

L. Degan

BLOMIDON NATURALIST'S SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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MARCH 1986

The BNS Newsletter is published on equinoxes and solstices.

SOCIETY NEWS

BNS Spring - Early Summer Programme

MONDAY EVENING MEETINGS: All meetings will start at 7:30 p.m. and will be held at the Beveridge Arts Centre at Acadia University. All lectures and field trips are open to the public and BNS members are encouraged to bring friends and neighbours.

1. March 17 -- Dr. Donald Bowen of the Bedford Institute of Oceanography will give an illustrated talk on "The Ecology of the Seals of the North Atlantic" with special reference to the Hooded and Harp Seals. Room 241.

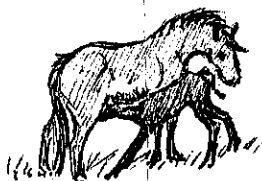
2. April 21 -- Karen Casselman will give an illustrated talk, "Flora, Fauna, and Textiles", covering her trip a year ago to parts of Scotland, including the Hebrides, and Ireland. Room 241.

3. May 12 -- Gary Saunders of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests will give an illustrated presentation on the "Trees of Nova Scotia". Rescheduled from March 17. Room 244.

4. June 16 -- Nan Geizer of Halifax will speak on "The Natural History of the Galapagos Islands". Her talk is based on a personal trip to the Galapagos and is illustrated with slides. Room 244.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
SOCIETY NEWS	
Spring - Early Summer Programme: Evening Meetings..cover	
Field Trips.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Book Review.....	15
Halley's Comet in 1910 - Louise Morse.....	12
Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas.....	1
Onion Skins and Snowshoes.....	15
Photographic Note.....	13
Halley's Comet 1910 - Ken Harrison.....	13
SOCIETY BUSINESS	
BNS Newsletter Deadline - June 21.....	8
Dues.....	8
FIELD TRIP REPORTS	
Blomidon Provincial Park - Jim Wolford.....	6
Kings County Winter Birds - Richard Stern.....	7
Kejimikujik National Park - Jim Wolford.....	8
Wolfville Christmas Bird Count - Peter Smith.....	3
NATURE REPORTS	
Distribution and Status of <u>Phoenicopterus ruber orna-</u> <u>mentalis</u> in Nova Scotia - Peter J. Austin-Smith...	14
Halley's Comet Casts its Spell - Roy Bishop.....	4
Owl Notes from Cyril Coldwell.....	13
Recent Sightings of Interest.....	9
FROM OTHER PUBLICATIONS	
Hummingbird Survives Winter in Ontario.....	16
The Land of Moss - J.S. Erskine.....	17



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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, water, air, and stars."

from the BNS constitution

FIELD TRIPS

All times are given for meeting at the Acadia Gym Parking Lot unless otherwise noted. If field trips begin in the morning it is advisable to bring a lunch. Waterproof footwear, insect repellent, binoculars, scopes, identification books will make your trip much more enjoyable.

1. April 19 -- Saturday at 9:30 a.m. (gym) or 10:00 a.m. (hatchery) -- a tour of the Coldbrook Fish Hatchery with the Halifax Field Naturalists.
2. April 23 -- Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. -- Geese on the Wellington Dyke. A marvellous spring migration!
3. April 26,27,28,29,30 -- Saturday to Wednesday 8:45 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. (Roy's) Saturday and 9:45 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. (Roy's) on the remaining days (because of the change to daylight saving) only if it is clear for a last look at Halley's Comet until 2062. Leader: Roy Bishop. Roy will try to show us Halley's Comet from his lawn using his portable telescope.
4. April 27 -- Sunday at 9:45 a.m. (gym) or 10:00 a.m. (Grand Pre) -- Spring Birds. Leader: Jim Wolford. With the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

5. May 3 -- Saturday at 9:00 a.m. at Room 244 Beveridge Arts Centre -- Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas. Leader: Judith Kennedy. Judith will first give a forty-five minute talk concerning the Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas Survey which officially starts this summer. She will then present slides and a ten-minute videotape of a similar survey conducted in Ontario. The tape has been shown on CBC's "The Nature of Things". By 10:00 a.m. she hopes to have us out in the field practicing some of the survey techniques so please dress for field work and bring binoculars, scopes, and note-taking equipment. The session should end about noon.

Expert skills are not necessary to participate. It may be possible to pair amateurs with the more skillful as we do in the Christmas bird count or skills can be developed over the five-year survey period. Enthusiasm and dedication are what really count in the long run.

6. May 5 -- Monday, time to be announced at our April meeting -- Amphibians. Leader: Jim Wolford. Flashlights are helpful on this excursion.

7. May 10 -- Saturday 9:15 a.m. (gym) or 10:00 a.m. (park) -- Smiley's Intervale Provincial Park to see Bloodroot and other spring plants and migrating birds. Leader: Alex Wilson of the Nova Scotia Museum.



8. May 11 -- Sunday, 8:00 a.m. (gym) or 10:30 a.m. (at bridge) Lichens. Leader: Dr. Wolfgang Maass. Meet at the bridge, south of Gibraltar, where Route 357 crosses the Musquodoboit River (Look for the Casselman's grey Honda). Bring a lunch and hand lens. If it is raining, call the Casselman's (523-2837) before 8:00 a.m. for directions to Dr. Maass' home near Halifax, the wet-weather field trip site.

9. May 24 -- Saturday, Nova Scotia Bird Society field trip to the Morse's in Paradise. Details can be obtained from NSBS members at BNS meetings in April and May.

10. May 25 -- Sunday, 8:30 a.m. (gym) or 9:00 a.m. (Scott's Bay) -- Cape Split hike to see late spring blooms and birds. The Halifax Field Naturalists will be coming a bit later. Comfortable footwear is very important!

11. June 1 -- Sunday, 7:00 a.m. (gym) or 10:00 a.m. (APBS), Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary for late spring birds, especially waterfowl.

12. June 15 -- Sunday, 9:00 a.m. -- Aylesford/Kingston sand barrens to see what special flora and fauna abounds on the glacial deposits. Leader: Jim Wolford.

13. June 22 -- Sunday, 9:00 a.m. -- Yellow Lady's Slippers at Poplar Grove, Hants County. Leader: Jim Wolford.

14. July 6 -- Sunday, 9:00 a.m. -- Shubenacadie Wildlife Park to see the extensive waterfowl collection as well as the animals.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Graham Daborn, Hubert Schuurman, Sherman Williams, Richard Stern and Jim Wolford for interesting and well-illustrated lectures or for leading our winter field trips; several people who have provided or helped with refreshments at meetings; and the numerous people who have written articles or assisted with the production of this BNS Newsletter. You have contributed to another successful quarter as only dedicated volunteers can.

BNS Newsletter Deadline - June 21, 1986

Please send articles, trivia, poetry and letters to the editors to Jean Timpa, P.O. Box 1382, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0, or give them to me or other Newsletter staff or BNS executive members at meetings or field trips. Your response to our recent pleas for submissions has been gratifying (except for the Halley's Comet Contest); keep up the good work!

It seems that few want to admit they are old enough to remember Halley's Comet seventy-six years ago. To date only Rachel Erskine and Louise Morse have committed their observations to paper, as well as a fine impression by Ken Harrison.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Wolfville Christmas Bird Count

by Peter Smith

December 22 arrived with brisk temperatures, light to moderate winds and chiefly clear skies. It was a great day for the annual Christmas Bird Count in which 68 people participated. Folk in 27 groups observed feeders, walked, skied, snowshoed or drove (as appropriate!) along roads, dykes, fields, woodlands and waterways in search of common and elusive birds. That evening, many observers converged upon the Gibson's warm roost where kind hospitality was enjoyed and the day's events were shared.

And there were exciting events with an excellent result of 72 species and 40,027 individuals. A brief scan of the list reveals a large representation and abundance of raptors, and high numbers of some species as varied as Black Duck and Goldfinch. Interesting additions are Water Pipits and the House Finch. One perhaps would expect to have pipits on a more regular basis, in contrast to our first count record for House Finch, this Purple Finch-like bird. We may see more of these finches with their current range expansion. As last year, river ducks were in short supply. It is good to be able to note that the low numbers of Gray Partridge seem to be at least holding their own as three coveys were sighted. The count of crows, en route to nightly quarters on Boot Island, was down. This is not due to demise of the crow! but to less than optimal conditions for the evening census.

The list also reflects the diversity and richness of habitats in the Wolfville area, features that "we locals" take much for granted. Moreover, the count results continue to stimulate one to think about our influences upon bird distributions and numbers ----- the presence of large corn acreages, feed-lots, sewage lagoons, refuse dumps, poultry farms and the like.

With thanks to all and best wishes for nature watching.



CHRISTMAS COUNT SUMMARY

Red-throated Loon.....2	Bl.-capped Chickadee.....335
Canada Goose.....130	Boreal Chickadee.....10
Green-winged Teal.....7	Red-breasted Nuthatch.....14
Am. Black Duck.....1937	White-breasted Nuthatch.....13
Mallard.....39	Brown Creeper.....2
Common Eider.....6	Golden-crowned Kinglet.....39
White-winged Scoter...4	American Robin.....17
Common Goldeneye.....12	Northern Mockingbird.....3
Common Merganser.....13	Water Pipit.....5
Red-breasted	Bohemian Waxwing.....58
Merganser.....1	Cedar Waxwing.....90
Bald Eagle - adult...40	Northern Shrike.....1
immature...35	European Starling.....5058
Northern Harrier.....6	Am. Tree Sparrow.....168
Sharp-shinned Hawk...11	Chipping Sparrow.....1
Northern Goshawk.....1	Savannah Sparrow.....4
Red-tailed Hawk.....82	Song Sparrow.....229
Merlin.....3	Swamp Sparrow.....1
Rough-legged Hawk...18	White-throated Sparrow....61
Gray Partridge.....21	Dark-eyed Junco.....1242
Ring-necked Pheasant315	Lapland Longspur.....18
Ruffed Grouse.....4	Snow Bunting.....278
Common Snipe.....1	Red-winged Blackbird.....4
Ring-billed Gull.....8	Common Grackle.....2
Herring Gull.....4710	Br.-headed Cowbird.....903
Iceland Gull.....3	Pine Grosbeak.....87
Gt.Bl.Backed Gull..1684	Purple Finch.....90
Rock Dove.....3515	House Finch.....1
Mourning Dove.....217	White-winged Crossbill...114
Great Horned Owl.....1	Common Redpoll.....5
Barred Owl.....1	Pine Siskin.....18
Short-eared Owl.....2	American Goldfinch.....730
Downy Woodpecker....33	Evening Grosbeak.....313
Hairy Woodpecker.....19	House Sparrow.....2082
Fileated Woodpecker..1	
Horned Lark.....361	
Gray Jay.....3	Total Individuals.....40027
Blue Jay.....405	Total Species.....72
American Crow.....14000	
Common Raven.....380	

HALLEY'S COMET CASTS ITS SPELL

by Roy Bishop

Mars, the rings of Saturn, and Halley's Comet are perhaps the most widely-recognized astronomical names (with the exception of Earth, Sun, and Moon). During 1985-86 it has, of course, been "the comet" that has dominated the newsstands and conversations related to the starry sky.

Although Halley's Comet was first recovered on its current return to the inner Solar System back in October 1982, it was not until late last summer that it became sufficiently near and bright to be seen in small telescopes. The first person to see it from Canada was apparently Father Lucian Kemble of the Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre near Cochrane, Alberta. In a dark, pre-dawn sky, he saw the comet on August 6 using his 280 mm telescope. During this period the comet was one or two magnitudes fainter than predicted, and I was not able to see it with my 200 mm telescope until September 21. On that night Halley's Comet appeared in my telescope as a small, extremely faint, fuzzy blob of light. However, through late October and early November the comet brightened dramatically so that I was able to see it with my unaided eyes on November 17. That night, it was located about 4° southwest of the Pleiades, although at this stage it was not bright with a flowing tail — just a barely-visible, blip of light, indistinguishable from a dim star. In a telescope it appeared as a ghostly, symmetric fuzz of light, about the size of the full moon in diameter.

By the end of November with the Moon out of the sky and Earth moving around in its orbit so that the comet was no longer opposite the Sun in the sky, a faint broad tail was visible, extending about 1° behind the bright head of the comet. By January, with the comet still approaching the Sun, its surface brightness was greater, but its total brightness was nearly the same as a month earlier since Earth had been moving almost directly away from it. Under a dark country sky, to the unaided eye the comet remained easily visible, but was indistinguishable from a dim star. One could not tell it was a comet without at least using a pair of binoculars, and it was difficult to find the comet in binoculars without knowing where in the sky to look.

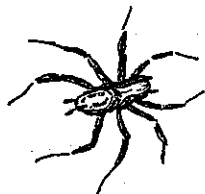
During the first halves of both December and January many people visited my observatory. The busiest night was the one night of the five scheduled BNS observing sessions that was clear: January 11. Approximately 80 - 100 people ascended the steep stairs for a brief encounter with that legendary visitor. Three nights earlier about 25 more people had done the same. I believe that the most determined visitor was Rachel Erskine. As readers of last September's newsletter will recall, from her father's arms, Rachel gazed upon Halley's Comet above the hills of northern England 76 years ago. Another observer who also had seen the comet in 1910 visited my observatory on December 5: Mrs. L. B. Harvie of Hantsport.

Halley's Comet became lost in the evening twilight late in January. It passed closest to the Sun on February 9 and then began its long journey back to the cold, outer edges of our planetary system. It was at its best with a

long tail during late February and March, but was lost in the solar glare during the first part of this period, and then was too low in the southern sky for easy observation from Canadian latitudes. With a very clear and dark sky, the comet was visible low in the southeastern pre-dawn sky in mid-March (see Larry Bogan's diagram on page 13 of the September Newsletter).

During the first 10 days of April, Halley's Comet will be at its best (as seen from Earth), but an observer should be at least as far south as Florida for a good view. From Nova Scotia, the comet will not become visible until the last half of April, and even then moonlight will interfere until the last few days of that month. Also, the comet will then be fading rapidly as it recedes from both Earth and the Sun. Through much of May, the comet will be visible in a small telescope, but by early June it will disappear low in the southwest evening twilight, not to be seen again until the year 2061. One wonders what the world will be like then.

Those who would like one last chance to see Halley's Comet may call me (542-3992) around supper hour on any clear evening during the period April 26 to May 11. I live in L.A. (Lower Avonport). Take exit #9 from highway 101, and proceed 2.4 km beyond the L. E. Shaw School to the first bend in the road past the second railway crossing.



Blomidon Provincial Park
led by Sherman Williams
January 19, 1986



by Jim Wolford
Wolfville, N.S.

Because a recent thaw removed much of our snow, about fifteen of us just walked on this excursion but six skiers seemed to enjoy themselves, especially on the return down the road to the cars, and one person tried snowshoes. Our walk into the park was pleasant but uneventful. We stopped to view the icy Borden Brook and its falls. Higher up in the park we saw signs of deer, porcupine, hares, red squirrels, and voles. We saw or heard a Pileated Woodpecker (I'm always disappointed when I don't hear one up there), Boreal Chickadees and Golden-crowned Kinglets (males interacting with erected caps). We also noted several different kinds of insect-caused galls on plants, three cocoons of Cecropia moths and an active beetle larva plus a Wolf Spider on the surface of the snow (air temperature perhaps 5 deg. C). Finally, one roadside willow bush showed fuzzy "pussies".

Kings County Winter Birds
February 2, 1986

by Richard B. Starn
Kentville, N.S.

For the third consecutive year the weather for the Kings County winter field trip was atrocious. At least this year the trip was on Ground Hog Day and since the ground hog couldn't possibly have seen his shadow, maybe it presages better things to come. Considering the wet snow and the very poor visibility, a surprisingly large number of people turned out and a succession of cars headed off towards the Grand Pre dykes. Has there ever been a field trip when no birds were seen? Well, this was very nearly it. We saw one Rough-legged Hawk, a few Tree Sparrows and a Downy Woodpecker. We traipsed all over the fields looking for Short-eared Owls, large numbers of which had been around the previous weekend, and saw none. We then drove on somewhat treacherous snow-covered dirt roads to the far end of the dykes looking again for Short-eared Owls, Snowy Owls or anything else that could possibly be seen, and again we saw nothing. The parking lot at Grand Pre, that had the previous week yielded Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks, on this occasion yielded (you guessed it) nothing.

Brenda Thexton kindly invited us back to eat our packed lunches in the warmth and comfort of her home; while eating we could view her feeders where we got close looks at Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches and Cowbirds. The two Rusty Blackbirds that had been present most of the winter showed up and put on a good display for us.

After lunch we went to an area in Wolfville where early in the morning before the field trip started about 300 Bohemian Waxwings had been seen but when we got there, apart from a few Cowbirds and three White-throated Sparrows, there was nothing.

We then went to Cyril Coldwell's establishment where he had a caged Snowy Owl, with a bruised wing, which had recently arrived from Yarmouth; luckily nothing was broken and he hoped to rehabilitate it. (Unfortunately, the injuries proved to be more severe than previously thought and part of one wing has atrophied. The Snowy Owl will now stay with Cyril. Ed.) We all had a good close look at a caged Rough-legged Hawk, and caged Bald Eagles and Barred and Horned Owls as well.

Following this we decided that the snow, which had now become heavier and wetter, precluded any possibility of visits to the Sheffield Mills and Church Street areas where Bald Eagles had been seen but we did at least glimpse, through the heavy snow, a dark shape sitting in a tree in the Gaspereau Valley. By virtue of its size and shape, it was presumed to be a Bald Eagle.

At least people learned where to go when the weather gets better.



Kejimikujik National Park
February 16, 1986

by Jim Wolford
Wolfville, N.S.

On our previous two Keji trips we "lucked out" and had perfect snow conditions and temperatures for winter recreation. This year the snow was again fine but the wind was bitterly cold whenever we were in open areas (no problem in the woods). There were about fifteen people, four on snowshoes and the rest on skis. We chose the flat and well-travelled Peskowsk Trail. There were deer tracks everywhere although only one deer was seen, but signs of other mammals were scarce. Birds were nearly nonexistent, except for a "craven" and one mixed flock of chickadees, kinglets and nuthatches.

In early afternoon, after everyone had had plenty of exercise, we gathered at the Mill Falls shelter where the Parks people had started a cozy fire in the stove; the atmosphere was very pleasant. Nearby along the road were a few snow buntings.

There were occasional taunting remarks about car keys (and frequent checks by everyone); the only lowlight was that one car had its lights left on and needed a boost to get mobile again. No problem!



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It seems that few want to admit they are old enough to remember Halley's Comet seventy-six years ago. To date only Rachel Erskine and Louise Morse have committed their observations to paper.

Dues

If you have not paid your dues or wish to join the Blomidon Naturalists' Society, please send your name and mailing address to Martha Dodge, R.R. 3, Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0 with \$5.00 if you are over 16 years of age or \$1.00 if you are 16 or younger.

Reported Wildlife Sightings - Winter



<u>No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Observers</u>
Common Loon			
21	(14 in raft) Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
Horned Grebe			
12	Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
Pied-billed Grebe			
2	Black Rock 'Light' nr Harbourville	24 Jan	GJT
Tundra Swan			
1	Annapolis Royal	13, 18, 19 Jan	RBS, BBT
Canada Goose			
75	Canard	23 Feb	GJT
11	Wellington Dyke Road	2 Mar	GMA
40	Grand Pre dykes	2 Mar	GMA
12	West Brooklyn	4 Mar	GMA
Brant			
2	Newport (Meander River)	22 Feb	IM
Mallard			
4	Melanson (Gaspereau River)	1 Mar	JCT
Black Duck			
24	Melanson (Gaspereau River)	1 Mar	JCT
5	Canard (Canard Poultry pond)	2 Mar	GMA
≈30	Canard (Canard Poultry pond)	8 Mar	GMA
Green-winged Teal			
2	(m) Canard (Canard Poultry pond)	2 Mar	GMA
Greater Scaup			
8	Annapolis Royal	17 Jan	GJT
≈100	Annapolis Royal	19 Jan	RBS
≈30	Annapolis Royal	22 Jan	GJT, MP
Common Goldeneye			
≈100	Annapolis Royal	17 Jan	GJT
50	Annapolis Royal	19 Jan	RBS
26	Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
3	Melanson (Gaspereau River)	1 Mar	JCT
Barrow's Goldeneye			
4+	(3m, 1f) Annapolis Royal	13 Jan	BBT
2	(m, f) Annapolis Royal	19 Jan	RBS
1	(m) Annapolis Royal	22 Jan	GJT, MP
1	(f) Digby	12 Feb	GJT
Bufflehead			
1	Annapolis Royal	17 Jan	GJT
≈30	Annapolis Royal	19 Jan	RBS
≈30	Annapolis Royal	12 Feb	GJT
3	(f) Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
Oldsquaw			
78	Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
White-winged Scoter			
1	Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
Common Merganser			
3	Melanson (Gaspereau River)	mid-Feb	BBT, JCT
1	Melanson (Gaspereau River)	1 Mar	JCT

<u>No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Observers</u>
Turkey Vulture			
1	Davidson Street, Gaspereau Mountain	10 Jan	LC
Goshawk			
1	Wolfville Ridge	10 Jan	GJ
Sharp-shinned Hawk			
1	Middleton	17 Jan	GJT
1	Wolfville Ridge	19 Jan thru Feb	GJT et al
Falcon (Peregrine?)			
1	Wolfville Ridge	10 Feb	GJT
Peregrine Falcon			
1	Wolfville Ridge	13 Feb	BSF
1	Wolfville Ridge	19 Feb	GJT
Hungarian Partridge			
2	Hantsport	9 Feb	RBS
6	(4m,2f) Porters Point	23 Feb	GJT
12	(4m,8f) Starr's Point	23 Feb	GJT
Iceland Gull			
1	Grand Pre	18 Jan	RBS
Bonaparte's Gull			
1	Smith's Cove (Joggin's Bridge)	22 Jan	GJT,MP
Dovekie			
2	Black Rock 'Light' nr Harbourville	24 Jan	GJT
3	Black Rock 'Light' nr Harbourville	29 Jan	GJT
3	Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
Black Guillemot			
2	Blandford Peninsula	4 Feb	GJT
Mourning Dove			
20	Wolfville (between Kent & Chestnut Streets)	early March	GT et al
Great Horned Owl			
2	Cheverie (Hants Co.)	19 Feb	KC
Snowy Owl			
1	Grand Pre dykes	26 Dec, 19 Jan	BSF
Short-eared Owl			
1	Grand Pre dykes	18 Jan	RBS
13	Grand Pre dykes	25 Jan	Hfx. Nat.
1	Annapolis Royal (Power Dam)	22 Jan	GJT
Saw-whet Owl			
1	Canning	27 Feb	WG
Northern Flicker			
2	(m) Granville Ferry	28 Feb	BSF,ME
Pileated Woodpecker			
1	Wolfville Ridge	11,19 Jan	GJT
1	Avonport	18 Feb	EU
Red-headed Woodpecker			
1	Aylesford (Dempsey Corners)	8 Feb	RBS
Black-backed Woodpecker			
1	Kentville (Hospital parking lot)	early Feb	RBS
Horned Lark			
	Kings & West Hants Co. (many flocks)	Feb to mid-Mar	RBS,GJT MP,GMA



<u>No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Observers</u>
Gray Jay			
4	near Blandford	7 Feb	RBS
Brown Creeper			
3	Cheverie	18 Feb	KC
Mockingbird			
1	Hantsport (Schuurman Road)	18 Feb	GJT
5	(seen at one time) Yarmouth	?	MD
Robin			
1	Coldbrook	24 Jan	GJT
Waxwing (Bohemian?)			
70	Dartmouth East	28 Feb	GJT
Bohemian Waxwing			
70	Granville Centre	22 Jan	GJT, MP
14	Grand Pre (Tourist Bureau)	25 Jan	GJT
Cedar Waxwing			
1	Kentville	26 Jan	RBS
1	Cheverie	21 Feb	KC
Northern Shrike			
1	Port Royal	13 Jan	BBT
1	Port Royal	17 Jan	GJT
Eastern Meadowlark			
1	Hantsport (Schuurman Road)	18 Feb	GJT
Red-winged Blackbird			
3 (f)	Gaspereau	18 Jan	GMA
Rusty Blackbird			
2 (f)	Wolfville	10 Jan to 27 Feb	BBT
Brown-headed Cowbird			
15	Gaspereau	18 Jan	GMA
Cardinal			
1 (f)	Coldbrook	15, 21, 24 Dec; 5, 31 Jan; 2, 19, 26, 27 Feb; 2 Mar	LW
1 (f)	Lookoff (Ross Creek Road)	16 Feb	GC
Purple Finch			
7-25	Wolfville Ridge (feeder)	thru Feb	GJT
60+	(at feeder at one time) Avonport	Feb	EU
House Finch			
1 (m)	Avonport	16 Nov to 30 Dec 22 Feb to present	EU
Pine Grosbeak			
25	Grand Pre (Tourist Bureau)	26 Dec	GJT, JCT
6	Grand Pre	25 Jan	GJT
25	North of Aylesford	27 Dec	GJT
Redpoll			
100	Digby (Digby Pines Hotel)	12 Feb	GJT
1	Coldbrook	14 Feb	LW
12	Cheverie	18 Feb	KC
White-throated Sparrow			
3	Wolfville	2 Feb	GMA et al
1	Grand Pre	11 Feb	GJT
1	Melanson	2 Mar	GMA

<u>No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Observers</u>
Song Sparrow			
3+	Starr's Point	2 Mar	GMA
Lapland Longspur			
2	Grand Pre	9 Feb	GJT, MP
1	Grand Pre	2 Mar	GMA
3	Port Williams	2 Mar	GMA
Snow Bunting			
	Kings and Hants Counties (many flocks)	mid-Feb to mid-Mar	GJT,RBS, MP, GMA
Porcupine			
1	Paradise	17 Jan	GJT
Red Fox			
1	Middleton	22 Jan	GJT
Mink			
1	Grand Pre dykes	13 Mar	BBT,JCT
Otter			
1	Conrad's Beach (Halifax County)	6 Dec	SC
Harp Seal			
1	Blandford area	7 Feb	RBS
Gray Seal			
4	Liverpool/Cherry Hill Beach	12 Jan	GJT,BSF
Pilot Whale			
6 to 8	Green Bay	4 Jan	SC

Observers - GMA-George and/or Margaret Alliston, GC-Gordon Callon, LC-Lloyd Card, KC-Karen Casselman, SC-Shirley Cohrs, MD-Mary Doucet, ME-Mark Elderkin, BSF-Bernard and/or Sandra Forsythe, WG-Wilma Gibson, IM-Ian MacPherson, MP-Mary Pratt, RBS-Richard B. Stern, BBT-Bill and/or Brenda Thexton, JCT-Jean Timpa, GT-Gerry Trueman, GJT-Gordon and/or Judy Tufts, EU-Eva Urban, LW-Leroy Wright.



Halley's Comet in 1910

by Louise L. Morse
Wolfville, N.S.

relayed to Roy Bishop
by Mrs. Rachel Erskine
January 16, 1986

I was born on February 21st, 1900, in Paradise, Annapolis County, N.S. My family lived on a big farm, with lots of space around us to look at the sky. I can remember, when I was ten years old, going out to the field behind our house, with my twelve-year-old sister, Sarah, to look at Halley's Comet. We were looking at the sky somewhat west of north, and saw the comet clearly - a star with a clear beam of light following it (from where we stood, the beam of light did not appear to be attached to the star, but was part of the phenomenon). It made an impression on me - especially as it was plain and clear, and it was in broad daylight.

Halley's Comet 1910

by Ken Harrison
Kentville, N.S.

One of my childhood memories is especially vivid. I had a spectacular view of Halley's Comet, thanks to my parents. I do not remember the date in 1910, but it appears to me now to have been late winter or early spring when I was awakened late one evening and taken to look out of the bedroom window towards the eastern horizon. The sky was cloudless but marked by a great broad band of white that stretched from the horizon to above me as I looked out of the window. The head of the comet was somewhere overhead, so actually I did not see it, only the great white path that was the tail stretching to the eastern horizon. I was a sleepy nine year old and remember little of my trip to the window, but the broad band of white was permanently impressed on my mind.

The idea of searching the morning skies for Halley's Comet with binoculars or a small telescope has not interested me in 1986, but the remembrance of the spectacular spectacle in 1910 is still vivid. And no wonder ancient people were in awe and trembled in fear when it put on a show like I remember.

----- NATURE REPORTS -----

Owl Notes from Cyril Coldwell

Again this year Cyril has a pair of Great Horned Owls nesting in captivity. The female began incubation on 10 March. Last year the same female (with a different mate) produced two fledged young. The young were banded and released and one is known to have been killed subsequently by a car.

A new development is that a "semi-tame" free-ranging female Great Horned Owl (presumed to have been previously released by Cyril) that has been resident at the Coldwell farm has mated and occupied the nesting platform Cyril had constructed in a tree in his front yard. She began incubation on 8 March.

The injuries to the Snowy Owl that Cyril has been caring for since early this year have proven to be more severe than initially thought. Damage to a wing, initially believed to be only a bad bruise, has resulted in the loss of the distal portion of the wing. The Snowy Owl (believed to be a female) will become another of Cyril's permanent wards.

Photographic Note

We were pleased to see an excellent photograph of a Great Horned Owl, taken by Mark Elderkin, a Wolfville resident, in the March/April 1986 issue of Harrowsmith. The photograph is used in an advertisement by the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism to interest tourists in a bird's-eye view of the 200 different bird species found in Nova Scotia.

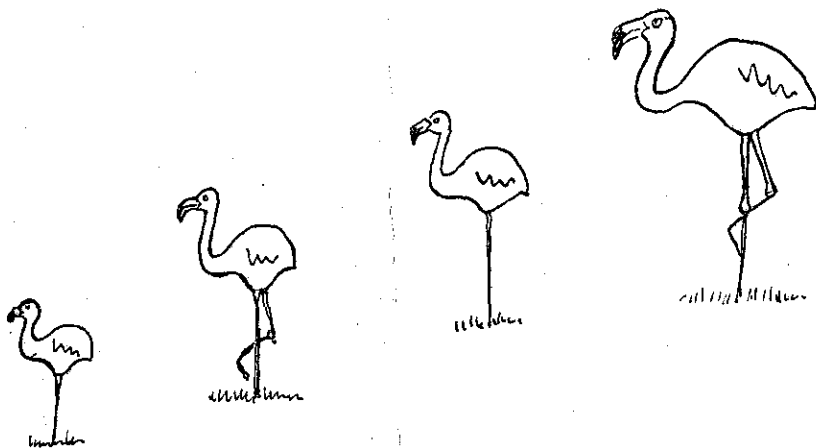
Distribution and Status of Phoenicopterus* ruber
ornamentalis in Nova Scotia

by Peter J. Austin-Smith
Nova Scotia Department of
Lands and Forests
Canadian Society of Fish-
ery and Wildlife Biologists
December, 1985

A study was undertaken to determine the distribution, and assess the relative abundance, of Phoenicopterus ruber ornamentalis in Nova Scotia because of recent commercial use of this bird based on its "aesthetic" appeal. Roadside censuses were conducted from a moving vehicle in four regions of the province by two and sometimes three observers. Numbers, ages and locations of birds were recorded within 30m on either side of the road over 50km routes, and also as number occupied per 50 available habitats. Results showed that P. r. o.'s were most abundant in the South Shore, followed by Cape Breton, Annapolis Valley and lastly the Eastern Shore area. Occupancy per 50 available habitats was again highest in the South Shore, averaging 10, but varied little in other regions ranging from 2.0 to 2.5 birds per 50 available habitats. Age ratios favoured adults in all regions. Number of birds per occupied habitat ranged from 2 to 6 with most habitats (91%) having one pair. The relatively warm, humid and often fog-bound South Shore seems to be favoured by P. r. o.'s, many of which are known to be permanent residents. Further studies are needed to determine relative abundance in other areas, as well as breeding biology, and other life history aspects of this ubiquitous species.

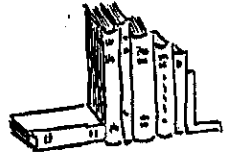
*Genus name for flamingoes.

We respectfully suggest that another interesting and much-needed study should be done on Distribution and Status of Danaus plexippus plywoodii and other plywoodii subspecies of the Papilionoidea wherever recognizable. (They have wings, Peter, but not feathers.) Ed.



Book Review

The Primary Source
Tropical Forests and Our Future
by Norman Myers
W.W. Norton & Co. 1984
SD 247.M94



by Larry Bogan
Cambridge Station, N.S.

In Nova Scotia we have relatively few environmental problems - the worst being acid rain and the over cutting of the forest softwoods. We have only very recently started forest management practices on private lands to improve the generally poor quality of these forests. Three-quarters of the land surface of the province is forested. Nova Scotia's population is low enough that demands for firewood (primarily hardwoods) are not of great significance. As a result our forests are relatively stable.

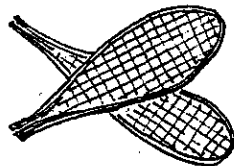
This is not the case in some far more important forests of the world - the tropical rain forests in South and Central America, Central Africa, South East Asia and the Australasian Archipelago. These forests are vastly more productive than ours and contain far more plant species with huge genetic variety. They are sources of invaluable products such as life-saving biochemicals. Yet they are disappearing at an alarming rate.

The alarm at this loss is clearly rung by Norman Myers in The Primary Source. He documents the character and value of these forests in esthetic as well as environmental and economic terms. He predicts that, at the present rate of loss, some major tropical forests will disappear as viable entities by 1990-2000. Forests faced with this threat are in Central America, Colombia, Eastern Brazil, Ecuador, East and West Africa, Madagascar, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Vietnam and Australia.

If you are concerned about the world environment, and other living species, and are not aware of the problems related to tropical rain forests -- read Myers' book.

Onion Skins and Snowshoes

In January someone gave Mary Pratt three large bags of onion skins for Karen Casselman to use for dyeing textiles. Karen would specially like to thank the "anonymous giver" as those skins were among the best she has ever used. Thanks also to Judy Tufts and Richard Stern for loaning the Casselmans their snowshoes so they could check the owl activity in their woods during February and March.



Hummingbird Survives Winter in Ontario

by Peter Whelan
from "Birds"
The Globe and Mail
February 26, 1986

Tell friends about a hummingbird in Ontario in February and listen to them scoff. (Take bets and clean up.)

The hummer is alive and well in Parry Sound, in the greenhouse that has saved it all winter.

In a tentative tough call, Carmen Douglas of Port Sidney identifies it as a female rufous hummingbird, a summer bird of western Alberta and British Columbia and a winter bird of Mexico.

It is rare enough in Eastern Canada to draw a flood of listers at any date. This bird, however, is uncountable by listing rules because it is confined. (Unconfined, it would be dead.)

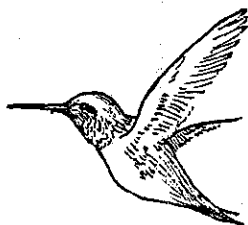
Norma Curry spotted it first, in late October, trying to feed on frozen flowers at her Parry Sound home. She put out sugar and water in a hummingbird feeder; this food promptly froze.

Curry then moved all her house plants to the front room and opened her front door. The bird flew in. She caught it and took it to the Little Garden greenhouse, where native ruby-throated hummingbirds gather when Parry Sound weather becomes fit for man and nectar-sipper in spring.

There it has been the guest of Ralph and Ian Burgess. They feed it sugar and water spiked with beef concentrate. It helps itself to nectar of hibiscus and fuschia. It pays rent by eating little white flies from lantana plants.

Identification is risky. Bird guides warn that female and immature rufous cannot be told in the field from Allen's hummingbird. Allen's is loyal to the coast of California, so the odds are sharply for rufous. Photographs taken of this visitor will go under the magnifying glass.

At any rate, the Burgesses welcome anyone who wants to see a little green, white and orangey bird of summer, thumbing its bill (so to speak) at Ontario's winter. They are at 36 Bow Street, on the south edge of town.



The Land of Moss

by J.S. Erskine

from Journal of Education

June 1957 (pp. 22-27)

If you mention Wedgeport to a Nova Scotian, his prompt reaction will be -- "tuna-fishing". And, indeed, this aspect of the place is conspicuous enough - hotels for visitors, the concrete Tuna Wharf with its enclosed harbour, the flotilla of waiting boats. But when you drive the road along the narrow peninsula where the little fields slope down to the salt marsh on either side, you notice that in front of the small yellow or white farmhouses, the driveways and paths and the soft shoulder of the road are littered with ragged seaweed drying in the radiant heat of the pavement and fading slowly from maroon and yellow-green to grey and parchment white. This is the Irish Moss from which is extracted an emulsive for ice-cream. The gathering of the moss has now become the principal summer industry of the fishermen along this shore. Here in the morning the women and children spread the moss to dry beside the road, and in the evening they rake it together again before the coming of the sea-dew and the fog of night. On the asphalt runways of Yarmouth airport you will see the dried moss spread out to be sprayed with fresh water and bleached white in the sun. For Yarmouth, in spite of its reputation for fog, is continentally sunny in comparison with the Tusquets.

In winter Wedgeport is half-deserted, for the fishermen move for the lobster-season with their families to their "shanties" -- wooden houses of two or four rooms -- which cluster in small villages on the Tusket Islands where the waters of the Fundy tides pour out twice a day through the narrow channels. In summer these islands are almost deserted; the little wharves at the edge of the water are piled high with gaily painted buoys and crates and lobster-traps, grey barricades that extend back through a waste of nettle and thistles towards the empty shanties. Behind them looms a dark forest of spruce and fir, except on the smaller islands where long habitation has swept away the last of the trees. Now and then a motorboat thrums through the channel or a murmur of French comes from where some dory-men are spreading moss on a deserted wharf, but in general the islands are quiet, except for the lonely voices of sheep and the grating cries of the fishing terns, while dim in the background, the foghorn of Pease Island and the warning gun on Green Rock mark the schooner channel in the mist.

To be continued...