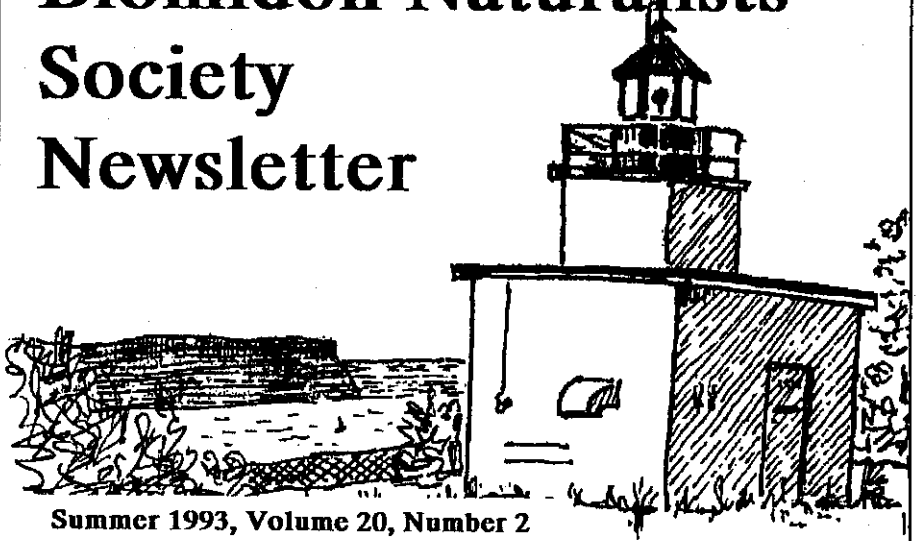


# Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter



Summer 1993, Volume 20, Number 2

## BNS Early Fall 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*.

### September 20 -- Bird Banding

George Boyd, waterfowl technician with the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests, will describe some of his many adventures banding birds. George's techniques are unique and unusual. From mist nets, dogs, culverts and fish nets, George picks birds to band for scientific study. Certainly entertaining, definitely educational.

### October 18 -- Temperate Rain Forests and Grizzlies

Jim Wolford recently visited Khutzeymatten River Valley Grizzly Bear Sanctuary and took part in a conservation-oriented cruise of the west coast. Jim's talk and slides will portray today's coastal rain forest and its inhabitants including the aboriginal peoples.

# *Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter*

Volume 20, Number 2, Summer 1993

**Editors:** George Alliston  
Margaret Alliston  
**Art:** Mary Pratt  
**Production:** Larry Bogan  
**Advertising:** I Ping Wong  
**Distribution:** Lana Churchill  
Brenda Thexton  
Judy Tufts

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Articles may be reprinted with permission of the author or the editor. Please credit the *Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter*. Unless otherwise stated, opinions are those of the authors, not necessarily the Blomidon Naturalists Society.

"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.

Summer 1993 - BNS Newsletter

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**The *BNS Newsletter* is printed on 100 percent recycled paper.**

## Late Summer - Early Fall 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.

Everyone, BNS member or not, is welcome on all field trips.

**Saturday, June 26, 1993, 9:00 a.m.**

### **Pickett's Wharf**

Sherman Bleakney (542-3604) has spent countless hours exploring the Minas Basin. He will share his interests and humour in an accessible portion of the Minas Basin shore (p. 158). Bring a lunch.

**Tuesdays and Thursdays, July and August, 1993**

**11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

### **Great Outdoors Day Camp**

#### **Upper Clements Wildlife Park/**

#### **Upper Clements Theme Park, Annapolis County**

An outdoor adventure camp for children ages 6-8. This program is designed to help young people discover plants and animals of Nova Scotia with a qualified leader. Hands-on activities, demonstrations and talks are all planned. Bring a lunch. Registration fee \$5.00. Advance registration required. Call Kaye Parker (532-7557). A *Parks are for People* program.

**Sunday, July 11, 1993, 8:30 a.m.**

### **Methal's Pond**

Bernard Forsythe (542-2427). You are sure to enjoy this canoe outing: birds, orchids, and who knows what else Bernard will find! Bring a canoe, personal flotation device and lunch.

**Saturday, July 24, 1993, 2:00 p.m.**

### **Natural History of Anthony Provincial Park**

#### **Anthony Provincial Park, Hants County**

Explore Anthony Provincial Park with Nick Hill. Plants, grasses and ecosystems will be discussed. Rain or shine. For more information call 457-6257. A *Parks are for People* trip sponsored by the Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society.

**Saturday, July 24, 1993, 9:30 a.m.**  
**Beaman's Mountain, Digby County**  
**Wildflower Hike**

**(meet at the Annapolis Royal Legion at 9:30 a.m. or Conway Irving at 10:00 a.m.)**

Enjoy rich hardwood flora, rare species, good company, and knowledgeable leadership (Gini Proulx, 467-3235). *Strenuous* uphill climbing requires sturdy footwear. Bring lunch and field paraphernalia. Will end approximately 2:00 p.m. Rain date: July 25. An *Annapolis Field Naturalists' Society* trip.

**Saturday, August 7, 1993, 8:00 a.m.**

**Rock and Fossil Hunting  
on the Parrsboro Shore**

**8:00 a.m.** Depart from the Robie Tufts Nature Centre

**11:00 a.m.** Slide presentation at Parrsboro Museum on what to look for.

**11:30 a.m.** Lunch (bring or buy).

**12:30 p.m.** Field trip to wharf and bluff area and Charles Head to search for agate, zeolites and fossils.

**3:00 p.m.** One-hour workshop at Museum to make your own jewellery and receive specimen card.

Reservations are required and there will be a fee for the tour guide and workshop. For more information and reservations, call Harold Forsyth (542-5983).

**Wednesday, August 11, 1993, 7:00 p.m.**

**Nature Walk**

**Blomidon Provincial Park, Kings County  
(meet at the park registration building)**

Join John Pickwell for a walk seeking out summer flora: wild leeks, orchids, and other plants - mosses, lichens and ferns. For more information call 681-8281. A *Parks are for People* trip sponsored by the BNS.

**Wednesday, August 11, 1993, 9:00 p.m.**

**Perseid Meteor Showers**

**Grand Pre Historic Park - Parking Lot**

Join Larry Bogan (678-0446), Sherman Williams and Roy Bishop to view the Perseid meteor showers which are expected to be most spectacular this year. The BNS astronomers will also point out many other interesting sky objects as well. Telescopes will be available but bring binoculars if you have them. A lawn chair will be useful for watching the shower. Dress extra heavily to stay comfortable under the clear skies.

Cloudy sky date: Thursday, August 12.

**Thursday, August 12, 1993, 9:30 a.m.**

**Beaman's Mountain Revisited**

**(see July 24 trip for details)**

Different leader (Alex Wilson, Botanist, Nova Scotia Museum), different luck, different flowers in bloom. No rain date. Contact Gini Proulx (467-3235). An *Annapolis Field Naturalists' Society* trip.

**Saturday, August 14, 1993, 8:00 a.m.**

**Shorebirds of the Minas Basin**

Judy Tufts (542-7800) will share with you her interest in this seasonal spectacle. Bring binoculars and boots or old sneakers. The field trip will end by lunch but you might want to stay on for a picnic.

**Thursday, August 26, 1993, 7:30 p.m.**

**Night Insects**

**Coldbrook Provincial Park, Kings County**

**(meet at the parking lot)**

Learn about the fascinating world of insects by joining Barry Wright, natural history curator of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, and Tom Smith, entomologist with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, for a walk on attracting and observing insects. Bring a flash light. For more information call 424-7353. A *Parks are for People* trip.

**Saturday, August 28, 1993, 9:00 a.m.**

**Wild Edible Search**

**(meet at the Annapolis Legion at 9:00 a.m. or Conway Irving at 9:30 a.m.)**

Search for your supper with David Melanson, Botanist, in the Clare area. Contact Anne Littlewood (245-4934). An *Annapolis Field Naturalists' Society* trip.

**Saturday, September 18, 1993, 7:30 a.m.**

**(or 11:00 a.m. at Amherst Point)**

**Ducks Unlimited Areas**

**Amherst, Nova Scotia**

John Wile will follow up his June meeting presentation with a field trip to show the birds and marsh structures in the DU areas at Amherst. Bring a lunch and warm clothes and wear waterproof footwear. Contact George Forsyth (542-7116) for further information.

**Saturday, September 25, 1993, 8:00 a.m.**  
**or Sunday, September 26, 1993, 9:00 a.m.**

**Migrating Seabirds**

**Minas Basin Boat Trip**

A two-hour boat trip on the Minas Basin to look for migrating seabirds. Dress warmly. Boat trip fee: \$20.00 per person. Limited to five people each day. Reservations required. Call Harold Forsyth (542-5983) for reservations.

**Sunday, October 3, 1993, 10:00 a.m.**

**Fall Birds of the Wolfville Area**

Join Jim Wolford (542-7650) for this joint BNS/Nova Scotia Bird Society field trip.

The *Parks are for People* field trips closest to the areas in which most BNS members live are included above. The *Parks are for People* brochure, which includes many more trips and events farther afield, may be obtained from the N.S. Department of Natural Resources or your local Tourist Bureau.

**SOCIETY NOTICES AND BUSINESS**

**Projects '93 Raffle**

by Harold Forsyth  
Greenwich, N.S.

Our 1993 fund-raising raffle was a great success and we were able to clear \$ 3500. The prize winners were:

*Trip to Newfoundland*  
Charlotte MacQuarrie, Truro

*Swarovski Binoculars*  
Diana Shelley, Wolfville

*Nikon Spotting Scope*  
Phyllis Bezanson, Berwick

*Plants and Landscaping*  
Jill MacLean, Halifax

*Whale Cruise & Accommodations*  
Roy Murphy, Wolfville

*Boat Tour - Minas Basin*  
to be auctioned off at BNS meeting,  
June 21, courtesy of Curtis Chipman,  
Wolfville

*Robert Bateman Book*  
Holly Gillis, Waterville

*Replica - Grand Pre Church*  
Marion Harris, Coldbrook

*Binoculars*  
Lana Churchill, Port Williams  
Glenn MacDougall, Wolfville  
Laura Graham, New Minas

*Natural History of Ontario*  
Julien LeBlanc, Church Point  
Arnold Forsythe, Black River Lake  
Jennie Sheito, Starr's Point

### *Whale Adoption*

Linda Cosman, Kentville

### *A Natural History of Kings County*

Nancy Naylor, Cambridge

Liz Vermeulen, New Minas

Howard Spinney, Gaspereau Mountain

Linda Coleman, Middleton

Candace Dunn, Canning

Many thanks to all the members who showed tremendous support in buying and selling tickets and, once again, to all the sponsors who helped make this fund-raiser such a success.

---

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to Show-and-Tell Night; as always everyone attending really enjoying sharing others slides, photographs, books, and collections. Some of us even enjoyed Tom Herman's snakes.

Thanks also to our speakers: Bernard Forsythe, who enchanted us with his tales and pictures of local owls; Rick Swain, who talked about national parks policy and potential sites for future Canadian national parks; George Forsyth, who explained the "Project Wild" program used in elementary school classes to sensitize young people to the natural world around them (it surely must be the only time BNS meeting attendees have been divided into kestrels, mice and grasshoppers); and John Wile, who explained the Ducks Unlimited philosophy and some recent DU projects.

As always, we must thank our field trip leaders who provide some of the most important services offered by the BNS: Sherman Williams, for explaining the interesting features of Horton Bluff and Blomidon Park; Jim Wolford, for our traditional spring birds trip; Larry and Lynn Coldwell, for an interesting new trip to Rockville Notch on a gorgeous spring day; Scott Hennigar, for leading the traditional Cape Split hike; John Pickwell, for helping with the Cape Split trip and showing us so many ferns and mosses in the Kentville Ravine; Sherman Boates, for an interesting walk along the Wolfville dyke; and Peter Austin-Smith, for informative trips along the Gaspereau and Black Rivers from White Rock and a canoe (as it turned out) trip along the Cornwallis River to the Kentville Bird Sanctuary.

---

## Notes from the BNS Directors

by Tom Herman  
Kentville, N.S.

The BNS Executive met on March 17 and May 12, 1993. Regular items of business, including reports from the Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Program Committee, Special Publications Editor, Conservation Committee, Robie Tufts Nature Centre Committee and the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists were reviewed at both. A number of additional items were also con-

sidered.

Development of the annotated checklist of Kings County birds is progressing nicely, thanks to the perseverance of Merritt Gibson, our Special Publications Editor. Final editing, layout and graphics should be completed shortly.

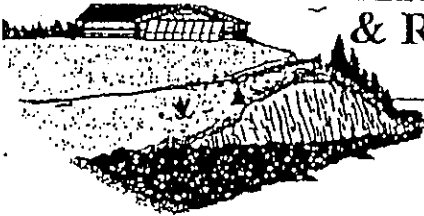
Credit goes to George Alliston for his carefully prepared proposal to the Baillie Fund to support our Short-eared Owl project. Not only was the project funded, but the proposal was ranked number one among the many competing applications. Now if we could only find some Short-eared Owls...!

We were also successful in our requests for funds from the SEED and Nova Scotia Youth Conservation Corps programmes. The SEED posi-

tion, to operate the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, has been funded for 12 weeks. The successful applicant is Christianne Lafferty, a Blomidon resident and student at the College of Geographic Sciences (Lawrencetown). In addition to operating the Nature Centre, she will also act as crew leader for three additional people to be hired shortly under the Youth Conservation Corps programme. During July and August, this group will be involved in a variety of activities, including construction of a dykeland trail adjacent to the Nature Centre, development and construction of information panels, preliminary surveys of BNS-designated "Special Places", and leading of interpretive dykeland nature walks.

The ad hoc committee to deter-

## BRIER ISLAND LODGE & RESTAURANT



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(At the tip of Digby Neck)

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mine the future editorship of the BNS Newsletter has drawn up a useful set of recommendations, which were adopted by the Executive. They include the formation of an Editorial Board, with defined duties for each member. This should help to distribute the impressive workload of the job more equitably and allow a smooth transition to the new editorial team.

The perennial pigeon problem at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre once again made for lively discussion. The Town of Wolfville has agreed to place physical exclosures on the beams. Hopefully these will help squelch the squab squabble.

---

## ***BNS Newsletter News***

by George and Margaret Alliston  
West Brooklyn, N.S.

This is the last *BNS Newsletter* we will be editing, and we wish to acknowledge all those that helped make the *Newsletter* possible. First we wish to thank the other members of the *Newsletter* team that have worked with us for the eight years we have co-edited or edited the *Newsletter*. Thanks go to Mary Pratt for her apt, and sometimes impish, illustrations; Larry Bogan, for laying out and producing the *Newsletter* and greatly improving its presentation by incorporating new technologies into the production process; Brenda and Bill Thexton, Lana Churchill and Judy Tufts for getting the final pro-

duct plus all enclosures, reminders, etc. to the membership. All have performed their functions promptly, efficiently and well and with much good humour. It has really been a pleasure working with a team that you can rely on completely!

Thanks also go to Dick Rogers for assuming the layout and production tasks during Larry's recent absence. Fighting a "learning curve", equipment incompatibilities and a very busy schedule, Dick persevered and produced a quality product.

Thanks also to our regular columnists for their major contributions to the *Newsletter*, Larry Bogan for his weather column; Jim Wolford for "Trivial Tidbits" and, more recently, Richard Stern for his popular "BNS Bird News".

Many thanks to all the contributors of articles to the *Newsletter* -- your contributions have been much appreciated by the readers for the variety they add.

After advertisements began being carried in the *Newsletter*, Carol Bradley joined the team to develop this program. Without advertising, fees would have had to be raised several years ago. Thanks are due from the entire BNS membership to Carol and to I Ping Wong who has recently assumed her responsibilities.

At a recent meeting the BNS Executive approved the restructuring of the *Newsletter* editorship. We, as editors, will be replaced by an Editorial Board, consisting of an editor-in-chief and up to three other members. The Executive also approved in principle the acquisition of computer software and hardware to facilitate

the production process. It is hoped that these measures will reduce the workload carried by any individual editor. If you are interested in serving on the new Editorial Board or can suggest suitable candidates to do so, please contact Margaret Alliston at 542-3651.

Only the editors will change now; for the time being the rest of the *Newsletter* team have agreed to continue with their current responsibilities.

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## *BNS Newsletter* Readership Survey

by Margaret Alliston  
West Brooklyn, N.S.

Many thanks to all of you who took the time to return the Readership Survey included with the last issue of the *Newsletter*. The response was excellent - 30 percent (60/201). As well as answering the questions, almost half the respondents added constructive criticisms and suggestions. These, along with the detailed survey results, will be passed on to the new Editorial Board. An overview of the survey results follows.

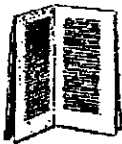
There was a good distribution of how long respondents had been reading the *Newsletter* with the highest number reading for at least ten years. Extrapolating conservatively from the average number of readers in the respondent households and the num-

ber of copies we mail, it is likely that each issue is read by 400-500 people. A surprising (to me, at least) number of respondents - 18 (more than 30 percent) - are currently directly involved with nature in a professional capacity; several others have retired from such positions. The BNS is the only naturalist organization in Nova Scotia to which more than 70 percent of the respondents belong and the only naturalist organization in Canada to which more than 60 percent belong.

Reading the *Newsletter* was the BNS regular activity most enjoyed by respondents (8.7 on a scale of 1 [very low] to 10 [very high]) followed by almost equal interest (approximately 7 on the 1-to-10 scale) in attending monthly meetings and field trips and supporting conservation projects like the Robie Tufts Nature Centre. A number of people commented that, because of distance or other physical limitations, they are often unable to attend meetings or field trips but feel they are participating in the BNS through the *Newsletter*.

Only approximately five percent of respondents elected to reduce the size of the *Newsletter* or the number of issues per year if the regular income (membership fees, *Newsletter* advertising, and donations) can no longer pay the full production costs of the *Newsletter*. The remainder elected to increase fees moderately or increase advertising or both (more than 60 percent). More than 80 percent of respondents would also be willing to pay moderately higher fees to support more conservation or education projects.

An overwhelming majority (more than 90 percent) of respondents were satisfied with the current popular/scientific mix, length and format of the *Newsletter*. Most popular of the regular features were articles on local natural history, closely followed by "BNS Bird News". A majority of the respondents thought the topic balance could be improved by adding more articles on subjects other than birds, particularly local hiking trails, archaeology, mammals, botany, geology, and local and regional environmental issues. A number of people commented that the *Newsletter* should concentrate on **local** interests and issues rather than more wide ranging ones.



## *BNS Newsletter* Submissions Deadline September 15, 1993

Please send all contributions to the *Newsletter* to:

Blomidon Naturalists Society  
P.O. Box 127  
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

Send submissions for "Trivial Tidbits" (everything but bird items) to Jim Wolford at:

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

Send observations for "Bird News", for Kings, Hants and Annapolis Counties only, as soon as possible after they were made to:

Richard Stern  
40 MacDonald Park Road  
Kentville, N.S. B4N 5C7

Last-minute observations can be phoned to Richard at 678-1975.

The editors would greatly appreciate submissions being at least double-spaced to facilitate both editing and word processing. Drawings should be black on white paper, camera-ready, on a separate page.

## Canadian Wilderness Charter

The **Canadian Wilderness Charter** is the mission statement of the **Endangered Spaces** campaign, a ten-year initiative launched in 1989 by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to ensure that each of Canada's 350 natural regions is represented by a park or other protected area by the year 2000. WWF is working with local conservation organizations, government and business to achieve the campaign's goals. In Nova Scotia, the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (FNSN) and, through it, its member organizations are the main proponents of the Endangered Spaces campaign. [The BNS is a founding member of the FNSN.]

The Blomidon Naturalists Society Executive approved the Canadian

Wilderness Charter at its Directors' Meeting on Mar 17, 1993. The text of the charter follows:

- 1 Whereas humankind is but one of millions of species sharing planet Earth and whereas the future of the Earth is severely threatened by the activities of this single species,
- 2 Whereas our planet has already lost much of its former wilderness character, thereby endangering many species and ecosystems,
- 3 Whereas Canadians still have the opportunity to complete a network of protected areas representing the biological diversity of our country,
- 4 Whereas Canada's remaining wild places, be they land or water, merit protection for their inherent value,
- 5 Whereas the protection of wilderness also meets an intrinsic human need for spiritual rekindling and artistic inspiration,
- 6 Whereas Canada's once vast wilderness has deeply shaped the national identity and continues to profoundly influence how we view ourselves as Canadians,
- 7 Whereas Canada's aboriginal peoples hold deep and direct ties to wilderness areas throughout Canada and seek to maintain options for traditional wilderness use,
- 8 Whereas protected areas can serve a variety of purposes including:

a - preserving a genetic reservoir of wild plants and animals for future use and appreciation by citizens of Canada and the world,

b - producing economic benefits from environmentally sensitive tourism,

c - offering opportunities for research and environmental education,

- 9 Whereas the opportunity to complete a national network of protected areas must be grasped and acted upon during the next ten years, or be lost,

#### **We agree and urge:**

- 1 That governments, industries, environmental groups and individual Canadians commit themselves to a national effort to establish at least one representative protected area in each of the natural regions of Canada by the year 2000,
- 2 That the total thereby protected comprise at least 12% of the lands and waters of Canada as recommended in the World Commission of Environment and Development's report, **Our Common Future**,
- 3 That public and private agencies at international, national, provincial, territorial and local levels rigorously monitor progress toward meeting these goals in Canada and ensure that they are fully achieved, and
- 4 That federal, provincial and ter-

ritorial government conservation agencies on behalf of all Canadians develop action plans by 1990 for achieving these goals by the year 2000.

---

## 1993 Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award

The Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award was established by the Blomidon Naturalists Society in 1983, in memory of Dr. Robie Tufts, to encourage an interest in natural history. Since 1983, eleven individuals, from nine communities, and the Port Williams Scout Troop have received awards.

Any resident of Kings or Hants Counties, fifteen years of age or younger, will be considered. The candidate should display an ongoing interest in any area of natural history: e.g., wildflowers, local birds, the life cycle of insects, geological collections, etc.

Direct questions about the competition to Irene Moore (678-4258), Chair, Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Committee,

or the other members of the Committee: Lana Churchill (542-2186), George E. Forsyth (542-7116) or Sherman Williams (542-5104).

Nominations should be mailed, **by September 1, 1993**, to:

Irene Moore  
Blomidon Naturalists Society  
P.O. Box 127  
Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

They will be judged by the Executive Committee of the Society and the award(s) presented at the October 1993 meeting. The prize will be one year's membership in the Society and a field guide of the recipient's choice.

---

## Letters

May 21, 1993

Dear Dr. Herman:

Thank you to all members of the Blomidon Naturalists Society for the recent generous gifts to the Regional Library. Donations such as yours are much appreciated and we are glad you thought of us.

Yours truly,  
David Witherly  
Regional Librarian  
Annapolis Valley Regional Library

[The Wolfville Library is displaying gifts to the Library from BNS members from early July through the end of August. Donations of books about natural history will still be gratefully received. For details, see the last issue of the *Newsletter*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Spring 1993, p.14.

Ed.]

# Brier Island Whale and Seabird Cruises, Ltd.



## “Strictly Pelagic” Bird Tours

Westport, Nova Scotia, BOV 1HO  
Ph. # 902-839-2995 Fax. # 902-839-2075

### DATES:

Saturday, July 31st

Saturday, August 28th

Saturday, September 25th

Saturday, October 16th

Strictly Pelagic Bird Tours will depart at 7:30 a.m. and will be app. 6 hours in length, depending on weather and sightings. The vessel used will be the Cetacean Venture. In case of inclement weather, the following morning will be set aside for a raindate.

Experienced naturalists from the Brier Island Ocean Study will be onboard, as well as other noted birders, including Peter MacLeod.

Passenger complement will be limited, preferably 30-35 people.

Price: \$35 dollars, G.S.T. inclusive. Please call ahead to book.

Other dates may be added as needed.

### Expectations:

Greater, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters, Northern Gannet, Wilson's & Leach's Storm Petrels, Common and Arctic Terns, Puffins, Murres, Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Red & Red necked Phalaropes, Black Guillemots, Common Eiders, Loons, Northern Fulmars, Skuas, Jaegers and occasionally southern rarities including as Cory's and Audubon Shearwaters.

Expectations for birds listed are good on all dates, however some species are sighted in greater numbers at certain times. Puffins are seen best in Spring and Fall, as well as Kittiwakes, Skuas, and Fulmars. Phalaropes are seen in highest numbers in August. It may be best to call ahead and inquire if you are looking for a specific species.

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR

## *Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter*

### EDITORIAL BOARD

With the retirement of the current editors, the Blomidon Naturalists Society is seeking an editor-in-chief and up to three additional people to form a new editorial board for the *Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter*.

The editor-in-chief will assume overall responsibility for production of the *Newsletter*. Under his or her direction, the members of the editorial board, assisted by the Blomidon Naturalists Society Executive, will solicit, prepare and edit *Newsletter* material.

Volunteers are already in place to prepare the artwork, lay out the camera-ready copy, solicit advertising and distribute the *Newsletter*. A decision on how to provide word processing for the new editorial board will be made once the board is appointed. The outgoing editors will be available for consultation during the transition period.

Members of the new editorial board should be prepared to start their responsibilities approximately 1 September 1993. There is no remuneration for any of the positions but there is a great deal of satisfaction in providing a *Newsletter* that is enjoyed by between 400 and 500 readers.

If you are interested in any of the positions, or can suggest someone who would make a positive contribution to the *Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter*, please contact:

**Margaret Alliston**  
R.R. 3  
Wolfville, N.S. BOP 1X0  
542-3651

# ***BNS Newsletter's*** **Kentville Library**

The Kentville Library is trying to complete a collection of *BNS Newsletters*. We have been able to donate some of the issues they require but many issues are out of print. If you have copies of the following issues and no longer require them, contact Joan Bromley, at 542-2446, to arrange to have them picked up.

Volume 11, Number 2

Volume 11, Number 3

Volume 12, Number 1

Volume 14, Number 1

Volume 18, Number 4

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## **Short-eared Owl Project Update**

by George Alliston  
West Brooklyn, N.S.

The field work for the 1993 short-eared owl project is essentially over. Twenty-eight BNS volunteers spent over 200 party-hours looking for short-eared owls in about 9000 acres of dykelands. Only one nesting pair was found. The nest was located in the Canard area -- an area from which we have no previous nest records.

After having observed a male short-eared owl on territory, the process of finding the nest proved

much more difficult than we had anticipated. The method that Bernard Forsythe had previously used so successfully was to approach the vicinity of the suspected nest site during the day when the male (who does not share in the incubation duties but hunts for and feeds the incubating female) is roosting. The male generally roosts within 100 yards or so of the nest site. The male generally flushes from his roost when the searcher is some distance away. The male tries to lead the searcher away from the nest site by using a variety of distraction behaviours. By proceeding in the opposite direction to which the bird is attempting to lead the searcher and observing the intensity of the birds distraction displays (the more intense the display the closer you are to the nest) the searcher can "trick" the bird into leading him closer to the nest site. The incubating female generally sits quite tight and flushes when the searcher is close to the nest site thereby giving away the precise location of the site.

The male of the Canard pair would flush and indicate his attachment to the area by circling high overhead or by perching nearby where he could watch us. However, his behaviour provided us with no clues to the precise location of the nest site. The female, on the other hand, sat extremely tight on her nest. After finally finding the nest (thanks to Ron Bezanson!) we realized that we had passed within a few feet of the cryptically-coloured incubating female on her not particularly well hidden nest on several occasions and



she had not budged!

The nest was located in a field where no agricultural activity had taken place for several years. The landowner has been informed of the presence of the nest and has advised us that he plans no activity in the area until August by which time the young should be fledged (dogs, coyotes, foxes, ravens, gulls and other potential predators permitting). The three young found in the nest have been banded.

We observed no evidence of nesting by short-eared owls on the Grand Pre dykelands even though they were present in The Guzzle area (maximum count of 13) throughout January 1993. Populations of the meadow vole, the short-eared owl's primary prey, were high in this area during early winter but by spring had undergone a dramatic crash. This, together with the heavy snow that covered the dykelands from late January through mid-April may have forced short-eared owls from this area. (Our casual observations suggested that the spring meadow vole population on the Canard dykelands, while not extremely high, was considerably higher than at east Grand Pre.) It has now been five years since the last short-eared owl nest was documented at Grand Pre.

Short-eared owls are one of the more nomadic owl species, and are disposed to changing their nesting areas in response to changes in prey population levels. Whether what we observed in 1993 is the result of a reduced short-eared owl population, low levels of prey populations or a general deterioration of habitat can-

not be determined from a one-year survey. Several more years of study will be required for us to get a good overall grasp of the status of the short-eared owl population in this area.

I would like to extend my thanks to the volunteers that conducted this study, spending many of their evening hours this spring vainly looking for short-eared owls. While collecting this type of information can be frustrating, the results are as valuable (but not as encouraging) as if short-eared owls were found. Where a diligent survey effort has been made we can make a definitive statement about the presence or absence of owls in that area - which is the objective of the study.

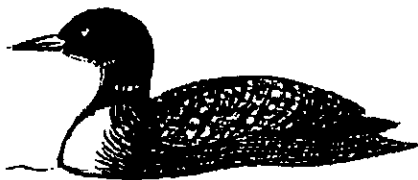
Thanks are also extended to the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources for providing copies of air photos of the study areas, to the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Marketing for providing maps of the dykelands and to the Marsh Bodies for permitting us to travel on their dykes and roadways. Special thanks to the landowners, Milford Corkum and Richard Sutton, who permitted us to conduct searches on their properties.

Special thanks are also extended to the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund that provided us with funding and were kind enough to rate our project first amongst the 19 successful 1993 applicants.

## Living with Wildlife, A Strategy for Nova Scotia

In May 1993, the Editorial Committee of the Nova Scotia Wildlife Advisory Council released **Living with Wildlife, A Strategy for Nova Scotia** (ISBN: 0-88871-264-2) "to ensure the restoration and maintenance of Nova Scotia's ecosystems and biodiversity, acknowledging our stewardship responsibilities to make certain all wildlife uses and benefits are sustainable for present and future generations". The **Strategy** was developed after consulting with the public through workshops and plenary sessions and soliciting written submissions. It will greatly influence future wildlife policy and management in Nova Scotia, affecting all wildlife users and landowners.

A copy of the **Strategy** is available for consultation at the Wolfville Library or you may pick up a free copy at *Earthwhile Pursuits* in Wolfville or at the Nova Scotia Government Bookstore in Halifax. You may also call the Nova Scotia Government Bookstore toll-free at 1-424-7580 to have a copy mailed to you. There is no mailing charge.



*Common Loon*

## Canadian Lakes Loon Survey

by Harry Vogel  
CLLS Project  
Biologist and Coordinator

Judith McIntyre, a well known loon researcher, has referred to Common Loons and their eerie calls as "the symbol of wilderness, the positive affirmation of wild places, wild things, and wild sounds in the night". Unfortunately, loons may be suffering from human activities. The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS) is seeking to answer concerns about the loon's future in Canada by continuing to expand its network of loon watchers across the country.

The CLLS is a long-term monitoring program designed to determine the effects of acid precipitation and other human disturbance on the reproductive success of Common Loons on lakes across Canada. These aquatic birds are dependent on their nesting lakes for resources to sustain themselves and raise their young. They may be extremely vulnerable to anything affecting water quality. Recent survey results suggest that loons may have difficulty raising young on lakes susceptible to acid precipitation. On severely affected lakes, loon chicks may starve to death because of low fish numbers. In addition to these obvious effects, increased acidity can release previously inert metals which then enter

the food-chain and may accumulate and reach toxic levels in loons. The well-being of adults and chicks can be interpreted as a reflection of the state of the environment in their nesting area.

Lake acidity is not the only problem loons have to contend with in Canada, however. Loon legs are placed far back on the body, making loons powerful swimmers but virtually helpless on land. Loon nests are typically built right on the shore to minimize laborious climbs into and out of the water and provide a quick escape from perceived danger. Favourite sites include small islands, marsh edges or points of land. Cottages built on or close to the shore can displace a loon from its traditional nesting site. Fluctuating water levels can swamp a nest, or leave it stranded high out of the water and unreachable. The wake from motorboats can also swamp nests and wash out loon eggs.

Hundreds of volunteers are already surveying lakes across Canada, collecting important information on the effects of pollution, development and other human disturbances on loon nesting and chick survival. The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey requires assistance from people who can visit lakes at least three times during the summer - June to watch for resident adults, July to look for newly hatched chicks, and August to record the number of chicks surviving the summer. Information is needed from every type of lake -- from pristine wilderness retreats to busy cottage intersections. You don't even need a pair of

nesting loons to do a survey on your lake. It is vitally important to know which types of lakes are *not* occupied by nesting loons and to determine which factors might exclude loons from an area. Each completed survey form will provide valuable information.

Anyone wishing to become a volunteer surveyor should send their name, mailing address, and the name and location of the lake or lakes they wish to survey to: Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, N0E 1M0, [(519) 586-3531]. A survey kit, complete with instructions, a report form, and information about conservation, educational signs and nest-site warning signs will be sent, free of charge, to anyone able to survey a lake or large river. All CLLS volunteers receive the annual newsletter each fall.

The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey is a project of the Long Point Bird Observatory, an independent, non-profit organization that conducts studies promoting the conservation of wild birds and their habitats. The CLLS is funded by Northern Reflections, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Environmental Partners Fund of Environment Canada, and charitable donations of CLLS participants.

# North American Migration Count Day

by Judy Tufts  
Wolfville, N.S.

I wish to thank all those who were coaxed away from garden and home to spend part or all of Saturday, May 8, 1993, participating in the North American Migration Count of birds in Kings County, N.S. Without your help this project could not have been completed so satisfactorily this year.

We were most fortunate in our day. The weather was warm and sunny after a cool start, with hardly a cloud in the sky. Birds were waiting to be found.

As to the count final tally:

- 36 people took part in 23 parties, with **eight** individuals generously devoting their whole day to the count;

- **10,792** individual birds were tallied. Of these, 6,055 were gulls (no

surprise there) and 420 crows/ravens were counted.

- that means more than 3,500 "others", mostly **migrants** were counted. We saw or heard 13 species of warblers (including 107 yellow-rumped warblers and six northern waterthrushes), 216 members of the three common swallow families, 60 chimney swifts, one broadwing hawk, three osprey, eight least flycatchers, one eastern phoebe, one northern mockingbird, one gray catbird, 13 barred owls, ten species of ducks, 370 American robins, three ruby-throated hummingbirds, eight belted kingfishers, one winter wren and one American woodcock.

If we could do this with only 23 parties, think what we could do in 1994 - so please keep the second Saturday in May, 1994 open. We need you to get better coverage of Kings County so that a good in-depth data base can be built up for the North American Migration Count in the future. Remember, it isn't hard work but a day for **fun** and enjoyment outdoors - enjoying nature while counting the birds.

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To ensure the health and safety of hummingbirds at supplemental feeders, remember:

\* The sugar-water solution should never be stronger than four parts water to one part sugar. Boil the mixture briefly to fully dissolve the sugar and kill bacteria.

\* Clean and refill the feeder at least once a week (every few days in hot weather). Use white vinegar to scrub away mold and algae.

\* Never put the feeder in direct sunlight.

\* Honey causes a potentially fatal fungus to grow on the tongues of hummingbirds, so don't substitute it for sugar.

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# FIELD TRIP REPORTS

## Stargazing at Stile Park March 20, 1993

Cancelled due to weather.

## Horton Bluff April 17, 1993

by Sherman Williams  
Avonport, N.S.

Approximately 35 people gathered at the lighthouse on Horton Bluff on a pleasantly sunny and warm day.

Featured were:

1. A display and discussion of typical Horton Bluff fossils. Horton Bluff (Maktomkus) offers a fine exposure of dark shales, siltstones and sandstones that contain fossilized parts of plants, fish, vertebrate trackways, and other trace fossils typical of the Carboniferous period.

2. Meeting retired lighthouse keeper, Bill Crosby. Bill told us about the lighthouses that were operated at this location from the 1850's until now. When Bill retired, the present light at Horton Bluff was added to the list of Maritime lighthouses that are operated automatically and monitored remotely.

3. Strata, folds and "sidewalks".

The cliffs of Horton Bluff are dark. They clearly show the layers of sedimentary deposits that were left at the bottom of what was probably an extensive and fairly shallow fresh water basin and swamp system. The multilayers are like pages in time whose fossilized code, when deciphered, gives a few glimpses of the elements that were part of the ancient scene. Even the raindrops that fell upon it were recorded.

Movement in the Earth's crust can be seen from the dipped and bent layers. In particular, the cliffs below the lighthouse are distorted and folded as if squeezed and pushed by a giant hand.

The strata that are at the level of the beach escape the main erosive forces of tide and frozen water and remain as solid natural sidewalks running out from the cliffs. They allow one to walk above the modern, muddy sediments dropped by the ebbing tide. They also become a larger page of uninterrupted prehistoric text to be read.

4. The oldest fossilized footprints in Canada. Recorded on one of the "sidewalks" are the oldest fossilized footprints in Canada. This trackway was featured in a *Canadian Geographic* article, Oct./Nov., 1980. We cleaned away the tidal silt in and around the tracks and tried to envision the ponderous creature that left this trail as it plodded through the mud and vegetation of that ancient coal age swamp.

After spending a few hours surrounded by the rocky pages of Horton Bluff and being immersed in the images brought to mind, we scrambled up the cliffs. As we reached the field above, it was with a sense of having just disembarked from a time machine into the greening fields of the present.



*Red Crossbill*

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## Wolfville Area Spring Birds April 25, 1993

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

In hindsight (always 20-20) I failed badly as leader of this joint Nova Scotia Bird Society / BNS field trip. Since the tide was low in mid-morning, I should have ended the day with the Wolfville / Grand Pre dykes and started with the Canning area rather than the reverse.

Our day started beautifully sunny and warm. About 35 people in 16 cars made up our starting caravan. Unlike previous years, we were unable to find a willet at the Wolfville wharf.

Near the Wolfville sewage ponds, in the mouth of the Cornwallis River, I had seen at least 40 brant the day before - but none were there at low tide on the day of the field trip.

Mike Hawkswood led us on an unplanned side trip to his yard in Wolfville where we were lucky to see

three red crossbills, two courting northern flickers, three cedar waxwings and a male house sparrow carrying nest-material into a hole in a willow trunk.

At a pond on Starr's Point, we saw a distant killdeer, a red-winged blackbird and a red-tailed hawk, one of several seen on the trip.

At the mouth of the Habitant River (Canning), we spotted a soaring immature bald eagle (and one or two more, very distantly). At the Canning aboiteau, there were three buffleheads, an American wigeon, at least 20 Canada geese, and two kestrels together.

We had a leisurely lunch in the new small river-park on the east edge of Canning. My scope gave us a good view of a feeding muskrat on the river bank.

Then we caravanned to Harris Pond (still in Canning). In addition to lots of loafing gulls, we found several basking painted turtles, a tree swallow, a barn swallow, a female belted kingfisher, two cock ring-necked pheasants, two American black ducks, and several grackles and red-winged blackbirds.

At Canard Pond, there were four male ring-necked ducks (seen by few because they flushed immediately

and left), 20+ green-winged teal, four American black ducks, three female red-winged blackbirds together (presumably newly arrived), and a drumming male downy woodpecker.

Next was Sheffield Mills, where we were lucky to find a fourth-year bald eagle that sat tight for close views, then also gave us a good flight display. We also had good looks at lots of common ravens.

In a cattail marsh by a stream, northwest of Sheffield Mills, a snipe flushed and was seen flying by most of us. Another barn swallow also appeared.

The weather became cool and overcast by the time we reached Bains Road, northwest of Canning, in late afternoon. This area has been a great spot for geese and ducks for several years. Just the day before the trip, I had seen 190 Canada geese plus lots of ducks: wood ducks, northern pintails, American wigeons, mallards, American black ducks, and green-winged teal. But on the day of the trip, a farmer was working his field nearby so there were only gulls.

Finally, I showed the few remaining participants the eagle nest at Greenwich where the attendant adult acted as if she(?) had small nestlings.



*Wilson's Snipe*

## Rockville Notch May 8, 1993

led by Larry and Lynn Coldwell  
Harmony, N.S.

No field trip report was available.

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## Cape Split May 23, 1993

by John Pickwell \*  
New Minas, N.S.

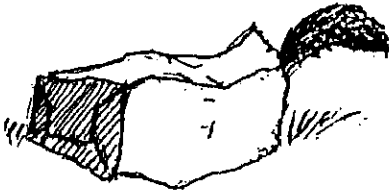
The weather was not at all promising when a number of cars left the Robie Tufts Nature Centre to meet the rest of the participants at Scots Bay. By the time I got my pack out of the car, I realized that everyone had already taken off into the woods. I hurried along as best as I could and eventually managed to catch up with two ladies bringing up the rear. The front runners were going at a pace that I could not, or would not, match if it were to be a meaningful nature walk. So the three of us settled down to enjoy the Spring Beauties, the Wild Sarsaparilla, Bluebead Lilies, Trilliums, False Solomon's-seal, Twisted Stalk, and many other plants along the way. Needless to say, we looked at the ferns and mosses too.

As we got closer to the Split, the



temperature began to get colder and walking was quite slippery in places. My companions were asking, "How much further?" However, we finally made it out to the end. The wind was blowing hard and it was cold and damp. People were huddled in small groups eating their lunches. How many belonged to the BNS trip I didn't know. In response to questions about the far shoreline, I got out my map and we worked out some of the places of interest between us. By now most people were ready to head back and disappeared.

I retreated to the shelter of an old pine tree, a little back in the woods from the Split, to eat my lunch. I had almost finished when I



heard a rustle in my lunch bag - there was a bushy tail hanging out of the bag! He was out of luck because there was nothing left in the bag but I dropped part of a banana and the red squirrel took off with it for one of the lower limbs of the pine.

About that time one of the ladies I came out with came along and we joined up again for the return trip. Here and there we stopped and looked at ferns and other plants of interest. At one point my companion slipped and fell, bruising herself. However, she was a real trooper and carried on in good humour. We arrived back at the parking lot at about 2:30.

Not exactly one of my most memorable BNS outings, I must say!

\* Scott Hennigar substituted for Jim Wolford as leader of this trip but we were unable to contact him for a field trip report. John Pickwell volunteered to record his impressions for us but emphasized that the participants were scattered and he didn't know what the others had encountered. It was really unfortunate that the weather was so poor. The next day, one of the Editors guided some out-of-province visitors along the same route on a warm, sunny, calm day. The spring flowers were magnificent and eating lunch at the Split was a real treat instead of an ordeal. We'll hope that conditions are better for next year's BNS trip. Ed.

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## Wolfville Dyke

May 29, 1993

led by Sherman Boates  
Wolfville, N.S.

No field trip report was available.

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## Blomidon Park Nature Walk

June 2, 1993

led by Sherman Williams  
Avonport, N.S.  
(substituting for Jim Wolford)

No report was available for this  
*Parks are for People* field trip.

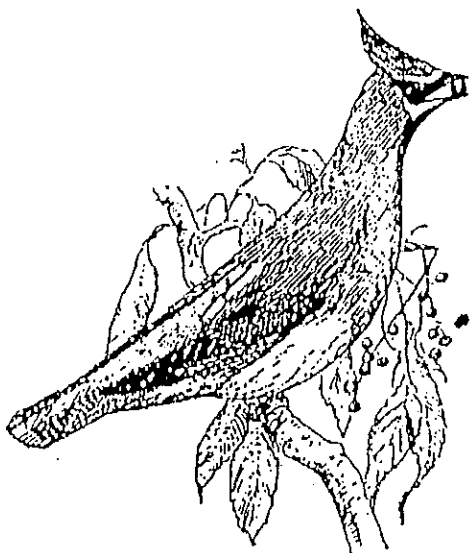
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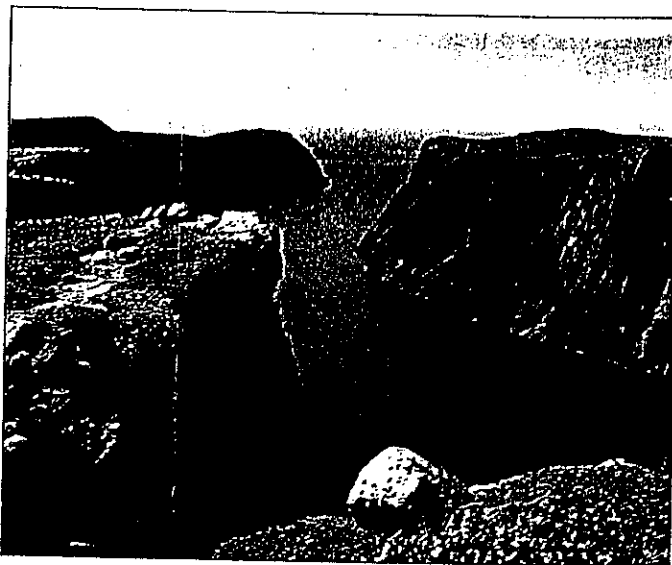
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# White Rock June 5, 1993

by Peter J. Austin-Smith  
Wolfville, N.S.



*American Redstart*

A sunny morning, notable in a week of otherwise cloudy and rainy weather, greeted the dozen people assembled at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre for a trip to White Rock. While waiting for any latecomers, we observed the chimney swifts spill out of the chimney beginning about 0830 hrs and lasting for four or five minutes. Many flew off immediately to the southeast, while others circled about for a moment or two, then headed off to forage for the day. Our group also headed out after briefly looking at a map of the area and discussing "river capture", a geological event whereby the Gaspereau River, eroding rapidly upstream, captured the waters of the Black River. The Deep Hollow Road follows the course of the old Black River.

Several warblers, a solitary virco and a rose-breasted grosbeak were singing when we first arrived at the White Rock bridge parking area. Bernard Forsythe identified at least five warbler species (including ovenbird, Blackburnian, yellow, and redstart) but most stopped singing when I stopped talking! There's a lesson here for field trip leaders - listen first, then talk!

After walking along the path through the hemlocks and crossing the iron bridge that now replaces the

old swinging bridge, we looked at the wooden fishway situated at the mouth of the Black River. The waters spilling over the structure down into the main channel seem to be an obstacle to any migrating fish but perhaps some might be able to leap the falls when more water is flowing down the old Black River.

After pausing to watch a woodchuck hastily make for its burrow in the rocky streambank, we made our way past the Hell's Gate Generating Station, where the water is channeled into turbines via twin aqueducts running down a steep incline, and followed the path alongside the Black River. Here the waters are relatively shallow as the river, actually not much larger than a good-sized stream, flows rapidly down over the underlying rocks to form many small falls and corresponding pools. The woods on either side are mainly



*Clintonia borealis*

hemlock, with some fir, birch, and maple. Blue violets, false lily-of-the-valley (*Mianthemum canadense*), and Clintonia were relatively abundant flowers. As we moved upstream, the banks become progressively narrower, then open out on the southwest side to provide a small flat area where signs of camping were evident. Just beyond this, we came to the lowest of the *three pools*, a favourite summer swimming spot and "plunge pool" as evidenced by the ropes hanging from the trees. Just beyond the pool the river gorge steepens and narrows, to form more attractive waterfalls and requires careful climbing!

At this point, we turned around and travelled back, parallel to the river but higher above it through the woods. Coming out to a power line, where apparently the brush had been cut not sprayed the previous year, there were bunchberries in flower and a stand of pink lady's-slippers.

Upon reaching the road leading from Hell's Gate to the top of the hill, we walked up to look at the aqueduct or penstock, a huge tube that snakes out of the woods and under a bridge, to split into two smaller tubes that disappear over the hill. This huge wooden aqueduct is constructed of boards strapped tightly together with steel hoops, then coated with creosote for waterproofing. Spring peepers inhabited some of the pools, created by dozens of leaks both large and small, below the penstock.

Returning to Hell's Gate we spotted a ruby-throated hummingbird and a young bald eagle soaring high

overhead. (In winter, eagles often roost in larger trees some distance up the Gaspereau River from White Rock and can be seen patiently waiting for prey at White Rock pond.) Back at the parking lot, we were treated to a firsthand view of a male redstart which landed on an eye-level branch just a few metres away.

Although little of unusual nature was observed, the trip, on a bright sunny morning, was successful if for no other reason than to introduce people to a beautiful area with easy access.

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## Kentville Ravine June 6, 1993

by John Pickwell  
New Minas, N.S.

Twelve people accompanied me on this trip through the Kentville Ravine, mainly to look for ferns and mosses. At the top of the first rise we found one of the hair capped mosses, *Pogonatum alpinum*, and two wood ferns, *Dryopteris intermedia* and (possibly) *D. x triploidea*, a hybrid between *D. intermedia* and *D. carthusiana*. At this time of year, it was impossible to be sure since the spores could not be tested. As we reached the first concrete bridge, we saw the first of many Ostrich Ferns, *Matteuccia Struthiopteris* plus Sensitive (or Bead) Fern, *Onoclea sensibilis*. On both we saw last year's fertile fronds with their spore cases that look like lots of little beads on a

stick. This year's fertile fronds were not showing yet.

We walked through the meadow alongside the stream which, I learned for the first time, is called Elderkins' Brook. A few small trout were seen darting away as we passed. In the wet ground at the end of the meadow, we collected two mosses: *Rhytidiadelphus subpinnatus*, one of the rough-necked mosses, and *Philonotis fontana*, a pretty light green moss with a red stem. Here we also found two of the common horsetails: the Field Horsetail, *Equisetum arvense*, and the Wood Horsetail, *E. sylvaticum*.

On entering the wooded part of the ravine, we took a side path to look at both of the Osmunda that grow here: *Osmunda Claytoniana*, the Interrupted Fern, and *O. cinnamomea*, the Cinnamon Fern. While we were there we also looked at Red Stemmed Feather Moss, *Pleurozium Schreberi*, and another Rough-necked Moss, *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*. A few Pink Lady's-Slippers were at the juncture of the two paths.

Returning to the main path, we examined the dainty little Oak Fern, *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*, and Step Moss, *Hylacomium splendens*. Through the next part of the ravine there was much to see: more Wood Ferns, the Beech Fern, *Phegopteris connectilis*, two forms of the Lady Fern, *Athyrium Filix-femina*, one with a green rachis (stem) and *forma rubellum*, with a wine coloured rachis. The New York Fern, *Thelypteris novaboracensis*, and the Hay-scented Fern, *Dennstaedtia punctilobula*, were just up so it was hard to

see what they look like when mature. Nancy Nickerson pointed out a liverwort, which I believe was *Frulliania tamarisci*, growing on a tree and the moss, *Neckera pennata*. We also saw Purple and Nodding Trilliums.

Growing on the path in a number of places were the Northern Coralroot, *Corallorhiza trifida*, a little



Coral-root

saprophytic orchid so small and pale it was quite hard to see. Also growing in the path was the Daisyleaf Grape-fern, *Botrychium matricariifolium*, indeed an unexpected find. Then, where there was a large patch of wood ash, we found the Golf Club Moss, *Funaria hygrometrica*, and later one of the mosses of the Mnium group, *Rhizomnium punctatum*. This is an interesting moss since one can observe the individual cell structure with a hand lens.

On up the slope we found the Marginal Wood Fern, *Dryopteris marginalis*, the Christmas Fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*, and two

hybrids: *D. x Boottii*, a common one between *D. intermedia* and *D. cristata*, and a rare as yet unnamed one between *D. intermedia* and *D. marginalis*. On a rocky outcrop were growing a few Common Polypody, *Polypodium Virginianum*. At the very top end of the ravine, we crossed the stream to look at the one and only Braun's Holly-fern, *Polystichum Braunii*, in the ravine. This fern, which is not common anywhere, also grows on Cape Split and in Blomidon Park. Here the mosquitoes were very thick so we did not stay long. On the way back, we stopped to look at things like Cushion Moss, *Leucobryum glaucum*, and *Polystichum commune*, another of the Hair-capped Mosses.

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## Biodiversity Cruise June 12, 1993

by Peter J. Austin-Smith  
Wolfville, N.S.

An unscheduled last minute change in field trip leaders didn't unduly upset either Nick Hill or yours truly, both of whom were drafted to lead this trip. The only question, given the field trip title, was where and how? After receiving a couple of phone calls about the "cruise", Nick and I agreed that we would make it a canoe trip to the Kentville Sanctuary, perhaps a short trip downstream to investigate a prominent forested ridge in the sanctuary.

So on Saturday morning, six of us gathered under cloudy skies at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, where we again witnessed the departure of the chimney swifts at 0830. The birds poured from the chimney at a steady rate until 0835 when presumably all had left to forage for the day, mainly departing in a southeasterly direction. Our small group then drove to Nick Hill's house which is situated on the edge of the Kentville Sanctuary, just off Highway 1 near Palmetter's Country Home. There we were joined by Larry Bogan and his son; Fred Payne, retired Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources wetlands and waterfowl biologist; and Nick Hill and his young son.

Sorting ourselves out among the canoes, we pushed off into the Cornwallis River and headed downstream, suddenly isolated from familiar surroundings by the tall reed canary grass that grew on the marsh and bordered the main channel of the Cornwallis River. This plant is unusual in that the only other place



*Reed Canary-grass*

in the province Fred knows of it is in northeastern Nova Scotia. It walled us in on both sides of the river, and gave the impression that we were in a near wilderness area (except for traffic noise further downstream).

Along the way we observed several expected bird species including the usual redwinged blackbirds (although not many of them), dozens of tree, bank and some barn swallows swooping for insect prey over the marsh and river, and five American black ducks. Heard but not seen were swamp sparrows, yellow warblers and yellowthroats. There were abundant signs of muskrats and some of the party saw muskrats diving ahead of our small flotilla as it cruised leisurely along.

Halfway to our destination we stopped alongside a steep embankment to stretch our legs under large hemlocks and red oaks, found scouring rush growing on the lower part of the shore and spotted a chipmunk and pink lady's-slippers somewhat higher on the sloping shoreline.

Returning to the canoes, we shoved off for the wooded ridge inside the town boundaries. This prominent hill was marked by a huge sand and gravel operation on its west side. After another 15 to 20 minutes, we landed on the drier portion of the marsh opposite this wooded ridge which likely was a kame, a remnant of glacial times. Kames consist of stratified material deposited by melt-water from ice.

We climbed up the steep wooded slopes, through hemlock and oak, pausing to look at various plants including more lady's-slippers in

flower, many of which were quite pale in colour, and a *Pyrola* species. Then we walked along the ridge top to the west to look at the sand and gravel removal; it was obvious that the woods were being cut, then the sand removed down to the surrounding level of land. At the eastern edge of the ridge or kame, some of the more adventuresome went down the slope to look at the pond on the southeast side. Evidently the pond is a kettle hole, where the melting of a large block of glacial ice caused a deep depression. There are a few buildings including a house near the pond. A discussion with the house owner revealed that he owned 50 acres including the wooded ridge or hill which eventually will be cut down to 20 feet or so for subdivision development! A dismal thought considering the wonderful opportunity for creating a major greenway to protect the integrity of the river corridor from Grand Pre to Coldbrook or even to the headwaters of the Cornwallis in Berwick.

The paddle back upriver was less leisurely for some of us than for others! One canoe veered off into a narrow channel to investigate a pond area for waterfowl. After unfolding our cramped legs and lugging the canoes (thanks again Fred, Larry and Nick) back over the marsh to the cars, the earlier arrivals were taken by Nick into the woodlot next to his house to look at false Solomon's seal, nodding trillium and other plants. In all we listed some 24 plant species in addition to those noted in a Canadian Wildlife Service Report on the Sanctuary compiled in 1975.



The "cruise" brought home a very important point to all of us. Sometimes the most attractive areas are those in our own backyards, literally, as we discovered while on the Cornwallis River both just outside and within the boundaries of the Town of Kentville. Perhaps this area should be given much more attention as a site of special interest because of its value as a wetland besides its natural history attractions. The sanctuary designation is still in effect but certainly the practical value of it will decline if uncontrolled development

proceeds around its margins. Fortunately, DND still controls much of the northern boundary.

If the people of Kings County wish to manage the river corridor, which includes the sanctuary, in a manner which will protect its ecological integrity and functioning, then it is imperative that all municipalities with an interest in the river valley begin planning for such enlightened management now. The BNS could certainly provide invaluable assistance in such an endeavour.

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## ARTICLES

### "Children in the Woods" \*

When I was a child growing up in the San Fernando Valley in California, a trip into Los Angeles was special. The sensation of movement from a rural area into an urban one was sharp. On one of these charged occasions, walking down a sidewalk with my mother, I stopped suddenly, caught by a pattern of sunlight trapped in a spiraling imperfection in a windowpane. A stranger, an elderly woman in a cloth coat and a dark hat, spoke out spontaneously, saying how remarkable it is that children notice these things.

I have never forgotten the texture of this incident. Whenever I recall it I am moved not so much by any sense of my young self but by a sense

of responsibility toward children, knowing how acutely I was affected in that moment by that woman's words. The effect, for all I know, has lasted a lifetime.

Now, years later, I live in a rain forest in western Oregon, on the banks of a mountain river in relatively undisturbed country, surrounded by 150-foot-tall Douglas firs, delicate deer-head orchids, and clearings where wild berries grow. White-footed mice and mule deer, mink and coyote move through here. My wife and I do not have children, but children we know, or children whose parents we are close to, are often here. They always want to go into the woods. And I wonder what to tell them.

In the beginning, years ago, I think I said too much. I spoke with an encyclopedic knowledge of the

names of plants or the names of birds passing through in season. Gradually I came to say less. After a while the only words I spoke, beyond answering a question or calling attention quickly to the slight difference between a sprig of red cedar and a sprig of incense cedar, were to elucidate single objects.

I remember once finding a fragment of a raccoon's jaw in an alder thicket. I sat down alongside the two children with me and encouraged them to find out who this was - with only the three teeth still intact in a piece of the animal's maxilla to guide



*Raccoon skull*

them. The teeth told by their shape and placement what this animal ate. By a kind of visual extrapolation its size became clear. There were other clues, immediately present, which told, with what I could add of climate and terrain, how this animal lived, how its broken jaw came to be lying here. Raccoon, they surmised. And tiny tooth marks along the bone's broken edge told of a mouse's hunger for calcium.

We set the jaw back and went on.

If I had known more about raccoons, finer points of osteology, we might have guessed more: say, whether it was male or female. But what we deduced was all we needed. Hours later, the maxilla, lost behind

us in the detritus of the forest floor, continued to effervesce. It was tied faintly to all we spoke of that afternoon.

In speaking with children who might one day take a permanent interest in natural history - as writers, as scientists, as filmmakers, as anthropologists - I have sensed that an extrapolation from a single fragment of the whole is the most invigorating experience I can share with them. I think children know that nearly anyone can learn the names of things; the impression made on them at this level is fleeting. What takes a lifetime to learn, they comprehend, is the existence and substance of myriad relationships: it is these relationships, not the things themselves, that ultimately hold the human imagination.

The brightest children, it has often struck me, are fascinated by metaphor - with what is shown in the set of relationships bearing on the raccoon, for example, to lie quite beyond the raccoon. In the end, you are trying to make clear to them that everything found at the edge of one's senses - the high note of the winter wren, the thick perfume of the propolis that drifts downwind from spring willows, the brightness of wood chips scattered by beaver - that all this fits together. The indestructibility of these associations conveys a sense of permanence that nurtures the heart, that cripples one of the most insidious of human anxieties, the one that says, you do not belong here, you are unnecessary.

Whenever I walk with a child, I think how much I have seen dis-

appear in my own life. What will there be for this person when he is my age? If he senses something ineffable in the landscape, will I know enough to encourage it? - to somehow show him that, yes, when people talk about violent death, spiritual exhilaration, compassion, futility, final causes, they are drawing on forty thousand years of human meditation on *this* - as we embrace Douglas firs, or stand by a river across whose undulating back we skip stones, or dig out a camas bulb, biting down into a taste so much wilder than last night's potatoes.

The most moving look I ever saw from a child in the woods was on a mud bar by the footprints of a heron. We were on our knees, making handprints beside the footprints. You could feel the creek vibrating in the silt and sand. The sun beat down heavily on our hair. Our shoes were soaking wet. The look said: I did not know until now that I needed someone much older to confirm this, the feeling I have of life here. I can now grow older, knowing it need never be lost.

The quickest door to open in the woods for a child is the one that leads to the smallest room, by knowing the name each thing is called. The door that leads to the cathedral is marked by a hesitancy to speak at all, rather to encourage by example a sharpness of the senses. If one speaks, it should only be to say, as well as one can, how wonderfully all this fits together, to indicate what a long, fierce peace can derive from this knowledge.

\* reprinted from **Crossing Open Ground**, pp. 147-151. George E. Forsyth read this moving essay at the end of his May 17th program on *Project Wild*. He obtained a copy of the essay accidentally and does not know the author or other details about the book. If anyone recognizes the essay, please call George at 542-7116.

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## Weather Statistics - Spring 1993

by George Alliston  
West Brooklynn, N.S.

The 1993 spring weather is not the subject of fond reflections for most of us; let's see what the statistics show.

Surprisingly (to me) the mean temperature for the period March, April, May was somewhat (0.8C) higher than the 30-year averages. This was due to the considerably higher mean temperature in May (3.2C above average) and somewhat higher (0.8C) temperature in April, more than compensating for a cold (1.5C below average) March. My memories of May temperatures must have been coloured by days such as May 10, 11, 12 and 30 where high temperatures were only single digit and the 12 days on which the lows were 3C or lower. There were, however, eight days in May where the highs were 20C or more; on the

warmest day, May 16, when the maximum temperature reached 25C, the minimum temperature was 0.5C.

Total precipitation for the spring months was only about 10 percent greater than the 30-year average; however, we received a much greater proportion of this precipitation in the form of snow. In March, when total precipitation was 50 percent greater than average, snowfall was 163 percent greater while rainfall was about half the average. Similarly in April, when total precipitation was somewhat below (-13 percent) average, snowfall was almost twice

while rainfall was two-thirds the average.

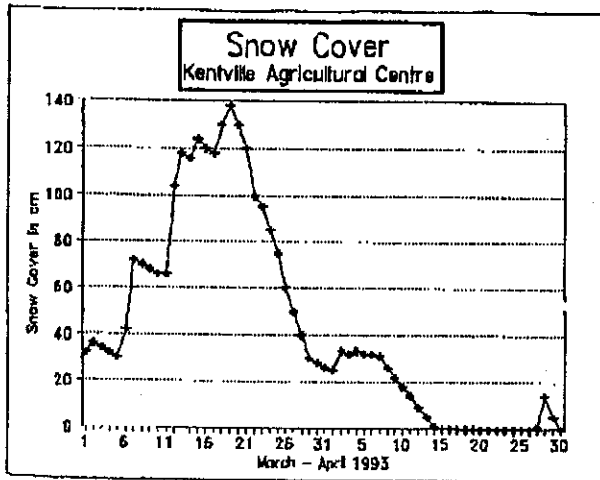
Snow, which had covered the ground since late January, accumulated to a maximum depth of 138 cm on March 19 and had not completely melted until after mid-April (see "Snow Cover" graph). A late snowfall on April 27-28 dumped 14 cm of snow on the ground. Photographs that I took on May 1 show snow cover in ditches and shaded places.

Statistics aside, the weather of the "spring" of 1993 can best be summed up in one word - miserable.

**Weather Statistics - Spring 1993**  
 recorded at the Kentville Agricultural Centre  
 (30-year averages - 1951-1980 - in parentheses)

Month	Mean.....	Precipitation		Bright	
	Temp..... deg C.....	Rain mm	Snow cm	Total* mm	Sunshine Hours
March	-2.5..... (-1.0).....	24.0 (45.9)	132.0 (50.2)	149.4 (98.5)	159.5 (125.8)
April	5.2..... (4.4).....	44.6 (65.7)	26.5 (14.6)	71.8 (82.6)	154.1 (149.3)
May	13.6..... (10.4).....	63.0 (75.0)	0.0 (1.6)	63.0 (77.3)	178.7 (201.5)
Total or Average	5.4..... (4.6).....	131.6 (186.6)	158.5 (66.4)	284.2 (258.4)	492.3 (476.6)

\* Rain plus snow, melted



## The Naming of the Gaspereau \*

About 1673.

Now the rainbow tints of autumn  
 Deck the ancient hills  
 And the dreamy river saunters  
 Past the lazy mills,  
 Let us seek the murmuring forest  
 Where the pines and hemlocks grow  
 And a thousand fringed shadows  
 Fall upon the Gaspereau.

When the old Acadian farmers,  
 Sailing up the Bay,  
 Landed with their goods and cattle  
 On the fair Grand Pre,  
 Wandering through the ancient forest  
 Claude, Rene, and Theriot,  
 In a vale of matchless beauty  
 Found the River Gaspereau.

Found the lithe and dark-skinned Micmac,  
 In his birch canoe,  
 Paddling down his *Magapskegechk*  
 To the Basin blue,

Little dreaming of the presence  
 Of the Indian's pale-faced foe  
 Singing unmelodious boat-songs  
 On the winding Gaspereau.

Midst the brushwood and the rushes  
 And the trembling ferns,  
 Where the River, sighing, singing,  
 Speeds with many turns  
 Through the gateway of the mountains  
 Toward the meadow far below,  
 On they crept in silent wonder  
 By the sun-kissed Gaspereau.

These were days of dream and legend,  
 Continents were new,  
 Here the humble Norman peasants  
 Into poets grew;  
 From their roaming in the forest  
 Claude, Rene, and Theriot  
 Brought their comrades rapt descriptions  
 Of the vale of Gaspereau.

Then around the hemlock fire,  
 In the cabin rude,  
 With their stock of cheese and brown-bread  
 And their ale, home-brewed,  
 Gathered all the Norman peasants;

And at last Rene said low:  
"Let us name the new-found river  
Gaspere-water, Gaspereau!"

Gaspere was the gentlest comrade  
In their little band,  
None so buoyant, none so eager  
For the Acadian land;  
But ere half the voyage was over,  
In the wastes of summer seas,  
Suddenly there crept beside him  
Some old shadow of disease.

There was mourning in the vessel,  
Strong men sobbed and cried,  
When one evening, just at sunset,  
Their loved Gaspere died;  
There was wailing in the vessel  
As, with trembling voice and slow,  
Pere Deschambault read the death-prayers  
As the still form sank below.

Dreary seemed the voyage thereafter  
On the cruel sea,  
Till they reached the smiling meadows  
Of fair Acadie.  
Never rose their songs at evening,  
For the flames of hope burned low;-  
So they named the lovely river,  
With fond memory, Gaspereau!

Thence, in summer, when the plowing  
In the fields was done,  
And the busy looms were growing  
Silent, one by one,  
Many a lover in the moonlight,  
Speaking tender words and low,  
Sought the path across the meadows  
To the quiet Gaspereau.

When there came some loss or sorrow  
To the little band;  
When the dykes broke, or the crops failed  
In the Acadian land,

Many a tired wife and mother,  
All her spirit dark with woe,  
Sought relief from her forebodings  
By the peaceful Gaspereau.

Vanished are the Acadian peasants,  
Sweet EVangeline,  
Gabriel, Benedict, and Basil,  
And no sadder scene  
Ever gave itself to story,  
Than that scene of wreck and woe,  
When the English ships weighed anchor  
In the mouth of Gaspereau.

Still it flows among the meadows,  
Singing as of yore  
To the ferns and trailing mosses  
On the winding shore;  
To the pines that dip their branches  
In the crystal wave below,  
And the crimson leaves of autumn  
Falling in the Gaspereau.

\* from **Acadian Legends and Lyrics**, pp. 3-7, White & Allen, London & New York, 1889. Submitted by Ellis Gertridge.

## CAR RENTAL

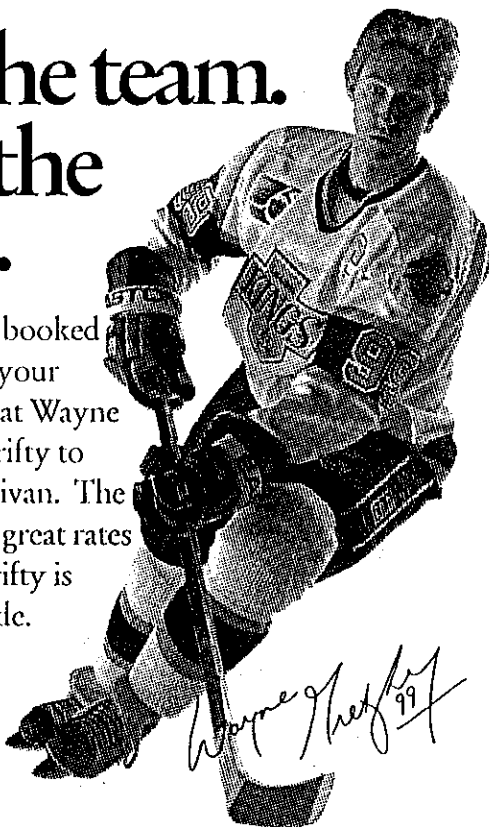
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# TRIVIAL TIDBITS of Local Natural History

early March through  
mid-May, 1993

selected and compiled

by Jim Wolford  
Wolfville, N.S.

## Skies

Mar 28 through at least Apr 19 - a newly discovered **supernova** visible via telescope in Galaxy M81 within Ursa Major constellation (SW).

Apr 19 - eclipse of Venus by our Moon (SW).

## Fungi

April - two "**false truffles**", underground fungi in the genus *Rhizopogon*, were dug up under mixed forest at West Brooklyn (GA, identified by DG).

## Plants

May 7 - a very rarely reported moss, *Rhodobryum ontariense* ("**umbrella moss**"), found on a mossy tree trunk at Canaan (NH, identified by RN).

(other plants listed sequentially by dates of reports)

Mar 15 - oodles of twigs and branches on the ground after very strong winds, on North Mountain north of Canning (EBM).

Mar 24 - swollen red flower buds obvious on a **red maple** tree at Acadia University (JWW).

Mar 26 - several **crocuses** and **snowdrops** in bloom in Wolfville (JWW).

Apr 7 - **daphne** in bloom at Gaspereau (EG).

Apr 10 - male catkins of **alder** just



noticeably beginning to open at Sheffield Mills (JWW).

Apr 11 - first report of **coltsfoot** in bloom west of Gaspereau - very late for that south-facing site (JWW); other reports of **coltsfoot** were Apr 18 at Borden Falls in Blomidon Provincial Park (WJH) and Apr 19 at Grand Pre (BBT).

Apr 16 - male catkins of **beaked hazelnut** nearly completely open at Acadia University (JWW).

May 1 - **hepatica**, an extremely rare spring-flowering plant in Nova Scotia, found in mixed woods at Canaan (BLF; later seen by RN, NH, JWW).

May 14 - **shadbush** (Indian pear) suddenly in bloom in Wolfville (JWW).

May 16 - carpets of **spring beauties**, lots of **Dutchman's breeches**, and a few **red trilliums** in bloom at Cape Split (BLF, JWW).

May 22 - new shoots of **Japanese knotweed** already about 3.3m tall in Wolfville (JWW).

## Invertebrates

Apr 6 - a garden spider on top of a half-metre of snow on Wolfville Ridge; the spider moved when touched (DJ).

Apr 11 - a black and brown **wooly-bear caterpillar** found on paved driveway in Wolfville (MT, BBT).

## Fishes

May 5 - a well-described **sea lamprey** seen at water's edge, attached to a rock, in the Gaspereau - White Rock canal (GT).

May 7 - first report of **gaspereaux** in the Gaspereau River (EG).

## Amphibians

Apr 6 - a **frog** seen in a tiny pond on Wolfville Ridge (DJ).

Apr 11 - in heavy rain at night near Windsor, an unidentified **frog** hopped across road (DC).

Apr 18 - **wood frogs** calling at East Dalhousie (DC), and **spring peepers** calling at Gaspereau (CKC); later reports for calling **wood frogs** were May 4 and May 5 at Lower Canard (JWW).

Apr 21 - on a warm, rainy night, Brian Merry drove westward along Belcher Street from Port Williams and found about eight **spring peepers**, 12 **wood frogs**, five **American toads**, and one dead **leopard frog**, all on the road.

May 5 - a few **American toads** calling at Lower Canard and lots of them in the Port Williams skating pond (JWW).

## Mammals

Mar 22 - three **skunks** and two **raccoons**, all road-killed, between Berwick and Aylesford (KLTC). Other reports of **raccoons** were as follows: Mar 28 - four fighting over suet in very early a.m. in Wolfville (DT); Apr 20 - cavity in maple trunk on Wolfville's Prospect Street again inhabited by (presumably) the same mother as in June 1992 (kits heard Apr 22) (PS); May 4 - one along lower Canard River and active a half-hour before dark (JWW); May 8 - one curled up asleep in crow nest at Grand Pre (BBT); at least one raiding suet feeders in Wolfville (BBT).

Mar 24 - a **mink** was seen at Avonport (EU); also several reports and sightings of at least one mink along the Cornwallis River at Col-dbrook (Mar ?) (ASM).

Mar 22 - an **otter's** tracks identified at Bramber, Hants County (KLTC, GC, confirmed by DNR).

May 15 - a **black bear** with two cubs seen (from the air) near Morrissetown (BA).

Mar 23 - a **red fox** seen at Avonport (EU).

Mar 31 - a **red fox** was seen to catch four mice (in 15 minutes!) at Cheverie (KLTC).

Apr 5 - a gray-black fox was seen



closely on Wolfville Ridge (DJ).

May 3 - a **red fox** seen from only five metres away, at a den in Grand Pre; then two cubs seen there May 5 (probably two months old) (JGT).

Feb 21 - a male **coyote** in good condition seen near the Delhaven aboiteau (JH).

Feb 22 - a silver-gray **coyote** seen at Sheffield Mills (RM).

Mar 8 - a **coyote** seen on a road at North Alton (KGT).

May 16 - three **harbour seals** together at Scots Bay (JWW).

March - Karen Casselman reports no **deer** tracks in Cheverie area.

March - KLTC also report many **red squirrels** at their Cheverie feeder, but then a **barred owl** showed up, resulting in fewer squirrels!

## Contributors to TRIVIAL TIDBITS

BA Bernard Armstrong  
GA George Alliston  
DC Donna Crossland  
GC Garnet Cox  
CKC Cyril Coldwell  
BLF Bernard Forsythe  
DG Darryl Grund  
EG Ellis Gertridge  
JH John Harwood  
NH Nick Hill  
WJH Winnie & John Horton  
DJ Dave Jones  
BM Brian Merry  
RM Richard Muise  
ASM Angus & Stella MacLean  
EBM Eleanor & Bernard Mason  
RN Ruth Newell  
DNR Dept. of Nat. Resources

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PS Philippa Shepherd  
DT Dianne Thorpe  
GT Gerry Truceman  
MT Matthew Thexton  
BBT Brenda & Bill Thexton  
JGT Judy & Gordon Tufts  
KGT Karen & George Turner  
EU Eva Urban  
SW Sherman Williams  
JWW Jim Wolford

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## BNS Bird News

April 1 through early June, 1993

by Richard Stern  
Kentville, N.S.

This was an interesting spring, with a sudden influx of migrants around mid-May as expected. I would like to see more reports and observations from the western part of our area (e.g. Berwick, Aylesford, Middleton etc.).

### Common Loon

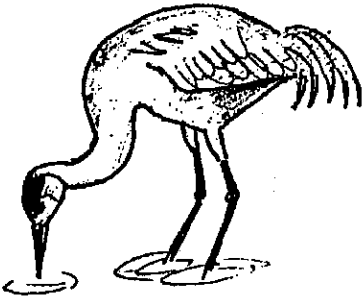
Three different pairs on Aylesford Lake, May 24 (RBS).

### Red-throated Loon

Although usually seen in winter plumage, one was seen off Scots Bay in full breeding plumage on the late date of May 16 (JWW).

### Northern Gannet

Twenty-one in total, in small groups over the Bay of Fundy near Black Rock, Margaretsville, etc., April 19 (RBS, JCT).



### **Sandhill Crane**

JCT received a report of one of these spectacular and rare (but possibly becoming more frequent) visitors to our area in Windsor during the third week in May. This species has a wide distribution from western Ontario to the west coast, and migrates to Texas, New Mexico, etc., for the winter. A separate, non-migratory population lives in central Florida. Who knows the possible origin of the occasional bird seen in our area?

### **Snow Goose**

PG saw "several large flocks" flying over the Bay of Fundy near Margaretsville, April 19, and 22 more were over Kingsport the same day. This is most unusual for a species that is normally present in ones and twos, if at all, in our area and Nova Scotia in general. Numbers passing north to Baffin Island through southern Quebec this spring were a record high, so this may represent a "spillover" from that area.

### **Brant**

Forty or more were in the mouth of the Cornwallis River, April 24. There is usually a small population

that migrate through our area, although their provincial strongholds are Brier and Cape Sable Islands.

### **Canada Goose**

JCT counted 300+ at Canning Aboiteau, April 10, and 168 in a flooded field at Bains Road, Canning, April 23.

### **Gadwall**

A pair of these rather uncommon "puddle ducks" was present at Canning Aboiteau, April 15 (JCT).

### **Wood Duck**

JCT found two pairs of this attractive and uncommon duck in a flooded field at Bains Road, April 23.

### **Oldsquaw**

GEF found a male at the Port Williams sewage pond in April. Last year a pair was seen there but the female was later found dead. Although common off our coast in winter they do not breed in the Maritimes.

### **Common Eider**

Three hundred and eight were counted between Huntington Point and Margaretsville, April 19 (RBS, JCT).

### **Black Scoter**

Ten were at Margaretsville, April 19 (RBS, JCT)

### **Surf Scoter**

Thirty-six were off Morden, April 19 (RBS, JCT).

### **Hooded Merganser**

A pair was on a pond near New Ross, April 15 (CR).

### **Northern Goshawk**

BLF reported an active nest with three eggs at Newtonville, April 25. By May 27 there had been no sign of the Kentville birds that I have followed for the last four years but one, behaving as if it were nesting, was seen on Jun 6.

### **Bald Eagle**

GMA have noticed immature birds all April around the site of last year's successful nest at Wallbrook, and wondered if they are birds originally from that nest.

### **Osprey**

The "platform nest" on an island in Aylesford Lake is again active, with the female sitting tight and the male bringing food, May 24 (RBS).

### **Merlin**

All through April various observers saw and heard birds around the Acadia campus in Wolfville. JT observed a pair on April 29 in Wolfville, with the female carrying nesting material. On May 15 BLF found the nest but, unfortunately, it had recently been predated by raccoons.

### **American Kestrel**

There is an active nest at the bottom of KLC's field in Cheverie.

### **Peregrine Falcon**

CS and others saw a pair at the tip of Cape Split, May 16. Wouldn't

it be nice to have a non-introduced pair successfully breed locally?



### **Ruffed Grouse**

BLF found an active nest with nine eggs in Canaan, May 9.

### **Gray Partridge**

BBT seem to be lucky with this species, and saw a pair along the Wellington Dyke Road (a favourite spot), April 3. Possibly the same pair was seen not too far away on May 3 (JWW).

### **Killdeer**

A pair built a nest on Wolfville Ridge, with one egg present on April 18. Next day the nest was abandoned and then a second nest begun. This was destroyed in a late snowstorm, so the persistent birds began a third nest! By May 5 this had four eggs, and was later successful (EA). Another pair was already nesting by the early date of March 27 (JCT). JWf had a nest on her property in Canard Acres mid-May but it was destroyed.

### **Willet**

A small migration of six birds was present in Wolfville Harbour, May 6 (JCT).

### **Least Sandpiper**

Twenty-one were present at Saxon Street Pond, May 12 (JCT). These were presumably spring migrants although the species is far more common and widespread in fall. A small number (about 150 pairs) are estimated to breed in the Maritimes, unlike most of the other "peeps" which are more northerly breeders.

### **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**

PG found an exhausted individual near Connors Creek (near Margaretsville), April 18. He watched it for over half an hour. This species is a regular fall vagrant and rare spring vagrant; even so this is an exceptionally early date. There are no confirmed breeding records for the Maritimes.

### **Short-eared Owl**

GWT saw one at Grand Pre, April 6. [For other information, see "Short-eared Owl Project Update" in this issue of the *Newsletter*.]

### **Barred Owl**

KLC heard one calling all day in the fog, possibly replying to the local foghorn! BLF reports a poor breeding season, with only seven active nests in his nest boxes this year (13 in 1992). Also this year clutches and individual egg sizes were smaller.

### **Great Horned Owl**

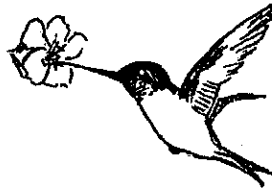
On March 31, at 9:30 p.m., one was hooting for about 20 minutes at the Tufts' residence on Wolfville Ridge.

### **Northern Saw-whet Owl**

March 31 - April 1, one "tooted" on and off in the Tufts' woods, was heard briefly four days later, and again from April 15 to April 19. On April 19 GWT finally saw the bird. He observed it close to a nest box he had put up for it but, unfortunately, it disappeared after that. Although this species seems to be a relatively common migrant in late winter in our area (generally only detectable by sound, late at night), there are only a few local breeding records.

### **Chimney Swift**

As of May 18 the highest number counted at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Wolfville, was 372 (EP, etc.)



### **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**

The earliest date I have is of two in Wolfville, May 9 (BS) - about on time! At least to late May all the birds I have noticed (and they are common this year) have been males. It is known that this is one of the species in which the sexes migrate separately, with the male being the first to arrive and depart. In this species, only the female builds the nest, broods the eggs and feeds the young. By late May both sexes seemed common, at feeders and around flowering trees.

### **Red-headed Woodpecker**

LM found two of these rare visitors from farther south and west of here on his property in North Alton, April 29. They are normally only occasional vagrants to feeders in winter.

### **Northern Flicker**

RBS had a pair that started to excavate a nest hole in an old poplar in his back-yard in early May, but the European Starlings have taken over the hole.

### **Red-bellied Woodpecker**

MAG's over-wintering bird in Canning finally disappeared sometime after May 4.

### **Pileated Woodpecker**

These spectacular birds have been frequent visitors to various backyard trees all spring (RBS, BBT, JT, JCT, etc.).

### **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**

A pair had returned to the woods in Greenfield, May 10 (GWT).

### **Eastern Kingbird**

One of the last of our regular breeders to arrive back, one was seen in Melanson, May 17 (BBT).

### **Cliff Swallow**

Returned to their New Ross haunts for the eighth year, May 14 (CR).

### **Tree Swallow**

Four were at Port Williams, April 18 (GEF), one near Billtown, April 19 (RBS, JCT), and then num-

bers so far are building up as expected.

### **Barn Swallow**

The earliest date I have is April 25 in Canning (v.obs).

### **Common Raven**



One was observed attacking and carrying off a Rock Dove in Wolfville, April 12 (GN).

### **Eastern Bluebird**

Birds have been seen in their expected haunts in Kings County in two separate locations (v. obs.), with use of a nest box in one.

### **Hermit Thrush**

One was singing along Butler Road, May 4 (GWT).

### **Northern Shrike**

Definitely a rarity this year, one was seen by GWT near White Rock, April 2.

### **Solitary Vireo**

A pair was singing and displaying on territory in woods in Kentville, May 3. This species is always one of the earliest true long-distance woodland-breeding migrants to return, together with the Ruby-crowned Kinglet and the Hermit Thrush. The more abundant Red-eyed Vireos come later.

## Warblers

A **Yellow-rumped** in breeding plumage was singing from a treetop in Kentville, April 25 (RBS) - always a great joy to the author to see the first Warblers back! **Palm Warblers** are early migrants, and three or four were along Butler Road, where they probably breed, May 4 (GWT). On May 7, we had the first true "wave" in our woods in Kentville, with **Northern Parula**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Black-throated Green** all singing, and a **Black-and-white** on Wolfville Ridge (JCT). The same species were present on the BNS field trip to Rockville Notch the next day. Two **Black-throated Blues**, one of our prettier but less common species, were seen by GWT at Greenfield, May 10, a **Yellow** was at Canard Pond, May 11 (JCT) and a **Blackpoll** was there May 17 (RBS). An **Ovenbird** was singing in Kentville, May 17. By the third week of May most of our expected warblers had returned to Kings County.

It is finally being recognized scientifically by more and more authorities that what birders have been surmising for years is true - that numbers of warblers and other neotropical migrant woodland species are on the decline, and that the reasons are mainly due to man's intervention, with the dividing up of large wooded areas and the consequent increase in numbers of Cowbirds, Raccoons and house cats, as well as destruction of wintering habitats. For an excellent account, see the June 1993 issue of *National Geographic*.

## Rose-breasted Grosbeak

BLF had one visit his feeder on May 1 - a very early date. By now (May 27) they seem well distributed and common in their usual haunts. It is worth keeping a feeder going into late May just for the pleasure of having this attractive species and Evening Grosbeaks present at the same time.

## Blue Grosbeak

A good description of one of these rare visitors was given to KLC - it was at Sunset Avenue, Windsor, May 16-23.

## Northern Cardinal

A female was present at WN's Coldbrook feeder on April 21, and was probably in the area for a few days after that. This is one of our more regular vagrants, noticeable by its colour, but easily hidden by its predilection for thick shrubbery!

## Indigo Bunting

As usual there were many reports from the Halifax area, Brier Island, etc., this spring. However Indigo Buntings remain rare (but highly visible when present) in our area. One was in Hantsport for two weeks, at the Frizzle's feeder (late April), one was seen in Windsor, May 20-22 (RB), one was feeding on the ground in New Minas, May 17 (AF), and I had a report of one visiting a Kentville feeder in early May.

## Northern Oriole

BLF was lucky in having one visit his hummingbird feeder on May 19. By May 27, none of last year's Kent-



ville birds were in evidence; however, one was seen behind the hospital on Jun 6. I have noticed a marked decline in this species locally in the last three or four years. Any comments?



### **Bobolink**

The bright, breeding-plumaged Bobolinks, with their tinkling spring-like song, were back in the fields and dykes of the Valley by mid-May. More unusually, two came to CM's feeder in Gaspereau, May 7.

### **Rusty Blackbird**

Although this bird is rather uncommon, BLF found an active nest with four eggs on May 15 at Methals Bog.

### **White-crowned Sparrow**

One of these attractive, rare, but regular, transients was present at BBT's feeder from May 15-19. They breed far to our north, in northern Quebec and Labrador.

### **Dark-eyed Junco**

As usual, widely distributed and seemingly abundant. CR counted over 40 at her feeder after the late snowfall of April 27.

### **Purple Finch**

Common at feeders, etc. after early April (m. obs.).

### **Evening Grosbeak**

After almost none most of the winter, flocks started to reappear at feeders and around the area in general in early April (RBS etc.).

### **American Goldfinch**

Abundant throughout the area from early April. Most were acquiring bright breeding plumage by the end of April. Although all common birds, the sight of a mixed flock of breeding-plumaged Goldfinch, Purple Finch and Evening Grosbeaks, perhaps with a Woodpecker or two, and even an Indigo Bunting for good measure, vying for space at a backyard feeder, is surely one of the most spectacular wildlife sights easily seen in our area.

### **Pine Siskin**

A few most days at feeders in Avonport, Wolfville and Kentville from early April. Far fewer around in general than the huge flocks of last spring (RBS). This doesn't mean too much in terms of population - the numbers fluctuate from year to year.

### **Red Crossbill**

Seven were seen in Wolfville on Apr 25 (JWW).

### **Fox Sparrow**

Seemed abundant this spring, in the first two weeks of April, on their way to their more northerly breeding grounds. Often small groups of this large, rufous coloured sparrow turned up at feeders and in the wild, and several were heard singing their loud, attractive and bubbly song (m. obs.).

# Contributors to Bird News

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Alliston**  
**EA Evelyn Andrews**  
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**KLC Karen Casselman**  
**AF Agnes Fletcher**  
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**CM Clinton MacInnis**  
**LM Len MacPherson**  
**WN William Naylor**  
**GN Gary Ness**  
**EP Earl Paynter**  
**CR Christine Ross**  
**BS Bev Shanks**  
**RBS Richard Stern**  
**CS Clarence Stevens**  
**BBT Bill & Brenda Thexton**  
**JT Jean Timpa**  
**GWT Gordon Tufts**  
**JCT Judy Tufts**  
**JWW Jim Wolford**  
**JWr Jane Wright**

# BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

## 1993 Membership Fees

Each member receives four issues yearly of the *BNS Newsletter*. The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations. The membership fee itself is not tax-deductible.

Members may also subscribe to *FNSN News*, the newsletter of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists; the subscription fee is not tax-deductible.

Please enclose a cheque or money order payable to "Blomidon Naturalists Society" and forward to:

**Harold Forsyth**  
R.R. 2 Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0

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## Sources for Local Natural History Information (compiled by Blomidon Naturalists Society)

<i>Information</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Home</i>
Rocks & Fossils	Geol. Dept., Acadia Univ.	542-2201	
Fish	N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources	679-6091	
Flora - General	Ruth Newell	542-2201	542-2095
Flora - Fungi	Darryl Grund	542-2201	542-9214
	Nancy Nickerson	679-5333	542-9332
Flora - Lichens	Karen Casselman	424-7370	633-2837
Flora - Seaweeds	Darryl Grund	542-2201	542-9214
Flora - Mosses & Ferns	John Pickwell		681-8281
Birds - General	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
	Richard Stern	678-4742	678-1975
	Gordon & Judy Tufts		542-7800
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-7650
	Jean Timpa		542-5678
Birds - Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
	Cyril Coldwell	542-2201	542-2854
Birds - Falcons & Eagles	Peter Austin-Smith		542-2109
Mammals	Tom Herman	542-2201	678-0383
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney	542-2201	542-3604
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-7650
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney	542-2201	542-3604
	Jim Wolford	542-2201	542-7650
	Graham Daborn	542-2201	542-5373
	Michael Brylinsky	542-2201	582-7954
Indian Prehistory	Ellis Gertridge		542-2816
& Archaeological Sites	James Legge		542-3530
Astronomy	Roy Bishop		542-3992
	Sherman Williams	542-3598	542-5104