

Bismillah Naturalist Society Newsletter
Twenty-fifth Anniversary Issue
Vol. 26, No. 1, 2005

A. K. K. K. K. K.

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

Visit us on the web

<http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/home.htm>

BNS SPRING PROGRAMME, 1999 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.

April 19. RAYMOND FIELDING. *The Shrubs of Nova Scotia.* Ray will tell us about our wild shrubs, with information on their values as ornamentals, in attracting wildlife and for medicinal purposes. Ray has recently published a beautifully illustrated book about the shrubs of Nova Scotia. This will be a good opportunity to get your copy autographed!

May 17. SHERMAN WILLIAMS. *Presenting the Night Sky from a Disc and Desktop.* Sherman, with the use of a computer program with supporting hardware and software, will show us some interesting astronomical events observed during the past one or two years, and especially some highlights to watch for this summer.

June 21. ROY BISHOP. *Natural History from a Sailing Ship.* Last October Roy sailed from Halifax to Bermuda on the *Endeavor*, an 18th century barque. Come hear about Roy's trip and see his beautiful photographs of stars, skyfeatures and natural history. A great way to celebrate the Summer Solstice!

FIELD TRIPS

April 23. A Field Trip to Outer Space. BNS "spring sky" field trip. Meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre at 8:30 pm. Dress warmly, bring binoculars or telescope, and a hot drink. We will likely proceed to the Grand Pré National Park parking lot, but this will be determined before we leave the Nature Centre. Leaders: Roy Bishop, Larry Bogan, and Sherman Williams. cloud date is April 24, same time and place.

April 25. Spring Birds. Jim Wolford will guide us to favourite shores, hedges, and ponds of the area. Waterproof clothing and footwear is recommended. Meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Center at **10:00** am. Bring lunch if you wish. Rain or shine. Jim

Wolford reminds everyone of the correction noted for his **April 25th** walk. It will be a joint field trip with the Nova Scotia Bird Society leaving from the Robie Tufts Center at 10:00 am. (not 8:00 am as stated in the last newsletter).

May 3. An indoor field trip with Jim Wolford describing his excursion to the isles of Greece. A repeat performance for those who were unable to attend the evening meeting on 15 March due to weather. The talk will be given in BAC, room 244 beginning at 7:30 pm.

June 12. A joint field trip with the Halifax Field Naturalists to explore amphibians, reptiles, pond-life and whatever. Lead by Jeff Franklin and Jim Wolford, the groups will meet at the Robie Tufts Center at 1:00 pm and again at 8:00 pm. No rain or sun date so bring appropriate clothing and binoculars, flydope, etc. Rubber boots are suggested for the wetter areas of exploration. The leaders are hoping for rain!!!.

Explore the habitat along the Avon River with Jim Wolford and friends, sighting location of the mythical eastern Cougar. **Check with Jim Wolford for the date:** (542-7650 or 542-9204).

5 July - Blomidon Provincial Park. Lead by Sherman Williams to visit one of the nature trails. The walk will be followed by an exploration of the stars and planets in the night sky. Meet at the lower gate at 7:00 pm. Rain date 6 July.

Notes from the Editor...

Last month the BNS celebrated 25 years of newsletters, trips and meetings -- quite an accomplishment! The planned festivities (which were to be associated with Jim Wolford's talk on the sunny Greek islands) were snowed out by a major storm -- look for something at the April meeting, and for Jim to repeat his talk on May 3rd (see field trips).

Thanks to all the contributors as usual, and also to Andrea Kingsley for her beautiful cover of two Harlequin Ducks (printed backwards to accomodate our format -- with her permission).

Barred Owls are hooting, Robins are waking me up in the morning, so spring is definitely springing!

Susan Montonen@acadiu.ca; 902-542-0437

history. Here is a selection of 25 of the nearly 250 talks over the past quarter century.

- 1974 September 16 -- Robie Tufts -- Birds and Their Ways
1975 May 27 -- Albert Roland -- Native Plants of Nova Scotia
1976 February 23 -- Donald Dodds -- Atlantic Salmon
1977 April 18 -- Bob Lambertson -- Birds of Newfoundland
1980 April 21 -- Jim Wolford -- Springtime Amphibian Activity
1980 Nov. 17 -- Ross Baker & Harry Brennan -- Birds & Wild Flowers
of Nova Scotia
1981 Feb. 16 -- Tom Herman -- Some Mammals of Nova Scotia
1982 May 17 -- Ken Harrison -- Mushrooms
1982 September 20 -- Larry Bogan -- The Natural History of New
Zealand
1983 June 20 -- Reid Dexter -- Nova Scotia Weather
1984 June 18 -- Mike Dadswell -- Fishes of Minas Basin
1984 November 19 -- Richard Brown -- Sea Birds
1985 September 16 -- Roy Bishop -- Halley's Comet
1986 October 20 -- George Stevens -- Geology of the Cape Split Area
1987 Jan. 19 -- Peter Austin-Smith -- Eagles of Nova Scotia
1987 May 11 -- Randy Milton -- Birds of Rural Indonesia
1988 Apr. 18 -- Scott Cunningham -- Coastal Areas of Nova Scotia
1988 May 16 -- Bernard Forsythe -- Orchids of Nova Scotia
1992 January 20 -- Sherman Bleakney -- The Esthetic Muds of Minas
1994 April 18 -- Sherman Williams -- The Annular Solar Eclipse of
May 10
1995 Nov. 20 -- Merritt Gibson -- Nature in Your Own Backyard
1996 July 8 -- George Archibald -- Cranes
1997 September 15 -- Brock Fenton -- Bats
1998 January 19 -- Richard Stern -- Birding in Manitoba
1999 January 18 -- Bonnie Sutherland -- The Nova Scotia Nature Trust

In addition to providing talks, slides, and videos of nature at the monthly meetings, the Society has arranged hundreds of field trips providing direct encounters with "rocks, plants, animals, water, air, and stars." Dozens of people have acted as leaders of these sometimes cold, dark, wet, windy, muddy, and exciting encounters with the natural world. However, a few individuals have gone far beyond the call of duty by acting as field trip leaders time and time again -- Jim Wolford, Sherman Williams, Larry Bogan, Bernard Forsythe, Judy Tufts, Richard Stern, Tom Herman, Sherman Bleakney, and John Pickwell.

The most enduring record of the Blomidon Naturalists Society is its quarterly Newsletter. These newsletters record the Society's monthly meeting, field trips, and natural history observations by members. Aside from this record of activities, the most valuable

part of the newsletters are articles on aspects of the natural history of the Kings County area. The authors of many of these articles are outstanding naturalists, and their words contain information and insights that can be found nowhere else. In recent years some newsletters have dealt with "special topics", including the Cornwallis River Corridor (volume 21, number 2, and 21, 3), the Black River System (21, 4 and 22, 2), the Natural History of Blomidon (23, 3 and 24, 1), and the Fundy Shore (25, 1 and 25, 3). Someday, before they disappear entirely, a few dozen of the best articles should be assembled into a book.

Several members are involved in the production and distribution of the Newsletter, but it is the Editors who provide the initiative and much of the necessary work:

Newsletter Editors

- 1974-80 Jean Timpa and Roy Bishop
- 1980-81 Jean Timpa and Larry Bogan
- 1981-82 Jean Timpa and Lynn Coldwell
- 1982-83 Jean Timpa
- 1983-84 Jean Timpa and Lynn Coldwell
- 1984-85 Jean Timpa and Larry Bogan
- 1985-87 Jean Timpa, George and Margaret Alliston
- 1987-93 George and Margaret Alliston
- 1993-95 Mark Elderkin
- 1995-present Susan Montonen

In addition to its monthly public meetings, field trips, and newsletters, over the past quarter-century the Blomidon Naturalists Society has accomplished several other goals:

BNS Logo, designed by Lynn (Dixon) Coldwell (1980); Incorporation (1982); Robie Tufts Young Naturalists Award (established 1983); "BNS Nature Notes" column in the Kentville Advertiser (began 1988); *Robie Tufts Nature Centre (opened 1990); Hosted the 1st (1990) and 6th (1995) meetings of the Federation of N. S. Naturalists; Book: "A Natural History of Kings County" (published 1992)*; "Birds of Kings County, An Annotated Checklist" (published 1993)*; Short-eared Owl Project (1993, 1994); Provincial approval as a Designated Conservation Organization (1997); A Society Brochure and Crest (1997); Natural History Calendars (1998, 1999)*; *(These publications exist primarily because of the leadership of Merritt Gibson.)

Also, through Honorary Life Memberships, the Blomidon Naturalists Society has recognized individuals who have made major contributions to the Society and/or to knowledge of the natural history of Kings County and Nova Scotia generally. The following are the Society's Honorary Life Members (deceased †):

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Robie Tufts† - 1981 | Margaret Chipman - 1990 |
| John Erskine† - 1981 | Bill Thexton - 1991 |
| Rachel Erskine† 1983 | Brenda Thexton - 1991 |
| Ken Harrison† - 1983 | Peter Austin-Smith - 1994 |
| Albert Roland† - 1985 | Sherman Bleakney - 1994 |
| Jean Timpa - 1988 | Larry Bogan - 1994 |
| Cyril Coldwell† - 1988 | Sherman Williams - 1994 |
| Charles Allen† - 1989 | Ross Baker† - 1995 |
| Curtis Chipman - 1990 | Harry Brennan - 1995 |

The existence and achievements of the Blomidon Naturalists Society are a reflection of the interest and support of many people in the Kings County area who care about natural history. However, the society could not survive without those few who have been willing to oversee its activities, to speak on its behalf, and to conduct the monthly meetings and meetings of the Board of Directors. Here are the Society's Presidents during the past 25 years:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1974-75 Sherman Williams | 1987-89 Sherman Williams |
| 1975-76 Cyril Coldwell | 1989-90 Peter Austin-Smith |
| 1976-79 Larry Bogan | 1990-94 Tom Herman |
| 1980-82 Peter Austin-Smith | 1994-97 Roy Bishop |
| 1982-85 Richard Stern | 1997-present Randy Milton |
| 1985-87 Jim Wolford | |

HUMOROUS BNS ANECDOTES FROM JIM WOLFORD FOR 1976-1999

Phil Taylor asked for something like this for our 25th Anniversary issue of this newsletter, and it was fun to comply. So here goes, from my selective memory:

Fred Scott led us on a very interesting field trip to see pre-hibernating bats in Hayes Cave, near South Maitland in the fall of 1984. After the trip, Fred's remark that I was the ONLY person ever to fall (on slippery mud inside the cave) on his many field trips there did not help!

At Brier Island a bunch of birders and BNS people were heading out of the harbour in a boat to observe seabirds and whales. Distantly to our north were ragged lines and Vs of flying birds, and some of the birders called them cormorants (most of us could only tell they were birds). Someone (intelligent) asked, 'How can we tell they're cormorants?' Then Norm McGuinness brought down the house by saying, 'If two or more people say they're cormorants, then they're cormorants!' End of discussion. A couple of field trips for local birds were memorable. On one occasion the leader (not me) took off like a 'bat out of hell' and immediately lost most of the cars behind him.

On another trip led by myself, we had 21 cars in a caravan and made a pit-stop in a stupid location, Wolfville's Irving station which then had only one washroom!

Another bird-watching field trip was to Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary, which is a 3-hour drive from Wolfville. I went there the day before and overnighted nearby. Our morning was quite rainy, and the gang who arrived at the appointed hour had left Wolfville in nice weather and were not prepared for inclemency -- so they stopped along the way and bought a package of black garbage-bags for ponchos! (I have a nice photo.)

On one of our many hikes to Cape Split in May or early June, there were quite a few children along, which normally is all right. But on this occasion, early in the walk, Ellis Gertridge showed everyone how to make a nice little whistle out of an alder stem. That was OK, BUT he made one for EVERY KID, and guess what? Yep, for the rest of the walk those of us who were hoping to hear birds (or just our own breath) had to put up with the high toots of those whistles, which did not attract birds. (I've never forgiven Ellis!)

Another perennial field trip was to Poplar Grove in mid-June for yellow lady's-slipper orchids. Two strong memories come back. First, on one occasion we clearly went in the wrong way, on the 'low road' through alder swamps, and several people got badly mired in mud! On another walk I was the leader and at one point was a bit unsure of whether we were lost or not. Then we heard a distant motor, and it got closer and closer to us, and, horror of horrors, it was a motorbiker on whose handlebars was a lovely bouquet of many lady's-slippers! At least we knew we were on

the right track!

Then two walks in Blomidon Provincial Park come to mind. On one trip a few of the hikers in the lead saw a running black bear, but the rest of us (laggards) had to take their word for that. On the second walk, we had gone around the big loop of the Jodrey Trail and were headed back, when one woman tripped, twisted her ankle, and then couldn't walk any further. Good old Ellis Gertridge took charge and found us a couple of long-enough wood poles which, with a couple of rain-jackets, served as a stretcher for carrying her. Luckily we had many people to switch each other off as carriers, and the remaining trail was fairly flat. For a couple of kilometres to our cars it was kind of fun and certainly memorable. BUT my raincoat has never been the same since!

My final anecdote here concerns chimney swifts and my own erratic, oblivious behaviour. On a day in August Wolfville held a SWIFTS DAY, with a contest to guess how many swifts would roost that night. I led a bunch of counters that evening, and the action at the time was at University Hall. It was a bit rainy that night, and I remember sitting in my lawn-chair with others under a horse-chestnut tree. Much later that night I became aware that my wallet was missing, and it stayed missing until the following July! I found it, still in my folding lawn-chair, which hadn't been used for almost a year and had sat under a staircase in the Acadia Biology building with its contents of about \$100 in cash plus credit-cards etc.! (I took the lawn-chair to East Dalhousie for sitting up in the Crosslands' barn-hayloft to observe nesting swifts, and the wallet fell out when I took the lawn-chair out of my car.)

P.S. Just for everyone's information (and my own), my TRIVIAL TIDBITS column started in the BNS Newsletter in March 1984, and Merritt Gibson's NATURE NOTES weekly articles in THE ADVERTISER began on January 22, 1988.

 **Camera Corner**
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County Fair Mall New Minas 681-6699
(Across from Royal Bank)

"POLAR BEAR" (ALIAS WYLIE COYOTE) SWIM!

By Jean Timpa, Wolfville.

On February 22 I rather reluctantly dressed to participate in the North American Mid-Winter Backyard Bird Count which is compiled by the Sapsucker Woods Ornithology Lab at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York by e-mail. Yes, Cornell does allow a loose definition of backyard, so that the observer can basically go anywhere as long as the birds aren't double-counted. Nobody would be out on the dykes in the weather I was about to face: bright sunlight but -12 °C with -20 °C wind chill. It was not a day I would have voluntarily gone out there, so I dressed more warmly than usual.

Opposite the end of Oak Avenue there is a lonely cat-tail swamp where swamp sparrows reside. By the time I arrived there having stopped numerous times to observe and record in my notebook, I was miserably chilled. I'd also forgotten to double mitten, and so my hands were particularly cold. I resolved to hurry back and homeward, foregoing the dykes which definitely would be more exposed to the elements but would also have different birds again for my list. Oh, that delicate balance. Oh, the pain. Oh, the temptation of the incurable lister just to go around one more corner!!

And so, of course, when I reached the turn off back into town I had managed to convince myself that I'd hurried enough, that I was truly a little warmer and I could possibly stand a little foray onto the dykes. Because there was no water in the harbour there were no birds for which to stop. It was about 1 p.m. at this point as I pressed onward to the end of a large drainage creek where the dykes turn north east along the Cornwallis River. There on the north bank of the river were the usual Black Ducks, but among them was one who had a lot of white markings on him. I needed to get opposite them in order to have any chance of identifying him accurately. So I kept on as quickly as possible - almost out to the Wolfville Sewage Ponds. I stopped, I tried to look. Both my fingers and glasses were too cold to make good fine-tuning of focus. I was shivering a bit. The tide was too low - just starting in again, and so the birds were a long way across a very deep, cold gully. I counted the 42 Black Ducks twice just to make sure. I kept looking at the one odd ball duck - sure it was a male Pintail, but couldn't quite make out that long skinny tail. "Bother", said Pooh mood set in. Tried once more despite my ice cake state. And then as I was making a last ditch effort to focus and stop

shivering at the same time who should walk right into where I was looking across the river - of all the hundreds if not thousands of acres of mud flats of Starr's Point - right into the tiny little area I was looking suddenly was standing a lonely coyote right by the ducks. He or she wandered back and forth by the edge a bit, sniffed at a drainage riverlet, came back near the ducks one of which I was sure was intended lunch. By this time I had totally forgotten about the cold. The ducks could easily have swum up river with the current or flown away, but didn't; they did move out into the river a short way, but they were seemingly non-plussed about the predator.

Before I knew it Coyote had deliberately placed one paw into the water - well-below freezing, but only kept open because of the constant tidal action. And then a second paw and then he was quickly submerged except for his head as he bravely struck out to swim across the river! The funny little ducks bunched up tightly and swam along side, quacking rather loudly until they reached the slush ice into which they did not choose to venture. But it brought them close enough that I finally could see the Pintail for sure.

Coyote was rapidly caught in the very swift current flowing upstream towards Wolfville. How tiny that little head looked. How long could it tolerate those frigid waters? How was it going to get through the slush ice to get to the bank? All these questions made me feel very small and inadequate as I rushed back along the dyke to try and keep coyote in sight. The slush ice was no trouble at all. Coyote made this adventure look all so easy - so every day!

Finally, after being in the water about five minutes it landed on a gentle slope of mud just on the other side of the drainage creek that runs along the dykes. Coyote scrambled out, took several steps, shook off copious amounts of water, took several more steps and had a large wiz, ran up some more embankment shook off water again, then got into the difficult terrain - nearly vertical and sheer ice all the way up. Coyote slipped and slid, shook once more, and finally picked its way along to a place where the embankment had crumbled away a bit to leave a pile of sods upon which it managed to jump, and from there sprang to the flat grassland of the salt marsh. Coyote took several steps forward, sat down and surveyed the scene forthwith - human habitation straight ahead, Wolfville harbour and more buildings to the west;

only one way to go - east towards me. I stood very still! Coyote moved a little ways south towards town, then disappeared into the drainage ditch. Before I knew it, there before me about 30 yards ahead stood coyote on the same dyke. He or she stopped for maybe five seconds, looked towards me, and I wondered if I was to be lunch! However, Coyote quickly loped down the side of the dyke, across the gravel road, and into the remains of acres of corn stubble.

Feeling a little braver at this point I spoke quietly to coyote. Unfortunately, it might as well have been a "bullet" as Coyote suddenly went into high gear and went streaking up through the old corn field, covering acres of land seemingly effortlessly. Finally it turned more southerly and in one leap or two ran up over the railway embankment and tracks and disappeared over the other side, quite near Brenda and Bill Thexton's backyard. I felt badly about scaring it, but it was a pretty sight in some ways to see how adept it was at running when necessary.

I stood there in awe, wishing you'd all been there to witness the survival tactics and hardiness of this much maligned creature. I also wished I'd had one of those wonderful nature photographers to record Coyote's trek. I also discovered suddenly I was very warm all over - even my fingers. There's nothing like a good shot of natural adrenalin!

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SOCIETY NEWS

MAG

The Minas Astronomy Group (MAG) meets monthly on the second Saturday at seven (SSS) on the second floor of Huggins Science Hall at Acadia. Like the meetings of the Blomidon Naturalists Society, MAG meetings are open to anyone and MAG members are of all ages and backgrounds. Call Roy Bishop (542-3992).

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT (NAMC) - MAY 8, 1999

Another year..... and another Spring will be upon us sooner than we realize. Time to be thinking about counting all those returning neo-tropical birds once again! The Spring Count for NAMC day in this province, will take place on the second Saturday in the month of May - **May the 8th.**

Many of our northward-migrating neo-tropical bird species will be back... visible once again in the midst of 'pairing off' or looking for suitable habitats to raise new families. But will there be much habitat left for them? What of the habitat lost to them through man's greedy efforts to reclaim farmland or wet areas for housing, or by 'clear cutting' woodlands... How does this affect our returning spring visitors? This should be of great concern for all of us. Once again we need to be thinking about being out in field, woods or mountain, along river, pond or ocean, searching for those species; counting the birds to see what effect 'migration', and losses of habitat, have had upon their numbers and their distribution. Get your friends together- go out in a group and look for those birds, contact birding buddies, make a day of it, have fun outdoors..... and COUNT! Please take time to consider participating in this very worthwhile project.

NO FEE is involved

It is important that all those wishing to participate contact local coordinators or area 'reps.' in their counties to prevent overlaps of areas being surveyed and to help the coverage be as widespread and thorough as possible. Should you not know who your local coordinator/area reps are, or you wish to 'count' in other counties than the one in which you live, please contact me. I will be happy to help with any queries.

Judy Tufts (NAMC Provincial Coordinator for NS)
Tel: 1-902-542-7800. PO Box 1313 Wolfville, NS B0P 1X0.
e-mail: <tandove@ns.sympatico.ca

NATURAL HISTORY REPORTS

1999 EAGLES/RAPTORS COUNT

On February 7 the 19th 'ANNUAL' CYRIL K. COLDWELL EAGLES/RAPTORS COUNT for eastern King's County was held. It was subzero Celsius all day, sunny with very good visibility, and the wind was cold and moderate from the northwest. A team of 37 observers in 16 field-parties fanned out through the Wolfville Christmas Count Circle plus a bit to the north for just one hour from 10 to 11 a.m. to minimize double-counting.

We tallied 483 BALD EAGLES (54% adult, 46% immature) half from Sheffield Mills to Kingsport/Medford, plus only 38 RED-



TAILED HAWKS. I suspect this is an underestimate. On such a nice sunny day, many were perhaps flying by mid morning, and spotting red-tails in the sky on a sunny day is difficult. Also counted were 5 **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS**, one **NORTHERN HARRIER**, one **MERLIN**, one **SHARP-SHINNED HAWK**, and a plastic great horned owl!

The fresh snow had a down-side in that it prevented access to some of our dykelands. Thus probably some rough-legs and at least a few short-eared owls were missed. Also about a dozen long-eared owls are known to be within our circle of coverage.

Since Cyril's passing in January 1994, I've been coordinating this nearly-annual affair. We all hope that somehow he's aware of the productive artificial nest-platform and nest that is producing eaglets yearly only a long stone's-throw from his grave behind his farmhouse at Gaspereau.

**Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists
Annual Conference
May 28 - May 30, 1999
Cheticamp / Cape Breton Highlands National Park
Hosted by Les Amis du Plein Air**

All BNS members are invited to join naturalists from across Nova Scotia in the picturesque Acadian village of Cheticamp for a weekend of field trips in Cape Breton Highlands National Park, whale cruises, illustrated talks, social events and much more.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a detailed programme of the weekend's events and a registration form. We encourage you to register early.

Plan to join us in Cheticamp — we can guarantee you will have an informative and enjoyable weekend!

LOON AND LAKE MONITORS NEEDED!

The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey is inviting volunteers to monitor loons breeding on lakes across Canada. Cottagers and lake residents are invited to make 3 or more visits to their lake each summer. Guided by a Loon Survey instruction kit, surveyors record information on adult loons, loon chicks, and levels of human activity on the lake. This project is a perfect complement for a cottage lifestyle; anyone who visits the same lake regularly and enjoys watching loons will find this monitoring program a very rewarding experience.

Join over 1000 loon surveyors nationwide in monitoring, conserving, and learning about the Common Loon on Canada's lakes! Participants are asked to make a tax-creditable \$25.00 contribution to help offset program costs.

For more information, contact:

Canadian Lakes Loon Survey
Bird Studies Canada
P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario
Canada N0E 1M0
Phone: (519) 586-3531
Toll-free: 1-888-448-BIRD
Fax: (519) 586-3532

Email: aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org
or visit our Webpage at www.bsc-eoc.org



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Sunday November 9 1998.

**Winter Evergreens,
By Bernard Forsythe**

(Editor's note. Bernard submitted this report for the last newsletter, but a forgetful production person (PDT) neglected to include it; apologies to Bernard, but given the recent snow, a winter field trip report still seems appropriate!)

About two dozen eager naturalists in nine vehicles joined me on this trip through a variety of woodland habitat at Greenfield, Kings Co. As we began the outing I speculated we may be lucky enough to find a grey jay as a bonus. Seconds later two grey jays flew right to us at the start of the wood road.

Winter evergreens were everywhere. Everyone was keenly interested and several joined in the process of naming many of the plants we looked at. The various leaf structure as well as the great variety of shades of green were carefully observed.

Some of the common evergreens included partridgeberry with double-eyed fruit, mayflower, teaberry, pyrolas, and a beautiful bed of creeping snowberry. The leaves of balsam fir and yew were compared as well as the pale whitish greens of *Usnea* and reindeer lichen and the various tree lichens.

The forest floor under the coniferous trees was a carpet of rich green moss. Mostly *Sphagnum*, but several other unidentified species were looked at. The floor under a deciduous wood lot was quite a contrast. Protruding above the dead leaves were several species of club mosses, some looking like miniature trees as well as ground pine that has been used for Christmas decorations. Although we found wood ferns our search for Christmas fern was unsuccessful.

Returning to our vehicles, some of us walked a short distance to Little Lake that was flooded from recent rains. Here we found another of the evergreen heaths, the large cranberry. Next to the wood road under a stand of white pines, one of our group found prince's pine, sometimes called pipsissewa. This is my favourite member of the pyrola family with its whorls of dark-green shining evergreen leaves. Another highlight was a pair of

courting ravens overhead. We listened to one of their songs many do not recognise as coming from a raven. To me it has the resonance of a deep-toned bell. A nice reward for a birdwatcher leading an enjoyable plant outing.

Winter 1999 Bird Report

By Jean Timpa,
(with late-breaking and much appreciated computer assistance from Ingrid Prosser!)

RED-NECKED GREBE

Dozens of them, Digby Harbour, Jan. 3, 1999 (KA, TF, ML, JWW)
Several along the Fundy coast near Middleton - Jan. 19, 1999 (RS)

CANADA GOOSE

Mar. 22/99 - 120 CANADA GEESE in fields west of the Canning Aboiteau, but none had neck-collars (Judy Tufts saw 4 collars there among about 1000 geese several days ago). (JWW)

WOOD DUCK

one pair, Saxon Pond, Centreville, Mar 19/99 (BBT, JET)

AMERICAN WIDGEON

One M.Saxon St. Pond, Sheffield Mills, March 26, 1999, (JT)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL

Two at New Minas Sewage Pond, Mar.26/99 (JWW)

MALLARD

20 at New Minas, Mar.26/99 (JWW)
15 Port Williams, Mar.26/99 (JWW)

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK

30 New Minas Sewage Pond, Mar.26/99 (JWW)



TUFTED DUCK

An adult Female, Annapolis R. causeway, Jan. 19, 1999 (RS)

HARLEQUIN DUCK

Mar. 15-23 1m/1f. 2 imm. Port George, Annapolis Co. (MN)
3 - 1 m, 2 f, Port George, Feb. 16/99 (BBT, GT)

RED-TAILED HAWK

one, Tremont, Jan. 3/99, screaming while flying (SLH)

one, Saxon St. Pond, Jan. 31/99 partial albino (BBT)

one, on nest in evergreen near UHall, Wolfville, March 20/99 (BBT, JET)

near nest in front of UHall Wolfville, March 21/99 (JET, BBT)

Today I checked on 4 local nests of RED-TAILED HAWKS (Univ. Hall, Acadia Univ.; lower east Wolfville; Fred Thomas Rd. n. of Canada Packers (Canard Pond); and se. of Jawbone Corner (Canard Valley)). All 4 nests had one adult hawk in attendance, and 2 of them appeared to be sitting deeply as if incubating eggs. At the other two they may have just been still rearranging nest-material. (Of course, all 4, or none, may actually have been in incubation.) March 23/99 (JWW)

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK

one, near Berwick, Jan. 22/99 (SLH) One, dark phase, Canard, March 12/99 (BBT)

AMERICAN KESTREL one, Tremont, Dec. 10/99 (SLH)

MERLIN one, Wolfville, took morning dove, Jan.5/99 (BBT) one, East Grand Pré, Feb. 4/99 (JET, BBT)

Jan. 14th - Black Rock, Kings.Co., Saw a hawk dive

through our larg feeder looking for lunch. "He" scooped up a finch at full speed and smashed into our window. The finch died and the hawk snapped out off its daze and flew away. I saw it all! Nature in action. Lorie-Ann Martin

GREY PARTRIDGE

3 near Blueberry Acres Sheffield Mills, Mar.20/99 (BBT, JET)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT

2 m, 6 f. Nictau, Annapolis Co. Jan. 23/99 (SLH) one male, cornfield, Greenwood, March 9/99 (SLH) one female partial albino, Wolfville, Jan-Feb./99 has a white head and white on the rump. Seen several times with other pheasants at feeder. (GT)

RUFFED GROUSE

one eating berries, Tremont, Jan. 2/99 (SLH)

one, Flying into woods, Tremont, March 27/99 (SLH)

ICELAND GULL

23.03 1 ind. New Minas sewage ponds, New Minas, Kings Co. (JWW) 26.03 1 imm. New Minas sewage ponds, New Minas, Kings Co. (JT)also (JWW)

One, at Wolfville Sewage Pond, Mar.28/99 (JWW)

BONAPARTES GULLS

Digby Harbour, Jan. 3, 1999 (KA, TF, ML, JWW)

DOVEKIE one at Digby Harbour, Jan. 3, 1999 (KA, TF, ML, JWW)

BLACK GUILLEMOT
at Digby Harbour, Jan. 3, 1999 (KA, TF, ML, JWW)

ATLANTIC PUFFIN
One Atlantic Puffin, at Digby Harbour, Jan. 3, 1999 (KA, TF, ML, JWW)

RED-THROATED LOON
one, at Margeretsville, March 19/99 Bill Thexton

COMMON LOON
at Digby Harbour, Jan. 3, 1999 (KA, TF, ML, JWW)
Several along the Fundy coast near Middleton - Jan. 19, 1999 (RS)
one, Swimming of Port George, Ana.Co., March 19/99 (BBT, JET)

SNOWY OWL
one, Aldersville, Lunenburg Co., Dec. 8/99 (ICR) (BC)

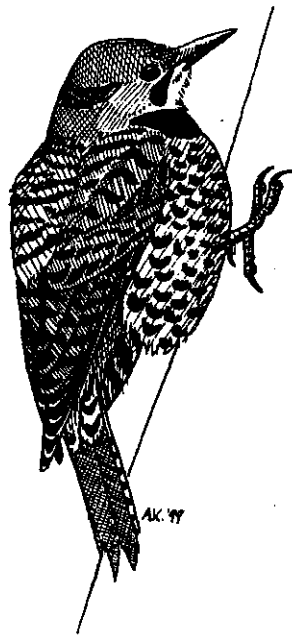
SHORT-EARED OWL
5, Wolfville Dyke by railroad tracks, Jan. 1/99 (JET)
7, Hortonville Dyke, Feb. 14/99 (SMcC)
1, Wolfville Sewage Pond, Feb. 22/99 (JET)

CEDAR WAXWING
15 or more on Gaspereau Ave., Wolfville Mar. 19/99 (JWW)

7 in Wolfville, Mar.27/99 eating Juniper berries (JWW)
15 at my home Wolfville, Mar.30/99 (JWW)

AMERICAN ROBIN
20 in rose bushes during big snow/rain storm, Woodside, Mar. 7/99 (JAH)
one complaining during storm, at home Wolfville, Mar. 7/99 (JET)
one singing, at Grand Pré, March 22/99 (JWW)

NORTHERN MOCKING-BIRD
at Grand Pré, Mar. 20/99 (JWW); a pair, Grand Pré,



Mar.29/99 (JWW)
NORTHERN FLICKER
one, Wolfville, Mar. 19/99

(JWW)

PILEATED WOOD-PECKER

one, Tremont, Dec. 6/98 (SLH)

one, backyard Grandview Dr., Wolfville, Jan. 2/99 (DT)

one, drumming and in flight, Tremont, Feb.17/99 (SLH)

one in tree beside road, Lakeville, Mar. 19/99 (MK, GT) One flying east to west Gaspereau Ave., Wolfville, Mar.22/99 (JET)

GRAY JAY

one, Blomidon Park, Feb. 4/99 (IP)

PINE GROSBEAK

One, Blomidon Park, Feb. 4/99 (IP)

PINE SISKINS

one, Tremont, among gold-finches at feeder, Jan. 23/99 (SLH)

4 at Wallbrook, Mar 21/99 (JWW, PM)

5 White Rock Pond, Mar.27/99 (JWW)

AMERICAN PIPIT

one at Dykes, Wolfville, Mar.28/99 (JET)

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

20 at feeder in Grand Pré, March 31/99 (PM, JWW)

PURPLE FINCH

2 colourful males, 4 "females", Grand Pré, Mar.18/99 (PM, JWW)

One singing, White Rock, Mar.21/99 (PM, JWW)

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

one, Tremont, at feeder Dec. 18 - Jan. 1/99 (SLH)

RED-WINGED BLACK-BIRD

one, at Grand Pré, Mar. 28/99 (JWW)

2 m. at Grand Pré, Mar. 31/99 (PM, JWW)

COMMON GRACKLE

2 Wolfville, at BBT's feeder, Mar. 7/99 One seen at Grand Pré, March 20/99 (JWW)

3 at Grand Pré and 2 at Canard Valley, Mar. 22/99 (JWW)

7 at Grand Pré, Mr. 28/99 (JWW)

20 at feed Grand Pré, Mar. 31/99 (PM, JWW)

Please note that the above list is far from complete, but time pressure and inability to use computer make it impossible for me to complete it. Next time, I promise to do better! Thank you for all your contributions.

Contributors: KA - Karel Allard; TF - Trina Fitzgerald; JAH - John & Averill Harwood; SLH - Sheila Hulford; MK - Molly Kernohan; ML - Mitch Leonard; PM - Pat Martin; SMcC - Sheila McCurdy; MN - Murray Newell; IP - Ingrid Prosser; I&CR - Ian and Christine Ross; RS - Richard Stern; BBT - Bill and Brenda Thexton; DT - Diane Thorpe; JET - Jean Timpa; JT - Judy Tufts; GT - Gerry Trueman; JWW - Jim Wolford

TRIVIAL TIDBITS of Nova Scotia Natural History

compiled by Jim Wolford, Site 1, Comp. 61, RR3, Wolfville, N.S.
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mostly from late Dec. 1998 to end of March 1999

SKIES and WEATHER

early Jan. - After the warmest year ever measured globally, **1999** has started in such a **cold** way that we might think Mother Nature is trying to do the opposite this year -- brrrr! (JW).

Jan. 6 - Andrew Hebda wonders about the effect of this so-far-mostly-open winter on the plants and animals in **ponds** that are covered with **ice** with no **snow-cover** on top; ice inhibits gas exchanges between the water and air, and snow cover prevents light penetration into the pond and thus reduces or eliminates photosynthesis; also this light might aid active predators under the ice in finding prey (AH).

Jan. 14 - in late afternoon, 2 beautiful bright **Sundogs** (extended up from horizon like **r a i n b o w - c o l o u r e d** horns)(reflections from ice-crystals); from late aft. into evening, the **International Space Station, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn,** and an '**auroral arch**' were all seen from Avonport (SW).

Jan. 18 - 'one of the thinnest **slivers of Moonlight**' he's ever seen -- Moon was only about 30 hours past New Moon -- seen from Pugwash Jct. (SW).

Jan. 21 - crescent Moon seen near Jupiter, from near Greenwood (SH).

Jan. 31 - in early evening in Wolfville I watched the beautiful, big '**BLUE MOON**' rise (so-called when it's the second Full Moon of any one month)(JW).Feb. 1 - in early evening, beautiful **Moonrise** (Moon just past Full), followed by the **occultation of Regulus** (in Leo) by the Moon (seen by SW).

Feb. 23 - 4 **planets** seen from near Greenwood in dusk sky: **Mercury** was lowest in the west, and very faint; then the near-conjunction of **Venus** with **Jupiter**; and **Saturn** was higher (SH).

Mar. 5 - '**4 planets + 1 + 6!**' -- seen in the city of Halifax from 6:40 to 7 p.m. in the west-southwest: **Mercury & Jupiter**, then up to **Venus**, and

upward to **Saturn**, all seen from **Earth**; then just before midnight, seen from Avonport, **Mars** with the Moon (and Spica)(SW).

Mar. 6 - from Sackville to Grand Pré in late afternoon, we watched two colourful and vertically-elongated **Sundogs**, one to the left and the other especially bright to the right of the Sun; also at the end of our drive there appeared a narrow vertical column of light above and perpendicular to the Sun (called a '**Sun or solar pillar**')(PM,JW).

Mar. 7 - a very bright **double rainbow** seen in late afternoon from the Newtonville area and elsewhere (WL et al.).

Mar. 30 - a very bright and large **spectacular fireball or meteorite** was reported at 8:52 p.m. from Digby Neck (CH) and 10 to 10:15 p.m. from Canning (JS) and several other places (HCH)('bright neon blue streak', 'honkin' big mother of all meteorites', 'centre white to blue to orange on edges, tail was a long streaming white & orange streak, encompassing most of the north and west sky, also throwing off fireballs before dissipating into a smoky blue con-trail', 'an incredible, wonderful moment').

Mar. 31 - as in January, March

had two **Full Moons** (the second of any month is a '**Blue Moon**') -- another rare event occurred when February had no Full Moon (JW).

FUNGI

MAR. 28 - last year's **puffballs** on a lawn, when stepped upon, still gushed out spores, near Greenwood (SH).

PLANTS

Jan. 4 - green leaves of **common speedwell** (*Veronica officinalis*) seen near woods, near Greenwood (SH).



Jan. 5 - **pussy willows** seen in New Glasgow -- is this a strange winter?(MB).

Jan. 16 - 5 examples of **pussy willows** 'out' at Baxter's Harbour (PD).

Jan. 17 - Eastern Shore south from Canso has abundant **mountain-ash** and **Canada holly**, both loaded with **fruits** (unlike Pictou Co.)(and groups of both **robins** and **waxwings** were seen (CB,KM).

Jan. 18 - open **pussy willows** along the Northumberland Strait (N.S. side)(KHP).

Feb. 13 - **pussy willows** seen along a road near Greenwood (SH). (This year has been weird, and several reports of early-winter pussy willows go back to January.)

Jan. 31 - buds on **blackberry** had opened to reveal trios of leaf-tips, sw. of Gaspereau (RN).

Mar. 3 - some **crocuses** in bloom in Wolfville (GG,IP).

Mar. 4 - 8 yellow **crocuses** in bloom at Port Joli (AD).

Mar. 4 - **pussy willows** noted in a back yard, and **apple** blossom-buds enlarging and opening a bit, at Coldbrook (SR). **Magnolia** flower-buds enlarging in Wolfville (HT).

Mar. 5 - **snowdrops** in bloom in Wolfville (JC,JN).

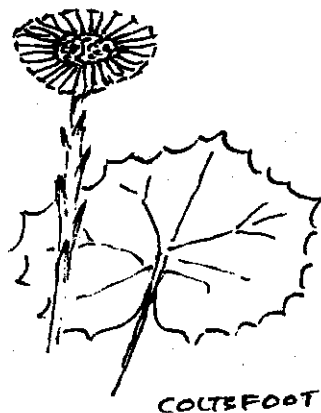
Mar. 18 - along hwy. 101 near Mt. Uniacke, visible from a commuting car, **larch** trees show just a hint of green along

their branches (new needle-bunch-buds?)(FS).

Mar. 21 - a few **coltsfoot** flowers in bloom at Shad Bay, near Peggy's Cove (MBM).

Mar. 23 - 2 **coltsfoot** flowers in bloom on a south-facing slope w. of Gaspereau (probably my earliest date ever)(JW).

Mar. 26 - **coltsfoot** in bloom near Stellarton (KM).



Mar. 25 - c. **dandelion** leaves growing in a sidewalk crack, but still too early for flowers, near Greenwood (SH).

Mar. 25 - **willow** catkins fully open and in bloom along Cape Split trail (TF,JN).

Mar. 30 - some male catkins of **pussy willows** (unidentified to species) fully open near Gaspereau; also flowers of **American elm** open on Acadia

Mar. 21 - the first **water strider** of the year seen, in the brook at Dollar Lake Prov. Park (PR).

Mar. 8 - a **7-spot lady beetle**, a **southern lady beetle**, and an unidentified **lady beetle** (very small, very pale, no spots -- perhaps a newly emerged 2-spot?) overwintering inside a Wolfville house (DGT).

Mar. 20 - a **2-spotted lady beetle** and a **southern lady beetle**, both alive, inside a house at Grand Pré (PM,JW).

Mar. 21 to 27 - on a very warm day, lots of **southern lady beetles & houseflies** were flying around a house at Delhaven (TF,JN).

Mar. 23 - a **southern lady beetle** active inside a car at Blomidon (AW).

Mar. 27 - several **southern lady beetles** seen indoors that were quite variable in appearance (some with 19 spots, some with 3, some with none) near Greenwood (SH).

Dec. 1/98 and Jan. 17 - single **woolly bear caterpillars** of **isabella tiger moths** found at North Alton; on the latter date it was crawling in mild sunny weather, and it was collected alive and subsequently pupated (MH,AK).

Feb. - an **isabella woolly bear**, collected before Xmas in Kentville, subsequently pupated? in a cocoon but later emerged still as a caterpillar!??(KKW). Has anyone out there ever heard of



WOOLLY BEAR

such a thing? Sounds impossible to me (JW).

Mar. 2 - another **isabella woolly bear caterpillar** found on the snow at Whitehill, Pictou Co. (MB).

Mar. 21 - 2 adult **Milbert's tortoiseshell** butterflies seen active in Canning -- this is a species which overwinters as adults, like the mourning cloak (GG,IP).

Mar. 28 - 4 prob. adult **Milbert's tortoiseshells** flitting in the sunshine in fields adjacent to woods at Harlen Point, Dartmouth (PC,JH).

Mar. 26 - an adult **mourning cloak** butterfly seen in Wolfville (JT), and another one

seen at Saxon St. Pond (JN).

Mar. 26 - an unidentified **moth** at a porch light near Greenwood (SH).

Mar. 21 - **seaweed flies** (Coelopidae) very abundant in stranded seaweeds at Canada Creek (Black Rock)(MH,AK).

Mar. 28 - in Wolfville, a hungry overwintered **mosquito** bit ST, and several small **moths** were seen flying (JT,ST).

Mar. 13 - **flies** (seaweed flies? adults?) active in seaweeds near Antigonish (RL).

Mar. 29 - many unidentified **flies** sunning themselves on the side of a house near Greenwood (SH).

Feb. 10 - a living adult **paper wasp** (*Polistes*) was found inside the Acadia Biology bldg. (DS,JW). (In Jan. we had a

living **mud-dauber wasp** inside the bldg.)

Mar. 27 - **carpenter ants** now active at Delhaven (JN).

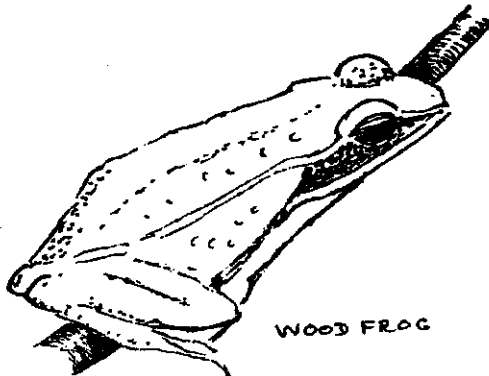
AMPHIBIANS

Mar. 21 - an unidentified **frog** (**wood?**) was seen hopping on a road at Grand Pré (PM).

Mar. 23 & 24 - reports of a single calling **spring peeper** and then a chorus of **peepers** at North Range, Digby Co. (NSM).

Mar. 23 - one **frog** was 'croaking' in a Liverpool pond (HD)(probably either a spring peeper or a wood frog?).

Mar. 25 - The first report of a calling **spring peeper** received by the N.S. Museum of Natural History came from Pubnico (Yarmouth Co.); Stephen Archibald wants to receive



WOOD FROG

reports of first calls and first choruses (e-mail <archibsb@gov.ns.ca> or phone the Museum (Frog-watch). (Or report to JW who will contact Museum.)

Mar. 26 - a **frog (wood?)** croaking at Greenwich (HF).

Mar. 28 - **spring peepers** heard calling at Coldbrook (SR).

Mar. 28 & 29 - reports to 1-800-354-FROG of calling **spring peepers** at Yarmouth, Lunenburg Co., Noel Shore, Truro, & E. Chezzetcook (SA)(NSM).

Mar. 28 - a **blue-spotted salamander (or Tremblay's?)** dug up while gardening, and **wood frogs** heard, near Antigonish (RL).

Mar. 29 - on a warm, foggy evening after daytime rain, 2 **wood frogs** seen (one almost dead) and a few **spring peepers** heard along roads near Gaspereau; also, in a roadside ditch west of Gaspereau were 20-25 conspicuous white **spermatophores** (sperm-packets) from at least one male **yellow-spotted salamander** (JW).

Mar. 29 - **spring peepers** heard at Woodville (AM).

Mar. 29 - 2 single **frogs**

(**wood?**) seen at night along Bluff Road at Avonport (SW).

Mar. 30 - **wood frogs** heard sw. of Truro (no **peepers** yet)(DC).

Mar. 30 - a second-hand report of a few **spring peepers** calling at Stellarton (KM).

REPTILES

Mar. 27 - one **painted turtle** active in a Greenwich pond (HF).

MAMMALS

Jan. 10 & Feb. 6 - single



SHORT-TAILED SHREW

short-tailed shrews seen at North Alton -- the Jan. one was feeding on seeds below a feeder and showed no fear nor aggression toward **juncos** (MH,AK).

mid Oct. - A naturalist from the N.S.Museum of Nat. Hist. found a **red bat** lying on the ground outside the Sheraton Halifax Hotel -- subsequently it was taken to the Museum, christened 'Scarlet', and tended

by Cathy Fulton and Andrew Hebda, with the hope of release in spring (HCH).

Feb. 10 & Mar. 19 - single **snowshoe hares** seen at North Alton (MH,AK).

Feb. 13 - a **snowshoe hare** seen at twilight near Mt. Uniacke -- it was white and stood out against its snowless background (PC).

(Dec. 30) - Rick Ballard at Port Hilford, Guysb. Co., reports that he has several **squirrels**, both **red** and **northern flying**, attracted to suet feeders. This is the second year he has had two **flying squirrels** living in a nestbox for barred owls. He wrote, '.....I see them glide down to my suet feeders about 5 m. from a large kitchen window, lit by an outside floodlight.' BUT he has very few **birds** at the feeders since late summer -- this is coincident with the June-July **spraying** of Btk for control of **white-marked tussock moths** -- Rick wonders how many other people have experienced drops in feeder or other birds, and when?

Dec. 30 - 2 smallish **red squirrels** were together and foraging on the ground for fallen **maple** seeds, in a Wolfville cemetery (JW).

mid Feb. - a cat-'killed' **red**

squirrel was actually 'playing 'possum', fooled a well-meaning, rescuing human and bit her, then making its escape, on North Mountain (PMi).

Feb. 25 - in a snow-storm at Bedford, 2 **flying squirrels** appeared at a window bird-feeder much earlier in the evening (8 p.m.) than their usual time about midnight (PC).

Mar. 16 - at home in Wolfville I saw a strange-looking **red squirrel** -- it looked skinny and had a relatively hairless tail, but most striking was a large light-gray patch on at least its left side (other side not seen)(JW).



Mar. 30 - at Murphy Lake, one **red squirrel** has swollen teats and is clearly **lactating** (MT).

Feb. 13 - one **chipmunk** eating under a bird-feeder, near Greenwood (SH).

Mar. 4 - a **chipmunk** seen gathering seeds under a bird feeder near Greenwood (SH).

Mar. 17 - 2 **chipmunks** arrived at feeders at Debert (PF).

Mar. 24 - a **chipmunk** under a bird feeder was chased by a **red squirrel**, near Greenwood (SH).

Mar. 25 - **chipmunks** have appeared at Port Joli (AD), and several active ones were seen along the Cape Split trail (TF,JN).

Apr. 1 - a **chipmunk** finally active on the South Mountain at Murphy Lake (MT).

Mar. 22 - a **groundhog/woodchuck** was road-killed on hwy. 101 near Bridgetown (TF,JN).

Mar. 24 - one **groundhog** seen at Upper Church St. (nw. of Port Wms.)(DGT).

Mar. 27 - at Falmouth, a **groundhog** away from its burrow was aggressive toward a domestic dog (HR).

Mar. 30 - a **groundhog** seen in a roadside field w. of Gasperau (JW).

mid Jan. - numerous **meadow voles**, including a **partial albino**, regularly moving between bird feeders (sometimes chasing **juncos**) and a house basement, at North Alton (MH,AK).

Mar. 22 - **meadow voles** now very active and out from their winter retirings in Keji' Park (TF,JN).

Dec. 29 - 2 very approachable **muskrats** seen at sewage ponds in Hantsport (JW).

Feb. 2 - a **muskrat** seen eating by a roadside, near Greenwood (SH); another one seen along Belcher St. west of Port Wms. (JW).

Feb. 2 - in mid afternoon a **muskrat** crossed Belcher St. (w. of Pt. Wms.) painfully slowly but successfully (JW).

Feb. 13 - a **muskrat** active at Harris' Pond in Canning (PC,ED).

Feb. 24 - a **muskrat** seen on the bank and in the water of Irving Brook, Delhaven (TF,JN).

Feb. 25 - a **muskrat** seen at Canning (MH,AK).

Mar. 21 - several **muskrats** active in the river in Canning (TF,JN).

Mar. 26 - several living **muskrats** seen from Lower Canard to Canning, and one road-killed in Canning not far from the river (JN).

Mar. 27 - a **beaver** seen in the Middle River Dyke area, Pic-

to Co. (MB).

Jan. 20 - a **porcupine** was seen in the middle of a snowless field at Port Lorne (DGT).

Feb. 13 - a **porcupine** road-killed on hwy. 101 in Annapolis Co. (MH,AK).

Jan. 30 - a **Norway rat** seen along Belcher St., sitting and eating something, west of Port Wms. (PD).



NORWAY RAT

Feb. 8 - a road-killed **Norway rat** was being scavenged by a **crow** in Wolfville (JW).

Feb. 15 - a **Norway rat** seen crossing a road at Delhaven in late afternoon (TF,JN).

Jan. 19 - a **skunk** probably road-killed near Greenwood (seen at night, gone by morning (SH).

Jan. 24 - a **skunk** road-killed at Middleton (MH,AK).

Jan. 26 - a **skunk** road-killed on hwy. 101 near Coldbrook

overpass (SH).

Feb. 13 - a **skunk** road-killed on hwy. 101, King's Co. (MH,AK).

Mar. 2 - a **skunk** seen in early evening just east of Canning (JN).

Mar. 3 - 2 freshly road-killed **skunks** along hwy. 101 on both sides of Windsor (FS).

Mar. 22 - a **skunk** (this one alive!) was active in the afternoon at Delhaven (TF,JN).

Jan. 24 - a **mink** was seen with a fish on the ice at the Annapolis River Causeway, and an adult **bald eagle** chased it away and stole the fish (MH,AK).

Feb. 20 - 3 **mink** scampering among the rocks at Tribune Head (s. of Hfx.)(KHP).

Mar. 23 - a **black-coloured mink** was seen crossing the road at the S. Bishop Rd. bridge over the Cornwallis River, Coldbrook (SR).

Mar. 22 - Harry & Jean Brennan got a call from Doug Fraser about a 'pine marten' in the MacLellan's Brook area (ne. of Amherst) -- it proved to be a **FISHER!!**, and it stayed in a tree long enough for photos to be taken (reported by KM).

Mar. 3 - a **raccoon** seen on a road at Pereau at about 8 p.m. (TF,JN).

Mar. 26 - two distinctive **raccoons** seen at Delhaven, where they have been visitors for over a year (TF,JN).
Jan. 3 - a **red fox** seen in late afternoon, about 2 km. s. of Kingston, in a field along hwy. 101 -- 'Looked like it had just come out of the salon, with all its fur abreeze' (JN,TF).

Jan. 5 - **red fox** tracks seen at North Alton (MH,AK).

Jan. 27 - a **red fox** seen for 10 min. at noon near the Canning Aboiteau (DGT).

Jan. 27 - a **red fox (dark cross-phase)** seen lying in a field at Canning -- later seen to pounce in grass and catch something -- blackish, grizzled saddle from tail-base to fore limbs, tail quite black except for white tip (TF,JN).

Jan. 27 (obviously a good day to see foxes!) - a **red fox** seen just west of Port Williams (seemed in very good condition)(PD).

Feb. 6 - a **red fox** seen at Starr's Pt., and many tracks around a barn there (DD).

Mar. 21 - a **red fox** seen in a grain field at Blomidon (AW).

Jan 26 - in mid-morning, a healthy-looking **coyote** ran across hwy. 101 just w. of Bridgetown (nearly hit)(RS).

Feb. 21 - a **coyote** seen at Blomidon had an attractive blackish coat and appeared well-fed and healthy (tracks and diggings after mice noted occasionally all winter there)(AW).

Feb. 22 - a **coyote** was seen on Starr's Point from the Wolfville dyke -- then, on a very cold day, it swam across the mouth of the Cornwallis River to the Wolfville dyke! (JT).

Mar. 25 - a **coyote** was seen mouse-hunting and territory-marking in an old pasture at Blomidon (AW).

Jan. 8 - **bobcat** tracks seen along a hedgerow edge of a pasture at North Alton (MH,AK).

Jan. 16 - 5 **gray seals**, 3 with **pups**, seen from Caribou Is. lighthouse area (KM).

Jan. 31 - 3 yearling **harp seals** seen on the ice at Ketch Harbour (IM et al.).

Feb. 7 - lots of ice build-up along the causeway to Big Island (Pictou Co.) and dozens of **gray seals with pups** just

offshore (KM).

Feb. 15 - **harbour and gray seals** 'still being seen' at Purcell's Cove (s. of Hfx.)(PMA).

Feb. 4 - a few **harbour porpoises** seen along Fundy shore from Parker's Cove to Phinney's Cove (AM).

Mar. 24 - 4 **harbour seals** basking on rocks at Port George (BBT).

Feb. 20 - **harbour porpoises** seen in Bedford Basin (KHP).

Mar. 21 - one **harbour porpoise** seen off Economy Point at high tide (FSp).

Mar. 30 - a probable **harbour porpoise** (3.5-foot whale) found dead on a beach near Parrsboro (KA).

Jan. 17 - a **pilot whale** seen at Tribune Head (s. of Hfx.)(PMA).

Feb. 10? (approx.) - about a dozen frozen carcasses of **pilot whales** were found at Hog Island, Malpeque Bay, P.E.I. -- probably they were beached sometime in Autumn (CBC,HCH).

Jan 2 - Researchers from the New England Aquarium expressed increased concern about the extremely low number of calves of **North Atlantic**

right whales that were detected in the summer of 1998; only 6 (1 dead)(vs. 11 to 20 living calves in normal years) were seen off Florida and Georgia, the winter calving grounds; and 1998 was the first year of research when there were no calves seen in the Bay of Fundy; the total N. Atl. population stands at about 310 whales with a very slow reproductive rate, and the interval between calves for mothers seems to have lengthened from 3 to 4 years (HCH).

Feb. 1 - news announcement that scientists are worried about **N. Atl. right whales**, in that only 2 cow-calf pairs have been noticed this winter off Florida/Georgia (HCH).

2nd. wk. of Jan. - 2 **minke whales** 'feeding on mackerel and herring' in Northwest Arm, Hfx. (PMA).

Jan. 16,17,18 - several **pilot whales**, one **blue whale**, and up to 12 **finback whales**, including 3 **calves** of finbacks, seen off Chebucto Head (s. of Hfx.)(PMA et al.).

Jan. 21 - **whales** off Chebucto Head over past several weeks have been impressive, including 20+ **finbacks**, numeral **minkes**, **pilot whales**, and a **harbour porpoise** (BM).

Jan . 31 - about 25+ **finback whales** still being seen off Chebucto Head (BM et al.).

Mar. 25 - the first **humpback whale** of the season (a young one) was seen at Brier Island, first in Grand Passage, then through Westport Harbour & out into St. Mary's Bay (very early for this area)(CH).

Mar. 20 - 18 **white-tailed deer** seen in afternoon from Big Island (Pictou Co.) to the McArras Brook area (Antigon-

ish Co.)(KM).

Mar. 25 - road-killed single **white-tailed deer** and **skunk** at Scots' Bay (TF,JN).

Mar. 27 - 3 **white-tailed deer** were seen in a field along Ridge Road (DGT).

Contributors

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SA - Stephen Archibald
CB - Calvin Brennan
MB - Mark Brennan
RB - Rick Ballard
CBC - CBC Radio News
DC - David Carter
JC - John Chardine
PC - Patricia Chalmers
AD - Andy Dean
DD - Debbie Daigle
ED - Elizabeth Doull
HD - Harold Dobson
PD - Pat Dix
HF - Harold Forsyth
PF - Phil Forman
TF - Trina Fitzgerald
GG - Glenys Gibson
AH - Andrew Hebda
CH - Carl Haycock
HCH - Halifax Chronicle-Herald
JH - Jean Hartley
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WL - Wanda Langley
AM - Angus MacLean
BM - Blake Maybank
IM - Ian McLaren
KM - Ken McKenna
KMu - Kevin Murphy
MBM - Martine & Blake Maybank
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DS - Dave Shutler
FS - Fred Scott
FSp - Francis Spalding

JS - Jamie Simpson
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DGT - Dianne & Gordon Thorpe
HT - Hilda Taylor
JT - Jean Timpa
MT - Miriam Tams
ST - Sean Timpa
AW - Anne Woolaver
JW - Jim Wolford
KKW - Keltie & Kathy Wagstaff
SW - Sherman Williams

What's In The Sky?

by Roy Bishop

New Moon: Mar. 17, Apr. 16, May 15, June 13

Full Moon: Mar. 31, Apr. 30, May 30, June 28

Daylight saving time begins on Sunday, April 4.

Summer begins on Monday, June 21 at 4:49 pm (ADT)

Galaxies

As I mentioned a year ago, the arrival of geese and robins coincides with Milky Way lying near the horizon during the late

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evening. As a consequence there are relatively few bright stars to be seen, but the obscuring dust in the plane of our galaxy is out of the way. Thus, through a telescope countless other galaxies are visible at this time of year. Many an April or May night the calls of spring peepers have serenaded me as I wander through clusters of galaxies tens of millions of light-years from Earth. The music of peepers wafting across dark fields blends well with intergalactic space.

Planets

We just had an outstanding display of planets in the late-February, early-March evening sky. The close Jupiter-Venus conjunction of February 23 was almost a repeat of the one visible in the morning sky exactly 10 months earlier, on April 23, 1998. Remarkably, the Kings County area was favoured with clear skies for both of these rare events! When this newsletter arrives, Saturn, Jupiter and Mercury will have vanished from the sky, all three being lost in the glare of the Sun. However, brilliant Venus continues to decorate the evening sky. Take note of the pretty configuration of the slender crescent Moon near Venus on the evenings of April 18, May 18 and June 16.

This spring Mars will be obvious in the southeastern sky as a very bright, somewhat orange, star-like object. Mars is at opposition on April 24 and nearest to Earth on May 1. Oppositions of Mars occur, on average, about every 26 months. With steady air, a good-quality astronomical telescope will reveal Mars' small



north polar cap and dark areas on its cold, dry, wind-swept surface. The best period to observe Mars with a telescope is during April and May when it will be between 14 and 16 angular seconds in diameter.

Tides

In mid-month this spring, the Moon is new within a day of when it passes an unusually close perigee, the close point in its orbit to Earth. This produces extra high tides in Minas Basin on April 16, 17 and 18, May 15, 16 and 17, and June 14 and 15. See the BNS Natural History Calendar for tide ranges and times of high tide. If you do not already have a copy of this unique Kings County publication, it is available at Herbin's, Wolfville, Willow Creek Antiques, Hantsport, and at the Shur-Gain store in Port Williams. The calendar includes an integrated tide table for Minas Basin, thirteen colour photographs of Kings County, plus historical and natural history notes.



Andrea Kingsley M.Sc.

Artist/Wildlife Biologist



technical illustrations * commissioned paintings
biological surveys * nature seminars and tours

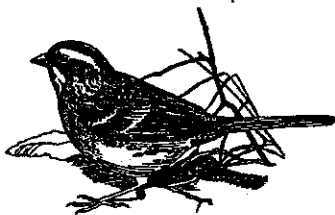


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Blomidon Naturalists Society

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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:

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Memberships are due January 1st, 1999

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 | |