

# **Blomidon Naturalists Society**

Winter 2005 – Volume 32 Number 4

## **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)

### **BNS Executive**

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President	John Harwood	582-3320
Vice-president	Richard Stern	678-1975
Treasurer	Ed Sulis	678-4609
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### **Directors**

John Belbin	765-3811
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Glenys Gibson	582-1273
Jean Gibson	678-4725
Patrick Kelly	798-3329

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a member of the Sable Island Preservation Trust and the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (Nature Nova Scotia) and is an affiliate member of the Canadian Nature Federation (Nature Canada).

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

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Illustrations by Mary Pratt (pp. 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 31)

Cover illustration by Mark Trenholm (also p.12)

The *Blomidon Naturalists Society Newsletter* is published quarterly – in March, June, October, and December – by the Blomidon Naturalists Society, PO Box 2350, Wolfville, NS B4P 2N5.

Contributions to the BNS newsletter are always welcome. Members are encouraged to share unusual or pleasurable nature stories through the pages of the BNS newsletter. If you have a particular area of interest, relevant articles and stories are always welcome. Send them to Jean Timpa by mail (25 Gaspereau Ave., #1, Wolfville, NS B4P 2C5) or by e-mail <jtimpa@ns.sympatico.ca>.

## **Upcoming newsletter deadline**

Spring, April 10, 2006 [Note late deadline to accommodate production crew vacation]

## **Editorial Board**

Chair: Jean Timpa (902 542-5678)

Committee: Merritt Gibson, Sherman Williams, George Alliston

Production: Doug Linzey

Distribution: Bill and Brenda Thexton, Judy Tufts, Lorna Hart

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## EDITORIAL

### **This and That, Out and About**

As this winter issue of our Blomidon Naturalists Society newsletter is about to go to press I would like to tie up a few unfinished bits and muse upon some coming events.

Unfortunately, we ran short of space and had to leave out a field trip report: Brendan Caverhill's report on a June trip to see Blanding's Turtles in their Pleasant River habitat will certainly be in the spring issue.

We are missing five field trip reports, which I hope will be submitted for the next newsletter. I believe that a record of these trips is important to future members of BNS as a historical note, a natural history note of the time, and a social note of its importance to us to gather and go out to look, listen, feel, sometimes taste and smell, and discuss what's out there. Without a record of what was listed as a field trip, others who come after us will always wonder if the absence was weather related (we do try to note these) or just not recorded. It is best if the trip leader – as the one who best knows what is going on and has the vocabulary and knowledge to describe it most accurately – summarizes the event. But if you trip leaders are unable to do the follow-up, please ask someone else at the beginning of the trip, so that the trip is adequately recorded.

You'll note that the annual treasurer's report is in this issue (p. 32). And our new president, John Harwood, introduces himself and discusses the work of the executive in an expanded executive report on page 12.

As for future happenings, Jim Wolford has volunteered to take on an all-important cause – as chair of the Issues Committee. Having just survived being on the provincial task force on the off-highway vehicles issue, Jim is well qualified to tackle most anything thrown his way. But the committee will need a few things that you can help with: 1) Members – please consider volunteering; 2) Input into what is concerning you environmentally in the BNS region; 3) Direction – Do we just want information from the committee to help us take personal action or should

the committee have authority to take action on our behalf? Such action might include presenting briefs to hearings or drafting letters and petitions. How proactive do you want BNS to be as a group? Two serious mining issues are cropping up right now, so we can't dally on this too long.

In the past few hours, as winter suddenly settles in, I hear ominous rumblings. Instead of the mild winter we were supposed to have, the long-range forecast has suddenly been changed to a short but vicious winter. I at least hope this means an early and pleasant spring for a change. Whatever the weather, I hope you all survive with a minimum amount of discomfort and discombobulation.

And just so we can keep a sense of direction and humour, I asked Dave Shutler to write something so we won't always take ourselves too seriously (see p. 26). Enjoy!

—Jean Timpa, editor

## **Acknowledgements**

As the season of thank-yous for many gifts is rapidly approaching, the BNS executive would like to express appreciation for the many volunteers who have recently joined the executive or filled other related positions (see the inside front cover for the new listing). We thank the trip leaders who open our eyes, hearts, and minds to the wonders of our local natural history, and the program speakers who are able to take us to marvellous, far-away places in picture and word. We thank those with all the various talents and time to produce our lovely Calendar and yet another newsletter: art and photography, programming, writing of specialty articles, reports of field trips, dedication over the years to regular columns, final editing, formatting and production, and the very efficient and loyal mailout crew bolstered by Brenda's good tea and crumpets. I don't often single out a person, but Judy Tufts deserves a major big thanks over many years for the complex data analyses on the Spring Migratory Bird Count. Happy retirement as provincial coordinator, Judy.

# Blomidon Naturalists Society

## Winter 2005

### Meetings

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month (except July and August) in the auditorium of the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre, Acadia University. The Centre is on University Avenue, up the hill from the Acadia arena. Parking is available at Wheelock dining hall, along Crowell Drive immediately east of the Centre, at the Acadia arena, the student union building, or on Westwood Avenue. Everyone is welcome.

**Monday, December 12, 2005 – Work and Play in Thailand** with Dr. J. Sherman Boates, NS Department of Natural Resources. Sherman made two trips to Thailand last year as a member of the Canadian delegation to meetings on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the UN Convention on Biodiversity. This experience provided him with new perspectives on global conservation and an amazing opportunity to experience the natural and cultural history of Thailand. Using lots of fun photographs and anecdotes, Sherman will share his experiences covering everything from forays into the jungle to find birds and spiders to stops at Buddhist sites in Bangkok, relaxing time at a tropical island paradise, and of course fascinating meetings about conservation efforts for rhinos, islands, sharks, and orchids.

**Monday, January 16, 2006 – New Mexico and its Natural History.** Larry and Alison Bogan have been visiting southern New Mexico during March and April for the last four years. It is a land of desert and mountains with few rivers but with a large variety of landscapes and wildlife habitats. Examples are the Rio Grande Valley hosting flocks of Snow Geese, Sandhill Cranes, and other birds in the winter; the stark white gypsum sands and black lava flows of the Tularosa Basin; the steep, dry canyons of the Sacramento Mountain foothills; and the snow-covered, forested peak of 12,000-ft Sierra Blanca. The area is at the northern edge of the Chihuahuan Desert, which is surprisingly lush with vegetation and in the spring can be carpeted with a large variety of colourful wildflowers.

Larry will show some of his many wonderful pictures to help describe the landscapes and wildlife.

**Monday, February 20, 2006 – Annual Show and Tell Night.** Open to all. Come to view, or bring along slides, pictures, specimens, collections, fossils, videos, computer stuff, favourite books and magazines, or anything that might be of interest to fellow naturalists.

**Monday, March 20, 2006 – Stamping Out Nature.** What do the following have in common: wildflowers, frogs, biologists, whales, constellations, Douglas Fir trees, amethyst, California Condors, the Grand Canyon, starlings, Halley's Comet, cheetahs, *Tyrannosaurus rex*, and Blomidon Provincial Park? The answer is that they have all appeared on postage stamps. These miniature ambassadors tell recipients many things about their countries of origin. Topics related to natural history have always been popular, both with postal administrations and with stamp collectors. Join Patrick Kelly on a worldwide tour of postage stamps covering many aspects of nature and natural history. He will also show us stamps currently available from Canada Post with nature as a theme. A small display of selected stamps will also be available for viewing after the presentation.

**Monday, April 17, 2006 – National Synchrotron Facility.** Canadian Light Source (CLS) Inc. is Canada's national facility for synchrotron light research, located on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Tom Ellis, former dean of research and graduate studies at Acadia, is now chair of the Beamline Advisory Committee, which is directly involved in the development and operation of the research facility. The synchrotron produces extremely bright light – millions of times brighter than the sun – by using powerful magnets and radio frequency waves to accelerate electrons to nearly the speed of light. Using different parts of the spectrum, information can be obtained to help design new drugs, examine the structure of surfaces for developing more effective motor oils, build more powerful computer chips, and help with cleanup of mining wastes, to name just a few applications. This project is Canada's biggest scientific research facility in over 30 years. It is one of only a handful of third-generation synchrotrons in the world and is one of the best available internationally. Tom will give us a presentation on how the CLS will light the way to a new era of science and innovation in Canada.

## Field Trips

Unless otherwise indicated, all field trips will begin at the Wolfville waterfront park. Everyone is welcome.

**Saturday, December 17, 2005 – Wolfville Christmas Bird Count.** Ian Paterson (902 582-1273) will be the compiler for our area of this annual North American bird count. Call Ian if you would like a designated area or would like to be assigned with a group. Everyone is encouraged to participate. Following the count, around 5 p.m., all participants are invited to Richard and Liz Stern's for a tally count and a chowder/chili supper. The address is 317 Middle Dyke Road, north from the lights at the intersection of Belcher Street and the dyke road from New Minas, just before Chipmans Corner. Richard and Liz can be reached at <rbstern@ns.sympatico.ca> or 902 678-1975. There is lots of room for parking and everyone is welcome.

**Saturday, December 17, 2005 – Kingston Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Patrick Giffin at 902 765-8688 or <barpat@ns.sympatico.ca>.

**Tuesday, December 27, 2005 – West Hants Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Gail Davis at <trooper\_ns@yahoo.ca>.

**Saturday, January 14, 2006 – Minerals: A Tour of Beauty, Symmetry, and Science.** Dr. Rob Raeside (902 542-7767) and his colleagues will provide a display of the mineral collection of Acadia University (including many samples not usually on show in the display cabinets), revealing some of the details of the crystal structure, shape, and symmetry that are used to identify and classify them. Included will be an opportunity to examine minerals in a petrographic microscope, where the use of double polarized light allows us to see otherwise invisible details in minerals that make up common rocks. The location will be in Huggins Hall (Science Building on University Avenue), room 324 from 10 a.m. to noon. Meet at the main doors to Huggins around 10 for coffee.

**Saturday, January 21, 2006 – Cross Country Ski.** David Dermott (902 542-2387) will lead a cross country ski trip from Greenfield on top of Gaspereau Mountain. The trail is fairly easy, about 10 km, not

too hilly and through open hardwoods. There are two beaver ponds near the start and Pileated Woodpeckers are often seen. Meet at the Wolfville waterfront at 9:30 a.m. Bring a lunch for a three to four hour trek. We will proceed up Gaspereau Avenue to Gaspereau village, right at the bridge, past Gaspereau school, up the mountain to the end of the pavement at Peck Meadow Road and park by the Greenfield cemetery. David says choosing a date for a ski trip several months in advance is like buying a lottery ticket; all we can do is hope for good snow conditions. Alternate date: Saturday, January 28.

**Sunday, January 29, 2006 – Winter on Snowshoes.** Snow transforms the landscape into stories that unfold as we follow tracks of foxes, mice, and other mammals. A Snowshoe Hare hops along and is pounced on by a Great Horned Owl. Without snow to show us the tracks, the wing markings and perhaps a drop of blood, we would not have known the drama that took place. Soren Bondrup-Neilsen (902 582-3971) will lead this hike on snowshoes or skies, and we will explore the properties of snow (its insulative value, for example) and, studying the characteristic imprints made by different organisms, we will interpret the various dramas that have unfolded. Meet at the Wolfville Waterfront at 10 a.m. for a two or three hour, non-strenuous hike at a nearby location to be determined by weather and snow conditions. Alternate date: Sunday, February 5.

**Saturday and Sunday, January 28 and 29, 2006 – Eagle Watch Weekend I.** The Sheffield Mills Community Hall will host its annual pancake and sausage breakfast with naturalist displays, films, and crafts. A short drive around the area will usually offer a sight of more than 100 Bald Eagles as well as many hawks. Maps and directions can be obtained at the hall. For more information, call Richard Hennigar at 902 582-3044.

**Saturday and Sunday, February 4 and 5, 2006 – Eagle Watch Weekend II.** A repeat at the Sheffield Mills Community Hall and area.

**Saturday, February 18, 2006 – Orchid Show.** The Valley Orchid Group will have a display of orchids in the Conservatory of the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre at Acadia University in Wolfville from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be a presentation in the downstairs auditorium about orchid growing and people in the lobby selling orchids along with specialized materials and instructions on how to help them grow well.

This is a sure cure for the winter blahs, with only the very best of the best brought to this occasion. You will see plants that you will not believe are real they are so beautiful, perfect, and complex in their structures. Photographers are welcome and encouraged.

**Saturday, March 11, 2006 – Bringing the Solar System to Life.** Dr. Svetlana Barkanova of the Acadia physics department will present a lab to explain the solar system, seasons, and eclipses, using animated 3-D software to help us visualize and understand the concepts involved. Meet at 10 a.m. in room 10 of the Huggins Science Hall at Acadia University for a very informative session.

**Saturday, March 18, 2006 – Birding the Fundy Shore.** Jim Wolford (902 542-9204) will lead a joint field trip with the Nova Scotia Bird Society with stops along the Fundy Shore and on to Annapolis Royal and Digby to the ferry terminal. We will be looking for Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks, scoters, mergansers, loons, grebes, Purple Sandpipers, murrelets, etc. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Wolfville Waterfront, or 10 a.m. at Port George. Dress warmly and bring a lunch. No storm date.

**Sunday, April 9, 2006 – Pond Life Through a Microscope.** Todd Smith and Helene D'Entremont of the Acadia biology department will offer a repeat of this popular indoor field trip to observe the fascinating and incredible diversity of living organisms found in pond water (see report of the 2005 session in this issue). Individual microscopes and one connected to a television set will be set up in a lab in the biology building, Patterson Hall, University Avenue, Wolfville, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. You can expect to see representatives from many phyla including bacteria, algae, diatoms, ciliates, flagellates, hydras, flatworms, roundworms and rotifers. Meet at the biology building.

**Sunday, April 23, 2006 – Early Spring Birds.** Jim Wolford (902 542-9204) will lead a joint trip with the Nova Scotia Bird Society pond hopping for ducks and early migrants in the Wolfville area. Meet at the Wolfville Waterfront at 10 a.m. Dress warmly and bring a lunch.

**BNS ACTIVITY REPORT**  
**Art and Nature Competition**  
**by John Harwood**

The drawing of a Killdeer on the cover of this newsletter (see full drawing below, showing Blomidon) was the winning entry at the grade 5 level in a BNS-sponsored Art and Nature competition held in October. The artist is Mark Trenholm, age 10.

An objective of BNS is to encourage an interest in natural history by young people. For several years, we have awarded an annual prize to the Young Naturalist of the Year. Apart from our continuing recognition of young naturalists, the executive wanted to look at other ways to involve the young, and an art contest at the elementary school level was suggested. The goal is to involve as many students as possible in a nature-related competition and to award prizes to the winners. An important consideration was to avoid overloading already hard-pressed teachers.

The first competition was held at Glooscap Elementary School in Canning, with prizes offered for the top three entries in grades 2 through 5. Response was very good: 109 entries from 102 students out of a student enrollment (including primary and grade 1) of 300. The standard of work was just as high. The school selected ten entries in each grade for judging by our own Mary Pratt. Eleven students were awarded cash prizes (1st: \$20, 2nd: \$10, 3rd: \$5):

Grade 2 (only two entries) both very good, awarded equal 1st prize:

Tanner Huntley and Hannah Taylor

Grade 3

1st: Abby Champion-Keating

2nd: Izra Fitch

3rd: Joshua McCulley

Grade 4

1st: Mark Parker

2nd: Brandan Bennett

3rd: Lauren Sweet)

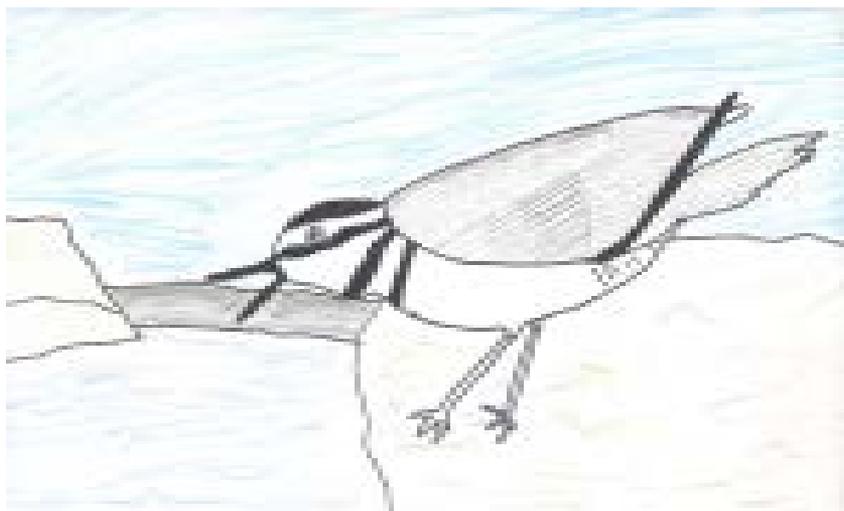
## Grade 5

1st: Mark Trenholm

2nd: Kelsey Byrne

3rd: Hannah Mitchell

All entrants received an attractive certificate from BNS thanking them for participating. Doretta Groenendyk designed it and the special sticker attached to the winners' certificates. I awarded the prizes at the school and congratulated the winners. I thanked the principal, Ms Corena Burbidge, for supporting the project, and Mr David Fitch, the teacher who coordinated it. The competition achieved its aim, and we hope to run competitions in other elementary schools in the BNS area.



## **BNS Executive Notes**

### **Past Presidents of BNS**

(compiled by Bill and Brenda Thexton)

1974 Sherman Williams

1975 Cyril Caldwell

1976 Larry Bogan

1980–81 Peter Austin-Smith

1982–85 Richard Stern

1986–87 Jim Wolford

1988–89 Sherman Williams

1990 Peter Austin-Smith  
1991–1993 Tom Herman  
1994–1996 Roy Bishop  
1997–1999 Randy Milton  
2000 Merritt Gibson  
2001–2003 George Forsyth  
2004–2005 Liz Vermeulen

These people have served BNS as president since it all started more than 30 years ago. An illustrious list it is! I am proud to have my name added to the list and I will do my best to live up to the high standard my predecessors have set.

I'm afraid I subjected the other members of your executive to an inordinately long session when I chaired my first meeting in November. The reason for such a long session was to bring me up to speed on just how BNS functions. Although I have served on the executive before, I wasn't sure about several aspects of the society's governance. It seemed a good time for all of us to learn or refresh our knowledge about BNS.

The aim of the Blomidon Naturalists Society is clearly stated in our constitution. It is repeated on the inside of the front cover of each issue of this newsletter. Our bylaws spell out how the Society should be governed to achieve the aim. They lay out a simple framework that allows BNS to function with maximum flexibility as a registered society under the laws of Nova Scotia. The bylaws were last amended in 1981, so we have initiated a review to see if amendment is now needed. At first glance, not much needs to be changed, but we will give them a good work-over. When we have finished we'll report the results to you and ask you to approve any changes we think are necessary.

Apart from ensuring that BNS is run in accordance with the laws of Nova Scotia, what does your executive do? I thought you might like to know. Here's the lowdown: The executive

- organizes meeting and field trips for the benefit of the members and members of the general public.
- manages the finances of the society.
- publishes a newsletter that outlines the proceedings of the society and provides members with information and articles on subjects

of interest.

- informs the public – through displays, books, pamphlets, calendars, etc. – about aspects of natural history.
- promotes an interest in natural history in the young by offering awards for excellence in the field, conducting art competitions, conducting summer young naturalist programs, etc.
- represents the membership in Nature Nova Scotia, Nature Canada, and similar organizations.

To accomplish these tasks the executive creates committees from its members and members of the society at large. In the next issue, I'll give you a rundown on the committees currently in place, their tasks, and their membership. In the meantime, I'm looking forward to spring like all the rest of you.

On behalf of the executive,  
John Harwood, president

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## PROFILE

# Robie Wilfrid Tufts (part 2)

by Merritt Gibson

*Robie Tufts was Chief Federal Migratory Bird Officer for the Maritime provinces (1919–1947). His duties were twofold: to enforce the bird laws and to educate the public in bird conservation. We discussed the first in the fall issue of this newsletter; the second is described here.*

### **An Amazing Ability to Inspire**

Robie died in 1980, in his 99th year. At that time Earl Godfrey, a Wolfville boy who became one of Robie's protégés and later author of *Birds of Canada*, wrote of him: "He had an amazing ability to inspire enthusiasm for birds."

Perhaps I can begin my story of Robie by telling you of my first visit to his office. I remember it well. Tony Erskine, now scientist emeritus with the Canadian Wildlife Service, and I were classmates in school. When we were in grade 4, on a Friday afternoon in October, we were walking down Highland Avenue when it started raining. We were passing Robie's house at the time and Tony said he had a question for Robie. I just wanted to get out of the rain. Robie welcomed us, invited us in, we sat by the fireside in his study, and he talked to us about birds for the next half hour or more.

His study was friendly and warm, bird paintings on the wall, mounted birds in the cabinets, and bird books on the shelves; but the fireplace was its charm. This was where many young people really met Robie, where his enthusiasm quickly generated in them an appreciation for birds. I don't remember if Tony got his question answered, but I was a committed birdwatcher when I left, and have been ever since.

Robie travelled widely and repeatedly throughout the Maritime provinces, talking to school and adult groups. I recall his regular visits to the Wolfville school. School assembly usually lasted for three-quarters of an hour. Robie's talks lasted for up to two hours, and no one ever mentioned lunch. He just told stories about his adventures with birds. He was an

amazing storyteller.

Robie encouraged his protégés to continue their education. If needed, he helped finance university costs. After they finished high school or university, Robie helped them find a job, and he had many contacts. The result: many of his protégés continued to senior positions in museums, universities, parks, and environmental and wildlife agencies, in both the United States and Canada. Others entered different professions, but maintained their interests in birds and became active in naturalist and conservation societies.

A few examples, of many, will illustrate Robie's influence. Austin Rand grew up on west Main Street. Austin led expeditions to Labrador and through the South Pacific. He later became chief curator of zoology at the Museum of Natural History in Chicago and president of the American Ornithologists' Union. Earl Godfrey grew up on east Main Street, also led expeditions to the north and the South Pacific, worked at the Philadelphia Museum, then became curator of zoology and ornithology at the National Museum of Natural Sciences of Canada. Earl wrote and later revised *Birds of Canada*. Ron Smith grew up on Westwood Avenue, spent six months (with the Vanderbilts and the Philadelphia Museum) in the South Pacific, and then became curator of the Natural History Museum at Queens University. While in school Ron started banding birds with Robie and resumed this interest at Queens. His banding helped answer the question: "Where do Chimney Swifts go in winter?" Ralph Moser grew up on Summer Street and became professor of education at Harvard. His interests in birdwatching continued and he became a leader in the New England Conservation Society. The list goes on and on; it is a lengthy one. Robie influenced not only local people, but students in biology at Acadia, who soon started visiting his office.

Robie started the Christmas Bird Count in the Wolfville area about 1921. With the exception of 1940 and possibly 1952, this count has been held every year since. In the 1930s Robie published many counts in the *Ottawa Field Naturalist*. They are fun to read and show many changes from present-day counts. (Can you imagine having to hunt for starlings, or finding the record number of 12 gulls?) Incidentally, Ron Smith was compiler of the counts in the late 1930s.

Robie wrote a number of books about birds:

*Notes on the Birds of the Grand Pre Region*, 1917

*Some Common Birds of Nova Scotia*, 1934

*Annotated List of Birds of Nova Scotia*, 1956

*Birds of Nova Scotia*, 1961, 2nd ed. 1973 (revised by the NS Bird Society, 1986)

*Birds and Their Ways*, 1972

*Looking Back*, 1975

*Nova Scotia Birds of Prey*, 1978

Robie received many recognitions, including

Honorary D.Sc., Dalhousie University

Honorary D.C.L., Acadia University

Robie Tufts Laboratory of Ornithology, Acadia University

Long-eared Owl subspecies: *Oso otus tuftsi*

Honorary member, Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club

First president (2 years), Nova Scotia Bird Society

Citation of honour, Nova Scotia Bird Society

Honorary member (our first), Blomidon Naturalists Society

Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Wolfville

Leadership positions in Fish and Game and other wildlife organizations.

Wall of Fame, Canadian Wildlife Service, Sackville, NB

When Robie was Migratory Bird Officer, he travelled repeatedly throughout the Maritimes. These trips were well organized, with talks to schools during the day and to adult groups in the evening. The talks were about birds and the need to protect them. During those years, Maritime communities were generally aware of birds and the living world around them. Today, our communities have lost that awareness. Why has someone not continued Robie's work? Naturalists and bird societies must, as their first goal, "educate the public in bird [and nature generally] conservation."

It is doubtful that many (any?) small communities, or even large cities, have produced as many ornithologists and conservationists as has the general area of Wolfville. Robie played a major role, but there were also Charlie Patriquin, Gordon Warren, and John and Rachel Erskine. All took time to talk to young people.

**BNS FIELD TRIP REPORT**  
**Blue Beach and Museum**  
by **Jim Wolford**

August 27, 2005 – On a gorgeous sunny and warm morning, about 25 participants showed up for the tour, hosted by Chris Mansky. Chris started by talking to us in the museum, which he and Sonja Wood created and manage. He explained everything in mostly quite understandable and entertaining ways, and emphasized the importance of this spot as a world-class site for fossils that seem to fit into a well-known gap of 22 million years of Early Carboniferous history. He explained in simple terms the groups of primitive fishes, both bony and cartilaginous, and early tetrapods that are represented here, and what sorts of fossil finds, both bones and various sorts of trace fossils like footprints, can be found here by someone with experience and discerning eyes and imagination.

After the good introduction and brief looks at the museum specimens, which actually belong to the Province of Nova Scotia, we all spread out on the upper beach, with a falling tide, and poked about looking for interesting rocks about which to quiz Chris. Various sorts of fossils are very abundant at this site: bits of fish scales and bones, worm tubes, arthropod burrows that look like coffee beans, scrape marks from plants, Coal-Age plants such as tree-like club-mosses, ripple marks both large and tiny, rain drops, mud balls and mud cracks, and other forms of water-loss marks, etc.

After just a few minutes, Chris himself picked up a rock that showed articulated portions of a front fin of a primitive lobe-finned fish called a rhizodontid, which he had told us earlier grew to monstrous sizes (i.e., many feet long) and must have been a formidable predator in its day.

Another experienced local fossil sleuth, Sherman Williams, was with us. We learned from Chris and Sherman that fossil tetrapod footprints are extremely abundant in the rock strata of this area. Chris suspects that there is a footprint mother-lode of several square kilometres, but of course much of that area is covered with a lot of overburden of more recent deposits. It's just at the upper beach that we can find newly exposed parts of these strata all the time. Chris emphasized that good fossil impressions very

quickly deteriorate after initial exposure to the air and especially the tides, so that even just one or two tides takes a lot of quality away from specimens.

Chris told us they have evidence from fossil bones for at least six different tetrapod creatures, and footprint evidence also shows at least six different tetrapods. And, since some of the bone fossils don't seem to match the footprints, there must have been at least eight to ten different tetrapods present. Thus the tetrapod fauna may have been fairly diverse. I think he also said that the fishes were not particularly diverse and partly consisted of quite large forms.

As an aside, we found out that Chris himself works when he can as a bloodworm, or baitworm, digger. He sells his worms to a man in Yarmouth, who in turn exports them mostly to the US eastern seaboard states.

For current mud-flat life, we noted zillions of Mud Snails on the upper mud when it was still wet from the ebbing tide. And on the upper beach there were common freshly-made tracks from Periwinkles on the rocks; the tracks when fresh were slimy and sticky, and then sediment particles accumulated on them and made the trails visible to us.

The only shoreline birds noted were a few crows and gulls, but Gisela Westphalen and others mentioned that, during the high-tide period, nearby Penney and Avonport beaches are excellent places to see flocks and roosts of many thousands of peeps here in summer to fatten up on their remarkable journeys south.

In the forest at Blue Beach, others heard a singing Eastern Wood Pewee. I couldn't hear the pewee, but I did see a large flock of Common Grackles and a mixed flock of Black-capped Chickadees with a few Black-throated Green Warblers and Red-eyed Vireos.

I think it's safe to speak for the other participants that we all went away feeling just a bit better educated about local geology and paleontology. Thanks very much to Chris for making his expertise and enthusiasm available and understandable to us.

**BNS FIELD TRIP REPORT**  
**Pond Life through a Microscope**  
**by Todd Smith**

April 10, 2005 – On this sunny spring afternoon, about 20 members of BNS came to a laboratory in Patterson Hall, home of Acadia University's biology department, to examine the microscopic life found in typical ponds and other small bodies of fresh water in Kings County. Two professors from the Biology Department, Todd Smith and Glenys Gibson, were on hand to help the participants identify the diversity of organisms found in these water samples.

Before the field trip, water samples were taken from each of four selected freshwater locations: Wanda Langley's artificial fish pond in Kentville, a ditch-fed pond near the corner of Middle Dyke Road and Belcher Street, an artificial fish pond near the corner of Highway 358 and Belcher Street in Port Williams, and a ditch-fed pond off the eastbound ramp of Exit 11 of Highway 101 in Greenwich.

We attached a specialized microscope to a television set, and participants were treated to video microscopy of many of the unusual animals and plants we found. As well, each person was encouraged to obtain a drop of water from a sample, dispense it on a glass microscope slide, and examine it using one of several microscopes set up in the lab. Everyone enjoyed this exploration of the normally unseen life that makes up a pond, and for many this was the first time they had seen these types of organisms. Described below are some of the highlights.

**Plant-like Microbes (cyanobacteria and algae)**

We observed many species of cyanobacteria (Kingdom Bacteria) and algae (Kingdom Protista), the two groups of plant-like microscopic organisms that use photosynthesis to make their own food. Cyanobacteria grow in long, dark-green strands visible to the unaided eye, but we used the microscope to observe their structure to a much more detailed degree. We identified several species of microscopic green algae (phylum Chlorophyta), including tiny *Chlamydomonas* moving rapidly through the water using two small tail-like flagella (such movement is not typical

for a plant-like organism), delicate fine strands of *Spirogyra* (a colonial species), and thick, crescent-shaped desmids.

We observed members of another group of algae, the diatoms (phylum Bacillariophyta). These photosynthetic one-celled organisms are encased in two shells of silica and move so slowly through the water that they at first appear motionless.

### **Protozoa (animal-like single-celled microbes of the Kingdom Protista)**

We found many species of three groups of one-celled animal-like organisms called protozoa, which move around in search of the food they need for nutrition. We observed many species of ciliates (phylum Ciliophora), which move (rather quickly) by means of hundreds or thousands of tiny hairs on their one cell.

Noteworthy were several species of slipper-shaped *Paramecium*, which zipped and darted across the field of view as we watched them in the microscope; the bizarre *Vorticella* from Wanda's pond, characterized by a tulip-shaped body atop a springy stalk attached to strands of algae; and the trumpet-shaped *Stentor*, which feeds by using specialized feeding cilia to sweep smaller protozoa and bacteria into its "mouth" at the wide end of the trumpet.

There was no shortage of flagellates, which moved rapidly through the water using one or two long tails that project from their single cells. Several distinct species of *Euglena* and *Phacus* (phylum Euglenozoa) were abundant. They move like tiny animals using a single flagellum but have their own chloroplasts to produce their own food like plants. Also common were a couple of distinct species of dinoflagellates (phylum Dinoflagellata), which have two flagella and protective plates to protect their fragile cell membrane; the characteristic whirling motion of these protozoa was quite entertaining.

A few participants were fortunate enough to observe in *Phacus* the bright red eyespot, or stigma, that allows these photosynthetic protozoa to detect the amount of sunlight in different parts of the pond.

## **Multicellular Animals (Kingdom Animalia)**

Many groups of tiny animals were abundant in our samples, although common pond life such as hydras (phylum Cnidaria, which also includes jellyfish) and free-living flatworms (phylum Platyhelminthes) were unfortunately not observed this year.

Highlights included several specimens of a tiny species of translucent roundworm, or nematode (phylum Nematoda), that were seen thrashing through mats of algae and feeding by means of their relatively large mouths. Several distinct but unidentified species of rotifers (phylum Rotifera) were observed in different samples; many participants were intrigued by the rapid wheel-like action of rings of small hairs near the mouths of these invertebrates.

We observed a few small aquatic oligochaetes (phylum Annelida), a type of segmented worm related to the earthworm, from the Exit 11 pond. This species had very long hairs, or chaetae, projecting from each segment of its body.

Crustaceans (phylum Arthropoda, subphylum Crustacea, which also includes shrimp, lobsters, and crabs) were abundant, and we observed two main groups of microscopic species:

- Ostracods, which are oddly-shaped crustaceans that each live within a tiny mollusc-like shell, delighted participants with their jerky movements on the slides.
- Copepods are more typical of a crustacean body plan, and are shaped like teardrops with the head and antennae at the blunt end and the body tapering to a point. Nearly everyone had a chance to see the one red eye that these animals use for vision, and one participant found a specimen that was carrying its eggs on each side of its body like two bunches of grapes.

## **Summary**

All in all, it was a successful day, for both the variety of pond life observed and the experience had by both the participants and the Acadia faculty members, who love to show everyone that a drop of pond water is not what it seems.

---

*Todd Smith, PhD, is an assistant professor in Acadia's department of biology.*

SEEN IN THE WILD  
**Fall Birds 2005**  
by Mike McCall

Unusual hurricane weather in the Caribbean made for interesting birding in Nova Scotia this fall (and in the Azores), not just with seldom-seen species coming into view but with many birds being sighted long after their normal departure dates. A White-fronted Goose put in an appearance at the Windsor sewage ponds in early October and stayed for almost two weeks. On Oct 13 John Belbin reported the first two Harlequin Ducks

of the season at Port George on the same day he reported Surf Scoters, Common Eider, Common and Red-throated Loons. “It’s starting to feel like winter is coming,”

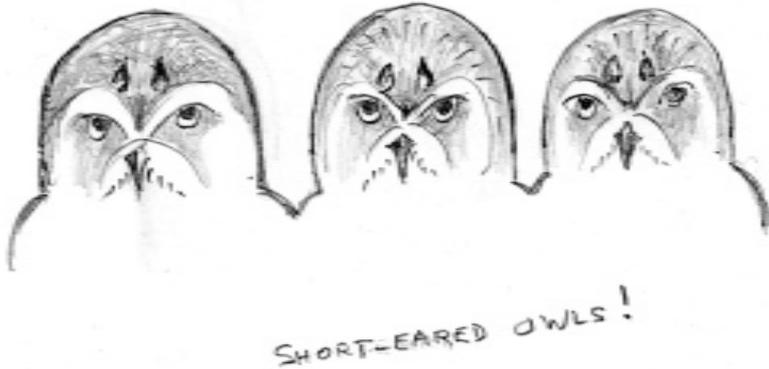
opined John, but of course he was fooled – just like the rest of us; a gentle autumn would continue well into November, bringing bird delights.



Purple Martins aren’t often seen in Kings County, but Luke DeCaccio spotted three of them on Grand Pre Road on Oct 10. On nearby dikelands a few days later, the Thextons and Jean Timpa watched a large female harrier fly overhead, followed by a much smaller (“silvery,” according to Bill) male. Horned Larks and a Vesper Sparrow were seen on the same outing. A week later Sherman Williams commented on a rapid increase in the number of Bald Eagles, an increase that continued apace. They don’t quite darken the skies today (Nov 20), but if you’re using an old-fashioned camera outdoors, I’d recommend a fast film.

Jean Timpa gave NatureNS subscribers an amusing late-October account of the Digby lady who heard a scratching in her chimney and thought, “those pesky Starlings again.” The bird – removed from the basement end of her chimney – turned out to be a swift, one who wouldn’t leave when asked. She took the bird to her front porch and released it, but instead

of leaving it came straight back into the house, flew upstairs, and settled comfortably under a radiator. Several others followed until the next day she had eight swifts in residence. Contrary to her belief, they didn't need a "drop" to take flight, but when they finally agreed to move on, flew straight out of her hand. By the time her adventure was over, she reckons she'd hosted 15 of the little fellows. Continuing with the swifts, on Nov 4 Randy Lauff saw 15 of them at St. FX.



### **Big Bird Department**

Both Judy Tufts and Luke DeCaccio reported a Sandhill Crane on E. Long Island Road at Grand Pre on Sep 23. Luke had a bonus sighting: three Short-eared Owls. Pat Giffen had a "what the heck is that?" moment near Aylesford on Nov 15. The large white object seen at a distance turned out to be a Great Egret. Larger species were the subject of much discussion in early November as observers tried to sort out whether the large, dark bird briefly present near Cole Harbour in early November was a Glossy Ibis, a White-faced Ibis, or a hybrid. Clarence Stevens reported the bird as a White-faced on Nov 8. Ian McLaren thought, well, maybe, but you can't be sure. Luke DeCaccio thought other sources should be consulted before confirming the bird as a White-faced. Our own Richard Stern could not be sure; a windy day and a tripod that would not remain still didn't permit a satisfactory sighting or terribly useful pictures. Much discussion about the colour of the eye and the lores. Angus MacLean suspects that a definite ID is probably not possible. How about DNA testing? someone asked. Too expensive and probably inconclusive was one response. In the end, definite ID could not be agreed. Not surprising,

since it is commonly held that the Glossy and White-faced can only be positively identified in breeding plumage, and they do hybridize. Not to worry; some highly regarded NS birders had something very interesting to chew on for a few days.

Judy Tufts marked Sep 30 as the visible commencement of the fall buildup of waterfowl, for on that day her tour of local ponds netted Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Black Duck, Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Double Crested Cormorant, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, and Green-winged Teal. Two days later, Elizabeth Doull unsuccessfully looking for the Grand Pre Sandhill Crane had to console herself with a Water Pipit. A few days later, Judy heard four Red-winged Blackbirds making spring-like sounds at the sewage ponds and also heard what she believes to be the trilling of toads. The rare (for Nova Scotia) Redhead was seen by Elizabeth Doull at Canard Pond on Oct 20, and Brian Dalzell queried on Nov 5, “Where are all the Redheads coming from?” No answer, Brian, it’s just one of those years.

Two young Wood Ducks (with parents) at the “small” Saxon Street Pond caused Jean Timpa to fret on Oct 21, concerned that they were too lightly feathered to be strong enough flyers to get out of the “soon to be winter conditions.” Well, of course we haven’t yet had any winter conditions so it seems probable Jean’s fears won’t be realized. Looking at it another way, maybe fretting works.

I’ll close these ruminations on December 1 by noting that in the last few days people – not necessarily in the Valley – have been reporting orioles, robins, Cape May Warblers, Gray Catbird, kinglets, and Pine and Palm Warblers. An unusual haul indeed for this time of year.



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## There's an Antler for Everything

by Dave Shutler



Ever wonder how one of your arms grows to the same length as your other arm? There is no simple answer. At best, researchers assume that there is a genetic blueprint, but that blueprint has to be able to respond to feedback from the internal and external environment. If you were a bird, that feedback might be simple; if one of your wings is

longer than the other, your brain might recognize that you're flying in circles, and tell your shorter arm to, um, shake a leg. Well, anyway, you can start to see that symmetry can be pretty important to organisms. Rich Palmer maintains a website <[www2.biology.ualberta.ca/palmer/asym/asymmetry.htm](http://www2.biology.ualberta.ca/palmer/asym/asymmetry.htm)> devoted to fascinating instances in which symmetry is influenced by the environment, and how being asymmetric can really put a damper on things like your sex life. For example, some studies show that humans prefer more symmetric faces. Although there is consensus that symmetry can be perturbed by a suite of environmental causes, ranging from heavy metals (maybe even the music) to parasites, lots of studies fail to find evidence of asymmetry, so it's not necessarily a predictable outcome, but I digress.

So, I mentioned parasites as something that may cause asymmetry. It could be that when an animal's immune system freaks out over the parasites it discovers, the brain forgets to check out what the hormones are producing on the head. It doesn't matter how; just trust that asymmetric antlers can happen. So what? Well, it's a pointless digression to mention that reindeer and caribou of both sexes produce antlers, so asymmetric adults may be less attractive mates. The pointful digression, which I guess means it's not a digression, is that antlers are not very aerodynamic to begin with. Thus, they would create lots of turbulence during movement. If the turbulence on one side of the head is greater than on the other side, it's not rocket science to realize that a reindeer would start to pull to the less

aerodynamic side. Now maybe I'm being alarmist, but wouldn't you be worried if the car you were driving kept veering into oncoming traffic? Fortunately, reindeer tend to join herds that move collectively in the same direction, so oncoming traffic isn't a huge problem. But, reindeer do have other responsibilities, which include a seasonal courier service. So, what if there's a parasite outbreak at 90° north this year, and because of asymmetric antlers, our courier service keeps delivering packages a few doors askew of their proper destination? I keep panic in abeyance by pinning hopes on the following scenarios. First, maybe reindeer parasites have Claustrophobia (once this atrocious pun entered my twisted mind, catharsis could only be achieved by "purgery," which is an exceptionally good pun). Second, the courier driver assesses the symmetry of his steeds(?), and balances the amount of symmetry on either side of his sleigh. Third, the season of giving is upon us, and although one should never horse around with a gift in one's mouth, one shouldn't worry about shifting one's gifts at this time of year.

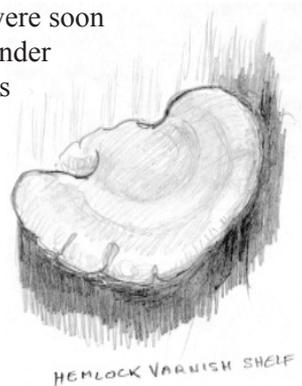
## NATURAL HISTORY

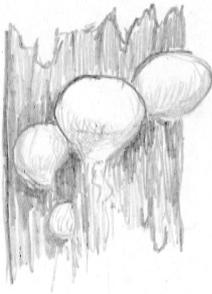
### Fall Fungi in the Kentville Ravine

by Nancy Nickerson

The Kentville Ravine is well known for its diversity of fungi. In 2005, dry weather resulted in poor showings of most of the soil-inhabiting mushrooms usually found in the ravine from late August to early October. Many species of *Amanita*, *Russula*, and boletes did not fruit at all, or produced only a few small fruiting bodies that were soon devoured by slugs and other fauna. One has to wonder how the scarcity of mushrooms affected the ravine's fungivores this year. A few small, soil-inhabiting mushroom species did manage to produce large numbers of fruiting bodies during this period, notably a pale lilac *Inocybe*.

Wood-inhabiting mushrooms usually fare better than soil-dwellers during a drought. Some have perennial fruiting bodies that withstand adverse





PEAR-SHAPED  
PUFFBALL

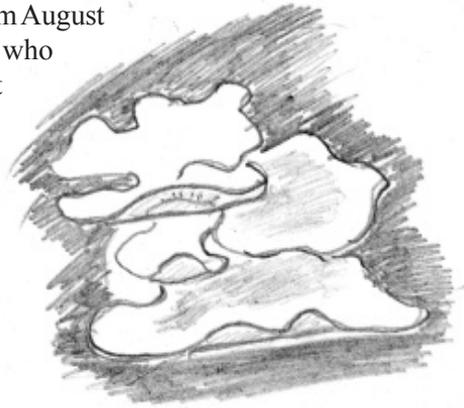
conditions, while others grow from stumps or fallen logs, which tend to retain some moisture. Slime moulds (*Fuligo septica*, *Lycogala epidendrum*), puffballs (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), jelly fungi (*Dacrymyces palmatus*, *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*), tooth fungi (*Climacodon septentrionale*, *Hericium americanum*) and several species of bracket fungi were found growing on wood in the Ravine from late August to early October.

By mid-October, heavy rains from various weather systems had begun to work their magic in the Ravine. Late-season species of *Cortinarius*, *Hygrophorus*, *Mycena*, and *Tricholoma* were much in evidence, and the fruiting bodies of the slimy-capped *Hygrophorus fuliginus* were the largest I have ever seen for this species. There were several reports of exceptionally large Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) fruiting bodies on lawns in the Wolfville–Port Williams area. Age, amount of moisture, and genetics are the main factors influencing the size of mushroom fruiting bodies. Evidently conditions were just right for the development of these super-sized mushrooms.

Many thanks to the people who accompanied me on my weekly field trips in the ravine from August 30 to October 4, 2005, and to those who shared their observations of fungi at other sites in Kings County.

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*Nancy Nickerson is a biodiversity (mycology and botany) research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.*



A NATURAL PHENOMENON  
**The Wilma Experience**  
By Angus MacLean

Wilma was detected initially as a tropical depression in the western Caribbean on October 15. By October 17 it was threatening Honduras and Nicaragua. It reached hurricane strength on October 18 and became a category 5 (the highest) in the early morning hours of October 19. (At its peak it was the most intense tropical storm ever recorded in the Atlantic. The eye measured about 2.4 km across (1.5 mi.), the smallest eye ever recorded). It weakened before coming ashore as a category 4 on Mexico's Yucatan peninsula around midnight October 21. It then swung to the northeast, passing over the western tip of Cuba and making landfall in southern Florida October 24. Since hurricane-force winds extended outward 160 km (100 mi.) from the centre, one can appreciate the wide swath of destruction it caused through southern Florida from Key West northward. Picking up speed it gained energy over the Gulf Stream (category 3-4) and by 5 p.m. October 25, the centre was opposite Cape Sable Island with winds of 140 km/hr. At this point Wilma was moving ENE about 85 km/hr. It paralleled the Nova Scotia coast, the centre passing about 100 km south of Sable Island.

On the island of San Andres off the Nicaraguan coast, there was an estimated fallout of over 8 million neotropical migrants, all exhausted and quite thin. There were dire reports from the Florida Everglades of birds being torn from their roosting trees and smashed bodies strewn along miles of the national park. These were mainly egrets, herons, ibises, and pelicans, although passerines would not have escaped the storm.

Almost immediately unusual birds started to be seen along the Atlantic coast. Large numbers of swallows and Chimney Swifts were noted by many, but soon birds of the coast attracted even more attention. Rarities such as Magnificent Frigatebird, Black Skimmer, Royal, Sandwich, Caspian and Forster's Terns, Laughing and Franklin's Gulls, were found by avid birders. Common Terns, almost all of which have left by late September, were found in large numbers.

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were especially prominent and found in large numbers. On Seal Island about 80 percent of this species had been killed by predators. Likely the remainder, with undoubtedly low fat reserves, would not survive. Since there were probably thousands brought north by Wilma, it will have a severe effect on the population. Since Yellow-bills are just fall vagrants in Nova Scotia, the impact on the population would not be noticeable here.

Chimney Swifts have left the province by late September, with stragglers reported (on average) to October 4 and several reports from early November. However, a fallout of thousands is without precedence. Hundreds have been found dead in chimneys, presumably caused by wood fires being started in the late evening. It is likely that only a few of these will be able to reorient themselves (or find the energy) to fly south (again), and a few may even be found into December. Swallow species included Tree, Barn, Cliff, Rough-winged, and even a few Cave Swallows. Tree Swallows have learned to exploit alternative food sources when they arrive in the spring, so this adaptation would serve them well. Most swallows disappeared after the first few days, so it would be reasonable to assume many attempted to migrate again, likely with mixed results.

On Sable Island, Wilma's impact on the displaced birds was shown very clearly. Because of the storm surge, the beaches were not accessible until two days after Wilma's passing, and even then only the north side was checked. Of 15 Sandwich Terns found, 10 were corpses. Magnificent Frigatebird and Black Skimmer individuals were both corpses. Unusually, only three Chimney Swifts were noted, all alive. The last day noted for six species was November 14.

Chimney Swifts were blown to the British Isles and France. Oddly, the various islands of the Azores hosted many North American species, most of which were first records for the Azores. Besides a broad sample of ducks, other species found included Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Grey-cheeked Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, White-crowned Sparrow, Red-eyed, Philadelphia, and White-eyed Vireos, Ovenbird, and Black-throated Blue and Hooded Warblers. As one would guess, Chimney Swifts even reached a few of the islands.

How did some of these species get caught up in Wilma's winds and why

did other species not reach our shores? It's been commented that Barn Swallows are quite rare in southern Florida in October. Except for Cave Swallows (although the few noted were thought to be of the Caribbean race), no other Florida specialty was found. Brown Pelicans and many egrets and herons were directly in the path of Wilma, but none of these appeared to have arrived with the passage of the storm. Perhaps none of these are suited for long-distance migrating, so many may have perished at sea.

Another weather phenomenon brought unusual numbers of two other species, Redheads and Long-billed Dowitchers, to the province. Seventeen Redheads were found at Bissett Lake, eight in Cape Breton, and a few scattered individuals elsewhere. It is likely that many Nova Scotia birders did not have Long-billed Dowitchers on their life-lists before this, but groups of 5–10 were easy to find along the Atlantic coast.

Although our understanding of the effects of one hurricane has been advanced, just think for a moment of the enormous effect the twenty or so hurricanes annually have on birdlife in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Florida year after year. According to forecasts, they will play an even larger role in the avifauna there in years to come.

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BNS artist Mary Pratt found this one in the dog dish—



HAIRY BURYING BEETLE  
(with 2 rows of baries on each wing)

## Treasurer's Report for year ended August 31, 2005 by Harold Forsyth

Thanks mostly to the sale of calendars, we made a profit of \$4,674 for the year if we ignore the write-off of books and crests. Special thanks go out to those who made donations to the Society during the year: Curtis Chipman, Jim Laceby, Arthur Irving, Minas Basin Pulp and Power, Owen & Janice Stephens, Rick & Janet Whitman, Gerald Porter, Glenys Gibson & Ian Paterson, Celia Corcoran, Robert Corcoran, Brenda Coldwell, Leslie & Neil Jordan, and George & Margaret Alliston.

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### Blomidon Naturalists Society Balance Sheet

Year Ended August 31	2005	2004
<b>Assets</b>		
Current		
Cash	\$ 2,051	\$ 13,366
Money Fund	16,167	15,955
Mutual Funds (1)	14,000	14,000
Stocks (plus cash in account) (2)	15,455	0
Accounts receivable	690	748
Inventory of books at cost (3)	0	3,801
Inventory of crests at cost (4)	0	348
	48,363	48,218
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current		
Payables and accruals	\$ 20	\$ 0
<b>Equity</b>		
Surplus	48,343	48,218
	\$ 48,363	\$ 48,218

Notes:

	Book Value	Market Value
(1) Mutual Funds		
Clean Environment International	\$7000	\$3366
Fidelity Global Asset Allocation	\$7000	\$5612
(2) Stocks		
Bank of Nova Scotia	\$7960	\$8221
Emera Inc	\$7435	\$7572
(3) Inventory of books written off at cost value.		
(4) Inventory of crests written off at cost value.		

President, Liz Vermeulen

Treasurer, Harold Forsyth

Thank you to Fred Chipman for auditing the financial records.

This year we started to make a donation of \$25 to a charity of the choice of our guest speakers as a token of our appreciation. Cheques have gone out to the Trans Canada Trail for Ron & Carol Buckley, Sable Island Preservation Trust for Paul Illsley, Cobequid Naturalists Club for Janet Roberts, and the Nova Scotia Bird Society for Bernard Forsythe.

Paid memberships in the Society have remained constant near 200 for the past several years.

**Blomidon Naturalists Society  
Statements of Operation and Surplus**

<b>Year Ended August 31</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
Advertising	\$ 150	\$ 250
Anniversary barbecue	0	682
Books	264	569
Calendar	8,851	9,336
Crests	25	20
Dividends	247	0
Donations	2,392	2,725
Federation dues in	215	155
HST rebate	690	748
Herpetology Atlas	0	13,750
Interest	212	250
Membership dues	3,087	3,063
Other	87	50
	<u>16,220</u>	<u>31,598</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Administration	425	263
Anniversary barbecue	0	809
Awards and Meetings	830	795
Books	3,801	247
Calendar	7,262	7,292
Crests	348	11
Federation dues out	215	140
Herpetology Atlas	0	18,907
Memberships	300	130
Nature Centre	181	566
Newsletter	2,733	2,312
Other	0	58
Projects: Sheffield Mills Eagle Panels	0	700
Evangeline Beach Shorebirds	0	500
	<u>16,095</u>	<u>32,730</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 125	(\$1,132)
<hr/>		
Surplus, beginning of year	\$48,218	\$49,350
Excess of revenue over expenses	125	(1,132)
surplus, end of year	<u>\$48,343</u>	<u>\$48,218</u>

# Eastern Annapolis Valley Weather

## Fall 2005

by Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station, NS

	Mean daily max. temp (deg.C)	Mean daily min. temp. (deg.C)	Mean daily temp. (deg.C)	Rainfall (mm)	Bright sunshine (h)
<b>September</b> (44 yr. average)	22.1 (19.9)	11.2 (9.3)	16.6 (14.6)	79 (94)	214 (168)
<b>October</b> (44 yr. average)	15.0 (13.7)	7.4 (4.6)	11.2 (9.2)	257 (106)	137 (141)
<b>November</b> (44 yr. average)	10.3 (7.5)	1.2 (0.2)	5.8 (3.9)	135 (118)	72 (82)
<b>Season</b> (44 yr. average)	15.8 (13.7)	6.6 (4.7)	11.2 (9.2)	471 (318)	423 (391)

*Source: Food & Horticultural Research Centre, Kentville, NS.*

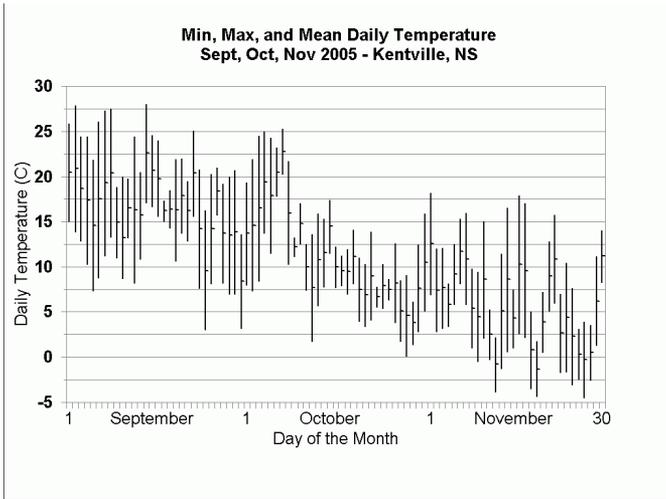
The autumn of 2005 was warm and wet.

### Temperature

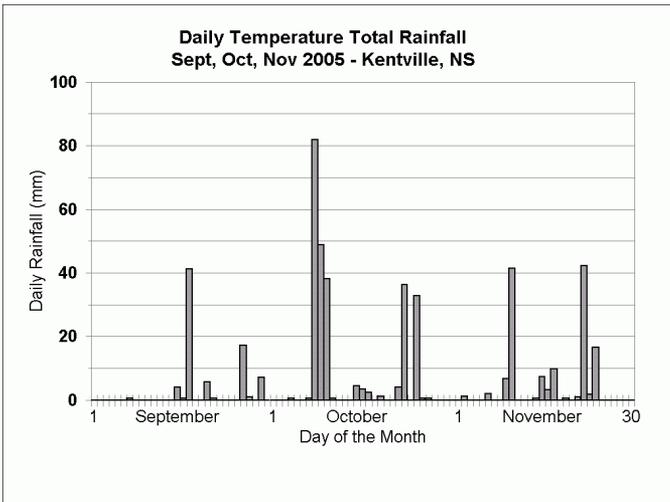
The autumn was remarkably uniform in that all three months were 2°C warmer than the 44-year average. The temperature chart shows the steady decrease in mean daily temperatures from about 20°C at the first of September to about 3°C at the end of November.

### Rainfall and Snow

While September had a little less than the usual rainfall, October and November more than made up for the deficit. On the Thanksgiving weekend, we had three days of heavy rain, with 82, 49, and 38 mm of rain on October 8, 9, and 10, respectively. On the 23rd and 25th of October another 70 mm fell, and the month ended with over two-and-a-half times the usual monthly rainfall. November, with 14 percent more rain than average, was not quite so wet, but there were two days each with over 40 mm. The whole season had 50 percent more rain than the 44-year



average. On average we have 14 cm of snow in November; last year by the end of November 52 cm of snow had fallen. There was none this year.



### Bright Sunshine

September was the driest month this autumn and, as you would expect, was also the sunniest month, with 27 percent more sunshine hours than average. The rainy months of October and November had less sunshine than normal, but the total for the season was still above average by 8 percent.

# What's In The Sky?

by Roy Bishop

New Moon: December 30, January 29, February 27, March 29

Full Moon: January 14, February 13, March 14, April 13

Winter begins on Wednesday, December 21, at 14:35 AST

Spring begins on Monday, March 20, at 14:26 AST

## Planets

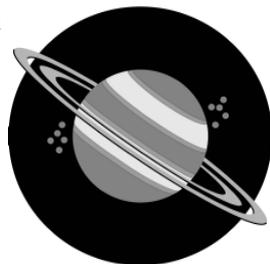
For Nova Scotians, during 2006 Mercury is at its best position for viewing in the evening twilight during mid-February. See the astronomy note on the February page of your 2006 BNS Calendar.

During December Venus is the very bright object low in the southwestern evening twilight. Binoculars may reveal its slender crescent phase. However, with the New Year, Venus rapidly drops day by day toward the Sun and vanishes from the evening sky as it passes between Earth and the Sun on January 14. Late in January Venus reappears in the morning pre-dawn sky where it remains for the rest of the winter.

Mars was at opposition on November 7, providing Nova Scotians with the best view of this orange planet in many years. Now Earth with its higher speed is moving ahead of Mars, so Mars is fading in brightness and shrinking in size as seen in a telescope. By mid-January Mars will be only half the angular diameter it was in early November. During the winter evenings Mars shifts progressively westward in the evening sky and becomes dimmer. By late April Mars will appear only one-quarter the diameter that it was last November and will be only one-thirtieth as bright.

Jupiter is bright but low in the southeastern pre-dawn sky as 2006 begins. Through the rest of the winter Jupiter rises a few minutes earlier each night, rising near midnight in February and late in the evening in March. It will be at opposition on May 4, shining brightly in the sky all night through April and May.

Saturn is at opposition on January 27, so it is in the sky practically all night during December, January, and February. The south side of Saturn's rings has been tilted toward Earth since 1996. The rings opened to their widest extent in 2003. They close significantly during 2006 and will be edge-on to Earth in 2009. Nearly everyone is awestruck when first they see Saturn and its system of rings in a telescope. It does not seem possible that such beautiful symmetry could actually exist!



### **An Eclipse**

There are four eclipses in 2006, two solar and two lunar. However, only one of these is visible from Nova Scotia: a subtle penumbral eclipse of the Moon on March 14. See the astronomy note on the March page of your BNS Calendar for more information.

### **Is the Night Sky Dark?**

The Sun is much larger than Earth. As a consequence, Earth's shadow has the shape of an ice cream cone, with Earth being the ice cream and its shadow a cone of darkness tapering to a point barely 1 percent of the Earth-Sun distance behind Earth. In other words, even on the darkest night, when we look at the stars we are looking through a region of space that is flooded with brilliant sunlight. The reason the sky appears dark is that we can only see light that enters our eyes. Within the solar system the sky is flooded with sunlight, but at night this light is not travelling toward our eyes. Only sunlight that happens to be scattered in our direction by the Moon or another planet can be seen.

For the same reason, we cannot see the light of the headlights of our own car except where this light is scattered back toward our eyes by the road or from particles (dust, fog, rain, snow, insects) in the air. Properly speaking, we do not "look at" the stars or the road in front of our car. We see only the light that enters our eyes, and from this information our brain creates our visual world somewhere within the darkness of our skull. Our perceived world is more subtle and magical than most people realize.

## Blomidon Naturalists Society

# 2006 Membership Fees and Publications Prices

Each member of the Blomidon Naturalists Society receives four issues of the BNS newsletter annually. Because BNS is a registered charity, the society issues receipts for all donations. The membership fee itself is not tax deductible. Members may also join the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists through BNS and will receive FNSN News, the federation's newsletter. FNSN membership is not tax deductible.

Please send cheques or money orders in payment of membership fees and for publication purchases to

Ed Sulis  
107 Canaan Avenue, Kentville, NS B4N 2A7

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**Membership fees are due January 1 of the current year**

## **Sources of Local Natural History**

**(compiled by Blomidon Naturalists Society)**

<b>Information</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Home</b>
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-9204
Astronomy	Roy Bishop		542-3992
	Sherman Williams	542-3598	542-5104
	Larry Bogan		678-0446
Birds – General	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
	Richard Stern	678-4742	678-1975
	Gordon & Judy Tufts		542-7800
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-9204
	Jean Timpa		542-5678
Butterflies & Moths	Jean Timpa		542-5678
Fish	NS Dept of Natural Resources	679-6091	
Flora – General Fungi	Ruth Newell	585-1355	542-2095
	Nancy Nickerson	679-5333	542-9332
Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
Indian Prehistory & Archeology	James Legge		542-3530
Mosses & Ferns			
Mammals	Tom Herman	585-1469	678-0383
Rocks & Fossils	Geology Dept Acadia U.	542-2201	
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-9204
	Michael Brylinsky	585-1509	582-7954

