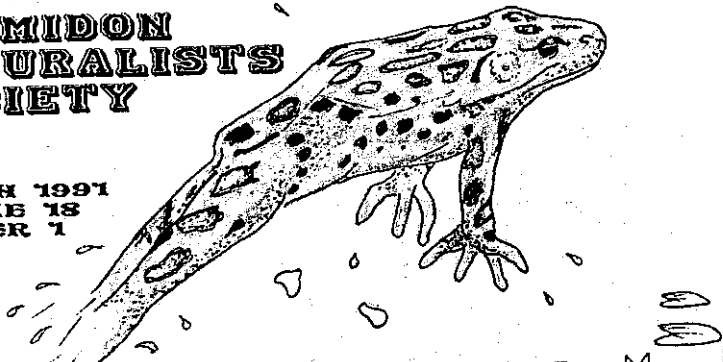


BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

MARCH 1991
VOLUME 18
NUMBER 1



NEWSLETTER

BNS Spring Programme

MONDAY EVENING MEETINGS: All meetings will start at 7:30 p.m. and, unless otherwise indicated, will be held in Room 244 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. March 18 -- "Views of Newfoundland". BNS member, Pat McLeod will make a presentation based on twenty years in Newfoundland. Many will remember the excellent slides she has shown on Members' Nights and those that have read her book on Gros Morne will know that we are in for a real treat.

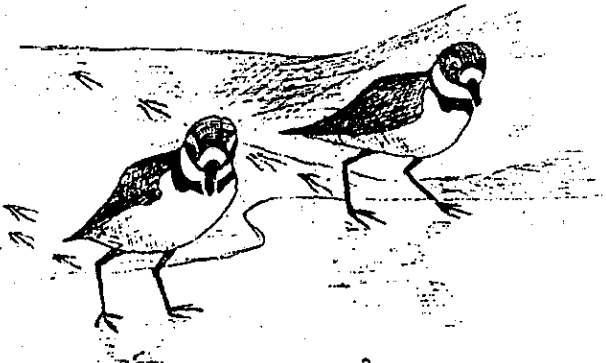
2. April 15 -- "The Little Brown Box Project" - Sherman Boates, a biologist at Acadia University, and students, Pam Mathews and Denise Packard, will present findings from their three-year study of birds nesting in chemically treated and untreated orchards in the Annapolis Valley.

3. May 20 -- "Environmental Planning" by Allison Evans. Allison, who studied wildlife biology at Acadia University, is now enrolled in a Masters of Urban and Rural Planning program at T.U.N.S. She will introduce us to the art and science of environmental planning.

4. June 17 -- "The Natural History of Microbes" by Colin Bell. One of the shortcomings of many naturalists is the tendency to ignore life forms that cannot be readily seen and counted. To ignore microbes and their essential role in ecosystems is to deny the understanding of these systems that we all seek. Colin, a microbiologist at Acadia University, will introduce us to the interesting and important world of the microbe.

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The BNS Newsletter is published on equinoxes and solstices.

Editors: George and Margaret Alliston
Art: Mary Pratt
Advertising: Carol Bradley
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 a member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, an Affiliated Member of the Canadian Nature Federation and a member of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation.

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations.

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

Field Trips

Unless otherwise noted, all times given are for meeting at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre parking lot. Leaders' telephone numbers are included to allow those without access to local news to confirm trips.

1. Sunday, March 17, 9:00 a.m. -- Wintering Waterfowl of the Annapolis Basin, Annapolis Royal to Digby. With a combination of salt and fresh water in Annapolis, Bernard Forsythe hopes to show you grebes, loons, mergansers and ten species of ducks. Since inclement weather could cause cancellation, please preregister with Bernard (542-2427). Bring warm clothing, your lunch and binoculars.

2. Saturday, April 13, 1:00 p.m. -- My Backyard at Horton Bluff with Sherman Williams (542-5104). Sherman presented a tremendous slide show of the wanderings of a naturalist in his own backyard at the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists meeting last June. He will repeat the show, this time for real. Come and see the beauty and share Sherman's discoveries at Horton Bluff and Blue Beach.

3. Thursday, April 18, 7:30 p.m. -- Owls, Owls, Owls. Bernard Forsythe (542-2427) will share his understanding and enjoyment of owls. Bring your flashlight so you can see these magnificent birds and share his wonder in them. Wear waterproof footwear; it will still be wet in the woods. This trip is dependent on wind conditions and will not be held if there is a strong wind.

4. Tuesday, April 23, 7:00 p.m. -- Birds in Your Hand - An Evening Especially for Children. Cyril Coldwell (542-2201) will open the Robie Tufts Ornithology Laboratory at Patterson Hall, Acadia University, for an evening of fun and discovery. Meet on the top floor of Patterson Hall.

5. Sunday, April 28, 10:00 a.m. -- Spring Birds, a Pond Hop with Jim Wolford (542-7650). An all day trip to various ponds in Kings County to see pond and marsh birds as they arrive in the spring. Bring your lunch, boots, and binoculars. A joint trip with the Nova Scotia Bird Society.

6. Sometime in late April -- Breeding Amphibians with Jim Wolford (542-7650). Our traditional evening crawl through the ponds, ditches and puddles of eastern Kings County to see a wide variety of breeding amphibian life. Because a successful trip depends on the season, the exact date will be announced at the regular meeting on April 15.

7. Saturday, May 11, 8:30 a.m. -- History and Natural History of "The Neary Pines" (a small area of virgin pine-hemlock forest in Greenwich) with George E. Forsyth (542-7116). We will repeat a late fall field trip at a more comfortable time of the year. (For a report of last fall's trip, see the BNS Newsletter, Vol. 17, No. 4, December 1990.) This will be an easy walk finishing by lunch time.

8. Sunday, May 19, 9:30 a.m. (or 10:00 a.m. at the carpool parking lot, Exit 12, Highway # 101) -- Ferns, Mosses and Lichens of the South Mountain, New Minas. John Pickwell (681-8281) will lead this walk to identify plants right in our backyard. Bring your hand lens, binoculars and rubber boots to explore an area that will soon be a residential subdivision. Morning only.

9. Saturday, May 25, 10:00 a.m. -- Spring Trip to Black Hole. Sherman Williams (542-5104) will show us the spectacular beauty of the Fundy coastline in Black Hole in spring. Explore the forest, geology and seashore. Bring your lunch and rubber boots.

10. Sunday, June 2, 8:00 a.m. -- Ducks Unlimited's Dewey Creek Management Area and other Ducks Unlimited impoundments. George Boyd (679-6091) of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests will help you find out why the Canard Pond is such a "hotspot" for waterfowl, shore and marsh birds. Find out what duck food looks like and how a marsh works. A great trip for kids, co-sponsored by Ducks Unlimited Greenwings. Bring your lunch and rubber boots!

11. Sunday, June 9, 8:30 a.m. at the Cornwallis Inn, Kentville -- Woodland and Breeding Birds of Kings County. Richard Stern (678-1973) will lead a trip to see the many bird species that Kings County hosts at this time of year. Bring your lunch. Beginner and novice birders are especially welcome.

12. Saturday, June 29 to Monday, July 1 -- Bon Portage Island. P.C. Smith will provide details at the April meeting. The cost per person will be \$30.00. Participants must pre-register with George Forsyth (542-7116).

13. Sunday, July 7, 8:00 a.m. -- Methal's Pond. Bernard Forsythe (542-2427) will lead this canoe field trip to one of his favourite haunts. Come and see orchids, Lincoln's sparrows and other distinctive bog life. You will need a canoe, personal flotation device, boots and lunch for this all day trip. (Some of you will want to bring insect repellent too!)

Acadia Biology Seminar Club

The Acadia Biology Seminar Club meets weekly on Thursdays, in Room 308, Patterson Hall, at 4:45 p.m. All interested persons, including members of the public, are invited to attend. Refreshments are served prior to the lecture. Following is a list of upcoming seminars:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Mar 21 | Historic names associated with Patterson Hall
Dr. Merritt Gibson, Acadia University |
| Mar 28 | Studies of some tropical damselflies
Dr. Tom Herman, Acadia University |
| Apr 4 | Scallops - underwater flying saucers with
vectored thrust control or underwater chickens?
Joan Manuel, Acadia University |

B.N.S. ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to:

Bernard Forsythe for his inspirational talk on his natural history experiences over the years;

all those who participated in "Show and Tell" on Members Night;

our field trip leaders: Sherman Bleakney, Merritt Gibson and George Forsyth;

and all our Newsletter contributors and production team.

Pheasant Auction

Ralph and Jean Winter have donated one of the last ring-necked pheasants mounted by the late Robie Tufts to the Blomidon Naturalists Society for fund raising purposes. This pheasant will be auctioned by a sealed bid to the highest bidder. The pheasant will be on display at the Robie Tufts Ornithology Lab, Patterson Hall, Acadia University until May 1, 1991 (contact Cyril Coldwell at 542-2201). Proceeds from the auction will go towards the Robie Tufts Nature Centre.

If you are interested in owning this pheasant, simply send your written bid with your name, address and telephone number to:

Pheasant Auction
Blomidon Naturalists Society
P.O. Box 127
Wolfville, N.S.
BOP 1X0

Bids will be accepted until May 1, 1991.

BNS Newsletter Submissions Deadline - June 1, 1991

Please send or give all contributions to the Newsletter to:

George Alliston (542-3651)
R.R 3
Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0

Send submissions for "Trivial Tidbits" only, one species per 3" by 5" index card, to Jim Wolford at:

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

Last-minute observations can be phoned in to 542-2201, ext. 334 (leave a message) or 542-7650 (late evening to midnight).

The editors would greatly appreciate submissions being at least double-spaced to facilitate both editing and word processing. If you are able to submit articles in word-processed form, please contact the editors for technical details. Sketches or diagrams should be submitted in final form, preferably on a separate page.

B.N.S. BUSINESS

President's Report

by Peter Austin-Smith
Wolfville, N.S.

Traditionally the annual President's report on the Blomidon Naturalists Society's activities is given at a fall meeting and published soon after in the BNS Newsletter. Such was not the case in the fall of 1990 because in September,

while returning home from vacation, my wife and I were involved in a rather serious automobile accident. Because of our injuries*, I stepped down as President of the Society in October and the preparation of this report was delayed.

The Blomidon Naturalists Society was exceptionally busy during 1989-90. In addition to our weekly production of "Nature Notes", our monthly meetings, our quarterly Newsletter production, our annual Christmas Bird Count and our expanded field trip program, we were involved in two major projects: the Chimney Swift Project and the planning and hosting of the inaugural meeting of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists. These two undertakings both grew into much larger, more ambitious projects than we had originally envisioned. The Chimney Swift Project, a joint project with the Town of Wolfville and the Wolfville Business Development Corporation, which culminated in the opening of the Robie Tufts Nature Centre on Front Street in July, was a success largely because of the dogged determination of Harold Forsyth and his committee. Harold pushed, cajoled, pleaded and fought to overcome what many of us thought were impossible obstacles (mainly financial) to bring about this most remarkable and pleasant addition to the Town of Wolfville. Harold's committee consisted of Peter and Jackie MacDonald, Jim Wolford, and Sherman Boates. Bill and Brenda Thexton, Judy Tufts, and Jean Timpa also volunteered to help in other ways and to ensure that this project would be completed. To the many members who sold (and bought) raffle tickets and participated in our public appeal by stuffing envelopes, contributing money or in other ways, please accept my gratitude for your support.

The inaugural meeting of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists was organized by Merritt Gibson and his committee of Miriam Tams and George Forsyth. This successful weekend event held during Environment Week drew more than 90 participants and gave rise to the new organization that will represent the provincial interests of naturalists. Curtis and Margaret Chipman, now BNS Honourary Life Members, were Honourary Chairpersons for this meeting. To those, including Judy Tufts, Bill Thexton, George Alliston, Sherman Williams, Sherman Boates, and Jim Wolford, who, in addition to Merritt and his committee, helped to make this meeting a resounding success, my grateful thanks. The success of this well-organized event reflected well on our Society and its members.

The program committee, consisting of George Forsyth, Sherman Boates and Miriam Tams, provided us with an excellent series of guest speakers for our well-attended Monday meetings. This committee was also responsible for setting up the 25 "regular" field trips the Society sponsored in 1989-90 as well as the five excursions in Blomidon Park which were arranged in co-operation with the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests "Parks are for People" program. To all our field trip leaders, a well deserved thank you for your patient guidance and the sharing of your special knowledge with others.

The production of the Society's Newsletter by George and Margaret Alliston with assistance from Mary Pratt, Larry Bogan, Lana Churchill and Brenda Thexton, is a formidable

task but one which, as yet, has not daunted either of our editors; for this, on behalf of all members, I wish to thank them publicly. The Newsletter is a rich fund of natural history information, both in the entertaining articles as well as in Jim Wolford's collection of natural history tidbits. To those of you who have contributed to the Newsletter, I wish to thank you and remind you to continue sending in your contributions to George and Jim.

Merritt Gibson, who looks after pamphlets and special publications, is to be commended for producing "BNS Nature Notes" which appears weekly in The Advertiser. This widely-read natural history column is very much in keeping with the Society's primary objective which is to encourage the understanding and appreciation of nature.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all members of the Board of Directors for their support during this very busy year. Your attendance at hastily-called meetings and your thoughtful suggestions when difficult decisions were being made were most appreciated. Special thanks to Bill Thexton, our Secretary, for his organizational efforts in steering us along our busy course and to Judy Tufts, our Treasurer, for dealing with the bookkeeping nightmare our special projects created.

In closing, I should note that the BNS is a strong organization with over 300 members and still growing. In large measure, the reasons for our recent and past successes are to be found in the remarkable dedication of so many of our members to the Society and its goals. Without their help, whether as members of our monthly audience, participating in field trips or at "Show and Tell", volunteering to serve on the executive, contributing articles to the Newsletter, or in other Society endeavours, the Society would not exist. I have enjoyed the experience of being your President once again and look forward to serving as Past-President of the Society and assisting Tom Herman, your new President, whenever possible.

* Although recovery has been slower than they had hoped, particularly for Peter's wife, both are now on their way to complete recovery. Ed.

Notes from the BNS Directors

by Tom Herman
Kentville, N.S.

The BNS Executive held a lengthy meeting on January 30. Regular items of business were reviewed. These included reports from the Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Program Committee and our newly formed Nature Centre Committee. A number of additional items were discussed.

We agreed that completion of the long-awaited Natural History of Kings County should receive high priority. For those of you anxious for a copy, please be patient (but feel free to communicate your anxiety to the authors!).

Sherman Boates provided the Executive with a synopsis of

the Christmas Bird Count Committee's activities. The success of the count was in no small part due to the efforts of committee members Bernard Forsythe, Merritt Gibson, Gordon Tufts, Richard Stern and Sherman Boates. We would also like to extend thanks to Brenda and Bill Thexton and Lana Churchill for their assistance in organizing the traditional post-count feeding frenzy.

The Secretary reported that a complete set of Newsletters is now available in the Archives of the Vaughan Library at Acadia. This collection includes an index prepared by Brenda Thexton, for which we are most grateful.

A donation from Lillian Tufts in memory of Mrs. Mary Forbes was gratefully received. It will be used to support the Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award, and will be suitably acknowledged with an appropriate bookplate in each award.

The Newsletter Editor presented the pros and cons of switching to recycled paper for printing of the Newsletter. After lengthy discussion we agreed to switch if it is feasible. Unfortunately it may cost us more to do so (there are no free lunches)!

The BNS has been asked to participate in the 1991 interpretive program at Blomidon Park. Last year's joint ventures with the Park were very well received by the public. It looks like we're back by popular demand. The Program Committee has agreed to look after the arrangements and will be meeting shortly with Park personnel. The committee will no doubt also be seeking input and participation from BNS members. If you are interested in getting involved, feel free to contact Jim Wolford, George Forsyth or Sherman Boates.

The BNS receives a number of requests to examine and evaluate conservation-related governmental and non-governmental policy documents and to present our concerns relating to the issues discussed. The Executive takes these requests very seriously, and feels that it cannot allocate adequate time during Executive meetings to address them all. We also feel that the issues involved are often so important that the BNS membership-at-large should have ample opportunity to become involved directly.

As a result we decided to strike a new standing Conservation Committee to deal with these requests, as well as with related issues. This committee will: (a) provide information about concerns relating to natural history and the environment; (b) seek the advice and draw upon the knowledge of the membership; and (c) when required, respond to these requests in consultation with the Executive. A search committee is presently on the prowl for members to fill this new and very important committee. We hope to report progress in the next Newsletter.



The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists

by Peter MacDonald
Greenwich, N.S.

The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (FNSN) officially came into being at the first annual general meeting in Wolfville on June 9, 1990 (also see BNS Newsletter, Vol. 16, No. 4, December 1989, and Vol. 17, No. 2, June 1990). The purposes of the federation are "to further communication and cooperation among naturalists and natural history societies in Nova Scotia, and to work towards a coordinated effort on the provincial level to protect the natural state of the environment". BNS is one of eight member groups in the federation.

The following are serving on the FNSN's Board of Directors: Michael Downing (president), Alice White (vice president), Nick Hill (member at large), Randy Milton (treasurer), Peter MacDonald (secretary), Carol Jacquard (for Tusket River Environmental Protection Association), Clifford Jones (for Annapolis Field Naturalists), Rebecca-Lynn MacDonald-May (for Les Amis du Plein Air), Jeff Pike (for Nova Scotia Wildflower Society), Mary Primrose (for Halifax Field Naturalists), Mark Pulsifer (for Eastern Mainland Field Naturalists), Sean Smith (for Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Society) and Sherman Williams (for Blomidon Naturalists Society).

Our first Board of Directors meeting took place on June 10, 1990 in Wolfville, immediately following the annual general meeting. We have met three times since then: in Truro on September 23, and in Halifax on December 10 and February 24. Much of our time thus far has gone into what has turned out to be a very contentious issue: the hiring of an executive director. At our first meeting Colin Stewart of HFN proposed that this position be established, and that he be appointed. Some felt that it was far too early to establish such a position while others saw it as being in the best interests of the FNSN. After considerable debate, it was decided to establish the position on a trial basis, and to have Colin occupy this position and be paid from money that he would raise himself. It was a difficult decision, reached by a one vote majority.

At our December 9 meeting, we conducted a scheduled six month review of the position of executive director and after considerable discussion, decided to dissolve it and continue activities on a volunteer basis. This was again a very difficult decision, but on this occasion the vote was unanimous, with one director abstaining. This in no way reflects on Colin's performance. It was simply a result of the directors being asked to make a major decision too early in the life of the Federation, and only afterwards having sufficient time to thoroughly reflect on what direction they and the members they represent would like to see the FNSN take. Colin is a valuable resource, and continues to be employed by the Federation as Endangered Spaces Coordinator, using funds already committed to the FNSN by the World Wildlife Fund. Despite our somewhat tenuous start, we

remain extremely optimistic about the FNSN's potential for improving communication between, and protecting the interests of, naturalists throughout the province.

In addition to actively working with the World Wildlife Fund on the Endangered Species Project, the FNSN is presently affiliated with the Canadian Nature Federation and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. We are also applying for charitable status.

The FNSN will be producing a quarterly newsletter, with issues every March, June, September and December. The editor is Sean Smith. Publication of our first newsletter through the Nova Scotia Museum has been delayed because of printing problems. However, efforts are being made to have it out by the middle of March. Member groups will receive sufficient copies for each of their members. Hopefully, your copy will be enclosed with your BNS Newsletter; otherwise it should be available at the next monthly BNS meeting. The second issue should be available in June.

Annual membership rates have been established. For member naturalist organizations the fees are: \$20.00 for groups of 6-20, \$50.00 for groups of 21-100, \$100.00 for groups of 101-500, and \$200.00 for groups of 501 or greater. Individual rates are: \$10.00 for a student or senior, \$12.00 for an individual, and \$15.00 for a family membership. We have also recently added a youth group rate of \$15.00. As well, corporate, government department and advanced membership categories have been established. Although you are automatically a member of the FNSN through your organizational (BNS) membership, you can also join individually. This allows you to make a greater contribution to FNSN projects.

The next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for May 5. The 1991 annual general meeting will be held in late June or early July in Halifax. The date and location will be finalized shortly and individual groups will be notified.

We would like to encourage anyone interested in volunteering their time to work on current or future FNSN projects to let us know. For example, we could use people to assist in producing and/or writing articles for the newsletter. Suggestions for an FNSN logo and newsletter name are also welcome. The address is: Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, c/o Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6.

BNS Newsletter News

by George Alliston
West Brooklyn, N.S.

Beginning with this issue, the BNS Newsletter is being printed on 100 percent recycled paper. Although this will result in some cost increases (mainly in postage due to the heavier weight of the recycled paper), we hope to cover these costs through advertising revenues.

We would like to welcome Carol Bradley to the Newsletter team. Carol is looking after all aspects of advertising in

the Newsletter.

We have recently taken a look at the distribution of our Newsletter and thought we might share these statistics with you.

The mailing list for the December 1990 Newsletter contained 248 addresses. One hundred and eighty-eight of these addresses (approximately 75 percent) were within a 20-mile radius of the Town of Wolfville. A total of 236 Newsletters (approximately 95 percent) were distributed within the Province of Nova Scotia as follows:

Kings County	164	Lunenburg County	6
Hants County	19	Yarmouth County	3
Halifax County	16	Cumberland County	1
Annápolis County	9	Digby County	1
Colchester County	6	Victoria County	1

Twelve Newsletters were distributed outside of Nova Scotia as follows:

Newfoundland	1	Quebec	2
Prince Edward Island	2	Ontario	2
New Brunswick	2	British Columbia	1
		U.S.A.	2

Since our last mailing we have received requests from the U.S. (Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Ithaca, N.Y.), Ontario (Niagara Falls Nature Club) and Prince Edward Island (Environmental Coalition of P.E.I.) to be placed on our mailing list.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Eagles and Other Raptors
February 17, 1991

by Jim Wolford
Wolfville, N.S.

Fifteen participants showed up for Merritt Gibson's annual raptor tour. We boarded the bus and rode west through Port Williams, took Sutton Road to Church Street, then Middle Dyke Road north. Along the way we spotted several small groups of bald eagles. The three large poultry farms west of Sheffield Mills provided a bonanza of eagles. The famous "Kennedy Eagle Tree" held 22 eagles! The 50+ eagles seen near Sheffield Mills were roughly half immatures and many of these immatures were subadults (heads and tails still with noticeable dark marks).

We then traveled to the Kingsport and Pereau areas where only a few eagles were seen. The "official tally", shouted out by our leader and faithfully recorded by Suzi Currie, totaled about 90 eagles. (Two weeks earlier, both the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests and the Acadia Biology Department had new record eagle counts of 142 and 148 respectively.)



After lunch in the Robie Tufts Ornithology Lab (Acadia Biology Museum), a few of us looked for the partial-albino red-tailed hawk at Gaspereau - no luck.

Later Merritt and I, while looking for ducks near White Rock, saw an otter diving and feeding. Then, at Grand Pre, we and the Thextons saw 200 Bohemian waxwings.

Winter Tree and Shrub Identification March 2, 1991

by George Forsyth
Port Williams, N.S.

March 2 was a very spring-like day, with the temperatures rising to about 14 deg C; however, the trees and shrubs were still in their winter dormancy. Fifteen participants strolled along agricultural field-forest edges in Greenwich to test and expand their ability to identify trees and shrubs, especially those without leaves. It is surprising how easy it is to identify most trees and shrubs even without their distinctive leaves, flowers or fruit.

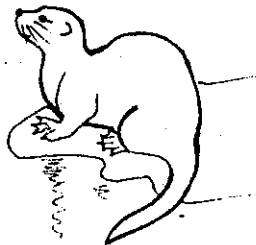
In winter dormancy, deciduous trees present only the barest of clues to their identity, but these clues are all that is needed. It is first helpful to look at the trees' habitat. Look at the ground for fallen leaves and what other trees are growing about it. Then define the shape of its growth, its bark and twig texture. Many trees have silhouettes that identify them from some distance. Upon closer scrutiny, the twigs, buds and leaf scars are also distinguishing.

During our walk we were able to identify forty-six species of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. These species are the most common tree/shrubs of upland second growth forest. Ten of these were introduced to our province, although two were planted specimens that have not yet established themselves in the wild.

We also identified a newly-arrived annual noxious weed, Velvetleaf, Abutilon theoprasiti, in a corn field (see BNS Newsletter, Vol. 17, No. 3, September 1990). Unless eradicated soon, this plant will become a serious agricultural pest.

Near the end of our walk, a shower provided a beautiful rainbow. A noted physicist claims that, when viewing a rainbow, each person is looking at their own rainbow. I thought mine was the best, but when I stood in Bernard's place I honestly couldn't see the difference. We returned to tree watching because we could see the differences among the trees; all the rainbows looked the same!

Although the participants decided to cancel their written quiz because of the rain shower, most were satisfied that they had learned to identify many of the trees and shrubs using the few clues these plants present.



LETTERS

A Response to Ogden Nash

Having long since despaired of becoming an accomplished birder, I was comforted somewhat by your Ogden Nash poem in the December 1990 issue of the Newsletter. At least I now can share my inadequacies with someone else. The enclosed verse expresses my thoughts.

I enjoy your Newsletter.

You've confirmed the worst of all my fears
To know your birds, takes years and years
For most their list will always grow
But some like me are much too slow

Through field glass and contact lens
I think I know my pheasant hens
As well some ducks; but not the geese
Nor finch nor wrens nor chickadees

It took some time to get to know
That ravens are not common crows
But yesterday - that was a howl
I recognized a snowy owl

It's difficult when you're my age
To tell if grouse is spruce or sage
But I progress in little bits
I've just been weaned from crested tits

Now a feeder guest just yesterday
I can't identify -- no way
A mystery bird that seems inclined
To be confused and partly blind

Is it lark, or thrush or brown nuthatch
Or the reincarnation of Ogden Nash?

Rod MacDonald
Dartmouth, N.S.

Dear Blomidon Naturalists,

The story of your chimney swifts was printed in the CNF News and caught our interests. A friend in Wolfville has since written and told us of the new Interpretive Centre and it all sounds very interesting and exciting.!

Anyway, I wondered if your group might like to exchange newsletters with us. We exchange news with several groups in Ontario and would like to expand and hear from others farther away.

Our Niagara Nature Club has about 150 members, many of them ardent birders. The Christmas Bird Count was very successful with 85 species this year. We also take part in a

waterfowl count each winter and the Niagara River is well known as one of the best spots for water birds in North America. In addition we have very interesting indoor programs during the winter and weekend excursions to various places; and weekly nature walks all summer. Quite an active bunch, on the whole!

Our members are also involved in wetland preservation and environmental concerns generally and we try to make sure that our M.P.'s and other "higher-ups" know what we are doing.

As newsletter editor I admit to freely pinching interesting tidbits from other bulletins - with proper credits, of course! I am enclosing our last two bulletins (we print five each year) and hope you will find them of interest. We usually have a guest editorial from someone well known - Roger Tory Peterson, Robert Bateman, Monte Hummel, people like that. One of our members goes after them and they always respond.

We wish you continued good luck with your chimney swifts!

Mary Stewart
Niagara Nature Club
Niagara Falls
Ontario

NATURAL HISTORY NEWS

Upcoming Conference on Science and Protected Areas

by Tom Herman
Biology Department
Acadia University

What role should science play in the management of our parks and ecological reserves? In turn, how can these protected areas contribute to the advancement of science? These are the questions that will concern several hundred scientists, educators and land managers attending the upcoming "International Conference on Science and the Management of Protected Areas", to be held at Acadia May 14-19, 1991.

The conference has attracted speakers from around the world. All the continents, excluding Antarctica, will be represented! Approximately 125 formal paper presentations are scheduled to date. Topics are diverse, ranging from highly theoretical ones to very practical ones. The meeting has been organized around a series of symposia. Symposium topics include: Vegetation Management, Landscape Ecology, Species Management and Monitoring, Land Use Planning, Putting Policy into Action, Human Impact, Marine Protected Areas, Ecotourism, Data Management, Water Quality, Indigenous People, Partnerships, Reserve Selection and Design, and Long-term Monitoring and Global Change Research.

A series of plenary lectures by internationally noted speakers, presenting different perspectives on science and protected areas, has also been scheduled. Harold Eidsvik,

from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, will present "A global perspective". Chris Maser, a recognized authority on old growth forests, will provide "An Ecological Perspective: How do we manage protected areas within our dynamic cultural landscape?" Monte Hummel, from World Wildlife Fund, will speak on "Endangered Spaces", and David Lohnes, Canadian Parks Service, will provide "A Land Manager's Perspective on Protected Areas". All plenary lectures will be given at 8:30 a.m. in Denton Hall:

Tuesday, May 14 - Eidsvik
Wednesday, May 15 - Maser
Friday, May 19 - Hummel
Saturday, May 18 - Lohnes

The general public is invited to attend.

Anyone wishing to receive further information on the conference, including registration material, should contact me or Soren Bondrup-Nielsen at the Biology Department, Acadia University (542-2201 ext. 334).

Flowing through Alberta
20th Annual Conference
Canadian Nature Federation *
Red Deer, Alberta
July 4 - 7, 1991

The Red Deer River Naturalists are hosting this year's Canadian Nature Federation conference to celebrate their eighty-fifth birthday. As well as the regular sessions, the conference includes pre-conference and post-conference field trips of two to seven days as well as day trips, local birding and botany walks, the Symposium, environmental theatre, banquet, and much more.

Bring the family (full time youth program and qualified babysitting are available) and go on to the Calgary Stampede or the mountains. The conference will be held at Red Deer Lodge which offers reasonably priced, comfortable accommodation, with express buses from Calgary and Edmonton to the door.

Book your flights to Calgary or Edmonton as soon as possible because the conference is so close to Calgary Stampede time.

For further information and registration forms, contact:

Jennifer O'Brien
20 Riverview Park
Red Deer, Alberta
T4N 1E3

(403) 346-6814 (Tuesday or Sunday, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.,
Mountain Time)

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

Better Birds and Gardens

by Cornell Laboratory
of Ornithology

Days are growing longer and now is the time to start thinking about turning your garden into a haven for birds. You can receive a free copy of an article from Living Bird magazine that tells you how to get started. Living Bird is the quarterly publication of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, a membership organization for the study, appreciation, and conservation of birds, located on a 200 acre wildlife sanctuary in Ithaca, New York.

The Lab recently remodeled its bird feeding area to create a state-of-the-art garden that exemplifies techniques you can use to attract birds to your own property.

Using a design by Cornell landscape architect Marvin Adelman, funds from generous private and corporate sponsors, bulldozers, and a lot of thought and sweat, Lab staff transformed a glorified mud puddle behind the Observatory into a veritable avian mecca.

First they replaced the straight-edge shore of the pond with a more attractive and accessible curving line. Then they planted trees, vines, shrubs, and ground cover to attract and feed birds year round: conifers, Juneberry, bush honeysuckle, winterberry, trumpetvine. Finally, they added new, squirrel-resistant feeders, a birdbath, and a waterfall.

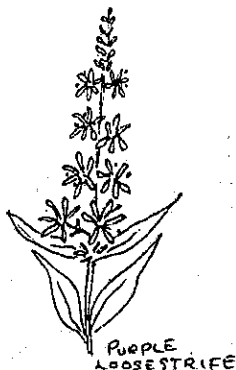
The area now contains all the elements of an ideal bird attracting garden. It provides a range of elevations for perching and nesting. It produces a variety of seeds, grains, and fruit, and food is present every month of the year. Edges between different types of plants and between water and land are extensive and curved -- edge attracts birds and gives the best viewing for observers. Already they have noticed an increase in the number and variety of birds visiting the garden - a goose-ravaged wasteland has become a treat for Lab staff and visitors. In fact, at least one pair of American robins took advantage of the renovations before they were even completed: it built a nest in an unplanted conifer.

Your budget may not permit you to hire a bulldozer, but for a self-addressed, stamped envelope you can learn more about landscaping for birds, including suggestions of plants, birds they will attract, and sources for detailed plant lists and gardening ideas. Write to:

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
EIS Dept. N1
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, N.Y.
14850

Purple Loosestrife Alert *

by Bob Bancroft
Nova Scotia Department
of Lands and Forests



Many introduced plants escape from gardens without upsetting the balance of nature. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria* L.) is an exception. Brought from Europe to North America in the 1800's, it is invading wetlands, displacing cattails, sedges and other native plants. Birds and mammals do not eat it or its seeds. Muskrats will not use the stalks for house building and waterfowl will not nest in it.

Small pockets of purple loosestrife are developing in many areas of Nova Scotia and, once established, it is almost impossible to remove. Small numbers can be eliminated, however. The plants should be dug up, roots and all, and dried out before being discarded. A single plant can produce 300,000 seeds. Cutting off the flowers will provide more time to remove entire plants later. Do our native wildlife a favour -- control the spread of purple loosestrife.

Habit - much branched, 0.6 m - 2.0 m (24 - 78 in); herbaceous plant with terminal spikes of bright purple-magenta flowers.

Leaves - downy, opposite or in three's, with no stems.

Flowers - magenta-purple flowers with five petals. Blooming from July to September.

Habitat - wet swales, roadside ditches, and marshes.

* reprinted from N.S. Conservation, Volume 12, Number 2, Summer 1988. To add your name to the (free) subscription list, write N.S. Conservation, P.O. Box 68, Truro, Nova Scotia, B2N 5B8.

Ed. Note: Because purple loosestrife is a very attractive plant and spreads so readily, it is often sold as an ornamental garden plant. While the variety developed at Morden, Manitoba, is not believed to be as invasive, many plants sold as "Morden" purple loosestrife are, in fact, the wild invasive variety. The only sure way to avoid contributing to the destruction of marshes and wetlands is to avoid buying purple loosestrife and removing it from your garden if it's already there.

International Piping Plover Census VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN ATLANTIC CANADA

The piping plover is listed as an endangered species in Canada, and endangered or threatened in the United States. Efforts are being made to conserve the species. To help measure the success of these



1991

Table 1. North American Piping Plover Population Estimates (Adult Birds) for 1988.
 {Numbers in () are percentages of the North American population.
 Numbers in [] are percentages of the Canadian population.} *

	Prairies & Plains	Great Lakes	Atlantic Coast	Total	
United States	1612 (37.3)	31 (0.7)	1288 (29.8)	2931 (67.8)	
Canada	Alta. 220+ [15.8] Sask. 500 [36.0] Man. 200 [14.4] W. Ont. 5 [0.4]	Ont. 0 [0.0]	Que. 74 [5.3] Nfld. 8 [0.6] P.E.I. 91 [6.5] N.B. 190 [13.7] N.S. 102 [7.3]	925 (21.4) [66.5] 0 (0.0) [0.0] 465 (10.8) [33.5]	1390 (32.2)
North American (Total)	2537 (58.7)	31 (0.7)	1753 (40.6)	4321 (100.0)	

* data from Table 1 and Table 2, in "Piping Plover Research and Conservation in Canada", J. Paul Goossen, Canadian Wildlife Service, Edmonton, Alberta; Blue Jay 48(3), September 1990, pp. 139-153, combined by the Editor, BNS Newsletter.

efforts, an accurate count of the number of piping plovers is required now and in the future. The first simultaneous census throughout North America is scheduled for 1991. This is an enormous task. Hence, your assistance is urgently needed. If you can visit one or more sandy beaches in Atlantic Canada during the first two weeks of June 1991, then send us your name, address, and telephone number, and indicate which beach you would like to census. We will forward the census instructions and forms. Thanks for the help!

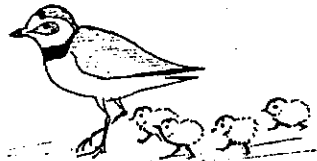
Bruce Johnson and Stephen Flemming
Canadian Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1590, Sackville, N.B.
EOA 3C0

ARTICLES

Piping Plover Research and Conservation in Canada (1)

by J. Paul Goossen
Canadian Wildlife Service
Edmonton, Alberta

The piping plover is a small North American shorebird which received relatively little attention from researchers until the 1980's when concern was expressed that this species had suffered a serious population decline. In 1985, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) declared the piping plover to be an endangered species based on a status report recommendation, while the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) declared the plover to be endangered in the Great Lakes region and threatened elsewhere as of 1986. In 1988, the population on the North American breeding grounds was estimated to be about 4300 adults (Table 1). Piping plovers winter in the southern United States, Mexico and on Caribbean Islands, however wintering ground surveys have accounted for about 1730 individuals (adults and young in their first year).



About the turn of the last century, hunting contributed to the plover's decline, but more recently, water level regulation, habitat modification, predation and human disturbance have been implicated.

This overview provides an update on surveys, research and conservation activities by various Canadian agencies and focuses on the period 1985-1988.

Surveys - Distribution and Abundance

National Perspective

The piping plover is found in nine of the ten Canadian provinces and breeds in two principal regions defined in this paper as Prairie Canada (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manito-

ba, western Ontario) and Atlantic Canada (Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland). Until 1977, piping plovers also nested in the Canadian Great Lakes region.

Based on 1988 data, about 32 percent (nearly 1400 adults) of the North American piping plover population occurs in Canada (Table 1). An international piping plover survey in 1991 on both breeding and wintering grounds will provide the best population estimates to date (see above request for volunteers).

Prairie Canada

Sixty-six percent of the Canadian population is found in Prairie Canada. Since 1900, habitat loss in Alberta is thought to have resulted in a decrease in breeders of less than ten percent, however drought conditions in 1988 resulted in no productivity at some locations and is thought to have influenced a decline in the provincial population.

[With a population of 500 adults in 1988 (36 percent of the Canadian population) Saskatchewan has the largest piping plover population in Canada. However, our best estimates suggest that the Saskatchewan population has decreased by about one-third since 1986. Drought and reduced habitat availability from fluctuating water levels brought about by damming are believed to have been the major contributing factors in this population decline.] (2)

Manitoba's plover population, based on data from surveys carried out prior to 1987, was estimated to be about 120-130 individuals. In 1988 the population was estimated at close to 200 plovers. This increase is thought to have possibly been a result of drought in other areas influencing plovers to move into Manitoba.

The piping plovers at Lake of the Woods in western Ontario are included in the plains population. This is the only known annual breeding population in Ontario consisting of up to ten adults.

Great Lakes Canada

Historically, the Great Lakes population in Ontario has been estimated at about 150-160 pairs, with most at Lake Erie, particularly Long Point. The species' decline in the Great Lakes region has been so great that it can be considered extirpated. Human disturbance and predation are thought to have contributed to the decline.

Atlantic Canada

The piping plover population in Atlantic Canada ranged from about 445-500 adults based on 1982 and 1984 information. The 1988 population estimate for Atlantic Canada, 465 adults, is approximately 34 percent of the Canadian plover population with 82 percent of the Atlantic Canada plovers occurring in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (Table 1). In these latter provinces, the annual breeding population at three National Parks has ranged from 45 to 52 pairs during 1984 to 1988. The lowest breeding population for Kouchibouguac National Park, New Brunswick, was recorded in 1988 with only nine breeding pairs reported,

down from the high of 21 in 1983. In contrast, Prince Edward Island National Park had its highest count in 1988, with 28 breeding pairs located. The breeding population in Kejimikujik National Park's Seaside Adjunct, Nova Scotia has varied from a high of at least 27-29 pairs in 1976 to nine breeding pairs in 1987. In 1988, The Canadian Parks Service (CPS), in addition to surveying plovers in National Parks, also surveyed nine provincial beaches in Nova Scotia and recorded 12-14 breeding pairs and 13 fledged chicks. In Quebec the population is estimated to be less than 40 pairs. Since 1979, population estimates for the Magdalen Islands have varied from 30 pairs in 1979 to 20 pairs in 1983 to 37 pairs plus four individuals in 1987. Surveys prior to 1987 were not considered to be exhaustive as was the 1987 survey, and therefore evaluating the population trend is difficult. However, it is believed that the population has been fairly stable. In the 1980's, the Newfoundland plover population appears to have remained at less than 12 adults.

In Nova Scotia, a decrease of 3.3-5.8 pairs/year was believed to have occurred from 1983 to 1987. In Quebec, adults and young were seen along the Gulf of St. Lawrence's north shore as recently as 1986., however no piping plovers were seen during a 1988 survey.

Research

National Perspective

Only four major research projects on piping plover biology have been completed in Canada - two in Prairie Canada and two in Atlantic Canada.

Prairie Canada

A.J. Whyte conducted a two-year study at Big Quill Lake, a large prairie lake in Saskatchewan. His field work concentrated on breeding chronology, territoriality, choice of nest locations and reproductive success. Hatching success was only 28.6 percent in 1980 and 8.8 percent in 1981 while fledging success was considerably higher (66.7 percent in 1980 and 86.0 percent in 1981). Predation by ring-billed gulls was suspected and may have caused the poor nest success.

In Manitoba, S.M. Haig carried out a major study of the breeding biology of piping plovers. She found that almost 70 percent of adults which survived returned the following year to the area where they had bred and that there was no significant difference in return rates between males and females. Although most pairs changed mates between years, the majority retained mates after nest loss. Like Whyte, Haig found nest success to be poor with 64 percent of the nests failing in her study, most likely because of predation, storms and human disturbance. She determined that only about one chick fledged from a nest. Haig also did genetic research on various North American populations; no convincing support could be found for taxonomically dividing this plover into two subspecies as does the American Ornithologists' Union.

A recent analysis of piping plover productivity data

from the Prairie Canada and American great plains population questions whether the population will sustain itself since not enough young may be being produced. Using a theoretical model to determine productivity required for population stability, researchers determined that between 1.15-1.44 fledged chicks/pair is required to maintain the western population. Known productivity was found to be only 1.12 fledged chicks/pair in the prairie and plains population. Theoretical production values, which serve as a tentative benchmark need to be tested further.

Atlantic Canada

W.E. Cairn's research in Nova Scotia resulted in the first comprehensive description of piping plover territorial and courtship behaviour. She found that fledging success was lower on beaches with greater recreational activity compared with her main study area, Cadden Beach, which had more limited recreational use. A one-season study by C.E. Tull in and near Kouchibouguac National Park, New Brunswick, found that reproductive success in early nests was greater than in those initiated later. Tull also found that human disturbance or lack thereof, was not an important factor affecting productivity, however disturbance was relatively limited at his study site and may not have been sufficient to show an impact. Further study in Nova Scotia revealed that disturbance was not an important factor for young chicks (ten days) but was for older chicks (17 days). For this latter group, significantly fewer survived per pair (0.5) on beaches with disturbance compared with those surviving (1.8) on beaches with less activity. This study suggests behavioural changes in response to human presence such as decreased chick brooding and feeding, may make chicks more vulnerable to predation and the elements.

Productivity has also been determined by CPS for piping plovers breeding in some Atlantic National Parks. The number of chicks fledged per pair has varied from 1.5-2.2 in Kouchibouguac National Park to 0.7-2.8 in Prince Edward Island National Park to 0.3-2.1 in Kejimikujik National Park.

In Nova Scotia, during 1979-1983, fledging success was reported to be 1.2 chicks/pair/nest initiated. It should be noted that there is variation in the above studies as to the definition of the fledged chick and some give minimum-maximum ranges because of the difficulty in determining the number of fledged chicks.

Conservation

National Perspective

Piping plovers are protected by the Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1917 and additional conservation measures are afforded through the Canadian Wildlife Act of 1973. As of fall 1990, Canada has no federal endangered species act, but Manitoba, Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick have endangered species legislation. At the national level, special status designations in Canada are assigned by COSEWIC but do not carry legislative powers.

After the piping plover's status had been upgraded in

1985 from threatened to endangered in Canada by COSEWIC, steps were taken to develop a national approach to conserving the species by laying the groundwork for a national recovery plan. The recovery plan has been approved and is complementary to the two American recovery plans already in place. Research and conservation actions, outlined in the Canadian Piping Plover Recovery Plan, are aimed at retaining the Canadian piping plover population and its distribution.

Federal, provincial and nongovernmental agencies have initiated a variety of research and/or conservation measures. Nongovernmental agencies have been successful in providing publicity about the plover's plight and have supported plover surveys and conservation. For example, the Canadian Nature Federation has been active in habitat preservation and through its publication, Nature Canada, has made Canadians aware of this plover. Support for survey work has come from World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The Elsa Wild Animal Appeal of Canada, the Saskatchewan Natural History Society (SNHS), the Province of Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds and the Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island (NHSPEI). Ducks Unlimited, SNHS, Wildlife Habitat Canada and WWF have supported habitat enhancement efforts.

Prairie Canada

Within the last five years, the participation of agencies in piping plover conservation in Prairie Canada has increased and demonstrates a heightened interest in the migratory plover. The Prairie Piping Plover Recovery Team has identified priority action plans. These strategies will serve to implement the interests of the national plan at the regional level. In addition to the national recovery plan, provincial management or recovery plans have been initiated in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta.

Habitat enhancement projects have been initiated in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Nesting substrate has been increased at two lakes in Saskatchewan through the spreading of gravel on lakeshore habitat. Since piping plovers successfully use a variety of artificial habitats for nesting, a proposed dyke to enhance waterfowl production in southern Saskatchewan, if constructed, may provide suitable plover nesting habitat. In Manitoba, habitat modification has been attempted. In 1982, breeding habitat on the southeastern shore of Lake Manitoba was protected by the Manitoba government declaring the site a Special Conservation Area.

Great Lakes Canada

Although piping plovers do not currently breed in this part of Canada, both the proposed national and Ontario recovery plans have set as one of their goals, the re-establishment, if feasible, of the plover in this region.

Atlantic Canada

Of nine National Parks and one National Park Reserve in Atlantic Canada, only Prince Edward Island National Park, Kouchibouguac National Park and Kejimikujik National Park's Seaside Adjunct harbour piping plovers. Each of these three

parks has a management plan for piping plovers. CPS has used signs, fences, and warden patrols to afford protection to some nesting areas and interpretive hikes, slide shows and pamphlets assist in educating the general public. Since maritime storms cause nest loss, CPS has considered removing eggs, incubating them and then replacing them. Piping plover eggs have been successfully hatched by artificial means and the young released into the wild. Predation is considered to be a greater problem than human disturbance in Atlantic Canada, but it may be related indirectly to human activity. Efforts to control predators have been attempted and nest enclosures have been successfully used in decreasing predation. Since there is evidence to suggest that plovers have a higher hatching success when nesting near breeding terns than in the terns' absence, consideration should be given to the suggestion to manage tern colonies in order to benefit plover conservation.

For more than ten years, the NHSPEI has been actively promoting piping plover conservation. The society has conducted surveys for plovers, helped in planning workshops, initiated a program to contact landowners, and supported public relation efforts including a piping plover video and poster. The landowner contact program revealed over 75 percent support by landowners for plover conservation. Disturbances identified by landowners included use of all terrain vehicles, habitat alteration and recreational activities.

On Quebec's Magdalen Islands, beach traffic during the plover's breeding season is heightened in July during part of the chick-rearing period. The primary conservation recommendation for these islands is to control traffic so as to decrease nest loss and secondarily to consider habitat creation.

The future of the piping plover in Atlantic Canada is somewhat clouded by a predicted warming trend in the earth's climate which may result in coastal flooding thereby reducing available nesting habitat and decreasing plover productivity. However, any future threats to the plovers and their coastal habitat will be challenged by the concern and commitment of dedicated conservationists in Atlantic Canada to attempt to ensure the continuing presence of the piping plover on east coast beaches.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Prairie Canada there are several concerns which need to be addressed. Further clarification of the plover's distribution and protection of its habitat are needed. As to research, long-term data are needed on population dynamics, dispersal and productivity to determine the nature of population fluctuations and the adequacy of reproductive output in maintaining a self-sustaining population.

In Atlantic Canada, information is needed on wintering locations of the breeding population while research and management is required to reduce nesting failure caused by predators and storms. The possible impact of illegal shore-bird hunting in some locations in Newfoundland should be

evaluated and appropriate action taken to provide public education. In both Atlantic and Prairie regions, conservation must take priority if the plover's status is to be improved. In order to effectively conserve the continental breeding population of piping plovers, joint action by Americans and Canadians must continue in cooperation with those Latin American countries where the plovers winter. Finally, it is of utmost importance that landowners and the general public take responsible conservation actions for habitat preservation during occupational and recreational activities.

(1) abridged from Blue Jay 48(3), September 1990, pp. 139-153.

(2) summary of part of the paper - prepared by the Editor, BNS Newsletter.

Mid-Winter Weather 1991

by Larry Bogan
Cambridge Station, N.S.

The two coldest months of the winter, January and February, are now behind us! How did the weather during these two months stack up against what we might expect in an "average" year?

1991 Weather Statistics - Kentville, N.S.
Agricultural Research Station
(Numbers in parentheses are 30-year averages)

	Mean Temp C	Precipitation			Heating Degree C-Days	Bright Sunshine Hours
		Rain mm	Snow cm	Total mm rain		
January	-6.8 (-5.0)	63 (65)	63 (72)	112 (136)	769 (713)	82 (73)
February	-3.8 (-5.2)	24 (42)	19 (65)	38 (107)	608 (656)	105 (98)
Total or Ave.	-5.4 (-5.1)	87 (107)	82 (137)	150 (243)	1377 (1369)	187 (171)

January was colder and February was warmer than average but the two-month period was about average. As a result we all burned about the same amount of fuel to heat our homes as expected. These two months represent a little over one third of the heating degree days in a normal heating season (October through May) and from March through May we should burn about another one third of our year's heating fuel.

The sunshine broke through the clouds a bit more than expected but not enough to make a large difference from the usual cloudy skies of this season.

The only major variance from the "norm" was in precipitation. Although January precipitation was slightly below normal, February was relatively dry. We received only 36 percent of the average total precipitation and had only 31 percent of the usual snowfall in February. Rainfall was also below the 30-year average but not by as much.

This winter's weather has been characterized by a rapid switching between lows approaching from the south to highs approaching from the west with the accompanying drastic swings from high to low temperatures.

Do Frogs Have a Future? and Related Serious Matters

by J. Sherman Bleakney
Wolfville, N.S.

It is only rather recently that the dramatic reduction in frog populations has been recognized to be a global phenomenon. Such news sends shivers up the vertebral columns of environmentalists. If this planet is no longer fit for frogs can humans be far behind?

Unfortunately, most reports are of anecdotal nature and therefore dismissed as unscientific. Fortunately the Canadian Wildlife Service (C.W.S.) is concerned and in 1990 compiled information from over twenty Canadian contributors, summarizing the known situation province by province. There are plans for a 1991 conference in Ottawa at which detailed plans for a Canada-wide, ten year, monitoring programme will be presented and discussed. Now that the five year survey for the Breeding Bird Atlas is finished, the B.N.S. members can switch to a ten year survey for a Frog Spawning Atlas. There could be dramatic changes in frog populations by year 2001.

I have read the C.W.S. report and two other articles and herewith present my resume of the situation. On a global scale the worst affected areas are the higher altitudes and higher latitudes. In other words, mountain tops in the tropics and many habitats beyond 10 deg north and south of the equator. In the mountains of western North America acid snow is a prime suspect. When snow melts in spring, the runoff acidifies the temporary breeding ponds of the early amphibian breeders and destroys their eggs. This picture is complicated by the fact that in some areas not all species of frogs are equally affected.

Amphibia live both on land and in water, have a moist permeable skin, and thus get the worst of both worlds. They are probably excellent indicators of environmental stress involving chemical pollution of water and air and even of increased ultraviolet radiation. The most dramatic changes reported are from the late 1970's to the late 1980's. In several cases, entire populations



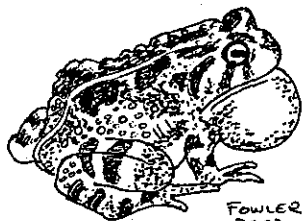
LEOPARD FROG

of frogs have simply vanished, even pristine natural areas such as protected provincial parks. In Ontario, nearly every type of anuran has been affected at one locality or another: bullfrog, green frog, mink frog, chorus frog, Fowler's toad and spring peeper. In southern Alberta, within the entire known range of the grass frog, the population went from common in 1977 to zero in 1978. From 1979 to 1989 none could be found nor even heard calling. However, in 1990, there were six new records of calling adults. What is the explanation in this case? Did some person reintroduce grass frogs? Perhaps a new genetic strain of pollution resistant grass frog has evolved.



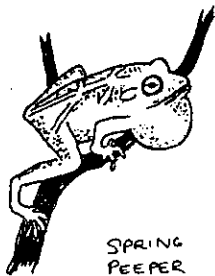
CHORUS FROG

in others. The worst is direct destruction of habitat, be it rain forest or cattail marsh. Polluted waters and acid rain or snow are certainly implicated. Also involved are introduced predators such as voracious bullfrogs and marine toads, and certain fish. In Nova Scotia, the introduction of smallmouth bass to many watersheds may be appreciated by sports fishermen, but the severe predation pressure placed upon our tadpoles and juvenile frogs has undoubtedly contributed to our far too quiet summer evenings along our lake shores. When I was a school lad, most of the local lakes and ox-bow ponds resounded with choruses of bullfrogs through the night. Equipped with canoe, flashlight and potato sack, it was relatively easy to gather up a feed of frogs legs.



FOWLER TOAD

You are probably aware that in France frogs legs are a must on the menu. You are probably unaware that France is the only country that imports 3-4,000 tons of frogs legs annually. This appetite has severely depleted the edible



SPRING PEPPER

amphibia of Europe and has increased hunting pressure in Bangladesh and Indonesia, the current countries of major supply. In 1989, India had to ban frogs legs exports because the absence of frogs in many areas had created an insect control problem. Which brings us to the topic of insects, the predominant food of sticky tongued frogs.

In 1953, Nancy and I witnessed the appalling effects of a chemical-

ly altered forest environment. I recall it as a truly spine chilling experience. We were surveying the early spring breeding amphibians of the maritime provinces and were given a tour and permission to work in a heavily sprayed forest in the Green River district of northern New Brunswick. The woods and ponds were absolutely silent, no twittering birds by day and no trilling frogs by night, just an awful, ominous, uninterrupted quiet. At the time, we assumed that the birds and frogs had been poisoned either directly, or indirectly from eating poisoned insects. However, I have often wondered since then whether there is not a more obvious explanation that is rarely considered. As most of the insect populations were quickly killed, and as frogs react to moving prey and flying insects, then how would the frogs have much of an opportunity to consume poisoned insects? Perhaps the birds simply flew away from this poisoned desert and the frogs starved to death. If today the general deterioration in our environment involves reduced numbers of flying insects, then frog densities should reflect this loss. I am convinced that there are far fewer insects about now that when I was young. Think back, when was the last time in Kings County that you saw real swarms of insects at street lamps, at window panes, in the beam of your car lights, or when you last watched entire meadows twinkling with fireflies, or heard nighthawks every evening, or dug up toads every time you garden? The D.D.T. of the 1950's eventually accumulated in polar bear tissues (as are P.C.B.'s?), an unequivocal demonstration of the existence of an integrated global ecosystem. Insects are the dominant herbivores and carnivores on this planet so they inescapably have to be affected, either as victims or as reservoirs of toxins.

The depletion of amphibia (and birds and fish and etc.) in Kings County is certainly related in part to agricultural practices, but the one-year extinction of grass frogs everywhere in southern Alberta suggests a disease phenomenon (transmitted by migratory birds?). Naturalists tend to ignore what they can't see, but those microscopic pathogens are evolving and adapting all the time. They can have devastating effects if they suddenly become more virulent and/or their hosts become stress weakened. (At the end of World War I, a mutant virus killed more millions of people in one year than did four terrible years of war.) Which brings us to my final and most depressing observation -- the fate of the great forests of the world, not from the axe but from disease.



The present generation of young naturalists perhaps do not realize that there has been a pronounced deterioration of environments over the past century, not just since the 1970's. The demise of our largest trees is a most striking example. More recently it has been the majestic elm trees. When I was a student, the giant yellow birch were gone and the large paper birch had just become seriously infected. Prior to that it was the large beech forests as well as the chestnuts. The beautiful pines of Japan have been dying for several decades, and even forest giants in the pristine southwest corner of Australia have succumbed to another mysterious disease. The glorious oaks of England are about to be added to the list.

Perhaps a microbe, not a meteorite, destroyed the dinosaurs. Perhaps, AIDS, not atomic bombs, will eventually destroy us. After all, microscopic life forms have existed since the very dawn of DNA, and have survived a succession of major extinctions, to live again another day. In today's jargon, viruses and their ilk are survivors. I have my doubts that we are. So, 'til we meet again in the fossil record, have a nice extinction.

Albino Red-tailed Hawks

by Bernard Forsythe
Wolfville, N.S.

The practice of discarding dead chickens near poultry farms has attracted many bald eagles to our area each winter in recent years. Overwintering red-tailed hawk numbers have also gone up. Many can be seen perched in trees bordering grassy fields watching for meadow voles and other small mammals or soaring in great circles over the same areas. Red-tailed hawks will, at times, also feed on the dead chickens, taking advantage of a free meal.

The plumage of red-tailed hawks is extremely variable and includes both light and dark phases. Most seen in Nova Scotia are the light phase which are quite white underneath with a "belly band" of streaked brown that varies in width and position. The back is dark brown with variable patterns of pale edges on some feathers. The adult's upper tail is rusty red but paler underneath. An immature's tail is gray and usually banded. Some young red-tails are so white underneath that they may be reported as snowy owls by an inexperienced birdwatcher.

A recessive gene will sometimes cause abnormal pigmentation of plants and animals. Rarely a black-coloured individual will show up in a species that is normally another shade. This condition is known as melanism. Erythrism is a condition where plumage or hair shows abnormal redness. Although also rare, albinism (white hair, skin or feathers) is the abnormal colour form most often encountered. Birds sometimes show traces of albinism: that is, patches of white feathers where normally they are another colour. Most birdwatchers have seen this in robins, crows, grackles, or starlings, probably because the large numbers of these birds

increase the chances of this condition occurring.

Large birds of prey such as red-tailed hawks are generally scattered in their winter distribution except where an abundant food supply brings them together. Albino red-tailed hawks have been reported but the chances of seeing one are small. Last winter one was seen near Sheffield Mills. I made several unsuccessful attempts to see this bird but this winter (1990-91) my luck changed. In December, an albino red-tail was reported on Saxon Street, near the site where the albino had been seen the previous winter. On January 13 I finally spotted this startling-looking red-tail. Most of the bird was snow white except for a black speck or two on the chest and top of its head. The tail was a very light brown and, when it flew, several primary wing feathers were seen to be black. The eyes were dark, making it technically a partial albino. A pure albino would have pink eyes.

On February 9, I received a report of a large white hawk below Wolfville Ridge in Gaspereau. It turned out to be a second partial albino red-tailed hawk. From the front, this one was an off-white colour with a hint of a belly band. The back view was most impressive. Its back and head were mostly snow white with a few brown patches. The top of its tail was a dark chestnut, deeper than the red of most red-tails. When this hawk was in flight, one could see black at the base of the primary feathers when viewed from above. Watching this bird soaring along the Ridge created an unbelievable colour pattern that I will not soon forget.



Both of the partial albino red-tails could be watched from one's car; however, when I attempted to approach them on foot to photograph them, they spooked very easily. Abnormal colouration probably resulted in their being picked on by siblings, others of their kind, and predators, making them wary. Two partial albino red-tails in one area is certainly exceptional. It will be interesting to see if more turn up in future winters. Should anyone spot an albino red-tailed hawk in this area during the spring or summer, please advise me or the Society.

Eminent Nova Scotia Naturalists

Nova Scotia has produced or harboured many eminent natural historians, a disproportionate number of whom have been associated with the Annapolis Valley and, specifically, the Wolfville area. To keep the memories of these extraordinary people alive, we will publish biographical sketches from time to time.

We begin with John Erskine, an extraordinary man with extremely broad interests and knowledge of the natural world. John was a founding member of the B.N.S and his thoughtful writings were regularly featured in the Newsletter

ter in the 1970's and early 1980's (many being printed posthumously). John was one of the first Honourary Life Members of our Society. The short biography presented below was written by his wife Rachel*. It was first published in the December 1977 Newsletter, shortly after John's death. Following the biography is an excerpt from some of John's unpublished notes.

* Rachel, who now lives in Sackville, N.B., has been a long-time supporter of the Society and is also an Honourary Life Member.

John Steuart Erskine

John Steuart Erskine was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 8, 1900, where his father was British Vice-Consul; John was registered in the Consulate as a British subject. His father was appointed Consul at St. Louis, Missouri, when John was eight years old and the family moved there. Later they moved to Portland, Oregon, and finally to New Orleans, Louisiana, where John's father died in 1916. After his father's death, the family returned to England. Although a British subject, this was the first time John had been in England. He worked as a farm hand during the war. He nearly died of pneumonia during the flu epidemic of 1918 and was told that his health would be permanently affected.

With the demobilization of troops after the armistice, there were no jobs in England so John was shipped off to Jamaica. After some months, he found work on a cattle "pen" near the west end of the island. He worked there and at another farm, that raised cattle and grew sugar cane, for some years. Later he moved to Honduras where he was employed for several years as an overseer on banana plantations. At the end of his time in Honduras, he made a 600-mile trip, almost all on foot or by canoe, through the interior and down the Patuca River to the Bay Islands on the coast. The trip's purpose was to study native tribes and their languages. After this trip he returned to England and started to write in earnest, selling short stories to American magazines.

He married in England. The financial crisis in 1929 made it impossible to sell his writing so John took a job on citrus and banana farms in Brazil, first in Rio, then in Santos. He had only been in Brazil a short while when he became seriously ill with malaria and hepatitis. He was sent home to England from hospital in Sao Paulo to convalesce.

John and Rachel's first son was born shortly after John's return to England and John decided not to return to the tropics. The family acquired a house in the Furness district of Lancashire and John resumed writing. Two more sons were born.

From his annual bicycling trips through various countries in Europe in the early 1930's, it was obvious to John how menacing the situation in Germany was. Being convinced that another European war was inevitable, John was anxious to move his family to a country from which they would not be forced to emigrate as he had been.

Late in 1936, the family moved to Nova Scotia, settling in Wolfville which has been their home ever since. Since John's education had been interrupted by the many moves during his childhood and starting work at age fourteen, he had never obtained a university degree. He received his B.A. in Romance languages from Acadia, then went to McGill to do an M.A. in French, teaching in a private school in Montreal while he did so. On his return to Nova Scotia, he taught at Kings College School for a number of years, then in public schools in Kings County.

In his summers, John collected plants throughout Nova Scotia for the herbarium of the Nova Scotia Museum. He later did archaeological work on the Indians of Nova Scotia for both the Nova Scotia Museum and the Museum of Man in Ottawa. He also studied the Acadian culture and Acadian artifacts throughout the province.

He wrote extensively and had published a novel, a number of articles and stories, numerous papers on botanical and archaeological subjects, and book reviews.

Birds were one of his lifelong interests and for many years he took part in the Breeding Bird Survey carried out jointly by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Each winter, for over twenty-five years, he took almost daily five-mile walks, recording the birds he encountered.

Much of his writing still remains unpublished.

Reflections on Forty Years of Bird Observations in the Wolfville Area

by John Erskine
Wolfville, N.S.
written about 1974

April (1936?) had come with a last fall of snow to welcome us to our small Nova Scotia farm on the ridge above the town of Wolfville. The aged orchard had not been pruned for some years and the kitchen door was ornamented with piles of cans on either side. Evidently our predecessors had not been equipped to carry away their rubbish, so I did my best with a wheelbarrow and spent much of a week in shifting the rubbish to the edge of the pasture. I had no need for an alarm clock to awake me in the morning. In the orchard was an abandoned kerosene can; at six o'clock each morning, a romantic flicker drummed upon it in his hope for a suitable wife.

Birds had always been my outdoor interest. Those seen in Wolfville were almost all species I had come to know during my boyhood in the United States. The flicker's golden wings seemed a little out of place, as the last flickers that I had seen were the red-winged ones of Oregon. Then, for some years in England, the green woodpecker had taken the flicker's place. They had all been stupid and beautiful and had spent more of their time on the ground, where ants were most abundant, than in the trees. The aforementioned flicker

nested in a hollow apple tree near the corner of the house and delighted the boys at Tony's birthday. A half-dozen large, fledgling flickers would tumble out of their hole as fast as they were put back. Life was good for flickers in those days. They had ideas of improving the world for flickers. They drilled neat holes in our century-old ash trees. I made a small box for a chickadee but the flicker enlarged the small door to flicker size and then made the box uninhabitable by drumming on it, now that the beloved kerosene can had gone. He did not foresee the trouble that was coming.

One day soon after our arrival in Nova Scotia, we had seen a flock of starlings. They were not abundant yet. Robie Tufts, the authority on birds, said that they were still rather scarce. In a few years, starlings had become the most abundant birds in all seasons. They took over the holes in the ash trees and, in the spring, whenever the drumming on an old tree told that a flicker was making a nest, one needed only to look higher on the tree to see the pair of starlings waiting to seize the hole. Years later a farmer told me that he had a flicker that would fight off the starlings. Perhaps this flicker's descendants will save their species from extinction.

I had seen starlings first in New York when they were still rare. In England they were a minor nuisance except in winter when they came by millions from Scandinavia and swung on the electric lines so that the lines touched and fused. Here they can be pests, especially when the cherries are ripe, but they also have their virtues. Rachel likes them because in the early months, when it seems that winter will never end, the sun comes out and the starlings sit on the ash trees and whistle cheerfully that spring is going to come. Then there are their imitations. One was with us for three years and did a perfect black-capped chickadee imitation. Another did a killdeer, and yet another a feeble version of the squeal of a red-tailed hawk. There was one summer when caterpillars swarmed over the neighbourhood, stripping the leaves from the trees and marching on into the raspberries. In the woods behind us the caterpillars created a constant rustle like rain and then, abruptly, it ended. The shingled walls of house and barn were dotted with peach-coloured cocoons. So, evidently, were the trees. The starlings came in thousands. They would not eat the caterpillars, but they devoured the pupas and the pests were vanquished.

At first the house sparrows were of little importance. Every farmhouse outside of the town had its poultry, and the eggs beyond what the family needed went to the local grocery store to pay for what the farm did not produce. During the winter the poultry were shut up in the barn. Then the sparrows, which had depended upon the food from the poultry during the summer, moved down to the vast dump beside the railway where there was abundant food. Then a law was passed allowing the grocery stores only to sell eggs from the Co-op. This put the small and poor farms out of the egg business for the benefit of the larger units. Large "hen colleges" were started and the sparrows changed their habits.

The dump was abandoned and they spent their winters around the hen colleges. The abundance of sparrows did not change appreciably but their distribution and use of nest sites did. Sparrows' use of nest sites in small barns decreased and they began to take over tree swallow nests in the vicinity of the hen colleges. They occupied the nest boxes and, if these were occupied, they killed the brooding tree swallows and their young. The barn swallows made their own shelters of clay in the eaves of buildings, and the sparrows ousted them from the eaves.

In the first month on the farm a bluebird caught my eye. There had been bluebirds in Oregon and Honduras, but they had been the chestnut-backed; the eastern bluebird I had not seen since I was ten. So, for the first years, I had the pleasure of bluebirds. They nested on the ridge above us but they brought their offspring to visit us: a string of four or five young birds perched on a wire. I am afraid that the visit was due to the wires rather than us. Our farm was the limit of both telephone and electricity lines. But when the sparrows changed their habits, the bluebirds gradually disappeared. Whether sparrow or starling had ousted them I do not know, but I have not seen a bluebird for thirty years.

One of our delights was the Hungarian (gray) partridges that used to wander through the garden, in the summer bringing the whole covey across the lawn and then disappearing into the grass beyond the road. I was digging in the garden when I heard a familiar call. But it could not be! There were no ring-necked pheasants in Nova Scotia! I dropped the spade and trotted up to the ridge. In the grass I saw a cock pheasant. I told Robie and he was delighted. The pheasants had been released further west in the Valley, but there had been no report of their having wandered this far. For the next three years pheasants were protected and, following that, came the war when men and cartridges were equally scarce, so the pheasants flourished. They seemed to realize their immunity. In the winter a beautiful cock pheasant used to run across the lawn which was deep in snow and then down onto the icy road, where he skidded and sat on his tail and collected himself with an air of indignity.

The war ended at last and the hunters' guns began to be used again. The pheasants dropped to half the number, and the partridges to even less. Pheasants continued to come occasionally to our farm, but the partridges took to the open fields where they could see people at a distance. The beautiful ruffed grouse and spruce grouse almost disappeared.

During the war, Robie lost his assistant for the "Christmas Count of Birds", and he asked me to take his place. In the school where I was then teaching, there was another teacher who had done Christmas Counts; we went for afternoon walks and kept counts for our own interest. This became a custom for me and, when I changed schools to be



able to spend more time at home, I began a practice of doing five-mile walks around Wolfville and recording the species and numbers of birds I encountered. I soon learned that I could not effectively count birds until the migrating birds (especially the robins and song sparrows which might number in the hundreds in a single walk) had gone. I counted only between November 8 and March 21. I have done this now for twenty-five years. Twice I tried to get the Ontario Naturalist to publicize this practice in the hope that other people would make such records in other areas, but I was turned down. Several years later I had a letter from the U.S. Wildlife Service. After various tests they had come to the conclusion that the best way to record winter bird populations was to do five-mile walks in limited ranges. They suggested that the Canadian Wildlife Service should do the same. My son, Tony, who was in charge of that branch of the Canadian Wildlife Service, sent them a copy of my first twenty years of doing exactly that.

During my first winter of walks, I recorded only 27 species. Since then the list has increased to 97 species, though not all were seen in any one year. I had hoped to find some patterns in the distributions of the less usual birds, but the only discovery I made was that in the winters when white-breasted nuthatches were plentiful, there were few or no red-breasted nuthatches. Since the white-breasted nuthatches were usually in orchards and garden trees while the red-breasted nuthatches were common only in the coniferous woods, competition for food was not likely to be a factor. In one year, golden-crowned kinglets averaged 1.8 per walk; in the next year they were 11.4; in the next 2.3. White-winged crossbills were abundant in some winters and then disappeared and never returned. Red crossbills appeared only in those rare years when the red pines had cones. Hawks and owls depended chiefly upon meadow mice; these cycled with the snow cover. In 1970, when an ice age appeared to begin, the snow lay feet deep. The crows were reduced to one-third of their usual numbers, and those that remained were unable to reach the mouse nests that were their usual winter dinner. The mice stripped the bark of the apple trees to four feet above the ground and, by the Gaspereau River, a beaver cut down a poplar tree eight feet above the ground. The discouraged hawks and owls have been scarce ever since.

Over the years some other new birds have arrived. I was passing a gypsum hollow in Windsor in 1941 when I heard an unusual noise. Here was a flock of evening grosbeaks. I had seen the western green version in Oregon and could recognize them as grosbeaks despite the, to me unusual, flashing golden wings of the males. The next winter there were none, but for some time they returned every second winter. When people began to feed them, they spent each winter around the towns. The evening grosbeaks have spent occasional summers in Nova Scotia and probably nest, but their nests have not been found. In the cold autumn of 1972, immature grosbeaks came into the Wolfville area for the winter.

One day in Berwick I saw a bird with a black head, sparrow-like beak and blue body sitting in the snow. I could

only think of the indigo bunting, but when I returned home I was given a similar bird that the cat had caught. The blue colour turned out to be iridescence and beneath it was a cowbird. I had seen as many as three on a spring day in Nova Scotia. But from that time they increased into flocks, sometimes of a thousand birds, and spent the whole year here, playing havoc with other birds' nests.

There seems to be a northward shifting of birds. When we went to see my sister in St. Louis, we saw abundant mockingbirds. When we lived in St. Louis fifty years before, mockingbirds were not seen there. They arrived in Wolfville in the forties, stayed through a few winters and then disappeared. In 1970, seven glossy ibis came to Grand Pre for a day and, in November of the next year, a pair of immature African cattle egrets arrived in time for the winter count.

Red-winged blackbirds were rare and new when we arrived in Nova Scotia but within 15 years were in every marsh even to the north of Cape Breton. Bohemian waxwings, which had been rare before, come more frequently in recent winters.

TRIVIAL TIDBITS
of Local Natural History
December 1, 1990 to February 28, 1991

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

My apologies to several contributors who were not acknowledged in the last Newsletter.

Weather

At Mosherville on Feb 14, a tremendous show of lightning lasted over an hour (SAC).

Plants

On Dec 2, I found lots of golden saxifrage that was still green at Greenwich.

Insects

On Feb 19, a brown caterpillar was found crawling along, halfway across a frozen lake southwest of Meteghan (CT).

Amphibians

On a balmy Dec 30, a frog (probably a green frog) was hopping across a Wolfville road (BBY).

Mammals

Two flying squirrels were regularly visiting a feeder at Lumsden Reservoir in mid-January (BBY).

On warm days in February, up to three muskrats were seen at Grand Pre (BBT). In early February, a muskrat took up residence under a woodpile in Wolfville; this muskrat feeds regularly at a bird feeder (HT), and another muskrat was seen eating sunflower seeds (and guarding them!) at another Wolfville bird feeder (JSB).

On the very cold night of Jan 22-23 (-15 deg C), in residential Wolfville, a skunk messed around with garbage and also left some odoriferous evidence (AC).

A mink was seen at the Kingsport salt-marsh on Feb 17 (PMA). An otter was diving and foraging near White Rock also on Feb 17 (MG, JW).

A coyote was seen at Starr's Point in mid-February, a few days after a noticeable drop in pheasant numbers at a nearby feeder (DD). Fox calls were heard Feb 4 in mid-morning at Mosherville (SAC).

On Prince Edward Island on Dec 7, 14 Atlantic white-sided dolphins, including three youngsters, were successfully herded by boat out of the river at Charlottetown (where they had been since early September) into the Northumberland Strait (CBC). On Nov 26, a humpback whale calf was stranded alive on Bon Portage Island's shore (it later died) (CH, BK, PCS).

On Jan 28 a white-tailed deer browsed on a bale of barley at Mosherville (SAC). Twelve deer were seen in a field at Scots Bay on Mar 2 (MTh).

Birds

Small numbers of red-necked and horned grebes were seen along various ocean shores in December and January (JGT). A great cormorant was off Hampton on the Fundy coast Jan 16 (JGT).

I have a late report of 530 Canada geese at Windsor Nov 13 (JGT). Wolfville's Christmas Bird Count tallied 295 Canada geese; then there were two sightings of seven and 18 in early January in the Canard/Canning areas (JGT, JT), and six at Grand Pre Jan 26 (NSM, HFN).

On Feb 12 there were 45 American black ducks and a mallard at Canard Pond (JGT); about 20 mallards were at Stirling's orchard pond Jan 20 (JW) and Feb 17 (GF). Also at Stirling's was a male gadwall Jan 20 to Feb 17 (GF, HF, JGT, JW).

A male pintail was at Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth Jan 20 (BLF, RS, JGT). I have a late report of a male blue-winged teal at Canard Pond Nov 16 (JGT). Sullivan's Pond held three American wigeon Feb 10 (JG, MG, JW).

Canvasbacks are very rare in Nova Scotia; a pair was seen in Halifax in early January and a female in Dartmouth until at least mid-February (JG, MG, JGT, BBT, JW). Thirty-five greater scaup were seen at the Annapolis Causeway and small numbers were seen near Halifax in mid-January (JGT).

Three single tufted ducks (a European species) were seen in Nova Scotia in early 1991 - near Sydney, Yarmouth and Dartmouth. The latter bird attracted lots of listers from mid-January to mid-February (JG, MG, JGT, JW).

Along the Fundy coast on Jan 16 were three groups of up to 25 common eiders, 33 oldsquaw, 89 white-winged scoters, 25 surf scoters, and one black scoter (JGT). A pair of harlequin ducks were at Lower Port L'Hebert Jan 23 (JGT); another pair was reported near Herring Cove (NSBS).

Fifty-five common goldeneyes were at Annapolis in December and January, and smaller numbers at Brier Island, Fundy shore, and Dartmouth (JGT). On Jan 16, there were nine Barrow's goldeneyes at the Annapolis Causeway (JGT).

Buffleheads were seen at Clementsport (19), Brier Island (12), Minas Basin (1), and Bear River (22) (JGT). Groups of up to 12 red-breasted mergansers were noted along the Fundy shore to Bear River and Clementsport, up to 40 were at Annapolis, and, on Feb 13, a single bird was at White Rock (JGT). On Feb 6 there were 18 mergansers (common?) in the Kennetcook River at Mosherville (SAC).

A turkey vulture was seen at Hortonville Feb 24 (by DM?). Although there were nine bald eagles in one tree at Gaspereau Nov 17 (EG), significant numbers were not found in weekly NSLF roadside surveys in Kings County until early December; these numbers climbed steadily to peak at a new record of 142 eagles on Jan 30, followed by decreases in the next few weeks (GDi, PMA). Coincidentally, Acadia Biology's annual eagle count in Kings County tallied 148 eagles, another new record, on Feb 3.

Near Yarmouth this winter, observers from NSLF have noted two immature bald eagles that were banded as nestlings in New York State and Prince Edward Island (PA). Other reports of bald eagles came from Hants County in October and November (KLC) and early February, when Sheila Connell saw one catch a fish from open water in the Kennetcook River.

Seven northern harriers were reported in December at Grand Pre and Brier Island (JGT); there were seven reported on the Wolfville Christmas Bird Count Dec 22; two were at Port Williams Jan 13-14 (GF); and one was at Grand Pre Jan 26 (NSM, HFN).

Cyril Coldwell reports a band-return for a juvenile female sharp-shinned hawk: banded on Bon Portage Island Oct 9, 1990, it was recaptured Oct 24, 1990, at Cape May Point, New Jersey. Other reports of "sharpies" were of interactions at feeders: on Dec 6 in Wolfville one took a goldfinch (JSB); on Jan 13 a song sparrow was taken in Port Williams (GF); and one attacked a blue jay on Dec 29 at Aaldersville near New Ross, but a four-minute fierce struggle resulted in the jay escaping (CIR).

Up to 25 red-tailed hawks were reported in the Canard, Canning area (JGT, JT). Of great interest were the two near-albino red-tails, one west of Sheffield Mills (Jan 8 to



GREATER
SCAUP

Mar 5 - JGT, BBT et al) and the other at Gaspereau (Feb 10-16 - BLF, CKC, BBT). (See article in this Newsletter.)

Rough-legged hawks, both light and dark phases, are abundant both at Grand Pre and in the Canard Valley - at least five in each place (JW et al).

Mike Dadswell saw a broad-winged hawk along Wolfville Ridge Jan 21. The only merlin reported was seen in early January in Avonport (EU), and the only peregrine reported was near Sheffield Mills Jan 13 (JGT). Another large falcon, either a gyrfalcon or a peregrine, was seen Feb 3 at Grand Pre (RRN).

A cock ring-necked pheasant was crowing Mar 2 at Wolfville (JT). Concern continues for the gray partridge. The population is down and may even be declining further - Barry Sabean of NSLF at Kentville (679-6091) is soliciting information from anyone who observes some; our only reports were of one group (?) of four to eight partridge near Wellington Dyke, Lower Canard (JGT, BBT).

One American coot was at Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, Jan 25 to Feb 10 (JGT et al). A killdeer was seen south of Grand Pre Feb 24-25 (BBT, DT, BLF).

A sanderling was at Cherry Hill Beach Jan 27 (BLF, JGT). Purple sandpipers were at Cheverie (18) Dec 30, Fundy shore (20 + 62) Jan 16, and at Cherry Hill (55) Jan 27 (JGT, BLF); the Thextons saw eight at Black Rock (Canada Creek) Mar 6. A common snipe was lingering at Port Williams on Dec 12 (JGT).

The Wolfville Christmas Bird Count on Dec 22 tallied 1,056 ring-billed gulls - most of these were north of Canning (MG); other reports of ring-bills were up to ten at Port Williams sewage ponds (GF) and up to 40 at Wolfville sewage ponds (JW). An immature mew gull was at Dartmouth Jan 20 (BLF, RS, JGT). Apparently the Halifax-Dartmouth area has five lesser black-backed gulls this winter; one of them was at the old Volvo plant in Halifax Feb 10 (JG, MG, JW).

Only one glaucous gull was reported, an adult at Canard Pond Feb 2 (JGT). Up to six Iceland gulls were at the Port Williams sewage ponds Dec 30 to Feb 2 (GF), and eight Icelanders were at the Wolfville sewage ponds Feb 16 (JW).

To that "outbreak" of inland dovebies in late November - early December can be added one more from the Clementsvale area (SH). The only "normal" winter dovebie sightings reported were one at Dartmouth and one at Ketch Harbour Jan 20 (BLF, JGT). Single thick-billed murres were seen Jan 20 at Ketch Harbour and Jan 27 at Cherry Hill; on the latter date a common murre was at Broad Cove (BLF et al). Black gullmots were seen at Brier Island, Fundy shore, and Sandy Cove (south of Halifax) (JGT).

Ed. Note: Jim was unable to complete these "Trivial Tidbits" in time for this Newsletter. We will include highlights from this period in the next issue.



Contributors

PA Peter Austin-Smith	FL Fulton Lavender
JSB Sherman Bleakney	DM Don MacNeill
AC Albert Cormier	PMA Peter MacDonald
CBC CBC Radio	NSM Nova Scotia Museum
CKC Cyril Coldwell	HFN Halifax Field Naturalists
KLC Karen Casselman	RRN Ruth & Reg Newell
SAC Sheila Connell	CIR Christine & Ian Ross
DD Debbie Daigle	RS Richard Stern
MD Mike Dadswell	PCS Peter Smith
GDi Gerry Dickie	CT Calixte Thibodeau
ABD Acadia Biol. Dept.	DT Dianne Thorpe
GF George Forsyth	GT Gerry Trueman
HF Harold Forsyth	HT Hilda Taylor
BLF Sandra & Bernard Forsythe	JT Jean Timpa
NSLF Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests	MT Miriam Tams
JG Jamie Gibson	MTh Merrill Thorpe
MG Merritt Gibson	BBT Brenda & Bill Thexton
CH Carl Haycock	JGT Judy & Gordon Tufts
SH Stephen Hawboldt	EU Eva Urban
WJH Winnie and John Horton	JW Jim Wolford
	BBY Betty & Barry Yoell

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Bearberry

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Paxistima

Bigleaf Wintercreeper

Hawthorne

Flowering Crabs

Buffaloberry

Wayfaring Tree

Highbush Cranberry

Mountain Ash

Serviceberry

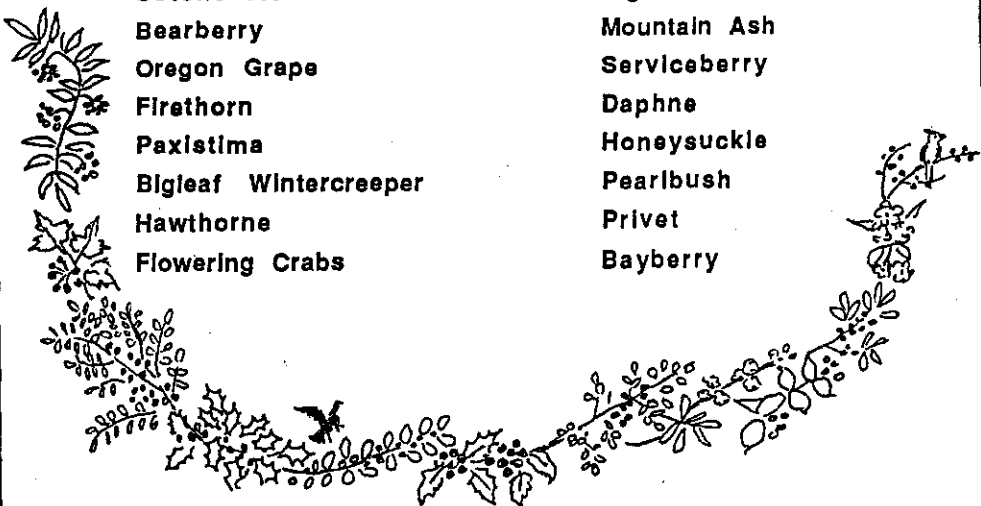
Daphne

Honeysuckle

Pearlbush

Privet

Bayberry



Sources for Local Natural History Information
(compiled by Blomdon 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	679-6097	542-2095
Flora - General	Ruth Newell	542-2201	582-7569
Flora - Trees	Merritt Gibson	542-2201	542-9214
Flora - Fungi	Darryl Grund	542-2201	542-9332
	Nancy Nickerson	679-5333	633-2837
Flora - Lichens	Karen Casselman		542-9214
Flora - Seaweeds	Darryl Grund	542-2201	542-9214
Flora - Mosses & Ferns	John Pickwell		681-8281
Birds - General	Bernard Forsythe	678-4742	542-2427
	Richard Stern	678-1975	542-5998
	Peter C. Smith	542-2201	542-7800
	Gordon & Judy Tufts		542-7650
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-5678
	Jean Timpa		542-2427
Birds - Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe	542-2201	542-2854
	Cyril Coldwell	678-8921	542-2109
Birds - Falcons & Eagles	Peter Austin-Smith	542-2201	678-0383
Mammals	Tom Herman	542-2201	542-3604
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney	542-2201	542-7650
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-3604
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney	542-2201	542-7650
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-5373
	Graham Daborn	542-2201	582-7954
	Michael Brylinsky	542-2201	542-2816
Indian Prehistory & Archaeological Sites	Ellis Gertridge	542-2201	542-3530
Astronomy	James Legge	542-2201	542-3992
	Roy Bishop	542-2201	678-0446
	Larry Bogan	542-2201	542-5104
	Sherman Williams	542-3598	