

Blomidon Naturalists Society



WINTER 2013 NEWSLETTER

Volume 40 · Number 4

❖ THE BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY ❖

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

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BNS Newsletter

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BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY
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:

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WOLFVILLE, NS B4P 2C5
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Digital photographs should be submitted to
doug@fundymud.com

**Submission deadline for Spring:
February 28, 2014**

Out and About

by Jean Timpa, editor

Do you remember when and where you were 40 years ago? And what significant natural history events have impressed you the most during this time period? Climate change was not a concept then, so not even part of our vocabulary. We did one bird count a year, the Christmas one, and we were a bit concerned about some declining numbers of some species – not only birds, but animals such as our native moose (as opposed to imports from Alberta), marten, several of our bats, and some plants as well. Acid rain and air pollution from the Boston states (that includes New York City and Philly) were just beginning to rear their ugly human-made chemistry.

Gradually, lists of endangered and threatened species were compiled and debated as to the whys and wherefores. Ideas were tossed about as to whether we should try to save vanishing plants and animals to which we had grown accustomed and about which we had become sentimental. Environmental ethics was becoming a whole new philosophy, perhaps starting with the publishing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. If you can locate a copy of it, read at least the introduction; you will find that, unfortunately, little has changed for the better.

People have always talked about the weather, but in the last 40 years, storms and destruction have become monsters that we would never have imagined. Nor would we have thought that the Arctic ice would be ever so close to vanishing in another few years from now. We feel so helpless, especially when 19 more Canada Council research scientists have lost their jobs, three in Halifax, just before Christmas. This is not the job creation bragged about ad nauseum, except in western Canada, Scrooge!

What do you remember about environmental changes and battles since 1974, here or somewhere else in the world? I'd love to have some musings on our past 40 years to publish in upcoming 40th anniversary Newsletter issues for 2014. Funny things that happened on field trips will also be gratefully received.

A hearty ho-ho-ho thanks to all of you for any little or big deed you might have done for BNS in 2013: coming out to programs and field trips and hopefully bringing friends, leading such events, contributing to the Newsletter, serving on the board, contributing to our wonderful calendar, and helping with or contributing to the Green Dragon young naturalist camps. Ed Sulis informs me that we had 158 members in 2013, the highest number he has seen during his tenure as treasurer. Our highest count was 186, and I think we could reach that again or exceed it if everyone makes it one of their very special New Year's resolutions. The more talent we have to draw on, the more likely that BNS will still be a healthy, vibrant organization in another 40 years.

CLUB NOTES

Happy Birthday to Us!

ON March 26, 1974, the very first meeting of the newly formed Blomidon Naturalists Society was held. Hard to believe, but that was 40 years ago.

So 2014 is a big birthday year for BNS, and we would like to celebrate that in as many ways as we can. If you have any suggestions, please share them with any of the board members, whose contact information is on the BNS website and at the front of every Newsletter.

We would like to collect photos from past events and field trips. If you have any, please forward them to Doug Linzey by March 1.

Send digital photos to doug@fundymud.com. All paper photos will be returned.

If you have any ideas for field trips, perhaps replicating a field trip of the past, such as the Fairy Shrimps in the Blomidon Park vernal pond with Jim Wolford or banding baby Barred Owls with Bernard Forsythe, we would like to know. Also, if you have any ideas for lectures or have any particular presenters in mind, please let us know. Contact James Churchill with ideas for trips and talks.

CLUB NOTES

Board of Directors Report

By John Owen, BNS president

YOUR board had a regular meeting on November 7, 2013. The following is a summary:

BNS BURSARY: Acadia is presently reviewing candidates.

BNS 40TH ANNIVERSARY: In 2014 BNS will be celebrating its 40th anniversary, specifically on March 24, the date of its inaugural meeting. A decision to hold a dinner or a picnic will be made at the February board meeting.

NEXT AGM: The 2013 Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday, November 18, 2013. Nominating committee members Jean Gibson Collins and Rick Whitman will present the proposed board members and request for any nominations from the meeting.

FINANCE, MEMBERSHIP, GREEN DRAGON PROGRAM: The current balance of the BNS bank account is \$8,400, and there is \$69,700 in the endowment fund. There are no outstanding bills. Overall, BNS income is down and expenses are higher. There are now 158 paid members for 2013, up from 148 in 2012.

The board felt it was prudent to review the Green Dragon program

to determine if it meets the objectives of the Blomidon Naturalists Society and if it should continue under the existing or a revised format.

TWITTER ACCOUNT: BNS will establish a Twitter account to communicate with members. It will provide news about field trips and monthly meetings to community members who might not be reached by e-mail, NatureNS, or the BNS website alone (the younger demographic). It will also communicate news about our accomplishments and involvement in local nature and conservation efforts and hopefully increase our involvement in nature conversations among local organizations and naturalists.

The next BNS board meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2014.

CLUB NOTES

Upcoming Events

WE will be holding several special events in 2014 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of BNS. Watch the Newsletter, our website (www.blomidonnaturalists.ca), the BNS and NatureNS e-mail lists, BNS Twitter feed (@bns1974), and other local media for information as the schedule of events unfolds. We will also be holding a special speaker series throughout 2014 – *BNS: 40 Years and Counting* – featuring local experts reflecting on changes observed since the early days of BNS and providing vision for the decades to come.

MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at 7:30 p.m., usually on the third Monday of each month, in Room BAC241 of the Beveridge Arts

Centre of Acadia University on the corner of Main Street and Highland Avenue, Wolfville. Parking is available off Highland Avenue, on Acadia Street, and at the parking area around the Robie Tufts Nature Centre. Everyone is welcome.

Monday, January 20, 2014 – *Laser Imaging of the Valley: from Resolving Geological Landforms to Modelling the Impacts of Sea-level Rise in the Future*, with Tim Webster.

Tim Webster is a research scientist at the Applied Geomatics Research Group (AGRG) and an instructor at the Centre of Geographic Sciences (COGS) in Middleton. Tim's research focuses on flood-risk mapping, shoreline delineation, and LiDAR surveys. Tim is also the chair of the Nova Scotia branch of the Canadian Institute of Geomatics and an adjunct professor at Acadia and Dalhousie Universities.

Monday, February 17, 2014 – *Annual Show and Tell Night*. Open to all. Come to view or bring along slides, pictures, specimens, collections, fossils, videos, computer stuff, favourite books and magazines, or anything that might be of interest to fellow naturalists. If you have digital images and would like to submit them in advance, contact James Churchill (681-2374, jamesLchurchill@gmail.com).

Monday, March 17, 2014 – *Kathryn and Nathan Gray: Sibling Supernova Superstars*, with Kathryn and Nathan Gray.

Kathryn Gray, a middle school student from Nova Scotia, first became interested in the night sky from the many family camping trips to astronomy camping star parties. Having seen her father find several supernovae, and hearing about a 14 year-old girl who found one, she decided that she could do that too. In late 2010, at the age of 10, Kathryn found her first supernova, a star ending its life in a large explosion. The following media fanfare propelled Kathryn to global star status and took her on a whirlwind tour and interviews, the highlight being a conference, Starmus, in the Canary Islands, and

the Glamour Women of the Year Awards in New York City! Kathryn is still searching for her second supernova but now has competition from her younger brother, Nathan.

Monday, April 21, 2014 – *The Evolution of Birding Culture: Examples from Nova Scotia and Elsewhere*, with Ian McLaren. 📖 BNS: *40 Years and Counting*.

Ian McLaren is an emeritus professor at Dalhousie University's biology department, which he joined in 1966. He has been a field naturalist (admittedly focused on birds) since age 12, but was educated (at McGill and Yale) into a professional life as a marine ecologist, working on the life histories and population biology of marine plankton, seals, and other marine life.

Monday, May 19, 2014 – *Old-growth Forest Remnants in the Maritimes*, with Jamie Simpson.

Jamie has a background in biology, forestry, and law. He has worked as a forester, arborist, writer, and advocate for sensible forestry practices. He has received awards from the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters for his conservation work, as well as the Environmental Law award at Dalhousie University. Jamie is the author of *Restoring the Acadian Forest: A Guide to Forest Stewardship for Woodlot Owners in the Maritimes* and *Journeys Through Old Forests: A Narrative Guide to Eastern Old-Growth Forests*.

FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER NATURE EVENTS

Saturday, December 21, 2013 – *46th Annual Kingston Christmas Bird Count*. Wayne Neily (765-2455, neilyornis@hotmail.com) will be compiling the count again this year. It covers a circle with a 12 km radius centred at the intersection of Main and Bridge Streets in Kingston. All are welcome to participate as field observers or, if you live within the circle, as feeder observers, but you must contact the compiler in advance to be included in the planning.

Saturday, December 21, 2013 – *Winter Solstice Family Frolic* – We invite everyone to welcome the winter season and continue the 5,000-year tradition of celebrating the return of the Sun after the longest night of the year. We will meet around a roaring bonfire at Noggin's Corner Farm and set off for a hike through the centuries-old pine and hemlock forest. We will pass an 18th century Acadian cellar, Poor Farm graveyard, and a huge Bald Eagle nest. We will look for tracks and signs of wildlife, call for owls in the deep woods, and view the stars from the dykes (weather permitting). We will make our way back to the bonfire for hot apple cider and share a toast to a winter season full of light and good cheer to all. Charlane Bishop (542-2217) and Harold Forsyth (542-5983) will be the leaders. Meet at Noggin's Corner Farm in Greenwich at 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 29, 2013 – *West Hants Christmas Bird Count* – Patrick Kelly (472-2322, patrick.kelly@dal.ca) will be compiling the count again this year. All are welcome to participate, but please contact the compiler as soon as possible so that you can be included in the planning. Following the count, around 5 p.m., all participants are invited to a tally count and potluck supper, location to be determined.

Saturday, January 28, 2014 – *Winter on Snowshoes*. Snow transforms the landscape into stories that unfold as we follow tracks of foxes, mice, and other mammals. A Snowshoe Hare hops along and is pounced on by a Great Horned Owl. Without snow to show us the tracks, wing marks, and perhaps a drop of blood, we would not have known the drama took place. We will interpret the various stories that have unfolded, and we will explore the properties of snow (its insulative value, for example). Meet at the Wolfville waterfront at 10 a.m. for a two-hour, non-strenuous hike at a nearby location to be determined by weather and snow conditions. Soren Bondrup-Nielsen (582-3971) will lead this hike on snowshoes or skis.

Saturday and Sunday, January 25 and 26, 2014 – *Eagle Watch Weekend 1*. The Sheffield Mills Community Hall will host its annual pancake and sausage breakfast with naturalist displays, videos, crafts, and art show. A short drive around the area in the morning will possibly offer a sight of more than 100 Bald Eagles and many hawks. Maps and directions can be obtained at the hall or any time at the information post on Middle Dyke Road. For more information, check the website (www.eaglen.ca) or contact Richard Hennigar (582-3044, hennigar@xcountry.tv).

Saturday and Sunday, February 1 and 2, 2014 – *Eagle Watch Weekend 2*. A repeat at the Sheffield Mills Community Hall.

Friday, February 14, to Monday, February 17, 2014 – *Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)*. Organized by the National Audubon Society, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada, the GBBC is again tied-in through eBird and will go worldwide. See the website: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>.

Saturday, February 22, 2014 (10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) – *Orchid Display and Sale*. The Valley Orchid Group's annual display of orchids in the conservatory of the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre, Acadia University. There is usually a presentation in the downstairs auditorium about orchid growing and people in the lobby selling orchids along with specialized materials and instructions on how to help them grow well. This is a sure cure for the winter blahs, with only the very best of the best orchids. You will see plants that you will not believe are real – they are so beautiful, perfect, and complex in their structures. Photography is encouraged.

Sunday, March 9, 2014 – *Valley Birding*. Leader: Patrick Kelly (472-2322, patrick.kelly@dal.ca). This will be a joint trip with the Nova Scotia Bird Society. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Wolfville waterfront. We will be looking for raptors, lingering winter visitors, and rarities in and around Canning and Grand Pre. Dress warmly and bring a lunch.

Saturday, April 12, 2014 – *Herbert River Canoe Trip*. Leader: Patrick Kelly (472-2322, patrick.kelly@dal.ca). The Herbert River is fairly easy, with lots of water at this time of the year, and it covers a great variety of terrain. There may be spots where it is running a bit faster, or where there are new obstructions from the trees, etc. that have come down over the winter, so we may have to wade in a few places or stop to scout out a bend. The trip will be four to five hours long, depending on our pace. Bring life jackets, canoe or kayak, and paddles. If you have access to a life jacket but not a canoe, there will likely be extra room in one of the canoes. Check with the leader to be sure.

Meet at the Newport rink parking lot at 9 a.m. Take Exit 5 from Highway 101 and follow Highway 14 east for about 10 km to the village of Brooklyn. At the cenotaph, keep left and follow Highway 14 north for just under 1 km. At the intersection (Petro-Canada station), Highway 14 turns right. Continue straight on Highway 215 (Note the YIELD sign. you do NOT have the right of way!) The rink is on the right as soon as you exit the intersection. We will be leaving some cars there as we will actually be putting into the river farther upstream. Rain date: Sunday, April 14. Please register with the trip leader so you can be notified if there is a change of plans.

April (date TBA), 2014 – *Clean Across Nova Scotia*. Last year nearly 15,000 Bluenosers participated in this province-wide community clean up (see the map of 2013 participants here: <http://clean.ns.ca/programs/waste/cleanacrossns/clean-up-locations/>). This is as simple as choosing a location and showing up. We would like to register a BNS team this year. If you know some locations that could use some beautifying, or are interested in participating, please contact Shanna Fredericks (sjfrdrc@gmail.com) or James Churchill (james-Lchurchill@gmail.com).

April/May (date TBA), 2014 – *Amethyst Cove Rockhounding and Photography*. Building on the success of the first trip in October 2013, Fundy Rocks members David and Chris Sheppard will lead a second

rockhounding and photography trip to the Cape Split area. This trip will comprise a descent into Amethyst Cove and a trek along the shore to Amethyst Cove proper. Date and time will be tide dependent and announced soon.

May 21, 25, 29, and June 2, 2014 – *Maritimes SwiftWatch Spring Migration Roost Counts*. Maritimes SwiftWatch participants will count Chimney Swifts at roost sites during spring migration on the above dates. This is part of a national monitoring effort to understand Chimney Swift population trends. Nova Scotians are asked to continue searching for, and reporting, active nests and roosts in both anthropogenic sites (e.g., chimneys) and natural areas. To share a Chimney Swift sighting, report a new roost or nest site, or help monitor an existing site, please contact Maritimes SwiftWatch (mar-swifts@birdscanada.org, 1-506-364-5196), or consider sharing your sightings and roost counts on their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Maritimes.Swifts – omit specific address information if posting here), NatureCounts (http://www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/mar_swift/), or eBird. For more information, see <http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/acswifts/>.

OTHER EVENTS TO WATCH FOR IN 2014

Citizen Science Night – a night to showcase and foster our DIY spirits (inspired by our annual Show and Tell nights)

Marsh Madness – an inter-generational bioblitz at Miner’s Marsh, Kentville

Status and Population Trends of Pollinators from Belize to Berwick, with Steve Javorek, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 🐝 *BNS: 40 Years and Counting*

Big Tree

by Ed Sulis

[The original date (Sep 7) for this rescheduled field trip (Oct 19) was carried through to the *Kings County Advertiser*, so big-tree events were held both dates.]

SEPTEMBER 7 – Several adults and 8–10 young people, many from Laura Churchill Duke’s Valley Family Fun organization, enjoyed a beautiful warm sunny afternoon checking out the big trees in the Mill Brook ravine. While the adults were very cautious when traversing the steeper slopes, the young ran, rolled, or slid on their backsides down the ravine, and found the brook – and several wet feet resulted. A good time was had by the water, among the trees. Energy was expended and information exchanged. An information hand-out defined the large Red Oak that was the object of this afternoon in the ravine.

October 19 arrived as a bright and sunny and warm fall day. Some leaves had fallen, and most that remained on the trees were nicely coloured. The large Red Oak, the subject of this event, had been accurately measured previously using tape (Ed Sulis), transit (Doug Twohig), and mathematics (solution of right-angled triangles): height 32 m (105 ft.), diameter 135 cm (53 in.), and crown spread 26 m (85 ft.). The score for this tree – as derived from the system used to compare trees by the Nova Scotia Forest Technicians (sum of height in metres plus diameter in centimetres) – is 167. The GPS location is 45° 04.262' N, 064° 29.446' W, and that is approximately 8,000 m closer to the north geographic pole than to the equator.

After looking over a few display items in the shed – such as locally processed oak lumber, oak wood projects – and measuring degree

of dryness in lumber and firewood, the group of 34 dispersed to the ravine to check out the various trees.

Some highlights we observed in the ravine:

- A number of mature Eastern Hemlock, White Ash, Red Oak, Scotch Pine, Sugar Maple, Norway Maple, clean American Beech
- Young and spreading hemlock, beech, Red Oak, Sugar Maple, Norway Maple
- Invasive species, as pointed out by George Alliston, Glossy Buckthorn and Japanese Knotweed. Prior to this day I was in denial: no Glossy Buckthorn here. Now over 75 percent has been cut out; the largest was six inches at the butt. Common Buckthorn was also present.
- Much of the small Norway Maple had been cut out, and most will be removed over the next year, the spaces filled in with Sugar Maple, hemlock, Red Oak, and White Pine. Three or four very large Norway Maples will remain, as they have been there for a long time and their seed will not be allowed to spread. George Forsyth provided a definitive way to identify the small Norway Maple and the small Sugar Maple by observing the terminal buds, so few mistakes will be made in the “weeding.” Many Sugar Maple seedlings are present, and selective thinning will provide stock for transplanting. Along our highways and power lines, pine, hemlock, and other small trees can be found in abundance. The opportunity to select and dig up a few before the large shovel-mounted bushwackers get to them could prove interesting.
- George Forsyth, with knowledge and sharp eye, also identified a rough-looking Sugar Maple that may be bird’s-eye or have patterned grain.

Much to gain, much to learn, much to appreciate from one small wooded area in the ravine by Mill Brook, by the swimming hole that has been known and used for generations by all ages. This outing was made special for the group by Doug Twohig, George Forsyth, George Alliston, and others who provided the technical and expert

assistance during this afternoon with the trees. Consider this: anyone with a large tree who wishes to have it measured could set up the next Big-Tree event. We will come, measure on the spot, and celebrate.

[Note: Nature Nova Scotia sponsors a big-tree registry and invites all to contribute, or at least visit the website to see some of the trees that your fellow naturalists have submitted: <http://www.naturens.ca/node/10>.]

FIELD TRIP

Kejimkujik National Park Seaside

by Ruth E. Newell

AUGUST 24 – Seven enthusiastic naturalists, including leaders Ruth and Reg Newell, met at Kejimkujik National Park Seaside (formerly known as the Kejimkujik Seaside Adjunct) for a botanical and birding field trip. With near perfect weather conditions, sunny and warm with a slight breeze, we headed out at 11 a.m. At the trail head a posted sign alerted us to the possibility of a bear in the area. With only slight trepidation we headed down the trail. As it turned out we did not see any bears during the four hours we were in the park.

One thing we noticed almost immediately was that many shrubs were in full berry mode (hence the bear warning, I suppose). Mountain Holly (*Nemopanthus mucronata*) bushes were full of striking bright-red berries. The berries of Witherod (*Viburnum nudum* var. *cassinoides*), also called Wild Raisin, were still a pale pink, indicating they were not quite ripe. Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia* spp.) fruit was ripe and very tasty, as were the blackberries and wild raspberries. Appropriately, we even found a small amount of Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos urva-ursi*) with ripe berries.

We had not gone very far when we found a beautiful Green Snake on the trail. After posing for multiple photos, he went on about his business.

Being late in the summer, numerous members of the aster family (Asteraceae) were in full bloom. We observed a plethora of goldenrods and asters along the trail edges. Some of the species we observed (and pondered) included Downy Goldenrod (*Solidago puberula*), Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*), Bog Goldenrod (*Solidago uliginosa*), Rough Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*), Bog Aster (*Oclemena nemoralis*), Tall White Aster (*Doellingeria umbellata*), New York Aster (*Symphotrichum novi-belgii*), and Rough-leaved Aster (*Eurybia radula*). Not to be outdone, sowthistles (*Sonchus* spp.) and Bull Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) were profusely flowering and fruiting on the beaches.

Horned Bladderwort (*Utricularia cornuta*) was spotted in flower, in several bogs along the trail. This is an insectivorous plant. It has tiny sac-like structures (bladders) with a trap-door mechanism. When sensitive hairs (trigger hairs) are touched by an unsuspecting aquatic organism, the trap door opens suddenly. The organisms are then pulled or sucked into the bladder – which maintains a negative pressure within – and become trapped, eventually to be digested by the plant. Other insectivorous plants in evidence along the trails were sundews (*Drosera* spp.) and Pitcher Plants (*Sarracenia purpurea*).

An interesting plant spotted on the sand beach while we were enjoying our lunch turned out to be Golden or Maritime Dock (*Rumex maritimus*). This is an unusual-looking dock species with the stem covered in dense golden flower clusters.

During the course of our walk, a valiant effort was made to find the tiny, elusive Curly Grass Fern (*Schizaea pusila*). This is a most intriguing species of fern that is so tiny one nearly always must get down on hands and knees to find it. This species was previously observed within Keji Seaside by both leaders a number of years ago in bog habitat. We unfortunately had no success finding it on this day.

A small patch of Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla xanthochlora*) was discovered near an old foundation. This is a non-native species, likely

introduced to North America by early settlers for its medicinal qualities.

Several orchids were found during our hike, including the Club Spur Orchid (*Platanthera clavellata*) and the Small Purple-fringed Orchid (*Platanthera psycodes*).

Although most of our attention during this trip was directed toward plants, birds were not totally forgotten! Birds observed included cormorants, gulls, Semipalmated Plovers, and yellowlegs.

FIELD TRIP

Shell Camp Lake

by Larry Bogan

SEPTEMBER 28, 2013 – The day was perfect for a paddle on one of Kings County’s undeveloped lakes. It was a sunny day with clear blue skies. The temperature was moderate and ideal for working (paddling) in shirt sleeves. Most fantastic of all, there was very little wind, giving glass-smooth water on the lake. This made for great imaging opportunities along the way.

We met at 8:30 a.m. in South Berwick and were on Peter Lake by 10 a.m. The gravel road from the Dalhousie Road across Crown land to the access was in good shape, since it had recently been graded. Only a few larger rocks had to be moved. Peter Lake is the smaller lake between the road and Shell Camp Lake; the two are attached through a marsh, navigable by canoe. The Red Maples by the shore were beginning to show their reds, and this added to the beauty of the day.

After passing into Shell Camp Lake, we passed the large rock island, but no gulls were present. In the past, this island had been a nesting spot for Great Black-backed Gulls. We went on down the

southern arm of the lake into the outlet that goes to Mistake Lake to the south. This late in the season, we saw no birds and only heard the common ones in the woods surrounding the lake. After paddling about 45 minutes we stopped for a coffee break at a convenient large rock landing spot. We lingered for half an hour, then headed north after viewing the outlet area.

There are some nice islands and bays in the northern section of the lake. We reached the largest island after an hour's paddle and landed on its southern shore to have lunch. On the way we encountered a Common Loon and spotted another on the opposite shore. The water was so smooth that the loon left a long wake easily visible from a distance. Similar wakes were seen from fish (or mammals) swimming near the surface. While eating lunch and enjoying scenery, we watched dragonflies flit about and minnows swim in the shallows near shore.

We were reluctant to leave our special place in the sun but headed back to the launch site about 1 p.m. We passed closer to the rock island this time and spotted several Song Sparrows and a Spotted Sandpiper. The paddle finished at 2 p.m., and after about 9 km of total paddling we were glad to stop. Unfortunately, Alison and I were the only participants.

NATURAL HISTORY

Nest Report 2013

by Bernard Forsythe

THE nesting season actually began on December 13, 2012, when I found a Rock Pigeon with one egg in a nest under the Hwy 101 overpass crossing Gaspereau Avenue. Although this nest failed, Rock Pigeons re-nest throughout the year. An even earlier date was



BRIAN MCKIBBIN

November 1, 2012, when my backyard Barred Owls returned to their feeder for the 21st winter. The first egg was laid on March 23, 2013. An eager crowd of close to 100 owl enthusiasts, including many children, visited us to watch the two young owls being banded on May 15. The young left the nestbox on May 26.

Winter 2012–13 was easy on Barred Owls, resulting in eggs laid in 14 of my nestboxes. Predation by raccoons became a problem. They located and robbed six boxes. At banding time, I visited young from both the successful nests and boxes put up by several other people interested in owls. A total of 37 young Barred Owls were banded this year. Other bird species using our nestboxes included Wood Duck in one box, Hooded Mergansers in four boxes, and Tree Swallows in one. Once again, Black-capped Chickadee nestboxes also experienced loss to raccoons when four of six nests suffered predation.

The Goshawk versus Barred Owl nest site saga last updated in

the winter 2012 BNS Newsletter continues. In September 2012, I installed a new owl nestbox 36 m south of the old Goshawk nest that the owls had occupied. In February 2013, the Goshawks reclaimed their old nest. Surprisingly, during a May visit to the new owl box within sight of the incubating Goshawk, I discovered that it held a female Barred Owl on two eggs. The Goshawk nest was successful, but sadly a predator got to the owl's nest. A Red-tailed Hawk nest and a Peregrine Falcon nest also fledged young. Of the 12 Bald Eagle nests I followed, 10 fledged young, but 2 nests were not revisited.

On April 28, Sandra and I walked up to Blomidon Park to check an owl box, where we met Alex and Helen Lindsey. They kindly showed us a Woodcock on a nest. Later in May, three of the four eggs hatched. Phoebes had two broods in their nest under the White Rock bridge. However, one young from the second brood perished when its leg became entangled in nesting fibres around the nest rim. Two of three Alder Flycatcher nests fledged young. Cliff Swallows returned to last year's Greenfield site. During a hike along the ravine trail in the Wolfville Watershed nature reserve, I spotted a Swainson's Thrush nest at arm's length containing three eggs. This is one of only a few locations one may still hear their lovely sliding flutelike song. Of the warbler clan, I located only two Yellow Warbler nests. This shows limited time searching or, more likely, old eyes not as sharp as they once were. Our feeder Northern Cardinals nested during July in the old field behind our house.

As previously reported, goldfinch nesting sites were lost when the Hwy 101 ditches were mowed in 2011. In just two years, sucker regrowth is high enough in places to be attractive once again for goldfinches. Thirty-one goldfinch nests were found along the roadside. In several old fields, nine nests of Cedar Waxwing, another later nester, were located. The last waxwings fledged September 13. The long season ended when the final goldfinches left their nest on September 18. A total of 131 nest cards from 28 different bird species were submitted to the Maritime Nest Records Scheme.

An Invasive Mosquito in Nova Scotia

by Murray Colbo

AEDES JAPONICUS (Theobald), also known as *Ochlerotatus japonicus*, is a mosquito species native to Japan, Korea, and northeastern Asia. It was first detected in New York and New Jersey in 1998 by adult-mosquito surveillance programs. It has now been detected in the southern United States, although it is apparently more abundant in northern states and is now known in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and a number of western US states. This mosquito has also been introduced to Europe. By 2008 Jeff Ogden had collected it in Truro, thus confirming its spread to Nova Scotia within a decade. In July 2013, I identified them at my house in Coldbrook from a collection reared from larvae in a 20 L bucket. I had thought they were unrecorded in Nova Scotia, as I was unaware of Jeff's collection.

As noted, the species may be designated by two scientific names, which illustrates a problem commonly encountered in biology. Recent taxonomic studies in 2004 indicated that the *Aedes* subgenus called *Ochlerotatus* should be raised to the level of genus. Now, many *Aedes* in Canada and from elsewhere in the world are also designated in the genus *Ochlerotatus*. Not all accept this, so the species may be referred to by either name in the literature. This taxonomic revision of organisms, while necessary as our understanding of their evolutionary relations improves, does make seeking out information on a species more challenging when their names change, or occur both ways, depending on your taxonomic view. I, being conservative, have kept them in the genus *Aedes*. *A. japonicus* was probably introduced more than once into the United States in used tires from Japan, which is ironic, as the United States is full of used tires. The

Japanese tires were brought in for recycling because of their high natural rubber content.

Mosquito larvae live in non-flowing water, and they feed by filtering microorganisms from the water with head fans. Thus, habitats must have a source of decaying organic matter and/or algae to provide a larval food source. The larvae also breathe air through siphons on the tips of their abdomens and thus need to be able to reach air with their siphons, normally at the surface of the water. One local mosquito larva uses air from within aquatic plants by sticking a spear-like siphon into the plant. Because they respire from the air, they can live in aquatic habitats with very low oxygen levels.

The original native habitat of *A. japonicus* was rock pools, but human technology has developed many artificial containers that hold water in a similar fashion to rock pools; this and a number of other species elsewhere have readily colonized them when filled by precipitation and decaying plant material and/or algae. Like several other *Aedes*, the egg stage is the survival stage and can withstand drying and the cold of winter. *A. japonicus* eggs are laid on the sides of the rock pool or container; therefore, tires or other containers that do not have water in them may still have viable mosquito eggs attached inside them.

This species also has several generations a year, breeding from early spring to late fall. In fact, Jean Timpa had larvae at least up to November 28, 2013, in a bucket behind her house in Wolfville. In my experience, having such a long breeding period is unusual for this part of Canada, as many species breed once in spring. Although salt marsh and floodwater *Aedes* species have more than one generation, they generally lay diapausing eggs in late summer and fall that do not hatch until spring. We have other genera of mosquitoes that breed in summer from eggs laid by overwintering adult females that mate in fall and hibernate for the winter. *A. japonicus* adult females feed on the blood of both mammal and bird hosts. Only female mosquitoes take blood meals for egg development, although not all mosquito species need a blood meal to develop eggs. It has been found that

A. japonicus is able to transmit several viruses, but how effective it is throughout North America is still being evaluated.

We normally do not see a lot of native mosquitoes in containers here, but obviously that habitat has been taken by *A. japonicus*. Therefore, keep containers clean, or enjoy this rather beautiful little critter with the female's annoying vampirish habit of needing blood from you or some other handy beast.

NATURAL HISTORY

Flowering Plants at Risk in Nova Scotia

by Martin Thomas

I N Canada over 500 plants and animals are at risk, and in Nova Scotia over 40 are in this category, with an additional 20 or more if coastal waters are included. It is no surprise that most of them are now rare and seldom seen; however, most can be found in their remaining habitat with a bit of effort. Because of their precarious situation, none of these flowers should be picked, and their habitat should not be disturbed. A photograph is the best way to record the presence of these species.

Past and remaining species at risk have been placed in five categories by experts in the biology of the species concerned: 1) *Extinct*, or no longer present on Earth, 2) *Extirpated*, no longer found in a province, 3) *Endangered*, in immediate risk of extinction or extirpation, 4) *Threatened*, would be endangered if limiting factors were not mitigated, and 5) *Vulnerable/special concern*, covers species likely to become more at risk if their environment deteriorates in any way.

Two pieces of legislation concern species at risk: federally, the Species at Risk Act (SARA) applies nation-wide, and provincially, the Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act (NSESA). Additionally, COSE-



Rock Rose (Helianthemum canadense) near Exit 17E Hwy 101



Pink Coreopsis (Coreopsis rosea) Wilson's Lake shore



Plymouth Gentian (Sabatia kenedyana) Wilson's Lake

MARTIN THOMAS (ALL PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE)



Eastern Lilaeopsis (*Lilaeopsis chinensis*) *Tusket Estuary*



Ram's Head Lady's-slipper
(*Cypripedium arietinum*)
Avon Peninsula

wic, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, is responsible for endangered species nationally.

There is a range of reasons why plants that formerly had a secure existence here are now in trouble; habitat loss is high on the list. In some cases the habitat available to a species is limited and has been greatly reduced by human activities. A good local example of this is the Rock Rose (*Helianthemum canadense*), which lives in specific areas of sand barrens, one of which is at Kingston. Over 97 percent of this habitat in Nova Scotia has disappeared through agricultural use, road building, ATV use, and changes due to invasive species. In the case of the Kingston sand barrens, Highway 101 runs right through the habitat, and another large area was used in building the air base.

Several threatened flowering plants in Nova Scotia are found on lakeshores or in shallow water in the southwest part of the province. Cottage building and associated activities such as dock building and ATV use destroy large areas of suitable habitat. Alteration of water levels from dam building for power generation is also a problem. Examples of plants affected by these activities are the Plymouth Gentian (*Sabatia kennedyana*) and Pink Coreopsis (*Coreopsis rosea*). Others include Water Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*),



Thread-leaved Sundew (*Drosera filiformis*) Port Latour Bog



Golden-crest (*Lophiola aurea*) boggy wetland Digby Neck

Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), and Redroot (*Lachnanthes caroliniana*).

An example of a habitat in this part of Nova Scotia that supports many rare plants is the gypsum-rich soils around Windsor and on the Avon Peninsula. There are other examples further away. The Ram's-head Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*) is a quite small and very beautiful endangered orchid found only occasionally. Another, very showy orchid more commonly found in these areas is the Yellow Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*). This habitat is threatened by gypsum mining, erosion, forestry, and agriculture.

Bogs and marshes would at first sight be unsuitable for road construction and housing. However, this is not the case, as such areas can be filled. To add to these threats, any activities in the vicinity of wetlands can alter the flow of ground and surface water into wetlands, thereby altering the environment to the detriment of threatened and endangered species. Along major highways, large areas to the sides have degenerated to poor habitat due to drainage changes. One bog



ATV damage, Kingston sand barrens

plant that is vulnerable to this kind of degradation is the very lovely Thread-leaved Sundew (*Drosera filiformis*), an insectivorous plant confined to just a few suitable areas in the province. A second example, Golden-crest (*Lophiola aurea*), is more widespread but still vulnerable to habitat change.

The examples above are in freshwater or land environments, but shoreline marine habitats are open to similar threats. Eastern Lilaeopsis (*Lilaeopsis chinensis*), a tiny plant of sheltered, muddy estuarine shores, has been affected by shoreline development, road and bridge construction, and erosion of its habitat.

All these wonderful plants and other rarities deserve every effort to help them to survive. Unfortunately, the present political regimes do not see the necessity of preserving these rare plants, and activities to their detriment continue. Naturalists must make every effort to convince governments that these and other endangered species must be protected.

Our Oregon Trail

by John Belbin

[This is a combination and expansion of two “Natural Focus” articles published in *Hantsport News and Views*, August and September 2012. The paper is no longer in production.]

IN June 2012 we were invited to a wedding in rural Oregon on the slopes of Mount Hood, Oregon’s largest mountain and potentially most active volcano. We first enjoyed the Columbia River gorge, a dry fruit-farming area of great beauty, where we stayed for several days. We then set off on our own trek to explore Oregon, driving down the entire 350-mile-long Oregon coast to the California Redwoods and returning through the Cascade volcano belt that dominates the interior of the state. After two weeks we were back in Portland, having put 2,200 miles on the car and seen a huge variety of natural landscapes and wildlife of all kinds. One of the great impressions we had is how proud the people of Oregon are of their natural wonders; in many locations local volunteers spend their days helping visitors enjoy the many nature reserves and parks.

The coastline is especially rich in natural history, with over 140 protected and designated nature-viewing regions scattered along Highway 101. One old-fashioned, family-style and very busy resort called Seaside has 40 excellent nature-viewing spots within just a few minutes’ drive. Many of the birds and animals are very unusual and cannot be seen anywhere else. Most sites have walking trails and excellent facilities. At the Sea Lion Caves, they even have an elevator for visitor access to the only mainland breeding cave for Sea Lions in the continental USA. The southern coast is very rugged and undeveloped; some 1.2 million seabirds nest on the islands just offshore.



JOHN BELBIN

At the High Desert Museum near the wonderful town of Bend, they put on a display of free-flying raptors (hawks, eagles, and owls). This is about the only way an average person will ever get close to such fierce predators except when they are caged in a zoo. Having a large Harris’s Hawk zoom right over your head and be close enough to touch is quite an experience. Needless to say, you get some wonderful photographic opportunities. Nearby you can see seven different and very large volcanoes from a single roadside park, six of them snow covered. There are 19 major volcanoes in Oregon. You could easily spend weeks visiting the variety of natural locations – don’t miss it if you ever get the chance.

When the explorers Lewis and Clarke were searching for a way for people to migrate to the west coast they stopped for the night on a beautiful island in the Columbia River between what is now Washington and Oregon. They were guests at a very large Native American village called Cathlapotle at Wapato Portage, a site that had been used for over 2,000 years. The site became famous because of a quote made by William Clarke: “I slept very little last night because of the

noise made by the swans, geese, and ducks – they were immensely numerous and their noise horrid.”

This beautiful place and the teeming wildlife is still there. It is a 5,280-acre National Wildlife Refuge called Ridgefield. We decided to visit it on our way to Mount St. Helens, the site of the 1980 volcanic explosion that was the deadliest in US history. Mount St. Helens is only about 40 miles away to the northeast. Ridgefield is huge, but it does have a 4.2-mile auto tour route combined with a 1.2-mile trail through the marshes, and this is what we took. Basically, you drive very slowly along, stop frequently, and use your car as a blind. The wildlife does not seem to mind, and you can take photos from the windows of your car. The volunteer ranger told me that a couple of people had sighted a Yellow-headed Blackbird, and we decided it would be our target, as I had never seen one before. There were herons, egrets, cranes, geese, and ducks everywhere you looked. The Canada Geese are a dusky subspecies found almost nowhere else. Rails and bitterns were frequent. I saw several Northern Shovelers with their huge, deformed-looking bills. About the only place you can often see those in Nova Scotia is at Annapolis Royal. We walked the trail and saw swallows and Marsh Wrens and many others. Just as we were about to give up and were in fact heading back to the park entrance, there was the Yellow-headed Blackbird in all its glory. The other tourists probably wondered what the crazy man was getting so excited about, as I'm sure they all missed it. I admit I got out of the car and ran madly (for me) down the side of the road, ignoring everyone else who might have been interested. Fifty-one species of birds, mostly seen without getting out of the car and without a scope – a great day!

We went from there to climb up Mount St. Helens (photo, p. 31), although the falling rain and snow at the top didn't make for very good viewing. After 30 years the damage is still appalling to see. You can have no idea of the size of the destruction without seeing it. Entire mountain valleys still lie completely destroyed and totally barren. There are some signs that life is taking over, and in the parking lot right on the edge of the crater a small frog was hopping

about. When the mountain blows again the entire tourist bureau and road system will vanish in seconds. It is sobering to realize that if the mountain erupts to the south instead of the north, that wonderful site Ridgefield, the Columbia River, and even the city of Portland could be threatened. You feel very small and useless when you see the power in the Earth.

Monarch Butterfly – Update 2013

by Larry Bogan

OUR field of Common Milkweed grew well this year, but there were no Monarch caterpillars to eat it. Last year we raised over 50 adults and tagged 25. However, none of our tags were found by Monarch Watch this year. Jim Wilson tagged 86 on August 24, 2012, at Point Lepreau, NB, and had two tags recovered in Mexico last spring.

Usually we see the first adult Monarchs from the south in mid-June, and by mid-July they are mating and laying eggs. This year we saw none until August 2. At that time I saw two in our field but only one that stayed around for a while. Even it (gender undetermined) disappeared in a couple of weeks. Soon after that I also saw several single Monarch adults in other fields in the Cambridge-Coldbrook area, but investigations of the Common Milkweed growing there found no eggs or caterpillars.

Monarch Watch (monarchwatch.org) reported that the population of overwintering Monarchs in Mexico in 2012–13 was down for a third successive year and at the lowest level ever recorded. I have searched several online sources for reports this year; some results:

- There were many fewer adult Monarchs moving north this year.
- Those Monarchs that were seen appeared as much as a month later than expected.
- Practically no migrating Monarchs have been seen in the Eastern United States and Canada. Ontario has seen few, and most of New England and the Maritimes have no reports of sightings.
- On both the NatureNS and NatureNB e-mail forums there were only three or four reports of adult Monarch in August and none in July. As of September 4, ebutterfly.ca had only two Monarch sightings in Nova Scotia, two in New Brunswick, and one in PEI.

I suppose if Alison and I had not been raising Monarchs for the last five years, we would not notice their absence in our environment. But to have absolutely no breeding this year is a shock and a worry. I hope the population of this species begins to bounce back next year.

NATURE COUNTS

*Kingston, NS –
Christmas Bird Count 2012*

by Wayne Neily

OUR 45th annual Xmas Bird Count (XBC) in 2012 was a record one in many ways and a highlight of the year for me. We had a record-high number of observers (total and field), a record number of feeding stations observed, and so definitely our best coverage of the circle in the history of the count. The total number of species was also a record (72), surpassing the seemingly impossible 21-year-old total of 68 set in 1991, despite the fact that none of them were new to the cumulative list for our count. See the items with aster-

isks below for more records (unusual or noteworthy observations are **bold-faced**). We cannot expect to do this well every year – weather as well as effort is always a factor – but as the 2013 season approaches, let's take inspiration from it and ensure that we get the best coverage that we can.

Kingston, NS, 44°59' N, 64°57' W (all points within a 24-km diameter, centre intersection of Bridge and Main Streets in Kingston, as described in 1969, to include Margaretsville, Dempsey Corners, Aylesford, Nicholsville, South Tremont, Nictaux Falls, and Middleton).

Conditions: December 22, 2012, 06:45–17:30, 20:30–21:00, 22:00–22:30. Temperature +4 to 9°C. Wind E, 0–15 km/h. Snow 0–10 cm deep. Still water mostly open, moving water open. Morning overcast to partly cloudy; afternoon mostly cloudy.

Observer effort: 123* observers, 27* in field in 11 parties (daytime), 96 at 65* feeders. Time and distance: 313.75 hours at feeding stations, 1.0 hour and 36.0* km owling; total field party-hours 87.0* (day), and party-km 924.5* (day) (19.0 hr and 30.0 km on foot, and 68.0 hr* and 894.5 km by car).

Birds observed: Canada Goose 69, American Black Duck 58, Mallard 123, Common Eider 26, Surf Scoter 19, White-winged Scoter 8, Long-tailed Duck 6, Red-breasted Merganser 13, Ring-necked Pheasant 19, Ruffed Grouse 8, Red-throated Loon 3, Common Loon 9, Horned Grebe 3, Red-necked Grebe 11, * **Northern Gannet 9*** (2nd record, RBS & RLB), **Turkey Vulture 1** (3rd record, CD & BJ), Bald Eagle 9a, 2i, **Northern Harrier 1** (6th record, DC et al.), Sharp-shinned Hawk 3, Northern Goshawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 26, Purple Sandpiper 3 (L), Herring Gull 248, Great Black-backed Gull 10, **Black-legged Kittiwake 1** (6th record, RSt), **Thick-billed Murre 1** (2nd record, RSt), **Razorbill 5** (7th record, RSt), alcid (sp.) 100+* (RSt), Rock Pigeon 351, Mourning Dove 632, Barred Owl 2, **Belted Kingfisher**

3* (5th record, 2 parties), **Red-bellied Woodpecker 1** (6th record, K&MB), Downy Woodpecker 70 (H), Hairy Woodpecker 73,* Northern (y-s) Flicker 2, Pileated Woodpecker 15,* Northern Shrike 1, Canada (Grey) Jay 4, Blue Jay 516, American Crow 9126,* Common Raven 438,* Black-capped Chickadee 1203,* Boreal Chickadee 2, Red-breasted Nuthatch 91 (H), White-breasted Nuthatch 76,* Brown Creeper 14,* Golden-crowned Kinglet 22, American Robin 1 (L), **Northern Mockingbird 1** (5th record, TC), European Starling 3833,* Bohemian Waxwing 250, **Eastern Towhee 1** (3rd record, C&DT), American Tree Sparrow 8, Chipping Sparrow 8 (H), Song Sparrow 22, White-throated Sparrow 32, **White-crowned Sparrow 1** (2nd record, AO), Dark-eyed (s.-c.) Junco 539, sparrow (sp.) 12, Snow Bunting 200, Northern Cardinal 18,* Red-winged Blackbird 2, Common Grackle 43, Brown-headed Cowbird 112, Pine Grosbeak, 12, Purple Finch 9, Red Crossbill 31,* White-winged Crossbill 48, Common Redpoll 75, Pine Siskin 4, American Goldfinch 968, Evening Grosbeak 122, House Sparrow 90

Total species 72*; total individuals **19,887***

Observed during count week but not on count day: Cedar Waxwing.

NOTES

H = high count

* = record-high total for the 45 years of this count

L = low count

Observers (field): Brian & Mary Barkman, Ron Blackert, James Churchill, Lana Churchill, Ashley Colville, David Colville, Keegan Colville, John DeCoste, Claire Diggins, Michael Gemmell, Barbara & Patrick Giffin, **Sheila L. Hulford**, Brian Jones, Kevin Kornelsen, Lyndon Kornelsen, Viala Kornelsen, Frances Lourie, Kristin McCurdy, Gary Myers, Larry Neily, **Wayne Neily (compiler** – 562 Messenger Rd., Tremont, RR 6, Kingston, NS B0P 1R0 Neilyornis@hotmail.

com), Daniel Penner, Twila Robar-DeCoste, Roger Short, Richard Stern

Observers (feeder stations): Spike & Carole Allen, Webster Andrews, John & Sandy Antoniuk, Karin & Manfred Baecker, Ron & Sharon Baker, Al & Gloria Blizzard, Bob & Karen Campbell, Kathy Chapman, Tony Chaulk, David & Heide Cogswell, John Collins, Cathy Crook, Kenneth Crowell, David & Edna Curry, Tom Cushing, Ella & Howard Dalton, Valerie Despres, Bea Deveau, David Diggins, Harold Elliott, Shirley Fahie, Bobby Featherstone, Joan Featherstone, Lloyd & Mary-Lou Graham, Cary Graves, **Carol** & Leonard **Gregory**, Mark Hamilton, Lilli Hand, Arlene Healy, Doreen Healy, James Healy, Donna & Ron Hill, Patricia House, Sibella Hulford, Michael Inkpen, Ted Kajdas, Jack & Karen Keddy, Roseann & Russell Keddy, Don & Ruth Kelly, Cathou Larocque, Andrea & Garry Leeson, Judy MacKenzie, Pam MacLachlan, **Patricia MacMillan**, Myrna Maye, Jason McInnis, Ethel McLane, Weldon Morash, Sandy Morrison, Ruth Myers, Ann O'Donnell, Alton & Darlene Palmer, Daniel Patterson, Lillian Pellerin, Debbie Proctor-Scoville, Noreen Reagh, Ike Reid, Wendy Rodda, Ron Rogerson, Kay & Shirley Sanford, Tony Scoville, Howard Selig, Helen Sharp, Herb & Judy Snell, Trish Stoelting, Ralph Swinamer, Holly Theriault, Barb Thompson, Charles & Doris Tye, Judy & Malcolm Uhlman, Margaret Waldner, Margot Walker, Audrey Wellwood, Jane White, Robert Wolfe, Ann Young. [Feeder observer coordinators **bold-faced**].

Habitat analysis has not been requested by Audubon since the 1970s, but we have long wanted an updated one, and ours was revised in 2012 by David Colville of the Applied Geomatics Research Group: (Acadian) Forest 55%, arable land, shrubs, and early regeneration areas 27%, towns (“urban”) and roads 10%, wetlands 4%, sand and gravel (“bare”) 1%, salt water 2.5%, fresh water 0.5%. A more detailed version of this re-analysis, including a map done by David and a comparison to the 1971 analysis, will be provided soon to field observers (and others on request).

Dedicated to two of our long-time field observers who passed away during 2012: Bill Caudle, a Nova Scotia Bird Society past president, who led the party covering our Middleton zone for many years, and Ed Dodd, who, with his wife Joyce, provided the coverage for our Millville zone through 2011.

NATURE COUNTS

Wolfville Christmas Bird Count 2012

by Alison Bogan

THE 2012 Wolfville CBC took place on a cold and blustery Saturday, Dec 15. Thanks to the combined efforts of 84 feeder watchers, 57 field observers, and 2 compilers, we reported 69 species and a total of 24,636 individual birds on count day (CD). Keen birders also identified an additional 12 species during count week (CW), the three-day period before and after CD. Field observers spent over 150 hours observing, more than half of it tramping on foot through woods, fields, and shoreline. They travelled over 900 km, 150 on foot, the remainder by car. The feeder watchers logged 133 hours. Full results can be found on the Audubon web site: www.audubon.com.

Some highlights:

- 5 CW observations of waterfowl (Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Wood Duck) that were scarce on CD
- 1 Ruddy Duck
- 294 Bald Eagles, 1 Coopers Hawk, 4 Merlins, 3 Peregrines, and an Osprey flying over Wolfville
- almost 1,500 crows in the field, a far cry from the tens of thousands seen in the past when they roosted in the Kentville area



RICK WHITMAN

Barred Owl

- Eastern Starling was the most abundant bird (6,280)
- 3 Red-bellied Woodpeckers reported by 3 separate field observers
- 1 Marsh Wren seen in Miners Marsh, thanks to persistent searching
- 3 warbler species: Pine, and Orange-crowned on CD, and a Palm during CW
- Dark-eyed Junco was most abundant sparrow species, 4 observers reported Chipping, and there was 1 Savanna, a Swamp, and 2 White-crowned on CD, plus a Fox Sparrow during CW
- 2 reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at different feeders and Evening Grosbeaks in the field and at feeders

A big thank you to all the field and feeder observers, Jim Wolford who organized and compiled the feeder watchers, Liz and Richard Stern for graciously hosting the post-count pot luck, and Judy Tufts for coordinating the dinner.

Nova Scotia Migration Count *2013 – Eastern Kings County*

by Larry Bogan

SATURDAY, May 11, 2013 – The field surveys and feeder watches tallied 97 species in eastern Kings County this year. Last year we counted 113 species, but that included western Kings County, which is not included this year.

There were 25 field observers and 17 feeder watchers. The field observers spent 89 party-hours on foot and driving, while the feeder watchers spent 32 party-hours watching feeders. The field parties walked 94 km and drove 397 km (38 km by bicycle).

The Kings County NSMC is only one of 12 such counts across Nova Scotia this year. Participation was down from 18 counts last year. The provincial coordinator this year was again Chris Pepper. Province-wide there were 162 observers (299 km on foot over 243 hours, and 3,032 km in cars over 211 hours) and 230 feeder watchers (520 hours). Almost 50,000 birds were counted, with a total of 176 species.

The tally below is a summary of the count for some of the migrating species in eastern Kings County, including both field and feeders. For complete details, see the Blomidon Naturalists Society website (direct link to 2013 NSMC report: <http://blomidonnaturalists.ca/node/426>). The website report also lists the names of all the participants. For details of the areas covered and reports from previous years, see <http://blomidonnaturalists.ca/node/194>.

Selected Migrating Species in Eastern Kings County,
May 11, 2013

Warblers

- Nashville 2
- Northern Parula 69
- Yellow 5
- Chestnut-sided 4
- Magnolia 4
- Black-throated Blue 3
- Yellow-rumped 157
- Black-throated Green 47
- Blackburnian 2
- Palm 26
- Black-and-White 37
- Ovenbird 45
- Northern Waterthrush 13
- Common Yellowthroat 3

Sparrows

- American Tree 2
- Chipping 64
- Vesper 4
- Savannah 36
- Song 401
- White-throated 122
- Dark-eyed Junco 57
- Tree 134
- Bank 6
- Barn 13

Other

- Broad-winged Hawk 1
- Peregrine Falcon 3
- Turkey Vulture 1
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet 21
- Hermit Thrush 42
- American Robin 430
- Grey Catbird 4
- Northern Cardinal 30
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak 1
- Bobolink 1
- Red-winged Blackbird 311
- Rusty Blackbird 2
- Common Grackle 168
- Brown-headed Cowbird 6
- Baltimore Oriole 1
- Purple Finch 113
- American Goldfinch 297



MARY PRATT

Birding Uncorked

by Peter Austin-Smith

WHILE sitting in the sunroom – one hand holding my binoculars, the other with a good glass of wine – watching avian antics around and below the bird feeder, my eyes strayed to an article in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology magazine (*Living Bird*, winter 2012) having to do with cork trees. It seems that just a few years ago we were alerted to the plight of these trees possibly becoming endangered because of the market for cork, primarily, of course, for use as stoppers in wine bottles. But wait, what’s this? Cork trees are endangered –not for overuse, but for underuse? Well yes, as more and more wineries are using metal screw-tops or plastic stoppers for their wine bottles, this has meant that cork tree groves are now under threat due to declining demand for cork.

These plantations and their trees have been providing cork for many decades in a sustainable manner. Indeed, the article notes that “cork farming is a centuries-old profession in the Mediterranean and is a star example of a sustainable industry.” According to ecologists, cork forests are biodiverse areas that provide habitat for the Iberian Lynx as well as Spanish Eagles, Black Storks, and thousands of migrants, including Common Cranes and millions of Common Wood Pigeons.

Cork trees live up to 250 years and grow in groves within which there are meadows of grasses and wildflowers. Cork farmers each decade slice an inch-thick piece of bark from the tree, which it will grow back in time. The cork industry is worth up to \$2 billion, but there is the fear that as cork demand falls the cork oak forests may be left to decline or to be cleared to make way for other plantations or resort areas. These cork forests are important ecosystems that

provide biodiversity, water quality, resistance to desertification, and other services, which of course are not recognized as benefits of the cork industry. Perhaps, as noted in the article, informed consumers should be willing to help financially, as has been done for the bird-friendly coffee or sustainable seafood industries.

So the next time all you backyard bird watchers buy wine, the lesson here is, for the birds, put a cork in it. Bottoms up!

NATURAL HISTORY

The Chimney Swift Disaster of 1974

by Roy Bishop

LATE May usually is a time of warm days, trees turning green, and flowers blooming. Late May of 1974 was different. Beginning about May 20 the air turned cold, and Tuesday, May 28, arrived with a high northeast wind and wet snow.

The sky above the Acadia University campus that day was filled with hundreds of Chimney Swifts, birds that spent the nights in the chimney at the southwest corner of University Hall. One after another the swifts were falling out of the sky, some momentarily clinging to the sides of trees and buildings, but then falling and dying in the slush.

Like many students and staff, I spent much of the day walking the campus picking up birds, two out of three of which were already dead. The ones still alive seldom tried to escape my hand, but just opened their eyes a bit and sometimes gave a high-pitched peep. Their keel bones were sticking out, flight muscles wasted from the lack of insects during the past several days. Some swifts in the air were eating snowflakes, a desperate act, which only hastened their death.

Live birds were taken to the biology department, where cages, heat lamps, dried insects, and baby food had been hastily assembled. Many of those birds also expired from the ordeal, although some did survive and were later released.

WEATHER

Fall Weather 2013, Eastern Annapolis Valley

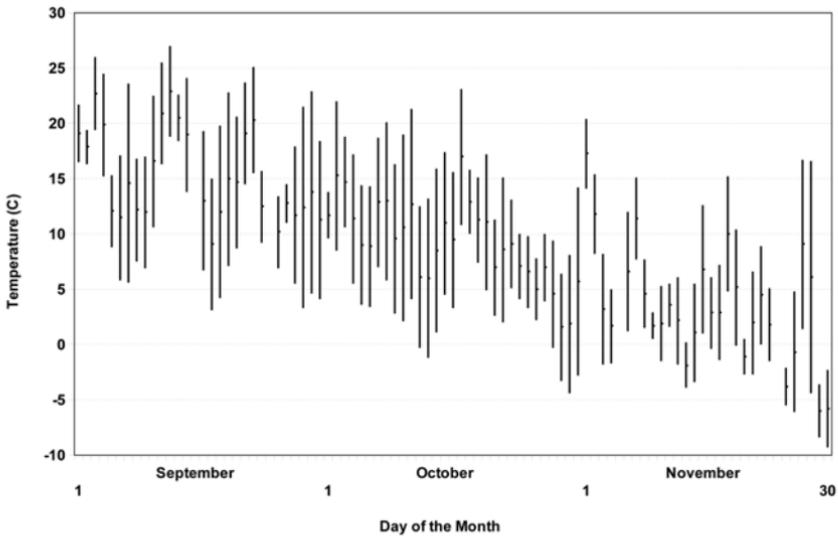
Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station

Autumn of 2013 had typical weather although a bit wetter and warmer than average.

	Temperature			Precipitation
	Max (°C)	Min (°C)	Mean (°C)	(mm)
September 2013	20.5	10.2	15.4	102.0
(30 yr. average)	(19.4)	(9.2)	(14.3)	(87.0)
October 2013	14.7	3.7	9.3	116.0
(30 yr. average)	(13.4)	(4.5)	(9.0)	(93.0)
November 2013	7.6	-0.6	3.5	85.0
(30 yr. average)	(7.5)	(0.1)	(3.8)	(104.0)
Season	14.3	4.3	9.4	303.0
(30 yr. average)	(13.4)	(4.6)	(9.0)	(284.0)

Source: Environment Canada data for Kentville, NS (<http://weatheroffice.gc.ca>) and Canadian Climate Normals and Averages (Kentville).

Daily Max, Min and Mean Temperatures
Sept, Oct, Nov 2013 - Kentville, N.S.



TEMPERATURES

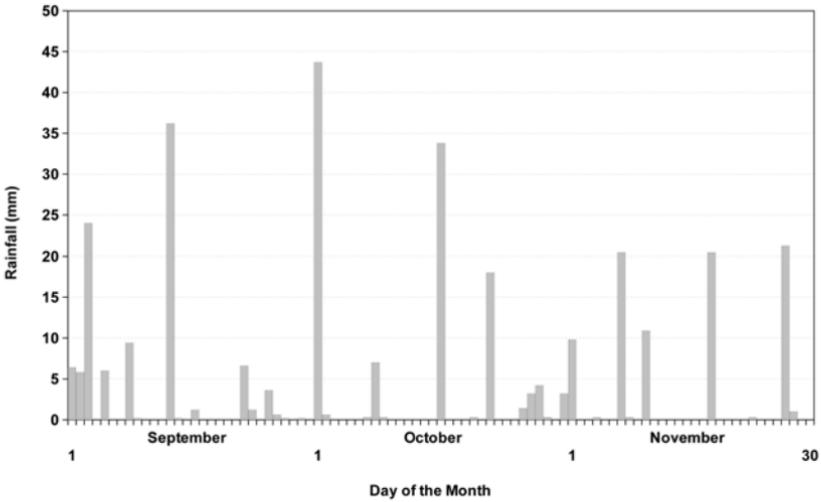
September was the warm month of the season, -1.1°C above average. October was only 0.3°C higher than average, and November was cooler by 0.3°C .

Although Environment Canada does not show sunshine statistics, the narrow range of the daily temperatures in November shows that it was the cloudy month of the season. Look at the daily temperature chart. Most days in September and October had a larger spread in the maximum and minimum temperatures due to sunny days and clear nights. November days had much less spread in temperature because the cloud cover was prevalent.

PRECIPITATION

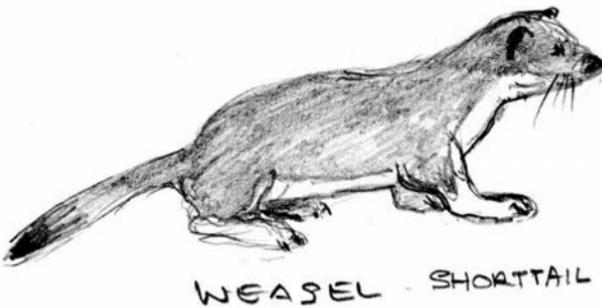
Clouds usually imply rain, but though November was cloudy, it was the least wet month of the autumn season. Both September and

Daily Precipitation
 Sept, Oct, Nov 2013 - Kentville, N.S.



October had above-average rainfall (nearly 20 percent more in both months), but November was below average. Looking at the daily rainfall chart for September and October, you can see that the five days with more than 15 mm of rainfall gave 156 mm, or 71 percent, of the rainfall for those months.

Although we normally expect a little snow in November, there was none this year.



MARY PRATT

What's in the Sky?

by Roy Bishop

HIGHLIGHTS FOR JANUARY THROUGH APRIL OF 2014

January 2, 3, 4: Large tides (see below)

January 2: Latest sunrise of the year (07:56)

January 4: Earth closest to Sun in 2014 (see below)

January 5: Jupiter at opposition (see below)

January 15: Full Moon (smallest of 2014)

January 31: Large tides again

February 14: Full Moon

February 26: Venus and the Moon (see below)

March 9: Daylight time begins – spring ahead one hour

March 16: Full Moon

March 20: The equinox – spring begins at 13:58 ADT

March 26: Blomidon Naturalists Society 40th anniversary

April 8: Mars at opposition (see below)

April 14: Total lunar eclipse tonight (see below)

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DECEMBER COMET?

Comet ISON passed within one diameter of the Sun on November 28. As stated in the previous Newsletter, “If ISON survives that roasting, it may put on a memorable show for us during the first half of December.” The nucleus of Comet ISON, a mountain of ice and dust about a kilometre in diameter, disintegrated in the intense heat as

it swung around the Sun. All that Sun-observing satellites detected where ISON should have been as it began receding away from the Sun was a fading puff of gas and dust.

The hype labelling ISON as “the great comet of 2013” was wrong. But that was our fault, not the comet’s. Comet PanSTARRS, which decorated our evening skies last spring, was the best comet of 2013, brighter than ISON, and more conveniently located in the night sky.

CLOSEST TO THE SUN

As Johannes Kepler discovered 400 years ago, Earth’s path around the Sun is a slightly distorted circle, an ellipse. Consequently, our distance from the Sun changes throughout the year. Earth is farthest from the Sun (aphelion) early in July, closest (perihelion) in early January. In 2014, perihelion occurs at 8 a.m. on Saturday, January 4, but don’t expect the snow to melt and dandelions to bloom that morning! The seasons are caused primarily by the tilt of Earth’s equator to the plane of its orbit, not by our changing distance from the Sun. Earth’s Northern Hemisphere was most recently at its maximum tilt away from the Sun only two weeks earlier, on December 21, 2013, marking the beginning of our winter.

JANUARY BEGINS AND ENDS WITH REALLY LARGE TIDES

Spring tides recur every two weeks with the new and full phases of the Moon. At such times the tides raised by the Sun are in step with those raised by the Moon. Another cycle of large tides occurs every 27.5 days, when the Moon is nearest Earth (perigee), resulting in perigean tides. Every 206 days (almost seven months), spring tides are in step with perigean tides, resulting in a third cycle of enhanced tides – perigean spring tides. Every 18.6 years the Moon’s wobbling orbit lies closest to Earth’s equatorial plane – yet another aspect of celestial geometry favourable for large tides. Unfortunately, the 18.6-year cycle of large tides does not have a catchy name, other than

18.6-year tides. The peak of the 18.6-year cycle of high tides occurs in 2015, and its influence is already apparent in the tides.

2014 begins with a bang for large tides. On New Year's Day the Moon is new and at a very close perigee. That, together with the 18.6-year influence, will cause the tide range in Minas Basin to exceed 16 metres on January 2 and 3. Perihelion that week will give a slight boost to those tides. New Moon and perigee again coincide on January 30, again resulting in tides in excess of 16 metres on January 31, February 1, and February 2. If a major winter storm is in the area on any of those five days and a storm surge happens to coincide with a high tide, flooding is likely.

Extreme tides will be even higher in 2015 and early 2016, when a fifth cycle of high tides coincides with the other four cycles. That fifth cycle repeats every 4.43 years, the period with which perigeean spring tides occur near an equinox.

The wild card in all of this is the weather, and the weather cannot be predicted more than a few days in advance. The last time a major storm surge coincided with extra-large astronomical tides was on October 5, 1869, resulting in the infamous Saxby disaster.

THE NEW YEAR'S GIANT PLANET

2014 opens with the Solar System's largest planet dominating long, cold, clear January nights. At opposition on January 5, Jupiter rises in the northeast at sunset and is high in the sky at midnight. Binoculars will reveal one or more of Jupiter's four large Galilean satellites, three of which are larger than our Moon. Galileo's discovery of the night-to-night motion of these satellites around Jupiter was the first clear evidence that the universe is not centred on Earth, that Earth is but one of the planets orbiting the Sun. Jupiter, a favourite telescopic target, remains well positioned in the evening sky through February, March, and April.

THE MORNING STAR

Venus leaves the evening sky shortly after the New Year, passes between Earth and Sun on January 11, and reappears in the dawn sky in late January. During February, Venus is the bright morning “star” in the southeastern dawn twilight, facing early-morning commuters as they drive from the Valley into Halifax. The waning crescent Moon will be near Venus on the morning of Wednesday, February 26.

MARS

In mid-April, Mars, the red planet of myth, fiction, and robotic exploration, is at its brightest, nearest to Earth, and visible throughout the night. “Red” is not quite correct. Mars has a pale but distinct orange colour. Through April and May a good-quality small telescope will reveal the Martian disk, with its small, white polar cap. Earth, in its orbit, laps Mars about every 2.13 years, providing for a few weeks our best view of the cold, desert-like Martian landscape.

A TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE

Weather permitting, you have a chance to see the Moon pass through Earth’s dark, umbral shadow in the early-morning hours of Tuesday, April 15. The start of the eclipse at 01:54, as the Moon begins to enter Earth’s penumbral shadow, will be undetectable. By 02:58 it will be obvious that the full Moon is in trouble, as it begins to enter the umbral shadow. Totality begins at 04:07 and lasts until 05:25. If sleep is a priority, yet you don’t want to miss seeing this impressive celestial event, the prettiest part of the eclipse will be from about 03:55 to 04:10. The Moon will be low in the southwestern sky, so you will need a clear view in that direction. And use your binoculars!

To Name a Brook

by Deirdre Dwyer

Naming a brook takes more
than sixty years, more than wintering
with Bigelows who timbered the mountain
where the brook flowed

for Glooscap's animal friends
who drank from the waters
parallel to the Borden brook,
that runs behind the cabin
my father came to as a child.

Every summer and fall he returned
for work and the green world.
Naming takes knowing
its dedicated path, the woods
at the Cookhouse Turn
where he sawed logs for Jim and Bill
and fields where he hefted
fifty-pound potato bags with wind
coming in off the Basin.

The wind never named the brook
that he returned to later with his bride,
then built a cabin under the mountain;
blink of an old eye.

To name a brook takes several generations,
trees felled and pulled down the mountain
by horse. My father knows the history of these trees
*and the family who has all
but disappeared*
from the woods
where the Bigelow brook flows,
all seasons.

[Italicized passages come from a proposal by David Dwyer to name a brook in Blomidon Provincial Park, a proposal to Kings County Council & the Province of Nova Scotia, November 2003.]



MARY PRATT

Blomidon Naturalists Society

Box 2350, Wolfville, Kings County, NS, B4P 2N5

Statement of Income, Expenditures, and Net Worth for BNS year 2012–2013 at September 30, 2013, and Budget for 2013–2014 (\$)

	Budget 2012–2013	Actual 2012–2013	Budget 2013–2014
Income			
Blomidon Naturalists membership fees	3,200	3,160	3,500
Nature Nova Scotia fees	120	110	120
Miscellaneous sales	1,000	95	600
<i>Within the View of Blomidon sales</i>	250	0	400
Calendar sales	9,000	8,043	9,000
Donations	2,500	2,762	2,500
Funding for Young Naturalists (Green Dragon)	18,000	10,756	12,000
HST rebate	1,200	1,231	1,000
Income from investments	2,000	2,603	2,650
	37,270	28,760	31,770
Expenditures			
Administration	450	475	1,000
Meetings	500	412	500
Donations to other groups	300	200	300
Nature Nova Scotia distributions	220	190	220
Calendar costs	5,000	4,652	4,100
Nature displays	500	174	600
Newsletters	4,400	4,645	5,000
Acadia Student Bursary (new)	2,000	2,000	2,000
Inventory writedowns	0	0	0
Inventory purchases	0	0	1,500
Young Naturalists (Green Dragon)	21,000	16,110	15,000
Bank charges	120	120	200
Other	0	0	0
	34,490	28,978	30,420
Excess (deficit)	2,780	(218)	1,350
Net Worth as of September 30, 2013			
Bank account (5207570)			\$6,963
Endowment fund (54YL48A)			\$66,115
<i>Within the View of Blomidon (451 @ \$11.30)</i>			\$5,100
			\$78,178
<p>1. Paid membership: 158; Honorary members: 14; Newsletter mailing: 235 2. Green Dragon 2014 budget reflects limiting BNS contribution to \$3,000. 3. Green Dragon program is experiencing increased costs, fewer contributed dollars, and after a six-year run needs an overall review.</p>			

SOURCES OF LOCAL NATURAL HISTORY

Compiled by the Blomidon Naturalists Society

TOPIC	SOURCE	OFFICE OR HOME TELEPHONE
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney	H: 542-3604
	Jim Wolford	H: 542-9204
Astronomy	Roy Bishop	H: 542-3992
	Sherman Williams	H: 542-5104
	Larry Bogan	H: 678-0446
Birds – General	Bernard Forsythe	H: 542-2427
	Richard Stern	O: 678-4742 H: 678-1975
	Gordon & Judy Tufts	H: 542-7800
	Jim Wolford	H: 542-9204
	Jean Timpa	H: 542-5678
Butterflies & Moths	Jean Timpa	H: 542-5678
Fish & Wildlife	NS Department of Natural Resources	O: 679-6091
Flora:	Ruth Newell	O: 585-1355 H: 542-2095
Fungi:	Nancy Nickerson	H: 542-9332
Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe	H: 542-2427
Indian Prehistory & Archeology	James Legge	H: 542-3530
Mosses & Ferns	Ruth Newell	O: 585-1355 H: 542-2095
Mammals	Tom Herman	O: 585-1358 H: 678-0383
Rocks & Fossils	Geology Dept., Acadia University	O: 585-2201
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney	H: 542-3604
	Jim Wolford	H: 542-9204
	Michael Brylinsky	O: 585-1509 H: 582-7954

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

2014 Membership Fees & Order Form

Members receive four issues of the BNS newsletter annually.

As a registered charity, BNS issues receipts for all donations.

Members may also join Nature Nova Scotia through BNS.

(Neither BNS nor NNS membership is tax deductible.)

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTAL CODE

E-MAIL

TEL

In signing this membership application, I/we hereby waive & release the Blomidon Naturalists Society, its executive committee and members, from all claims for injury and/or damage suffered at any function or field trip organized by the Blomidon Naturalists Society.

SIGNATURE

DATE

No.	Description	Price	Total
_____	Individual/ Family Membership	\$20.00	\$ _____
_____	Junior (under 16 years) Membership	\$1.00	\$ _____
_____	Nature Nova Scotia Membership	\$5.00	\$ _____
_____	2014 BNS Calendar	\$15.00	\$ _____
_____	Natural History of Kings County	\$14.00	\$ _____
_____	Within the View of Blomidon	\$20.00	\$ _____
_____	Checklist of Kings County Birds	\$5.00	\$ _____
_____	Blomidon Naturalist crest	\$5.00	\$ _____
_____	Blomidon Naturalist hat	\$15.00	\$ _____
_____	BNS Calendar Photos (Screensaver)	\$10.00	\$ _____
	Postage: (calendar \$2) (parcel \$6)		\$ _____
	Tax-deductible Donation		\$ _____

(Registration number: 118811686RR0001)

TOTAL \$ _____

Address cheques or money orders to Blomidon Naturalists Society for membership and other purchases to: **Ed Sulis, 107 Canaan Avenue, Kentville, NS B4N 2A7.** Due date is January 1 of current year.



