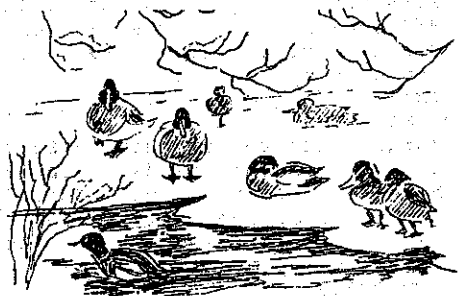


BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15
NUMBER 34
DECEMBER 1988



BNS Winter Programme

MONDAY EVENING MEETINGS: All meetings will start at 7:30 p.m. and, unless otherwise indicated, will be held in Room 241 of 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. Any changes in the date, time or subject of meetings are announced on posters, the Kings Kable notice board and in The Kentville Advertiser and The Hants Journal.

1. January 16 -- "A Matter of Understanding". Barry Sabeau of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests will talk about (and possibly show a film on) coyotes.

2. February 20 -- Hal Whitehead, Biology Department, Dalhousie University, Halifax, will speak about "The Social Organization of Sperm Whales".

3. March 20 -- "Show and Tell Night" in Room 308, Patterson Hall (Acadia University Biology Building). Share your natural history interests and experiences with other enthusiasts. Bring interesting finds, slides (10-15), display collections, books, etc.

4. April 17 -- "The Natural History of Weeds and Animal Pests". David Patriquin, Dalhousie University, Halifax, will discuss this fascinating topic as related to agriculture.

*****SPECIAL WORKSHOP*****

Wednesday, January 25 -- "Winter Birds" - identifying them, bird feeders, the art of feeding birds, etc. Jim Wolford and other members of the Blomidon Naturalists Society. 7:30 p.m., Room 308, Patterson Hall (Acadia University Biology Building).

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The BNS Newsletter is published on equinoxes and solstices.

Editors: George and Margaret Alliston
 Art: Mary Pratt
 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, water, air, and stars."

from the BNS constitution

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is an Affiliated Member of the Canadian Nature Federation.

Address correspondence to:
 Blomidon Naturalists Society
 P.O. Box 127
 Wolfville, Nova Scotia
 B0P 1X0



Field Trips

Unless otherwise noted, all times are given for meeting at the Acadia Gym parking lot. Where available, leaders' telephone numbers are included to allow those without access to local news to confirm trips.

1. Sunday, January 22, 1:00 p.m. -- Winter Woods Walk to Moosehorn Lake with Dr. Sherman Bleakney (542-3684).
2. Sunday, February 5, 10:00 a.m. -- Winter Raptors. A combined field trip with the Halifax Field Naturalists led by Dr. Merritt Gibson (582-7569). Bring a lunch to eat at Patterson Hall (Acadia University Biology Building) after which there will be a tour of the Biology Department.
3. Sunday, February 26, 8:00 a.m. -- Winter Beaches and Seabirds. Bernard Forsythe (542-2427) will lead us on an all day field trip to Lunenburg County. If the weather is unsettled, we will look at birds in the Wolfville area.

SOCIETY BUSINESS and NEWS

Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

our speakers: Zoe Lucas, Dr. Richard Stern, Robert Morrison and John Brett, who persevered through poor weather, federal elections and malfunctioning audiovisual equipment;

our many field trip leaders without whom BNS activities would be severely curtailed: Roy Bishop, Larry Bogan, Jack Colwell, Bernard Forsythe, Kathy Fuller, Ruth Newell, Nancy Nickerson, Sherman Williams and Jim Wolford;

our new Newsletter contributors. You will notice some unfamiliar authors and artists in this issue. New contributors provide a fresh point of view; more are welcome (see BNS Newsletter Submissions Deadline in this issue).

BNS Newsletter Submissions Deadline - March 1, 1989

Please send or give all contributions to the Newsletter to:
George Alliston (542-3651)

R.R 3

Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

or to other members of the BNS executive.

For "Trivial Tidbits" only, send your written observations (in chronological order) to Jim Wolford at:

Biology Department
Acadia University
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Last-minute observations can be phoned in to 542-2201, ext. 334 (leave a message).

The editors would greatly appreciate all submissions, even those typed or word-processed, being at least double-spaced to facilitate both editing and word processing. Sketches or diagrams should be submitted in final form, preferably on a separate page.

1988 Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Awards

At the November 17th meeting of the Blomidon Naturalists Society, Larry Bogan presented the 1988 Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award to two Kings County boys: Stephen MacPhee of Wolfville and Jelmer Wiersma of Bishopville.

Stephen MacPhee, 11, is a grade five student at Wolfville Elementary School. He has exhibited a deep interest in natural history from about age six. His primary interest is birds, particularly owls. One of Stephen's recent projects has been the "adoption" of a burrowing owl. In order to raise the \$75 required to "adopt" the owl for one year, he delivered papers, did odd jobs and had a yard sale. Stephen intends to "re-adopt" his owl again next year. Stephen's choice for his prize was a book and cassette entitled Song Birds - How to Attract Them and Identify their Songs.

Jelmer Wiersma, 13, is a grade eight student at Horton District High School. Jelmer's interests are also in the field of ornithology and he has been keeping records of local bird life for the past three or four years. One of his recent projects has been setting up nest boxes for tree swallows and studying the competition between the tree swallows and house sparrows for these nest boxes. Jelmer's choice for his prize was a copy of Harrison's Field Guide to Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings.

Both boys were enthusiastic participants in the 1988 Wolfville Christmas Bird Count and Jelmer also participated in the West Hants Christmas Bird Count.

Congratulations to two very deserving recipients of the Robie Tufts Award!

Blomidon Naturalists Society
P.O. Box 127
Wolfville, Nova Scotia B0P 1X0

Audited Financial Statements - 1987-1988

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
September 1, 1987 - August 31, 1988

INCOME

Membership Dues	\$1267.00
Charitable Donation	50.00
Bank Interest	14.19
Christmas Bird Count Fees	172.00
Monteverdi Rain Forest Donations	300.00

\$1803.19

EXPENSES

Awards and Meetings	\$124.95
Bank Service Charges	4.50
Christmas Bird Count	172.00
Monteverdi Rain Forest Contribution	300.00
Newsletter and Programmes	1180.33
Post Office Box Rental	6.74

\$1788.52

EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENSES \$14.67

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

Cash \$442.60

LIABILITIES - None

SOCIETY'S EQUITY

Balance September 1, 1987 \$427.93
Add: excess of income over expenses 14.67

\$442.60

Treasurer - Judith C. Tufts

Auditor's Note: Audited and found correct.

(signed)

George Fraser
November 30, 1988

**Blomidon Naturalists Society
Executive -- 1988-1989**

At our annual meeting in October, the following executive was elected for 1988-1989.

President

Mr. Sherman Williams Home: 542-5104
Lighthouse Road
Avonport, N.S. B0P 1B0

Vice President

Dr. Tom Herman Home: 678-0383
40 Elm Avenue Office: 542-2201 ext 469
Kentville, N.S. B4N 1Y9

Past-President

Mr. James Wolford Home: 542-7650
c/o Biology Department Office: 542-2201 ext 391
Acadia University
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Treasurer

Mrs. Judy Tufts Home: 542-7800
Box 1313
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Secretary

Mr. Bill Thexton Home: 542-3722
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Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Directors

Dr. J. Sherman Bleakney Home: 542-3604
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Mr. Harold Forsyth Home: 542-5983
R.R. 2
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Mr. Bernard Forsythe Home: 542-2427
R.R. 2
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Dr. Nancy Nickerson Home: 542-9332
Box 127
Port Williams, N.S. B0P 1T0

Mr. John Pickwell Home: 678-8281
1015 Prospect Road
New Minas, N.S. B4N 3K4

Mrs. Marian Zinck Home: 582-7798
R.R. 5
Canning, N.S. B0P 1H0

Newsletter Editors

Dr. W. George Alliston Home: 542-3651
Mrs. Margaret Alliston
R.R. 3
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Pamphlets and Special Publications

Dr. Merritt Gibson Home: 582-7569
Box 35
Canning, N.S. B0P 1H0

Trenna Scott Turner

Trenna Turner, a longstanding member of the Blomidon Naturalists Society, died at the Eastern Kings Memorial Hospital in Wolfville on October 14, 1988. She was 85.

As she and her husband, Wally, travelled the world, Trenna was always a keen observer of nature. Not unlike Wally, who is a well known watercolour artist, she had a quick eye for form, texture, colour and detail. She enjoyed outings and, over the years, participated in many field trips devoted to flora. Trenna had a great love of gardening, music and people. Her generous spirit and natural curiosity will be missed by her many friends.

The Turners retired to Wolfville in 1971 and Wally resides at 7 Blomidon Terrace. Trenna is also survived by a sister Kay and a daughter Patricia, both of whom live in the United States.

A Tale about Trenna

by Karen Leigh Casselman
Cheverie, Hants Co., N.S.

Several years ago I was chatting with Trenna Turner after a Blomidon Naturalists Society meeting. During our conversation Mary Pratt's name came up. Trenna quickly asked me to bring Mary over some afternoon for a visit. Finally Mary found some time in her busy life and we both presented ourselves on the appointed afternoon.

On opening the door, Trenna immediately exclaimed, "You must be the Mary Pratt! Come right in!" Mary, completely taken aback, said, "No, no, no! I'm not the Mary Pratt." Trenna, with a gleam in her eye, said, "Of course you are. You're the Mary Pratt who draws and sculpts all those wonderful horses." Mary and I both started to laugh. In fact we couldn't stop laughing. We were both caught up in Trenna's trick.

Trenna had the ability to tease a little, praise a lot and wrap up the whole thing in a warmth that was uniquely hers.

We will miss her.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Murphy Lake to Falmouth
September 17, 1988

by Bernard Forsythe
Wolfville, N.S.

Eleven cars from the Halifax Field Naturalists and the Blomidon Naturalists Society joined in a leisurely drive along this wood road. Although our objective was fall orchids we made stops every few miles to observe the general flora and fauna. The ditches along this road are wide, damp and not sprayed, creating a favourable habitat for a wide variety of plants. We found hundreds of nodding ladies'-tresses and several of the similar yellow nodding ladies'-tresses. There was much discussion of how to identify these two orchid species. The yellow ladies'-tresses had previously been thought to be a form of the nodding ladies'-tresses but recently it has been given full species status.

At one stop there was a flurry of bird activity. Kinglets, chickadees, and many yellow-rumped, black-throated green, blackpoll, and palm warblers were busy feeding until a sharp-shinned hawk appeared and caused a wild dash for cover. At another stop we observed gray jays and many red crossbills. When one encounters crossbills most are usually white-winged crossbills so large numbers of red crossbills were unexpected.



A few other plant species that were observed along the ditches included silver rod, sundew, creeping snowberry, mayflower, boneset and various grasses, mosses and ferns. The best views were obtained while driving. The miles of white pearly everlasting, yellow goldenrod and blue asters combined beautifully to rival any cultivated garden.

Grand Pre Shorebirds
September 25, 1988

(Joint Nova Scotia Bird Society/
Blomidon Naturalists Society field trip)

by Jim Wolford
Wolfville, N.S.

I used my "leader's prerogative" and changed the objective of our outing on this beautiful sunny day to "ponds and brown ducks". This decision was based on the previous day's scouting that indicated very few shorebirds at Grand Pre.

The 40 people in their 16 cars first caravanned to Canning where we began at Harris' Pond. There we set up cans and took our time examining the basking painted turtles and birds: lots of American black ducks and green-winged teals, a few mallards and mallard/black duck hy-

brids, two blue-winged teals, six American wigeons, 45 greater yellowlegs (one wading up to its belly in the water), ten common snipes, a killdeer, a belted kingfisher, a ring-billed gull, goldfinches, etc.

The mouth of the Habitant River, southeast of Canning, produced a few double-crested cormorants, great blue herons, and a few more ducks. The tide was spectacularly high at this time of the full harvest moon. At Porter's Point there were lots of "dark ducks" on the water in the distance; most or all were probably black ducks.



At Canard Poultry pond we saw six lesser yellowlegs, a common snipe, a least sandpiper, two northern pintails, shallowly diving American black ducks and green-winged teal (normal behaviour in this pond), plus common ravens and, as usual, oodles of gulls.

The next pond we visited was by Blueberry Acres (Sheffield Mills). There we saw nine more American wigeons and other ducks, and lots of red-winged blackbirds roosting in the cattails.

Our final stop on this tour was in New Minas, at the pond created by Ducks Unlimited when the new bridge was built. Everyone had a fairly good view of four juvenile pied-billed grebes (presumably a brood). Later I found out we had missed a willet, a few other shorebirds, and some pipits at Grand Pre; and we also missed six wood ducks at the Blueberry Acres pond.



Night Sky Observation Field Trip September 29, 1988

by Larry Bogan
Cambridge Station, N.S.

An ideal combination of weather, celestial objects and people occurred at the Grand Pre Historical Park parking lot on this Thursday evening. The dark sky had cleared by the time most people arrived at 8:30 p.m., the temperature was cool but not unpleasant, and three planets plus the Moon made appearances at some time during the hour and a half we were there.

The first order of star gazing was to have several member of the B.N.S. (Roy Bishop, Sherman Williams, and myself) begin by pointing out the constellations. The constellations of the Zodiac were of interest and we could see Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pices, and Aries. We pointed out how patterns of the brighter stars in the constellations can be used to remember them. Astronomers call them asterisms. Some of the familiar ones we saw that night were the Big Dipper in Ursa Major, the Teapot in Sagittarius, the Great Square in Pegasus and the Northern Cross in Cygnus. Roy pointed out one that was new to me, the "Diaper on the Line" in Capricorn; it may sound silly but everyone saw and remembered it.

At that time of the year the wispy, star clouds of the Milky Way stretched from Sagittarius in the southwest

through Cygnus at the zenith to Perseus in the northeast.

The group, which grew to something like 40 pairs of eyes (it was too dark to count noses), had at their disposal two 200 mm Schmidt-Cassegrains, two 150 mm Newtonian, and a couple of 60 mm Refractor telescopes through which they could observe many celestial objects. I can list just some samples of what was seen since we were divided into several groups looking at many different objects.

Galaxies: the Great Andromeda Galaxy, large and bright and seen as well with binoculars as with the telescopes.

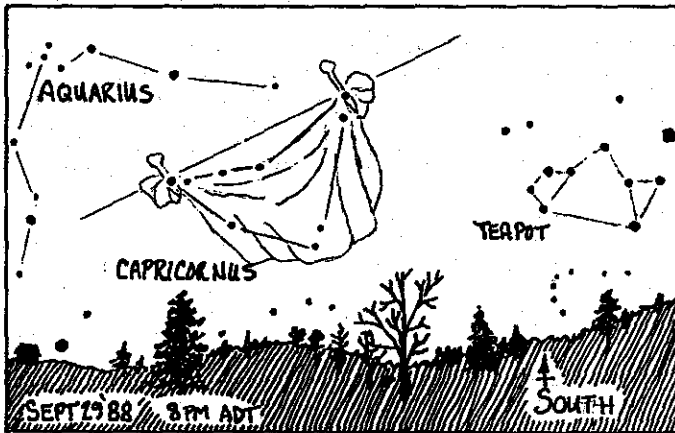
Open Cluster of Stars: the bright, rich M-11 in the Milky Way near Aquila, the Eagle.

Emission Nebula: The Trifid and Lagoon nebulae close together in Sagittarius were bright and structured.

Planetary Nebula: The Ring Nebula in Lyra is the best small smoke ring in the sky.

Globular Cluster: I like M-22 in Sagittarius as well as M-13 in Hercules; both are large, bright balls of faint twinkling stars.

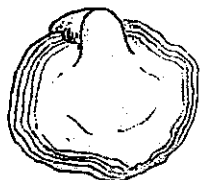
Everyone got a look at the "star" of the night, Mars. It appeared as a dull orange disk, with prominent dark markings and, if you looked carefully, you could see its small south polar cap shining brighter than the rest of the surface. It's the best look we will have of our planetary neighbour in our lifetime. Early in the evening, before it set, we saw Saturn and its rings and largest moon, Titan. The Moon rose late in the session and more than a few observers were around to be dazzled by its light as seen through the telescopes. Before we packed up to leave, we caught a view of Jupiter as it rose in the east. We felt that it had been an excellent night for viewing extra-terrestrial objects and for fellowship with our fellow naturalists.



Mushrooms at Kentville Ravine

October 2, 1988

by Nancy Nickerson
Port Williams, N.S.



A warm, August-like afternoon attracted about 20 people to our annual fungus foray, led this year by Kathy Fuller and myself. After sampling the local beechnuts we descended into the ravine, carefully avoiding capture by a troop of Girl Guides on patrol. Dry weather in late September had greatly reduced the number and diversity of fungi but, despite the fact that some of the specimens were rather crispy, we were able to collect representatives of at least 21 genera.

One of the more interesting finds was the delicate white "angel wing" fungus (*Pleurocybella porrigens*), growing in overlapping clusters on the side of a fallen log. On closer inspection we discovered a small wood frog that had taken refuge under one of the "wings". Also of interest was *Entoloma abortivum*, complete with several of the oval, white, "aborted" fruiting bodies for which this species is named. Across the brook on another stump was the "sulphur shelf" (*Polyporus sulphureus*), its yellow colour somewhat faded with age but still striking. According to a 1902 field guide, "a cluster [of this fungus] 18 inches across afforded a dozen meals. Whenever a meal was wanted, a pound or two was broken off". Nearby on yet another stump was a cluster of the "winter mushroom" (*Flammulina velutipes*) with reddish orange caps on brown, velvety stalks - a perfect subject for at least one photographer in the group. Probably the most common of the terrestrial mushrooms was the "chicken of the woods" (*Rozites caperata*) with its characteristic "frosted" caps.

Among the others collected were the "honey mushroom" (*Armillariella mellea*; species of *Amanita*, *Collybia*, *Cortinarius*, *Lactarius*, *Russula* and *Tricholomopsis*; a coral fungus; several puffballs and a few boletes.

The birders in the group were entertained by a pileated woodpecker. Bernard Forsythe was pleased to find one of his pet orchids in its usual spot. There was even an interesting rust fungus to keep the plant pathologist (yours truly) searching through the literature for a name. All in all, a pleasant and profitable afternoon.

Hike to Little River Falls

October 16, 1988

by Ruth Newell
Wolfville, N.S.

Although the weather was cool and overcast, 19 enthusiastic people and one even more enthusiastic dog turned out early Sunday morning to hike to picturesque Little River Falls. Despite the efforts of Jack Frost, there was still

plenty to be seen in the way of plants and, although shy and somewhat reluctant to show themselves, many birds could be heard in the still, crisp air. A winter wren was one of the more cooperative songsters, allowing some of our group an excellent visual inspection. The bright red berries of Canada holly added sparkle to a beautiful fall backdrop of muted yellows, golds, greens and browns. Trailing, evergreen clubmosses were very evident amongst the brown leaves that carpeted the forest floor. Two sightings were made of plants making late flowering attempts. Ellis Gertridge discovered a purple violet in full bloom while further on, water cress was found bearing small, white flower buds. Nearer to the falls, several pipsissewa (prince's pine) plants were found.



PRINCE'S
PINE

Upon reaching our destination we carefully made our way down a steep, mossy slope in order to get to the river and observe the falls. This area is luxuriant in plant growth with many mosses, ferns and lichens clothing the slopes and rock faces. We were very fortunate to have Karen Casselman along to identify the many species of lichens. Numerous deadfalls from the previous winter made getting about a little awkward but not impossible.

After viewing the falls, the group continued downstream to where Little River joins the Gaspereau River. Witch-hazel was one of the shrubs of note during this part of our journey and, after some careful searching, a few of the unusually shaped, yellow flowers were found.

The return trip, although encompassing a small amount of rigorous climbing up relatively steep, wooded slopes, was not without its rewards. An unusual discovery was made of a recently killed southern bog lemming. This is a type of vole, not often seen in Nova Scotia and not always restricted to bogs as its name might imply. There is the possibility in this case, however, that the unfortunate fellow was captured elsewhere by a predator and dropped, for whatever reason, at this spot. A characteristic of interest of the southern bog lemming is that its droppings are bright green whereas those of meadow voles (a type of vole similar in appearance to bog lemmings) are brown.

At one point along the logging road we were following, Jim Wolford pointed out numerous mosquito-sized black flies (possibly "dance flies") hovering in the air. They appeared to be exhibiting a form of courtship behaviour as they gently moved up and down in the still air.

Further plant discoveries made toward the end of our hike included the weak-stemmed water-starwort in some of the shallow pools along the road edge. These plants possessed tiny, rounded fruit at the base of the small, oppositely arranged leaves. When nearly back to our vehicles, Bernard Forsythe spotted, with his binoculars, an extremely vigorous virgin's-bower vine, bearing its distinctive feathery fruit, unusually high up in some coniferous trees.

All in all, it was a very pleasant way to pass a fall day.

Valley Geology Field Trip

November 5, 1988

by Sherman Williams
Avonport, N.S.

Twenty-eight people participated in the November 5th field trip led by Dr. Jack Colwell. With the aid of a relief map of Kings County, Dr. Colwell gave a brief overview of the geological structures that shape the Valley. We boarded the "big yellow taxi" and set off to make a south to north cross-sectional tour of the Valley to examine some of the structures first hand.



The first stop was at the top of Wolfville Ridge where we examined a bedrock exposure at one of the Highway 101 overpasses. This rock was formed from sediment that had accumulated in the depths of an ocean bottom a half billion years ago. Today, it is the top of an anticline, or fold, and part of a series of anticlines and synclines that were formed as a result of movement in the earth's crust that pushed this land mass against what today is part of northern Africa. This movement closed the ancient ocean that existed above these slates and pushed them up to become part of a supercontinent. Wolfville Ridge is one of the wrinkles that resulted.

The tour continued down into the Gaspereau Valley. Every wrinkle has an anticline and a syncline; the Gaspereau Valley is the syncline of the Wolfville Ridge wrinkle. The softer sandstones and shales that were part of the syncline have eroded away leaving the valley.

Our next stop was at what used to be the "Swinging Bridge" below the Hell's Gate hydroelectric power station. The bridge no longer swings, having been replaced by a much more rigid and not-so-romantic structure. Here one can see where one river was "captured" by another. Today, this is where the Black River enters the Gaspereau River. At one time the Black River, the more ancient of the two, was one of a series of rivers that drained south to north from what is today the South Mountain and the interior of our province. The Black River slowly eroded through the very hard quartzites of White Rock. Its old, winding course is now the Deep Hollow Road and Horton District High School sits in the middle of the former Black River delta. The Gaspereau River cut its course, from the east, through softer rock and eventually intersected and captured the water flow of the Black River. The hard grey and red quartzite of the White Rock area is used as building stone in dykes, walls and fireplaces throughout the Valley.

We drove along the ancient course of the Black River and continued on our journey across the main part of the Valley, to stop and walk along the Minas Basin sea cliffs between Delhaven and Blomidon. This provided an opportunity to ob-

serve the younger and much softer rock out of which the main part of the Valley is carved. These are the Wolfville Sandstones and the Blomidon Shales. The rocks of this group resulted from sediments of sand and mud deposited in shallow water deltas under a dry, windy climate that caused the iron content of the sediments to oxidize, resulting in the rusty-red colour we associate with the soils and beach sands of the area. Since the underlying rock was soft, the river systems flowing through this area were able to quickly (in a geological sense) erode the broad valley. This group of rocks contains fossilized remains and tracks of many primitive reptiles.

To end the trip we drove up through the Mill Creek Road that leads from Blomidon to the Lookoff. This provided an opportunity to look at and discuss the North Mountain basalts that lie on top of the red shales of Blomidon. The basalt cap was formed from a sequence of lava flows that were extruded onto the surface through fractures in the earth's crust that resulted in the opening of the Atlantic Ocean and sent Nova Scotia on its westerly drift away from northern Africa. The hard basalt has resisted erosion, thus preserving the softer shales and sandstones beneath. This creates the north side of the Valley and provides a protective wall from the cool winds and fog of the Bay of Fundy, adding to the pleasant and favourable agricultural climate for which the Valley is well known.

NATURE REPORTS

One Shrike and You're Out!

by Jeanette M. Elke
Lawrencetown, Hfx. Co., N.S.

One day last winter while I was in my "bird room" caring for my finches and budgies, I heard a loud ka-THUD from the living room. My immediate thought was that one of my pet doves had flown into the glass sliding deck door (again). I investigated and found a large brownish bird, flapping spasmodically, lying against the outside of the door on the deck. I caught it and brought it indoors. Usually I put stunned birds in a small darkened cage to recuperate. However, this one was struggling and violent, so I held it loosely in one hand while I paged through a bird book with the other. I soon identified it as a juvenile Northern Shrike.



Happily, my little patient recovered very quickly. He stabbed my fingers angrily when I examined him. I remember being surprised by his complete lack of fear, the strength of his grip, and by the smallness of his body beneath the heavy plumage. When I released him, he flew to a small tree in my neighbour's yard and began at once to put his feathers back in order. His attitude was one of extreme annoyance, even outrage; the whole experience had obviously not

subdued him in the least. My last sight of this Shrike was of him stealing off through a nearby thicket, no doubt in search of a small feathered victim. I never saw him again.

I keep two cages suspended from the ceiling beside the deck doors. At the time of the incident, the lowest-hanging cage contained a pet Bengalese Finch, an eye-catching brown and white species somewhat smaller than most sparrows. Given the Shrike's position when I found him, I strongly suspect that he was attracted to and attempted to attack this Finch. Unfortunately (for him), the glass door got in his way.

Nestbox Sharing

by Bernard Forsythe
Wolfville, N.S.

Putting up nestboxes for our feathered friends can be a great help in their search for nesting sites. Mature forests are disappearing and most of the second growth trees have not reached the size to provide rotting wood or the natural cavities that are the required nest sites for several species of birds. Birds are not the only creatures to use cavities. Mammals such as deer mice, red and flying squirrels, and raccoons are also affected by the scarcity of cavities and will move into boxes intended for birds. At first I did not appreciate mammals occupying my bird boxes but soon realized the boxes provided ideal homes for some mammals as well as birds. Also, boxes made it easier to observe the family life of the mammals.

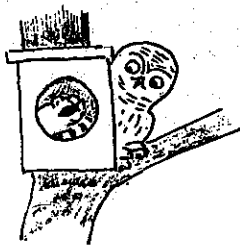
Beginning in March of 1988 I had a most unusual occurrence involving a raccoon and a barred owl family at a nestbox. Raccoons will sometimes den up in a barred owl nestbox during the winter. On March 26, I climbed to one of my boxes near White Rock and found a raccoon curled up inside. The raccoon refused to leave so I decided to let nature take its course. I monitored the box closely throughout the season to find out what would happen with the owls that had used this box for several years. The following are some excerpts from my field notes:

- April 2 - no raccoon in box, nest cup dug in nest lining, adult barred owls nearby
- April 3 - first egg in box
- April 10 - 3 eggs, female barred owl incubating
- May 8 - 2 eggs pipped, plus 1 young owl
- May 29 - 3 young barred owls about ready to fledge
- June 23 - box empty, young barred owls begging for food nearby

On August 26 I returned to clean out the box. When I looked into the box I got quite a surprise. There were two young raccoons inside, one of which was dead. The live youngster's eyes were just opening. This was a very late date for such young raccoons.

How does one explain the apparent "cooperation" between the raccoons and barred owls? It was as though the raccoons moved out in late March, let the owls raise their family, and then returned to have their own young in mid-summer. But

that could only happen in a Disney movie. My March 26 visit may have upset the raccoon and caused it to go elsewhere.



Because of the shortage of potential nesting cavities, the owls may have immediately moved in to the vacated box. The female raccoon that had young in the box in August may not have been the same animal I discovered in the box in March. For some reason she was very late having young; possibly this was a second attempt at reproduction this year after losing the first litter when they were newly born. There are probably other explanations to the apparent "cooperation" between these usually mortal enemies.

In most cases owls come out on the short end of raccoon/owl encounters. After the young owls no longer need to be brooded, both parents will leave them to go hunting. The young owls give a continuous food begging cry that can lead any nearby raccoon right to them. Some seasons I lose as many as 50 percent of my owl broods this way.

The one thing that all this does show is how critical the cavity shortage is. Second growth woods provide lots of food for both prey and predators but very few cavities for the birds and mammals that need such sites to raise their young. Put up some boxes around your property and you may be pleasantly entertained by being able to watch the family life of some of our woodland creatures.

Was the Weather Nice this Autumn?

by Larry Bogan
Cambridge Station, N.S.

Below is a table summarizing the weather statistics for September, October and November, 1988, as measured at the Agricultural Research Centre in Kentville. Look them over and you can decide how we fared this year compared with the 30-year averages (in parentheses).

	Average Temp. (C)	Rainfall (mm)	Heating Degree days above 18 C	Bright Sunshine hours
Sept.	13.1 (14.3)	30 (85)	147 (123)	178 (175)
Oct.	8.1 (9.1)	197 (99)	310 (278)	136 (131)
Nov.	5.3 (4.0)	175 (105)	381 (422)	114 (80)
Total		402	838	428
Fall 88		(289)	(823)	(386)
1988 variation from "normal"		39%	2%	11%

The most dramatic departure from the 30-year average was in the amount of rainfall. September was very dry with only about 1/3 the average rainfall for the month, but both October and November were far above average. In October we had twice the average rainfall and in November rainfall was 75% above average. In total we received almost 40% more rain this autumn than the 30-year average. As a result of this many areas that are normally dry in the fall are wet and more difficult to cross when enjoying the woods and marshes.

I have not included the snowfall statistics but everyone will remember that last year the snow began in November and did not go away until March. This year we have had only 3 cm of snow and all of that in late November. Last year, by the end of November we had had 15 cm of snow which is about normal.

Usually wetter than average months are also cloudier than average but the statistics indicate that this autumn was actually a bit sunnier than average. Before I received the weather statistics for November, I guessed from the performance of my solar home that it had been sunnier than "normal". I was correct; normally November has only 3/5 (61%) the sunshine hours of October but this year the fraction was 5/6 (83%). Much of our rain in October and November came in short, "rain at times heavy" downpours followed by periods of nice weather.

The average temperature for the season was just about normal. Early autumn was cool while November was 1 degree C above average which helped to keep the mean autumn temperature near the 30-year average.

Because of variations in microclimate, weather statistics measured at Kentville may not accurately reflect the conditions that occurred throughout the Valley or even Kings County. My home is nearly in the center of the Valley north of Cambridge Station where, on clear nights, the cold air tends to settle. The weather instruments at the Kentville Agricultural Research Station are situated on the rise to the south of the main building, and this location does not trap the cold cold night air. In addition, the Kentville site is not far from the tidal part of the Cornwallis River, which will cause the temperature to be more moderate than further inland. For example, on the evening of September 26, under a clear sky containing the nearly full Harvest Moon, my garden was hit by a heavy frost that wiped out my squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc. The weather records from Kentville for that day showed the minimum temperature to have been +2 degrees C. Many gardens nearer the Minas Basin looked healthy long after mine was finished.

It would be interesting to have a series of weather instruments across the Valley that would record the differences in temperature, cloudiness, and precipitation due to nearness to water, height of land and wind deflection by hills.

An Inland Occurrence of Leach's Storm-Petrel

by Arnold A. Wellwood
Kentville, N.S.



On Tuesday, September 20th, 1988, while trolling on Lake Charlotte, Halifax County, my friend, Albert Smiley of Halifax, and I saw a petrel sitting on the water. When we got fairly close to it, the bird flew showing its conspicuous rump patch.

Two days later, September 22nd, while returning from the north end of the lake, we again saw a petrel, presumably the same one. As we made our way down the lake, the bird appeared in our wake and stayed with us for several miles. It put on a real show of aerobatics frequently flying back and forth across our bow, with many fancy dips and turns, often within a distance of 25 to 50 feet. By the white rump patch and forked tail, we identified the bird as a Leach's storm-petrel.

It was especially interesting to see this bird on a fresh water lake as it rarely occurs in inland Nova Scotia.

The Counting Game

by Bernard Forsythe
Wolfville, N.S.

Now that bird watching (both through a window and in the field) has become such a popular pastime, everyone seems to be counting our feathered friends and making lists. The types of lists are just as varied as the people making them. Examples would include a lifetime list, birds seen at a feeder or from one's property, town, county or province; lists involving time such as a day, a year, or while on vacation; and even a list of birds that one can observe while watching television! My own pet list is of bird nests I have found and recorded. Some lists, such as the Christmas Bird Count, are compiled by groups of bird-watchers. Also the compilation of breeding bird atlases has initiated whole new groups into the bird counting game.

But why stop with birds? Many of you already have lists from other fields of interest or could easily make one. I began to count our native orchids in 1985 and was amazed at how fast the list grew. Soon I was finding orchids in areas where they had not been recorded previously and even discovered a couple of new species for the province. All that was required was a bit of book work and hours of enjoyable travelling over the countryside looking down at plants instead of up at birds.

So, how many orchids would it be possible to count on a one-day outing? First, does one count orchids that are past flowering? I would, as long as they can be positively identified. After all, we count birds in their dull winter plumages as well as their bright breeding plumages.

On July 23, 1988, I led a group from Annapolis County on an orchid hunting trip. Let's count the orchids that we found.

The first stop was behind my home on Wolfville Ridge for tuberculed orchid (1). We then headed for Mud Lake on the Methals Road but made a couple of stops on the way. Along the road to Lumsden we looked at a colony of slender ladies'-tresses (2) as well as spotted coral-root (3), a saprophytic orchid. A stop at Hollow Bridge produced several beautiful large purple fringed-orchids (4), contrasting with the yellowish little club-spur orchid (5) growing beside them. At Murray Porter's home on Black River Lake he showed us a striking specimen of the large round-leaved orchid (6), the largest one that I have seen. We also saw a ragged fringed-orchid (7) in a nearby ditch.



As we started along the wood road to Mud Lake, Gini Proulx spotted a Hookers orchid (8) that was past flowering but quite recognizable. Several pink lady's-slippers (9) were also well past flowering. Next we spent some time looking for the tiny green adder's mouth (10) and soon found a half dozen or so. A loose colony of tessellated rattlesnake plantain (11) was not hard to find. We looked at a few blunt-leaf orchids (12) at the only site in the Valley where I know it grows. Just before reaching Mud Lake a few heart-leaved twayblades (13) were found in a rich carpet of sphagnum moss. At Mud Lake the snow white blossoms of the white fringed-orchid (14) made a nice show. After a bit of looking we found a few calopogon (15) and rose pogonia (16), now past their best, to end a very successful outing.

Sixteen orchids during one field trip was thrilling although my personal list for the day was higher. In the morning I had visited a wet, abandoned pasture near my home and looked at hooded ladies'-tresses (17), small purple fringed-orchids (18) and Loesel's twayblade (19). As I write I can think of at least three more species of orchids that could have been visited with a little more effort. A goal for another season.

Does all this counting produce anything of value? It certainly does. In order to count one has to learn when and where to find the species to be counted and keep records. Being aware will make one's time spent on outings much more enjoyable. Collective record keeping by laymen has added a great deal to the knowledge of the life cycles of our flora and fauna. A good example would be the years of data that have been compiled from some of the bird counts mentioned earlier. Take a notebook and pen on your next outing. But be careful, it's addictive!



The Bather

by Karen Leigh Casselman
Cheverie, Hants Co., N.S.

The highlight of my summer birding occurred last August 25th when I was on the Cheverie beach early in the morning. I had set up my tripod and scope and was waiting for the incoming tide to bring the shorebirds closer to me.

A falcon, flying across the bay, made me raise my binoculars. The bird landed not 50 feet away; it was a female Merlin. Any thoughts I might have had about its purpose in being there were quickly answered. The bird's sole aim that morning seemed to be the harassment of the wading birds. As the shorebirds came in closer, the Merlin systematically attacked them. First the falcon went after the larger Black-bellied Plovers, who were only mildly amused. Then she shifted her attention to several dozen Ruddy Turnstones. Finally the falcon spotted a few noisy yellowlegs who, until then, had escaped her attention. The yellowlegs merely TEW-TEW-TEW'd and flew about ten feet away.

The Merlin kept up this game for about 20 minutes. It did indeed seem to be a game, because she ignored the Semipalmated Plovers, the Short-billed Dowitchers and the "peeps" while she went about pestering the other birds. No kill was made; both sides seemed to know the rules.

Finally the falcon flew the short distance to the tidal pool where the Cheverie River enters the Minas Basin. She selected a large rock in the stream-bed (about 100 feet from my scope), and commenced a long bathing ritual. First she spread one wing out and dipped it in the tidal pool; then the other wing was given the same treatment. The bird completed her toilet by wading right into the pool and splashing around vigorously until only the feathers on the very top of her head were still dry. The finale to this last act was a shaking off, much like that of a very wet dog. The bath was now over; the falcon climbed to the top of the rock and commenced a long and serious preening.

My pleasure that morning was unmatched. It was a real privilege to watch how the Merlin spent a small part of its day. Getting up early seemed a very small price to pay!

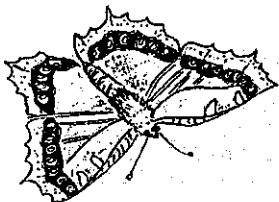
TRIVIAL TIDBITS of Local Natural History September 1 to December 15, 1988

selected and compiled
by Jim Wolford
Wolfville, N.S.

Date
(1988)

Obs

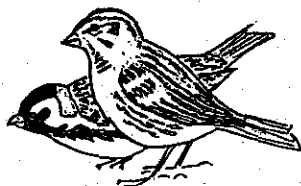
Sep 1	-2 whimbrels, 6 pectoral sandpipers at Grand Pre BBT
Sep 3	-at Brier Island, a Bonaparte's gull, a whimbrel, to a pectoral sandpiper, a white-rumped sandpiper,
Sep 5	a lark sparrow, and a winter wren still feeding young JC, BLF, GF, HF, BS



Date 1988		Obs
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Sep 7	-a fresh-looking mourning cloak butterfly in Wolfville	JW
Sep 9	-30 killdeer at a ballfield in White Rock	RRN
	-recently a near-absence of warblers in Wolfville and Canning areas - where are they?	JSB, MG
Sep 10	-stem-swelling (gall) on bugleweed or horehound causes plant stem to grow fast then fall over, common at Shingle Lake, Lunenburg Co.	NH
	-5 adult lesser golden-plovers at Grand Pre	JW
Sep 11	-a merlin with prey at Evangeline Beach	JW
Sep 12	-a caterpillar of a spotted tussock moth eating climbing bittersweet leaves in Kentville	JW
Sep 13	-3 wood ducks near Sheffield Mills	BBT
Sep 17	-5 + 1 wood ducks, 8 American wigeons, 10 northern pintails, a scaup, and a hooded merganser from Canard/Canning/Sheffield Mills area	GF
	-20+ red crossbills, a pine grosbeak, a large flock of mixed warblers and kinglets near Black River Lake	BNS
	-nodding ladies'-tresses orchids (2 kinds) common and in bloom near Black River Lake	BNS
	-alder woolly aphids and willow pine-cone galls abundant near Black River Lake	BNS
	-a little stint (European sandpiper) and a peregrine falcon at Cherry Hill Beach	SJC
	-poison sumac, a "new" plant for N.S., found near Caledonia	NH
Sep 18	-on Wolfville Ridge, a wave of warblers: black-throated green, redstart, northern parula	BLF
	-1 + 3 pied-billed grebes at Sheffield Mills and New Minas	BLF, JW
	-40 molting common grackles in a flock near Greenwich	JW
	-at Keji' Park/Tobeatic Wildlife Sanctuary, Blanding's and snapping turtle hatchlings emerging from protected nests; also 3 otters and 3 coyotes (2 of them nearly black)	TH, TP
Sep 19	-oodles of craneflies at Avonport (first noted in late August)	SW
	-lots of small green cups of "green stain" fungus on a fallen birch branch in Wolfville	JW
Sep 20	-a 30-cm giant puffball in a New Minas ditch	JB
Sep 21	-a gray catbird "mewing" in Wolfville	JW
	-several hundred frogs on road, many killed, between Brooklyn and Cheverie	KLC
Sep 22	-a pileated woodpecker very vocal at Gaspereau	PMC
Sep 24	-common ravens playing in the wind in groups (just like spring); one bird seen to drop twig from bill and catch it in its feet, at Grand Pre	JW
	-a greenshank (European shorebird) at Cherry Hill Beach	SJC, SF

Date 1988

- Sep 24 -70 lesser golden-plovers, 23 dunlins, 2 white-rumped sandpipers at Grand Pre JW
-a road-killed adult painted turtle at Canard Poultry; also 8 lesser yellowlegs there JW
- Sep 25 -6 wood ducks near Sheffield Mills GF
-a willet, 3 northern harriers, 15 water pipits at Grand Pre RB,BLF,
- Sep 27 -a super low tide at Black Rock (Canada Creek) exposed lots of blue mussels and many big starfish DG,JW
-a cock Lady Amherst pheasant very approachable at Hall's Harbour (an obvious escapee) RD
- Sep 28 -a partial albino American crow (lots of white in wings) found injured in Kentville KF,CKC
- Sep 30 -a shaggy-mane mushroom on an Acadia U. lawn JW
-2 gyrfalcons, a peregrine falcon, and a merlin at Cherry Hill Beach SJC
-1 common merganser + 50 red-breasted mergansers at White Rock (eating young gaspereau? especially injured and dead ones?) JGT
- Oct 1 -over the past 2 weeks, about 4,000,000 young gaspereau have gone downstream through the spillways in the Black/Gaspereau Rivers EG
-2 piping plovers at Cherry Hill Beach; big piles of fresh kelp washed up on beach; also millions of dead/dying winged ants along beach MT,JW
- Oct 2 -2 pied-billed grebes and "Bernard Forsythe's domestic duck" (see Jul 28, last Newsletter) JW
-a pileated woodpecker observed closely in Kentville Ravine BNS
-5 barn swallows along New Ross Road JGT
-300 brown-headed cowbirds at farm, 100 red-winged blackbirds in cattails, near Sheffield Mills JW
-4 Lapland longspurs at Cherry Hill Beach JGT



- Oct 7 -2 probable water pipits on ferry from Bar Harbour to Yarmouth BBT
- Oct 8 -200 double-crested cormorants flew over Wolfville Ridge JGT
- Oct 8 -on Bon Portage Island, a prothonotary warbler, a scarlet tanager, and a clay-colored sparrow ABD
- Oct 9 -pipefish common in mouth of Gold River (Mahone Bay), also mysid shrimp (opossum shrimp) extremely abundant JW
-a nearly all-white adult red-tailed hawk near Sheffield Mills BBT
-31 pectoral sandpipers and 300 green-winged teal feeding at Ells Bros. farm at Sheffield Mills JGT

Date 1988

- Oct 9 -3 hooded mergansers NW of Port Williams JGT
 (cont) -a single probable scoter on Port Williams sewage pond BBT
- Oct 10 -a black-coloured red fox in orchard at Greenwich GFo
 -2 lesser scaup at Canard Poultry Pond JW
 -56 dunlins, 7 white-rumped sandpipers at Evangeline Beach JW
 -several shaggy-mane mushrooms on Wolfville Post Office lawn; also yellow-rumped warblers and American robins abundant in Wolfville JT
 -lots of dead small fish in canal upstream from White Rock Power House GW
- Oct 11 -about 1000 Canada geese at Lower Gnslow (w. of Truro); 5 had coded yellow neck-collars BBT
- Oct 13 -a road-killed northern saw-whet owl at Port Williams BBT, JT
- Oct 14 -a lesser scaup and 4 ring-necked ducks at Canard Poultry Pond JGT
- Oct 15 -2 gadwalls, 2 northern pintails, 22 American wigeons, 3 Hudsonian godwits, 4 common snipes at Canning JW
 -60 pectoral sandpipers at Sheffield Mills JW
 -6 hooded mergansers NW of Port Williams JW
 -a sora rail and a marsh wren at Wallace Bay National Wildlife Area RDau, FS
- Oct 16 -near Sunken Lake: 2 colonies of alder woolly aphids with 2 living yellowjacket hornets on them BNS
 -1000+ European starlings at Blueberry Acres (Sheffield Mills) not at all bothered by the presence of 2 or more plastic great horned owls JW
 -a large dark blue dragonfly (blue darner?) at White Rock JW
 -a male wood duck at Sheffield Mills BBT
 -at least 8 great blue herons and lots of dead, fungus-infected young gaspereau at Lumsden Reservoir BBY
- Oct 17 -a ruffed grouse landed on a wire in residential Wolfville JT
- Oct 18 -a gray catbird in Wolfville MZ
 -a yellow-spotted salamander on paved road in Wolfville HMT
 -a skunk on hwy. 101 near Hantsport (a near hit!) JW
- Oct 16 to Oct 21 -a greater golden-plover (Eurasian), 14 lesser golden-plovers, a western sandpiper, 2 white-rumped sandpipers, and a black-billed cuckoo at Harlen's Point, Dartmouth PM, JGT
- Oct 22 -a northern shrike near Port Williams JGT
 -34 Canada geese over Wolfville Ridge JGT
- Oct 23 -6 lesser scaup at Canard Poultry Pond; 400 green-winged teal, 6 hooded mergansers and a wood duck at Sheffield Mills; 2 more hooded mergansers at Canning; a very heavy cone-crop on spruces (bring on the crossbills!) at Sheffield Mills and elsewhere. JW
- Oct 24 (approx) -a very strangely behaving red fox, at Evangeline Beach, was very curious, followed and actually chased an adult human on the beach (rabies??) RDav



Date 1988

- Oct 24 -2 purple finches singing and eating seeds from spruce cones on Wolfville Ridge JGT
- Oct 25 -a small painted turtle basking in Wolfville JW
-a cricket "singing" in Wolfville JT
-at Canning & Sheffield Mills: 27 American wigons, a northern pintail, a lesser scaup, 3 + 2 hooded mergansers, a Hudsonian godwit, 6 greater yellowlegs, 20 lesser yellowlegs, 4 common snipe JGT
-22 common mergansers at White Rock JGT
-2 boreal chickadees on Wolfville Ridge JGT
-extremely low tide at Gulliver's Cove, Digby Neck, exposed rocks covered with pink stony crust of coralline algae JW
-white spruce very heavy with cones at Digby Neck (and Bird Atlas Newsletter mentions crossbills moving into various areas of the Maritimes as early as July) JW
- Oct 27 -Lady Amherst pheasant cock seen again; then to lured into a shed, then taken to Gaspereau
- Nov 3 and caged there MT,TW,CKC
- Oct 27 -a very dark-coloured red-tailed hawk at Grand Pre; also 60 common eiders BBT
-a northern oriole at feeder at Gaspereau CKC
- Oct 27 -on Bon Portage Island, a special weekend tribute to Cyril Coldwell; also there were 2 Leach's storm-petrels, 4 northern saw-whet owls, a northern mockingbird, a black-throated blue warbler, 2 blackpoll waxblers, a common yellowthroat, a yellow-breasted chat, 19 golden-crowned kinglets, 2 ruby-crowned kinglets, 2 hermit thrushes, a red-eyed vireo, etc. MZ,JSBo,ABD



- Oct 29 -black scoters off Porter's Point (same on Nov 9) JGT
- Oct 30 -a total of about 500 Canada geese from several locations from Blomidon to Canard Valley DT
- Nov 4 -a single lesser golden-plover at Grand Pre BBT
- Nov 5 -2 large, fat, adult cross spiders still active in Wolfville JT
-a small brown skimmer dragonfly still active and a spring peeper heard peeping, on Wolfville Ridge BLF
-80 Canada geese off Lower Blomidon, and 75 common mergansers at White Rock (also juvenile gaspereau still there) BNS
- Nov 6 -a swan (tundra swan?) along river at Canning GB
-a dragonfly active in Wolfville and a spring peeper calling at Sheffield Mills MT,JW
-a barred owl calling in late afternoon on Wolfville Ridge JGT

Date 1988

- Nov 6 -in various Canard/Canning/Sheffield Mills ponds:
to a juvenile American coot, 2 great blue herons,
- Nov 8 2 gadwalls, 2 northern pintails, 6 American
wigeons, 4+2 hooded mergansers, and 1+6 scaups-
these scaups were controversial, since two ob-
servers think they were greaters, while your
infallible compiler (joke!) is pretty sure they
were lesser scaup! RS,JGT,JW
- Nov 7 -a short-eared owl in Canard Valley JGT
-2 northern flickers calling on Wolfville Ridge JGT
- Nov 8 -at Porter's Point, 3 red-throated loons, 14
black-bellied plovers and 2 dunlins JW
- Nov 9 -a cricket still active in Wolfville (also one
heard calling Nov 8) JT
-a red-necked grebe at Black Rock (Canada Creek) JW
-huge numbers of adult seaweed flies (2 kinds) on
stranded seaweeds and rocks at high-tide line
at Black Rock MD,TH,JW
- Nov 10 -50 red-winged blackbirds at South Maitland BBT
- Nov 11 -75 common mergansers at White Rock, and 70+30
Canada geese near Wolfville JW
- Nov 13 -Harris' Pond in Canning nearly frozen; 6 Ameri-
can wigeons, a northern pintail, several ring-
billed gulls there JW
-a great blue heron and a greater yellowlegs at
Canning aboiteau; several hundred American
black ducks off Porter's Point JW
-an adult American coot at Port Williams
sewage ponds JW
-10 oldsquaws off Lower Blomidon EM
-a dead coyote draped over a mailbox in the
Charlotte Lake area (Eastern Shore) HFN,JP
- Nov 14 to 16 -a northern parula warbler in Canning MG
- Nov 16 -6 black-bellied plovers, 75 sanderlings, 5 pur-
ple sandpipers, and 200 "peeps" (semipalmated
sandpipers and dunlins) at Cheverie Beach KLC
-a hummingbird (black-chinned?) in Halifax (seen
Nov 19 by JGT and Nov 20 by MG) IAM
-2 barn swallows at Greenwich HF
-2 American tree sparrows and 50 American robins
at Canning MG
- Nov 17 -a merlin chasing starlings at Port Williams CKC,CG
-lots of big earthworms on pavement in Wolfville
(weather balmy and rainy) JW
--"Siamese twins" in snapping turtles? Yes, one
pair of hatchlings found inside a nest from which
normal young had emerged, in Kejimikujik Park TP
- Nov 19 -a Eurasian chaffinch in Halifax DC et al
- Nov 20 -a small adult grasshopper still active in
Wolfville JT
-250 Canada geese in Lower Canard area TH,JW
- Nov 21 -a northern mockingbird daily at Cheverie feed-
er (since late Sep) - eats grape skins, crab-
apples, suet GR
- Nov 26 -in Grand Pre area, 15 white-winged scoters
and a merlin BBT,JT

Date 1988

Nov 27 -a jackdaw in Fairview Cemetery, Halifax RBA
-a few American robins in Wolfville JW
-a great blue heron at Sheffield Mills and 400
Canada geese near Porter's Point BBT
-8-10 pine warblers and an orange-crowned warbler
in Halifax HF, BLF, IAM
-a common yellowthroat at Canard Poultry Pond BLF
-a western kingbird at Granville Ferry SH
Nov 29 -2 male black-throated blue warblers at a
Canning feeder MZ
Nov 30 -a great horned owl, killing and decapitating
domestic ducks, near Annapolis Royal BBT
-45 ring-billed gulls at Wolfville sewage ponds BBT
-25 evening grosbeaks, nearly all males,
in Wolfville BBT
Dec 3 -a common yellowthroat in Canning MG
-8 American tree sparrows at Grand Pre BBT, JT
Dec 4 -a bobcat seen in Kejimkujik Park TP
-a rough-legged hawk, a great blue heron and 2
swamp sparrows at Grand Pre JSBo
-3 horned larks and a Savannah sparrow at
Grand Pre BBT
-20 American robins at Gaspereau BBT
Dec 6 -30 cedar waxwings in Wolfville FS
-an ermine (weasel) on Main Street in Wolfville HD
Dec 9 -a common yellowthroat in cattails east of
Canard Poultry BLF
Dec 10 -a very probable eastern phoebe on Wolfville
Ridge BLF
-a northern flicker on Wolfville Ridge ME, BLF
-a peregrine falcon on Wolfville Ridge RS, JGT
-25 evening grosbeaks in Kentville RS
Dec 11 -a red-throated loon at Scots Bay MG
-2 northern orioles at a Gaspereau feeder CKC
Dec 12 -3 flocks of American robins in Wolfville GT
-4 white-throated sparrows at a Wolfville feeder BBT
Dec 13 -14+51 Canada geese flew over West Brooklyn GA
Dec 14 -a mosquito flying at Port Williams MT
-a great blue heron flew over West Brooklyn GA
-5 mourning doves at a Wolfville feeder BBT
-30 evening grosbeaks & 10 purple finches
at a Wolfville feeder DT
Dec 15 -a miserable-looking great blue heron, 40 Canada
geese, 16 common eiders, 2 rough-legged hawks,
a red-breasted nuthatch and lots of American
tree sparrows at Grand Pre BBT, JT

Contributors

Special thanks to KLC, BBT, JGT and MZ for providing written observations. To improve the accuracy of the reports in this column, I would appreciate receiving more written reports directly. My thanks also to Larry Bogan for his regular analysis of our weird weather patterns.

GA	George Alliston	TH	Tom Herman
RBA	Rare Bird Alert	EM	Erich Muntz
GB	George Boyd	JM	Jackie MacDonald
JB	Joanne Bezanson	PM	Peter MacLeod
RB	Ross Baker	PMA	Peter MacDonald
JSB	Sherman Bleakney	PMC	Pat McLeod
JSBo	Sherman Boates	IAM	Ian McLaren
DC	Dave Currie	HFN	Halifax Field Naturalists
JC	John Carruthers	RRN	Ruth & Reg Newell
CKC	Cyril Coldwell	JP	John Pickwell
KLC	Karen Casselman	TP	Terry Power
SJC	Shirley & John Cohrs	GR	Gerry Rathbun
HD	Heather Davidson	BS	Brad Sweet
MD	Mike Dadswell	FS	Francis Schwab
RD	Richard Davies	RS	Richard Stern
RDau	Richard Daury	BNS	Blomidon Naturalists Soc.
RDav	Robert Davies	DT	Dianne Thorpe
ABD	Acadia Biol. Dept.	GT	Gerry Trueman
ME	Mark Elderkin	JT	Jean Timpa
GF	George Forsyth	MT	Miriam Tams
HF	Harold Forsyth	DTO	Dan Toews
KF	Kim Fortin	BBT	Brenda & Bill Thexton
SF	Sylvia Fullerton	JGT	Judy & Gordon Tufts
GFO	George Forsyth Sr.	HMT	Hilda & Mark Taylor
BLF	Bernard Forsythe	GW	Gisela Westphalen
CG	Christine Garron	JW	Jim Wolford
DG	Darryl Grund	SW	Sherman Williams
EG	Ellis Gertridge	TW	Ted White
MG	Merritt Gibson	BBY	Betty & Barry Yoell
NH	Nick Hill	MZ	Marian Zinck
SH	Sharon Hawboldt		

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Wolfville Christmas Bird Count December 17, 1988

by Jim Wolford
Wolfville, N.S.

A total of 77 people in 24 field parties drove (319 miles in 61 party-hours), walked (85 miles in 75 party-hours) and observed feeders (14) within a 7.5 mile radius of Hennigar's Farm Market during the 1988 Wolfville Christmas Bird Count. The weather was nearly perfect - cold, sunny and windless - but more snow cover might have produced more birds along the roads and at feeders.

The total number of birds seen (53,160) was well below that for 1987 and 1986: by 3500 and 9000 birds respectively.

However, when we consider how difficult it is to "count" some abundant species, such as gulls, crows, and starlings, then how meaningful is the grand total?

We identified 65 species (see list below), much closer to the average than last year's 75 species. Two more species were found during the "Count Period" (December 14 through December 20) whereas six more were found last year.

Uncommon birds included a wood duck (December 18), a dunlin, two alcids, a glaucous gull, three northern flickers, a yellow-rumped warbler, a common yellowthroat and a northern oriole.

Species observed in notably high numbers included common merganser (57), bald eagle (96), red-tailed hawk (165), ring-billed gull (134), mourning dove (401), pileated woodpecker (6), red-breasted nuthatch (73!), golden-crowned kinglet (152!), American robin (534!) and American tree sparrow (303).

Species observed in relatively low numbers were sharp-shinned hawk (3), dark-eyed junco (134), pine grosbeak (6), and white-winged crossbill (18). (Our very heavy spruce cone crop had raised my expectations for large numbers of crossbills.)

Unusual sightings included seven feral white chickens running and flying freely, a rock dove sitting on a nest and a dark gray "mystery finch" (probably a melanistic American goldfinch).

Species that were probably in our area but were undetected include common loon, merlin, gray partridge (we saw 21 last year), great horned owl, short-eared owl, northern saw-whet owl, black-backed woodpecker, gray jay, Lapland longspur, red-winged blackbird and red crossbill.

The Robie Tufts Museum of Ornithology in Acadia's Biology Building was again the site for our post-count gathering which was well attended by those wanting to boast or compare sightings, or to warm up and eat.

Our hearty thanks go to Sherman Boates for organizing the count and making the terrific chowder; Peter Smith for organizational help; Brenda Thexton, Judy Tufts and others for providing delicious treats and looking after the fees and book-keeping; and two keen birdwatchers from Halifax who came to hone their bird-watching skills in preparation for one of Halifax's Christmas counts the next day.

Great Blue Heron.....	2	Northern Flicker.....	3
Canada Goose.....	154	Pileated Woodpecker...	6
Green-winged Teal.....	CP-3	Horned Lark.....	282
American Black Duck....	1259	Blue Jay.....	222
Mallard.....	75	American Crow.....	16600
Wood Duck.....	CP-1	Common Raven.....	278
Common Eider.....	28	Bl.-capped Chickadee..	438
White-winged Scoter....	42	Boreal Chickadee.....	8
Common Goldeneye.....	12	Red-breasted Nuthatch	73
Common Merganser.....	57	Wh.-breasted Nuthatch	13
Red-breasted Merganser	3	Brown Creeper.....	3
Bald Eagle - adult....	50	Golden-crowned Kinglet	152
- immature	46	American Robin.....	534
Northern Harrier.....	4	Cedar Waxwing.....	25
Sharp-shinned Hawk....	3	European Starling....	22602
Northern Goshawk.....	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Red-tailed Hawk.....	165	Common Yellowthroat...	1
Rough-legged Hawk.....	14	American Tree Sparrow	303
Ring-necked Pheasant..	149	Savannah Sparrow.....	10
Spruce Grouse.....	1	Song Sparrow.....	133
Ruffed Grouse.....	1	Swamp Sparrow.....	5
Feral Hens.....	7	White-throated Sparrow	12
Common Snipe.....	1	Dark-eyed Junco.....	134
Dunlin.....	1	Snow Bunting.....	258
Ring-billed Gull.....	134	Common Grackle.....	2
Herring Gull.....	3102	Brown-headed Cowbird..	252
Iceland Gull.....	1	Northern Oriole.....	1
Glaucous Gull.....	1	Pine Grosbeak.....	6
Great Bl.-backed Gull	1808	Purple Finch.....	35
Alcid species.....	2	White-winged Crossbill	18
Rock Dove.....	1028	Pine Siskin.....	43
Mourning Dove.....	401	American Goldfinch....	453
Barred Owl.....	4	Evening Grosbeak.....	413
Downy Woodpecker.....	39	House Sparrow.....	1222
Hairy Woodpecker.....	22	"Mystery" Finch.....	1
NUMBER OF SPECIES.....	65	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	53164
	(+2-CP)	(including 4 CP's & 10 "other")	

CP - Count Period: the 3 days before and the 3 days after the Count Day

Brier Island Christmas Bird Count
December 20, 1988

by Richard Stern
Kentville, N.S.

On the evening of December 19, despite an unforecasted heavy snowfall, seven hardy souls from Halifax and the Valley were ensconced in the Stern cottage at the far end of Brier Island. Four more stayed at more refined accommodation (a Bed and Breakfast) in Westport. The count started at midnight with an owl prowl up the lane with the prowlers hooting, tooting and squeaking; probably frightening the one human winter resident, and certainly frightening away any owls that might have been there.

We started a little more conventionally the next morning with the eleven of us splitting up into three groups to cover the Island. One group walked around the town of Westport but, apart from the "resident" mixed flock of Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds, there was little excitement at the town feeders. However, Peter MacLeod managed to put up an Eastern Meadowlark from the field behind the dwellings at the north end of town. In the same group Blake Maybank and Brian Dalzell identified a female King Eider swimming close inshore with two Common Eiders. They also found a Northern Mockingbird feeding on ornamental Christmas berries in town. On the Freeport side, Fulton Lavender found a Hooded Merganser.

Meanwhile the other groups were not idle. Gordon and Judy Tufts and Richard Stern walked the Whipple Point - Western Light circuit, seeing a female and an immature male Harlequin Duck; and then walked Pond Cove, finding a large flock of Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs, as well as 23 Purple Sandpipers and a Ruddy Turnstone. At the same time the Gibson/Wolford/Tams team was busy finding and photographing a heavily marked Snowy Owl at Western Light.

The three groups met at lunchtime to compare notes and plan the afternoon. Most people joined forces to look for the rarities and fill in the gaps. We all saw the Mockingbird at the red berries on a front porch, looking like a Christmas card; but, alas, the Snowy Owl had been scared off by all the attention and the King Eider was by now, presumably, half way to Maine. Jim Wolford did find two Chipping Sparrows at a feeder. Everyone was impressed by the numbers of sea birds around the Island; totals at the end of the day included 641 Common Eider, 100 Red-breasted Merganser, 58 Oldsquaw, 242 Great Cormorants, 44 Common Loons and 30 Red-necked Grebes. There was good representation, too, from the Alcid family with several Razorbills and three Thick-billed Murres, one very close to shore. Unfortunately, several of these birds appeared to be oiled.

Small woodland birds such as Chickadees, Nuthatches, etc. were notable by their almost complete absence although one warbler (a Yellow-rumped) was found.

Amazingly for a Brier Island Christmas Bird Count, and in marked contrast to last year, the temperature stayed well above freezing, there was virtually no precipitation, and the drive home was not an exercise in negotiating freezing rain, blizzards, or any of the other weather-related pheno-

mena well-known to Nova Scotia drivers. The final count was 3229 individual birds of 57 species, making for an enjoyable and satisfying day.

West Hants Christmas Bird Count
January 2, 1989

by Karen Casselman
Cheverie, Hants Co., N.S.

On count day skies were overcast, winds were light and the temperature a brisk -8 deg. C.; all in all quite a good day for birding. Twenty-two observers in eight parties drove (258 miles in 11 party-hours), walked (50 miles in 45 party-hours) and observed feeders (5) within a 7.5 mile radius of Centre Burlington. About 6592 individual birds of 50 species were observed on count day and another four species were observed during the count period to make a total of 54 species (see table below). Highlights of the count were a Northern Saw-whet Owl, two Barred Owls and a Great-horned Owl as well as a Northern Goshawk and nine(!) Pileated Woodpeckers.

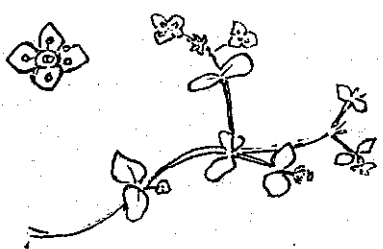
Canada Goose.....	CP	Pileated Woodpecker...	9
American Black Duck...	705	Blue Jay.....	188
Mallard.....	3	American Crow.....	733
Common Merganser.....	33	Common Raven.....	75
Bald Eagle.....	8	Bl.-capped Chickadee..	215
Northern Harrier.....	1	Boreal Chickadee.....	18
Sharp-shinned Hawk....	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	44
Northern Goshawk.....	CP	Wh.-breasted Nuthatch	3
Red-tailed Hawk.....	11	Golden-crowned Kinglet	63
Rough-legged Hawk....	1	American Robin.....	53
Gray Partridge.....	5	Northern Mockingbird..	1
Ring-necked Pheasant..	152	Northern Shrike.....	2
Ruffed Grouse.....	1	European Starling.....	1850+
Purple Sandpiper.....	CP	American Tree Sparrow	88
Com. Bl.-headed Gull..	15	Dark-eyed Junco.....	51
Ring-billed Gull.....	13	Snow Bunting.....	23
Herring Gull.....	369	Red-winged Blackbird..	3
Great Bl.-backed Gull	30	Common Grackle.....	25
Black Guillemot.....	1	Brown-headed Cowbird..	1
Rock Dove.....	367	Pine Grosbeak.....	1
Mourning Dove.....	33	Purple Finch.....	8
Great Horned Owl.....	CP	Red Crossbill.....	3
Barred Owl.....	2	White-winged Crossbill	199
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	Pine Siskin.....	30
Downy Woodpecker.....	11	American Goldfinch....	124
Hairy Woodpecker.....	4	Evening Grosbeak.....	449
Bl.-backed Woodpecker	1	House Sparrow.....	565

NUMBER OF SPECIES..... 50 NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS 6592+
(+4-CP) (+CP's)

CP - Count Period: the 3 days before and the 3 days after the Count Day

NOTE FROM THE NEWSLETTER ARTIST:

In the June 1988 issue of this Newsletter on page 14 there is a drawing of Saxifrage. That particular Saxifrage does not grow in Nova Scotia. Golden Saxifrage (*Chryso-splenium americanum*) shown below magnified grows here, from Annapolis County to northern Cape Breton. According to Flora of Nova Scotia by Roland and Smith, it can be found in wet mucky woods and cold springs and flowers in May.



Somerset School
26 September 1988

Dear Editor,

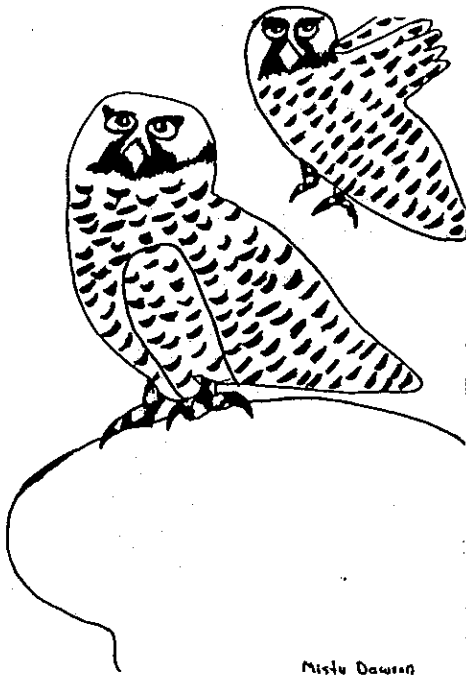
I have enclosed some poetry and artwork from my grade three and four class of last year. These stemmed from our reading Owls in the Family by Farley Mowatt. The class was intrigued by owls and wanted more, so we invited Jim Wolford and Mark Elderkin to class on separate occasions. With their expertise and what the class was able to learn from (the books by) Godfrey, Peterson and Tufts, they became very knowledgeable about these beautiful birds.

On our hikes in the woods behind the school, many class members were able to find owl pellets to dissect them in class. Because they had never seen a live owl, our final activity was to visit Cyril Coldwell at Acadia University and then to travel to his farm for a first hand experience. They were certainly not disappointed; many entered the cages with the Barred Owls and Bald Eagles.

As a teacher, this is certainly a highlight of my career. It is a treat to teach about a subject that is of personal interest and one which the students so whole heartedly enjoy.

I am sure our readers will enjoy the thoughts of these students, as much as I enjoyed teaching my students about owls and their environment.

George E. Forsyth



Misty Dawnen



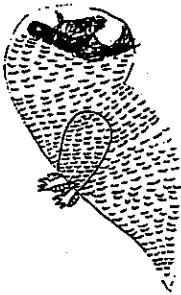
OWI

Swift
Quiet
Sharp
Brown
Black
Baby
Grownup

OWI

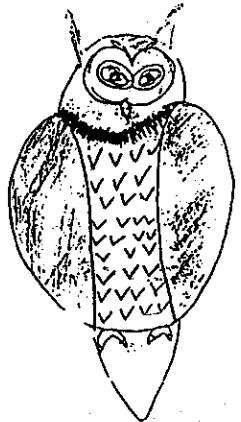
NIGHT OWL

Swoops
Silently
Hunting
Peer
Open
Talons
Screams
and Silent Again
NIGHT OWL
Cecile Bulcom



Owl

Swift flying
Silent
Sharp talons
Long
and Hungry
Owl
Cathy Crocker



1. ...

Quick
Swift
Graceful
Dark feathered

Dennis Miller

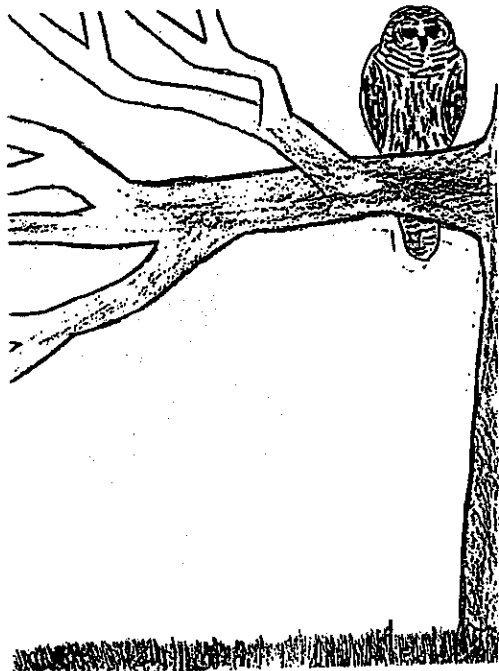


Hawk Owl

Quick Swift
Graceful fast
flying
Dark feathered

Hawk Owl

Enfield



Owlets

Small
Not tall
funny call
New
Maybe
two



BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY
1988 - 1989 Membership Fees
(due September 1, 1988)

Each member receives four issues yearly of this Newsletter.

Please enclose a cheque or money order payable to
"Blomidon Naturalists Society" and forward to:
Mrs. Judy Tufts
P.O. Box 1313
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

<u>Number</u>	<u>Membership Classification</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
_____	Individual Adult	\$7.00	\$_____
_____	Family	\$10.00	\$_____
_____	Individual Junior (less than 16 years old)	\$1.00	\$_____
		TOTAL	\$_____

My name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Phone Number(s): Home _____ Office: _____

Membership Type (please check one):

Ind. Adult__ / Ind. Jr.__ / Family__ (# of family members__)

Gift Subscriptions

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Phone Number(s): Home _____ Office: _____

Membership Type (please check one):

Ind. Adult__ / Ind. Jr.__ / Family__ (# of family members__)

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Phone Number(s): Home _____ Office: _____

Membership Type (please check one):

Ind. Adult__ / Ind. Jr.__ / Family__ (# of family members__)

Sources for Local Natural History Information
(Compiled by Biomidon Naturalists Society)

<u>Information</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Home</u>
Rocks & Fossils	Geol. Dept., Acadia Univ.	542-2201	
Fish	N.S. Dept. of Lands & Forests	678-8921	
Flora - General	Ruth Newell	542-2201	542-2095
Flora - Trees	Merxitt Gibson	542-2201	582-7569
Flora - Pungi	Darryl Grund	542-2201	542-9214
	Kenneth Harrison	542-2201	678-4890
	Nancy Nickerson	678-2171	542-9332
	Karen Casselman		633-2837
Flora - Lichens	Darryl Grund	542-2201	542-9214
Flora - Seaweeds	John Pickwell	542-2246	678-8281
Flora - Mosses & Ferns	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
Birds - General	Richard stern	678-4742	678-1975
	Peter C. Smith	542-2201	542-5998
	Gordon & Judy Tufts		542-7800
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-7650
	Jean Timpa		542-5678
Birds - Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe	542-2201	542-2427
	Cyril Coldwell	542-2201	542-2854
	Mark Elderkin	542-2201	542-3731
Birds - Falcons & Eagles	Peter Austin-Smith	678-8921	542-2109
Mammals	Tom Herman	542-2201	678-0383
	Francis Schwab	542-2201	542-3473
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney	542-2201	542-3604
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-7650
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney	542-2201	542-3604
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-7650
	Graham Daborn	542-2201	542-5373
	Michael Brylinsky	542-2201	582-7954
Indian Prehistory & Archaeological Sites	Ellis Gertridge	542-2201	542-2816
	James Legge	542-2201	542-3530
Astronomy	Roy Bishop	542-2201	542-3992
	Larry Bogan	542-2201	678-0446
	Sherman Williams	542-5137	542-5104