

Blomidon Naturalists Society

Autumn 1998 - Volume 25 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
P.O. Box 127
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SUMMER AND EARLY AUTUMN PROGRAMME, 1998

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.

Oct. 19 **MIKE JAMES.** *Leatherback turtles: Summer Visitors to Nova Scotia.* Leatherback turtles are sighted off Nova Scotia between June and October. The natural history of these large, pelagic reptiles is not well understood. Mike is a graduate student in biology at Acadia working on leatherbacks. He will report some surprising information, beautifully illustrated with slides and videos. Come and enjoy the leatherbacks.

Nov. 16 **HEATHER DRUPE.** *Orchid Slide Presentation.* Heather has pursued her hobby of searching for and photographing wild orchids for several years. Tonight she will share her interests and slides with us. Heather is a member of The Orchid Society of Nova Scotia, and a frequent leader of field trips.

Dec. 14 **TONY DUKE.** *Nova Scotia Forestry Wildlife Guidelines.* Tony has worked with the Dept. of Natural Resources for many years. For the past several years, one of his major interest has been the development of the new forestry-wildlife guidelines. Tony will explain these guidelines to us and invites a discussion of them.

Jan. 18, 1999 **LESLIE ROGERS.** *The Nova Scotia Nature Trust.* Leslie will tell us about the work of the Nature Trust; its organization, lands and legacies. Primarily, her presentation will be photographic tour of the property held by the Trust. Come and see some of Nova Scotia's beautiful natural places, and learn how you can help.

FIELD TRIPS

Note: **RTNC** is the Robie Tufts Nature Centre on Front Street in Wolfville.

Oct. 11, 1998 BLACK HOLE. (Black Hole is near Baxter's Harbour, this is not an astronomy trip with Stephen Hawkins.) A nature walk with Jim Welford (542-7650) down into a dark ravine to a brook and waterfall on the Fundy coast. Enjoy the fall colours. Meet at 10 a.m. at RTNC, bring rubber boots and lunch.

Oct. 12 FALL BIRD MIGRANTS. A fall birding walk at Blomidon Provincial Park with Mark Elderkin (542-1964). This is a **Parks Are For People** walk, see also PAFP brochure for other autumn outings in various Provincial Parks and at Museum properties. Meet at 1 p.m. at Blomidon Provincial Park.

Oct. 23 THE AUTUMN SKY. Larry Bogan, Roy Bishop and Sherman Williams will guide you across the autumn sky. A good night to see planets. With telescopes see Saturn with its rings and Jupiter with its four moons. Meet at RTNC at 7:45 p.m. or at Stile Park, Wolfville Ridge, at 8 p.m. (Cloud date is Oct 24.)

Nov. 8 WINTER EVERGREENS. A woodland walk with Bernard Forsythe to look for plants that remain green all winter, and other interesting features of nature in autumn. Meet at RTNC at 1 p.m.

Dec. 20 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. All interested are invited to participate. If you have not taken part recently, contact Randy Milton (542-1761 - evenings) before Dec. 14 for information and instructions.

Notes from the Editor

The Special Fundy Shore Issue wraps up with this newsletter - Fred Scott on Mammals of the Fundy Shore, Angus MacLean on Shorebirds, and Plants of the Fundy Shore illustrated by Mary Pratt. This issue also wraps up the spring and summer with reports on the North American Migration Count, Trivial Tidbits, and the April to June bird news from Richard Stern. Thanks to all the contributors, and to Lorna Hart for advertising and Phil Taylor for production. On to autumn.

Susan Montonen
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ANNOUNCEMENTS & SOCIETY NEWS

Founding Meeting of the United Plant Savers - Nova Scotia Chapter

This will be a grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving at-risk, native, medicinal plants.

Saturday, November 28, 1998
Meeting and Slideshow 1 pm - 5pm. Potluck Dinner after (5-7 pm) Suggested Donation \$10-20. At Swallow's Nest
1702 Lower Church Street
(Starr's Point)

For registration and Information call Loraine Johnson 542-4146 Lorie-Ann Martin 538-3977 or email: ups@oshogardens.com

The United Plant Savers mission is to protect native medicinal plants of the United States and Canada and their native habitat while ensuring an abundant renewable supply of medicinal plants for generations to come. We encourage land stewardship and sustainable wild harvesting, recognizing that the environmentally responsible cultivation of medicinal plants is of critical importance in addressing these goals - from United Plant Savers, East Barrie, Vermont.

Web: www.plantsavers.org

Earthwhile Pursuits.

Earthwhile Pursuits on Main Street, Wolfville, closed on September 30, 1998. Opened in November 1992, the store was the place where many people

bought topographic maps, recorded bird sightings, and got information on natural history trips. We wish Neil Cloghesy all the best in his next venture.

DIRECTORS OF THE BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1997-98

President — Randy Milton 542-176; Vice-President — Phil Taylor 542-0437; Past-President — Roy Bishop 542-3992; Secretary — Neil Cloghesy 542-4525; Treasurer — Harold Forsyth 542-5983; Directors at Large — Sue Bissix 542-9138; Merritt Gibson 582-7569; Lorna Hart 542-4470; Tom Herman 678-0383; Stan Riggs 679-9746

Special Issue -- The Fundy Shore

MAMMALS OF THE FUNDY SHORE

by Fred Scott

Mammals of the Fundy (or any other) shore fall into two basic categories: those that can be seen from it, and those that actually travel over it or find resources on it, such as food, resting or denning sites. Some, like seals, may fall into both categories.

There are two main types of shore: (a) rocky, which can be vertical (cliffs), or horizontal (ledges), or loose boulders and cobbles; and (b) sedimentary (gravelly, sandy or muddy). Most stretches of rocky coast are actually a mix or mosaic of the two, for instance a rocky cliff with boulder rubble at its foot, above a sand or gravel beach, perhaps with rocky outcrops here and there. Where rivers or streams enter the sea there is an increase in substrate diversity, and the presence of fresh water increases the number of wildlife species that can make use of the habitat. Streambeds also provide an access route to the beach for mammals that cannot get down cliffs or very steep banks.

Extensive saltmarshes are characteristic of low-lying sedimentary shores around the Bay of Fundy. These are by far the most intensively used by small mammals such as shrews, voles and mice.

There are always adventitious mammal visitors to shorelines. Mammals are exploratory and whenever they live in habitats adjacent to a shore, some individuals of most species will sooner or later, deliberately or by accident, come onto the shore itself. This is how new resources are discovered and exploited. Where farms abut the shoreline you can expect skunks and raccoons to occasionally venture down to the beach. White-tailed Deer often visit shores, and when a shore is backed by cliffs and they can't find the streambed or ravine down which they came, they can get trapped and die. They also use shores as departure and landing points when they swim to and from inshore islands in the summer, as they often do. In July 1997, deer remains were found on the beach at Isle Haute, almost 10 km from the nearest mainland.

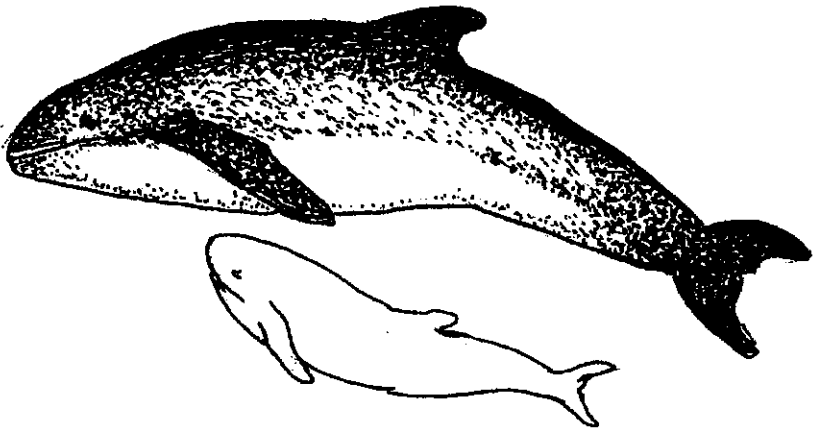
Above the extreme high tide line, cracks and crevices between rocks, including those between wharf pilings, provide denning sites for American Mink (*Mustela vison*), the only large mammal that permanently inhabits seacoasts in Nova Scotia. I have seen 10 mink along rocky coasts for every one on freshwa-

ter shores, though this may be partly because they are more visible.

Throughout the world, wild members of the dog family (canids) that have access to beaches regularly forage on them for live prey or carrion, and our coyotes and foxes are no exception. Nor are domestic dogs, and if you see small or medium-sized canid tracks on a beach there is no reliable way of determining which species made them. However, the further you are from areas of human habitation or recreation, the less likely they are to be domestic dog tracks.

Nobody in North America, to my knowledge, has ever systematically investigated the use of shore habitats by small mammals in general. The few studies that have been undertaken have been focused on single species, or on the small mammal community at a single location. At least five such studies have been carried out in Nova Scotia by Acadia honours and graduate students. Some species of our shrews and mice regularly visit beaches for the abundant invertebrate prey, mostly amphipods and fly larvae, to be found in the wrack line of seaweed at the high tide mark, and for the green vegetation as well as invertebrates in the upper zones of saltmarshes. This behavior is well known in the Common Shrew (*Sorex cinereus*), the White-footed Mouse and Deer Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus* and *maniculatus*) and the Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). Other species recorded on shore habitats are the Water Shrew (*Sorex palustris*) and the Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*).

Of the marine mammals, the ones most commonly seen from shore are the seals and the Harbour Porpoise. In summer



the Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) are common and often visible from shore, especially where there are islands or islets for haulout sites. Both species are abundant around the west end of Isle Haute. In late winter and early spring stray juvenile Harp Seals (*Phoca groenlandica*) and Hooded Seals (*Cystophora cristata*) from the Gulf of St. Lawrence sometimes make their way into the Bay of Fundy and can end up being seen and photographed on beaches.

Most species of whales and dolphins enter the Bay of Fundy at least in small numbers, and some make their way up to the Minas Basin and even into the major estuaries flowing into it, most notably a stranded Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and in the summer of 1998 a young Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*). Probably the only species that can routinely be seen alive from shore in the middle and upper Bay of Fundy are the Atlantic Long-finned Pilot Whale (*Globicephala melaena*) and the Atlantic Harbour Porpoise (*Phocaena phocaena*).

VALLEY SHOREBIRDS WHERE AND WHEN TO FIND THEM

by **Angus MacLean**

In the first part of this special issue (Volume 25, #1) we looked at the widespread opportunities for viewing waterbirds in the Valley. Shorebirds tend to be more concentrated at feeding or roosting sites and are thus somewhat easier to find. One area that has been known for many years is Grand Pré. There are several sites with the highest number being found on the north side of Long Island. After crossing the dykelands on the main road (past Grand Pré National Historic Park), turn left at the T-intersection and then take the next right. As you pass the campground on the right, turn left when you see the Minas Basin. You can park in the parking lot here. Along the shore especially to the right (east), one can find hordes of Semi-palmated Sandpipers, in the tens of thousands at the peak of migration. With these are usually Least and White-rumped Sandpipers, Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plovers and Sanderlings. Occasionally Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers and Ruddy Turnstones are also present. If there are not people present swimming or walking their dogs, the birds when at roost can be approached allowing a close study of the flock and thus a better chance to locate those rare species such as Baird's or Western Sandpipers. Sometimes flocks move farther

east but they can be viewed there more closely by returning to the T-intersection and continuing east (rather than returning across the dykelands). The pavement quickly ends but continue on the dirt road to the end. Park there (do not block the road) and walk north to the shore. Smaller flocks frequent this area as do Common Snipe. Remember that these small shorebirds, called peeps, can only be viewed close to and during high tide as they range too far when feeding on the extensive mud flats of the Basin.

During high tide the peeps and other larger shorebird species sometimes use the dykelands to roost. Although it is beyond our understanding to determine beforehand which field they may use, a plowed field or a "sod" field is often chosen. Some of the larger species such as Hudsonian Godwit and Whimbrel are usually only found in such fields and other uncommon species such as Lesser Golden Plover, Upland and Buff-breasted Sandpipers are possibilities too. Black-bellied Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin and Short-billed Dowitchers can be common in such roosts but are found along the beaches too. The best fields are east of the main (paved) road and all are accessible by narrow dirt roads, best travelled when dry. If you leave your vehicle, make sure it's parked off the road to allow others to pass.

Travel east on Highway 101 to Avonport and take the Bluff Road (at the sharp intersection by the school), cross the railroad tracks and turn onto the narrow road/path to the beach. This is Penny Beach and here you may find not only flocks of peeps but often good numbers of dowitchers, yellowlegs, Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones. Since there are fewer peeps here, the flocks are easier to check out for that rarity we always hope for. From this point one can see Avonport Beach to the northwest but because of the intervening mud flats and a stream, it is best to retrace your steps a bit to reach it. Return to the Bluff Road and take the first road on your right which will lead to Avonport Beach. You may find that the shorebirds, if disturbed, move back and forth between the two beaches which can be frustrating especially if you feel there's a rare bird in the group. At times when high tide is especially high, flock after flock may be seen coming from the southeast. These are thought to be coming from the Windsor mudflats which is the next site we will examine.

The mudflats at Windsor were created with the construction of a causeway as part of the development of Highway 101. It is possible to view the shorebirds here from either the east or west end

of the causeway. Take the exit at the east end of the causeway and head towards the tourist bureau. Park and walk over the dyke. If no birds are close, walk on the dyke towards the causeway. Since they often feed within "scoping" distance, this is one site where arriving several hours before high tide is advantageous. At the east end of the causeway you can park by the small buildings. At any of the sites mentioned previously a scope is useful but here, it's most essential to separate the peeps. However the larger species, which are more commonly found here than elsewhere, can be identified with binoculars. When the mudflats are completely submerged, the birds go elsewhere to roost; thus the flocks arriving at the two beaches in Avonport as mentioned earlier.

Finding shorebirds on the ponds in the eastern Valley is usually fruitless although Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and occasionally Stilt Sandpiper can be encountered. These ponds are described in the previous article on waterbirds. In the western end of the Valley, Belleisle Marsh Wildlife Area, a joint Ducks Unlimited/Natural Resources venture, can hold a surprising array of shorebirds when water levels are low. To reach this site take Highway 101 west to Bridgetown, then Highway 1 to the village of Belleisle. Just after house # 6748, turn left (south) on a gravel road. Continue south to a T-intersection. Park your vehicle here. There are several ponds but the one you are seeking can be seen to the southwest. It's about a ten minute walk. The pond will also have a good assortment of dabbling and diving ducks.

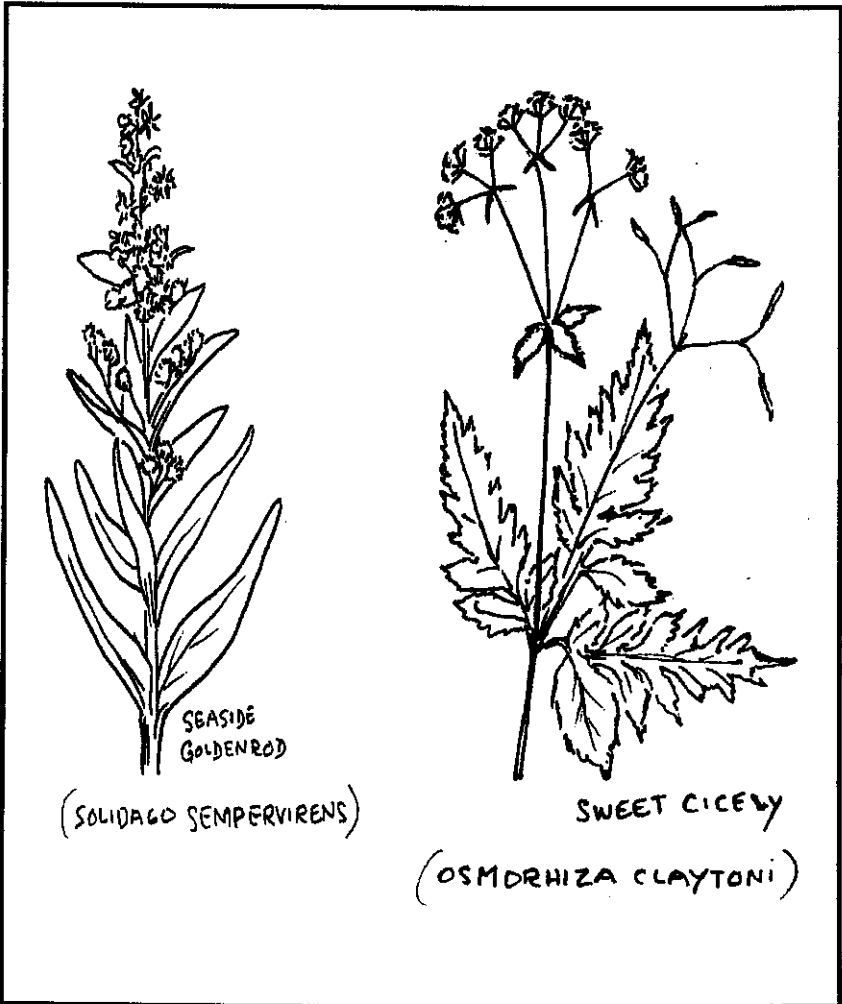
After heavy rains, especially in late September thru October, fields with clayey soil can hold expanses of water. These attract shorebirds (and also gulls and ducks) and offer the opportunity to find the rarer species which are more likely at this time.

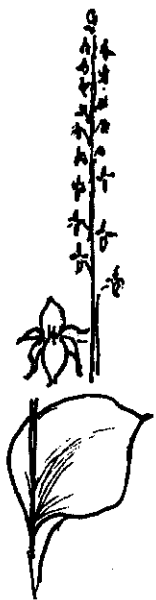
To many birders, shorebirds have a fascination all their own. The coordinated flight of the flock as they twist and flare, alternating from dark to silvery and then dark again; their ability for such close maneuvering has perplexed man over the ages. The knowledge that these tiny creatures gorging themselves in the Minas Basin, fly directly from there to Suriname in northern South America, a distance too mind-boggling for us to comprehend. The challenge of identifying some of the smaller sandpipers is daunting to some and enjoyable to others. The first to arrive in late July-early August are adults in worn plumage. Later the immatures arrive in spanking bright colors. It is difficult at first to believe these are not two different species. Aging them is the first

step in picking out those rarities from the west or Eurasia. However the larger species are easier to identify; their size, shape, length of bill, are distinctive enough that a beginning birder should have little problem.

Enjoy them! They are with us for a relatively short time!

PLANTS OF THE FUNDY SHORE
Mary Pratt

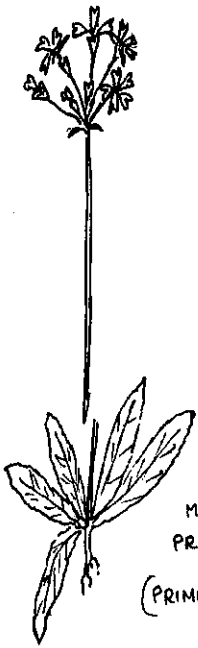




WHITE
ADDER'S
MOUTH
(MALAXIS
BRACHYPODA)



HAREBELL
(CAMPANULA
ROTUNDFOLIA)



MEALY
PRIMROSE
(PRIMULA LAURENTIANA)



QUEEN OF THE MEADOW
(FILIPENDULA ULMARIA)

days of very strong winds. Predicted to do very well this winter, rather than finches like crossbills, are the **red-backed voles** on the forest floor (BD).

Oct. 5 - in the Antigonish area, **cone-crops** of both **spruce** and **white pine** were heavy -- also it's a good year for **mountain ash berries** (see also below)(RL).

Oct. 6 - at Liverpool, it was "snowing" seeds of **white pines** onto the ground, where up to 34 **mourning doves** were apparently feeding on them, on a plot recently dug up and seeded with grass (HD).

FLOWERING PLANTS

June - an element of the Coastal Plain flora, **eastern baccharis** (*Baccharis halimifolia*), a low shrub, was found on two coastal islands near the mouth of the Tusket River near Yarmouth by Ray Fielding (ME).

Sept. 2 - considerable numbers of **purple bladderwort** with all the **flowers white** (normally violet or purple), found at Pretty Mary Lake, Annapolis Co. (JSB, ME, NH).

Sept. 2 - **little floating bladderwort** (*Utricularia radiata*), provincially rare, beautiful, and unreported for about 40 years, was found on Pretty Mary Lake

and its connected sister, Mudflat Lake, Annapolis Co. -- its upper leaves are inflated and arranged in a whorl, serving for flotation (JSB, ME, NH).

Sept 30 to Oct 3 - very strong winds dramatically started to strip trees of their autumn leaves (JW).

Oct. 19 - a planted **rhododendron** on the Acadia Univ. campus was **in bloom** with white flowers (DT).

Oct 24 - **mouse-ear hawkweed** and **red clover** still in Bloom at Tremont (near Greenwood)(SH).

Nov 8 - This report came in from a NSBS birding trip on Cape Sable Island: "We were struck by the abundance of **cone and berry crops** bountiful clusters of **red mountain ash berries**, **rose hips**, and **Canada holly (fruits)** provided bursts of colour among the subdued grasses and shrubs and out



Buttercandless

on the headlands there were dense clusters of **bayberries**" (PC).

ing history, and is a very recent change from what most of us are used to calling the solitary vireo! Aren't names fun??

P.S. I returned the next day for pictures of the leeks and white worm coral "fungi", and in the

same area I found lots of northern green bog-orchids (*Platanthera hyperborea*) in the woods. And I identified some colourful bracket fungi we saw on a cut stump as "dye polypores" (*Phaeolus schweintzii*).

NATURAL HISTORY NEWS

A three-toed woodpecker with four toes

Most birds have four toes. The Black-backed Woodpecker is different and has three toes. Many years ago, Robie Tufts told me about an illustration of a Black-backed Woodpecker that showed four toes. However, it was only recently that I saw the illustration.

While birding in Newfoundland a few weeks ago, I was shown a copy of the 1951 edition of "Birds of Newfoundland". I had not seen this book previously but, remembering Robie's story, opened it immediately to the illustration of the Black-backed Woodpecker. There, as Robie had said, was a Black-backed Woodpecker with four toes!

The well-known bird and wildlife artist, Roger Tory Peterson, prepared the illustrations for this book. Peterson, apparently absent-mindedly, had drawn four toes on this three-toed woodpecker. Memorial University, some years later

and for different reasons, awarded an honorary doctorate to Peterson. He was also the convocation speaker. When he was introduced, he stood in silence looking at the audience for a few moments, and then began his address with the exclamation: "Alright, I'm the one who drew the fourth toe on the three-toed woodpecker."

There's more! When Robie Tufts' first published his "Birds of Nova Scotia", he obtained permission from the Newfoundland government to use the Peterson plates. However, he had noted the fourth toe and when the master print was being prepared, he took out his pocket knife, scratched out the fourth toe and shaded it over with grey. If you have either the first (1962) or second (1973) edition of Tufts' "Birds of Nova Scotia", check the illustration of the Black-backed Woodpecker. There is a grey area on the tree trunk behind the foot, where a fourth toe would be if this

woodpecker had one!

After Robie Tufts died, a revised and updated edition of his book was published in 1986. However, the revisers had not noticed the fourth toe and used the original plate as Peterson had prepared it. If you have the third edition of

Tufts' "Birds of Nova Scotia", check the illustration opposite page 257. It shows a magnificent three-toed, Black-backed Woodpecker, complete with four toes!

Here ends this week's lesson in trivia. -- Merritt Gibson.

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT REPORT by Judy Tufts - NS Provincial Coordinator for NAMC

On May 9, 1998 the North American Migration Bird Count took place throughout the continent. Participants in the Annapolis Valley counties found, after the overnight fog dissipated, that the day turned out to be a most pleasant one. Ideal for being 'out in the field' counting birds with just the right amount of cloud and sunshine to make it worthwhile. Not all provincial counties were as fortunate for fog tended to make counting offshore birds difficult in coastal areas.

Now for some interesting highlights of the count around the province. Little and Snowy Egrets turned up in Cape Breton Co. again, just as in 1996, with a second Snowy Egret found in Lunenburg Co. Lawrencetown marsh turned up two Eurasian Widgeon among some American Widgeon. While a single Common Moorhen swam in a pond in Tangier, a Pomarine Jaeger

rested on mudflats on Cherry Hill Beach. A Caspian Tern fed with other gulls on a beach near Louisbourg.

In the waterfowl group: 19 Snow Geese were observed around Economy; several hundred Brant were moving through the southern counties of Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth. Two thousand of the 3400 Common Eiders tallied around the province (twice as many as on the count in '97) were found resting offshore in Shelburne and Yarmouth counties. Black Ducks held their own in Kings (305) and Hants (170) while Surf Scoters (155) in Hants were tops for the province. 20 Bufflehead were found in the Belleisle Marsh in Annapolis Co. Seventeen Turkey Vultures were tallied (possibly some counted twice?) and the Fundy coastal range seemed to provide thermal breezes to their liking from Brier Island all the way to Scotts Bay.

Ringed-necked Pheasants still dominate in the Annapolis Valley area: Kings (161) and Hants (124), and 426 was the total counted for the province (up from 292 in '97). Among the heron family five Bitterns made an impression in Hants Co. while Kings Co. birders noted 28 Great Blue Herons in theirs. One hundred and forty-nine Ruffed Grouse were counted in NS. A flock of 20 Purple Sandpipers, flying toward Cape Split, surprised birders at Scott's Bay by their lateness. Usually, they are gone by May. The Snipe (45) and Woodcock (40) in Hants led all the provincial counties with a fine showing. It seems to have been a great spring for them. Bernard Forsythe's Barred Owl nest boxes in Kings Co. led the field with an impressive total of 31 individuals (adults and young). A proud achievement for BLF.

Amazingly, nine Ruby-throated Hummingbirds made the deadline around the province, with two spotted in Hants and two in Kings. Yellow-shafted Flickers were abundant around the province (626, up from 402 in '97), with the Valley tallying 300 of these vocal woodpeckers.

Tree Swallow numbers were well down in Kings Co. from 1997, about the same number were in Hants, and numbers

were well up in Annapolis County. There has been great concern with the general drop in numbers of this dainty member of the Swallow family, and Barn Swallows seem to be decreasing in numbers too. Provincial totals this year -1796 Tree Swallows - were down from a recorded 2840 in '97.

For some birds the early warm spring did wonders, with large numbers returning early to the Valley. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were abundant especially in Hants (258). Hermit Thrushes too (179), and Robins were almost too numerous to count everywhere.

Among the 13 species of warblers that appeared 33 Nashvilles were noted in Hants (2/3 of the NS total) and nearly 600 Yellow-rumps (Myrtle) Warblers moved around our three counties that day (more than a 1/3 of the provincial total).

Finally, uncommon birds, bright enough to cheer up anyone, were observed that day: three Cardinals, six Mockingbirds in Kings, two Baltimore Orioles in Hants, Indigo Bunting in Hants, Fox Sparrow in Annapolis Co. and one White-crowned Sparrow on Grand Pré. Anyone wishing to see the full provincial count may see it in the next issue of

found (JN).

early Nov - some small **flies** (**prob. midges**) were swarming in the air (these are groups of males trying to attract females for mating) in a back yard in Wolfville (JT).

Dec. 1 - on a very warm day, tiny **insects** (**gnats?**) and possible **house flies** were flying in Wolfville (JT, BBT).

I N S E C T S

HYMENOPTERA

early Oct - an underground nest of **yellow jackets** among conifer tree-roots in a forest in residential south Wolfville was deeply dug up, probably by a **skunk?** -- this was when the wasps could still be seen coming into and leaving the nest in the daytime (DGT).

FISHES

mid Oct - the annual migration of "**needlefish**" (**Atlantic saury**) was reported to be "on" again at the Canso Causeway (KM). Randy Lauff tells me this lasts for weeks every year, and large numbers of opportunistic **predators** can be seen there then, e.g., bald eagles, gannets, gulls, dolphins, seals, etc.

REPTILES

July - (from conversation with Mike James in late Oct.) - Mike talked with two mackerel fishers (one based in Nfld., other in Yarmouth) about their sightings of **loggerhead turtles** on the Grand Banks off Nfld. -- apparently loggerheads were common/abundant in the 2nd half of July -- one fisher said he sometimes had one hooked loggerhead for each buoy marking long-lines (they just cut the line to release each turtle with the hook in its mouth -- prognosis unknown, but the hooks may eventually rust away) -- the turtles are attracted to the bait on the hooks -- apparently these turtles' diets are quite varied and they'll "eat nearly anything" (MJ).

end of Oct. - 2 PEI scallop-fishers saw a **leatherback turtle** in the Northumberland Strait (MJ).

Nov. 5 - a **leatherback turtle** was seen swimming in a harbour se. of Glace Bay (MJ).

Sept 16 - a very small (6-cm) **ringneck snake** was found on the soccer pitch of New Minas' Lockhart-Ryan Park -- it was released in adjacent woods, a probably safer habitat (JS).

Oct 13 - a **red-bellied snake** was found sunning itself on a cool afternoon on a dirt road

TRIVIAL TIDBITS
of Local Natural History

compiled by Jim Worford
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(I still prefer, but very seldom get, written submissions -- bring them to meetings.)

late June to late September 1998

SKIES

Late Aug -- Sherman Williams was able to watch the shadows of two of Jupiter's moons, Calisto and Io, pass over Jupiter.

Sept 6 -- our Moon slipped under Jupiter during the night (SW).

FUNGI

mid July - Anne Woolaver reports she has now had 3 good "feeds" of **chanterelles** at Blomidon.

July 18 -- **white worm coral fungi** (*Clavaria vermicularis*) found on the ground, and colorful dye polypore shelf fungi (*Phaeolus schweinitzii*) on a cut stump, in blomidon Provincial Park (JW).

Sept 1 - a large **giant puffball**, weighing about 1.5 kg., was found in a farmer's field at Lakeville (KA).

early Sept -- **blood-red corts or webcaps** (*Cortinarius sanguineus*) abundant in Cheverie woods, while **chantrelles** were in short supply (KC).

Sept 20-22 - reports of numbers of deadly **destroying angel** mushrooms on lawns and dyke paths turned out, happily, to be "smoothcap parasols" (*Leucoagaricus naucina*), which are "edible with caution" (will make some people sick) (JT,DG,JW). (Thanks go to Darryl Grund for the identification.) It pays to be extremely cautious with any all-white mushroom with white gills. But all of the **amanitas** (the group containing the destroying angel) have the ensheathing volva or "death cup" around the base of the stalk -- always dig down with your fingers to get the entire base for examination and if you are at all uncertain, consult an expert.

Sept 25 - several **shaggy-mane** mushrooms coming up on grass at Acadia University gym parking lot; they were all finished, with caps shriveled and black, by Sept 30 (JW).

CONIFERS

Aug 17 - **white spruces** have a very **heavy cone-crop** in Five Islands Prov. Park, and, not coincidentally, lots of singing **white-winged crossbills** (PM,JW). Also the same phenomenon was noted at Mary's Point in se. N.B. in early August and the very heavy cone-crop is very widespread in NS and apparently through eastern Canada (JW).

FLOWERING PLANTS

July 11 - in White Rock area, **Ironwood or hop-beam** trees conspicuously and very heavily fruiting (RN, JW)

July 12 - **poison hemlock** and **arrowhead** in bloom on Grand Pré dykelands in ditches (PM,JW).

July 13 - **purple loosestrife** in bloom at Bridgetown along Annapolis River (JW).

July 18 - **wild leeks** flowering, plus **shinleaf** and **bush honeysuckle**, in Blomidon PP (JW).

Aug 6 - a few flowering **purple loosestrife** along hwy. 236 several km NE of Kennetcook; also lots more of the "purple plague" growing among cattails in Sackville's (N.B.) Waterfowl Park; at the latter locale, the Canadian Wildlife Service has decided to try to control the infestation (by introducing alien beetles?)(JW).



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Aug. 15 - oodles of flowering **purple loosestrife** at Maitland and also at South Maitland (PM,JW).

mid Aug - at North Grand Pré, I'm a bit frustrated to see that two households again have lovely big **purple loosestrife** plants in their gardens, in spite of my having approached them nicely a year ago about the environmental problems associated with this species in wetlands. Nevertheless, we naturalists should continue to be vigilant, and approach owners of private gardens and uneducated nurseries, since supposedly sterile strains sold to gardeners have been found to produce viable seeds, which then may get into wetlands (JW).

Aug 18 - at least one rare plant's distribution-description in the new edition of Roland's Flora of Nova Scotia is obsolete, and in a good way -- Marian Zinck confirmed a new location for **sweet pepper-bush**, *Clethra alnifolia*, at Mill Lake (NE of Maitland Bridge) (and Nick Hill informed me in Sept. that two more locations have also been found).

Aug 23 - **alfalfa** luxuriantly in bloom and colourful (whitish, yellowish, blue, purple) and, according to my partner, fragrant (PM,JW).

Sept 6 - at the tip of Gaff Point (Lun. Co.), lots of prostrate flowering plants of **common or scarlet pimpernel**, alias **poor-man's weather-glass** (PM,JW).

Sept 26 - one "lovely wild **strawberry blossom**" still in a field at Bear River (JT)

Sept 27 - on Brier Island, **harebells (bluebells)** still in bloom, plus lots of **asters, mayweed, goldenrods, eye-bright** (PM, JW)

Sept 29 - **witch-hazel** (planted) in bloom next to Acadia biology's greenhouse in Wolfville (JW).

INVERTEBRATES

July 9 - Heather MacDonald is concerned about the numbers of **bloodworm-diggers** (up to 25 or more at a time) on the mud-flats off Avonport Beach (more than last year).

July 31 - on **aphid-infested sea lavender** plants in Wolfville's salt-marsh, **adult 7-spot** and **Adonis' lady beetles** were common; earlier the smaller and **yellow 14-spot lady beetles** were also seen there (JB)

Aug 1-3 - lots of living and stranded **lion's-mane jellyfish** at Summerville Beach, Lockport's Crescent Beach, and

Carter's Beach near Port Mouton (PM,JW).

Aug 6 - caught in a plankton net dropped into the Cornwallis River from the Port Williams bridge, were oodles of tiny **jellyfish or medusae**, about 5 mm in diameter/height. These are hydromedusae, *i.e.*, the medusa stages of hydrozoans (which also have colonial polyps that are attached to rocks and other substrates), tiny predators of the plankton (genus *Bougainvillia*) (GD,MG).

Sept 7 - at Black Rock (Canada Creek) on a low low tide, lots of **sea slugs** of two kinds, *Onchidoris* and *Dendronotus* -- see Sherman Bleakney's or Merritt Gibson's books for more about these (GG,IP).

Sept 8 - at The Guzzle (east end of Grand Pré's Long Island) on a low low tide, a "large" (1-cm) **sea spider** (not really a spider, but superficially spider-like, belongs in phylum Pycnogonida) seen on some **hydrozoan** colonies, upon which it preys (GG,IP).

ARACHNIDS

July 18 - a very large & swollen adult **tick** (collected and yet to be identified) found on a pet dog at Black River Lake (JH).

INSECTS - ODONATA

July 13 - a **12-spot skimmer** dragonfly seen along New

Minas RR tracks (JW).

INSECTS - HOMOPTERA

July 13 - 2 **annual or dog-day cicadas** calling at New Minas (JW).

Sept 3 - along dyke east of Wolfville, on sow thistles, two kinds of **aphids** were found: fairly large, light-coloured ones in dense colonies on the upper stems were abundant but not attended by ants; one plant had small blackish aphids that were attended by tiny black **ants** (JW).

Sept 5 - 3 or 4 alder trunks white with dense colonies of **woolly alder aphids** at Greenfield (PM,JW).

INSECTS - COLEOPTERA

July 6 - 2 kinds of **lady beetle pupae** found on leaves of linden, buckthorn, and ornamental silver willow? adjacent to Acadia Univ. biology building. Abundant were large, colourful pupae of **southern** species (several dozens); and small, dark pupae probably of **2-spotted** species (less common); also a few **adults** of each seen (IP,JW).

July 8 - one large red & black **burying beetle** (carrion beetle) found inside a tree swallow nest-box containing 3 dead nestling swallows, on Bon Portage Island (JO).

July 10 - as at site above, many dozens of **lady beetle pupae** found on leaves of tall French willows along Gaspereau Ave. in Wolfville (2 kinds again, most abundant were large, colourful pupae, much less common were small, dark pupae, one colourful **larva** seen, one **adult** each of **southern** and **2-spotted** species -- at both Wolfville sites, no aphids noted (JW).

July 11 - one **14-spotted lady beetle** found inside my home in Wolfville (JW).

July 15 - good numbers of **southern lady beetles** on bracken ferns adjacent to garden lupines that were loaded with **aphids**, at Blomidon (AW).

Aug 14 - on milkweeds at Port Williams & New Minas, four **7-spot lady beetles** and one **14-spot** (JW).

Aug 20 - along the dyke east from Wolfville, on **aphid**-infested sow thistles, there were 3 kinds of adult **lady beetles**: about two dozen **7-spots**, a dozen **Adonis's**? (2 were copulating), and two **southerns** (JW).

Aug 31 - along dyke north of Wolfville, on **aphid**-infested sow thistles, I found about 25 **Adonis' (?) lady beetles** (two

were mating), four **7-spots**, and one **southern lady beetle** (JW).

Sept 3 - along dyke east of Wolfville, on **aphid**-infested sow thistles, **lady beetles** of four kinds were found: about 40 **southerns**, ten **7-spots**, ten **Adonis'?**, and two **2-spots** (all adults)(also the **southern ladybirds** were highly variable in their patterns of spots, from weakly spotted (most) to heavily spotted to totally unspotted)(JW).

Sept 5 - adult **alder flea beetles** abundant on alders at Greenfield -- also alder leaves full of holes from the adult and larval beetles? (PM,JW).

Sept 26 - one adult **7-spot lady beetle** found on the ground in an open area on Brier Island (PM, JW)

INSECTS - LEPIDOPTERA

July 8 - one adult **monarch butterfly** in New Minas among milkweeds; none seen at milkweed patch at Port Williams; last summer Canada had a bumper-crop of monarchs, and I had a wonderful time observing them and getting good photos of all life-stages; but this summer I saw only one adult, even though I did make several forays in appropriate habitat, and not much evidence of anything eating milkweed leaves (JW).

July 9 - hundreds of **fritillaries** seen in flowering knapweeds along an old road on west end of Digby Neck (GG,IP).

July 13 - 2 **northern (pearl) crescents** plus 2 dark **satyrs**, a **sulfur**, a **cabbage white?**, 2-3 **fritillaries**, a **hairstreak**, and many unidentified **skippers** at New Minas (JW).

July 19 - 3 **caterpillars** of **monarch butterflies** on planted ornamental **milkweed** plants in a garden in Port Williams -- earlier in July an **adult monarch** was seen near the same spot (NN).

Aug 5 - along Evangeline Beach (n. Grand Pré), one **mourning cloak** and several dark-coloured **satyr butterflies** seen (JW).

Aug 12 - many dozens of cocoons (consisting of tiny sticks held together by silk) of **bagworm moths** stuck on a house on North Mountain, west of the Lookoff (EBM). Also I've seen numbers of **bagworms** in Wolfville and at Grand Pré (JW).

Aug 23 - on Grand Pré dykelands, lots of **cabbage whites** and unidentified **sulfur** butterflies in fields of alfalfa & red clover; also one **black swallowtail** seen; and a large brown woolly-bear called the **salt-**

marsh caterpillar crawled across a dykeland road (PM,JW).

Aug 28 - a very large (3.25-in./8.5-cm.) "**hornworm**" **caterpillar** found in a Wolfville garden -- green, smooth, with diagonal lines of orange-yellow on sides, and a blue "horn" with black spots at hind end -- was photographed -- very probably a **laurel sphinx moth** (*Sphinx kalmiae*) -- see Peterson's First Guide to Caterpillars (LH,JW).

Aug 31 - a probable **monarch** butterfly seen at West Brooklyn (GA).

Sept 2 - a definite **monarch** butterfly seen in Wolfville (LH).

Sept 4 - a large "hornworm" or caterpillar, probably of the **laurel sphinx moth**, found in Wolfville -- also this caterpillar's thorax showed 5-6 eggs of some "**parasitic**" insect (**wasp or fly**)(IP).

Sept 29 - a monarch (migrating?) seen flying down Wolfville's Front Street (JT)

INSECTS - DIPTERA

July 1 - suddenly numbers of **filth flies** (mostly **house flies**) appeared in the Grand Pre area -- then the "**swat team**" arrived from the Kentville Agric. Res. Stn., and by the next day the

Williams) (seemed small but had rounded head) (JWW).

RING-NECKED DUCK -

Oct. 16 - 7 in Kidston's Pond, Church St., nw. of Port Williams (JWW).

Oct. 27 - 9 together in Canard Pond (one was male) (JWW).

Nov. 17 - one female/immature at Canard Pond (JWW).

Nov. 19 - one eclipse male at Port Williams sewage ponds (JWW).

COMMON GOLDENEYE -

Oct. 27 - one female/immature at Canard Pond, and one at Saxon St. Pond (JWW).

Nov. 9 - 2 nw. of Port Williams., 2 in Canard Pond (JWW).

Nov. 14 to 17 - 3 in Canard Pond (JWW).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER -

Nov. 9-14 - one immature in Kidston's Pond, nw. of Port Williams. (JWW).

Dec. 2 - 15 off Evangeline Beach at high tide (JWW).

HOODED MERGANSER -

Oct. 27 - 5 together in river at Canning Aboiteau (one was male) (JWW).

Nov. 1 - 7 females/immatures in Habitant River in Canning (PAM, JWW).

Nov. 2 - 3 (1 male, 2 females/immatures) nw. of Port Williams (JWW).

Nov. 5 - 6 in Saxon St. Pond (JWW).

Nov. 9 - 4 (1 male) nw. of Port Williams, 2 in Saxon St. Pond (JWW).

Nov. 14 - one female/immature nw. of Port Williams. (JWW).

Nov. 17 - 5 (1 male) nw. of Port Williams, 3 (1 male) w. of Sheffield Mills (JWW).

COMMON MERGANSER -

Sept. 6 - 16 in one group at Mahone Bay (all females/immatures - one large family?) (seen by JWW and PAM).

Oct. 31 - 8 females/immatures in White Rock Pond (JWW).

Nov. 5 - 4 in Saxon St. Pond (JWW).

Nov. 14 - one female/immature nw. of Port Williams. (JWW).

Dec. 2 - 3 females/immatures at Saxon St. Pond (JWW).

Dec. 7 - one female/immature in river in Canning (JWW).

COMMON EIDER -

Sept. 22 - 40 moulting males off Evangeline Beach, n. Grand Pre (JWW).

Oct. 6 - at 3 p.m., a wavy line of 160+ birds flew west past Wolfville, high above and along the Cornwallis River (JWW).

Nov. 13 - 3 males swimming offshore Margaretsville, Anna. Co. (SLH)

TURKEY VULTURE -

Sept. 27 - one seen at Brier Island Lodge (JWW, PAM).

North Sea, then south off Europe & Africa, and back to the same beach at Trinidad to lay eggs a year after it was tagged there. (All info. from MJ.)

Sept 18 - the adult **red-eared slider** (alien species -- probably someone's illegally-released pet) is still in the pond at Hennigar's Market at Greenwich (since at least May 14)(JW).

MAMMALS

July 11 - an adult **chipmunk** seen with two juveniles under a sunflower-seed feeder at Murphy Lake (MT).

July 14 - 2 **North Atlantic right whales**, a mother with her calf, were trapped inside a herring weir off Grand Manan Island -- they were subsequently released unharmed, the costs being the creation of a break in the weir and then the needed repairs, plus any fish lost (CBC *et al.*).

July 19 - off Indian Point, Mahone Bay, Lun. Co., a pod of 4 **harbour porpoises** included a female with a **pure white calf!** -- calf was about one metre long, half the length of the adults -- these were seen within about 10 metres of the boat (GT).

July 30 - a probable **little brown bat** was inside the

entrance to the Acadia Univ. Arena (SA).

Aug 2 - at the south end of the beach of the Kejimikujik Nat. Park Seaside Adjunct, about 20+ **gray seals** and, separately, about 110 **harbour seals**, mostly basking on rocks at low tide -- a few gray seals were moaning, and harbour seals were barking occasionally (PM,JW).

Aug 4 - 2 **harbour porpoises** seen on a rising tide in the mouth of the Cornwallis River, north of the Wolfville sewage ponds (BBT).

Aug 1 to 14 - several sightings reported of 3+2+2+1 **white-tailed deer** on dykelands at Sheffield Mills, Porter's Point, Canning, and Grand Pre's Long Island (drought-related?)(MG in KA).

Aug 16 - at Hall's Harbour, a **whale**, probably a smallish **humpback?**, was watched for 10-15 minutes as it slowly swam se. and dived shallowly, showing its flukes a couple of times (MM).

Aug 19 - observations at dusk at Hayes Cave near South Maitland, to check out reported behaviour of **little brown bats** called "**swarming**". The first activity noted was of one or two bats flying into the cave entrance. Shortly thereafter, at

8:45 p.m., the first emergences occurred, followed quickly by a few dozens more, and they all quickly dispersed into the surrounding forest. Later, from about 9:30 to 10 p.m., viewing up into the nearly dark sky of stars revealed the "swarming" -- dozens of bats, flying around over-head and landing on the cliffs of gypsum. These are thought to be adult male & female bats that swarm, perhaps partly early courtship & mating activities, before this year's juveniles arrive at the hibernation site. It was also noted that the half-metre-diameter large pipe at the main cave-entrance (placed there hopefully as an entrance/exit for the bats in case of any collapse of the natural opening) was well used by the bats for both exiting and entering (ME,RH, and an electronic bat-detector).

Aug. 23 - a half-grown **skunk** seen walking down a dykeland road at Grand Pré at late dusk (PM,JW).

Aug 25 - a probable **little brown bat** seen flying at low altitude (2-3 m) at Acton's Grill in downtown Wolfville at 8:45 p.m., at late dusk (JW).

Sept 12 - in Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, I watched a wild **red squirrel** repeatedly caching acorns of red oak in the ground at my feet along a path;

also a free-ranging **Norway rat** was foraging inside the otter enclosure and then caching stuff in its burrow at the foot of a tree just outside the fence (JW).

Sept 13 - a **muskrat** trotted along Main Street at the east end of Wolfville, then turned via a driveway into a residential yard, inspected a few bird feeders, then went on its way (probably a large juvenile that had been kicked out of its mother's territory and was looking for some water to colonize?)(BBT,JW).

Sept 26 -- along highway 101, besides the usual flattened fauna (raccoons, porcupines, skunks) one poor **beaver** was killed at a Middleton exit (JT, ST).

Sept 26 - a **red fox** was road-killed about halfway across the Windsor Causeway (BBT)

Sept 26 - at noon a beautiful healthy **coyote** successfully crossed hwy. 101 just east of the Paradise exit (this was JW's first definite sighting of a NS coyote (PM, JW).

Sept 26 - CBC radio reported that a gang of whale watchers in the St. Lawrence River spotted a large adult **North American right whale**, estimated at 60-65 tonnes -- the boat captain had only seen one

other right whale there in his 18 years of tours.

Sept 26 - along hwy 101, between Middleton & Bridgetown, 1+2 white-tailed deer seen -- the single deer was on the grassy bank of the highway and paying no attention to the traffic (JT, ST)

Sept 27 - about 20 gray seals at the north end of Brier Island, and at least one more gray seal with a few harbour seals at the other end of the Island (PM, JW).

CONTRIBUTORS

GA - George Alliston
KA - Kentville Advertiser
SA - Sylvie Amie
JB - Jenn Baltzer
CBC - CBC Radio & TV News
KC - Karen Casselman
NC - Norma Collett
GD - Graham Daborn

ME - Mark Elderkin
DG - Darryl Grund
GG - Glenys Gibson
MG - Melissa Gray
MGi - Merritt Gibson
HCH - Halifax Chronicle-Herald
JH - Jack Herbin
LH - Lorna Hart
NH - Nick Hill
RH - Ross Hall
MJ - Mike James
EBM - Eleanor & Bernard Mason
HM - Heather MacDonald
MM - Mike McCall
PM - Pat Martin
Ruth Newell
NN - Nancy Nickerson.
JO - Jonathan Oxley
IP - Ian Paterson
DR - Dick Rogers
BBT - Brenda & Bill Thexton
GT - Gordon Thorpe
MT - Miriam Tams
JT - Jean Timpa
Stephanie Timpa
AW - Anne Woolaver
JW - Jim Wolford
MY - Mateo Yorke
MZ - Marian Zinck
Thank you all!

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(BBT).

GREATER YELLOWLEGS -
NOV. 24 to Dec. 2 - one on
mud-flats at edge of Saxon St.
Pond (JWW).

DUNLIN - Nov. 3 - at least 5
with other sandpipers &
plovers on Grand Pre dykeland
field (JWW).

RED KNOT - Nov. 3 - at least
5 with other sandpipers &
plovers on Grand Pre dykeland
field (JWW).

**WHITE-RUMPED
SANDPIPER** -
Aug. 20 - 20+ along shore of
Minas Basin at Wolfville
sewage ponds, with other
shorebirds at high tide (JWW).
Nov. 3 - 10 with other
sandpipers & plovers on Grand
Pre dykeland field (JWW).

**SEMIPALMATED
SANDPIPER** - Nov. 3 - 2 or 3
with other sandpipers and
plovers on Grand Pre dykeland
field (JWW).

WESTERN SANDPIPER
NOV. 3 - a single juvenile
seen very well with dunlins,
red knots, & semipalmated
sandpipers on a mowed field
on the Grand Pre dykelands --
all these sandpipers were
together and very close to my
car, from which I could easily
see with 10x binoculars and
25X scope the very noticeable
rufous/reddish colour in a line

where the scapulars meet the
back on both sides; the bird
otherwise looked like a
semipalmated sandpiper
(JWW).

COMMON SNIPE -
Oct. 27 - one feeding on
exposed mud-flat at edge of
Habitant River in Canning
(JWW).

GREATER YELLOWLEGS -
Oct. 27 - at least 8 along river
in Canning (JWW).

**BUFF-BREASTED
SANDPIPER** -
Sept. 23 - 2 seen with mixed
plovers + a pectoral sandpiper
in a mowed dykeland field at
Grand Pre (JWW, Matt Holder,
Dave Shutler).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER -
Sept. 27 - one at Pond Cove,
Brier Island (with 20 ruddy
turnstones, 4 sanderlings, a
semi' plover, 10 semi'
sandpipers, 4 greater
yellowlegs (JWW,PAM).

SANDERLING -
Sept. 22 - 15 at Kingsport
mud-flat at low tide (at
low-water line)(JWW).

RING-NECKED PHEASANT
Nov. 8 - 2 males along
roadside, Greenfield (SLH)

SHORT-EARED OWL -
Nov. 7 and 9 - w. Grand Pre
south of Win Peters (BBT)

the bird was not in evidence subsequently.

HERONS -- JCT found the Spring's first reported **GREAT BLUE HERON** as it flew into a stream at Kingsport April 3. EL heard an **AMERICAN BITTERN** "booming" at Van Nostrand's Pond April 29.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT -- 20+ flew over the Highway 101 at Grand Pré 25 April (SLH).

TURKEY VULTURE -- Perhaps becoming more common our way after years of only being seen on Digby Neck, there were 3 sightings in May, from west Hall's Harbour (MM), Avonport (PK) and Bridgetown (RBS).

RAPTORS -- The **BALD EAGLES** at Greenwich were seen feeding 2 nestlings in the nest May 9 (JWW). The pair at White Rock whose nest was lost during the winter ice storm have built a new one. The **RED-TAILED HAWKS** on the nest over the entrance to U-Hall at Acadia University were feeding small nestlings by May 12 (JWW). MH saw a **SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** catch a bat in flight in Gaspereau, and JWW saw one catch a pigeon "mantle" it, and then chase it into a garage only to lose it, in Wolfville in March. BLF's **NORTHERN**

GOSHAWK nest near Gaspereau had the female incubating in April, but the usual one in Kentville was not to be found so far this Spring. SLH observed a **SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** kill a Junco at her feeder on May 27.

MERLINS behaving territorially have been seen in North Kentville (RBS) and around University Ave., Wolfville this Spring (JWW, BBT)). The Kentville birds have nested, and at the end of June are raising 3 chicks.

GRAY PARTRIDGE -- EL had a few birds hiding in his bushes around Planter's Barrack, Port Williams in late April/early May.

WATERFOWL-- Early April brought several Spring arrivals on the local ponds, including **BLUE-WINGED** and **GREEN-WINGED TEAL**, **RING-NECKED DUCK** (up to 26 on Canard Pond by April 26 - JWW), **HOODED** and **COMMON MERGANSERS**, **WOOD DUCK** (numbers seem to be getting higher every year - m.obs.) and **OLDSQUAW** (1 M. at Canard Pond) as well as the expected building numbers of **BLACK** (70+ at Canard Pond May 21, JCT) and **MALLARD**. (m.obs). 3 pairs of **NORTHERN SHOVELLER** were at New Minas sewage pond, May 19-21 (JWW). About 1000

CANADA GEESE in the mouth of the Habitant River April 4 (JCT) seemed about usual. JWW saw one on a nest on a small island in a pond at Lockhartville on May 9. A MUTE SWAN at the New Minas sewage pond and other local watering holes was thought to be an escape from the family on the Bedford Basin. A bright male RUDDY DUCK, unusually, spent several days on the New Minas sewage pond in mid-June (JWW etc.).

RAILS etc. -- The only SORA reported was one calling at Van Nostrum's Pond 4 (EL) and 19 May (BBT, GT).

SHOREBIRDS -- There was a good-sized Spring flock of BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, together with some WHIMBREL at the Windsor Causeway and the east end of the Grand Pré Dike May 29 (JCT), to be followed 2 days later at the latter spot by 20 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (JCT). HF heard a SNIPE winnowing behind Wolfville Hospital at the end of March. There was a GREATER YELLOWLEGS in the Habitant River April 26 (JWW). JCT found 4 SPOTTED SANDPIPERS at the New Minas sewage pond May 21. Seven LEAST SANDPIPERS were at New Minas sewage pond 19 May (BBT,

GT).

GULLS -- The ICELAND GULLS at the Wolfville sewage lagoon were joined by a GLAUCOUS and 2 BONAPARTE'S GULLS on April 22 (JN). A late Iceland Gull flew by SLH off Morden on May 9.

WOODPECKERS -- A good description of an adult RED-HEADED WOODPECKER at Grand Pré was given by EG in mid-April. At the same time the woods started to fill with the drumming and calling of our more usual species, including arriving COMMON FLICKERS, and a YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER drumming on a power pole insulator in Tremont May 16 (SLH). There were at least 8 of this species along the Butler Road on 2 occasions in early June (RBS). I have been entertained for the latter half of May into mid-June by a HAIRY WOODPECKER'S nest, with at least 2 young constantly squeaking for food from their harried parents, in my backyard.

CHIMNEY SWIFT -- After the first arrival of 35 birds on May 16 (JT), numbers at the Front St. chimney had built up as follows (JCT) - In Wolfville at Robie Tufts Nature Centre:-
Fri - June 5: 511
Sat - June 6: 433

Sun - June 7: 305
Mon - June 8: 365
(8.54- 9.35pm)

Due to the build-up of numbers of swifts in Wolfville, Bill and Brenda Thexton with Gerry Trueman, drove to MIDDLETON last night to see what was happening in the High School chimney (behind Tim Horton's) and were pleased to find the numbers to be even more impressive! Mon - June 8 -- 639. There seemed to be a few in the air over Kentville every evening in June.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD -- There were already 2 seen in the area by May 9, at Black River and Pereau, but numbers did not really become significant until the 3rd week in May.

FLYCATCHERS -- The first Spring arrival reported was an **EASTERN PHOEBE** in Greenwich April 4 (GF). BPG recorded this Spring's first local **EASTERN WOODPEWEE** on 5 May in Kingston. By early June **LEAST** and **ALDER** were well established in appropriate habitats.

SWALLOWS -- The first **TREE SWALLOW** of the season reported was on April 9 (ME) in Waterville. There were 73 **BANK SWALLOW** nests in a colony near Kingston

June 10 (BPG).

THRUSHES AND MIMIC-THRUSHES ETC. -- GF wrote on 31 March "On Sunday I saw a **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** at Richard Rand's on Lower Church Street King's Co. The pair at Grand Pré are back again (BBT).

Lots of **GRACKLES**, **ROBINS** and **REDWINGED BLACKBIRDS** seem to be flying about in Port Williams". One of the Grackles in Kentville was a partial albino (DT) - I wonder if it's the same bird that has been seen on and off in the area for the last 3 years? A rarer relative of the latter, a female **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD**, appeared at EU's feeder May 12. A pair of **BALTIMORE ORIOLES** has taken up residence in a small marsh near Kingston, late May (JR). A **BROWN THRASHER**, a good rarity for the county, spent the evening at a feeder near Melanson May 27, but could not be relocated the next day (BLF). At least 3 other **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS** seem to be in the area this Spring. **HERMIT** and **SWAINSON'S THRUSH** and **VEERY** seem to be back in good numbers singing and calling in the woods by early June.

WARBLERS -- Spring hasn't really arrived until the first

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warblers have! There were 2 PALM WARBLERS, more commonly the first of the family to arrive, in Kingsport April 22 (RBS). Some YELLOW-RUMPED were on territory in Kentville 1 May (JCT). The total number of this species reported to JCT on Migration Day, May 9, from King's Co., was 286. Various forays into the woods revealed that virtually all of our breeding Warblers had arrived on territory by late May, as expected. JN noticed quite a "wave" with 10+ species May 19.

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HF heard one singing in Greenwich at the end of March. A male has visited several members' yards on the Wolfville Ridge in mid-April (MP et al). At least one pair appeared near Skyview Dr., Wolfville late May (JWW, PCS) and a female was in Coldbrook around the same time (SM). Yet another visited DEM's feeder in Kentville 24 and 31 May.

SPARROWS-- FOX SPARROWS started to appear at feeders at the end of March, an always welcome harbinger of Spring with their delightful song. An **INDIGO BUNTING** appeared at a feeder at East Hall Road, Kingston April 18 for the next few days (BPG, SLH). The first **Spring CHIPPING SPARROW** reported was at EU's feeder on April 19. A rarer **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** was at the same location the same day, and another (or the same) was at Grand Pré Park 9 May (BT, GT).

FINCHES -- GA wrote on 9 April "During the past couple of weeks I have been seeing a large flock of **REDPOLL**s (500 to 1000?) around my home. Today while I was working in the woods behind my home I heard a flock of redpolls approaching and in very short order it began to virtually rain redpolls! They

dropped out of the sky landing on bushes, trees and the ground all around me. One landed briefly on my hat! I stood frozen watching this most interesting sight with birds perched on branches less than two feet from my face and swarms of birds foraging on the ground around my feet. They then spread out somewhat foraging amongst the leaves for several minutes, then began to fly short distances; not as an entire flock but in small groups (10 to 20). Some of these small groups passed so close that I could feel the wind from their wings! I was standing with my hands on my hips and one bird actually flew through the space between my torso and my arm!"

The last report of this winter's redpoll invasion was of one at a feeder on April 25. A well-described **HOARY REDPOLL** was seen by JWW April 9, with a white unstreaked rump and an overall color much paler than nearby Common Redpolls.

EVENING GROSBEAKS, PURPLE FINCHES, PINE SISKINS and **RED CROSS-BILLS** were in evidence by early May.

GA	George Alliston
BB	Bernard Balcom
ME	Mark Elderkin
GF	George Forsyth

HF	Harold Forsyth	MP	Mary Pratt
BPG	Barb and Pat Giffen	JR	John Rubin
MH	Matt Holder	PCS	Peter Smith
SLH	Sheila Hulford	RBS	Richard Stern
PK	Pat Kelly	DT	Diane Thorpe
EL	Ed Leblanc	BBT	Brenda Thexton
SM	Stella MacLean	GT	Gerry Trueman
DEM	Don MacLean	JCT	Judy Tufts
MM	Mike McCall	JWW	Jim Wolford
BJM	Betty and Jim Morrow		
JN	Joe Nocera		

Summer Weather in the Valley-1998
June, July, August
Larry Bogan

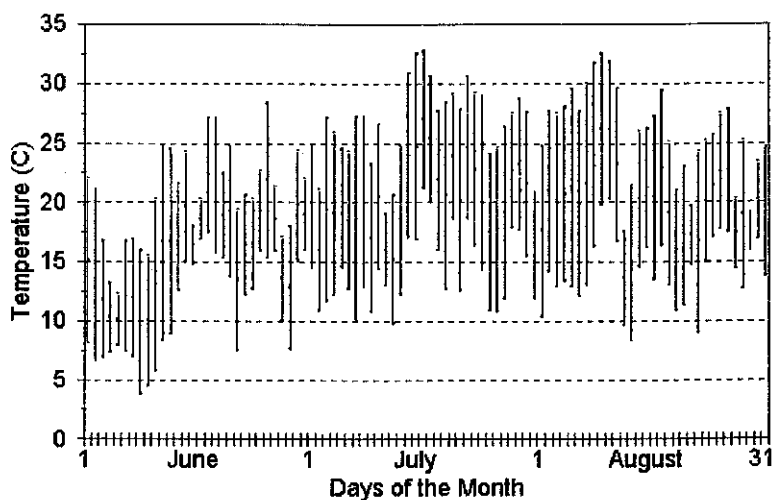
Statistics from the Agriculture Research Centre
Kentville, Nova Scotia

	Mean Temp °C	Rain Fall (mm)	Evap (mm)	Bright Sun Hours
June (37yr ave)	15.9 (16.0)	51 (69)	98	163 (212)
July (37yr ave)	20.4 (19.3)	31 (72)	139	254 (231)
August (37yr ave)	20.0 (18.5)	55 (93)	140	251 (215)
Period (37yr ave)	18.8 (17.9)	137 (234)	377	668 (658)

It is not news to the readers that it was a dry summer in the Annapolis Valley. Just how bad was the season?

July was the driest month (31 mm) with no day having as much as 1 cm (10 mm) of rain. Rain was more abundant (50 mm) in June and July but still far below the normal rainfalls. The accumulated rainfall for the season was less than 60% of the 37 year

Daily Temperatures (Max, Min, Mean) Summer 1998 (June, July, August)

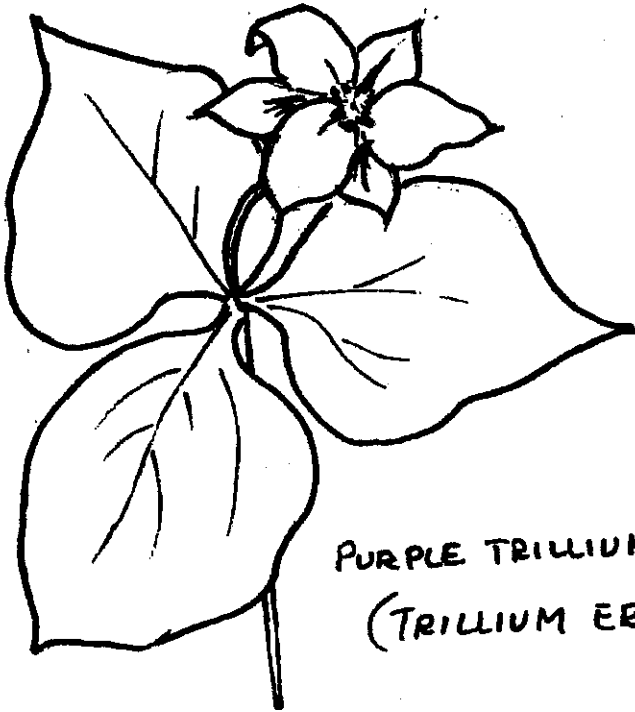


average for rainfall. Evaporation statistics are collected to be compared with the rainfall. The drop of the level of water in an open pan provides this measurement. Evaporation far exceeds rainfall every summer and this year it was 240 mm greater than the 127 mm of rain. Evaporation statistics have not been kept long enough to provide a 37 year average but over the last 5 years it was 434 mm compared with 377 mm for this summer.

We have had a warm summer which produced a mean temperature 1 C above the 37 year average. June was normal but July and August were 1.0 and 1.5 C respectively above average. I have include a graph of the daily maximum, minimum temperatures for the season. Two things to note:(1) Early June had consistently cool weather (and cloudy) while (2) the period from mid-July to mid-August had a fair number of days with maximums above 30C.

Despite the fact that we had a warm summer, it was not sunnier than normal. June was so cloudy (3/4 of average) that the excess sun in July and August only just made up for the deficit. It is easy to forget that only the second week in June had any consistently sunny days and it was not until mid-July and early August that we had the sunny weather. Since late August we have had a fair amount of cloud and now, at the end of the growing season,

are starting to get substantial rainfall. The grass on my lawn is at its best yet this summer and I have to get out and cut it - something I did little of this summer.



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<i>Galanthus</i>	Paperwhites
<i>Iris</i>	Rock-garden Daffodill
<i>Muscari</i>	Large-flowering crocus
<i>Scilla</i>	Other species of crocus



Blomidon Naturalists Society

1998 Membership Fees

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

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Memberships are due January 1st, 1998

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	585-1355	542-2095	
	Fungi	Darryl Grund	585-1252	542-9214
		Nancy Nickerson	679-5333	542-9332
	Lichens	Karen Casselman	424-7370	633-2837
	Seaweeds	Darryl Grund	585-1252	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	585-1684	542-7650	
	Jean Timpa		542-5678	
Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427	
Falcons & Eagles	Peter Austin-Smith		542-2109	
Mammals	Tom Herman	585-1469	678-0383	
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604	
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-7650	
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604	
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-7650	
	Michael Brylinsky	585-1509	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	

