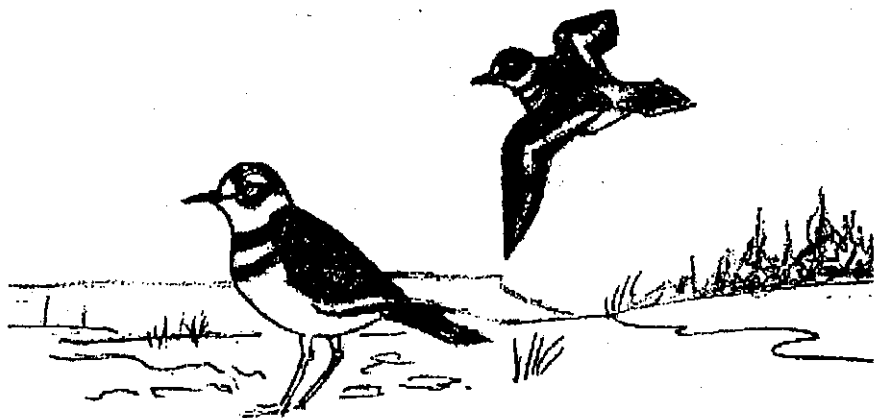


Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter



Spring 1994 - Volume 21, Number 1

Twentieth Birthday- Anniversary Issue

March 1974 to March 1994

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Spring- Early Summer Programmes

Monday Evening Meetings

All meetings will start at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise indicated, will be held in **Room 244 of the Beveridge Arts Centre at Acadia University**. All meetings are open to the public and BNS members are encouraged to bring friends and neighbours. Any changes in the place, time, or subject are announced on posters, Kings Kable notice board and *The Kentville Advertiser* and the *The Hants Journal*. [NOTE: WE ARE BACK IN THE ORIGINAL ROOM LOCATION - IN MAY AND JUNE THE FRONT DOOR OF BEVERIDGE ARTS CENTRE MAY BE LOCKED, BUT THE SOUTH DOOR AT THE VAUGHN LIBRARY WILL BE UNLOCKED]

18 April: Sherman Williams - The Annular Solar Eclipse of the Sun on May 10. Nova Scotia is under the path of annularity of this Eclipse. Sherman will describe the circumstances of the eclipse and how to best observe it safely.

16 May: Paul Comeau - Forest Decline in the Tropics. - Paul is visiting Acadia from Trinidad. He has worked there for 11 years and has observed the conflict in resource use and Forest maintenance. Illustrated with slides.

20 June: Soren Bondrup-Nielsen - The Boreal Forest and Forestry - observations from Canada, Sweden, and Russia. Soren will discuss forestry in the boreal forest against the backdrop of a naturally functioning ecosystem.

Field Trips

Unless otherwise noted, meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre on Front Street in Wolfville at the time indicated. Leaders' telephone numbers are included to allow participants to confirm trips in the case of uncertain conditions. Everyone, BNS members or not, is welcome on all field trips.

Saturday April 16, Evening SkyObserving Session to celebrate Astronomy day. : Meet at Grand Pre' Parking Lot at 9:00 pm. Crescent Moon, Venus, Jupiter, deep sky objects. Telescopes will be provided but bring your binoculars. Dress warmly.(If it is cloudy on the 16th, we will try the 17th) Leader: Roy Bishop (542-3992)

Saturday, April 24 - NSBS/BNS field trip for spring birds - 10 am- An all day outing so bring your lunch, rubber boots, sunscreen (wishful

thinking), etc. Jim Wolford, leader (542-7650)

April-May - An evening Amphibian trip will be lead by Jim Wolford (542-7650) one spring evening - time and date will be announced at the April Evening meeting.

Saturday, May 14, North American Migration Count Day, contact: Judy Tufts (542-7800) - see notice in Society News and Notices

Sunday, May 15, Spring Flora of the Meander Intervale (Hants County). Meet at 1:00 pm for car pooling. Bring rubber boots and a snack. Leader: Marian Zinck

Saturday, May 21, Spring Birds and Flowers on the Trail to Cape Split. 8:30 am or at 9:15 am at the trail-head parking lot in Scots Bay. This is an all day trip so bring wind breaker, binoculars, lunch, good footwear, etc. At this time of the year the trail is very wet in spots. (If the weather is inclement - we will try Sunday May 22) Leaders: Mariam Zinck and Sherman Williams. (542-5104)

Sunday June 5, Walk to Balancing Rock from Tiverton on Long Island. Flowers and Birds of Spring. We will leave the Robie Tufts Nature Centre at 8 am - It is a 2-1/2 hr drive. Bring a lunch. Cancelled in case of poor weather. Leader: Bernard Forsythe (542-2427)

Saturday, June 11 - Ferns and Mosses - a short easy walk on woods roads at the edge of the South Mountain. 8:30 am or 9:00 am at the commuter parking lot of exit 12 of Highway 101. Leader: John Pickwell (681-8281)

Wednesday, July 20 - Life in the Muds of Blomidon - 7:00 pm at Blomidon Provincial Park. - A look at the animals that live in the tidal flats around Cape Blomidon. Wear waterproof footwear.- Leader: Sherman Boates - Sponsored by Dept. of Natural Resources.

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"The primary objective of the Society shall be to encourage and develop in its members an understanding and appreciation of nature. For the purpose of the Society, the word 'nature' will be interpreted broadly and shall include the rocks, plants, animals, water, air, and stars."

from the BNS constitution

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.

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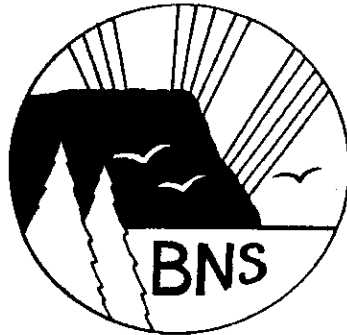
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Blomidon Naturalists Society 20th Birthday Anniversary Issue

A Letter From The Founder Of The Blomidon Naturalists Society

by Bob Lambertson

Princeton, New Jersey

March 15, 1994

Dear Sherman (Williams):

I was very touched that you contacted me with regard to the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Blomidon Naturalists Society. Few members of the society can possibly remember the small part I played in its founding, all those years ago. My wife and I had moved to Outram, up the North Mountain from Paradise, in 1970. In 1971-72 and 1973-74, I taught at Acadia, first in the Department of French and then in the Department of Classics, though to tell the truth, I probably spent more time around the Biology Department than in the departments I was supposed to serve. I was particularly active around the fringes of Darrell Grund's mycology courses, where I learned a great deal and, I hope, made some small contribution to the field trips. The only Masters defense I ever participated in at

Acadia was on the photosynthesizing anenomes of the Minas Basin.

At that time, we lived in Wolfville during the winters, migrating back to the North Mountain in the summers, and I was writing a "Notes on Nature" column for the weekly Bridgetown paper. I was very active in the Nova Scotia Bird Society, and that organization elected me its president in 1975. I had begun discussing with students and faculty in the Biology Department -- as well as naturalists in the community, and especially John Erskine -- the idea of a local group to bring together and provide focus for those concerned about the natural history of the Wolfville area. This was clearly a matter that attracted great community interest. An organization linking the researchers and students in the university with members of the community who shared their interests -- and some of whom were engaged in their own research on local birds, plants, and fossils -- promised to meet a real need. Finally, one day, I put up a poster announcing an organizational meeting. What I thought I was trying to launch bore the title "Annapolis Valley Naturalists Society", if I remember correctly

(and in any case, I doubt that anyone is going to produce a copy of that poster to correct me). In any case, I got a quick lesson in local geography and sense of place. Wolfville is Wolfville and the Valley is the Valley: a very few minutes into that organizational meeting, the group had the decidedly more colourful name that it has retained, "The Blomidon Naturalists Society".

That was pretty much my contribution. The organization took off quickly, and after naming itself soon organized to the level of offering a series of talks on local natural history subjects. It must have been only a couple of months after the society formally came into being that I went off to Newfoundland to pursue my brief but tremendously exciting career as a contract ornithologist for Parks Canada, preparing avifaunal surveys of Gros Morne National Park and L'Anse-aux-Meadows National Historic Park. At the end of the first field season, I returned to the North Mountain and came regularly into Wolfville to the meetings of the society, but it had already taken on a life of its own, and those of us who had dreamt up the idea were all, I think, amazed at its vitality. At the end of the second field season, in August of 1975, while I was installed in the tiny community of Straitsview at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, watching both the birds and the icebergs that sailed past down the Strait of Belle Isle, I received a

phonecall from Mt. Allison University inviting me to join the Classics Department there. (There was only one phone line in Straitsview, and as you can imagine, this semi-public communication convinced the locals that the "gum-mint bird man" was even stranger than they already knew he was.) The net result was that I never returned to Wolfville and the Valley for more than brief visits -- one of the first on the sad occasion of the funeral of John Erskine, whom I count among the dearest teachers and friends I have known.

After six years at Mt. Allison, I was awarded a fellowship to the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington D.C., and that job led to offers in the States (where I had grown up, but never really expected to return to live). I've written a few books on Greek Poetry, and travelled from university to university -- always, I'm afraid, with only one foot in Greek literature and the other in natural history, and particularly ornithology. My wife Susan, whom I met nearly twenty years ago at Mt. Allison, is an archaeologist, and this has given us reason to spend a good deal of time in Greece and to travel widely in the Mediterranean. We even collaborated on a volume entitled Birds of the Athenian Agora for the "picture book" series published by her excavation. I sometimes lead groups in Greece for a company called WINGS, which organizes ornithological tours and tours combining

natural history and cultural history. My own ornithological research is reduced to a weekend survey of a series of ponds on corporate estates in central New Jersey. The results are fed into the quarterly regional report in Records of New Jersey Birds, and every once in a while I come up with something exciting -- a Greater White-fronted Goose on the Christmas Count, or, most recently, a couple of Caspian Terns that dropped in at "Squibb" one afternoon last August. It's pretty tame, though, on the whole, and although we get away a lot to exotic places -- Maya ruins and rainforest in Yucatan and Guatemala last January -- both of us look back on our years

in the Maritimes as a time that was in many ways better, more challenging, simply richer.

By this point, those of you whom I've never met are wishing this old windbag would pry himself away from his wordprocessor. As far as the oldtimers are concerned, I must thank you, Sherman, for prodding me and acting as my mouthpiece to try to make some sort of bridge over the years. My small role in getting the society started is one of the handful of things in my life in which I take the most pride. It is good to think of you there in Wolfville, and I do so often.

Sincerely;

Bob Lamberton

BNS IN THE BEGINNING

by Sherman Williams
Avonport, N.S.

Blomidon Naturalists Society is one of the older files in the "B" section of my filing cabinet. A few weeks ago I realized that it would soon be twenty years since the BNS came into existence. Having been involved in its first meetings, I was curious to see what items the old file might contain. What follows is a sharing of a few of the items I found and the recollections they brought to mind.

As I began to browse through my old BNS file I came across a

poster advertising "A COMET WATCH, Thursday, Jan 10, Crowell Tower Roof - Acadia U. 5:45 pm. for further details contact R. Lamberton, 510 Library." This carried my thoughts to Bob Lamberton and to background events that led to the first meeting of the Blomidon Naturalists Society. I hope you will also read the letter from Bob Lamberton reprinted in the previous article. It best gives insight into who Robert Lamberton is and what his connection was with the BNS.)

I recall meeting Bob Lamberton for the first time late in the fall of 1973; the details of why we met escapes me now, but I know the exchange around national parks,

birds, mushrooms and stars took the conversation beyond the 'how-do-you do' stage. He mentioned having explored and discussed with others the idea of getting a group together that would encourage field studies on the natural history of the Valley. The next contact with him, that I can remember, occurred late in the year, concerning the topic of comet Kohoutek, which was soon to make its most favourable appearance in our skies. Bob looked at this event as one occasion around which natural history enthusiasts could come together.

Comet Kohoutek, unfortunately, had not lived up to expectations created by a zealous media, but it was still expected to be an interesting comet to see. I was asked to prepare a handout briefly providing updated details about it. Also, a notice from Bob announcing the possible formation of a natural history group, was to be handed out on the comet observing night. The latter handout provided a coupon to be returned by those interested. In part, it stated, "If you are interested in participating in a new organization dedicated to.....field study of natural history of the Valley.....fill out the coupon below.....return it to R. Lamberton.....An organizational meeting will be held in the near future, and those who return the coupon will be notified of time and place.....", etc. I found copies of both documents in my old file.

The weather for comet viewing on Jan. 10th, if my memory serves me right, was not ideal and I don't think anyone got to see the comet that night. In spite of the clouds, however, the notice containing the organizational coupon began to circulate. Favourable responses came in and less than two months later Bob had everything set for the March 6th organizational meeting.

I dug into my old BNS file again. A feeling of excitement came over me when I pulled out a copy of the minutes from the organizational meeting. Even more exciting was finding the original notes from which the minutes were constructed. As I glanced over the words of the old notes, the thought came to me that, as acting secretary for the night, I had pressed these words to paper, on the spot, the night BNS was born. I should point out, that for the first meeting the proposed organization had been tentatively called "The Annapolis Valley Field Naturalists" but once the constitution was adopted three weeks later, it became known as the "Blomidon Naturalists Society".

The following are quotes and summarizations taken from that first set of minutes:

"March 5th, 1994, Wheelock Hall, Wolfville, N.S.

A meeting of a group interested in the natural history of the area was called to order by the acting chairman, Bob Lamberton. The

meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a Naturalists Society in this area."

The minutes went on to discuss what should be the purpose and goals of the proposed organization. From the discussion these were some of the suggestions put forth:

- a wilderness preservation society
- join forces with EPIC (Eliminate Pollution In Kings)
- education
- study and enjoyment of natural history
- develop a sensitivity for what is here to see and enjoy and preserve
- publications i.e. a newsletter, etc.
- input into current environmental issues
- study of ecology and natural cycles
- consider efforts in directions in research and distribute findings to the public
- guided tours and fieldtrips

A nominating committee was appointed to bring in a slate of officers for the new organization. Larry Bogan and Roy Bishop were nominated to be the committee to draw up a constitution. It was moved to elect a 3- member program committee-2 now, 1 later; Bob Lamberton and Simon Lunn got to be the 2 now. Joy Gmeiner volunteered to be the provisional publicity chairlady.

A location for meetings was discussed; it was suggested that

the next meeting be held on more "neutral ground" such as at the Kentville Research Station or Wolfville High School.

Just before the meeting was adjourned, the decision was made to hold the first regular meeting on March 26th; a program suggestion for the meeting was that it be "an introductory type of slide talk that presented the natural history of the area".

During the meeting, an attendance book had been circulated to get signatures with the expression of natural history interests held by each person who had attended the evening gathering. About 65 people signed.

During the next three weeks things began to happen: Roy and Larry drew up a constitution, the nominating committee did their job, Sherman Bleakney agreed to give a slide talk that would present an "eagles eye view" of the area's natural history and the audio-visual room of Wolfville High School was chosen as the meeting place. The new natural history organization had begun to take root.

I see by a notice in my file that Sherman Bleakney actually called the first BNS talk, "An Introduction to the Diverse Habitats of Kings County". The minutes record that it was well received by the 70 to 80 people of all ages who attended. Many of the evening presentations since have been natural extensions of this first one.

My file gave up a yellowed clipping cut from the local paper. It announced the formation of the Society on March 26, 1974 and reported the first slate of officers: -president: Sherman Williams; vice-president: Jean Timpa; secretary-treasurer: Larry Bogan. You know.... I had completely forgotten that yours truly had been part of that first executive. Since then, there have been numerous executive, committee members, and volunteers who have given much to moving the Society forward; I know we all appreciate their effort!

The file is made fat with old newsletters. I was really pleased to find among them, Volume 1 No. 1, published in August, 1974. It is on 3 sheets of 8.5 x 14 paper, printed on both sides. They were typed and run off on a Gestetner duplicating machine. From the newsletter, I discovered that the first field trip was on March 29th. It was hosted by Roy and Gertrude Bishop. It states, "sixty members of the Blomidon Naturalists Society converged on Maktomkus Observatory at Avonport." Again, a comet was one of the featured objects for the evening's observations; this time it was Comet Bradfield. Several other sights, including aurora, were on display in the sky. The night fieldtrip was a great success.

Before I put the newsletter aside I noted that a host of other field trips had taken place during the first five months of operation:

- a Wild Goose and Frog Chase,
- Migratory Birds,
- Gravel and Sand Pits found interesting,
- Canoe Trip,
- 47 hike to Cape Split,
- a walk between the Tides,
- a Bog and Stream study,
- a trip to check a Black River Eagles' nests,
- geological features of Horton Bluff examined,
- Shorebirds,
- 20 to 30 people gather at Rotary Park to view the Perseid Meteor Shower and,
- last, but not least several BNS members got to see a Glossy Ibis that had come to the Valley for a rare visit.

I find it quite remarkable that the momentum established in those first few months has continued almost unabated for 20 years.

Finally, I pulled a copy of the constitution from the file, (there were more items that related to the first year of BNS, but the file has to be closed for now). The constitution was adopted with only minor changes on March 26, 1974. I found the first two articles particularly pleasant to read and I am pleased by how relevant they have been throughout the 20 year history of the Society. I have repeated them here for your enjoyment.

Article 1 (1.01) The name of this

organization shall be the Blomidon Naturalists Society. The name "Blomidon" is chosen since it is anticipated that many of the activities of the Society will occur within sight of this unique landmark. The flora and fauna of Blomidon itself show great variety, while the minerals in its cliffs make it perhaps the most interesting locality in Canada for the geological naturalist. In addition, the pulse of a larger nature is visible and audible here as the highest tides on Earth endlessly surge around its base.

Article 2 (2.01) Whereas the happiness, well-being, and very existence of man are inseparably linked to the natural world, and whereas a knowledge of nature is a prerequisite to any and all

means of preserving these aspects of life, 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.

I think we can feel proud of how well the activities of the Society have managed to match the mandate of these two articles. I thank the authors who encribed them so adequately; I'm confident the words hold inspiration and guidance to see the Blomidon Naturalists Society through another 20 years.

TWENTY YEARS OF THE BNS NEWSLETTER

Larry Bogan

Cambridge Station, N.S.

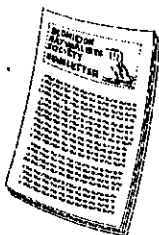
This is Issue #1 of Volume 21 of the BNS Newsletter and marks two decades of continuous publication. On the cover of Issue #1 of Volume 1 is a sketch of mine of Cape Blomidon. I have worked on the BNS Newsletter in different capacities to the present day and in this anniversary issue felt it might be interesting to review the historical development of the

Newsletter. The past issues of the Newsletter contain the a history of the activities of the society and I will leave that reading to you; here, I will only recount my view of the production of the Newsletter over the years.

I have searched my memories and scanned my nearly-complete collection of Newsletters to find statistics, facts, and anecdotes that might be of interest to the reader.

Although the Newsletter has always been published on the equinoxes and the solstices, in the formative years four newsletters were not always printed. The

Society did not exist until March of 1974 so Volume #1 did not start until September and had only two issues. Issues 3 and 4 of Volume 5 were published as one Newsletter along with issue #1 of Volume 6. Issues #3 and #4 of Volume 6 will be found in one Newsletter also. Those were in the years of 1978-79 which were difficult years for the society.



The initial format of the Newsletter was on 8-1/2"x14" (legal size) paper printed on both sides. The text was typed onto Gestetner masters (usually with a manual typewriter) and the drawings were "scratched" into the masters with a stylus. If a mistake were made, it had to be painted over with a bright orange correction fluid very much like nail polish. Roy Bishop and I scratched many a drawing on those masters and I have to admit, Roy had a fine technique in this medium, one I could not match. Twila Robar-Decosta was the artist on issue #3 of volume 9 and did an excellent job of scratching on the gestetner stencil. Most of you know Twila is the artist that created the drawings in

the "Natural History of Kings County".

Roy Bishop and Jean Timpa were the first editors and I think Jean used to do most of the typing. Besides making illustrations, I would get my fingers black with printing ink and exercise my arm by turning the Gestetner printer handle. Gestetners were motor driven but I seldom trusted them on automatic because as soon as I did, it would mis-feed the paper, wrinkle the stencil or jam. Quite a few sheets could be destroyed before one managed to stop the machine. Since the printing had to be on both sides, one had to be careful not to damage too many sheets when printing on the second side. I know of at least one issue that had one page printed upside down and it stayed that way. It was a difficult and messy task to put a used, wet stencil back on the machine without a wrinkle.

Today, if we are shy a few copies of the Newsletter for mailing, we just photocopy some more. With the Gestetner copies, only once did I try to put the used stencils back on to make more copies, something I dreaded. Imagine handling several long, flimsy, black sheets that have to be attached to the drum at one end and wrapped smoothly over a drum covered with thick, black ink -- it's something to avoid.

In 1976, "new" technology in the form of a Gestafax was first

used to produce the newsletter. This device copies black and white sheets of text and drawings onto gestetner stencils photoelectrically. The master and a special stencil are put on co-rotating drums; when a black area on the master is detected by a photosensor, a corresponding area of the stencil is burned through with an electrical spark. The typing pool at Acadia had one and we used it extensively to improve the appearance of the Newsletter. Ink drawings could be reproduced faithfully with only a small decrease in the quality of the text.

The early Newsletters had 6 cents postage stamps on them. Photocopying existed but printing by Gestetner was less expensive. In those days, we were allowed to fold the newsletters in half, staple them shut, and put the address and postage on the back sheet. No wonder, we were able to put out four newsletters a year for a membership fee of only \$2. I remember many days at Jean Timpa's kitchen table with other BNS members addressing newsletters and wetting stamps. In 1983 Brenda Thexton and Lana Churchill began doing this and they're still at it.

The Newsletter has had a series of editors and coeditors. From my records, the list is as follows:

1974-1980 Jean Timpa and Roy Bishop
1980-1981 Jean Timpa and Larry Bogan
1981-1982 Jean Timpa
1982-1983 Jean Timpa and Lynn Coldwell

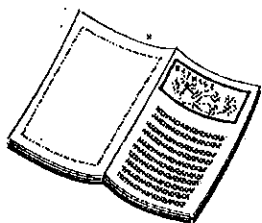
1984 Jean Timpa and Larry Bogan
1985-1993 George and Margaret Alliston
1993 Merritt Gibson
1994 Mark Elderkin

1984 was a year of significant change in production of the Newsletter. That year, I purchased my first wordprocessor for the Commodore 64, and used it to enter and correct text electronically, before printing it. The final issue that year was the first in the present "folded" format and the first printed in the Acadia University printshop. It was still on the legal sized paper but sideways. There was one more "Gestetnered" newsletter before turning all printing over to the Ron Bezanson and his crew in the printshop. Earlier in the year, Jim Wolford, contributed his first "Trivial Tidbits of Natural History" which has continued in every issue to present. Reports of field trips have been in the Newsletter ever since the first Society field trip.

In 1985, the Newsletter shrank to its present paper size and the type was reduced to put more text in the smaller area. The lay out of the newsletter had to be 33% larger than its final size because it was reduced by 3/4 before the copy ready version was sent to the printshop. This was confusing for many involved including the production manager. Fourpages, in pairs, had to be placed back to back on a single sheet in the correct order for the sequence to be right in the final, assembled Newsletter. All this made for more

tedious production. In the same year, long-time editor Jean Timpa turn over her editorship to George and Margaret Alliston. The text was now entirely handled by computer and the pictures, now cleverly drawn by Mary Pratt, were pasted into spaces generated by the wordprocessor.

In 1991 desktop publishing was first used to layout the Newsletter and to import, size and place pictures. This software allowed the format to be changed to two columns of text on the page with slightly larger print. In this same year two issues had 52 pages, the largest BNS Newsletters published.



PRODUCTION OF THE NEWSLETTER TODAY

At the present time, the majority of the contributors to the newsletter compose on a computer and most text arrives in the editor's hands on magnetic disk. The editor edits and arranges the material and copies the text files on a magnetic disk (at present in a WordPerfect format). This is passed onto me while a printed copy is given to Mary Pratt to read and create appropriate drawings. When I receive Mary's drawings, I

scan them photoelectronically and store the images on a magnetic disk. If special diagrams are needed, I can scan the original, modify it or create a new one with a drawing software. I assemble the entire newsletter using the desktop publishing software called "Publish It!". This software enables me to "flow" the text into columns and frames that can be sized and moved around the page. Many different type styles (fonts) are available to make the Newsletter fancy but the better layouts are the ones using only one or two fonts. The font can be changed in size or made bold or italics for emphasis. The drawings are imported into frames in the same manner as the text. I can scale the drawings to the sizes needed and add a captions. The text flows around the drawings automatically. Finally, the newsletter is printed with a laser printer in its final size. The pages are assembled in the required sequence of groups of four to make a copy ready Newsletter before delivering to Ron Bezanon at the printshop.

The BNS newsletter has undergone several facelifts over the years and is undoubtedly prettier than it once was. It is, however, the content that is important and as a member of the Newsletter Committee, I hope the Society continues to find the Newsletter a useful and informative vehicle of communication.

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Bigleaf Wintercreeper
Flowering Crab
Mountain Ash
Serviceberry
Honeysuckles
Privet
Bayberry
Highbush Cranberry

BNS SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTICES

President's Report 1993

by Tom Herman

Kentville, Nova Scotia

The past year has seen BNS grow in size and profile, as it continues to expand its educational mandate. Since its inception, our Society has been dedicated to encouraging and developing an understanding and appreciation of nature. Although the focus of the Society has always been local, we are constantly reminded that the world has become increasingly smaller. Our local landscapes are affected by political and economic decisions made on other continents. Our local conservation efforts are recognized worldwide. As the Province aggressively markets Nova Scotia as an "ecotourism destination", our favourite haunts and special places will be sought by more and more people.

The Robie Tufts Nature Centre and its Chimney Swifts have gained an international reputation. In summer, visitors flock daily to witness the spectacle of swifts coming to roost. This past season saw record numbers of visitors. We were fortunate to have a team of summer students to act as interpreters and guides. This group, funded in part by the Nova Scotia Youth Conservation Corps program and in part by the SEED program, also worked on trail

construction adjacent to the Nature Centre and along the Gas-pereau River.

The Nature Centre Committee has continued to work with the Wolfville Business Development Corporation and other community groups on a comprehensive interpretive plan for the Wolfville dykelands and Wharf area. This is a long-term project, designed in the same cooperative spirit as was the original Nature Centre.

On a slightly larger scale, our Conservation Committee continues to explore local initiatives for a Cornwallis River Corridor Conservation Plan. Although still only in the preliminary stages, this promises to be an exciting opportunity for a grass roots effort to clean up the Cornwallis. The Conservation Committee also recently attended the public hearings on the Draft Environment Act of Nova Scotia. As well, the Committee submitted a written critique of the Act on behalf of the BNS membership.

This past summer, the Conservation Committee, primarily through the efforts of George Alliston and his cadre of volunteers, launched a survey of breeding Short-eared Owls on the Canard and Grand Pré dykelands. Hopefully this will become an annual monitoring event, including participation by Acadia students each fall to assess abundance of owl

food (=small mammals).

The society's publications continue to flourish. Following the success of *A Natural History of Kings County*, the Society launched a series (we hope) of companion annotated checklists. The first, *An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Kings County*, was recently published, and should find its way to the pockets (after purchase, naturally!) of local as well as visiting bird watchers. Subsequent checklists will appear in due course. Personally, I've argued that a Checklist to the Dragonflies should follow next, although the Editor only mutters something about a limited market... The production of this series will depend primarily on the expertise and contributions of our membership. Please contact Merritt Gibson if you wish to participate.

Our (the "Royal We") weekly newspaper column "BNS Nature Notes" continues to draw a wide readership. Although this column contributes significantly to the ever lengthening "life list" of publications of its editor, the same editor assures me that he would be willing to reduce his productivity (hint, hint). Please send your ideas or, better yet, nicely polished text items to Editor Gibson.

In response to requests by the Nova Scotia Museum, several of our members contributed to the updating of *The Natural History of Nova Scotia*, which should be

available shortly. We have also embarked on a collaborative venture with the Museum to continue production of the Species Status Sheets series (see article this issue). This venture was funded by a generous contribution from the Environmental Partners Fund to BNS, along with in-kind contributions from Acadia's Centre for Wildlife and Conservation Biology and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Although the scope of these sheets is provincial and beyond, rather than local, we feel that they fall well within the information mandate of the BNS.

Field trips and monthly meetings continue to form the core of our organization's activities. The Program Committee is to be commended for the diversity of speakers, topics and meeting formats, and for the diversity of field trips. I wish to thank all the speakers and field trip leaders, who shared their time and expertise with us.

Our *Newsletter* continues to serve as the essential link for our Society. I would like to thank the former editors, George and Margaret Alliston, for their tremendous contributions, for the high standards that they established and for the challenge that they have provided to the new editorial team. Indications to date suggest that the new team has responded well. The assistance of Mary Pratt, Larry Bogan, Dick Rogers, Brenda Thexton, Judy Tufts, Lana Churchill, I-Ping Wong and Jim Wolford

proved invaluable. I also extend my thanks to all regular and occasional contributors to the Newsletter. The editorial team invites members to submit articles on any items of natural history interest.

As always, I enjoyed working with members of the Board of Directors, who provided support, enthusiasm, expertise and commitment. Bill and Brenda Thexton kindly hosted our Directors' meetings. Harold Forsyth continued to keep the records (and me) straight.

Again, all members of BNS committees deserve our thanks for their contributions of time and ideas. The Christmas Bird Count, Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award, and activities at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre result from these efforts. Finally, I would like to thank all BNS members for their participation and support over the past year.

BNS Programme Development

by John Harwood
Canning, Nova Scotia

Over time, BNS has developed a programme that involves it in many activities related to natural history. Although the focus is mainly on the local area of Kings County, BNS is involved in provincial, national and world-wide activities. Here is a run-down of some

of our current activities. With strong support from the membership at large, the BNS executive is working with the Environmental Partners Fund in the production of the excellent Special Status Sheets. The Short-eared Owl Project kept a lot of people busy last summer and promises to do so again this year. Our Robie Tufts Nature Centre is attracting lots of interest, particularly in the swift season, but as the information panels are expanded and improved the centre will attract more people over a longer period. BNS is involved in the Cornwallis River Corridor Project. Funding has been provided in support of the province-wide Endangered Spaces Project. BNS, through the Conservation Committee has been active on many fronts, including the drafting of a new Environment Act, and keeping a watchful eye on the Kings County waste management plan and on selection of a new landfill site for our area. BNS is providing input for the development of the Wolfville dykelands. Each year a deserving student is identified and is presented the Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award. Last, but not least, is BNS' publication of the splendid book, *A Natural History of Kings County*, now in its second printing. The first in a series of Annotated Checklists, the one for Kings County birds, is now available. These checklists - there will be more - are ideal companions to the main book.

There are other activities that BNS is interested in, but what are you interested in? Are there areas of interest or concern that you think we should be looking into? If so, give any of the executive a call.

The BNS is a busy society. A lot of people are involved in a lot of things; nonetheless, the most significant activities for most members are the monthly meetings and the field trips. Speakers for the meetings and the field trips are arranged by the Programme Committee. The committee keeps an ear to the ground for new subjects and good speakers and is eager to keep the field trips varied and interesting. Is there a speaker you would like to hear? We do have a limited fund for honoraria and travel costs. Is there a subject you would like to have presented? Would you like to present a subject? It is not a requirement to be a professional or an academic. Do you have an idea for a different field trip? Would you like to lead one?

Please let us know. If you have programme suggestions, comments, or questions, call John Harwood at 582-3320 for subjects and speakers, or Larry Bogan at 678-0446 for field trips. Terry Power, the third member of our committee, would be equally pleased to hear from you and can be reached at 679-3028.

Notes From The Newsletter Editor

by Mark Elderkin

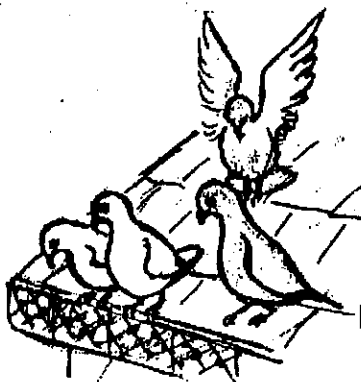
Wolfville, Nova Scotia

The last issue of the BNS Newsletter came off with few hitches much to the credit of Merritt Gibson, George and Margaret Alliston and Larry Bogan. Only those who have been directly involved in the production of the Newsletter could ever fully appreciate the tremendous amount of work that the Newsletter committee undertakes four times a year to get the newsletter to you in finished form. At each step in the process, from writing articles, doing art work, collecting advertisements, typing, production, printing and the mailout; many of the societies members work behind the scenes on an ongoing basis in an attempt to bring interesting articles intermingled with the new and familiar to each issue. Mainstays such as Jim Wolford's, "Trivial Tidbits Of Natural History", Richard Stern's, "BNS Bird News" and Larry Bogan's, "Weather Summary" are extremely popular with our readership. I would encourage each of you to keep Jim and Richard informed of your natural history observations made during your wanderings through the diverse habitats of Kings County.

The real strength of any society, is of course in the diversity of interests, talents and the values

held by the membership. As a new member of the society and your new editor, it is imperative that I hear from you. I would encourage each of you to get involved directly in some aspect of the Newsletter. I welcome your comments and suggestions on content and our format. If you have an inclination to write on natural history matters - we want your articles. If you have an inclination for doing art work - we want your drawings. You do not need to be an accomplished writer or a gifted artist to make a contribution. Articles may be hand written or typed, but if you are using word processing software on a computer please make a copy of the article on a diskette. I will make sure all disks are returned to you in person, or by mail. If you should decide to contribute art work please contact one of the Newsletter Committee members first before putting pen to paper. This will ensure that we can accommodate the size of your graphics in the Newsletter format. Please feel free to make your ideas and suggestions known to any of the members on the BNS Executive or Newsletter Committee. Alternatively, I can be reached by phone or in person at:

80 Skyway Drive,
P.O. Box 206
Wolfville, Nova Scotia
BOP 1X0
Ph: 542-1964



Robic Tufts Nature Centre Update: Pigeon Proofing Required

At the last meeting of the BNS Executive, (February 24, 1994) Harold Forsyth reported that pigeons roosting under the eaves of the Nature Centre this winter have made an unsightly mess with their droppings and feathers. Alterations to the eaves will be required to prevent the problem from reoccurring in future. Unless minor structural alterations are initiated soon, accumulations of pigeon excrement will eventually result in rotting wood on the building. Needless to say, the presence of the pigeons also detracts from the aesthetics of this important land mark for tourists.

Harold is currently assessing the costs of initiating repairs to the Nature Centre. Assuming costs for building materials are reasonable, the BNS executive will be asking its membership for volunteers to

help make the necessary repairs sometime this spring. We anticipate that most of this work can easily be done in a single weekend. As the saying goes: "many hands make light work". If you enjoy woodworking or have an inclination for painting outdoors here is your chance to make an important contribution to the community. Your cooperative participation in this endeavour is vital and would be greatly appreciated. Watch the next issue of the Newsletter for an update on the date and time. We will also be keeping you posted on this matter at our regular spring meetings. Stay tuned!!!

Projects in Partnership at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History

by Frances Barry
Halifax, Nova Scotia

The current trend seems to be partnerships. Three exciting projects based at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History were made possible through cooperative ventures between various combinations of non-profit, private and government organizations.

Species Status Sheets

In 1991, in response to an increasing demand for information on the flora and fauna of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Museum

of Natural History started a series of status sheets on rare and endangered species in the province that would be available to the public. Each sheet provides a concise overview of pertinent information on a particular species and a list of references to point to further information, if desired. The purposes of these sheets are to increase awareness of the flora and fauna of Nova Scotia, to be able to respond to requests for information from the general public and to provide knowledge to allow people to make informed decisions on environmental action.

In September 1993, a project was started to produce another group of status sheets on 50 additional species for the series. This project is funded by the Environmental Partners Fund, sponsored by the Blomidon Naturalists and supported by the Centre for Wildlife and Conservation Biology in Wolfville, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The status sheets include pest species (e.g. earwigs, lice), introductions (e.g. Purple Loosestrife, the Giant Slug) and species of public interest (e.g. Little Brown Bat, Bloodroot). The sheets for this series will also be produced in a simpler format for use by schools.

Natural History of Nova Scotia

The Natural History of Nova Scotia is a two volume document

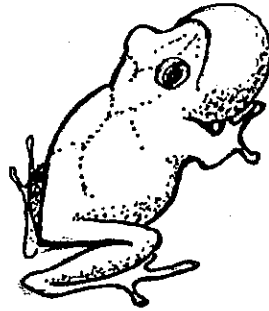
that describes the province's natural processes, species, habitats and landscapes. It was first published in 1984 by the provincial Departments of Natural Resources and Education as a park planning manual. The book has been used by a variety of interest groups and individuals besides park planners. This encouraging reception prompted a reprint in 1989.

In 1990, the Museum and provincial Parks staff recognized that the document needed to be updated and revision was initialized. The project was funded under the Canada/Nova Scotia Cooperation Agreement on Sustainable Economic Development. Much of its success, however, was due to the concerted efforts of volunteers including field naturalists. The new edition reflects the continued interest of naturalists and scientists in observing and recording natural phenomenon.

This edition incorporates a summary of documented natural history information compiled since the first publication. There are some new subjects such as an introduction to cultural landscapes and an increased emphasis on the offshore areas of Nova Scotia. It is hoped that the changes will be appreciated and that people will continue to contribute their opinions and information.

The book is currently undergoing a draft facelift and is expected to be ready for distribution in

the late spring. Copies will be available at the museum and also at the Government Bookstore.



Frogwatch '94

Frogwatch '94 is an environmental education project happening this Spring in Halifax County. Funded under the federal Environmental Partners Fund, this pilot project is a joint effort between the Clean Nova Scotia Foundation, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History and Windsor based EnviroSphere Consultants Ltd. The partners are involving the schools and youth groups in the County in a Spring Peeper monitoring study.

This project is designed to increase interest and understanding of natural changes by encouraging the participants to observe, record and to experience their environment. In this way, it reflects one of the original phenological studies conducted in Nova Scotia by A.H. McKay, superintendent of schools at the turn of the century. This inspired gentleman organized

a province-wide program of natural history observations carried out in the schools. For several decades, teachers and students watched and recorded changes in plant and animal life, weather and other natural phenomenon, throughout the year.

One of the things these early observers noted was the "piping of frogs" - the Spring Peeper. The timing of the Peeper was one of the signs of spring. Linked as it is to temperature, it has also become a means of assessing climate today, especially when we are so concerned with declining amphibian populations and the possibility of global warming.

Frogwatch '94 is a pilot project,

which, if successful and resources permit, could become the prototype for a more extensive survey in 1995. The project team wants to again involve students and youth groups because they have the necessary enthusiasm and interest in environmental issues. It is designed to make science fun and accessible, while at the same time contributing population and distribution data to baseline studies.

The project is aimed at youths, however, both younger and older Nova Scotians have shown an interest in participating. By June we expect to have a report available.

BNS DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR 1994

Directors

President: Tom Herman	Ph: 678-0383 or 542-2201
Vice President: Larry Bogan	Ph: 678-0446 or 542-2201
Secretary: Lorna Hart	Ph: 542-4470
Treasurer: Harold Forsyth	Ph: 542-5983 or 542-3368

Committee Chairs

Conservation: Peter Austin-Smith	Ph: 542-2109
Program.: John Harwood	Ph: 582-3320
Robie Tufts Nature Centre: Harold Forsyth	Ph: 542-5983 or 542-3368
Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Awards: Irene Wright	Ph: 678-4258
Newsletter: Mark Elderkin	Ph: 542-1964
Fed. N. S. Naturalists Representative: Jim Wolford	Ph: 542-7650

**North American
Migration Count Day
(N.A.M.C.) - May 14,
1994:**

Anyone interested in participating in spending a few hours, or more, on the above date counting birds in Kings County, especially migratory birds, please contact: **Judy Tufts (542-7800)**. This is in essence a 'Spring Count' like the Christmas Bird Count, but covers an entire county, instead of the 15-mile radius count circle of Christmas Bird Counts. Let's get out on Saturday, May 14th and see how many birds have arrived from their spring migration journey.

**Federation of Nova
Scotia Naturalists
Annual Conference**

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Mainland Field Naturalists

Send in your registration or if you do not have a form, contact:

Kerstin Mueller
Box 117
Mulgrave, N.S.
B0E 2G0
Tel/Fax: 747-2265

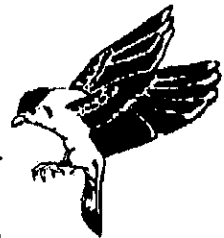


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Field Trip to the Geology Department, Acadia University

March 12, 1994

(reported by Larry Bogan)

We were greeted by Dr. Rob Raeside, of the Geology Department on this sunny day. Ten people, including myself, were given a two hour tour of the extensive displays in the hallways of the third floor of Huggins Science Hall. There are minerals, gems, rock samples from all over the Earth, including our local area.

Dr. Raeside explained the origins and use of many of the samples. The displays had been unlocked and opened so we were able to look closely at the samples and handle them (carefully). There were meteorites (the oldest rock), tar sand samples, gold, semi-precious gems, ordinary granite, etc. We were able to handle one of the oldest rocks on the Earth, olivene, from the Earth's mantle.

A large array of individual fossils on display, were too numerous to inspect in detail.

A highlight of the visit, was our use of the polarizing microscopes to examine thin sections of local rock samples. We saw a kalidescope of colors from the mineral components viewed in crossed polarizers, and learned how to identify a couple of minerals in the rocks.

Maps cover many of the walls in the hallways. We examined a couple that showed the subsurface structures in North America and the geology of the whole Appalachian Mountain chain.

A tour such as the one we got opened our eyes to how interesting and informative rocks and maps can be. If you missed this field trip, visit the third floor of Huggins Science Hall anytime during working hours and walk the hallways. Most of the displays have explanation with them; stop and read. You will be pleasantly surprised by what you see and learn.



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Reports on Natural History

Blanding's Turtle - Nova Scotia's Threatened Terrapin by Terry Power Kentville, Nova Scotia

On Tuesday, June 30, 1953, an article on page four of The Halifax Chronicle Herald read: "UNUSUAL VISITOR - Sherman Bleakney of Wolfville, now Herpetologist with the Zoology Division of the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, examines an unusual visitor to Nova Scotia - the first Blanding's Turtle to be found here - taken by him at Lake Kedgemakooge". Dr. Bleakney could not have realized the omen in that 1953 headline, for history may yet record this species as simply that - "an unusual visitor to Nova Scotia". Forty years later, in 1993, Blanding's Turtle was declared a "Threatened" species by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Blanding's Turtle in Nova Scotia may be in danger of extinction.

The original report of Blanding's Turtle in Nova Scotia in 1953 was based on the observation of an adult female at the mouth of Grafton Brook in what is now Kejimikujik National Park (1). From then until the end of the decade, only a handful of sightings of this

species are recorded by the same author. Then in 1961, a number of Blanding's turtles were observed in and around the old Fish Culture Station at Grafton Lake. Bleakney (1) recounts the subsequent search for this unusual beast which began in Grafton Lake and ended on a stream on the far side of the lake called Kedgemakooge - during a fishing trip. On West River, whose headwaters are Tobeatic bogs from Horseshoe Lake south to Turnpike Lake and beyond, Blanding's Turtle was found to thrive. That tea-coloured stream dear to the hearts of so many visitors to Kejimikujik National Park, remains today the home of the largest concentration of Blanding's Turtle yet discovered.

Following those original observations of Blanding's Turtle, further intensive searching for this elusive terrapin would await the formation of Kejimikujik National Park (KNP) in 1967. In 1969, Ross Dobson (Park Naturalist, KNP) began to record observations of nesting turtles and began a process of marking individuals for future identification based on a method developed elsewhere (2). This procedure involved filing a notch or drilling a hole in one or more of the bony marginal scutes of the turtle's carapace (top part of the shell) which afforded a vir-

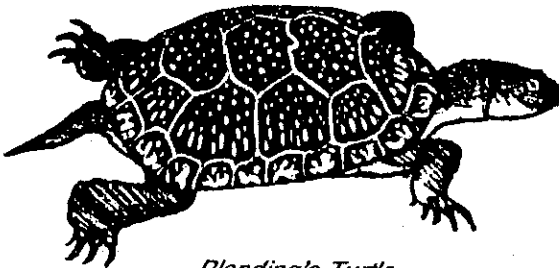
tually permanent mark. Twenty-four marginal scutes appear like tiles around the perimeter of the carapace. Each of these scutes is assigned a number by virtue of its position on the carapace, thus enabling all markings to have a unique numerical code. This marking system is still in use in the Park today and is a standard procedure used around the world.

Mr. Dobson continued his observations of Blanding's Turtle in Keji Park until at least 1972. During this period he was able to record numerous locations of turtles within the park as well as extending the known range of the species to at least as far south as the Mersey River below Lake Rossignol. There has been a long-standing interest in Blanding's Turtle by staff of Kejimikujik National Park as well as biologists from the Nova Scotia Museum and Acadia University. During the 1970's and 80's, a succession of individuals took up the search. Thanks to this enduring interest, the species is becoming better known.

Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) is recognized as one of

four freshwater turtles native to Nova Scotia. Within the province, this species is known to occur only in the southwest and particularly within Kejimikujik National Park. Over the years, sporadic searches in peripheral areas as well as occasional sightings reported by the public, have established that Blanding's Turtle occurs at least as far east as the Medway River and south almost to Liverpool on the Mersey River. It has not been reported west of Keji. Within the park, few records exist for the area west of Keji Lake and south of West River.

Some of the reasons for this restricted pattern of distribution can be better understood if you consider the species' continental range. Blanding's Turtle has a latitudinally compressed range suggesting that it does not have a broad climatic tolerance. It occurs only in North America and is believed to have originated in prairie sloughs and marshes. Fossil records indicate a former distribution considerably southward of the present range - southwest to Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma and southeast to Mississippi. The



Blanding's Turtle

Artist: Tamara Thieboux

evidence suggests a movement from west to east since glaciation. Today, the species range is centred in the Great Lakes basin with peripheral populations both in the west and in the New England States. The most geographically isolated population is that of Nova Scotia.

In Nova Scotia, Blanding's Turtle is restricted to the southwestern region for what scientists believe to be largely climatic reasons. The species is believed to have colonized the province via the Isthmus of Chignecto during a warming trend which followed the last glaciation (Wisconsin). Considerable climatic cooling has left us with the small isolated population surviving today in the warmest part of the province.

Within its Nova Scotia range, Blanding's Turtle shows a distribution equally as interesting as the continental pattern - it is patchy. West River appears to be a veritable Shangri-La for this turtle, while a few miles to the west, it is absent. Mersey River, especially the area of braided islands just upriver of Jake's Landing, has long been recognized as a haven for these turtles. The same is true of the Heber Meadow area of Jeremy's Bay. The question of why Blanding's Turtle inhabits certain areas in profusion while virtually absent from other areas has long been of interest to biologists and park managers alike.

The answers to these questions

are not entirely clear. If you consider the commonalities among the known areas of high turtle density, however, some very striking patterns emerge. Known areas of concentration are all located on slate bedrock. As you move west of Keji Lake, granite predominates and turtles are absent here. In addition, turtles are centred on slow flowing, darkly coloured acidic streams in areas of peaty soil. It is believed that turtles concentrate where they do, partly due to abundance of food. Ironically, it has been shown that in Keji, secondary productivity is higher in darkly coloured waters than in clear waters, regardless of acidity. Turtles may be absent from many lakes with clear water partly due to reduced food availability.

Food is only one requirement for survival albeit a critical one. Availability of other habitat requirements must also contribute to the patchy distribution of Blanding's Turtle in Nova Scotia. This species, like all turtles, reproduces by laying eggs. Each June and July, females deposit a clutch of about 8-10 eggs in gravel/cobble substrate on either natural lakeshore beaches or on artificial sites such as roadbeds or parking lots. Before the advent of artificial nesting sites, it is easy to imagine that the distribution of these turtles could be restricted to locations within reach of suitable natural beaches. Beaches seemingly suitable for nesting may actually be hostile environments due, for

example, to inappropriate substrate, incompatible temperature regimes (eg. too shaded), or low elevation causing drowning of eggs and hatchlings.

Occurrence of suitable overwintering sites may also limit the distribution of Blanding's Turtle. These turtles hibernate in both slow flowing and still waters on the bottom substrate or clinging to a pond/stream bank above the bottom. Though the habitat requirements for overwintering have not been studied in detail, some are apparent. The water and mud must be deep enough not to freeze to the bottom, the site must be protected from strong currents and ice scour and it must be within a few kilometres of a turtle's summer range.

Adult turtles also require basking (sunning) sites on logs, rocks or stream banks both in shallow water and out of water. The habitat requirements for juvenile turtles (less than 15 years old) is poorly known and may further limit the range of this species. Nonetheless, given the complex of habitat features necessary for the survival of this turtle, it is easy to see why its distribution should be patchy.

The population of Blanding's Turtle in Nova Scotia is small, isolated and of limited distribution. It is further compromised by high predation rates on eggs (the density of raccoons in the vicinity of some of its most important nesting areas continues to be very

high due to human presence). For these reasons, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) named the Nova Scotia population of Blanding's Turtle to its list of "Threatened species" in April, 1993.

What happens to a "Threatened" turtle?

COSEWIC was organised in May, 1977, to develop a national list of Canadian species regarded on the best scientific advice available, to be at risk. In April, 1988, five categories of species at risk were approved by COSEWIC. These are, in ascending order of endangerment: Vulnerable, Threatened, Endangered, Extirpated and Extinct.

"Threatened species: Any indigenous species of flora or fauna that is likely to become endangered in Canada if the factors affecting its vulnerability do not become reversed."

"Endangered species: Any indigenous species of flora or fauna that is threatened with imminent extirpation or extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its Canadian range."

The majority of species that ever lived on earth are now extinct. Extinction appears to be normal. Consider then, that scientists believe a certain species to be at risk of disappearing. So what? How can humankind be so presumptuous as to attempt to halt this inescapable procession towards doom. Part of the answer

is that in the last few decades, unprecedented numbers of species all over this planet are going extinct precisely due to human activity. Now that we have recognized that our activities may have put Blanding's Turtle on the fast track to oblivion - what can be done? Enter RENEW.

The National Committee for the Recovery of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (RENEW) was established in 1989 to oversee the recovery efforts for all terrestrial vertebrates at risk. The overall objective is to effect recovery of each recognized species. Success can be measured indirectly by removal of species from the COSEWIC list. In order to accomplish such an ambitious task, a group of experts is brought together to form a Recovery Team. The team prepares a Recovery Plan which outlines the measures to be taken in order to ensure survival of the population. Preparation of a Recovery Plan is only a first step. Information must be gathered in order to understand the reasons for the species' decline. Action must then be taken to ensure that the process of decline is arrested.

So what will happen to our threatened turtle here in Nova Scotia? A Recovery Team has been formed and is now preparing a plan for the recovery of Blanding's Turtle. Information gaps have been identified and a plan for action is taking shape. The irony

of all this is that despite the success or failure of this endeavour, Blanding's Turtle will in the end become extinct. This "unusual visitor to Nova Scotia" will become a notation in the geologic record. With some careful planning and a bit of luck, however, the recovery efforts will ensure human activities do not unnecessarily accelerate the process. Then perhaps, our history books will not scoop the story of extinction before it is penned in the more enduring font of fossil history.

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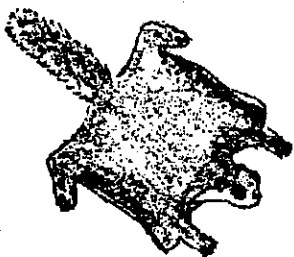
Flying Squirrels: Elusive Forest Friends

by Shawn Gerrow

Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Many people frequent the woods during the day, few are there at night. But, if you quietly walk through an older forest after dark, you might just hear a high pitched 'pisp pisp pisp' sound. If you are very lucky you may even

catch a glimpse of something gliding off into the darkness, a flying squirrel. These secretive animals only venture out of their nests after dark and return to their home at dawn. This, and the fact that they require a specific habitat are the main reasons why few people see flying squirrels. Nova Scotia has two species of flying squirrels; the northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*) and the southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*). Both species are nocturnal but differ in size, pelage, and behaviour. Northerns are found throughout the province while the smaller southern flying squirrel is known only from two localities (Gaspereau valley and Kejimikujik National Park). I will limit my discussion to the more abundant northern flying squirrel.



Most people are familiar with the common red squirrel, but not the northern flying squirrel, which looks quite different. They appear to be almost as large as a red squirrel but weigh about half as much. Flying squirrels are a mixture of tan, cinnamon, and beige in colour with a white underside.

Their faces and the ends of their tails are grey. They have very large eyes and see extremely well in the dark. This is not surprising given their nocturnal nature and mode of locomotion. In contrast to red squirrels, flying squirrels are gentle and mild mannered. When they are handled, flying squirrels usually only scold you in a whiny voice, and only occasionally bite you.

The unique features that enable flying squirrels to 'fly' are a large flat tail and a gliding membrane. This membrane is actually a fold of skin which is completely furred and stretches from wrist to ankle. In order to glide, flying squirrels leap from trees and extend their limbs forming a kite like profile as the membrane is stretched. The tail acts as a rudder, provides extra lift and is used to stabilize the squirrel during a glide. Flying squirrels are exceptionally agile in flight, capable of glides of up to 100 meters. They are able to turn, gain altitude, avoid branches and make a soft landing on the trunk of a tree.

Breeding occurs in March - April and young are born in May - June. Litters range in size from 1-4, with two being common. At birth young flying squirrels are only a few grams in weight and are blind and hairless. By the end of August most have reached adult size. They can be distinguished from adults by their grey colour until October, at which

time they moult into their winter coat.

Two basic types of nests are used by flying squirrels, cavity nests and dray nests (outside nests). Cavity nests are located in snags or in trees with dead or broken branches. The cavities are either naturally formed or were created by small woodpeckers such as the hairy or downy woodpecker. Flying squirrels can be found in the day by tapping on snags with natural cavities or woodpecker holes. Dray nests are made in witches brooms, dense conifer branches, and where large branches meet the trunk (fork). These nests consist of a tangled ball of shredded bark, grass, moss, and old- mans beard and are similar to those used by red squirrels. Both cavity and outside nests have finely shredded bark of birches in the interior and this is used by the squirrels as bedding. During winter, flying squirrels nest in underground or under snow nests and occasionally in cavity trees. More than one nest is used by individual squirrels and nests seem to be community property since they are often used by different individuals on different days. Groups of flying squirrels are commonly found together in the same nest. Apparently flying squirrels are very social and tolerant of each other.

Fungi (mushrooms and truffles, etc.) appear to be the most important food source. The seeds of

birches and berries are also eaten when in season. While foraging, flying squirrels can travel quite far for an animal of its small size, up to 500 meters or more from their nests. Home ranges overlap, so squirrels will often forage in close proximity to one another and sometimes can be found feeding in the same place.



Flying squirrels seem to use habitats that have tall trees, snags, decomposing logs, and relatively little understorey. Tall trees and little understorey offer excellent gliding opportunities. Fungi, which are used for food, tend to be more abundant in forests with decomposing logs. Snags are used for nest sites. These habitat characteristics are generally found in older forests. As a result, flying squirrels have a patchy distribution since older forests are becoming increasingly rare.

Northern flying squirrels are very important in the ecology of forests in western North America. Some fungi, that flying squirrels eat, form their fruiting bodies underground. These fungi form a

symbiotic relationship with tree roots, and as such help plants obtain nutrients that they would otherwise have been unable to procure. By digging up fungi and eating them, flying squirrel help to spread their spores. The spores pass through the squirrels digestive tract unharmed and inoculate the roots of young plants¹.

It is not known if flying squirrels make the same contribution to the forest community of eastern Canada. However, if this is the case, then the ecological integrity of our forests may not be the same without the northern flying squirrel.

As a Masters student at Acadia University, I am currently conducting my research on northern flying squirrels in and around Fundy National Park, New Brunswick. Habitat association, nesting behaviour, food habits, dispersal, and the effect of habitat fragmentation are being investigated for the purpose of determining what is required to maintain northern flying squirrels in Atlantic Canada.

¹ The discussion on fungi ecology is based on the following report: Maser, C. and Z. Maser. 1988. Interactions among squirrels, mycorrhizal fungi, and coniferous forests in Oregon. Great Basin Naturalist 48:358-369.

Tidbits of Natural History

TRIVIAL TIDBITS of Local Natural History

early January to
mid-March 1994

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

Fungi

late Jan. - in P.E.I. National Park, immediately after warm rain on January 28, lots of "witches' butter" appeared on black cherry trees (orange jelly fungi of *Dacr-*

myces or *Tremella* of family *Tremellaceae* (DC).

Insects

Jan. 11 - sudden and mysterious appearance (spontaneous generation?) of a fresh-looking, beautiful adult black swallowtail butterfly! in Graham Cheeseman's office in the Acadia University Biology building (GC).

Feb. 12 - in Wolfville, Trevor Thorpe discovered a black-brown-black hairy caterpillar on snow in full sunshine; this is the familiar woolly bear of the isabella moth, and its amounts of black do not foretell the severity of the winter (TT, BBT).



Mammals

Feb. 13 - a snowshoe hare seen closely at Pereau, near the feeding station for eagles - colour a dirty light gray, with dark ears - extremely poor "camouflage" against the white snow (HFN, JW).



Jan. 2-11 - in Thextons' yard in Wolfville, a raccoon raided suet feeders nightly until they were taken in every late afternoon; the thief was well seen on Jan 5, when it fed on food scraps put out for crows (BBT); what surprised me (JW) is that several of these nights were very cold, when I don't expect raccoons to be mobile.

Jan. 11 - in mid afternoon on Grand Pre dykelands, a red fox was seen mousing in the snow - "on three occasions it leapt high into the air, pouncing down on all-fours - we couldn't tell if it had caught anything"(BBT).

Feb. 12 - perhaps the same red fox seen in the same area (JW).

Jan. 20 - two coyotes seen again at Wellington Dyke (mouth of Canard River)(BBT). [See Nov.7/

93 and Jan.1/94 in last edition of Trivial Tidbits](JW).

Jan. 3 - a bobcat "observed for about 15 minutes near Black River Lake (on a N.S. Power road) at 2 p.m. - distance as little as 35 feet - animal showed minimal fear"(RW).

Jan. 21 - a harbour seal, a 3-foot juvenile of about 60 lbs.(27 kg.), was found along highway 101 near Lawrencetown (Ann. Co.) - it was rescued by two motorists and later released, healthy, in Annapolis Basin, by personnel from N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources (KA).

Contributors to

TRIVIAL TIDBITS

KA - Kentville Advertiser

DC - Donna Crossland

GC - Graham Cheeseman

HFN - Halifax Field Naturalists

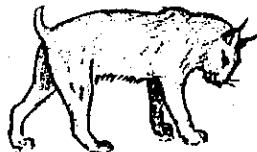
BBT - Brenda & Bill Thexton

TT - Trevor Thorpe

JW - Jim Wolford

RW - Rick Whitman

Editor's Note: Contributors to Jim Wolford TRIVIAL TIDBITS are urgently needed. Jim can be reached by phone at home (542-7650) or at the Biology Department (542-2201). Please call and let him know about your natural history observations.



BNS BIRD NEWS

December 15, 1993 to

March 15, 1994

by Richard Stern

Kentville, Nova Scotia

This account does not include Xmas Bird Count sightings, which were reported in the last issue of the Newsletter (Winter 1993, Vol.20, No.4).

Double-crested Cormorant ASM saw 2 of these common summer but rare winter coastal birds near Young's Cove Feb.1.

Wood Duck CM has had a male coming to his feeder (I) - or at least to the flowing water around it, in mid- Feb.



Scoter spp. ASM reports about 100 each of **White-winged** and **Surf scoter**, and a few **Black scoter** along the Fundy coast near Young's Cove Feb.1. Numbers fell as winter advanced, but hopefully they will pick up again soon as spring approaches.



Sharp-shinned Hawk Only 1 report to me this winter! ASM saw 1 in Coldbrook Dec.22. Hawk watchers and banders at Cape May, one of the chief migration concentration points for this species, have reported a steady decline in numbers over the last 4 or 5 years. On the other hand, counters at Holiday Beach in Ontario have not found this. Is there a true decline in just eastern populations, or has the species nesting in eastern Canada changed its migrating habits, and if either of these, why? I believe it is cause for concern.

Red-shouldered Hawk A fine example of this rare visitor, in adult plumage, was seen around Lloyd Duncanson's home near Wallbrook by MAG in mid- Feb., and remained easily visible to many local birders in the same area for the next week or two.

Red-tailed Hawk Abundant as usual in our area all winter. 84 were counted on the eagle count day, Jan. 30. The albino seen for at least the last 5 years near Saxon St. was once again present this winter.

Bald Eagle On Jan.30 the annual local Bald eagle count yielded 408 birds this year - down a little from last year. The largest single concentration was between Canning and Kingsport (104 - MAG).

Merlin CR saw one near New Ross Jan.3. JT saw one in Wolfville 22 Feb.

Peregrine Falcon ASM saw one over Coldbrook, heading in the direction of the ducks on the Cornwallis River, on Jan.12.

Killdeer 3 were along a still open stream on the rather late date of Dec.24, near Saxon St. Pond (TH, JB).

Purple Sandpiper Several observers noted them in their regular haunts along the Fundy coast, e.g. 16 Young's Cove Feb.1 (ASM).

Northern Bobwhite 6 have been coming to SM's feeder in Gaspereau all winter. These attractive members of the quail family are not native to Nova Scotia, but several attempts have been made to introduce them over the years (recently at Canard and near Berwick). Presumably these birds are introductions, probably to help with training hunting dogs.

Hungarian Partridge One flock of 7 birds at Canard Acres subdivision, Jan.7.(MS).

Great Horned Owl BLF was hearing one near one of his platform nest sites at Wallbrook by early Feb.

Pileated Woodpecker One was seen by CR flying over Hwy.12 in Feb.13, and ASM has had one around their property in Coldbrook again.

Common Flicker A few individuals have stayed around this winter, despite the harsh weather (BLF, WC, RBS).

Black-backed Woodpecker
This is the rarest of our locally breeding woodpeckers, and is probably seen less often than



some of the more southerly vagrants, unless the right habitat is frequently visited (usually well off the beaten track). RW saw one on the Black River Lake road Jan.3, on a dead tree.

Horned Lark RBS and others have noted increasing flocking and larger numbers in suitable habitat (open fields etc.) by mid-Feb., in preparation for their early migration.

Common Raven Approx. 40 visited JAH's feeder near Woodside in a storm at the end of Dec. Must have been quite a sight!

Fieldfare An individual of this European thrush was present just east of Annapolis Royal on 1 Feb., first noticed as it flew past RBS's car by its Robin-like shape and size, but with prominent white wing patches, and when then seen after it landed, its blue-gray head and rump, brown wings and yellow breast heavily spotted with black. The bird remained very



co-operatively in the same area for at least a week, and was seen by many interested birders from far and near. It has been photographed, and is a documented "first" for Nova Scotia (although there are 2 possible sight records from Cape Breton 21 years ago). The occupants of the surrounding homes were most interested in the bird and the large numbers of birders who descended upon their driveways and orchard with their binoculars, long camera lenses, tripods etc.

Bohemian Waxwing Large flocks of this beautiful bird have been roaming around our area all winter in search of berries, often very close to human habitation, to the extent that many non-naturalists have commented to me this winter on their attractive and striking appearance. Perhaps we should nominate them as an ambassador for the birds in general!

Northern Shrike Not an irruptive winter for this species, one was seen at Ross Creek Rd. on Jan.18.(GC).

Pine warbler MAG has had one coming to his feeder, early Jan. This rare winter visitor breeds

well to the south and west of our area, but is regular in winter, particularly at feeders in the Halifax/ Dartmouth area.

Northern Cardinal MAG reports a total of 11 birds in our area by the middle of Jan., mostly at feeders. They have been seen in Canning, Pereau, Port Williams, Wolfville and Kentville, and others have been seen in Coldbrook. A banner year for this species, whose range is spreading northwards, probably helped by winter feeding. We should watch closely to see if any of these wintering birds stay around and breed in our area.

Evening Grosbeak Not very abundant this winter, CR had up to 35 at her feeder in New Ross most of the winter. RBS has noted odd ones and twos over Kentville.

Dickcissel A F. bird spent early Jan. around a feeder in Wallbrook, with House sparrows (JWW etc.). This is a rarity from farther S. and W., that can easily be overlooked because of its resemblance to the latter species.



Northern Shrike

House Finch Port Williams and the west end of Wolfville remain the local hot-spot for this species, with examples coming to feeders all winter (CL etc.)

Common Redpoll This "irruptive" arctic-dwelling finch species occurs in our area only during some winters, and this season has to be its best showing for at least 10 years. Flocks have been reported all over the place, at feeders, roadsides etc., all winter. They are quite variable in appearance. 2 different races may occur here, ad. male, ad. female and imm. plumage of each vary slightly in appearance (It's the adult males that are the most overall pink), and evidently as feathers wear as the season progresses, many individuals become slightly darker anyway.

Hoary Redpoll A bird answering to the description of this species was present in a flock of Common redpolls at B & EM's feeder near the Lookoff in mid-Jan. The Masons noted the overall pale appearance and the small



bill, giving it a "squashed in" appearance to the face. People with experience of this species elsewhere in Canada claim that in a flock of Common redpolls there should be, on average, 2-4 Hoaries for every 100 Commons. That has not been my experience in Nova Scotia, where they seem far rarer than that. Although they should stand out in a flock of Commons by their slightly larger size, much paler and less streaked appearance, smaller bill, and unstreaked rump, there is apparently a lot of overlap between many individuals of this species and many of the former, and only "extreme" plumage variations of either can be safely labelled as to species in the field.

Crossbill spp. ASM has seen a few of both **White-winged** and **Red crossbills** in Coldbrook this winter.

Rufous-sided Towhee 2 males have been present at CER's feeder in Kentville (sometimes with a male cardinal!) most of the winter, seen by many observers.

White-crowned Sparrow An imm. plumaged bird has been present all Dec. and Jan. around the Long Island area of Grand Pre (BLF, RBS, and JCT who felt that the bill was particularly yellow, which is suggestive of one of the west-coast races.).

Snow Bunting 200+ were present in Gaspereau Jan.16 (WC, CR).

Contributors to Bird News

JB	Joanne Bezanson
WC	Will Caudle
GC	Gordon Callon
BLF	Bernard Forsyth
MAG	Merritt Gibson
JAH	John and Averill Harwood
TH	Tom Herman
CL	C.Lennox
ASM	Angus and Stella MacLean
SM	Shirley and Don Marston
W&EM	Bernard & Eleanor Mason
CM	Clinton Macinnis
CR	Christine Ross
CER	Carl Ross
MS	Mabel Sheffield
RBS	Richard Stern
JT	Jean Timpa
RW	Rick Whitman

A Cold Winter for 1994

by Larry Bogan

Cambridge Station

Let's look at the snow fall for the winter first. The snow cover was with us from the end of December to the end of March. The fall itself was almost exactly what would be expected for the three months. However, January had 50% more than usual while February had 1/2 of the expected snow fall for the month. Many of you will remember the snow storm in March of 1993 which contributed to the 132 cm for the whole month; compare that with this years 37 cm snowfall.

Rain fall fluctuates the most from year to year and this winter was especially variable. Note that February had 1/5 the usual 40 mm

of rain for the month!!!. January was up a little while March more than made up for the drought in February by dropping 3-1/2 times the standard rainfall for the month. The net rainfall for the season was 75% above normal.

We had flooding in March because the above average rainfall occurred at about the same time that the snow cover was melting.

Sometimes snow and rain complement each other and we get normal precipitation with wild fluctuations of rainfall or snowfall. March of last year was an example with lots of snow but less than half the usual rainfall. February of this year, was lacking in both snow and rain by a significant amount. March of this year had about normal snowfall and excessive rain yielding over 2-1/4 as much precipitation as an average March.

As you might expect, the bright sunshine hours trends for each month are usually in the opposite direction to those of the precipitation. February was dry but sunny, with 20% more sun than usual. January was normal but March was so cloudy that we had less than 2/3 of the average sunshine compared with the 30 year average for March. Since the days are longer in March, the fraction of sunshine hours in this month has a dominant effect on the overall winter sunshine hours and the season had below

average bright sunshine.

The season as a whole had a below normal mean temperature. January was the coldest with a mean temperature 3.5 C below average and February was 1.7 C below average. March was actually warmer than average by almost 1 C. These cold mean temperatures should be reflected in an increase in the amount of heat needed for our homes and the Heating Degree Days below 18 C should be noticeably greater than the 30 year average, but it isn't. That figure is only 4% larger than normal. Although I have not done a study of what caused this,

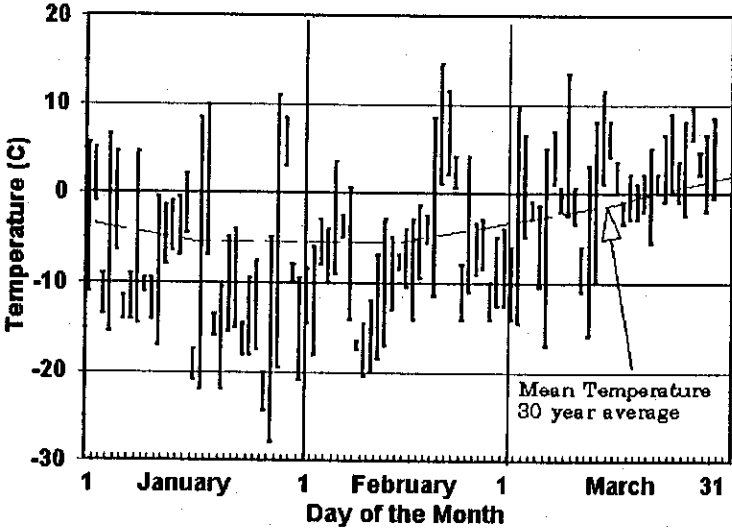
most likely it is a result of having a normal number of cold days but with fewer relatively warm days during the winter. Usually, we get nearly a week of warmer weather in January with a January thaw, but this year there was none.

I have plotted the maximum - minimum range for all the days for the winter season in the graph on the next page. You can examine the cold and warm periods to see if I am correct in my analysis. Compare the temperatures with the dashed line that marks the mean temperature from the 30 year averages.

**Mean Weather Statistics
Kentville Agriculture Centre
Winter 1994**

	Mean Temp C	Heat Degree Days <18C	Rain fall (mm)	Snow fall (cm)	Bright Sunshine hours
January	-8.8	830	59.6	111.1	74
30 yr ave.	-5.3	725	52.6	72.7	79
February	-7	701	7.9	34.2	123
30yr ave.	-5.3	699	40.7	65.3	102
March	-0.1	560	188	37	84
30yr ave.	-1	589	53	44	136
Total	-5.2	2091	255.5	182.3	281
30yr ave.	-3.8	2013	146.3	182	317

**Maximum and Minimum Temperatures
January, February, March 1994**



**Deadline for the June Issue of the
BNS Newsletter May 15 1994**

The June issue of the BNS Newsletter is to be a special issue on the Cornwallis River Corridor. Deliver articles, notices and/or artwork to the editor:

Mark Elderkin
80 Skyway Drive
P.O. Box 206
Wolfville, N.S.
B0P 1X0
Ph: 542-1964



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
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
	Larry Bogan		678-0446

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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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