man could be pardoned for wondering about bears.

Again we -- my wife Ruth, daughter Jean, and I -- were with Les Rice at his 6th Lake Stream camps. Trout had cooperated that day, supper dishes were nearly done, and I suggested we take a stroll on the turnpike(esker) to the rear of the camps. Ruth said she would help Les finish the dishwashing so Jean and I started off to look and listen. The evening was lightly overcast with the western cloud banks faintly coloured with rose and gold shades. We hoped we might see a deer or moose from the vantage height of the turnpike, overlooking two or three small bogs



and the large meadow of the stream. Various birds sang their evening songs and the croaking of bullfrogs came from the stream's edge.

We had walked about a hundred yards from camp when we heard something of a combined hoarse choking, gargling cough, as if the creature might have been trying to expel a splinter or piece of bone. We stood listening carefully to locate the source. It appeared to come from the hackmatack swamp three hundred yards distant, just beyond a spur of the main turnpike. The sound was not only being repeated, but was coming closer. It was obviously a bear and in no mood to bargain with humans. Jean and I dashed for the camps. "Come quick, Les", I gasped. "Bear, I think. Get the gun." He had a 12 gauge shotgun in camp, using ball cartridges for bear trapping. In those days it was legal as there was a bounty on bear.

Les came out armed and we all listened as the creature came ever nearer, the raucous cough continuing. We strained our eyes toward the shadowy woods and small growth on the nearby bog.

We could see nothing; then we noticed the sound next seemed to come from an elevated point. Finally, with a few more coughs, overhead came the darkened shape and the croaking of the Great Blue Heron. Les laughed and we all joined in. "Jean", he said grinning, "that's the first time I ever saw a Flying Bear". From that time on, in our family, the Great Blue Heron has been the Flying Bear.

Perhaps it would be fitting to end this series of stories of forest and stream with a brief account of the "big one". "The fish you land are smaller than the ones that get away", is an old quote. Perhaps, but there are occasion.....!

It was late May, 1982. Ruth and I had gone to "Kedgie" National Park. I had asked one of the wardens what luck was to be had at Mill Falls, a short distance below the Park Administration Building. I was told that most fishermen were doing better with worms than with flies as the water was still very high and cold.

The large pool below the falls was turbulent. I followed the warden's advice, attached a small spinner, baited the #8 hook with a small worm, and attempted a few casts with no results. The little 3½ oz. split-bamboo rod was not designed for bait casting, so I decided to fish the area of the series of small stepped falls below, which lead down to the larger pool beyond. I moved out to a narrow ledge where a foam patch gave promise of a lurking trout. A small dead tree with several protruding limbs was lodged against the bank, but was partially submerged. I cast near the outer edge of the foam patch and had a nibble as the bait sank. I struck quickly -- too quickly -- and decided next time I'd let the trout take it. I did and watched as the line moved slowly about the pool. Then I set the hook. I was fast to either the ledge or a sunken log. Still I could feel the twitching of the fish. I laid the little rod down and gradually put pressure on line and the 3 pound test leader. Ever so slowly the large piece of log came into view in the dark water. The leader was holding. I just might get the trout after all.

Suddenly the log surfaced -- the ugly head and jaws of a huge snapping turtle, front feet nearly as large as a man's hands, with a shell that must have been over 30 inches in length. I eased the strain on line and leader and he slipped back into the pool. I called my wife who was nearby. When she came, I brought the turtle to the surface once more for her to witness my glory as a bait fisherman. Then I snapped the leader, taking care not to get my fingers too close to those deadly jaws.

When I reported the episode to a park naturalist, I was told that the turtle had been caught before and the weight was estimated to be about 15 pounds.

As Isaac Walton said in The Complete Angler, the crocodile is not to be confused with the trout. In my case, neither is the Kedgie Snapper to be confused with trout. On that observation, I rest.

#### ILE HAUTE

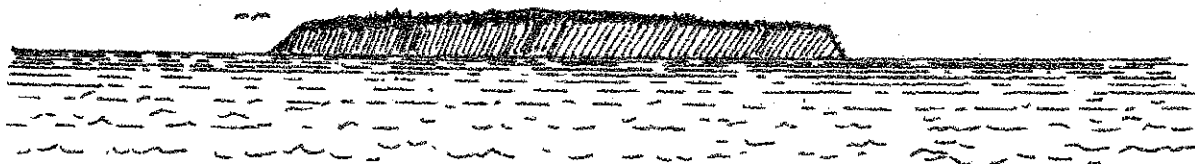
John Erskine,  
Wolfville, N.S.

From the Journal of Education, December, 1956.

Many years before, I had seen Ile Haute standing up steep-sided from the grey waters of Fundy, and I had remarked to David that we ought to go out and collect the plants that grew on it. Pessimistically he had answered: "There's probably nothing there that doesn't grow here, too." And, as money was a great object then with us, we let the matter drop. Later Wilfred Schofield planned to visit the island when he was collecting the Cumberland shore in the following summer, so I abandoned all thought of going there myself. Then unexpectedly in June I received a call from the Nova Scotia Museum of Science to ask if I would join an expedition to the island for the next week-end, as they needed a botanist. I was in the throes of a bronchial cold, but the opportunity was not one to be missed. Then my conscience smote me. I had already forestalled Wilfred's ambition to collect on Sable Island. "Could you take two botanists?", I asked. I begged a day off from teaching for both of us, and in a misty grey dawn we set out for Harbourville.

Fundy harbours are not serious seaports. Each is at the mouth of a little brook, and the huge wharf, designed to meet the thirty-foot tides and the battering of winter storms, seems





out of proportion to the small fishing-boats that use it and to the handful of houses perched on the slopes around. When we arrived, the tide had already turned, so we scrambled aboard, and our gear was lowered to us by ropes and gaffs, and the motor-boat slid out to sea. A few minutes later the harbour would be a waste of water-rolled stones and a trickling brook, yellow-green with Enteromorpha weed.

Gulls rose heavily from before us, for there was not a breath of wind to lift them, and the smooth sea heaved and humped under a variety of cross-swells reflected from many shores. Gradually the island climbed out of the horizon ahead, and in the rising sun we had a sight of pinkish-brown basalt cliffs lifting sheer two hundred and fifty feet from the water's edge. The scrubby talus, where we had hoped to find cliff-plants, did not exist, having been scoured away by the east-west set of the tides which had swept the fallen blocks into long spits at the east and west ends. As a result of this protection, the cliffs at these points rose more gradually, and towards the east we turned, taking a wide sweep around the dark riffles of the spit.

The boat drew up to a mooring-buoy and was looped to it. Then the skipper slid overboard the small dinghy that was carried astern. "Will one of you row it ashore?" he suggested; "that man on the beach will bring it back." No one seemed eager to go, so I dropped in and rowed clumsily to the rocky beach. Then, load by load, the gear was ferried ashore, and Mr. Fullerton, the hospitable lighthouse-keeper, welcomed us and offered us house-room. With him we set off up the steep slope to have a look at the island from the inside.

We were now at the fifth of June of a late spring. We had had a few beautiful weeks in late April which had brought the spring-beauties and Dutchman's-breeches into pale flower before their time, and then in May cold north winds had returned us half into winter. On the slopes we could see the results in the frost-burned leaves of elder and raspberry and moosewood. Among the fire-scarred trees of the hillside a winter-wren was singing his long shrill bubbly song. A parula warbler buzzed below us, and a few starlings flew busily to and fro, probably occupied with nests in old stubs. Robins clattered, and a group of cedar-waxwings whispered on a clump of spruce. I scribbled frantically as I walked, trying to list birds and plants as fast as they appeared.

At first sight the botany was not promising. Fire had recently run through everything, and only the deep and excellent soil had saved the roots from the heat. For years half the island had been burned over each year, so that the rich hardwood forest of a century ago was now reduced chiefly to alders and brambles. The slopes were covered with red-berried elder, showing cones of fluffy blossom, and the half-shaded ground was chequered with the great triangular leaves of white lettuce. The lighthouse stood on the crown of the island, 320 feet above the sea, a three-storied white building surrounded by barns and snake-fenced pastures. The house was large enough to shelter an army, and Mr. Fullerton and one man went to catch the horse to cart our gear, and Wilfred and I returned to the beach to get our vasculums and to begin collecting.

The beach was like a long Y with the divided top toughing the island, a small pond of brackish water filling the space between the prongs. We skirted the pool where a kingfisher rattled and a sandpiper curtsied on the pebbles, and then Wilfred turned up a tricky gully and I went on to explore the beach. A few salt-grasses were coming into flower among the loose cobbles, and tufts of beach-pea were in large purple bloom; and then, on the

inner slope where the cobbles gave place to coarse gravel, there was a freshly scooped hole some two feet deep. I guessed what this must be, for I had read of the digging up of a skeleton and buried treasure on this island the year before. Later, from Mr. Fullerton's information, we tried in vain to build up a clear picture of the find.

Buried treasure is imperishably a Nova Scotian tradition. At first it was Acadian treasure that was sought, the gold buried by the poor fugitive peasants who had escaped deportation; but the methods for finding gold--digging in the places selected by a divining rod, just before midnight and in dead silence--and the typical description of the pickaxe ringing on the lid of the chest and eliciting a surprised exclamation at which the treasure disappeared again into the earth--all this rigmarole of the traditional stories tells that they were really searching for fairy gold far older than Acadia, as old as men's dreams. Then pirates entered the picture, the envy of those with itching palms and callous conscience, and the dreams of avarice became centred upon pirate hoards, especially that of Captain Kidd who had ventured into the neighbourhood of Nova Scotia and who had therefore buried his treasure on every island around the peninsula as well as upon New York's Long Island where it was dug up in his own day. We have no impressive Indian mounds to ransack, and we cannot spend our days in searching for the lost mines of the Micmacs. Therefore we have to be content with pirate treasure.

The story of Captain Kidd's treasure on Ile Haute is of long standing, and many unsuccessful attempts had been made to find it. One expedition even brought in a motor-pump and drained the pond to make sure that the treasure was not hidden there. Then an American who had made a hobby, almost a profession, of the search for buried treasure, tested the beach with a metal-detector and found this skeleton some two feet below the surface. The shattered body seemed, according to Mr. Fullerton, to be holding all but one of the coins in his hand, Portuguese or Spanish coins of dates between 1710 and 1729. Of course, at that period most Atlantic countries used such coins. The picture that comes to me is not one of buried treasure but of a sailor drowned soon after 1730 and cast up by a storm. Then later storms would have rolled new cobbles over his remains.

One of our party, scrabbling later around the hole, found an Indian arrowhead, and I suggested ignorantly that this might have come ashore in the body, but Mr. Fullerton objected that he had found many such on the beach and several even in the grave. The Indians, according to local tradition, used to meet on the spit for their tribal gathering, although the top of the island was sacred and forbidden to them. We saw two of these arrowheads, both barbed and tanged, one of red jasper with the head curved like a gothic arch, the other of grey translucent chalcedony and shaped like a long triangle. There were many chips of jasper, also, on the beach, suggesting that arrowheads had been worked there. Yet all this failed to make sense.

That afternoon we collected westward along the edge of the cliff. A white-flowered form of the common purple trillium was abundant, but otherwise the flora was much like that of the North Mountain, hardwood forest over basalt. Fire and sheep, twin enemies of botanists, had trimmed the possibilities. A century ago shipbuilders had come here for fine hardwoods, but we found three fire-scarred sugar-maples and a few crippled and dying birches. However, Wilfred returned later in the summer and spent two weeks in searching this half mile island and found relics of other trees in gullies and one interesting orchid, an adder's-mouth, not previously collected nearer than New Brunswick.

We came out at last at the westernmost point of the cliffs. On the ledges and down the milder slope towards the spit, unburned grass matted the talus and projecting shoulders were white with whitlow-grass and tufted with the chaffy fronds of Woodsia fern, and on the bare slope of a slide stood tall plants of rock-cress. The sun was warm on our backs, and below us cormorants wheeled long-necked around their white-splashed rocks.

The interest of these plants was not so much in their rarity, for we had found them all in Cape Breton, and even on the cliffs of Blomidon a few miles away, but rather in the picture that they

gave of the plant-colonization of the province. Dr. Fernald of Harvard, the outstanding botanist of the area, had attributed the spotty distribution of such plants to their having survived the ice-age on unglaciated peaks or plateaux (nunataks), of which he thought Cape Breton Highlands to have been one. However, here the ground was littered with erratic boulders carried by the ice. The boreal plants had survived here, as in Cape Breton, where the cliffs had prevented forest from shading them, but clearly they had come in after the retreat of the ice from its greatest extension.

That evening, from supper until dark, we spent in getting our plants into press, while the entomologist went out to set his lamps and traps to catch night-flying insects. Later we heard that these lights had set the Advocate shore in a turmoil. In the days before the coming of the radio-telephone, which incidentally was out of order at this time, the signal of distress from the island was the building of two fires on the long spit of eastern beach. The many flares of insect-lamps were visible, but it was hard to be sure where they were set. However, the grapevine had already circulated the news that there were visitors on the island, and the excitement died down. Overhead the white beam of the light began to swing in the gathering dark, and we spread out our sleeping bags in the various rooms.

The conclusion of ILE HAUTE will appear in the next Newsletter.

Dues for 1983-1984 NOW DUE!!

At our annual meeting in October our membership voted to keep the BMS 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 McQuinness,  
c/o School of Business,  
Acadia University,  
Wolfville, N.S.  
BOP 1X0

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

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