

# Blomidon Naturalists Society

Fall 2006 – Volume 33 Number 3

## **Blomidon Naturalists Society**

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

(from the BNS constitution)

### **BNS Executive**

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Vice-president	Richard Stern	678-1975
Treasurer	Ed Sulis	678-4609
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John Belbin	765-3811
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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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<[www.blomidonnaturalists.ca](http://www.blomidonnaturalists.ca)>

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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**

Winter, December 4, 2006

## **Editorial Board**

Chair: Jean Timpa (902 542-5678)

Committee: Merritt Gibson, Sherman Williams, George Alliston

Production: Doug Linzey

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## EDITORIAL

# An Inconvenient Truth

I know many of you have seen this documentary. I hope you were among the lucky viewers for the panel discussion at the Al Whittle Theatre in Wolfville on September 13. Climate change is no longer an illusion of fanatical environmentalists, but a scary reality that Mother Earth is rapidly deteriorating. This concept is not something any of us want to face; it seems too monumental for the individual to grasp. And there does not appear to be the political will and leadership to correct the systemic problems that we can only solve together as a world body. Despair sets in as we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place.

However, a panel member said that this is actually a valuable feeling, as it shatters our illusions that everything is fine, as big corporations, especially those associated with the petroleum industry, would have us believe. We must now educate ourselves on a much broader interdisciplinary basis, and we must also rethink and restructure our political vision into a broader framework of sustainable living. Archaic notions that resources are endless and here for our exploitation must go – and quickly – if we are to reverse the climate-change trends.

Is it realistic to think it can be done? Al Gore thinks so. Many scientists and organizations devoted to this cause agree. But time is of the essence. If you missed the film, it will be released on DVD in November.

One of the lessons from the film is that we should be prepared to harass politicians at all levels until “they get it!” If there are moments of total frustration and despair, remember that we rid our earth of DDT and allied pesticides. The disappearance of such poisons undoubtedly made a positive difference to all of us. Remember how countries around the world banned the use of ozone-depleting chemicals as refrigerants? Slowly but surely the hole in the ozone layer is healing.

We must declare and fight a different kind of war – the war on climate change – but not by using wasteful and violent tactics. By using the very opposite notions, we can bring peace and good health to this world and all its inhabitants. [Jean Timpa, editor]

**NATURE NOVA SCOTIA NOTICE**  
**Time and Tide: Nature Canada 2007**

As we announced in the summer issue, Nature Nova Scotia (Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists) will be hosting the Nature Canada 2007 conference, August 1–5, in Wolfville. We chose these dates so that naturalists from all over Canada will be able to observe and enjoy the shorebird migration and experience the natural history and agricultural bounty of the Valley at a wonderfully productive time of the year. We will concentrate on showing our visitors, and telling them about, the wonders of the Bay of Fundy and surrounding region.

We fully expect that BNS members will want to be involved. Please have a look at our website <[www.nature2007.ca](http://www.nature2007.ca)> and feel free to make suggestions (it's a constantly changing thing). And we'll need plenty of volunteers for all manner of activities: field trips, transportation, communications, hospitality, workshops, registration, . . . almost anything you can think of. To find out how you can help, or to make suggestions, please contact one of the organizing committee: Joan Czapalay, chair (902 431-8727, <[joancz@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:joancz@ns.sympatico.ca)>), Larry Bogan, communications (902 678-0446, <[larry@bogan.ca](mailto:larry@bogan.ca)>), Doug Linzey, program (902 892-7176, <[doug@fundymud.com](mailto:doug@fundymud.com)>).

### **Acknowledgements**

As the leaves brighten into their fall colours, it reminds me of all the bright spots in BNS – all the people who help keep so many new and old issues organized and running smoothly. Some of them are our own members, who with great dedication to our cause spend many free hours helping in so many ways. There are also many nonmembers who help cheerfully when asked for their time and expertise. I particularly think of the many volunteers who helped Charlane and Laura this past summer with the Green Dragon camps for children under BNS auspices, and those responsible for our other big project, the total refurbishing of the Robie Tufts Chimney area. Kudos to all our volunteers, without whom we could never do all the wonderful things we do accomplish. [JT, ed.]

# Blomidon Naturalists Society

## Fall/Winter 2006

### Meetings

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

**Monday, September 18, 2006 – Standing Tall for Forests.** Tired of clearcuts? Worried about more herbicide spraying near your land? Wondering how our forest industry has gotten into this state? Come and hear Joanne Cook of the Ecology Action Centre's Standing Tall Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Forestry. This presentation gives you the facts about forestry in Nova Scotia and suggests how to achieve some real changes that will preserve and protect our wild lands. Since the '60s, Nova Scotia's native Acadian Forest, once a healthy, diverse mix of hardwoods and softwoods, has been systematically cut and replaced by spruce and balsam tree farms. Driven by pulp and paper mill demand, our forests are being clearcut at the rate of over 500 square kilometres a year. We have put all our forestry eggs in the softwood basket, and now the paper sector is teetering on the brink of disaster all across Canada. We need to change our approach to forests and forestry. Over the next 18 months, the Government of Nova Scotia is going to develop a new 10-year forestry strategy. The Ecology Action Centre comes with fresh new ideas about how we can all speak for our trees.

**Monday, October 16, 2006 – Arctic Alpine Plants of Newfoundland and Labrador.** Jamie Ellison has spent a lot of time studying the flora of Newfoundland and Labrador, and he will be sharing his knowledge with us. He started Bunchberry Nurseries in Upper Clements and teaches horticulture at Kingstec.

[Note: The BNS annual meeting is also held at the October gathering.]

**Monday, November 20, 2006 – This Is Not a Krill: Scientific Trawling in the Southern Ocean** with Jennifer Van Dommelen. Jennifer is an instructor in the Department of Biology at Dalhousie University. Through a combination of modest skill and copious luck, she found herself helping with data collection aboard a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research cruise in the vicinity of the South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula earlier this year. Her presentation, which will cover a little bit of the science and a lot of the fun of life at sea, will be sprinkled liberally with acronyms and other initialisms such as NOAA, AMLR, CCAMLR, AERD, SWFSC, FASA, and FAME.

**Monday, December 11, 2006 – A Birder's Trip to Panama: Two Weeks in the Heat** with Richard Stern. In March 2005, Richard went on a birding trip with a group of friends from Nova Scotia to two destinations in central Panama, the latest favourite destination for eco-tourists. He will present a talk and slide show of the natural wonders that the group encountered on the trip. (Please note the early date for this meeting – to avoid the Christmas rush.)

**Monday, January 15, 2007 – Painting Nature.** Twila Robar-DeCoste will explore the subject of nature illustration and the people who work in this art form, especially those who have influenced her work. She will bring samples of her own work, possibly including a work in progress, to help illustrate some of the topics she will be covering. Twila's love of nature is the driving force in her creation of realistic paintings of many subjects: birds, butterflies, flowers, landscapes, and seascapes. She works in watercolour, acrylic, and ink. BNS members are likely to be familiar with her work, as she has provided the illustrations for sixteen books, including nine of Merritt Gibson's nature books, the latest of which will be published this fall.

**Monday, February 19, 2007 – Annual Show and Tell.** 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.

## Field Trips

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

**Sunday, October 1, 2006 – Canoe Trip.** Bring your canoe or kayak and join Ruth and Reg Newell (902 542-2095) for a trip down the Black River Lake system with a stop to look at interesting plants in the Methals Lake area. This trip will be at least six hours long. Bring a lunch, water, hot drinks, warm clothing, and, of course, life jackets, canoe, paddles, etc. If you have access to a life jacket but not a canoe there will likely be extra room in one of the canoes. Meet at 8 a.m. at Forest Home on Highway 12.

**Sunday, October 15, 2006 – Canoe Trip.** Patrick Kelly (902 798-3329) will lead a canoe trip in the Cloud Lake Wilderness Area. This should be a great time of year to see the autumn colours reflected in the lake. There may also be a chance to stretch your legs with a short hike along a portage to see the northwest end of Frog Lake. Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot of Avery's Market on Highway 1 in South Berwick (about a 30-minute drive from Wolfville).

**Saturday, October 21, 2006 – Astronomy Observing Session.** Join Roy Bishop (902 542-3992) and members of the Minas Astronomy Group to observe the night sky. Constellations will be identified with the use of a laser pointer. Telescopes will be on hand to view Uranus, Neptune (now the official outermost planet), galaxies, star clusters, and nebulae. Meet at 8 p.m. at the old parking lot at Grand Pre National Park. In the event of cloudy weather the session will be held on Sunday, October 22.

**Sunday, November 5, 2006 – Acadian Nature Hike.** George Forsyth (902 542-7116) will lead this popular trip again and describe the natural and cultural history of the Lockhart Ryan Park area of New Minas. We will see a recognized Acadian grave site, Acadian cellars, and apple trees descended from the time of the Acadians. George will explain the identity of dormant trees and shrubs and point out other notes of natural history along the trails in this area. Meet at the Wolfville Waterfront at 1 p.m. or at the Lockhart Ryan Park in New Minas at 1:15 p.m.

**Wednesday, November 8, 2006 – Transit of Mercury.** Approximately once every seven years, as viewed from Earth, the planet Mercury passes across the disk of the Sun. We have been invited to join Roy Bishop (902 542–3992) at 475 Bluff Road, Avonport (next to his home), where there will be telescopes that will allow you to safely observe the event. The transit starts around 3 p.m. and will end for observers in Nova Scotia around 5 p.m. when the Sun sets. In the event of cloudy weather, the next viewing session will be May 9, 2016.

**Saturday, December 16, 2006 – Wolfville Christmas Bird Count.** The compiler for this year's count is unknown at press time, but mark the date on your calendar and look for more details in the next issue. 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 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.

## **Big Tree Search** **by Larry Bogan**

This Nature Nova Scotia project needs your help. Several recent submissions have included three very large Sugar Maples in Kings and Hants County. Most of the entries to date are from Kings, Hants, and Cumberland counties, the species being mainly Red Oak, Sugar Maple, and White Pine, along with a few others.

Rather than identifying just the very largest trees in the whole province, our aim is to list several of the largest of each species in each county. At the moment there are plenty of blank spaces to fill in, so take your tape measure and camera along on your outings and let us know about the big trees you find.

For information, instructions, and entries go to <<http://naturens.ca>> and click on Big Tree Search. All tree species are fair game.

**EXECUTIVE NOTES**  
**Focus on Youth**  
by **John Harwood, president BNS**

Summer got off to a pretty shaky start with the soggy conditions we experienced in June, but things did improve and, all in all, I think we had a pretty good summer. Let's hope that the fall lives up to normal expectations and proves to be a spectacular season. For BNS it was a spectacular summer. There were all sorts of great field trips, and our summer young naturalists program was, as you will read on the opposite page, a winner. Programs were conducted at four local sites in our area – a first for us.

At the recent meeting of the executive committee, we decided to continue the emphasis on youth. We will conduct two more Art and Nature Competitions in this school year. The schools have not been selected yet, but I hope to be able to announce them at our September meeting. Also, we hope to build on our successes with the summer program and work toward a winter program to be conducted during March Break. We are also hoping to embark upon an after-school program. In the past, we have had trouble identifying outstanding young naturalists. With this emphasis on young people, we shouldn't have so much difficulty in the future in finding suitable candidates for our Young Naturalist Award. Thanks very much to all the field trip guides, to Charlane Bishop who set up and conducted the summer youth program, and to all the others who made it such a success.

I hope you all have noticed the improvements and general sprucing up that has gone on at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre. You will also notice improvements at our booth at the pre-Christmas craft fair in Wolfville. The team has done some outstanding work. Thanks.

You will see from the program notes that we have an exciting schedule set up for this season. Another exciting event will be the launch of Merritt Gibson's latest book, *Within the Sight of Blomidon*. Because BNS has helped with the publishing costs and, incidentally, will receive all the proceeds from its sale, the launch will take place at our October meeting.

The books will make great holiday gifts. Remember Merritt's admonition: "Always buy three – one for posterity, one for yourself, and one for a gift."

Our efforts to get input from you to assist the executive in selecting worthy persons to be awarded honorary life memberships in BNS have so far failed. At the remaining monthly meetings, papers will be available for you to submit candidates' names. It won't be necessary to sign them. Remember, candidates need not be current members of BNS. We hope to keep up with the Queen and publish a New Year's honours list. Please help. If we do it every year, the task will be less daunting.

**REPORT – YOUTH**  
**Green Dragon Nature Camp**  
**Charlane Bishop & Laura Gillis**

During Green Dragon Nature Camp this summer we got our feet wet and our hands muddy, as promised. We figure that around 250 smiling, whooping, dripping wet, and muddy children and counsellors dragging their feet by the end of the day is about as successful as a summer nature camp can get. And there are photos to prove it.

We began the summer with a group of kids from Kentville Recreation using the Kentville Research Station picnic park as our home base. The most memorable part of this hot and muggy week was our Kentville Ravine stream walk: squealing, splashing, and skipping the perfectly flat rocks all the way to the falls. It was amazing to see the children go from tender-footed, stiff-legged, and "cold" to boldly and deftly straddling mossy downfalls and wading up to their armpits, shoeless yet fully clothed. It was nothing less than magic when we came to the edge of the steep bank at the top of the falls and the kids paused very briefly, considering the descent before making their way down and quickly into the rushing water and whirlpools. One little guy declared the long, smooth-

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*Charlane and Laura are the coordinators of the 2006 Green Dragon nature camp*

rocked water path a “waterslide” and it didn’t take long for a lineup to form behind him. Two inseparable girls, perhaps the most skilled naturalists of the group, found Red-backed Salamanders under a log and secretly shared them on the walk back with our keenest guy. I am certain none of them will forget that day, and I hold it as a vision of the simplicity and joy of children engaged in their world.

### **Blue Beach Fossil Hunt**

We took each of our groups to Penny’s Beach for a fossil hunt, followed by a visit with Chris and Sonja at the Blue Beach Fossil Museum. On each trip, Sherman Williams met us at Penny’s Beach to guide and explore with us all along the beach to Lighthouse Road. Sherman enthralled the young naturalists (and the older ones too!) with tidal clues, amphipods, mermaid’s purses, rock and fossil hunts, amygdaloidal basalt, long-eroded apple orchards, and, last but not least, the amphibious track way. On our ramble we heard the occasional peeping of shorebirds gliding by and the regular chirping of “Sherman! Sherman! Look what I found! Is this a fossil? What is this, Sherman? Wow! Cool! Sherman! Hey, Sherman!” We ate lunch in the shade of Sherman’s house, then continued on to the museum, the kids dragging bookbags and armfuls of fossils. Chris and Sonja helped the little naturalists identify the many different fossils found and then gave a tour of the museum (interspersed with lots more “Wow!” and “Hey, Chris!”)

### **Wetlands Days**

On our Wetlands Days we were joined by the Friends of the Cornwallis River Society, Sarah Sabean, Rosalie Schop, and Esther terMeer. They took us down to the river or to a local pond to show us what they do as FOCRS. The kids got to use water-quality test kits, go critter dipping for invertebrates, and play some great ecology/conservation games that Sarah (as a teacher) brought or created herself. The Friends also delivered Ducks Unlimited Canada’s Wetlands Education “Project Webfoot” for part of the day. Our most interesting wetland experience (other than the very cool tiger-striped dragonfly nymphs at Spicer Park in Canning and the giant fishing spider we found in the salt marsh on the bank of the Cornwallis in New Minas) was walking the New Minas kids down below Lockhart Ryan Park where the Cornwallis flows by right in their back yard. Here we tested the river water, and as we did this the kids noticed the river getting higher as the tide came in.

## **Conservation Day**

In the morning of the final day of each camp the children created a garden of native plants at their daycare or recreation centre. They contemplated the placement of bayberry shrubs (*Myrica* sp.), Wild Iris (*Iris versicolor*), and Saskatoonberry (*Amelanchier* sp.), and then got their hands in the soil and compost. The children were incredibly focused and worked together seamlessly digging, adding compost, straightening the plants, topping with bark mulch, and watering the plants in thoroughly and with great care. Our Appletree Landing group was especially enthusiastic and planted an additional 20 baby iris plants that Melanie Preisnitz had given us from the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens. We also put up some bat and Tree Swallow boxes with the kids. They were fascinated by the structures and how they worked and had many interesting questions.

We spent the rest of the day at the Botanical Gardens, where we were met by Laurel McIvor, who walked us from the Irving Centre entrance through to the Woodland trails where the kids got to see and learn more about some of the plants they had just put in their own garden. We broke up into three groups and took turns at each activity station. Laurel and Tony Coakley took them on the trails up to the Norway Spruce grove to plant native trees and create habitat by piling brush, making stick shelters, and putting up bird boxes. Laura Gillis took them for a silent walk on the trails, ending at a spot beside the stream where they sat and composed a piece of music with percussion instruments and flute that imitated the sound of someone walking, birds, wind, water . . . There was a painting station where the children had a chance to create a ten-by-five-foot canvas nature mural entitled “biodiversity.” The canvases grew full of colourful critters, clouds, kids, rainbows, and insects that will brighten their recreation or daycare centres.

At the end of the day each child received a Red Spruce seedling with a Green Dragon card attached that had instructions for planting and caring for their seedling as well as an invitation to join the Green Dragon Nature Club.

## **Camp Odonata**

We also had the opportunity to take part in Camp Odonata (a camp for children who have recently lost a loved one) by leading some nature activities at the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens. Jim Wolford and I

showed the kids around the pond at the gardens and luckily found some dragonfly exuviae (nymph skins) in addition to nymphs in the pond and damsels and dragons hovering around us. They were very happy to have a nature component to their camp, and the kids loved the pond, woodland trail, and the nature music Laura Gillis created in the forest with them.

### **Thank You, Volunteers**

Thank you so much to all the people who volunteered their time, skills, and joy in nature:

- Glenys Gibson (and her students) for a trip with the Wolfville Junior Naturalists Camp into the mud at Kingsport Beach
- Larry Bogan and Roy Bishop for joining Wolfville Recreation and New Minas Recreation overnight campers at Blomidon Provincial Park for stargazing and galaxy fentours with the amazing “laser-sabre” (a huge hit!)
- Tracy Horseman (DFO ) and Jim Wolford for taking the Wolfville group for a hike and exploration of the salt marsh habitat on the Wolfville dikes
- Sherman Boates (NSDNR) for a beach walk at Lower Blomidon.
- Sherman Williams for sharing Penny’s Beach and much more with us
- Reg Newell (NSDNR) for advice and ideas early on
- Todd Smith (AU) for bug swooping with us at the Botanical Gardens
- Suman Gupta (AU) for experience and suggestions
- Marika from Clean Annapolis River Project for teaching us about invasive aliens (plants, that is) at the Botanical Gardens
- Glenys Gibson and Harold Forsyth for helping to get this project funded and much, much more
- Eric Kershaw and Brennan Caverhill for doing such a great job last year that we had something to build on

Thanks also to those who donated binos and field guides and showed their interest, enthusiasm, and support.

### **Partners and Sponsors**

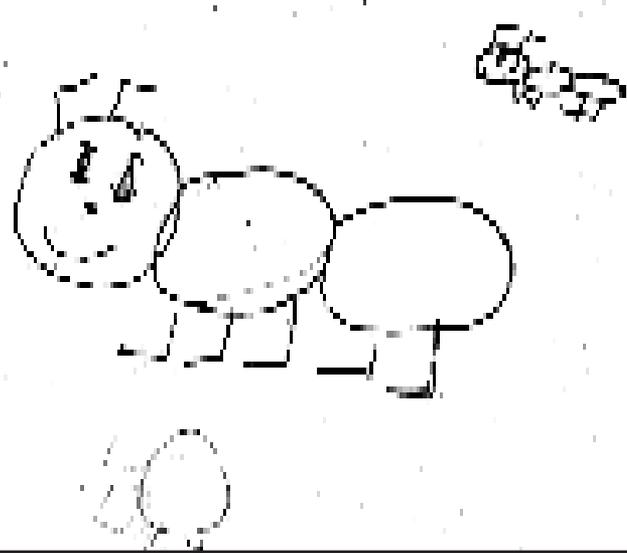
Thank you to our partners and sponsors: Environment Canada’s Ecoaction Fund, Kings County Community Economic Development Agency, NSDNR, Minas Pulp and Power, Wolfville and New Minas Rotary Clubs, Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens, Friends of the Cornwallis River Society.

Year 2007 (B.I) Wings

Don't say...  
Don't...  
Don't...  
Don't...  
Don't...  
Don't...

Good things

You can't clean up



## **BNS/NS NATURE TRUST FIELD TRIP REPORT**

### **Aylesford Mountain Walk**

**by George Alliston**

July 30, 2006 – Promptly at 10 a.m., with sunny, warm conditions, about 42 people and one dog gathered at the Nova Scotia Nature Trust property on Aylesford Mountain. An article by Sara Keddy in the Kings County Register had advertised this joint BNS and Nature Trust walk served to attract a large number of participants from the Aylesford-Berwick area.

Before embarking on our walk we began with a brief history of this area and explored how what was in the 1800s an active farming community is now woodland. We examined the 1870 “Church map” of the area showing the location of homes and the names of their owners. We also discussed how, in 1999, the 400-acre property, the largest the Nature Trust currently owns, was donated to the Nature Trust by Mildred Annetta (Neaves) Clem, a woman of modest means whose family had first purchased a portion of this land in 1878. Mrs. Clem had lived on the property for much of her life, had grown to love this land and its wildlife, and wished to see it preserved. Mrs. Clem died in 2001 in her 97th year.

We began our trip by visiting one of the farmers (or at least the cellar walls of his former home) who worked this land in the late 1800s, a Mr. Timothy Shea. This was the first of a number of visits we would pay to the inhabitants of this area in the late 1800s and early 1900s. We then proceeded along the roadway toward the homestead.

I must confess to having some apprehension concerning how well we might be able to accommodate such a large group, even with the assistance of Louise Ritchie from the Nature Trust and BNS regulars Bernard Forsythe, Larry Bogan, and Jim Wolford. Early in our walk, when the entire group stopped and listened in silence to the song of a Hermit Thrush, those apprehensions were allayed.

Along the way we noted the diversity in the understory of the forest, including several species of ferns (Cinnamon, Interrupted, New York, Beech, Hay-scented, Sensitive, Bracken, Christmas, Wood Fern spp., etc.)

and orchids (Purple-fringed, Helleborine, Pink Lady's-slipper, Spotted Coral-root) as well as the ubiquitous Blue Bead Lilly, scattered Red and Painted Trilliums, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Wood Sorrel, Indian Cucumber Root, Bunchberry, Wintergreen, Partridge Berry, Red and White Baneberry, Twisted Stalk, False Solomon's Seal, Sarsaparilla, Toothwart, and shrubs such as Beaked Hazelnut, Hobble-bush, and Ground Hemlock.

We reached the homestead just before noon, viewed the foundation of the house and outbuildings built by Mrs. Clem's grandparents, and compared these with photographs of the homestead taken in the 1950s when it was still a working farm, by this time the last one on this road. We ate our lunch in a beautiful stand of old growth Sugar Maples adjacent to the homestead.

The homestead is the site of some nefarious Kings County history. In 1904, the year in which Mrs. Clem was born, her grandmother was brutally murdered and the house and outbuildings burned. The murderer and arsonist, the second husband of Mrs. Clem's widowed grandmother, was charged, convicted, and hanged in Kentville that same year. He was the last person to be hanged in Kings County.

After lunch we descended into the deep ravine ("vault") that Brown Brook cuts through the property. Although it was our intent to follow the brook northward to the northern boundary of the property, water levels in the brook were so high (after all the rainfall in June and July) that we decided to reach our destination via the Lightfoot Road. There we visited the site of the home where Mrs Clem's grandparents lived when they first bought the property. In the area surrounding where this house once stood, and even in the old cellar, is a very large colony of Goldie's Large Round-leaved Orchids. Bernard Forsythe and members of the Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society have indicated that they know of no comparable site in the province. Unfortunately, this year the colony was in poor condition, most plants appearing to be afflicted with a fungal infection, possibly as the result of the very wet weather we has experienced this summer. Although some plants had sent up flower spikes, none had actually bloomed; compare this with 123 plants in bloom during a visit in 2004.

It was now time to make the return trip via what in the 1800s was the main thoroughfare through this area, the Lightfoot Road (while still a

public road, it now looks like, and serves as, a woods road), but, feeling sociable, we dropped in on a few former residents. We first visited a home (cellar) built in the late 1800s and occupied first by members of Mrs. Clem's father's family and later by Mrs. Clem's older sister. This sister died at age 28, leaving three children whom Mrs. Clem's mother brought up on the homestead along with her own six children and an adopted daughter. We admired the rock walls this family had built along the roadway. We also dropped in to see Roger and Elizabeth Baker and admired the very long rock wall they had built and paid a brief visit to the Fitzgeralds. At the suggestion of participants Don Osburn and Kate and Brian Adams, we again descended into the vault of Brown Brook to view and relax by a beautiful waterfall. What a wonderful way to end a trip that I believe was enjoyed by all.

**BNS FIELD TRIP REPORT**  
**Smileys Provincial Park**  
by Jean Timpa

June 28, 2006 – By six-thirty p.m., nine of us, including our two leaders, Reg and Ruth Newell, and their son, Seth, had gathered at our appointed meeting place, the Wolfville waterfront park. It had been a hot and muggy day, open and shut, back and forth with sun and then with light showers, so we were not surprised to see far off in the east a small but brightly coloured piece of rainbow against a very dark rain cloud. Reg was eager to experiment with his new digital camera, so he went up on top of the dike and took a photo or two while we waited for any latecomers. Little did we realize how very much the little piece of rainbow was about to thrill us, more than I can ever begin to put into words, but I will try.

As we started east toward Lower Wolfville and then Grand Pre, the rainbow grew first into a complete rainbow, and then into a lovely double one. As we started to exit off the ramp onto Highway 101, Reg commented that one end of the rainbow was over in the field by the Ducks Unlimited Pond, not that far away. The wind was blowing from the southwest, so

the cloud and shower edge creating the rainbow was rapidly moving toward us. Just before we crested the Hantsport hill, Ruth had to put on the windshield wipers, for we were now in steady rain with the sun also shining brightly in through the back window of the car. All of a sudden we were quite aware that the rainbow with all its glorious colours and sparkle had moved into the roadside ditch to our right just a few feet away. It was so surreal that I felt as though I could reach out the window and bring in a handful of rainbow! We were all transfixed to be in the rainbow and hardly spoke for the next five minutes as we travelled along. As suddenly as it came to us, the rainbow then disappeared, except for a small piece shining off in the distance to the left for a while. None of us quite knew what to say or how to explain something we had never dreamed could happen. And the experience lasted so long, too. We didn't need a spade to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow because as far as we were concerned the experience, which most people will never be so lucky to encounter, was the real pot of gold, a real blessing indeed. A person can stand in the rainbow created by a hose or sprinkler or in a bow by a large waterfall, but to encounter a real moving rainbow as we did – well, it was just too unscientific a thought, too unrealistic, too imaginative. But it did indeed happen to nine of us very lucky BNS members.

After we left the 101 and travelled many turning and twisting roads, we arrived at Smileys Provincial Park, where six other BNS members were waiting for us. Parking our cars and comparing a few breathless comments on our rainbow encounter, we then walked down the main road a few paces, parted some bushes, and suddenly disappeared into the hidden world of an Eastern Larch (*Larix laricina*, and also commonly known as tamarack or hackmatack) swamp. It was absolutely jam packed with Showy Lady's-slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*) in full splendour and definitely not to be outdone by any wet, fickle rainbow. Fortunately, Bernard Forsythe was also with us and quickly warned us not to touch the orchids, as they tend to give some people a very annoying skin rash, not unlike poison ivy. The stems are covered with short, dense hairs that perhaps cause the skin irritation. Ten years ago, Bernard said, he estimated that there were about 400 Showy Lady's-slippers in this bog; now the blooms are so numerous that it is impossible to count or even estimate their population. Each bloom may be one plant, or each cluster may be one plant, so there seems to be no standard way to count them anyway. They are very large, robust plants, so unlike the small, delicate, stereotypical orchids we tend

to picture. There certainly were plenty of photo opportunities and lots and lots of oohing and aahing and “Oh, look at these” comments floating through the swamp as we carefully stepped around plants and tried not to make too many paths. A few days earlier, Bernard visited this area and also discovered blooming Northern Green Bog Orchids (*Platanthera hyperborea*), which are as inconspicuous as the Showy Orchids are visible. There were at least 20 of these green-fringed orchids growing beside the giants for a perfect contrast study of two quite different orchid genres.



As an additional bonus, Reg and Ruth were able to point out to us other plants endemic to the floodplain of the Meander River, which was dashing along at breakneck speed, full to its brim after so much June rain. Mitrewort, or Bishop's Cap (*Mitella nuda*), Dewberry (*Rubus hispidus*), and Indian Pear (*Amelanchier* sp.) were already in fruit. A lone piece of Blue Flag (*Iris versicolor*) also brightened up the bog. Alder-leaved Buckthorn was also pointed out and deemed “the good kind,” as opposed to the very invasive introduced buckthorns that are choking out good plants. We also saw the leaves of one of the *Geum* species, and bedstraws (*Galium* sp.) in bloom were also thriving in the moisture of the wet areas, as well as a small clump of Cotton grass (*Eriophorum* sp.). On drier ground we saw a lot of maturing Wood-horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*), the Helleborine orchid (*Epipactis helleborine*) in leaf, flowering Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), and very early specimens of Daisy Fleabane (*Erigeron stigosus*) and Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum pubescens*) being buffeted by the rushing waters of the Meander River. The latter two plants were blooming at least two weeks ahead of expectation, as so many plants have continued to do throughout this summer of warmth and unusual moisture. As we walked back toward our vehicles, we stopped to admire a number

of Ironwood or Hop-hornbeam trees (*Ostrya virginiana*) in their showy fruit stage, a rather uncommon tree, well admired for its very strong-grained and much desired wood for axe and other tool handles. Some of these trees were quite sizeable, which is not usual, so they probably are of considerable age. Someone also pointed out that the top of the leaves are very fuzzy, rather an unusual trait for our hardwood trees.

Last, but certainly not least, we headed off to see two new patches of white, but ripe, Woodland Strawberries (*Fragaria vesca*, forma *landonii*, var. *americana*) in the shade of some mature trees. Acadians brought these berries to their new world, so when we find them we feel fairly sure that Acadians once lived in these areas. This is, thanks to Nancy Nickerson's sharp eyes, another new site for them in Nova Scotia, to go with patches in Wolfville, Grand Pre, White Rock, Clementsport, Bear River, and Tusket.

As we drove home, the grand vistas of our special Valley were highlighted with gold-edged thunderheads over the Bay of Fundy, the North Mountain, and Blomidon. Finally the golds turned to pink to complement the rather massive, ominous looking, gray thunderheads giving parts of New Brunswick and Cumberland and Colchester Counties yet more rain. It was just such a perfect field trip.

**BNS FIELD TRIP REPORT**  
**Gaspereau River Trail**  
**by Bernard Forsythe**

August 5, 2006 – A dozen people enjoyed a pleasant, although wet underfoot, stroll upriver from the White Rock bridge. Points of interest included a very large spider, many plants (both common and several not often found in Kings County), mushrooms, trees, and birds. Some of the past human uses of the river were also discussed.

The seeds of Ironwood hung in dense clusters looking like hops making it obvious why Hop-hornbeam is another name for this tree. A few of the long list of wildflowers spotted along the river included Sweetflag, Swamp Milkweed, Pickerel-weed, Joe-pye-weed, Poison Ivy, impressive stands of Coneflower, Ground-nut, Small Purple Fringed Orchid, and Helleborine in flower. Helleborine has become a common woodland orchid but was unknown in Nova Scotia prior to 1985.

A few birds were heard, such as Eastern (Wood) Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, raven, and the food begging calls of newly fledged young. Many species of mushrooms were scattered along the trail. Some of the amanitas were especially colourful, and several coral fungi were also found. Until recently the high river level of this summer had flooded over the intervale, leaving much of its vegetation in poor shape, especially the Royal Ferns. The many other species of ferns present helped make up for the loss of the showy Royals.

We looked at the mill sites of the late 1800s and early 1900s, the largest being S.P. Benjamin's mill, which operated around the clock with a crew of 75 men and sawed 70,000 feet of lumber per day. As we walked along the rocked up 100-year-old river road we talked about its builder, Thomas Kneeland. The road was the start of an ambitious power and pulp project his US company planned for the Gaspereau River and its watershed. His engineer worked out one cost of development at \$1,900,460, a high sum in 1910. After three years of work, Kneeland spent \$90,000 and owed another \$80,000 for machinery and to local workmen. One night Kneeland left White Rock and was never seen again.

However, his road has stood up well and is used year round by many enjoying the river and its steep, forest-covered ravine.

Our final stop was at the site of Joe Smith's old cabin, where Hank Snow and his friend Lloyd Corkum were said to have spent a winter or two, and where Snow practised for his upcoming singing career. Thinking of past history added to the enjoyment of the natural history along the river on this fine midsummer day.



NATURAL HISTORY  
**Woodland Trail Evening Walks**  
Tony Coakley

Since the beginning of May, enthusiastic BNS and community members have been meeting each Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. to hike the Acadia Woodland Trails behind Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens.

There were quite a number of fungi discovered along the trail edge. We were very fortunate to have Nancy Nickerson record the various types of fungi such as Spreading Cup (*Peziza repanda*), Turkey Tail (*Trametes versicolor*), and Eyelash Cup (*Scutellinia scutellata*) to name a few. Thank you so much for your time and expertise, Nancy.



The weekly walk was an interesting way to monitor the development of some of the invasive species that potentially threaten this woodland. Each portion of the trail has its own “thugs” that either have remained somewhat stationary or have flourished, posing a problem to this habitat. Some of these invasive plants are Glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*), and Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*).

Our conclusion to a great weekly event was held on Tuesday, September 5. Our pace quickened, as the days were getting shorter and the nights cooler. This, however, did not hold us back from observing and discussing all the interesting aspects of the flora and fauna that are present along the trail.

Thanks to all who have joined in since the beginning of May. Thanks to Harold Forsyth and Jim Wolford who have consistently been a part of the walks, adding a tremendous amount of knowledge and good company.

Hope to see you all next year.

## **BNS FIELD TRIP REPORT**

### **Neary Pines by George Forsyth**

Sunday, June 11, 2006 – After the previous day’s heavy rainfall during the BNS walk in the former Wolfville reservoir property we were hesitant to set out on our walk. The morning weather was wonderful by comparison, and we finished in time for an afternoon rain.

About 20 people participated, the youngest the five-year-old great grandson of the property owner. As with most BNS walks the leader need only know how to get in and then find the way out. We were privileged to have one of the property owners, a fungi expert, a couple of agriculturists, knowledgeable birders, an orchid specialist, a gentleman who as a child sixty years ago played in the woods here, and me, the leader. Each of us was able to contribute questions, observations, and experiences as we rambled the trails that the Bishops of Noggins Corner Farm have prepared for the public.

The walk through the field toward the Neary Pines allowed us to see the beginning of a covered raspberry field. The modern way to raise these delicate fruits is to cover them with a plastic row house so that the crop will ripen earlier and be of higher quality, since the fruit will never be wet from our frequent rain, and mould will be unlikely. The water for growth is from trickle irrigation lines at the base of the canes.

Our first stop was at the dam of Timothy Bishop’s grist mill, circa 1760. This is also probably the site of an earlier Acadian mill. The site of the mill house and sluice is still visible. Above the mill house are two Acadian cellar sites. It is interesting to try to visualize how this area would have looked in the early 1700s, when Acadians lived here, and how it would have changed after the Bishop family settled in 1760, five years after the Acadian expulsion.

We then entered the pine woods. This is truly a spectacular remnant of our primitive forest. It is amazing that this small area of centuries-old pines

and hemlocks has escaped the fires, axes, and saws of the past 320 years of settlement. The floor of these woods is so far from the canopy and the light so reduced that there is very little vegetation among the trunks of the trees. Records from previous generations tell of men riding horses through the forest; in the Neary Pines this is still possible!

After crossing the railroad we were able to visit the site of the Horton Poor Farm burial ground. Before the present welfare system, residents of Horton Township who were unable to support themselves because of physical or mental incapacity and whose families were unable to support them were placed into the care of the Poor Farm. The residence was across the road from where the McConnell's recycling depot is, and the burial ground was on the high ground overlooking the Cornwallis River. The cemetery is now remote and easily overlooked but has had some care provided by the Kings County Cemetery Preservation Society.

As we continued our ramble we were able to see evidence of the retreat of the last glaciers 15,000 years ago. The cemetery is located on the top of an esker or lateral moraine that parallels the river. This formation of gravel and till is exposed in several places, and the variety of stones and rocks is impressive, suggesting the wide areas that must have been scoured in order to amass such a collection.

Our final display was a family of Great Horned Owls that have occupied a nest in a White Pine bordering the dikes. We were able to see the adults briefly, but everyone had good looks at the two youngsters as they hopped and clumsily flew among the branches of a large Red Oak.

My interest in this tiny corner of Greenwich is lifelong. I explored it as a young person, with members of the Bishop family, with Bernard Forsythe, in Kings County history books, and I have shared it with Les Amis de Grand Pre, the Bishop Family Association, and the Blomidon Naturalists Society. My wife and children and have ceased to be impressed by its sense of permanence and stability, and I know that permanence and stability in nature are in fact not possible. But because nature's time scale is so slow compared to our rushed modern lifestyle, visiting this area seems to remind the soul of what once was.

**PROFILE OF A NATURALIST**  
**Wolfville Birder: Earl Godfrey**  
by Merritt Gibson

William Earl Godfrey was one of Canada's foremost ornithologists. In 1966 he published *The Birds of Canada*, revising it in 1986. The book became known as *The Godfrey*. It sold over 300,000 copies, was on the bestseller list, and made information about birds readily available to both laymen and professionals.

One November Saturday in 1988, while birding about Britannia Bay in Ottawa, I met another birder intently studying a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. It was a cold day, his hat was pulled down, collar up, and I did not recognize him. We exchanged "good mornings" and I added, "this is a great place for birds." "Where are you from?" he asked, "Wolfville, Nova Scotia," I replied. "Oh I know you," and he pushed back his hat and I recognized Earl Godfrey. "Would you like to see a Eurasian Wigeon?" he asked. "Yes," I replied, and we hiked around the pond. "There," he said, and I added the first Eurasian Wigeon to my bird list.

Earl Godfrey grew up on east Main Street in Wolfville; the family home is now numbered 88. He started birding at an early age and frequented the ravine behind his home. As was the practice in those times, he also collected birds to prepare study skins. I might note that Earl collected with a homemade slingshot! It was not long before Robie Tufts of Wolfville, migratory bird officer at the time, caught him, confiscated his slingshot, and gave him, as Earl wrote many years later, "the most bloodcurdling lecture I've ever heard." But, Earl protested, he was interested in birds and wanted to study them. Tufts tested him by asking him to name all the warblers he had seen in the ravine. Earl listed them and then added the sparrows for good measure. Tufts instructed Earl to appear at his office a few days later.

Fully expecting the RCMP to be waiting, Earl appeared at Robie's office. But Robie invited him in and talked to him about birds, as he did with so many young people. When Earl left, with an armload of bird books, he was a committed birdwatcher. In the years to come he accompanied

Robie on birding trips and wrote in 1982, on the occasion of Robie's death, "when I was a boy growing up in Wolfville, it was a red-letter day when he took me afield with him."

Earl Godfrey graduated B.Sc. from Acadia University in 1938 and continued to graduate studies at Western Reserve University. Following university he joined the staff at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Philadelphia, from which he participated in trips to the South Pacific islands. Earl, like Robie Tufts, was also an enthusiastic tennis player. He worked at the museum during the day and played tennis most evenings.

Other bird students from Wolfville (Austin Rand, Ron Smith) followed the same pattern of working at the Cleveland Museum with trips to the South Pacific. Cyrus Eaton, Cleveland industrialist, was the connection. Eaton was originally from Nova Scotia, owned properties in Nova Scotia, and had many friends in Wolfville, including Robie Tufts. Robie recommended Wolfville birders to Eaton.

When a position in ornithology became available in 1947 at the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Ottawa (now the Canadian Museum of Nature), it was offered to Godfrey. He accepted and returned to Canada. Earl travelled extensively, collecting information on Canadian birds and sorting out difficult identification problems. Under his leadership, the museum organized 43 bird expeditions throughout Canada, with 12 into Canada's North. Earl wrote 236 research papers and reviews about birds. Included were monographs on the birds of different regions of Canada, such as *The Birds of Prince Edward Island* and the *Birds of Nova Scotia: Cape Breton Island*. Acadia University awarded him an honorary D.Sc. in 1969.

At the museum, no matter how busy, Earl always took time to talk to people about birds, a practice perhaps learned from Robie Tufts. In particular, he welcomed young visitors to the museum and would personally show them the collections and discuss their bird lists with them. As one author explained, "he wanted to make his passion accessible to others." During one period, Godfrey received over 2,000 letters a year from birders across Canada and internationally. They kept him informed of their sightings, and he mentioned many of them in his *Birds of Canada*.

Godfrey wrote *The Birds of Canada* at home during the evenings. It took seven years to write and required 17 trips across Canada to confirm the information. It includes all birds that, to that time, had been recorded in Canada (519 species). Most birds and their habitats were beautifully illustrated with paintings by John Crosby and drawings and maps by Stewart MacDonald. The book made birdwatching one of the most popular activities in Canada.

In 1977 Godfrey retired from the museum but continued to work as curator emeritus of ornithology. He died in Ottawa on June 8, 2002, at the age of 91. The Hermit Thrush was his favourite bird because of its song: “It has marvellously light overtones. It makes chills go up and down the spine, very ethereal.” A subspecies of another thrush, the Varied Thrush, is named after him, *Ixoreus naevius godfriei*.

Because of his research and writings, many people now share Earl’s passion: “Birds are the most interesting of animals, with their bright colours and interesting movements and habits.”

## NATURAL HISTORY

### Something Fishy?

by Dave Shutler

I guess Beluga caviar has haunted the back of my mind for a long time, but I can’t recall what circumstances brought it to the fore. Once there, it provoked a craving for the stuff. So I began shopping around for the appropriate crackers, but none of them looked big enough. Truth is, I had no idea how large the crackers should be because I had no idea how big Beluga caviar eggs were. I had to do some research.

I knew that precocial birds (ones that leave the nest shortly after hatch) lay comparatively large eggs; the champion is the kiwi egg that weighs about 25 percent of the mother’s mass. In contrast, altricial birds (those with blind, naked babies many of us found as kids, and are going to have to start finding again as part of the renewed Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas) may lay eggs that are only 2 percent of the mother’s mass.

But these eggs have passed through the reproductive tract and had yolk and albumen layered on them. Most mammals don't give their eggs a head start that way. Instead, they anchor fertilized eggs to the placenta, where they are hooked up, mosquito-like, to the mother's bloodstream. Monotremes, such as the platypus, lay eggs that are similar to those of reptiles, but these also include yolk and albumen. I found out that, before fertilization, monotreme eggs are only 0.4 mm in diameter. But, they're weird mammals. In contrast, an unfertilized human egg is only 0.1 mm.

Bigger animals don't therefore have predictably larger cells, so it's likely that Belugas have eggs that are approximately 0.1 mm. But even if their eggs were scaled to body size (they're about 4.6 m, or two to three times the size of an average human), at most their eggs would be at most about 0.3 mm. Before I selected crackers, my mind did some more pondering.

I know that someone gently squeezes sturgeon to extract their caviar, but how the heck would you gently squeeze a 4.6 m Beluga Whale? I'm afraid my research came up with a blank there. I also pondered all the concern we have about Belugas: their populations are declining, and some fingers have been pointed at extremely high levels of some toxins in beluga carcasses. Maybe I didn't want Beluga caviar after all. Maybe I was putting the Beluga squeezers at risk; how much insurance do these people have to pay? Maybe the Belugas need their eggs to replenish their populations. Mammals don't produce anywhere near the number of eggs that fish do; in humans, only about 300–400 reach maturity, and Belugas probably only ovulate at most once a year, meaning they likely produce even fewer mature eggs than humans, so every Beluga egg counts. Besides, how many crackers could I cover with 400 0.1-mm eggs? Third, I probably already have too many toxins coursing through my veins. Fourth, with so few Belugas, how expensive would their caviar be?

It seems my research has all been wasted. Turns out that like many other caviars Beluga caviar isn't from Belugas at all – it's from sturgeon. Beluga caviar gets its name from an area near the Black Sea; nothing to do with whales. An irony is that these species of sturgeon are also endangered, another reason not to buy their caviar. Caviar emptor, I always say.

Thanks to Adele Mullie for her ever-valuable feedback.

## SEEN IN THE WILD

# Big Fish

by Gary Boates

Monday, August 14, 2006 – Saturday and Sunday past were two great days for local windsurfing: 15–20 knots with gusts to 25 knots at Mosquito Point (Sunset Beach).

### Dolphins

While on our boards one kilometre offshore, due north from Wolfville harbour, Dave Chandler and I saw a school of juvenile dolphins on Saturday. They were dark and sleek and appeared to be only three feet in length. They would clear the surface in an arch, nose to tail fin, and re-enter the water only to clear again in a few seconds. But yesterday, Sunday, August 14, was the BIG surprise.

### Sturgeons

I was about 50 metres offshore when I witnessed a huge splash, the size of which was near that of a whale breaching. I have observed many whales while on Maui. However, this fish arched in the air like a marlin or swordfish, and the belly was white. I had never seen the likes of it out on the Basin and have windsurfed there since 1980. Then, a few minutes later, another large splash backlit by the setting sun. The tide was out now to the point where the mouth of the Cornwallis River started to look like a river. Pulling out the lawn chairs, we sat on the shore watching. Then we both saw two more huge breaches.



Apparently they [sturgeons] can be a bit of a hazard if the stories [from the St. Petersburg Times (July 26, 2002)] about leaping sturgeons injuring boaters in Florida waters are to be believed (see [http://igorilla.com/gorilla/animal/2002/sturgeon\\_attack.html](http://igorilla.com/gorilla/animal/2002/sturgeon_attack.html)).

Maybe go out tonight, 5 p.m. onwards, warm coat and a friend, and you may get lucky. For me it was a once in a lifetime experience.

**SEEN IN THE WILD**  
**Summer Birds (and Deer) 2006**  
by Mike McCall

Let's begin with the biggies and work our way down to the small fry.

Jim Wolford checked six local eagle nests from June 23 to 25, and when the dust settled he'd counted eight "large" young birds. He had no luck at the Cape Blomidon site, nor at the nest near the Cornwallis River, but Ron Buckley came across a large fledgling beside the road at the latter nest a few days later, theorizing that the bird probably flapped and walked its way from its home in the tree. In early July Ron Bezanson reported two healthy fledglings at the Gaspereau nest.

Birders made their way to Cape Breton in early August following a report by David McCorquodale of a Western Reef Heron, a bird normally found in West Africa and the Middle East. On August 18 a rare bird alert reported the same species on the Maine coast, where it attracted considerable attention. It seems very likely that it was the CB bird moving south along with Great Egrets.

The only Turkey Vulture report I have for the period is my own sighting on July 3, when a lone bird rocked its way slowly from the east over my Halls Harbour home, circled once, then drifted away to the southeast.

In Palmetter Woods on June 7, Angus MacLean and Nancy Nickerson located two young Barred Owls. Bernard Forsythe's owling year, in which five of

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his nine Barred Owl nests were successful, produced 10 young owls for banding. In one of Bernard's four failed nests the eggs were infertile; the other three were predated by raccoons. Bernard also tended four other nests in Kings County, two on the North Mountain, and two further west in the Valley, which yielded eight young owls. Some years Bernard has banded as many as 40 young owls, compared to this year's total of 18. Bernard suspects the decline may be due to a die-off of small mammals during winter, resulting in a shortage of food for adult owls, leaving them in poor condition for reproduction.



In the years that I've been doing this column and editing the journal, I have no recollection of nighthawks being reported. If this is because the birds have been absent, I'm glad to report they're back. Angus MacLean reported eight at Coldbrook on June 7, and I saw 20+ feeding overhead on the morning of July 24 as I paddled on Big Dam Lake in Keji. John Belbin had welcome sightings of these aerobats near his home in July and August, marvelling at their size (large), speed, and agility. 150 were reported from Lunenburg on August 16, and five days later Sean Timpa reported 40 birds at Bear River. If someone asked me to provide a reason for this mini-irruption, I'd say that a good year for insects is very good for nighthawks, but not for a canoe tripper with a hole in his tent.

### **Oh Deer**

Judy Tufts and Jean Timpa enjoyed following the call of a Black-billed Cuckoo near Stewart Mountain Road (Blomidon) on July 7. On the same expedition they were a trifle alarmed at the behaviour of a doe, which, emerging from cover, snorted, pawed the ground, and seemed inclined to move toward them aggressively enough that the two moved to put some distance between them and the deer. A day or two later, while I was cycling along Gospel Road, a fawn literally bounced out of the bush onto the centre of the road ahead of me and boing-boing-boinged its bouncy way at a good clip. I put on (for me) a burst of speed, but then Ma jumped onto the road from stage right, unaware of my presence until I got quite close. Whereupon she stopped, turned to face me, flicked her

tail, snorted, and had me reaching for my brake levers. I stopped. She seemed to be saying “stay right where you are, sonny,” then took off to chase down her errant child, and both disappeared into the bush. This took place not very far from the scene of Judy’s encounter, so I wonder whether we have a testosterone-fuelled doe on the prowl.

The deadly impact of Hurricane Wilma on migrating Chimney Swifts in November of ’05 is the probable cause of their relatively small numbers at Wolfville and Middleton this year, down markedly from the numbers seen in typical years. For example, between June 28 and July 3 an average of 10 swifts entered the RTNC chimney, compared to several hundred on a typical evening in some other years. Small numbers were also in evidence at Bible Hill and Middleton. Perhaps they disapproved of the new paint job at RTNC and took their business to New Glasgow, where upward of 400 were seen on a few nights.

Reading about shorebird activity isn’t nearly as much fun as watching our migrating visitors. So I will only note that this fall’s migration seemed to get under way locally around July 12 and went on building from then. The usual range of peeps, plovers, Dowitchers, Willets, yellowlegs, and so on strutted their stuff while the close formation antics of thousands of peeps, wheeling and glinting as they turned as one, again amazed watchers at the usual viewing sites: Windsor causeway, the Guzzle, Evangeline Beach, and so on. But I have no information on any unusual sightings.

Richard Stern, puzzled by the absence of Mourning Warblers at his Baxter Harbour digs, made bold to enquire on the NatureNS e-mail forum whether they were missing elsewhere. Responders assured him that they were certainly around in Cape Breton and Pictou County, but Wayne Neily noted that he had not seen them elsewhere in Nova Scotia. It seems possible that, once more, Hurricane Wilma can be blamed for reducing the numbers, but that doesn’t explain why the birds were more in evidence in northeast Nova Scotia than elsewhere.

I blush to tell you that I often take my morning coffee abed and bird through wide bedroom windows that offer a view of lots of trees of all sizes and types. I had several very good mornings in late August and early September, as Kinglets, along with Nashville, Northern Parula, Blackpoll, Magnolia, and Yellow-rumped Warblers darted among the leaves sussing

out their breakfasts. And what I saw was also reported by others who like me were glad to see the little fellows but gnashed their teeth at the difficulty of getting correct IDs of first year birds and of adults in fall plumage. Ah well, I console myself with the thought that, in birding as in love, a little mystery is not a bad thing. (Birding abed tip: Make sure you don't try looking at birds while holding a hot cup of coffee instead of binos. Recovery takes several days.)

Hummers seem to have left (Sep 4), but if I note in my journal, "Hummers gone," one will return to prove me wrong.

Happy fall birding to all.

## REPORT

# **Nova Scotia Migratory Bird Count** **Annapolis Valley (Annapolis, Hants, and Kings Counties)** **by Judy Tufts**

May 13, 2006 – The weather was kinder to us this year. After a cool start to the day under a cloudy (Hants) to partially cloudy (to the west) sky, temperatures rose with the sun as the morning progressed. Easterly winds remained fairly light for most of the morning, with winds shifting slightly to more southerly gust conditions in the afternoon. By noon much of the cloud cover had eased, and the sun's warmth brought temperatures up into high teens, with some areas experiencing 23°C during the afternoon, before dropping back down to cooler evening temps. What a day!

Highlights for the Valley region: a Yellow-throated Warbler found in the Springfield area of Annapolis County is a new species for the provincial North American Migration Count (NAMC), and a rare vagrant at the best of times; and a Great Egret, lingering long enough to be included in the Port Williams, is a first for Kings County. The Valley provided the only sightings in the province (all singles) for the following species: a light-phase Rough-legged Hawk, Short-billed Dowitcher, Lesser Black-backed

Gull, and a Tennessee Warbler, were all in Kings, while an Olive-sided Flycatcher was discovered in Hants. Barred Owls were well represented, with 36 from Kings, again leading the province, and 11 from Hants. Honourable mention here goes to Bernard Forsythe, our dedicated “owl man,” accounting for 27 gorgeous owls (11 were owlets in his boxes).

Most people know one of the best areas to find pheasants is in our beautiful Valley, the three counties standing the test with 75 percent (305) of those upland game birds recorded for the entire province. Hants County enjoyed a wave of Nashville Warblers passing through, noting 80 of the provincial total of 120. The Valley yielded 16 of the 20 warbler species found in the entire count. Woodpeckers, especially Northern Flicker and Downy, fared very well, as did Least Flycatchers, White-breasted Nuthatches, and American Robins (highest number sighted came from Hants). Also, more than 50 percent of the provincial final tally for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Rose Breasted Grosbeaks, and Chipping Sparrows came from our Valley counties. While Northern Cardinals are starting to making inroads around the province, only six managed to be seen on count day in Kings; one wonders how many more remained out of sight. Sadly, only one Northern Mockingbird was found; this species seems to be struggling to survive in Nova Scotia.

This is just a perspective of the results from the Annapolis Valley counties. The final tallies for the full Nova Scotia Migratory Bird Count is now available on the great website that Hans Toom (our new provincial coordinator) has set up: <[www.hanstoom.com/](http://www.hanstoom.com/)>. Click on NAMC for details.

For Valley county coordinators please contact

Hants East: Roslyn MacPhee

Hants West: Patrick Kelly (902 798-3329 or <[patrick.kelly@dal.ca](mailto:patrick.kelly@dal.ca)>)

Kings Judy Tufts (902 542-7800 or <[tandove@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:tandove@ns.sympatico.ca)>)

Many thanks to all of you who participated, for without your wonderful efforts, these results would not be here. It was a great day, and we can be proud of what we all accomplished. In 2007 the Nova Scotia Migratory Bird Count will be held on May 12.

## Spring Nova Scotia Migratory Bird Count —

Species	Anna	Kings	Hants	Tot	Species	Anna	Kings	Hants	Tot
Red-throated Loon	3	3	-	6	Willet	4	34	25	63
Common Loon	9	13	9	31	Spotted Sandpiper	8	11	8	27
Pied-billed Grebe	-	-	2	2	Semi-palm. Sandpiper	-	-	15	15
Red-necked Grebe	4	-	-	4	Least Sandpiper	-	9	-	9
Dbl-cr Cormorant	71	137	25	233	Wilson's Snipe	7	6	25	38
American Bittern	5	-	6	11	Am Woodcock	35	2	22	29
Great Blue Heron	5	27	4	36	Bonaparte's Gull	-	1	-	1
Canada Goose	66	26	140	232	Ring-billed Gull	-	11	-	11
Wood Duck	8	6	2	16	Herring Gull	101	830	71	1002
Gadwall	2	-	-	2	Gt Blk-backed Gull	9	355	26	390
American Wigeon	2	4	-	6	Black Guillemot	-	8	-	8
Am Black Duck	26	211	386	623	Rock Dove	68	194	211	473
Mallard	8	96	41	145	Mourning Dove	108	314	339	761
Blue-winged Teal	4	7	10	21	Great Horned Owl	-	-	1	1
Northern Shoveller	-	1	-	1	Barred Owl	1	31	21	53
Wigeon	-	2	16	18	Common Nighthawk	-	-	1	1
Green-winged Teal	2	46	5	53	Chimney Swift	155	79	-	234
Ring-necked Duck	25	8	33	66	Ruby-thr Hummingbird	14	29	19	62
Lesser Scaup	-	1	-	1	Belted Kingfisher	4	10	10	24
Common Eider	96	50	-	146	Y-bellied Sapsucker	2	5	21	28
Surf Scoter	27	3	60	90	Downy Woodpecker	26	102	44	172
White-winged Scoter	1	-	-	1	Hairy Woodpecker	12	40	47	99
Black Scoter	100	210	-	310	Bl-backed Woodpecker	-	-	3	3
scoter sp.	300	-	-	300	Northern Flicker	23	117	170	310
Bufflehead	25	-	-	25	Pileated Woodpecker	3	9	17	29
Hooded Merganser	1	5	-	6	E. Wood Pewee	-	1	-	1
Common Merganser	4	4	15	23	Y-bellied. Flycatcher	-	1	-	1
Red-br Merganser	-	1	4	5	Alder Flycatcher	1	1	-	2
Osprey	3	2	17	22	Least Flycatcher	5	8	-	13
Bald Eagle adult	-	14	31	45	Eastern Phoebe	-	5	-	5
Bald Eagle imm. *	-	7	14	21	Eastern Kingbird	1	7	-	8
Northern Harrier	5	6	14	25	Northern Shrike	-	-	1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	6	2	11	Blue-headed Vireo	5	80	40	125
Northern Goshawk	-	2	1	3	Red-eyed Vireo	3	16	2	21
Broad-winged Hawk	-	5	5	10	vireo sp.*	11	1	-	12
Red-tailed Hawk	8	41	17	66	Gray Jay	7	3	2	12
Rough-legged Hawk	-	2	1	3	Blue Jay	94	367	302	763
buteo sp. *	2	-	-	2	American Crow	154	648	666	1468
2 American Kestrel	5	5	5	32	Common Raven	15	234	111	360
42					Tree Swallow	749	411	325	1485
Merlin	1	7	1	9	Bank Swallow	82	4	3	89
Ring-neck. Pheasant	40	143	103	286	Cliff Swallow	109	20	-	129
Ruffed Grouse	3	14	16	33	Barn Swallow	230	99	235	564
Virginia Rail	-	2	-	2	Blk-cap. Chickadee	112	406	474	992
Sora	2	3	-	5	Boreal Chickadee	-	5	23	28
American Coot	-	1	-	1	Red-br Nuthatch	9	75	42	126
Killdeer	6	28	23	57	White-br Nuthatch	8	25	10	43
Greater Yellowlegs	3	1	5	9	Brown Creeper	-	1	3	4

\* unidentified or subspecies

## — Results for the Valley (2006)

Species	Anna	Kings	Hants	Tot	Species	Anna	Kings	Hants	Tot
Winter Wren	6	5	4	15	Common Yellowthroat	11	9	4	24
Golden-cr Kinglet	5	34	37	76	Wilson's Warbler	1	-	-	1
Ruby-cr Kinglet	11	92	146	249	Canada Warbler	-	3	-	3
Veery	1	1	-	2	Am Tree Sparrow	-	18	12	30
Swainson's Thrush	-	2	-	2	Chipping Sparrow	16	89	37	142
Hermit Thrush	10	18	46	74	Savannah Sparrow	11	102	65	178
American Robin	134	626	848	1608	Fox Sparrow	-	1	1	2
Gray Catbird	1	3	1	5	Song Sparrow	111	432	340	883
Northern Mockingbird	-	15	-	15	Lincoln's Sparrow	-	1	-	1
European Starling	185	1252	1393	2830	Swamp Sparrow	10	7	28	45
Bohemian Waxwing	2	1	-	3	Wh-throated Sparrow	34	117	131	282
Cedar Waxwing	1	-	1	2	Wh-crowned Sparrow	6	11	7	24
Nashville Warbler	1	13	12	26	Dark-eyed Junco	47	183	307	537
Northern Parula	18	29	16	63	Northern Cardinal	5	6	-	11
Yellow Warbler	31	58	10	99	Rose-br Grosbeak	25	28	15	68
Chestnut-sided Warb	10	3	1	14	Bobolink	21	55	9	85
Magnolia Warbler	4	9	9	22	Red-w Blackbird	553	344	380	1277
Cape May Warb.	-	-	2	2	Rusty Blackbird	3	7	13	23
Blk-thr Blue Warb	1	1	-	2	Common Grackle	229	483	670	1382
Y-rumped Warbler	70	206	219	495	Brn-headed Cowbird	11	19	23	53
Blk-thr Green Warb	47	86	40	173	blackbird sp *	1	4	3	8
Blackburnian Warb	8	-	2	10	Baltimore Oriole	2	1	-	3
Palm Warbler	10	21	59	90	Pine Grosbeak	-	-	8	8
Blackpoll Warbler	-	3	-	3	Purple Finch	81	286	425	792
Blk-and-white Warb	38	55	32	125	Common Redpoll	-	5	7	12
American Redstart	1	1	-	2	Pine Siskin	14	58	65	137
Ovenbird	29	95	19	143	American Goldfinch	122	452	364	938
Northern Waterthrush	8	19	12	39	Evening Grosbeak	53	132	267	452
Mourning Warbler	1	-	-	1	House Sparrow	32	186	194	412

Total: 145 species for the Valley

Time Start	600	530	500
Time Stop	2130	2130	2200

### Owling

Time (hr.)	0.25	0.5	2	2.75
Distance (km)			2	2
Parties (#)	1	2	4	7
Observers (#)	2	4	4	10

### Feeder Watching

Time (hr.)	59	112	69	240
Feeder watchers (#)	25	58	41	124
Feeder stations (#)	23	50	33	106

### Regular

Foot (hr.)	29	81	115	225
Car (hr.)	9	40	170	219

Boat (hr.)	5.5		2	7.5
Bike (hr.)		2	3.5	5.5
Foot (km)	55	126	137	318
Car (km)	118	737	543	1398
Boat (km)	13		5	18
Bike (km)		15	32	47

Parties (#)	12	32	39	83
Observers (#)	16	45	54	115

### Stationary

Hours	1	12	1	14
Parties (#)	2	6	1	9
Observers (#)	5	9	1	15

## REPORT

# 15th Annual Eagle Watch Weekend II

by Jim Wolford

February 4 and 5, 2006 – Thanks to lingering snow on the ground, and in spite of warm and foggy (Feb 4) and warm and rainy (Feb 5) conditions, this weekend was much better for finding groups of Bald Eagles than was the previous weekend. However, the viewing conditions were much worse, with overcast and dark lighting. The best sites for the eagles were at the north end of Middle Dyke Road (west of Sheffield Mills), Woodside (north of Canning at north end of J. Jordan Road), and the junction of Church Street with Highway 358. Scattered smaller groups were along Middle Dyke Road north of Canard Road. And single or paired adults were seen near, or in, six of our approximately 15 local Bald Eagle nests; of course, they are not nesting just yet, but are probably adding sticks, courting, etc. They won't be actually incubating eggs until about March 15–20.

A continuing problem for eagle viewing is the selfish behaviour of some gawkers/shutterbugs who perhaps unthinkingly walk out into the middle of the feeding-site field, or leave their cars on foot to approach other eagles perched just too far for their viewing or photos. What may be the best remedy for this might be the strategic placement of volunteer naturalists in a couple of sites, plus perhaps a few rovers in cars to locate eagles, etc. for the gawkers, and to police them in a friendly, educative way about ethical behaviour for the sake of all viewers as well as the well-being of the birds.

This and several other issues, discussed in the recent consultant's report by Janet Larkman (fall 2005), provide lots of food for thought concerning the festival, the placement of the feeding sites, possible discontinuation of the provision of dead chickens for the raptors, possible alternative foods for them, etc. into future years and decades.

Since last winter I have suspected there are many fewer poultry producers putting out carcasses for the birds of prey. I'm not sure that anyone has a handle on this, but Matt Harvie conversationally agreed with

my suspicions during the festival. Last winter I learned one reason for fewer carcasses being available: Matt told me that lately a much lower percentage of the young chickens dies every day and in total; thus each grower has fewer mortalities per day to dispose.

As far as I know, Matt and Bill Swetnam are the only producers who have moved their feeding sites well away from the farm buildings (voluntarily, since there are no regulations on this from the Department of Natural Resources, despite the talk about such last winter). Talk is cheap, but I have heard everything from one to seven kilometres as the desired distance from buildings.

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## den Haan's garden world

1 mile west of Middleton on highway 1 (902 825-4722)

Christmas Shopping Party – no tax sale

November 30, 6pm–9pm

Lots of entertaining ideas and unique gifts



# **Annual Cyril K. Coldwell Eagle and Raptor Count of Eastern Kings County**

**by Jim Wolford**

Saturday, February 4, 2006 – Our first attempt this year unfortunately was on a very foggy morning, so several groups had little or no visibility. We had 16 field parties as usual, with 32 total observers, a medley of biologists, naturalists, etc. We observed from 10 to 11 a.m., and then most groups reported their results at the Sheffield Mills Community Hall, where the Eagle Watch festivities were continuing.

Aside from the fog, which was patchy and lifted a bit during the hour, the temperature was 4°C, the sky was overcast, and the wind was light. We were fortunate that quite a bit of snow had been dumped on Nova Scotia earlier in the week, and some remained on the ground.

Despite the viewing problems, here are our totals seen for the day:

- Bald Eagle: 214 total (125 adults, 84 immatures, 5 unknowns). Of the 209 age-categorized eagles, 60 percent were adults, 40 percent immatures. Coincidentally, the total was nearly the same as the 217 counted last year.
- Red-tailed Hawk: 61.
- Rough-legged Hawk: only 1 (dark phase).
- Other raptors: one Peregrine Falcon (seen Feb 5 at Grand Pre), one Barred Owl (seen by Bernard Forsythe on Wolfville Ridge), and four Short-eared Owls (seen Feb 5 on the dike west of the Guzzle at northeast Grand Pre). The Peregrine and Short-ears were reported to Judy Tufts by a team of birders from Maine and New Brunswick.

Regarding the distribution of the 214 Bald Eagles counted, the most (53) were seen by the Miltons in area B, north and west of Port Williams to Saxon Street. 34 + 10 were counted west of Sheffield Mills in areas Hi and Hii, respectively. There were 22 + 14 north and east of Canning as far north as Scots Bay. Several other groups had between 10 and 15 eagles; 12 of 15 seen by Bernard Forsythe were at Gordon Young's feeding site along the Lower Sunken Lake Road.

During our Count day and other recent dates, there have been sightings of singles or paired adult eagles at or in their nests at the following locations: Cornwallis River site east of Port William, northeast Starrs Point along Canard River mouth, lower Canard River site southeast of Jawbone Corner, Greenwich north of Noggins Farm Market, and east of Wolfville along Highway 1 at Eye Road. Also, Sherman Williams said that two adults were still in the vicinity of last year's nest that fell down with the youngsters (that didn't survive), at the Sponagle farm site on Oak Island (north of Avonport).

Such sightings make me wonder how many of our overwintering adults from elsewhere have already left us to return to their nesting areas such as Cape Breton? We all know that is a hazard of going too far into February with our count attempts.

Because of the fog, a second count was scheduled for the following Saturday, February 11, 2006. We had 15 field parties, 23 total observers.

Here are our totals seen for the day, which was an excellent day both for eagle concentrations and visibility:

- Bald Eagle: 287+ (eagle numbers minimal because one field party didn't do the survey in the area north and east of Canning to Medford and Kingsport).
- Red-tailed Hawk: 38 (including the nearly all-white Red-tail at Hortonville)
- Rough-legged Hawk: 1 dark phase
- Sharp-shinned Hawk: 3
- Peregrine Falcon: 1
- Short-eared Owl: 4

### **Addendum**

For what it's worth, in late morning (Feb 11) Pat and I drove the roads north and east of Canning. Just east of Fuller's red barn south of Perea, we found 10 Bald Eagles (4 adult, 6 immature) and three Red-tailed Hawks. Thus, we can probably be reasonably certain there were about 300 eagles and 41 Red-tails on Saturday in eastern Kings County. We also found the dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk that is regular where the Canard River crosses Highway 358, so that our total should be doubled for Rough-legs.

## REPORT

# Wolfville 2005 Christmas Bird Count

Wolfville, Dec 17, 2005 – Temperature  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ; 43 field observers; total field-party hours 108 (49 on foot, 57.5 by car, 1.5 by bicycle); total field-party kilometres 911 (91 by foot, 814 by car, 6 by bicycle); total feeder/yard watchers 91.

### Species counted

Canada Goose 314; American Black Duck 789; Mallard 401; Northern Pintail 3; White-winged Scoter 1; Common Goldeneye 4; Hooded Merganser 1; Common Merganser 46; Ring-necked Pheasant 260; Ruffed Grouse 2; Bald Eagle 230; Northern Harrier 6; Sharp-shinned Hawk 5; Red-tailed Hawk 61; Rough-legged Hawk 1; Merlin 6; Peregrine Falcon 1; American Coot 1; Dunlin 45; Ring-billed Gull 34; Herring Gull 1978; Iceland Gull 10; Great Black-backed Gull 1054; Rock Pigeon 435; Mourning Dove 772; Barred Owl 3; Short-eared Owl 2; Downy Woodpecker 61; Hairy Woodpecker 29; Northern Flicker 30; Pileated Woodpecker 5; Blue Jay 651; American Crow 3010; Common Raven 440; Horned Lark 414; Black-capped Chickadee 1194; Red-breasted Nuthatch 19; White-breasted Nuthatch 45; Brown Creeper 5; Golden-crowned Kinglet 40; American Robin 47; Northern Mockingbird 1; European Starling 12,420; Bohemian Waxwing 5; Cedar Waxwing 9; **Cape May Warbler 1**; American Tree Sparrow 89; Chipping Sparrow 8; Savannah Sparrow 59; **Fox Sparrow 2**; Song Sparrow 394; White-throated Sparrow 60; **White-crowned Sparrow 3**; Dark-eyed Junco 1460; Lapland Longspur 12; Snow Bunting 148; **Northern Cardinal 4**; Dickcissel 1; Red-winged Blackbird 42; Brown-headed Cowbird 1; **Baltimore Oriole 1**; Pine Grosbeak 11; Purple Finch 29; White-winged Crossbill 3; Common Redpoll 28; **Hoary Redpoll 2**; Pine Siskin 42; American Goldfinch 936; Evening Grosbeak 95; House Sparrow 209.

Total Species 70, about 28,530 individuals (count week species included Red-throated Loon and Lincoln's Sparrow).

### Field Observers

Peter Austin-Smith Jr., Charlane Bishop, Fen Bishop-Boates, Sherman

Bleakney, Sherman Boates, Larry Bogan, Soren Bondrup-Nielsen, Dennis Brannen, Peggy Crawford, Katie Dailey, Gail Davis, Mark Elderkin, Harold Forsyth, George E. Forsyth, Bernard Forsythe, Glenys Gibson, Jamie Gibson, Merritt Gibson, Tom Herman, Patrick Kelly, Angus MacLean, Stella MacLean, Randy Milton, Terri Milton, Greg Mitchell, Adele Mullie, Lola Mullie, Mike O'Brien, Ian Paterson (compiler), Mike Peckford, Stan Riggs, Barry Sabean, Dave Shutler, Peter C. Smith, Sara Spencer, Richard Stern, Bill Thexton, Brenda Thexton, Jean Timpa, Judy Tufts, Rick Whitman, Jim Wolford, Barry Yoell.

### **Feeder or Yard Watchers**

Agar Adamson, Diana Anderson, Peter J. Austin-Smith, Diana Bishop, Carol Buckley, Ron Buckley, Jan Buley, Nancy Burbidge, Scott Burbidge, Lana Churchill, Sandi Connelly, Ed Connolly, Graham Daborn, Sue Cox, Pat Davis, Pat Dix, Betty Eaton, Joan Eaton, Paul Elderkin, Wendy Elliott, Mary Ellis, Bob Flecknell, George F. Forsyth, Hilma Frank, Hedley Fulton, Mary Sue Goulding, Eileen Harris, Lorna Hart, Avril Harwood, John Harwood, Meaghan Hawes, Pat Hawes, Heather Hennigar, Terry Hennigar, Gail Herbin, Maxine Hill, Phyllis Hiltz, Dave Hirsch, Marg Horne, Bob Horne, Isobel Horton, Winnie Horton, J.P. Huang, Sandy Kempton, Jean Leung, Linda Lusby, Ron Margeson, Shirley Marston, Pat Martell, Del MacInnes, Mac MacInnes, Sheila McCurdy, Terry Murphy, Edna Mutch, Gary Ness, Andy Nette, Linda Nette, Nancy Nickerson, Linda Pearson, Terry Pearson, Dorothy Perkin, Mary Pratt, Ladny Richmond, Gordon Robart, Marg Russell, Linda Sacouman, Donald Sam, Helen Shaw, David Silverberg, Yvette Silverberg, Peter C. Smith, Marty Snyder, Sandy Stevens, Ed Sulis, Mary Anne Sulis, Martin Thomas, Dianne Thorpe, Jean Timpa, Chris Toplack, Dave Tracy, Lois Tracy, Judy Tufts, Lynn Walker, Gertrude Waseem, Dave Webster, Jim Wolford, Don Wright, Irene Wright, Shirley Wright, Betty Yoell, Sheila Young.



# Eastern Annapolis Valley Weather

## Summer 2006

by Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station, NS

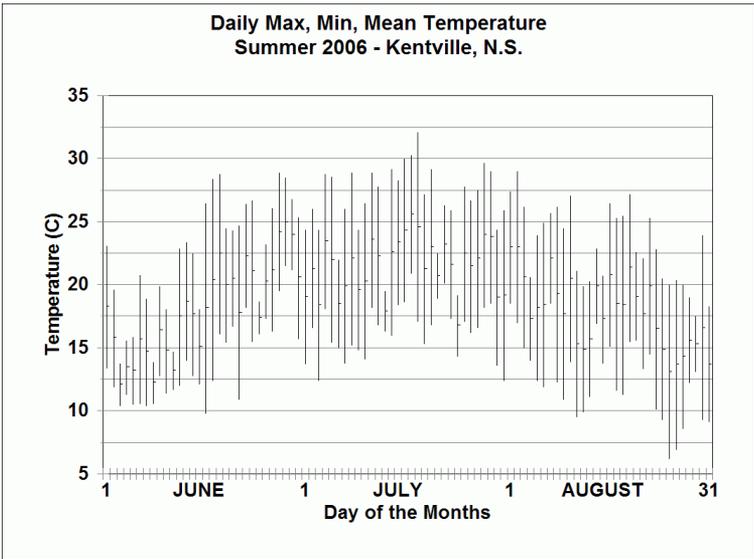
	Mean daily max. temp (deg.C)	Mean daily min. temp. (deg.C)	Mean daily temp. (deg.C)	Total precip. (mm)	Bright sunshine (h)
<b>June</b> (45 yr. average)	22.3 (21.9)	14.0 (10.2)	18.1 (16.0)	222 (67)	137 (212)
<b>July</b> (45 yr. average)	26.7 (25.0)	16.3 (13.6)	21.5 (19.4)	129 (69)	226 (231)
<b>August</b> (45 yr. average)	23.1 (24.3)	12.5 (13.3)	17.8 (18.8)	65 (88)	234 (230)
<b>Season</b> (45 yr. average)	24.1 (23.8)	14.3 (12.4)	19.1 (18.1)	416 (224)	597 (673)

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

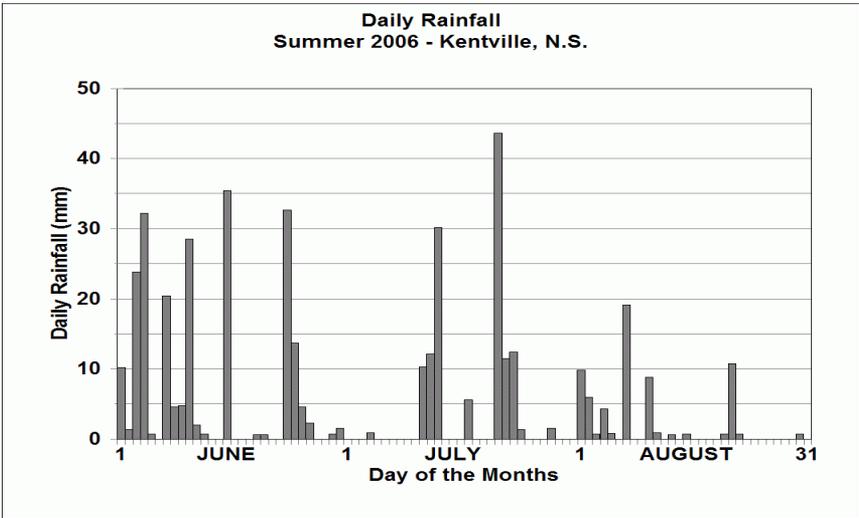
Look at the rainfall and total bright sunshine for June in the table above. Notice that we had our season's quota of rain in that one month. Note also that June also received only two-thirds of expected bright sunshine.

In general, it has been a warmer summer than average, but that has been true for most summers in the last few years. This year, the mean minimum temperatures exceeded their respective averages to a greater extent than the mean maximums did. I certainly do remember a lot of warm nights in June and July. To illustrate this, I have made a table of the differences between the mean minimum and maximum temperatures and the corresponding long-term averages:

	Min (°C)	Max (°C)
June	+3.8	+0.4
July	+2.7	+1.7
August	+1.1	+1.2
Season	+1.9	+0.3



If the days are overall warmer, then both the maximum and minimum would be equally above average, but here we see that June and July had significantly higher minimums than maximums. As a result, on a whole, the summer season was warmer by 1°C, mostly because of the warmer nights.



Warm nights usually mean humid or cloudy weather, and we certainly had that. Rainfall in June was three times the average, twice for July. Only August was “dry,” with slightly below average rainfall. The whole season had 85 percent more rain than a “normal” summer. I have included the rainfall graph to show how well distributed the watering of our lawns was this summer. The soils on my property are droughty sands, and due to the abundance of rain my lawn this year is unusually green for late-summer conditions.

Very seldom have I seen such a low fraction of bright sunshine hours in a summer month as we had in June. July was a bit below and August a bit above average in sunshine hours, but by so little that they would still be considered normal in that category. It was June entirely that gave the season its below average (88%) of bright sunshine hours.

Now that summer is coming to an end we have the normal cool nights and warm days that I think of when I remember Nova Scotia summers.

## **What’s in the Sky?**

**by Roy Bishop**

New Moon: September 22, October 22, November 20, December 20  
Full Moon: October 7, November 5, December 4, January 3  
Autumn begins September 23 at 01:03 ADT, winter December 21 at 20:22 AST

### **The Naked-eye Planets**

Mercury is the featured planet this autumn. Usually hidden in the Sun’s glare, Mercury is generally visible only for a couple of weeks, a couple of times each year. Between November 8 and mid-December this year, there are three reasons to look for Mercury:

1. On Wednesday, November 8, Mercury passes directly in front of the Sun, appearing in silhouette against the solar disk. Astronomers call this a transit. You may recall the publicity surrounding the transit of Venus

on June 8, 2004. Transits of Mercury occur on average about every eight years; thus they are uncommon, but not rare like transits of Venus. This November's transit is visible in its entirety from most of the Pacific, but only the first 100 minutes of the event will be visible from our area. On the afternoon of November 8, Mercury will begin to cross the face of the Sun at 15:12 AST. Our view of the transit will be cut off by sunset before Mercury reaches the midway point of its five-hour passage in front of the Sun.

DO NOT look directly at the Sun on November 8 in an attempt to see Mercury. The tiny disk is too small to see with the unaided eye, and you risk partial blindness if you stare at the Sun without a proper solar filter. The transit can be observed safely with an astronomical telescope that has a securely mounted, proper solar filter in front of its objective lens or mirror. The Blomidon Naturalists Society has scheduled a field trip for this event (see page 9).

2. For a few weeks after its transit, Mercury is well placed in the morning sky before sunrise. It reaches greatest elongation ( $20^\circ$ ) from the Sun on November 25 and is easily visible as a star-like object low in the east-southeast dawn twilight from about November 20 until December 10. Set your alarm clock and look about 06:30 in late November, 06:45 in early December.

3. On the morning of December 10, from about 06:40 until the sky becomes too bright around 07:15, Mercury is in a very tight group very low in the southeast with two other planets: Mars and Jupiter. All three planets will be within  $1^\circ$  of each other. Jupiter is the brightest, Mars the dimmest. Such a close conjunction of three bright planets is rare. Hope for a clear sky that morning, pick a viewing site with a low southeast horizon, locate your binoculars, and set your alarm clock. The grouping is nearly as good on the mornings of the 9th and 11th.

### **Other Planets**

The evening skies this autumn are remarkably free of bright planets. Only the telescopic planets Uranus and Neptune are well placed for viewing at a convenient hour.

Venus was visible low in the east-northeast morning twilight during

September, but by late September this “morning star” becomes lost in the dawn. Venus passes behind the Sun on October 27 and emerges low in the southwestern evening twilight in December.

Mars passes behind the Sun on October 23 and slowly emerges into the morning sky during December.

Jupiter has been very bright but low in the southwestern sky on September evenings. It vanishes into the evening twilight during October, passing behind the Sun on November 21, and emerging in the dawn twilight during December.

Saturn is well-placed in the morning sky this autumn. By December it rises in late evening and is high in the southern sky as dawn approaches.

### **Planetary motions**

Note that three planets (Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter) enter the morning sky this autumn, but Venus does the opposite, moving past the Sun into the evening sky. The closer a planet is to the Sun the faster it moves, and that is why Venus does the opposite of Mars and Jupiter when these three planets pass behind the Sun this autumn. Mercury, the fastest planet of all, joins Mars and Jupiter in moving into the morning sky because it passes in front of the Sun.

### **Geminid Meteor Shower**

The Geminids are the best meteor shower of 2006. They peak on the night of December 13/14. The Moon does not rise until well after midnight, near 00:45, so the evening sky will be dark, provided you are in the countryside, away from the light pollution of towns and yard lights.

The shower is named for the constellation Gemini that occupies the part of the sky from which the meteors radiate. Gemini will be low in the east on the evening of December 13.

Geminid meteors travel at 35 kilometres per second, which gives them a kinetic energy equal to nearly 150 times the explosive energy of the same mass of TNT. Thus, despite their small size (comparable to a blueberry or smaller), these lumps of cometary dust produce a bright trail as they burn up high in Earth’s atmosphere, about 120 to 80 km above the ground.



Note that two astronomy field trips are scheduled, for October 21 and November 8 – see pages 8–9 for details.

**REPORT**  
**Nova East 2006**  
by Roy Bishop

Nova East is the annual star party hosted by the Halifax Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC), the Nova Central Astronomy Club (NCAC) of Truro, and the Minas Astronomy Group (MAG) of Wolfville. Nova East is held in late summer around the time of the New Moon at Smileys Provincial Park near Brooklyn in Hants County.

This year Nova East was on the last weekend in August, from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning. About 80 people attended the star party, and a dozen speakers presented talks on a variety of topics, including relativity, photography, birdwatching, and telescopes.

Both Friday and Saturday nights were clear, and many telescopes were pointed at the heavens. The public were invited on Saturday. Views of the Sun were featured that afternoon, and Sherman Williams led a nature walk in the surrounding forest. After sunset, many people joined the astronomers to view planets, stars, nebulae, and galaxies.

Most readers of this newsletter live in the Wolfville end of the Annapolis Valley. If you have an interest in astronomy, come to the monthly meetings of MAG. We meet on the second floor of Huggins Science Hall at Acadia, usually on the second Saturday of each month at 7 p.m. (SSS, the Second Saturday at Seven). Call 542-3992, or send an e-mail to <rg@ns.sympatico.ca> and ask to be put on the MAG list.

## 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

