



Blomidon Naturalists Society

Autumn 1997 - Volume 24 Number 3

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).*

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The Blomidon Naturalists Society

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BNS AUTUMN PROGRAMME, 1997

MONDAY EVENING MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held on the third Monday of the month and start at 7:30 p.m. at Acadia University in Room 244 of the Beveridge Arts Centre. All meetings are open to the public and BNS members are encouraged to bring friends and neighbours.

Sept. 15 BROCK FENTON. *Bats.* Brock is a biologist and Vice-President (Research) at York University in Toronto. He is Canada's foremost Batman, and a renowned teacher and speaker. Brock will tell us about the behaviour and amazing diversity of bats. Illustrated with excellent close-up photos.

Oct. 20 TONY LOCKE. *What to do with Sable Island.* Tony is the Atlantic Region Marine Issues Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Bedford. He will tell us about the history, biology and geology of Sable Island, and discuss possible management strategies.

Nov. 17 BERNARD FORSYTHE. *Update on Orchids and Owls.* Bernard has spoken to BNS about his work with orchids and owls on several occasions. This talk will tell us about his recent orchid discoveries and owl work.

Dec. 8 (Note date) LARRY BOGAN. *Soaring with Eagles.* Larry will use his experiences as a glider pilot to discuss the flight of hawks and eagles.

Jan. 19 RICHARD STERN. *Birding in Manitoba.* Richard will tell us about his birding trip last summer to both southern Manitoba and Churchill. Great slides!

FIELD TRIPS

(Note: RTNC = The Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front Street, Wolfville.)

Sept. 13. HORTON FOSSILS. Join **Sherman Williams** on a walk along the beach at Avonport to look for fossils. Meet at RTNC at 1:00 p.m. (542-5104).

Sept. 27. MUSHROOM WALK. **Twila Robar-DeCoste** will lead a walk through the Kentville Ravine to look for fall fungi. Meet at RTNC at 9:00 a.m. or at the Parking Lot, Route 1, at the entrance to the Ravine at 9:30 a.m. Walk finishes at noon.

Oct 12. POND LIFE. **Jim Wolford** will lead a field trip to search for the plants and critters that live in water - everything from waterfleas to turtles. Meet at the RTNC at 1:30 a.m. Bring rubber boots and binoculars. (542-7650).

Nov. 4. TOUR THE NOVEMBER SKY with **Sherman Williams** and **other BNS Stars**. A good night to see planets. Come early and view the crescent moon sitting above Venus and Mars. With telescopes see Jupiter and its four moons and Saturn with its rings. At Stile Park, Wolfville Ridge, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. Cloud date is Nov. 5. (542-5104).

Dec. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Date and information will be available at the Nov. and Dec. meetings

Notes from the Editor

Many thanks to all the contributors to this season's issue. I'd especially like to thank our feature article contributor, Sam Vander Kloet who presents a concise guide to the seven species of *Vaccinia* found in Kings County. Sam is one of the world's foremost authorities on this fascinating group of plants.

Thanks to Joanna Duy who provided a number of illustrations for this issue. Joanna is doing research for her Master's degree at Acadia University. Jim Wolford, in spite of several rather crippling computer problems (one of which was that his computer was stolen!) provides a lengthy summary of trivia from the summer.

Last issue I was sad to see Hale-Bopp go.... this time, it is a sad farewell to the summer of '97, but a welcome to a glorious autumn.

Deadline for the next issue: 1 December 1997.

Susan Montonen. 542-0437; susan.montonen@acadiu.ca

SOCIETY BUSINESS AND NOTICES

A TRAGIC NOTE

by Roy Bishop

Dr. Eugene Shoemaker, who along with his wife Carolyn and colleague David Levy gave a memorable presentation in Denton Hall on July 2 ("More Things in Heaven and Earth") died in a road accident in Australia on July 18. The Shoemakers were pursuing crater research in the Australian Outback. On July 18 they were driving on a remote, very rough, one-lane track near the western border of the Northern Territory when, on a blind corner, they were in collision with another truck. Carolyn was severely injured, but is now recovering at her home in Arizona.

Two weeks later, in a message addressed to "Dear Friends, old and new, all special people," Carolyn stated: "My children and I want to thank you for all your outpouring of love and support since Gene's death. To know Gene was loved, liked, admired, and respected by so many people has helped to sustain us in this very difficult time." "Although the death of Gene is still a shock and a great loss to us all, Gene would have felt it was a good way to go. He was out doing something he loved away from all the pressures of the world, in a country he loved, with the woman who had been his life partner for 46 years, and he died quickly."

Gene Shoemaker, 69, was a legend of a man who almost single-handedly created planetary science as a discipline distinct from astronomy. He was considered the greatest living planetary astronomer. He was best known for his work on craters and impacts, and for his conviction that comets and asteroids pose a real threat to life on Earth. The spectacular collision of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 with Jupiter in 1994 served notice to the world that there was good cause for Gene Shoemaker's concern. Many readers of this newsletter were fortunate to hear him on July 2. It was his last public presentation.

DIRECTORS OF THE BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1996-97

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IN MEMORY OF HILDA WEEKS, NATURALIST

by Roy Bishop

The above title is the inscription on a spotting telescope kindly donated to the Blomidon Naturalists Society at its June 1997 meeting by Angus and Margaret Weeks of Kingston, NS. Hilda Weeks (1916-1997) was the wife of Thomas Weeks, also of Kingston.

After the death of her mother, when she was eight years of age, Hilda Eugenia McCready moved with her father to a farm on the Saint John River. Even as a child she displayed a tremendous curiosity about the flora and fauna of the fields and forests in the area. From this, she developed a great understanding of nature and its wonders, which she maintained throughout her lifetime.

The telescope will be made available to leaders of our field trips as soon as a full-sized camera tripod is obtained to facilitate its use. (Does any member have a tripod collecting dust which could be used for this purpose?)

BNS FIELD-TRIP (MAY 3, 1997)

by Judy Tufts, trip leader

An active Red-tailed Hawk's nest on campus, a hen pheasant exploding from underfoot, a couple of Palm Warblers adding extra colour to a 'wave' of Yellow-rumps were some of the highlights of this BNS field trip.

A quick pre-trip check of the town harbour by the leader indicated that the Willets were not back yet so six of us set out before 8:30 am from the Robie Tufts Nature Centre directly to Grand Pré under sunny skies with a raw wind whipping across the Minas Basin. A Rough-legged Hawk rose from a nearby field as we stopped to admire the newly returned Savannah Sparrows. Two Bald Eagles and a Great Blue Heron flushed from the shoreline at the east-end of Long Island; the usual array of Double-crested Cormorants,

Black-backed and Herring gulls could be seen on Boot Island. A visit to Wolfville Sewage ponds turned up a pair of Iceland and a handful of Ring-billed gulls.

Next we were on a raptor nest-quest in the Wolfville area. All was quiet at the Merlin nest site in the cemetery — no adult in sight — but the nest itself was interesting as most of the field trip participants had never seen a nest of this species before. The Red-tailed Hawk's nest on Acadia campus proved more rewarding. Initially, the nest appeared unoccupied and we were about to depart when Roy Bishop noticed movement in the nest. We shifted our viewing positions further away from the nest site and within minutes the adult hawk stood up in the nest, took to wing through the campus

trees, crying 'Keeeer, Keeeer' in flight. As we were returning to our cars, a Red-tailed Hawk (the same one or a 'shift' change?) flew up to the building's ledge and once again the nest was occupied. Quite a thrill for us all.

Following this bit of excitement we drove to the church parking-lot in Greenwich to focus for a few minutes on the enormous Bald Eagles' nest, with attendant adult eagle, built in a distant tree.

The first sightings of a 'wave' of migrating Yellow-rumped Warblers began at Van Nostrand's pond, Starr's Pt., as they foraged, flitting around us from bush to bush unconcerned by our proximity. The visiting pair of Buffleheads of a few days earlier were nowhere to be seen. As we left the pond area one of our birders was suddenly very startled by a hen pheasant almost exploding from under his foot - an experience which can be rather unnerving at the best of times!

By the time we reached the Kingsport bluff the sun was beginning to warm us up. The Minas Basin at high-tide produced around 40 Black Scoters, six Surf Scoters, six Common Eiders and a Red-throated Loon. Here we were joined for a few minutes by a couple of local cottage owners eager to open up their cottage 'for the season' - everything for the cottage in their car- only to find they had arrived MINUS the cottage KEY !! I think they needed the distraction for a few minutes while they recovered from their obvious disgust. Fortunately for them their home was only in Wolfville, but it created a few sympathetic chuckles !!

'Lunch and munch' time was spent outdoors at a picnic table in Canning - the cool wind again stirring against our legs - prior to our visit to Harris' Pond behind the church nearby. Getting out of our cars our attention was captivated by a pair of brightly coloured Palm Warblers moving



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through the trees with more Yellow-rumps. A stroll along the edge of the pond added three Greater Yellowlegs, a single male American Widgeon, one Swamp Sparrow, Black and Mallard ducks, Green-winged Teal, while the 'wave' of Yellow-rumped Warblers continued around us. Occasionally one could hear them snapping their bills as they snatched insects from the air. Several Painted Turtles were spotted sunning themselves on logs or grassy mounds at the edge of the pond.

We left Canning for the final two pond-stops : Canard Pond where seven Ring-necked Ducks cruised along the far shoreline, a male Blue-winged Teal dabbled

in the company of Green-winged Teal, and Black ducks dozed in the sun along the pond edge. Another disappointment here, the male Eurasian Widgeon seen here the previous week evidently had moved on. A Belted Kingfisher was spotted on the way to the New Minas sewage ponds which turned out to have nothing different to offer, just more Black Ducks and Green-winged Teal. Possibly the most interesting part of this visit was the fact we ended up having to climb over the gate to get in to check the ponds as the leader was supplied with the wrong key!!! Was there something about that day and KEYS? 45 species were seen.

BNS FIELD-TRIP REPORT: POND LIFE (JULY 26, 1997) by Jim Wolford, Wolfville

This field trip was scheduled for the Saturday afternoon of Wolfville's Mud Creek Days, which we should have avoided. The parking lot at Robie Tufts Nature Centre was so full of cars that I was worried about finding participants. Only five people, including two from near Mahone Bay, followed me out to the lily-pond at the Kentville Agricultural Research Centre.

On our arrival there on this sunny and hot day, we found a wedding party assembling for photos. We obtained their permission to share the pond areas with them.

The pond was covered with beautiful exotic water-lily leaves and flowers, and there was very little open water. The water level was quite high, despite our long-continuing drought of this summer.

We quickly noticed oodles of skimmer dragonflies and damselflies of several kinds. I pointed out how useful binoculars are at ponds (I was the only one with some). I showed dragonflies that were laying eggs in the edge-water while hovering in flight. Also we saw damselflies "in tandem" — the male in front has clasped the female behind her head, and this is either a pre-mating position, or

a mate-guarding position so that she won't mate with another male until she has laid her (and his) eggs.

In a white enamel pan on top of an overturned bucket, I showed the abundant leafy stems of bladderwort. The many obvious bladders among the finely dissected leaves are vacuum-filled traps for tiny swimming animals, which are protein supplements for these otherwise normal, green, photosynthetic plants.

Also very abundant in the water were filmy mats of filamentous, bright green algae.

The following pond animals were seen without much searching: flatworms or planarians (we could see the eyes of one); a small, narrow,

swimming leech (most kinds of these are not "bloodsuckers"); two kinds of small snails were very abundant (*Physa* and *Gyraulus*); "water fleas" which are small to tiny crustaceans (relatives of *Daphnia* and *Cyclops*) were not very abundant; other common crustaceans were young amphipod "shrimps" (*Hyaella*); very young dragonfly larvae were common, and we saw one molted "skin"; only two damselfly larvae seen (one tiny, one large); we didn't look much for the "skins" of emerged dragonflies and damselflies (too many distractions); large larvae of long-oared backswimmers (predatory bugs) were abundant and also two shed "skins" seen; less common were shorter-oared, herbivorous water boatmen (adults and small young seen); new for me were green larvae of



Lysimachia terrestris

some kind of fly (about a cm long or less); and one well-developed tadpole, probably of a spring peeper, with large hind legs.

A few small frogs were not seen well enough to identify, and we didn't see or hear any adult green

frogs, which usually are common and vocal there.

We left the wedding party and photographers at about 3:30 p.m. Because so few participated, I am offering a similar trip on October 12th. (See Field Trips).

**BNS FIELD-TRIP REPORT : MIDDLETON CHIMNEY
SWIFTS (AUGUST 4, 1997)
by Jim Wolford, Wolfville**

On the evening of August 4th, I was scheduled to lead onlookers to Middleton Regional High School (one block north of highway #1 from the Tim Horton's doughnuttery) to watch the post-sunset show of swifts diving into the big chimney. However, that afternoon and evening we had long-awaited dark skies and steady rain. I found it very difficult to be upset, since our summer's long drought made us very desperate for such weather, even if it is temporarily hard on the swifts and our field-trip schedule.

Based on few observations in Middleton at this time of year, I had predicted we would see 400 or more swifts. To check on this, and to add to our meagre data on numbers there, I decided to observe the high-school chimney on the first nice evening, which occurred on August 6th.

I arrived at 8:35 p.m., with clear sky and cool temperature. At first, very few swifts were visible, then they slowly

accumulated in numbers and bided their time up very high, flying over the school, then disappearing, then reappearing after a minute or two. Their gathering was so high that it made me wonder if they have been experiencing harassment and/or predation from merlins, as has happened in Wolfville since 1992.

After a long period of gathering (and socializing?), the first swift entered the chimney at 9:02. Two minutes later (a half-hour after sunset), the entire accumulated flock descended and swirled into their overnight roost over perhaps a minute. An accurate count is impossible for such a show, but I guesstimated about 200.

After that, as always, a few laggards showed up and entered after the horde. When I departed at 9:15, I guessed a grand total of 210 swifts. Check out this show next year, from mid-May on, with peak numbers expected in late-May or early June.

NATURAL HISTORY NEWS

THE KINGS COUNTY *VACCINIA* SEPTET by Sam Vander Kloet, Wolfville, NS

Vaccinia, or blueberries, are intolerant to shade and require acid soils for growth and development so that in Kings County the plants are restricted to sand barrens, open oak-pine remnants, bogs and boggy barrens, acid-rock outcroppings, clear cuts (sorry, regeneration cuts!) and the associated edges of coniferous stands. Usually, in each of these habitats two or three species of *Vaccinia* are found growing together.

(1) The Aylesford-Kingston sand barrens and associated piney woods contain populations of *Vaccinium angustifolium* and *V. myrtilloides*. In the wetter regions of these barrens large trailing colonies of *V. macrocarpon* may also be found as well as the occasional feral *V. corymbosum*.

(2) In bogs and boggy barrens, vegetative populations of *V. angustifolium* may be found in the *Kalmia-Cladina* zone, *V. macrocarpon* in the sedge mats and *V. oxycoccus* trailing on the *Spaghna* mats.

(3) Acid-rock outcroppings usually have populations of *V. vitis-idaea*, *V. myrtilloides*, *V. angustifolium*, and occasionally *V. caespitosum*, the rarest species in the county, if not the province. It is found in the Three Pools area, and towards as well as along Schofield Road.

(4) Clear cuts usually have extensive populations of *V. myrtilloides* and *V. angustifolium* and could with a little sound management be turned into blue-berry barrens.

(5) Along the headlands of the Bay of Fundy, the *Vaccinia* are absent unless some sedge peat has developed, e.g. Huntingdon Point has extensive colonies of *V. macrocarpon*. These plants bloom during late July but were you to poke about the vines now, edible fruit will still be found often in large numbers.

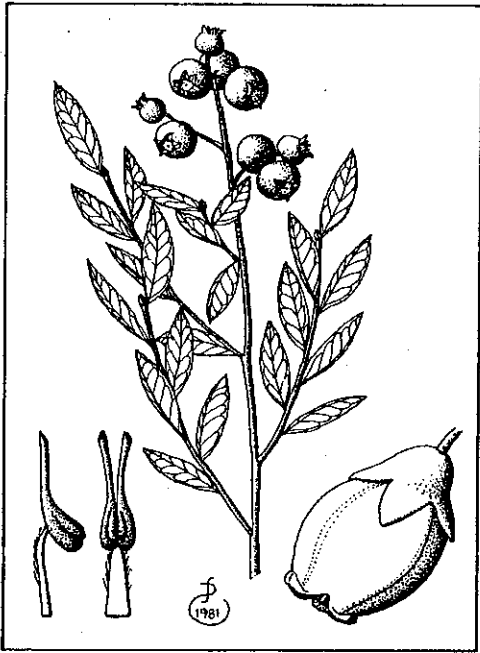
Fructing and dispersal characteristics of *Vaccinia*

Glossary:

Pedicel: Stalk of an individual flower

Flexuous: Curved alternately in opposite directions.

Axil: Angle formed by the leaf or branch with the stem.

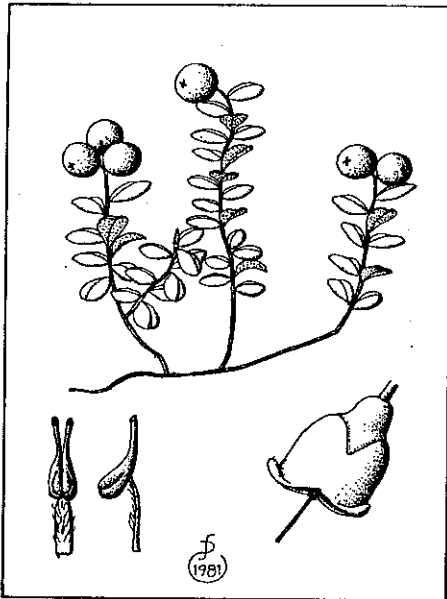


Vaccinium angustifolium (left) and *V. myrtilloides* (below): berries blue or black, in clusters of 3 to 5 berries, borne on the tips of stiff aerial shoots, 5 to 50 cm high; berries easily detached from the pedicel, and readily drop onto the ground after ripening. Berries ripen in late June and continue to ripen during July and August. Dispersal agents seen: robins and bears.

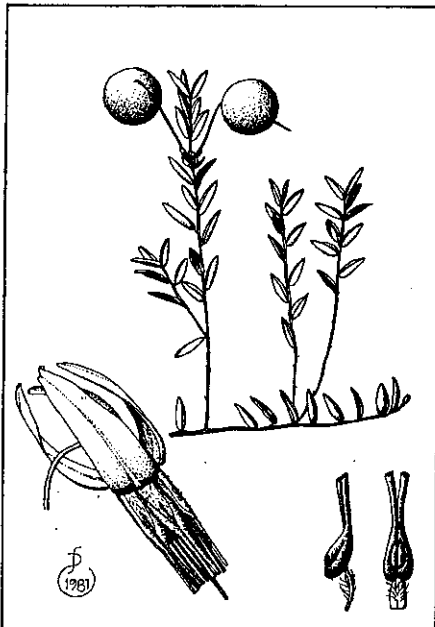


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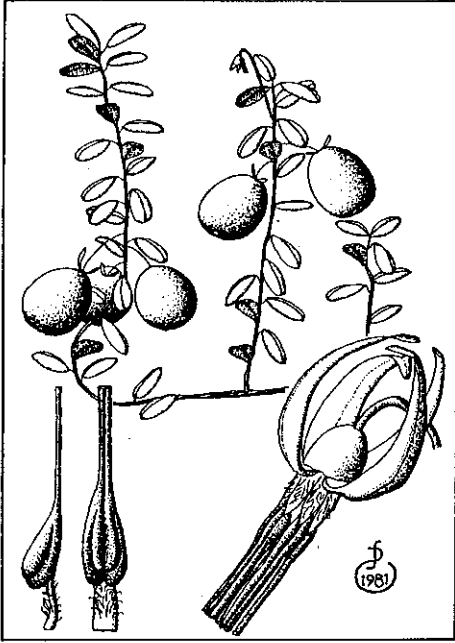
V. corymbosum ; berries blue or black, in clusters of 3 to 6 berries, borne on the tips of arching aerial shoots 1 to 3 m high; berries not easily detached from the pedicel and few if any berries seen on the ground. Berries ripen during July and August. Dispersal agents seen: cat-birds and robins.



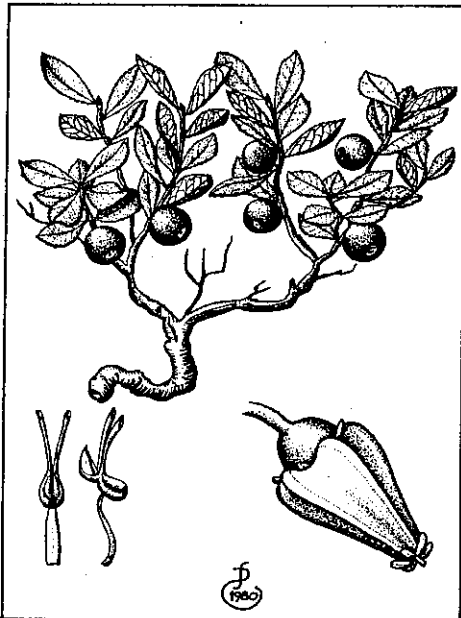
V. vitis-idaea: berries red, in clusters of 1 to 3, borne on the tips of flexuous shoots, leaning on the ground, or held 2 to 5 cm above the ground; berries will persist on the plant through the winter and many lie rotting on the ground after snow melt in early spring. No dispersal agents seen.



V. oxycoccus: berries red, borne singly on slender pedicels, ripening slowly in the fall on a bed of *Spagna*. The berries will rot *in situ* during the next spring and summer often still attached to the vine. No dispersal agents seen. Seeds require stratification for germination.



V. macrocarpon: berries red, borne singly on slender pedicels and held on aerial shoots 3 to 10 cm high, ripening slowly during late fall and early winter. The berries will rot *in situ* during the next spring and summer often still attached to the vines. Indeed fruits may persist on the vines for up to 18 months at which time they are reduced to papery brown hulls and seeds rattling about inside.



V. caespitosum: berries blue, borne singly in axil of leaf on very short pedicels and held on aerial shoots 3-17 cm high, ripening during late July - early August. After ripening the berry will soon drop into the litter with pedicel still attached to the berry. Dispersal agents not seen.

RECENT OFFICIAL NAME-CHANGES FOR BIRDS

compiled by Jim Wolford

The following has been lifted verbatim from a report of the New Brunswick Bird Records Committee, written by David Christie, and published in the N.B. Naturalist (September 1996).

"A number of taxonomic changes were accepted in the 40th Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union's Check-list of North American Birds (Auk, July 1995).

"These included the splitting of Gray-cheeked Thrush into two species, Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, which breeds across much of boreal Canada, and Bicknell's Thrush *C. bicknelli*, which breeds in Appalachian areas, including New Brunswick. The frequency of the redefined Gray-cheeked Thrush as a migrant in New Brunswick is not clear, but two museum specimens (Grand Manan, 26 May 1908; Fundy National Park, 28 Sept. 1976) have been reported. It is difficult to separate these new species in the field during migration. This change adds an additional species to the provincial list.

"Also split were: Rufous-sided Towhee into Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (eastern breeder and a rare visitor to this province) and Spotted Towhee *P. maculatus* (western breeder; the first New Brunswick record is



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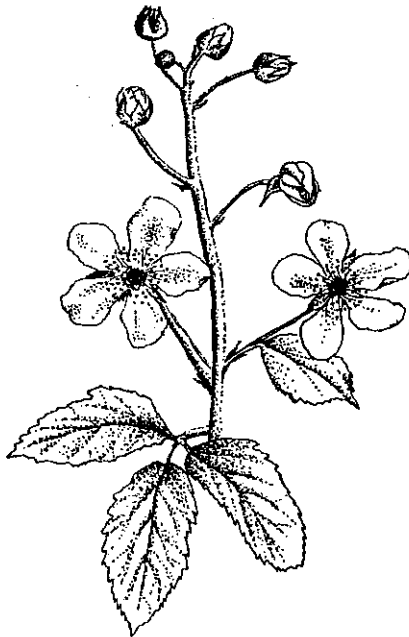
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accepted in this report); Sharp-tailed Sparrow into Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow *Ammodramus caudacutus* (breeder on Atlantic coast north to southern Maine; unknown in New Brunswick but a possible vagrant during migration) and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow *A. nelsoni* (breeder in New Brunswick and other northern areas); and Northern Oriole into Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (breeder in the east, including New Brunswick) and Bullock's Oriole *I. bullocki* (western breeder and vagrant in the east; the committee is studying New Brunswick's reports of Bullock's Oriole to see if any can be accepted)."

Finally, I'll state that the Rufous-sided Towhee reported in the Christmas Count report and Richard Stern's column in the Winter 1996 edition of the BNS Newsletter was definitely an Eastern Towhee. Also, many of you knew about the Bicknell's Thrush from an episode of *Land and Sea* on CBC-TV.

Keeping track of current accepted names is frustrating, I know, but names are very important to all of us, as stepping-stones into the interesting natural history of each species, whether or not it has an accepted common name, and thus the importance of those "nasty" Latinized scientific names.



*Rubus
canadensis*

NOVA SCOTIA NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT (REPORT SUMMARY) May 10, 1997

by Judy Tufts, PROVINCIAL COORDINATOR, NAMC

The 1997 Spring Count on May 10, 1997, proved to be anything BUT spring-like, yet brought some surprises to the Count records as noted : One Sandhill Crane flew out of a gully - probably its night roost - behind a shopping centre in Elmsdale, Hants Co; a Junco found on Seal Island was of the Oregon race; one Snow Goose was seen in flight with Canada Geese near Canning; and, a high number of American Bitterns were recorded this year (21).

By far one of the best areas in NS for observing a large variety of duck and geese species in May is the Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary, Cumberland Co., and it was rich that day - 20 species were noted there. For shorebird variety and extra surprises, Cape Sable Island held the honours this year - 12 species of shorebirds, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, four Black-crowned Night Herons, and a Snowy owl !! Five Broad-wing hawks riding the thermals were observed together near Caledonia, Queens Co. Two Eastern Bluebirds were a delightful surprise for one young birder and her father on the outskirts of Halifax. Imagine seeing five Mockingbirds together in your backyard that day!! One lucky Kings Co. feeder-watcher had that lively experience - a total of 12 were recorded for the province. Of the 17 species of war-



blers recorded, the best prize was the Prothonotary seen on Brier Island. The warblers most frequently seen, as expected, (Myrtles) Yellow-rumped (1800) and Palms (196), with a large wave of Yellow-rumps moving through the central counties. And to add colour and cheerfulness to the Spring list this year, were four Orchard and 11 Baltimore orioles, a Blue Grosbeak, and seven Indigo Buntings.

Once again, our province was not blessed with good birding weather for our spring migration count - does that sound familiar? One unfortunate participant was forced to curtail his birding observations mid-morning when an inch of snow fell on his count-area on the South Mountain, Gaspereau Valley, making visibility almost impossible. However, amid rather appalling weather conditions 357 participants persevered to gather information - 182 species were seen, for a total of around 80,000 birds on this 6th Annual Spring NAMC. Sleet and snow spread a path through central NS after dawn and up through Cape Breton counties by mid-morning, causing poor visibility and near freezing conditions for many. Rain was widespread except for outer islands, i.e., Seal, Bon Portage and Brier, in the Bay of Fundy. Coastal fog added to the frustration of others; temperatures varied - lows of minus 1 to plus 3 °C, highs of 6-14 °C.

The number of species seen was down, to be expected due to the cold, wet, and late spring we had all been experiencing. Many birds, dependant on warmth and flying insects for nourishment, delayed their arrival, and it became obvious with the weather conditions that many that had migrated here were in no hurry to leave whatever protective shelter they had obtained. It was interesting to note that although the total number of birds seen was approximately the same as last year, we saw five fewer species this year but we enjoyed having more 'counters' take part!!

A quick break-down of participation: The 18 Owlers (12 parties) who spent nearly 12.5 hrs checking out owls in various locations recorded 54 owls (5 species), including 37 Barred owls, and one Snowy Owl lingering on Cape Sable Island. 198 Observers in the field in 134 parties spent 305 hrs covering 468 kms on foot, travelled 6102 kms by car in 360 hrs or paddled for 2.25 hrs in a boat over 9.5 kms. 41 people in 28 parties were in Stationary watches for 58 hrs, while at 178 Feeder-Stations, 235 Feeder-watchers were observing birds around their feeders for 555 hrs. I do wish to thank everyone for their great effort despite the nasty weather conditions. The results have shown dedication and a keenness which has proven most rewarding as the data below indicates.

Total Species Counted: 182
 Total Counted Birds: 79,840

| Species | Total |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Red-throated Loon | 12 |
| Common Loon | 134 |
| Pied-billed Grebe | 25 |
| Red-necked Grebe | 13 |
| Leach's Storm-Petrel | 500 |
| Northern Gannet | 50 |
| Great Cormorant | 66 |
| Double-crested Cormorant | 2232 |
| American Bittern | 21 |
| Great Blue Heron | 332 |
| Great Egret | 2 |
| Cattle Egret | 1 |
| Black-crowned Night Heron | 7 |
| Snow Goose | 1 |
| Brant | 92 |
| Canada Goose | 150 |
| Wood Duck | 34 |
| Green-wing Teal | 452 |
| American Black Duck | 1439 |
| Mallard | 329 |
| Northern Pintail | 14 |
| Blue-Winged Teal | 78 |
| Northern Shoveler | 11 |
| Gadwall | 12 |
| American Wigeon | 101 |
| Ring-necked Duck | 324 |
| Greater Scaup | 242 |
| Lesser Scaup | 1 |
| Common Eider | 1717 |
| Harlequin Duck | 2 |
| Oldsquaw | 43 |
| Black Scoter | 350 |
| Surf Scoter | 215 |
| White-Winged Scoter | 137 |
| Scoter sp * | 4 |
| Common Goldeneye | 52 |
| Bufflehead | 17 |
| Hooded Merganser | 9 |
| Common Merganser | 188 |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 489 |
| Turkey Vulture | 3 |
| Osprey | 85 |
| Bald Eagle adult | 78 |
| Bald Eagle imm * | 31 |
| Bald Eagle age? * | 28 |
| Northern Harrier | 48 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 25 |
| Northern Goshawk | 3 |
| Broad-winged Hawk | 9 |



Ranunculus acris

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------|------|
| Red-tailed Hawk | 42 | Black-backed Woodpecker | 2 |
| Eagle sp * | 1 | Yellow-shafted Flicker | 402 |
| American Kestrel | 48 | Pileated Woodpecker | 34 |
| Merlin | 29 | Eastern Wood Pewee | 2 |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | 292 | Least Flycatcher | 1 |
| Spruce Grouse | 8 | Eastern Phoebe | 3 |
| Ruffed Grouse | 124 | Eastern Kingbird | 10 |
| Virginia Rail | 1 | Horned Lark | 1 |
| Sora | 21 | Purple Martin | 18 |
| American Coot | 1 | Tree Swallow | 2840 |
| Black-bellied Plover | 26 | Bank Swallow | 54 |
| Piping Plover | 4 | Cliff Swallow | 3 |
| Killdeer | 55 | Barn Swallow | 293 |
| Greater Yellowlegs | 108 | Gray Jay | 47 |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | 31 | Blue Jay | 1132 |
| Eastern Willet | 291 | American Crow | 3661 |
| Spotted Sandpiper | 12 | Common Raven | 453 |
| Upland Sandpiper | 1 | Black-capped Chickadee | 1805 |
| Ruddy Turnstone | 25 | Boreal Chickadee | 70 |
| Red Knot | 26 | Red-breasted Nuthatch | 139 |
| Sanderling | 80 | White-breasted Nuthatch | 40 |
| Least Sandpiper | 9 | Brown Creeper | 14 |
| Dunlin | 29 | Winter Wren | 37 |
| Short-billed Dowitcher | 3 | Golden-crowned Kinglet | 81 |
| Common Snipe | 68 | Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 300 |
| American Woodcock | 31 | Eastern Bluebird | 2 |
| Common Black-headed Gull | 7 | Veery | 5 |
| Bonaparte's Gull | 5 | Swainson's Thrush | 7 |
| Ring-Billed Gull | 277 | Hermit Thrush | 119 |
| Herring Gull | 12737 | American Robin | 4432 |
| Iceland Gull | 152 | Gray Catbird | 11 |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | 1 | Northern Mockingbird | 12 |
| Glaucous Gull | 4 | Bohemian Waxwing | 1 |
| Greater Black-backed Gull | 6031 | Cedar Waxwing | 17 |
| Black-legged Kittiwake | 350 | European Starling | 7078 |
| Gull sp* | 222 | Solitary Vireo | 9 |
| Common Tern | 81 | Red-eyed Vireo | 2 |
| Sterna sp* | 5 | Vireo sp* | 3 |
| Black Tern | 8 | Orange-crown Warbler | 1 |
| Black Guillemot | 136 | Nashville Warbler | 1 |
| Rock Dove | 1161 | Northern Parula | 5 |
| Mourning Dove | 639 | Yellow Warbler | 9 |
| Great Horned Owl | 10 | Chestnut-sided Warbler | 2 |
| Snowy Owl | 1 | Magnolia Warbler | 2 |
| Barred Owl | 37 | Cape May Warbler | 1 |
| Long-eared Owl | 3 | Myrtle Warbler | 1806 |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl | 3 | Black-throated Green Warbler | 3 |
| Chimney Swift | 6 | Blackburnian Warbler | 1 |
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 4 | Palm Warbler | 196 |
| Belted Kingfisher | 145 | East Palm* | 17 |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 25 | Black & White Warbler | 26 |
| Downy Woodpecker | 189 | Ovenbird | 12 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 87 | Northern Waterthrush | 10 |

| | | | |
|------------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| Common Yellowthroat | 2 | Brown-headed Cowbird | 198 |
| Canada Warbler | 4 | Blackbird sp* | 36 |
| Northern Cardinal | 10 | Orchard Oriole | 4 |
| Rose-breasted Grosbeak | 28 | Baltimore Oriole | 11 |
| Blue Grosbeak | 1 | Pine Grosbeak | 19 |
| Indigo Bunting | 7 | Purple Finch | 2004 |
| Rufous-sided Towhee | 1 | House Finch | 1 |
| American Tree Sparrow | 48 | Red Crossbill | 58 |
| Chipping Sparrow | 190 | Common Redpoll | 4 |
| Savannah Sparrow | 440 | Pine Siskin | 167 |
| Fox Sparrow | 49 | American Goldfinch | 1546 |
| Song Sparrow | 1426 | Evening Grosbeak | 883 |
| Swamp Sparrow | 125 | House Sparrow | 704 |
| White-throated Sparrow | 967 | Horned Grebe | 3 |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 16 | Cormorant sp* | 8 |
| Dark-eyed Junco | 5011 | Prothonotary Warbler | 1 |
| Bobolink | 7 | Sandhill Crane | 1 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | 1698 | Junco - Oregon | 1 |
| Rusty Blackbird | 41 | Bobwhite * | 1 |
| Common Grackle | 4987 | | |

BNS BIRD REPORT SPRING- SUMMER 1997

by Richard Stern, 40 MacDonald Park Road, Kentville, NS B4N 4M1
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This report covers spring, and up to early August 1997. Birds were affected by a cold, late spring with heavy snow over Easter, followed by rapid transition to a hot and very dry summer. The woods were closed to travellers from mid-July on, due to the high fire risk.

RED-THROATED LOON -- as usual there were a few off King-sport in the Minas Basin at high tide, presumably on Spring migration north (e.g. April 6 - AAM, RBS). Two at Port George 11 May were almost in full breeding plumage (RBS).

RARE EGRETS -- TR-D saw a **GREAT EGRET** in a field by the river in Aylesford April 19-20, and it was still easily visible for several days. They are occa-

sional vagrants to the province, usually in early spring and late fall. Another was present in the Cornwallis River Valley in mid-July, seen by ELB etc. After that it seemed to take up residence on the Wolfville and Avonport dykes (JCT etc.). There was a **SNOWY EGRET** around the pond at the campground in Somerset during the 2nd week in May.

GEESE -- There were two juvenile plumaged **SNOW GEESE** (presumably 1st winter) with the Canadas near Canning Aboiteau early April (JWW etc.). However this was dwarfed by a flock of 38 (!) flying over Advocate in May (MK). The numbers of this species around Hudson's Bay and Baffin Island are "exploding" so perhaps we are destined to see more of this beautiful bird.

Numbers of **CANADA GEESE** in the area at that time were estimated at 5000+ feeding on corn stubble, and inter-tidal mud. One had a neck-band "X+9", which had been banded near Fredericton in April 1993. Several stayed around; I was aware of at least two pairs that raised young on local ponds by the end of May. There was a lone **BRANT** on the rocks at Port George 11 May (RBS).

DUCKS -- Spring migration began in earnest in early April when local ponds unfroze. E.g. AAM saw in the New Minas Sewage Pond, on April, 9 "In the second last pond to the west, there was a pair of **RING-NECKED DUCKS** (first of the year for me); about 6 pair of **MALLARD** were scattered around (no Black Ducks); a few **COMMON GOLDENEYE**; and a pair of **WOOD DUCK** in the narrow wet area between the river and the east pond." Ring-necked ducks then became more common, e.g. 7+ at New Minas April 18, together with a **NORTHERN SHOVELLER** (RBS). Also by mid-April most of the local ponds held numerous **GREEN-WINGED TEAL**. A lot of these had disappeared by early May, but a few **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** had appeared, and paired off, by then. Canard Pond held a rare male **EURASIAN WIDGEON** on 26 April (RBS). BBT had a pair of **GADWALL** at West Grand Pré May 10. HF found two male **WOOD DUCKS** at Greenwich April 19 - 21, and BLF reports better than usual success with this species in nest

boxes this season. There were at least 40 **BLACK SCOTER** off Kingsport 18 May (RBS), and 25 mixed male and female **COMMON EIDER** off Margaretsville as late as June 19 (SLH). **RING-NECKED DUCKS** raised a brood of 10 ducklings on Canard Pond, and there was an out-of-season **GREATER SCAUP** there on 2 Aug. (RBS).

RAILS -- Both **SORA** and **VIRGINIA** were heard in the cattails at Van Nostrum's Pond in early May (JCT). Juvenile **SORAs** were at Harris's Pond, Canning in late July (JCT).

TURKEY VULTURE -- BBT saw one flying over the road east of Bridgetown May 3. This species seems to be slowly increasing away from its Brier and Long Island strongholds.

RED-TAILED HAWK - A most unusual nest for this normally tree-nesting species has been on a ledge on the front of University Hall, the main building of Acadia University. By early July the fledged chicks could be seen close by. BLF observed one of the pair present a dead Robin to the other at changeover time. Another, in a more conventional nest, was felt to be incubating eggs, April 9, near Eye Rd., Wolfville (JWW). The last sighting of the Sheffield Mills albino this winter was on March 20 (BDG).

MERLIN -- Two pairs were back at traditional nest sites in Wolfville April 10 - 22 (JWW). GF watched one of this species

snatch a **TREE SWALLOW** on the wing at Van Nostrum's pond May 10, and they have again been harassing Chimney swifts.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK -- ICR found one on the ground under their feeder in New Ross at 6:30 a.m. on April 8. NN heard at least three American Woodcock doing their 'courtship' routines in open woods in Port Williams at dusk on several evenings from April 7-11. One bird was observed excavating for worms on a nearby lawn. Another was on a lawn at Harbourville (AO).

OTHER SHOREBIRDS -- JCT noted about 10,000 **SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPERS** at Avonport Beach 29 July. BLF and AAM/SM found about the same number at Grand Pré around the same time, as well as small numbers of several other species, including **WHIMBREL**, **BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER**, **SANDERLING** and **SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER**. On 1 Aug there were about 20,000 there at high tide, with plenty of **SEMIPALMATED PLOVER**, **WHITE-RUMPED** and **LEAST SANDPIPERS** mixed in for good measure (RBS). **GREATER** and **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** have found the low water levels in Harris's and New Minas Ponds to their liking in early August.

GULLS -- A rare **LESSER BLACK-BACKED** was in a field near Blueberry Acres April 12 (IJ), the same spot that the first record for the county occurred two winters ago. A

GLAUCOUS, with several **ICELANDS**, were at Wolfville sewage pond April 15, and several of the latter still hung around there, and New Minas, till the end of the month. (JWW, RBS). There seem to be more **RING-BILLED** around this spring. They tend to hang out together and separate from Herring gulls (? different food).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK -- The first sighting of this increasingly rare insect-eater this summer was May 27 over Wolfville (JWW).

CHIMNEY SWIFT--- AAM saw one over Kentville May 10, then JT saw four over Wolfville 4 days later. But they did not start using the BNS Wolfville chimney till the 14th, and then were harassed by Merlins. On May 27 there were 190+ (JWW). Early August the numbers were down to about 50. SLH reports 200+ funnelling into the high school chimney in Middleton at dusk on May 22.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD -- I received numerous reports at feeders during the last week in May and first in June. Early ones were males on May 12 near Canning (BBT) and May 18 in Tremont (SLH). I must have seen hundreds altogether during a week spent in mid-July at Aylesford Lake - most of the cottages there had well-attended feeders.

WOODPECKERS - I heard about a pair of the rarely seen **BLACK-BACKED** seen along

the Sunken Lake Road most of the summer so far (SWy), and saw some photos of them. AAM tells of up to 10 **DOWNY** at a time in his back yard, occasionally drinking from the Hummingbird feeder. Two **PILEATED** flew across the road near the ball park in Kentville in early August (RBS).

SWALLOWS -- The first **TREE SWALLOW** was noted April 12, over Saxon St. Pond (JWW). This species, and smaller numbers of **BARN SWALLOW**, were well in evidence, particularly hawking insect over fresh water, as usual by early May. A female **PURPLE MARTIN** was seen over Van Nostrum's Pond 8-11 May (ELB et al).

GREAT CRESTED FLY-CATCHER -- One was in Bishop Woods, Coldbrook, on May 15. Not there the next day (AAM). A pair that raised a brood in Coldbrook in late July was reported to the Chronicle-Herald.

THRUSHES -- RW noted four **HERMIT THRUSHES** in the Gaspereau area April 20, the first this spring for our region. **VEERIES** and **SWAINSON'S** were back on territory by late May, and seemed to be numerous by the breeding season.

NORTHERN MOCKING-BIRD -- GA saw one outside MacDonalds in New Minas on April 6, presumably one of the billions now served! There is also a pair that looks like nesting, at Grand Pré (BBT). BBT also saw

two pairs on July 1, one on Saxon St. and one at Lower Canard, presumably nesting. Another pair has been active and noisy by the church in Port Williams.

VIREOS and **WARBLERS** -- A rare **WARBLING VIREO** was at Planters' Barracks B&B 15 May and sang all day. (ELB). AAM saw an equally rare **PHILADELPHIA VIREO** at Blomidon Park on 17 June. RW noted several **YELLOW-RUMPED** singing, along the Gaspereau river trail April 20, and there seemed to be a large influx of this species into the area 1-3 May. Other early species included **PALM**, **BLACK-THROATED GREEN** and **BLACK AND WHITE**. A rare **GOLDEN-WINGED** was in maples at Clementsport on 7 May - only the 2nd in our area in recent years (JF), and PT found another bird singing in the orchard across from his house in Gaspereau on 1 June. There were 10 species in Kentville the morning of May 15, including **BLACKBURNIAN** and **NASHVILLE** (RBS). A **BLACKPOLL** was at Avonport May 16 (EU). **TENNESSEE** first appeared late, as expected, 1 June, and AAM felt they were "unusually common" this year. By mid-summer's day all the expected local warblers seemed to be on territory in the usual spots, with no obvious reported crashes or increases in numbers compared to recent years.

NORTHERN CARDINAL -- DF had a beautiful male at her feeder in Sheffield Mills May 22,

JC heard one singing in Centreville May 16, and SVM told me of a pair possibly nesting in New Minas. PSC have had both sexes coming to their feeder in Kentville most of the summer so far.

SNOW BUNTING -- JWW saw what was perhaps the last stragler at Starr's Point April 5.

INDIGO BUNTING -- It was a good Spring for this rare and spectacular species. SW saw a beautiful male at an Avonport feeder on May 14, and others have been seen at Blomidon Provincial Park May 25 Scott's Bay in mid-May, and species #150 for MAG's yard list on the 23rd!

SUMMER Tanager -- Kings County's first for about 50 years was an immature male visiting a suet feeder in south Grand Pré in late May for several days - a rather drab blotchy orange bird compared to the bright red adult plumage. (BLF etc.).

ORIOLES -- BALTIMORE ORIOLES started to show up in ever smaller numbers in late May (about 2 weeks later than they used to). BPG reported a nice, and rare, adult male **ORCHARD ORIOLE** in Greenwood on May 21. Both species had been present on Brier Island the week before.

DICKCISSEL -- One of these rare sparrows (but with a good influx this winter) was at TR's feeder at Lower Canard April 21.

FOX SPARROW -- Birds on

northward migration through our area in late March and early April seemed present in unusually good numbers, often around feeders, and often heard giving their beautiful song.

FINCHES -- Large numbers of **PURPLE FINCHES** started showing up everywhere, and often singing, in late April after a complete dearth all winter. BPG had **RED CROSSBILLS** at their feeder in Kingston on May 7, and SM had 12 at hers on 18th. There were 25+ at GT's feeder in Wolfville on 28th. The first reported **ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK** was seen in Port Williams May 10 (GF), and many people have subsequently taken note of this showy species. There still seem to be quite a few around as of 1 July. **RED CROSSBILLS** seemed prominent in various parts of our area in early July.

| | |
|------|-------------------------|
| GA | George Alliston |
| JC | Joe Clifford |
| PSC | Pete and Sandy Connelly |
| DF | Darlene Feener |
| HF | Harold Forsyth |
| BLF | Bernard Forsythe |
| JF | Jeannie Fox |
| BDG | Barbara de Geus |
| BPG | Barb and Pat Giffen |
| SLH | Sheila Hulford |
| MK | Molly Kernohan |
| IJ | Ian Jonsen |
| ELB | Ed Leblanc |
| AAM | Angus McLean |
| SM | Stella McLean |
| AO | Anna Osborn |
| TR | Tom Regan |
| TR-D | Twila Robar-Decoste |
| ICR | Ian and Christine Ross |
| RBS | Richard Stern |
| BBT | Brenda and Bill Thexton |
| GT | Gerry Trueman |
| PT | Phil Taylor |
| EU | Eva Urban |
| SVM | Sandy Van Meekeren |
| RW | Rick Whitman |
| SW | Sherman Williams |
| JWW | Jim Wolford |
| SWY | Sue Wylie |

TRIVIAL TIDBITS OF LOCAL NATURAL HISTORY

selected and compiled by Jim Wolford, Site 1, Comp. 61, RR3,
Wolfville, NS, BOP 1X0. 542-7650

Early April to late August, 1997

This column has never become what I had originally envisioned, namely a lasting record of what you and I as nature-observers considered **unusual** or just stimulating or instructive, for that particular year or season or date.

I reserve the right to truly get selective about which reports (written!, please, on separate small, rectangular pieces of paper) to include in this column. As I have asked so often, please get into the easy habit of keeping such slips of paper handy and jotting down just a few words, in this order what, when, where, how many or the activity seen, and your name plus phone number.

Thanks to those of you who do contribute regular, unsolicited, and written reports.

WEATHER, SKIES

April 10-11 - a beautiful display of **aurora borealis** from 11:30 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., plus **Comet Hale-Bopp** and **crepuscular Moon** (CM,SW).

June 24 - a small **tornado**, accompanied by **hail** up to the size of golf balls, reported in the Milford/Lantz area of Hants County (HDN).

FUNGI and PLANTS

June 18 - a few fresh **oyster mushrooms** on a cut stump (old cut) in Wolfville (JW).

June 29 - a beautiful colony of **sulfur shelf** or **chicken mushroom** found on a log along the Cape Split trail (PV,PM,SM,CP, CT, JW).

April 24 - early fertile stalks of

field horsetail shedding spores, on a south-facing bank in Wolfville (JW).

April 15 - finally two flower-heads of **coltsfoot** in the Gaspereau Valley -- two weeks late for this particular south-facing bank (JW).

April 16 - two **dandelion** plants seen in bloom on Acadia Univ. campus (AW).

April 17 - more **dandelions** in bloom, beside a building, in Wolfville (GT).

April 21 - **dandelions** growing through pavement at Greenwood Mall (SH).

April 23 - both **alder** and **hazelnut** (latter planted) showing open catkins of flowers in Wolfville (JW).

April 24 - **trembling aspen** cat-

kinds of flowers open in Wolfville (JW).

April 25 - beautiful red female flowers of **silver maple** open on 2 planted trees in Wolfville (JW).

May 3 - **coltsfoot** (in bloom?) at the edge of some woods at White Rock (SH).

May 14 - **white violets** growing on a lawn at Greenwood (SH).

May 14 and June 10 - **common strawberry** in bloom on a lawn at Greenwood, and on a grassy cliff at Margaretsville, respectively (SH).

May 19 - **purple or red trilliums** blooming along a brook near Greenwood (SH).

May 19 - **shadbush** trees (in bloom?) near Greenwood (SH).

May 23 - **early winter cress** at a Middleton school-yard (SH).

May 24 - **leatherleaf, goldthread, and common blue violet** (*Viola papilionacea*) (in bloom?) near Aylesford (SH).

May 25 - **cuckoo-flower** showing masses of blooms in a wet field at Kingston (SH).

June 3 - **gill-over-the-ground or ground-ivy, mouse-ear chickweed, mouse-ear hawkweed, white clover, wild lily-of-the-valley, common speedwell, and lowbush blueberry** (in bloom?) on a lawn near Greenwood (SH).

June 9 - **rhodora** (in bloom?) in a

ditch at Torbrook Mines (Annapolis Co.)(SH).

June 10 - **common periwinkle** (garden escape) growing on lawns in Margaretsville (SH).

May 29 & June 5 - on the floodplain along the Meander River, not far from Brooklyn (Hants Co.), lots of blooming **nodding trilliums** and possible hybrids? of **nodding X purple trilliums?** -- no, the "hybrids" are more probably just a red- or pink-petalled form of the **nodding trillium** (JW).

June 28 - **common comfrey** abundant and in bloom from Wolfville to Hortonville, and **black locust** or 'acacia' trees in bloom near Kentville and Grand Pré (JW).

June 29 - along the Cape Split trail, in bloom were **one-flowered wintergreen, white-flowered twisted-stalk, sweet cicely, mountain maple, wild wood sorrel, wild Solomon's-seal, banberry (white-berried species), dewberry (trailing raspberry), small-flowered buttercup, et al.** (JW).

June 30 - a large **tulip tree** (planted) in bloom on Kent Ave. just south of Main St. in Wolfville (several days later I discovered a few flowers on a small planted tree in Wolfville's 'Quiet Park' along Main St. north of the old hospital)(JW).

July 3 - lots of **bush-honeysuckle** in bloom in New Minas along RR tracks (JW).

July 4 to 9 - **common milkweed** beautifully in bloom, in a hopefully secret location in eastern Kings County -- lots of interest this year among naturalists on account of a bumper crop of local **monarch butterflies** (see under Insects below) -- I personally would like to know of other milkweed colonies in our general area, but be careful whom you tell (see also below for **monarchs**)(JW).

July 27-29 - **water hemlock** (*Cicuta maculata*) in bloom in Canard Valley and at Grand Pré (JW).

August 1-25 - **purple loosestrife** (alias the 'purple plague') very obvious in two gardens at north Grand Pré -- we naturalists should be nicely informing gardeners and nurseries about the fact that stocks from nurseries are **not** free from the potential to set seed and then get dispersed to our wetlands, where the species forms monocultures that out-compete native plants and have little or no value for wildlife(JW).

August 14-18 - large colonies of blooming **purple loosestrife** well established and probably spreading at South Maitland and north of Amherst (JW).

Aug. 27 - at the east end of Grand Pré's Long Island, **perennial sow thistles** are very heavily infested with **aphids** (and attracting lots of **lady-bird beetles**), but the plants are also thriving in the sense that their flowers have now gone copiously to seed (JW).

INVERTEBRATES

June 12 - a very thin, long, twisted **worm** found slowly writhing above the litter, in a Wolfville garden -- appears to be a **segmented worm**, i.e., a relative of earthworms (SVK).

June 19 - several long (20-25 cm.), wire-thin, black or dark brown **worms**, slowly moving by twisting, in shoreline water of north Sherbrooke Lake at the United Church Camp -- very probably **horsehair or Gordian worms** (SW,JW).

Aug. 7 - one "sea mop" or cluster of **egg-sacs of a long-finned squid** found attached to a seaweed on the upper beach at Cape Blomidon (JW).

March 28 - two unidentified **spiders** spinning webs at doorways in Wolfville (JT).

early or mid May - lots of probable **fairy shrimp!**, not yet mature, found in a vernal or temporary pond north of Somerset School, with a crude dip-net, by two young students -- this important record needs to be confirmed next May (GF).

May 25 - lots of big adult **fairy shrimp**, including many females with well-developed egg-sacs, in the semi-permanent forest pond along the cliff-trail in Blomidon Provincial Park (JW,BNS).

INSECTS INSECTA-EPHEMEROPTERA

May 29 - adult **mayflies** seen on

the hood of a car in Greenwood (SH).

INSECTA - ODONATA

June 22 - lots of **white-faced skimmer dragonflies** (body all black with a white face and a yellow spot along abdomen), probably freshly emerged, at the lily-pond at the Kentville Agricultural Research Centre (PM,JW).

July 3 - a **12-spot skimmer** and a **white-tailed skimmer** seen along RR tracks at New Minas (latter species was still being seen there until early August)(JW).

INSECTA - ORTHOPTERA

July 26 - first **field cricket** heard in a Wolfville garden (JT).

INSECTA - DERMAPTERA

Aug. 23 - 4-5 **earwigs** found resting during day in head-down, pincers-up position (fearsome!) at the top of a common milkweed plant among the leaf-bases next to the stem, at Waterville (JW).

INSECTA - HOMOPTERA

June 22 - a probable **annual or dog-day cicada** (? - but see below) heard calling along the Gaspereau River near White Rock (PMc,GW).

July 3 - oodles of cottony colonies of **alder psyllids** at tips of alder branches, along RR tracks at New Minas (JW).

July 28 - a few **annual or dog-day cicadas** calling at New Minas

-- these were the first ones heard by me this year (see above)(JW). JT heard one in Wolfville on July 26.

Aug. 8 to 26 - more **annual cicadas** heard at Wolfville, Lunenburg, Kentville, Waterville, etc. (JW).

Aug 20 - an adult **annual cicada**, described as a 'frog with wings', found on a weathervane on a house-deck, west of The Lookoff (North Mtn.)(EBM).

Aug. 27 - lots of large colonies of **aphids** on sow thistle plants at Grand Pré (JW). (See also under Plants and Insects (ladybeetles).)

INSECTA - COLEOPTERA

April 22 - a medium-sized adult **predaceous diving beetle** (aquatic) found dead on top of my car in Wolfville (warm & sunny day)(JW).

May 27 - a **2-spot ladybird beetle** (native) found dead at my home in Wolfville (JW).

May 31 - **June beetles** seen near Greenwood (SH).

June 10 - an **eye-spotted ladybird beetle** (native) found in Greenwood (SH).

June 14 - a **7-spot ladybird beetle** (alien species) found on a barrier-beach on McNab's Island, Halifax Harbour (JW).

N.B. This species is now Canada's most frequently found species of ladybug, possibly at the expense

of our many native species -- **contact** the Canadian Nature Federation in Ottawa at 1-800-267-4088 to become a participant in their **Ladybug Survey** -- they can send you a very colourful identification-guide brochure, a reporting form, and a 1996 news-letter (the latter for a \$5 donation).

June 24 - parts of **June-beetle** exoskeletons were found in two regurgitated pellets of indigestible matter from nestling **red-tailed hawks**, under their nest on Acadia's University Hall (also feathers, but no bones, of pigeons were the bulk of the pellets)(FS).

July 13 - a black **pine sawyer** (a long-horned wood-boring beetle) seen on a wooden floor along Wolfville's Front St. (NC).

Aug. 8 - at least ten **7-spot ladybird beetles** found on **aphid-infested** sow thistles along a dyke at Wolfville (JW).

Aug. 23 - a **7-spot ladybird** found on a common milkweed plant, adjacent to another milkweed infested with **aphids** and, attending them, **ants**, at Waterville (JW).

Aug. 27 - lots of **ladybird beetles**, about 21 **7-spotted** and **southern** or **19-spotted** (both alien species), found among abundant colonies of **aphids** on sow thistles, at the east end of Grand Pre's Long Island -- also lots of larvae and pupae and young adults of the ladybirds (JW,ALCC).

INSECTA - LEPIDOPTERA

May 12 - two **cabbage (white)**

butterflies in a Wolfville garden (JT).

June 7 - a **tiger swallowtail** seen in Wolfville (JT).

June 9 - a 'tent' of **eastern tent caterpillars** forming between two small branches of a bush, near Greenwood (SH).

June 26 - two **northern pearl crescents**, an unidentified **blue**, and, most notably, 20-25 **ochre ringlets** at Bear River -- the latter have only recently appeared in N.S. in the last few years, having migrated from the west -- they were flitting over and stopping at flower-heads of fall dandelion and white clover (JT).

June 24 to late August - there seems to be a bumper-crop of **monarch butterflies** this year, according to several observers from here to Canso -- this led to local explorations of, and interest in, colonies of **common milkweed** -- I've found quite a few adult monarchs and all stages of their life-cycle, including probably two generations locally -- I'd like to find out about any milkweed colonies known by you-all, but be careful whom you tell! -- c. milkweed is officially a Noxious Weed in the Regulations of the N.S. Weed Control Act -- in Kings County the District Weed Inspector hires a contractor to spray herbicides on common milkweed colonies that are considered to be threats to agriculture -- I'd also be interested in others' observations of monarchs this year and in the future -- there's a sometimes-spectacular migration along the

Atlantic Coast of N.S. and Digby Neck from Aug. thru Oct. and even until mid-Nov. -- did you know that the monarch has now been officially listed as Vulnerable (among Canada's many Species at Risk)? (JW *et al.*).

June 28 - a **red admiral** butterfly in Wolfville (JT).

June 30 - a **polyphemus moth** and two **rosy maple moths** in New Minas (JW).

July 1 - a **white admiral** or **banded purple** in Wolfville (NC).

July 2 - two **rosy maple moths** in Wolfville (JH).

July 3 - an unidentified tiny white-striped black **day-flying moth**, resembling a tiny butterfly, found inside a Wolfville house -- released onto its host(?), jewelweed, outside (JT).

July 3 & 9 - two & one adult **viceroys** butterflies (mimics of monarchs) seen at New Minas in one of my milkweed/monarch areas (JW).

July 9 - an adult **question-mark** butterfly seen in Wolfville (JT).

July 15 - an **Atlantic fritillary** butterfly found dead in Halifax (NC).

July 21 - a **northern pearly eye** butterfly found dead in Wolfville (JT).

July 22 - an **American painted lady** butterfly seen flying in Wolfville (JT).

July 24 - a **common wood nymph** butterfly flying in Wolfville (JT).

July 26 - a **striped hairstreak** butterfly seen in a Wolfville back yard (JT).

July 27 - a large green '**horn-worm**' (**caterpillar of a sphinx moth**), with a metallic-blue posterior 'horn', found climbing up a house door in Wolfville (HMT).

July 29 - 6 caterpillars of **question-mark** butterflies found on American Elm in Wolfville, and were collected for hand-rearing indoors (see below)(JT).

July 29 - a **Canadian(?) sphinx moth** clinging to a screen in Wolfville -- had been attracted to an all-night light (JT).

Aug. 11 & 13 - four new **question-mark butterflies** emerged from six hand-reared chrysalises (see July 9 & 29) -- but two of the caterpillars were apparently parasitized, since their subsequent pupae turned black and then some small dark-brown pupae/cocoons of the parasites emerged -- 2 adult flies, probably **tachinid flies**, emerged from the cocoons on about Aug. 24 (JT).

N.B. These '**parasites**' are actually **predators**, since the host-insect always dies. Entomologists frequently call them **parasitoids**. These include certain flies and especially small wasps that are diverse and often extremely host-specific. Thus they are potentially very useful as relatively environmentally friendly

control-agents toward insects that we too-often view as 'pests' (JW).

Aug. 13 - a brown woolly-bear known as the **salt-marsh caterpillar** (of an **acrea moth**) found eating leaves of sweet clover at Port Williams (JW).

Aug. 13 - a **clear-winged moth** that closely resembles a yellow-jacket wasp (*i.e.*, a harmless mimic) found along New Minas RR tracks (JW).

Aug. 21 - **lots** of small black **ctenucha moths** (day-active moths) on flower-heads of goldenrod at Grand Pré (JW).

Aug. 23 - on goldenrods at Waterville, two **viceroy**s, two **painted ladies** (which species not noted), and a **wood nymph** (a satyr butterfly) (JW).

Aug. 27 - a black-brown-black **woolly-bear** caterpillar of an **isabella moth** found among grasses at ne. Grand Pré (ALCC,JW).

INSECTA - DIPTERA

June 30 - lots of hungry **no-see-ums** or **biting midges** in Wolfville in late afternoon and evening (JW).

mid Aug. - out of two chrysalises (pupae) of **question-mark butterfly**s, being reared indoors in Wolfville, emerged several brown pupae, probably of parasitic **tachinid flies** -- two of the pupae produced adult flies a couple of days later (JT,JW). (Also see Aug. 11 note under Lepidoptera above.)

INSECTA - HYMENOPTERA

April 16 - another adult **mud-dauber wasp** (see my previous Trivia column) inside Acadia's Biology building (AW).

May 15 - **flying ants** seen in Greenwood (SH).

June 10 - a large **winged ant** on my car in Wolfville at late dusk (JW).

August 8 - mass excited emergence of small male and large female **winged ants**, along a residential sidewalk in Wolfville (JW).

August 21 - mass emergence of **winged ants** in a Grand Pré garden -- also lots of **starlings** feeding aerially nearby, probably on the flying ants (JW).

Aug. 23 - more **winged ants** emerging in Wolfville (JW).

FISHES

June 28 - lots of **goldfish** in schools in Silver Lake at Lakeville -- I saw about 100 or more, and only two were not all gold -- one had a dark stripe along its back (JW).

HERPTILES

May 3 - **spring peepers** heard near Greenwood at dusk (SH).

June 18 - a large **painted turtle** on the shoulder of hwy. 101 near the St. Croix River (DT,JWa).

June 23 - a very large **snapping turtle** found between Lumsden

Pond and Schofield Brook on Corkum Burns Road (BBY).

June 30 - another **painted turtle** on the highway-shoulder s. of New Ross (DT,JWa).

MAMMALS

May 1 - a **muskrat** crossing a road, moving very slowly (flaunting traffic), near Canard Acres subdivision (Canard Valley)(AW).

May 10 - **muskrats** swimming in a ditch on farmland near Kingston (SH).

July 1 - a yearling **woodchuck** or **groundhog** seen basking and drying off (after a swim?) along the White Rock Canal, west of White Rock Power House (JW).

April 3 - a **raccoon** found asleep in a tall poplar tree in Wolfville, and not far from bird-feeders! (where one or more are long-standing pests)(BBT).

April 8 - at midday, a very bold or oblivious (distemper?) **raccoon** in Wolfville walked up a path in the garden and then to the next yard (BBT).

Aug. 5-10 - road-killed **raccoons** common on local highways (JW).

April 19-20 - a **skunk** seen very late at night at Grand Pré (PM,JW).

April 21 - a **skunk** freshly road-killed at Greenwich (JW).

mid June - a mother **skunk** and five small youngsters, going

single-file, along Hwy. 221 north of Berwick (DO).

July 10 - an adult and three baby **skunks**, hunting beetles and worms on a lawn at Blomidon, at 10 p.m., after heavy rains in afternoon (AW).

Aug. 2-3 - freshly road-killed **skunks** on highway 101 at Greenwich and highway 1 east of Wolfville (JW).

Aug. 10 - three fresh road-killed **skunks** one (half-grown) at east Wolfville and two at Greenwich (JW).

June 10 - a **seal** (**harbour?**) seen near shore at Margaretsville (SH).

April 24 - a **harbour porpoise** nearly got stranded by the tide in a stream-mouth at nw. Grand Pré (DT *et al.*).

? - I lost the exact date (late July?), but an unidentified **small cetacean**, probably a **dolphin?**, found dead on the tiny public beach at Hantsport -- unfortunately, the next-day's tide carried it away (PC).

July 6 - I saw, photographed, and petted 'Wilma the Whale', a **beluga** or **white whale**, where Guysborough Harbour meets Chedabucto Bay (JW,JM,BN).

June 10-11 - a **minke whale**, locally named 'Cosmos', was far inland along the Shubenacadie River, attracted a lot of attention, was rescued from a mud-bar, but was found dead the next day up the Stewiacke River

(CBC,HCH,HDN).

mid July - a probable **minke? whale** approached and stayed close to a boat off Harbourville (Bay of Fundy) for 45 minutes (JMo).

June 12 - a 14-15-metre **sei whale** found dead and beached at Hartlen's Point, Dartmouth -- originally came in from offshore on the bow of a container ship (PB,CBC).

June 29 - at least **60 finback whales!** (possibly 80-90!) in a small area off Peggy's Cove (ATV).

Aug. 19 - a **North Atlantic right whale**, a 41-foot subadult female, was found dead somewhere between Grand Manan Island and Brier Island -- it was towed to Freeport, where an autopsy showed a broken jaw and internal hemorrhaging, very probably caused by a collision with a ship (DTo + media).

May 10 - a **white-tailed deer** seen standing in an open field near Kingston (SH).

May 18 - five **white-tailed deer** were visible all afternoon, feeding in hayfield/pasture above the Stewart Mtn. Rd. at Blomidon (AW).

June 7 - a **white-tailed deer** in a back-yard in Wolfville along Main

St. (and had spent the night there)(ES).

June 30 - two **white-tailed deer fawns** along highway 103 near Mahone Bay (DT,JWa).

Aug. 8 - a small **white-tailed deer** seen in late afternoon along Main St. at east end of Wolfville (PM).

TRIVIA CONTRIBUTORS (Thanks!)

PB - Paul Brodie
ALCC - Appletree Landing Children's Centre
CBC - CBC Radio
NC - Neil Cloghesy
PC - Penny Corbett
GD - Graham Daborn
JH - John Horton
HCH - Halifax Chronicle-Herald
SH - Sheila Hulford
SVK - Sam Vander Kloet
CM - Charlene MacLellan
JM - John Morgan
JMo - Jeff Moore
PM - Pat Martin
PMc - Pat McLeod
SM - Sheila McCurdy
BN - Bruce Nunn (N.S.Know-It-All)
HDN - Halifax Daily News
DO - Don Osburn
CP - Cheryl Phillips
BNS - Blomidon Nat. Soc.
ES - Ed Shynal
FS - Fred Scott
BBT - Brenda & Bill Thexton
CT - Chris Toplack
DT - David Timpa
DTo - Deborah Tobin
GT - Gerry Trueman
HMT - Hilda & Mark Taylor
JT - Jean Timpa
ATV - ATV News
PV - Pol Vincter
AW - Anne Woolaver
GW - Gisela Westphalen
JW - Jim Wolford
JWa - John Warren
SW - Sherman Williams
BBY - Betty & Barry Yoell

WEATHER STATISTICS APRI-JULY 1997

by Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station

This month we look at the four month period from mid-spring to mid-summer. From my recollections, it was a period of contrasts.

April, and May were cloudy, cooler, and wetter than July. Let's look at the facts in the table of monthly statistics below.

| | Mean Temp (°C) | Rain Fall | Sunshine Hours |
|------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| April | 2.9 | 94.3 | 144 |
| 35 yr mean | (4.5) | (81.7) | (154) |
| May | 10.3 | 72.5 | 175 |
| 35 yr mean | (10.3) | (76.2) | (199) |
| June | 15.7 | 57.1 | 204 |
| 35 yr mean | (16.0) | (71.4) | (210) |
| July | 20.2 | 23.3 | 301 |
| 35 yr mean | (19.2) | (73.7) | (229) |
| Period | | 247.2 | 824 |
| | | (303.0) | (792) |

As you can see from the statistics, May and June were more-or-less normal in temperature, rain, and sunshine. However, June did have only 80% of expected rainfall. The rainfall of April was slightly above normal but a full 1.6°C cooler than usual. I certainly remember the large snow and rain fall on April fools day (The records show 19 cm of snow and 32 mm of rain fell on Kentville that day).

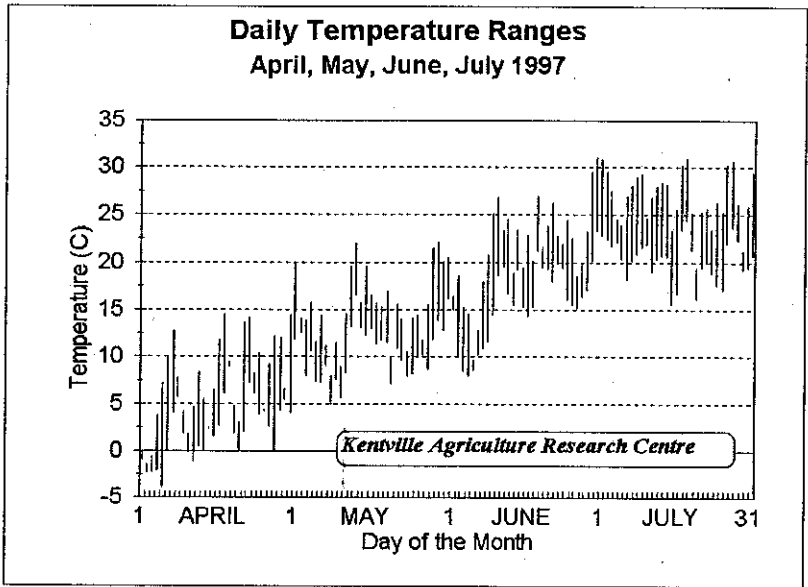
July was so sunny, hot, and dry that it made the earlier part of the season seem more extreme than it was. We has less than 1/3 the expected rainfall and 30% more bright sunshine than the average over the previous 35 years. The average temperature in July was a full 1°C above its usual value.

I have included three graphs of the daily weather statistics

because I think they best show the weather for the period.

Temperature: This graph shows the range of temperatures each day with a line that extends from the minimum to maximum temperature. Notice the number of times the maximum exceeds 30°C in July. Notice, also the more oscillatory nature of the temperature in May and June when we had many weather systems passing through Nova Scotia that changed the weather nearly every day.

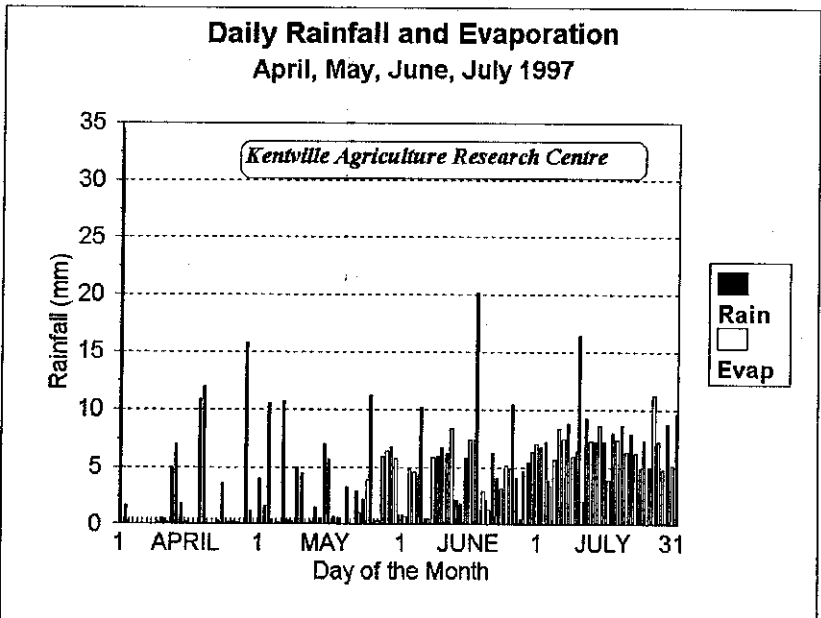
Sunshine: The oscillatory nature of the weather in April, May and June is very clearly shown in this graph. Notice how there are dips in the sunshine hours every 5 or 6 days during May and June while in July there were only 3 days with less than 5 hours of bright



sunshine. (The average was 10 hours of bright sunshine for July).

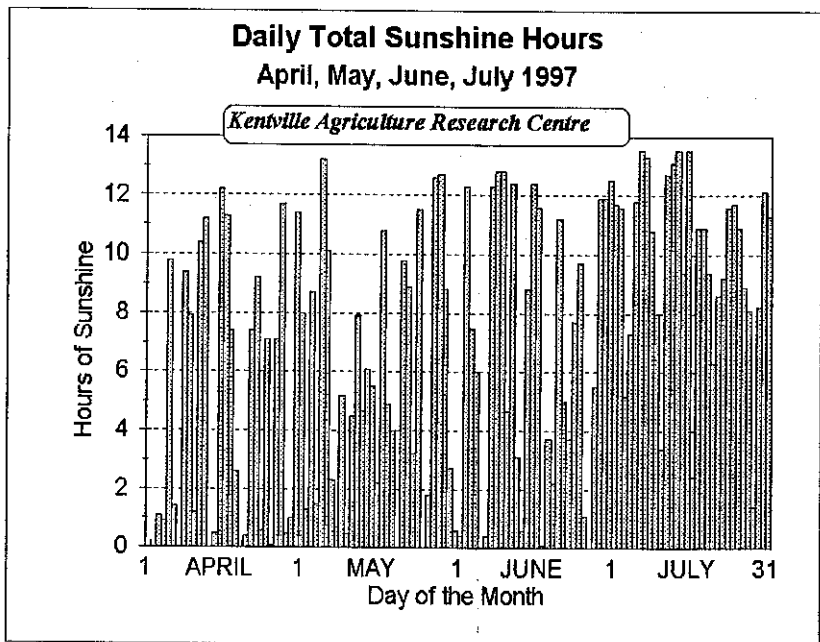
Rainfall and Evaporation: This graph shows the daily rainfall with black bars while the open

pan evaporation is indicated with white bars. July had only one good rainfall (in Kentville) early in the month while the evaporation was quite high all month. The early part of the season was well



watered but not enough to make up for the dryness in July; the

season as a whole received 82% of the normal precipitation.



WHAT'S IN THE SKY
by Roy Bishop

New Moon: Sept 1, Oct 1, Oct 31, Nov 29, Dec 29; Full Moon: Sept 16, Oct 16, Nov 14, Dec 13; Autumn: Begins on Monday, September 22 at 8:56 pm (ADT) Standard Time: Begins on Sunday, October 26; Winter: Begins on Sunday, December 21 at 4:07 pm (AST)

A Special Harvest Moon

The full Moon on the evening of September 16 is called "the Harvest Moon" because at mid-northern latitudes, for a few evenings near this date, the delay in the rising time of the Moon from one day to the next is unusually short (about 37 minutes this year, compared to an average of 50 minutes). Thus, for a few days in succession, the bright

Moon provides light in the early evening hours, assisting farmers with their harvest. The reason for the short delay involves the tilt of Earth's equator to the plane of its orbit.

The full Moon on the evenings of September 15, 16 and 17 will look especially large because it *will be* especially large! On September 16 the Moon in its elliptical (egg-shaped) orbit is especially close to Earth, only 357 000 km away, as compared to its average distance of 384 000 km.

Also, the Moon is totally eclipsed on September 16, but this event is visible only from the Eastern Hemisphere. The eclipse ends well before the Moon rises over Nova Scotia.

A Special Hunter's Moon

The October full Moon also has a shortened delay in successive rising times, and thus, like the Harvest Moon, provides light for a few evenings in succession, supposedly aiding hunters. Hence it is called "the Hunter's Moon", although it is illegal to hunt after sunset!

As in September, the full Moon around October 15, 16 and 17 will be exceptionally close (359 000) and hence will look especially large.

Jupiter and Venus

Jupiter, the largest planet, dominates the evening sky this autumn, being in the southeast as dusk

falls in September and lying high in the southern part of the early evening sky through October and November. It resembles a very bright, slightly yellowish star, but unlike a star, does not twinkle. Steadily-held binoculars will show its disk plus two or three of its four large satellites, like stars lined up close to Jupiter. In a small telescope, four satellites are easily seen along with cloud bands in Jupiter's thick atmosphere.

Don't confuse Jupiter with Venus. Venus is even brighter than Jupiter, but lies far to the right of it, low in the southwest sky in early evening, and it sets by mid-evening. The distance between Jupiter and Venus shrinks toward year's end as Jupiter gradually shifts into the western portion of the evening sky.

Saturn

Well to the left of Jupiter, Saturn rises in the east in mid-evening in September, and is already in this part of the evening sky as darkness falls through October and November. Somewhat dimmer than Jupiter, Saturn is easily mistaken for a star, but unlike a star, does not twinkle. In good binoculars, Saturn is slightly egg-shaped. A small telescope will reveal the cause of this odd shape: Saturn's spectacular rings, the south side of which are now tilted about 10 degrees toward Earth.

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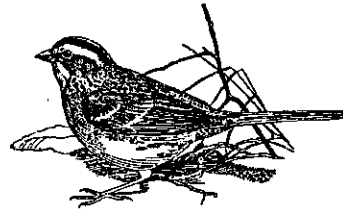
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Each member receives four issues yearly of the BNS Newsletter. The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations. The membership fee itself is not tax-deductible. Members may also join the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists through the BNS and will receive their quarterly newsletter; the membership is not tax-deductible.

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

Harold Forsyth
RR #2, Wolfville, NS. B0P 1X0

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| _____ | Individual Adult | \$12.00 | \$ _____ |
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**Sources for Local Natural History
(compiled by Blomidon Naturalists Society)**

| Information | Source | Office | Home | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Rocks & Fossils | Geology Dept. Acadia U. | 542-2201 | | |
| Fish | NS Dept. of Natural Resources | 679-6091 | | |
| Flora - General | Ruth Newell | 542-2201 | 542-2095 | |
| | Fungi | Darryl Grund | 542-2201 | 542-9214 |
| | | Nancy Nickerson | 679-5333 | 542-9332 |
| | Lichens | Karen Casselman | 424-7370 | 633-2837 |
| | Seaweeds | Darryl Grund | 542-2201 | 542-9214 |
| 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 | |
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| Falcons & Eagles | Peter Austin-Smith | | 542-2109 | |
| Mammals | Tom Herman | 542-2201 | 678-0383 | |
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| | Jim Wolford | 542-2201 | 542-7650 | |
| Seashore & Marine Life | Sherman Bleakney | | 542-3604 | |
| | Jim Wolford | 542-2201 | 542-7650 | |
| | Michael Brylinsky | 542-2201 | 582-7954 | |
| Indian Prehistory & Archeology | Ellis Gertridge | | 542-2816 | |
| | James Legge | | 542-3530 | |
| Astronomy | Roy Bishop | | 542-3992 | |
| | Sherman Williams | 542-3598 | 542-5104 | |
| | Larry Bogan | | 678-0446 | |

| September 1997 | | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|--------|-------------------------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | 1 New Moon | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 Horton Fossils |
| 14 | 15 Brock Fenton -- Bats | 16 Full Moon | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 First day of Fall | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 Mushrooms |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | |

| October 1997 | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | | 1 New Moon | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 Pond Life | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 Full Moon | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 Tony Locke - Sable Island | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 New Moon | |

| November 1997 | | | | | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 November Sky | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 ... |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 Full Moon | 15 |
| 16 | 17 Bernard Forsythe - O&O | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23/30 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 New Moon |

