

*Blomidon
Naturalists
Society*



SUMMER 2017 NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 44 · NUMBER 2



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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Black River Lake, Kings County

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY
members are encouraged to share
unusual or pleasurable nature stories
through the pages of the BNS News-
letter. If you have a particular area of
interest, relevant articles and stories are
always welcome. Send them to Shel-
ley Porter at *blomidonrose17@gmail.com*

Digital photographs should be
submitted to
doug@fundymud.com

Next submission deadline:
August 31, 2017

Do It Yourself

by Shelley Porter

✂ Recently, I started baking my own bread again. When my children were very young and I was a full-time stay-at-home parent, I baked bread every week. I've always loved bread, and it gave me great satisfaction to be able to make it myself. I made every loaf of bread my family ate for the better part of a decade.

Since I was a child, I've been creative: I drew, wrote stories, and built things out of found materials like sticks and string and discarded containers. Once I made a pet for a doll out of a very small knothole. I can't even explain that to myself, so don't ask.

I was born into a world enthralled with everything modern, new, and artificial—fast food, transistor radios . . . miracle drugs like thalidomide. I emerged an adult into a world rejecting everything modern, new, and artificial. When I was born, the skills of past generations were widely considered irrelevant, unnecessary, and good only to marvel at in museum displays. By the time my first child was born, those skills were being pulled back from the brink of being forgotten to be marvelled at in farmers' markets and high-end artisan shows.

It's no wonder so many people were eager to leave the skills of the first half of the 20th century behind—they symbolized poverty, backwardness, and drudgery (especially for women). Why would my mother teach me to bake bread when it was available so readily at a supermarket, or knit socks when 10 pairs could be had any day in a department store? I learned to bake bread myself in my 30s. I learned to knit socks last winter.

I don't blame my parents for not teaching me to stack firewood or tat a piano runner. They thought they were doing

their best to raise children to succeed in the world they lived in now, not some past version of it. My father fell in love with the automobile at a very young age and volunteered to milk a cow every evening when he was a teenager because to get to the cow, he was allowed to drive a new truck for 20 minutes. He would be bemused to realize his grandchildren are much more impressed that he could drive a team of working horses than they will ever be by his knowledge of car engines.

Yet for all my parents' enthusiastic adoption of the wonders of the modern age, one ancient practice remained: tending a garden. My mother loved the natural world, and from her I learned the names of birds and plants and insects. From her I learned that spiders and snakes were not objects of terror but worthy of our curiosity and observation. It was my mother who carefully cut the string trellis to release a young skunk that had become entangled in the Sweet Peas. She came from a family of farmers, and to have her own tomatoes and raspberries and cut flowers was a given. My father's agricultural heritage wasn't nearly as respected, but even he spent long hours tending the green pepper plants that would produce his favourite pizza topping. Used to hearing him talk about economic theory and business trends, I was very surprised to learn he knew the soil preferences of onions.

Retail outlets like Home Depot and Internet sites like Pinterest have brought "do it yourself" to a whole new level; we're expected to do or make everything ourselves, from home renovations to cleaning solutions to car repairs. The expectations can be quite overwhelming.

The old adage "if you want something done right, do it yourself" is another angle on DIY. Recently, many members of the Blomidon Naturalists Society have announced they are retiring or scaling back their work for the organization. These hardworking and dedicated volunteers have been DIY-ing the many tasks of fundraising, programming, and Newsletter distribution for years, some for decades.

We are actively looking for members to step forward to fill those large and worn shoes. Want something for the Blomidon Naturalists Society done right? Do it yourself. Volunteer!

CLUB NOTES

2018 BNS Natural History Calendar

✂ Photo submissions are invited for possible use in the 21st edition of our society's Natural History Calendar. Submissions should be in electronic form: JPEG format, with file size between 300 KB and 3 MB.

Photos should be of natural history interest, preferably taken in Nova Scotia. Please submit no more than 10 of what you consider to be your most suitable photos.

Suitability involves technical quality (sharp focus, not under- or over-exposed), composition (object of interest nicely positioned, no distracting background), content (a photo that calendar users will enjoy looking at for a month), and one that is not too similar to photos appearing in recent BNS calendars. We try to match images to the months so pictures from "not summer" are appreciated! Send submissions to:

Patrick Kelly
patrick.kelly@dal.ca
902-494-3294 (work)

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: Monday, September 11, 2017

Board of Directors Report

by Kent Williams, BNS president

The “control of nature” is a phrase conceived in the arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man. The concepts and practices of applied entomology for the most part date from that Stone Age of science. It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons, and that in turning them against the insects it has also turned them against the earth.

RACHEL CARSON (1962), *Silent Spring*

☛ Carson wrote these words over 50 years ago. Still, not much has changed in our effort to control nature. One of the most alarming elements of the global climate change debate has been how, with each emerging report on climate science, the news keeps getting worse. According to Clive Hamilton, “The Earth may soon demonstrate that, ultimately, it cannot be tamed and that the human urge to master nature has only roused a slumbering beast” (*Requiem for a Species*, 2010, p. 31).

It would be pleasant if I started out my report with a good-news story. Moreover, I feel this is part of the problem with humankind: the masses seem to want to brush over the dire challenges before us and continue to live in our artificial bubbles of reality. If we are not denying the science on climate change and declining biodiversity, we are putting our head in the sand or looking the other way. When I reflect on this, I am proud that BNS has not shied away from the issues of climate change, species biodiversity, and habitat degradation. In our monthly presentations we are sensing the effects of anthropogenic pursuit of wealth and how it affects bees (insects), animal health and survival, and forest preservation in Nova Scotia.

The news we hear from our expert presenters is not good,

but we are listening and acting in our own ways. As a society we continue to support research and scholars who are led by curiosity and wonder to explore questions that can connect us more fully with our roots of nature. Also, we are observing our values and mission, and listening to members' voices; we have become a partnering member in support of the Healthy Forest Coalition in their efforts to embrace the challenges of Nova Scotia forestry practices that are limiting the biodiversity in our area. This has become a paramount issue that we will continue to support.

Importantly, we continue to support and offer field trips that connect us to the beauty and awe of the nature that surrounds. I extend my appreciation of and gratitude to our speakers, field trip guides, and those taking action through research or looking after things in their own backyard. Let's keep educating ourselves—and thinking and acting with curiosity and enlightened minds to support our intertwined relationship with nature.

At our June board meeting we had the opportunity to have Jaya Fahey, who is one of the collaborative leads on the shorebird research project Space to Roost, give us an update to the important work she and Sue Abbott are doing to preserve the shore habitat for shorebirds. Science suggests that there has been a severe decline in shorebird numbers due to anthropogenic influences. They are seeking citizen scientists to get involved as observers for their project, which is working with the Blue Beach, Avonport, Penny Beach,, and Evangeline Beach landscapes and seascapes. If you are interested in participating, please connect with Jaya (jfahey@bsc-eoc.org)

Lastly, I want to make an appeal to the membership on the need for volunteers. The Blomidon Naturalists Society has a successful 40-year history and has been built on the backs of the commitment of hardworking volunteers. One of the challenges during the past several years is the minimal number of members actively getting involved and participating in the important roles that enable the society to thrive. Consequently,

we have had long-time BNS volunteers retiring from their roles—such as putting the BNS Calendar together, helping with program coordination, leading field trips, writing for the Newsletter—with no members stepping up to the call to fill these positions. Moreover, this is a call for members interested in seeing a long future for BNS to step forward and lend a hand. Over the coming months we will be collecting nominations for 2018 positions, including a new president. This is an opportunity for new insights and leadership to collaboratively lead the society.

Enjoy the summer months, and see you out on one of our field trips!

CLUB NOTES

Upcoming Events

Meetings

✿ *Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at 7:30 p.m., usually on the third Monday of each month (note exception for December), 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. Note that no meetings are scheduled for July or August. Everyone is welcome. For more information on any events, contact us at info@blomidon-naturalists.ca.*

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017—Marine Animal Rescue Group

JULY/AUGUST 2017—Summer break: No meetings

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017—*Pecha Kucha*

OCTOBER 16, 2017—Joint meeting with the Valley Gardeners Club

Field trips and other nature events

Visit the BNS website for upcoming events and field trip maps and directions.

SATURDAY, JULY 15, 2017—*Early Summer Mushrooms*. At 9 a.m., we are planning a mushroom walk at the Kentville Ravine of the Kentville Agricultural Research Centre. The event will be open to everyone. We hope that there will be sufficient rain in the two weeks of July before the planned event so that we will see an assortment of the early summer fungi. If the weather stays very dry, we may need to re-schedule the mushroom walk, so please check the BNS website or BNS social media for the latest news. Unlike ordinary plants, mushrooms will only reveal themselves when weather conditions exactly suit their particular needs for moisture and warmth.

We will gather at the Picnic Grove shelter and then proceed down the steep trail into the ravine. A walking stick is very helpful as we wander across the uneven slopes. We hope and expect that the early summer mushrooms will be different from those that you may have seen in past August, September, and October walks.

The walk will last about two hours with an opportunity to examine specimens during the walk and at the picnic tables when we return. If you have a mushroom field guide and a basket, please bring them along with waxed paper and a few index cards to make spore prints.

Healthy Forest Coalition

✂ The Blomidon Naturalists Society has recently become a member of the Nova Scotia Healthy Forests Coalition. The Coalition sent this letter of welcome:

June 10, 2017

Kent Williams, President
Blomidon Naturalists Society

Nova Scotia Healthy Forest Coalition (HFC, the Coalition) members are very pleased that the Blomidon Naturalists Society has decided to become an affiliate of the Coalition. Welcome!

Your affiliation gives us even more inspiration to carry on our quest to have future (a) forests in which clearcutting and whole-tree harvesting are eventually phased out, herbicide spraying is prohibited, biomass burning for energy production is rolled back, and an annual allowable cut is introduced; (b) forests that brim with diverse flora and fauna; (c) forests that give Nova Scotians sustainable work, respite, and recreation; and (d) forests that attract tourists and adventurers to “Canada’s Ocean Playground.”

Your affiliation strengthens HFC’s potential to influence government, educate the public, and promote climate-friendly healthy Acadian forests for future generations. Thank you!

Please send a brief description of the BNS, or its statement of objectives, and its logo to Chris Kennedy (cjkenedy66@gmail.com), the Coalition’s webmaster, so that BNS can be identified as an affiliate organization on the Coalition’s website (www.healthyforestcoalition.ca/Supporters).

Be advised that individual members of your organization may

join the Coalition by contacting mikeus_lancaster@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,
Richard Beazley, Information Officer, HFC

What is the Healthy Forest Coalition?

If you check out the HFC website (healthyforestcoalition.ca), you'll find this paragraph:

The Nova Scotia Healthy Forest Coalition is an alliance of organizations and individuals united to raise public awareness of the critical state of our forests and the need for fundamental reform of forest policy. Generations of mismanagement have depleted our soils and seriously compromised our forests' capacity to regenerate. Current practices are making things worse at an alarming rate. Indigenous species are threatened. Habitats are disappearing and natural ecosystem functions destroyed. Our forest economy is collapsing. We must act before it is too late. We must change the way we manage our forests. We must set them on the road to recovery. Restoration won't be easy, but, with your help, it can be done. Please help our forests become again a great ecological and economic asset.

That is a plea for help. It's a plea made by Nova Scotians who know what they're talking about—scientists, naturalists, parks people—and who are sacrificing personal lives to this important cause. People like Bob Bancroft, Donna Crossland, Nick Hill, David Patriquin, Paul Pross.

What can you do?

NUMBER ONE: *Get informed!* The HFC website is a great place to start. There's a huge amount of information here.

The Resources section, for example, provides “links to articles, downloadable documents, videos, and audio” in nine categories: clearcutting, soils, biomass, water, nature & wildlife, law & policy, forest strategy, economics, and history.

The site has informative blog entries and a very wide-ranging section of Forest Notes covering such topics as climate change, forestry, natural history, biophilia, current issues, and keeping track of forest harvesting in the province.

NUMBER TWO: *Get involved!* Tell your friends what’s going on—get them involved too. Write to (and talk to) politicians—go to the Action tab on the HFC website for some ideas on how to do this. Become an individual member of HFC—see the letter above for how to do this. Write letters to the editor in response to newspaper or magazine stories. See for yourself what’s going on—visit clear-cuts and watercourses, take photos, report violations, keep notes on wildlife observations. If you have kids in school, find out what they’re learning about their own local environment, and give feedback to the school or school board. Write to the BNS Newsletter with more ideas for this list.

FIELD TRIP

Cape Split Hike

by Patrick Kelly and Sherman Williams

☘ SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2017—Given that the weather this May has been mostly cold, overcast, and damp, it was a real treat to have a relatively warm sunny day for the trip. We had about a dozen people show up, including Donna Crossland and a second person from Parks Canada (Kejimikujik National Park). Several of the students that have been hired for the coming

summer arrived later than expected and we met them while on the way back out. In talking to Donna the following weekend at the Nature Nova Scotia Celebration of Nature, I learned that they had been quite surprised to at how different the plant cover was even though the park has areas with similar trees but has a *lot* more deer browsing on the undergrowth.

It was great that Sherman was able to make it this year. Some health issues had kept him from long hikes the last few years and originally he planned to just go part way. He surprised both of us by going right to the end and felt in good form.

We had Purple Finches singing at the start of the trail. Our first stop was a look at the basalt rocks at the start of the trail. Sherman had brought along the provincial geological map to show how the entire North Mountain was part of the same lava flow. The map is still in print, and there is now an online version available as a PDF file.

As usual, we come on this trip for the spring flowers and were not disappointed. While the Lily-of-the-Valley, Goldthread, and a few others made for good stops, it was the Spring-beauty, Purple (Red) Trillium, and Dutchman's Breeches that were the stars of the trip. With a mostly sunny day, the Spring-beauties carpeted the forest floor, but not as fully as I have seen on past trips. It still seems hard to believe that a month later there will be no visible signs of the plant. It seems like the Trilliums seem to get better each year, with more and bigger clusters.

We heard (and saw) a number of birds on the way out, including Black-and-White Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, and a male American Redstart that hung around long enough for everyone to get a good look at it. A Least Flycatcher also put on a good show. As usual, Ovenbirds were heard but not seen. There was also one place where we may have heard a Winter Wren, which would not be unusual, as they have been heard here in the past. At the split, there were the usual nesting Great Black-backed Gulls (on top) and Herring Gulls (on the side). The Double-crested Cormorants were also nesting

again on the farther points of rock. It looks like they are back to stay. Normally there are Common Eiders on the water, but we didn't see any this time.

One thing that was obvious, given that there were a lot of others enjoying the first half-decent weekend of the year, was the number of dogs, only about half of which were on leash, which is required. One dog at the end was particularly annoying; while it was on a leash it barked at every other dog that appeared and had to be held back. Donna noted that in Quebec dogs are not allowed in provincial parks unless they are service dogs. Last year they did start a pilot project to allow dogs on a few trails in three parks. It will be interesting to see the outcome.

People headed back at their own pace, and one surprise was to find a Hobblebush in bloom near the trail. After reaching the parking lot, a few of us stopped off at Huntley Road (in Scots Bay) and there was an eagle sitting in the nest, as curious about us as we were about it.

NATURAL HISTORY

Nova Scotia Celebration of Nature 2017

by Doug Linzey

✦ MAY 26–28, 2017—This year, Nature Nova Scotia took its annual general meeting and conference into the wilderness (or pretty close to it) at Milford House, the lodge and tourist cabin establishment that has long served visitors to the Keji area. Milford House was able to accommodate nearly 90 of us, including a number of kids (members of the Young Naturalists Club of Nova Scotia) and their families.

This is an ideal place to gather to talk about and experience nature in its own setting, surrounded by mature Acadian Forest and relatively unspoiled lakes and streams—and only a couple of hours from the city. Late May being ahead of the tourist season, we had the whole place to ourselves.

Program

Our programs are pretty standard from year to year. We socialize, explore nature, go on field trips, and learn from experts in their fields. The outdoor activities depend of course to some degree on weather, which in Nova Scotia this time of year is still pretty unpredictable. We got lucky—it was cool (well, downright cold at night) but precipitation was minimal.

Friday evening we had our usual wine and cheese reception, an opportunity to renew old acquaintances and catch up with our fellow naturalists.

Each morning the keenest of birders got out early before breakfast. Not much in the way of a morning chorus this year—a bit too chilly for much action. By Sunday morning after breakfast it was finally getting warm enough to inspire some action in the woods.

We had three wonderfully entertaining and informative talks from local naturalists. Matt Smith, an ecologist with Parks Canada, has been researching and studying the Southern Flying Squirrel for years. He brought us up to date on the status of this delightful tiny nocturnal creature, which is at the northern limits of its range here in New Brunswick and southwest Nova Scotia. If you live in its territory and have the right habitat and haven't seen one yet, the secret may be to watch your bird feeders at night.

Reg Baird is a lifelong fly fisherman and student of trout behaviour in and around Kejimikujik National Park. He was the fly fishing consultant and volunteer researcher in catching and tagging Brook Trout for a migration study. The team was

able to tag the fish with radio transmitters for telemetry tracking and determining their movements over time and locating feeding areas, summer refuges, and wintering sites. This is really fascinating stuff, and you can get a taste of it on a series of YouTube videos (see youtube.com/watch?v=X4W8Ajo963k) for the first in a three-part series). Later, on Saturday afternoon, Reg gave a fly fishing workshop on the Milford House lawn, where the kids got to test their casting skills.

Amanda Lavers is the executive director of MTRI (Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute), located near Caledonia, Queens Co. Since 2008, the LoonWatch program has been monitoring 35 lakes in southwest Nova Scotia to determine breeding productivity. The project involves banding by a professional team and observation by volunteers. Amanda gave a fascinating talk and was as upbeat as possible despite the sad truth that the Common Loon is not doing particularly well in this part of the world. Typical problems for loons in these lakes involve acidic conditions, lead poisoning (from fishing sinkers and buckshot), and predation by eagles. For more information on LoonWatch, see the web page merseytobeatic.ca/projects-freshwater-loonwatch.php.

Saturday afternoon was devoted to a great variety of field trips: a canoe paddle on the lakes surrounding Milford House, an old-growth forest walk, the aforementioned fly fishing demo with Reg Baird, an exploration of the flora of the local woods with long-time NNS member Gini Proulx, and a lichen ID walk around Milford House with Frances Anderson (co-author of the field guide *Common Lichens of Northeastern North America*). To finish off the afternoon, Ashley “Little Miss” Moffat entertained the kids and adults alike with her signature songs about nature. At one point the audience, led by expert owl callers (and NNS directors) Donna Crossland and Larry Bogan, added their collective hoots to the music.

After our Saturday evening dinner, Chief Frank Meuse and Shalan Joudry (from Bear River First Nation) hosted a camp-

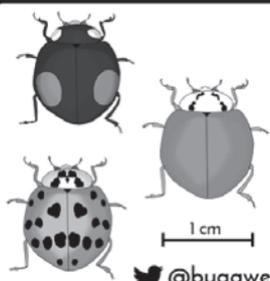
fire on the beach—well attended despite the increasingly cold breeze.

On Sunday morning we held our annual general meeting, attended by 30 or so members. After a sit-down lunch and check-out, a number of participants embarked on another offering of field trips, reportedly well attended and appreciated. On the way back home to the Valley, I wound up with about 20 others on Steven Hawboldt's natural and cultural history walk around the French Basin in Annapolis Royal—an excellent and informative tour on a beautiful sunny afternoon.

In all, we were well treated by the Milford House staff: good food, good service, and the rustic cabins seem perfectly suited to a group like ours. The young naturalists had a space to themselves and kept very busy and happy thanks in large part to YNC executive director Robin Musselman and her crew. Robin also took on much of the organizational work for the whole weekend, so we offer her many thanks. Also thanks to Jean Gibson Collins, Donna Crossland, and Bob Bancroft for the time and effort they put into making the Celebration of Nature 2017 one of the best ever.

BUG OF THE WEEK: HARLEQUIN LADYBIRD

The harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) is native to Asia, but is rapidly establishing a widespread global distribution. It comes in many various colour morphs, but can generally be identified by a 'M' shaped marking on it's pronotum. It is a threat to native species via competing for food, and by avoiding natural enemy attack.




1 cm

 @bugaweek

Bugs of the Week that you might encounter in this issue are generously contributed by Paul Manning.

Mission Monarch: Another 2015 Nova Scotia Monarch Reported from Mexico

by Larry Bogan

✂ Last year I reported that one of the tags we placed on 50 Monarchs in 2015 was found in the El Rosario Butterfly Preserve in Michoacan, Mexico. In late April, Monarch Watch, based in Lawrence, Kansas, released the list of tags retrieved from Mexico this year (see monarchwatch.org). I eagerly looked for any of the 50 tags we used in 2016, but none of them were found.

The residents near El Rosario, who collect Monarch tags, might not contact the Monarch Watch each year and sometimes return tags a year or two later. I checked the list for our 2015 tags, and UGL-890 was there! This was the tag of a female Monarch we released on August 30, 2015, along with nine other tagged Monarchs. That butterfly flew more than 4330 kilometres to the El Rosario reserve in 2015, but the tag was not turned in until February 24, 2017.

So Monarch butterfly UGL-890 joins UGL-881 in making it to Mexico



in 2015. UGL-881 was released only a day before UGL-890, whose tag was returned on March 6, 2016. I can at least hope that some of our 2016 tags will show up next year on the found list.

Notes from Lorax

by Peter Wallace

✂ I retired in 2010 and a year later moved to Black River onto a property in the woods. With the property came part ownership of approximately 185 acres of woodlands with 10 km of trails. Upon retirement, one of my new jobs was walking the dog every morning on those trails, and I decided I was going to try to identify as many of the plants (herbaceous flowers, trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses, lichens, and fungi—I know fungi are not plants and lichens are in that zone of being both algae and fungus) as I could on those jaunts. I had forgotten how diverse a woodlot could be even though it had probably been clear-cut years ago.

As a professional field geologist as well as avid naturalist who bikes, kayaks, canoes, and hikes, walking in the woods was always an experience with new things to see, but I was only seeing the common things that were right in front of me. I needed to see and identify more. To assist me I carried an Olympus Stylus 850 camera (waterproof, drop-proof, freeze-proof, and lightweight) to record what I saw, and I used various references for identification. After a year I had photographed and identified 78 herbaceous flowers, 43 trees and shrubs, 9 ferns and grasses each, 33 lichens and fungi, and 7 mosses. I compiled the best photos as proof and proceeded to get prints of these 179 plants and to show them around to friends.



PETER WALLACE

Rhodora canadense



PETER WALLACE

Striped Maple flower



PETER WALLACE

Arum

When a friend proposed to publish these photos on the Internet I agreed and quickly realized there were shortcomings and corrections needed. So in 2016 and 2017 I revisited the herbaceous plants, trees, and shrubs to come up with 158 species of herbaceous plants, 48 trees, and 34 shrubs, nearly doubling the inventory. I haven't got to the rest yet (years to come) and there still may be errors.

My principle references are the books by T. Boland (*Wildflowers of Nova Scotia* and *Trees and Shrubs of the Maritimes*), Newcombe's *Wildflower Guide*, and the *Go Botany* website (<https://gobotany.newenglandwild.org/>) with occasional forays into *Nova Scotia Plants* and books on forest plants from Ontario. My findings are published on the Lorax Woodlands website for all to see at (lorax.earthrootsns.ca), and I encourage all to visit it, bearing in mind I know there are errors and some photos are fuzzy—remember I'm a geologist, the camera is a lightweight instamatic, and I'm not aiming for any prizes, just passing information along.

Why do this? Two reasons: The first is that the more I know about my environment and the more that people can see the basis of my knowledge, the better case I can make for saving our woodlot as well as forests in general—remember Lorax was clear-cut decades ago and is only now experiencing the end of its pioneer succession. After walking the woods for three years, for some species I have seen a plant only once and the evidence is the photo. The second reason is that it's fun and makes my forays more interesting. Instead of just following the dog into the woods, I readily go there on good days as well as rainy, cold, and snowy days and track individual plants over time and seasons. What a project, if only I could have done that with some of my geologic studies!

I challenge all who walk their dogs to eschew the roads and take to the woods and see the plants as individuals in the forest. Note them because otherwise you will forget them. If you do not get off on plants, do it with birds or other animal wildlife.

And do it now that spring is upon us and follow your favourite plant through its life cycle. Stretching your knowledge stretches your life and will make you a better person.

NATURAL HISTORY

Beach Notes

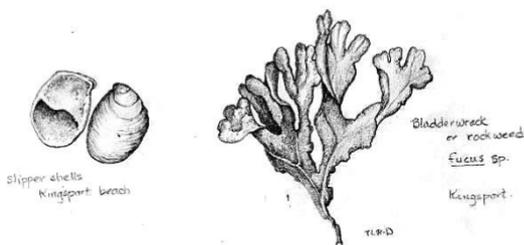
by *Twila Robar-DeCoste*

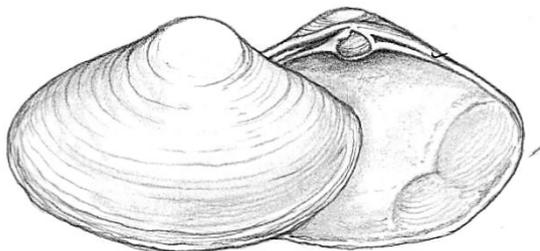
☞ JUNE 1, 2017—Earlier this week we cleaned the cottage. Our annual foray into opening, freshening, shaking out mats, and pulling off covers is something we have done for 25 years or more.

This is the place, it seems, that all good flies go to die. The occasional larger winged creature unfortunately finds itself trapped in the fireplace, and it is the usual domain of indignant spiders, squirrels, and nesting rabbits.

It is also the place where, while polishing salt streaked windows, one looks wistfully toward the beach path, anxious for that first foray to the upper reaches of the tides and beyond. Sadly, this will have to come bit later when the beach steps have been set down and access is safe.

Each year I pull out my little red and black hardcover book that just says “Notes,” which I started in 1985. On the first page





Bar Clam TLRD

Spisula solidissima

are sketches and notes of shells collected at Waterside Beach in Pictou County. We were living near there at the time and spent many happy hours beachcombing and note-taking at the in-laws' cottage.

In a few short years our family cottage was built at Donnellan Brook on the cliff-ringed and rocky stretches of the Bay of Fundy. Sketches and notes were frequently added, and the additions continue to this day. It is fun to look back at earlier notes and sketches: the discoveries in tide pools, of which there are few here, and wonderful rocks to look under and bits and pieces to find in the drifts of seaweed and driftwood.

My pages opened to the entry for August 29, 1992. This was a special beach trip, where the whole family walked far, far out over progressively larger and barnacle-studded rocks to the distant and foreign sandbars exposed at only extreme low tides. We were walking on the ocean floor, with the stalks of kelp popping up like little trees. Amazing to see what is normally covered and only exposed twice a year if we are lucky

“Dreams of clams filled our heads, and off we all went. The tide was really out—and the sandbar was accessible after a long walk over the various rocks and several tidal zones. The dogs were very amusing. Sissy found something delectable under a rock and, after much digging, ate it. The sandbar was wonder-

ful. Small holes indicated a clam relative, so we dug. Mindie was quite excited at the ensuing “squirt” and quickly learned to dig. She was quite good at it and sometimes got us a trophy when it was finally exposed. As far as I could determine, the clams were the Atlantic Surf Clam, or Bar Clam (*Spisula solidissima*), and ranged from 1¾ to 4 or 5 inches. The evening was special, not only because we were all together and in reasonably good health: the sunset was glorious, sending golden orange rays across the sandbar. The tiny rivulets and wave ripples glistened and danced with light. The Bay was very calm, with only tiny waves. All too soon we had to leave this treasured spot and take our soaked feet, played out dogs, and bulging bag of clams home.”

As I look back in memory and notes, I realize how important and wonderful it is to share a bit of time at the beach with family and friends, looking at the amazing things nature provides for our interest and exploration.

NATURAL HISTORY

Nature Notes from a Recent Arrival

by Howard Williams, Wolfville

✂ It is just 16 years since I last lived in Nova Scotia. Many things have changed since 2001, but not my curiosity for all things natural. These notes document some of the natural and not-so-natural processes that have entertained me on my return.

Bald Eagles are still very common in this part of Nova Scotia until spring. As well, it seems that the Northern Cardinal has become more of a resident in recent years. Having spent the last three years in southern Ontario, where Cardinals abound all through the year, it was interesting to find that they have

recently been on the increase here. There seem to be three reasons for this increase in distribution into regions previously not suited: climate change, proliferation of backyard feeders, and fragmentation of forest habitat, making forest edge, the Cardinal's preferred habitat, more common. Time will tell whether one or a combination of these variables is the most responsible for the success of this popular bird. Regardless of the cause, it is good to hear and see this assertive bird in its Canadian colours.

It is also good to see Turkey Vultures are also here; I spotted three cruising along the eastern edge of Blomidon Provincial Park. Also that day (April 14) we saw our first Mourning Cloak—a sure sign of spring. I am reminded of work that my wife and I did on a phenology project (Thousand Eyes) for the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History some years ago. In that project we looked at century-old data gathered by school-children in the period before and during the Great War. There used to be a dedicated website for data collection; I cannot find it now. Does anybody know what happened to the project?

It was good to spot a spring located along the northern edge of Miner's Marsh east of Kentville, and it was a treat to see it flowing strongly even on a cold -14°C day. This depression spring marks the location where the groundwater table intersects the steep slope to the north of the marsh, allowing groundwater flow to seep to the soil surface. The temperature of the water is likely to be in the 5 to 10°C range in winter as it issues from the ground, so it takes some time to flow before it eventually freezes. These springs are useful places for birds to drink in deep winter.

Forestry still seems to be a hot topic in Nova Scotia—to clear fell or not, that is the question. Lecture presentations are going around the province showing why clear-felling is bad, not only for the environment, but ultimately for foresters. Remember the codfish fiasco—Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons" springs to mind. From a birding perspective, habitat for song birds is being lost at an alarming rate. Furthermore,

soils exposed during clear-felling lose their nutrient and carbon content, and they become prone to soil erosion as their protection has gone and they compact, allowing surface water to gully them.

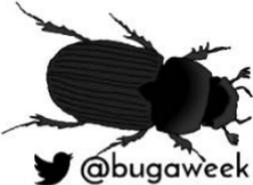
On several weekend trips to Dartmouth in March I have noticed booming sounds from the ice on Oat Hill Lake, just south of Lake Banook. This lake is one of many that dot the suburbs, and it offers swimming in summer and skating in winter. In the early spring, this lake emits booming sounds that are the result of fracturing of the thin ice. The sounds are short, less than 1 second, bursts of low-frequency noise in a descending scale. Examples of these sounds can be heard at the links at the end of this article, The first link also describes some of the frequency dispersion physics of noise production during the propagation of fractures in the ice. The ice acts as an elastic membrane similar to a drum. Despite spending many years in the Greenland Arctic and in Northern Ontario during spring break-up, I have never heard this noise before, so I do not know how common it is. Please respond if you know of local lakes that do this.

<https://silentlistening.wordpress.com/2008/05/09/dispersion-of-sound-waves-in-ice-sheets/> <http://www.theverge.com/2017/1/15/14253688/frozen-lake-sound-star-wars-acoustics>

BUG OF THE WEEK: *Aphodius ater*

Aphodius ater is a species of dung beetle common throughout many parts of Europe, Asia and North America. Male individuals 'sing' by scraping an organ on their abdomen against their elytra. Females, who themselves rarely sing - receive this signal mechanically over short distances within dung. Individuals may have red or black elytra.

1 cm



@bugaweek

See Change: Tides of Environmental Learning

by Bev Williams

✿ MAY 18–21, 2017—Canada’s national organization in Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM) held its annual conference on the east coast this year. I was pleased to attend, with support from Mount St. Vincent University. The conference was aptly entitled “See Change: Tides of Environmental Learning.”

Acadia University proved to be a wonderful setting for the conference, which was co-chaired by Dr Alan Warner, vice-chair of EECOM and professor in Community Development and Environmental and Sustainability Studies at Acadia. He and his committee facilitated an excellent conference, which in the words of some participants was “intimate, inspiring, energizing, and magical.”

The conference focused on facilitating environmental and sustainability learning in a wide range of settings, including schools, post-secondary institutions, and communities. About 320 delegates—from as far away as South Africa and Indonesia—gathered to explore and share how innovative learning inspires a deeper connection to nature and more sustainable lifestyles and communities while supporting a life-giving planet. More than 135 workshops focused on hands-on, interactive learning. To give you an idea of the scope of the conference, here is an excerpt from the program, which delineates conference themes and pertinent questions:

- *The Big Four* (Food, Water, Waste, and Energy): How can we

educate with respect to issues of food, waste, water, oceans, energy, inequity, and climate? How can we best facilitate environmental learning, literacy, and citizenship, whether in the classroom, the natural world, or the community?

- *Sustainable Communities*: How can we promote and facilitate environmental learning as a tool that is integrated into lifestyles, livelihoods, and communities?
- *Outdoor Active Living*: How can we promote, facilitate, and use outdoor learning activities as a pathway to wellness and sustainable lifestyles?
- *Indigenous Perspectives*: How can indigenous worldviews facilitate environmental and educational change? How can indigenous knowledge be supported and integrated into the culture of environmental education?
- *Research and Policy* (sharing and discussing current research): How can we bring together and mobilize stakeholders to foster change at systems levels, based on current knowledge?
- *Re-connecting with Nature*: How can we best facilitate young and old to spend more time appreciating, understanding, and caring for the natural world?

Keynotes

There were four keynote presentations, and all were excellent:

- *Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer* (author, storyteller, scientist, member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and distinguished teaching professor at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York) offered indigenous perspectives to help shift to a sustainable society. Robin also offered a workshop, “Learning from the Mosses: Small and Green,” through which she integrated traditional indigenous ways of knowing and scientific knowledge in support of healing our relationship with the living world. Look for her latest book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Sci-*

entific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants (2013), which was awarded the Sigurd Olson Nature Writing Award and was well recommended by many delegates.

- *Dr. Boris Worm* (internationally recognized marine biologist, educator, and researcher at Dalhousie University) is committed to understanding, promoting, and protecting both biodiversity in the oceans and ocean literacy in our hearts. You have probably heard Boris on CBC Radio (Halifax) as the “Oceans Guy.” See his website, wormlab.biology.dal.ca, to learn of his newest initiative—funded federally to the sum of \$250,000—of bringing “oceans education” into the public schools for grades 6–12.
- *Jan Sebastian LaPierre & Chris Surette* (creators of the *A for Adventure* team, adventurers, storytellers, and entrepreneurs who are building a movement that inspires children, young and old alike, to embrace the outdoors and experience nature). Jan and Chris are frequently heard on CBC Radio’s *Information Morning*, sharing their adventures in Nova Scotia. They have recently secured a contract with Parks Canada to encourage camping adventures across Canada—especially for newcomers to Canada.
- *MindShift* (powerful, award winning, theatrical production written and performed by high school youth that encourages sustainability to become a core value in our lives, workplaces, and communities). This was an amazing group of students and well received by delegates.

Other highlights of the conference

Garden Luminata: Wandering through the beautiful Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens and woodland trails by lantern light with spring peepers orchestrating the music of the night proved to be a beautiful experience. In conjunction with this event, there were opportunities to experience Maritime cultures and arts in a unique natural setting: wine tasting hosted by local

wineries; Scottish dancing by Maggie Keppie and group; singing in the yurt; storytelling around the fire circle, featuring Gerald Gloade (Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre), Trevor Gould (Mi'kmaq singer), and Claude deGrace (Acadian interpreter & storyteller). Claude shared a brief history of Grand Pré and how Acadians and Mi'kmaq were closely connected to each other and the land.

Farmers' market dinner: a delicious market style supper featuring local and sustainable food. In conjunction with this supper, intriguing activities were scheduled throughout the town of Wolfville

Local foods: A conscious effort was made by the organizing committee to feature local foods. The menu was planned nine months ahead to ensure the best local foods would be available in sufficient quantities in mid-May. Acadia students grew some of the fresh organic greens in March and April as part of a course in Community Food Systems. All coffee and tea were fair trade, sourced from Just Us! Coffee. The eating premises included a wonderful, huge yurt (Palace Yurt) located within the Botanical Gardens—it was unique to eat within it while networking with delegates from across Canada and other countries.

High school youth program: The conference committee offered a dynamic program stream for 30 high school youth interested in environment and sustainability, including 10 participants from Mi'kmaq communities.

Children's program: a good range of activities to suit a variety of interests. Wild about Nature—music concert with Little Miss Moffat; A for Adventure—activity circuit with the authors of the book; field trip to the mud flats, with a walk on the ocean floor.

Last thoughts

I found this conference to be very meaningful. The core values

of the conference—“Engaging, Building Community, Magic, Walking the Talk, and Managing Risk”—were truly embedded throughout each day. I was told to expect an interactive, engaging, and challenging conference where I would learn, share, and connect. These expectations were well met! I am left with the question, Now what? What will I do in the next while as a result of the conference? What am I going to shift? One thing that I do know is that I am left in a reflective mood, re-energized and motivated to be a better steward of Planet Earth. I can no longer think, “Remind me later.”

SEEN IN THE WILD

An Astronomical Pain in the Neck

by Patrick Kelly

✂ Having a son (and family) in the RCMP who volunteered to go to the Northwest Territory has allowed me to see some parts of Canada sooner than I had planned. In 2013 and 2014, I flew to in to Lutselke and explored the eastern arm of Great Slave Lake. I can see why it has been proposed as a national park; the scenery alone is amazing. In 2015, I flew to Whitehorse and rented a vehicle and drove to Dawson City and then up the Dempster Highway to Fort McPherson. All those trips have been in the summer, and while my son has taken some amazing pictures of aurora, I have never seen them because, as he pointed out, I always come up in the summer when it never gets truly dark. This year marked the first in which Dalhousie added a study week to the fall term, so with a chance to go in November before the winter got really underway, I decided to visit them at their new posting, Tuktoyaktuk, and this time there would be no problem with too much daytime!

The northern lights are unpredictable, but enjoying the night

sky from an area with few lights is always a treat. The first thing I noticed was that at sunset the Sun takes a long time to set, as it approaches the horizon at a shallow angle. The same is true of the Moon, it moves along the horizon for some time before setting. Once it is dark, the first thing I did was to find Polaris, the north star. As it is almost directly above the Earth's North Pole, it moves north (or south) one degree for every degree change in latitude, moving higher as you go north and lower as you go south. From Nova Scotia, being midway between the pole and the equator, Polaris appears about 45° above the northern horizon. Tuktoyaktuk is 25° further north than Nova Scotia, putting Polaris 25° higher in the sky.

That may not sound like a lot, but you can see for yourself just how big a change it is. On the next clear night, find the Big Dipper. It is low on the northern horizon at sunset during the winter. The Big Dipper is 25° from end to end. Extend an arm fully, and spread your thumb and little finger as far apart as they can go. That should give you about 25° . You can check it with the Big Dipper to see how close you come. The Big Dipper can be used to find Polaris by following the line made by the two pointer stars (the ones in the bowl farthest from the handle)



25°. That should get you to Polaris. (See the star chart.) Now use your hand to see where Polaris is as seen from Tuktoyaktuk. See how long you can stand there until your neck gets sore! I have done this in the planetarium, including going all the way to North Pole, but only for a brief period.

I was also lucky to get a chance to see a really amazing display of the northern lights. After having gotten a sore neck from looking at Polaris I did spot a faint vertical band of aurora in the northwest, rising up from the horizon. It was barely visible. As my son put it, that is the worst display you get to see from here. But they are unpredictable. As his shift was not due to end until 4 a.m., he was going to check periodically and wake me up should a display flare up. I was woken up at 2:45 a.m. with two words: "Let's go!" I quickly got dressed and stepped outside the house, and the sky was writhing with green! Not low on the horizon as I have often seen it from home, but large curtains of shifting green light rising in the northwest, passing right overhead, and ending in Orion in the eastern sky. Once again, I got a sore neck from staring up, but it was well worth it.

I tried to use my small digital camera to capture the spectacle, but even with the aperture opened up all the way and the shutter speed set to maximum (4 seconds) all the pictures I took came out black. As I had nothing to lose, I set the camera to "intelligent auto," pointed it at the aurora and half pressed the focus button. Up on the screen comes "dark sky mode" "hold camera steady." I pressed the shutter down and, oddly, the pictures taken this way show some green in them. My son has a large DSLR and also took some pictures, so the one printed here (unfortunately in black and white) is from him, not me. Gradually, some high cloud moved in, and after about 30 minutes the display had mostly faded away. As it turned out, the first two nights I was there were clear. After the aurora display, it was overcast, with a few periods of light snow, for the rest of my stay, and it was close to a week and a half after I left before they saw sky again. Talk about lucky!

Nova Scotia Migration Bird Count— Eastern Kings County 2017

by Larry Bogan

☘ SATURDAY, MAY 13—a very pleasant day for counting migrating birds. Although cloudy and cool in the morning (2°C overnight in Cambridge), it cleared and warmed quickly (high of 20°). The winds picked up and became brisk in the afternoon.

Seventeen field observers and five feeder watchers saw 99 species in Eastern Kings county that day. Only two birds (Cowbird and Indigo Bunting) were seen at feeders and not in the field. Participants spent 59 party hours in the field walking (and biking) 94 km and 25 hours driving about 300 km.

A comparison of recent years and species count:

2016 102 species

2015 87 species

2014 101 species

2013 97 species

2012 112 species (including Kings West NSMC)

2011 113 species (34 field observers—123 hours)

The local migration count was started here in 1992, and the best count was in 2001 when 96 participants counted 140 species (over 15,000 birds) in 150 party hours.

You will note that the number of participants has decreased from what it was in the past. The NSMC is also not done in as many places as in the past. The annual count used to be part of the North American Migration Count (NAMC), but that

has disappeared. There is now an alternate “migration count,” started by eBird (ebird.org), called the Global Big Day on the second Saturday of May (same day as the NSMC).

The status of the migration is determined by what birds were *not* seen. For example, this year saw solitary or few Indigo Buntings, House Sparrows, Bobolinks, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Red-eyed Vireos, and American Redstarts.

2017

Species	Regular	Feeder
Canada Goose	40	0
Wood Duck	2	0
American Black Duck	13	0
Mallard	133	0
Northern Shoveler	1	0
Green-winged Teal	1	0
Lesser Scaup	2	0
Surf Scoter	1	0
Hooded Merganser	5	0
Ring-necked Pheasant	76	1
Ruffed Grouse	12	0
Common Loon	5	0
Double-crested Cormorant	6	0
Turkey Vulture	1	0
Osprey	2	0
Bald Eagle	37	0
Northern Harrier	2	0
Broad-winged Hawk	2	0
Red-tailed Hawk	14	0
Merlin	1	0
Peregrine Falcon	2	0
Sora	1	0
Killdeer	1	0
Spotted Sandpiper	2	0
Greater Yellowlegs	1	0
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	0
Wilson's Snipe	2	0
Black Guillemot	2	0
Ring-billed Gull	1	0

Herring Gull	568	0
Iceland Gull	2	0
Glaucus Gull	1	0
Great Black-backed Gull	62	0
Rock Pigeon	28	0
Mourning Dove	84	11
Barred Owl	6	2
Chimney Swift	10	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	1
Belted Kingfisher	4	0
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	20	0
Downy Woodpecker	44	5
Hairy Woodpecker	16	2
Northern Flicker	78	5
Pileated Woodpecker	10	1
Least Flycatcher	6	0
Eastern Phoebe	4	0
Eastern Kingbird	2	0
Blue-headed Vireo	71	0
Red-eyed Vireo	4	0
Blue Jay	210	11
American Crow	315	7
Common Raven	133	2
Tree Swallow	56	4
Barn Swallow	59	0
Black-capped Chickadee	195	9
Boreal Chickadee	1	0
Red-breasted Nuthatch	35	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	2
Winter Wren	7	0
Golden-crowned Kinglet	9	0
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5	0
Swainson's Thrush	2	0
Hermit Thrush	17	0
American Robin	242	7
Gray Catbird	5	0
European Starling	280	8
Cedar Waxwing	69	0
Ovenbird	95	0
Northern Waterthrush	24	0
Black-and-white Warbler	39	0

Nashville Warbler	2	0
Common Yellowthroat	2	0
American Redstart	1	0
Northern Parula	41	0
Magnolia Warbler	4	0
Blackburnian Warbler	1	0
Yellow Warbler	18	0
Chestnut-sided Warbler	2	0
Black-throated Blue Warbler	4	0
Palm Warbler	17	0
Yellow-rumped Warbler	106	0
Black-throated Green Warbler	16	0
Chipping Sparrow	35	0
Vesper Sparrow	2	0
Savannah Sparrow	34	0
Song Sparrow	274	2
Swamp Sparrow	2	0
White-throated Sparrow	48	3
Dark-eyed Junco	30	2
Northern Cardinal	24	6
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	10	4
Indigo Bunting	0	1
Bobolink	1	0
Red-winged Blackbird	176	3
Common Grackle	146	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	0	1
Purple Finch	71	16
American Goldfinch	228	39
Evening Grosbeak	17	0
House Sparrow	1	0
Waterfowl Species	10	0
Gull species	22	0
Flycatcher species	1	0
Warbler species	1	0

TOTAL INDIVIDUAL BIRDS: 4,543

TOTAL SPECIES: 99

FEEDER WATCHING: 4.7 hours

WALKING: 59.2 hours (92.2 km)

DRIVING: 25 hours (299.6 km)

Woods, Water and Sky: Writings by Robie Tufts

by Rachel Cooper

✦ Robie Wilfred Tufts (1884–1982), of Wolfville, was Chief Migratory Birds Protection Officer for the Maritime provinces from 1919 to 1947. He was also founding president of the Nova Scotia Bird Society and author of the highly regarded *Birds of Nova Scotia*, first published in 1961. He held honorary degrees from Acadia and Dalhousie universities, and his papers are housed in Acadia University’s archives.

From the early 1940s to the 1970s, Robie Tufts wrote a regular column, “Woods, Water and Sky,” for the *Chronicle Herald*. BNS has been given the opportunity to publish a sampling of Robie’s columns.

This sampling, our eighth, is believed to be from 1947 or 1948 (exact dates of the columns are unknown). In this excerpt, Robie describes the unexpected feeding behaviour of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in the deep forest, and the resourcefulness of a porcupine that had one of its quills embedded in its fur.



Hummingbirds in heavily wooded areas

Mr. Austin W. Cameron, Wildlife Technician for the Department of Lands and Forests, who is presently working in the Liscombe Big Game Sanctuary, tells of a number of interesting observations he has recently made while carrying out his special investigations. One of these concerned a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. We are apt to think of these diminutive feathered creatures hobnobbing with the bumblebees among the nectar-laden flowers of our gardens and orchards, but as a matter of fact they are quite frequently seen in the heavily timbered sections of the province, and considering the relative scarcity of flowers there, one is quite justified in asking what they find to eat in such a place. Mr. Cameron, who has the keen powers of the trained wildlife observer, is able to answer that question.

One of the six species of woodpeckers which occur regularly in Nova Scotia is the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. These birds, slightly larger than the more common Downy Woodpecker, feed, as their name suggests, on the sap of hardwood trees. They bore a fair-sized hole through the bark and suck the sap as it oozes out. Mr. Cameron tells of recently having seen a Hummingbird at one of these Sapsucker "feeding stations," greedily partaking of the sweetish liquid as it continued to flow after the larger bird had left, having no doubt become surfeited.

Porcupine in difficulties

He also related a story about a porcupine which he had captured in a box-trap for the purpose of studying the animal's food preferences. During the procedure, one of its own quills had become embedded in the furry underparts of its body about midway between nose and tail. It was liberated on a small island where it could be watched readily. When given its freedom from the trap, it was seen to climb a tree, hang by the toes of its hind feet, head pointing downward, and while in this rather

unique position it used its free forepaws like hands to extract the offending quill.

SEEN IN THE WILD

One Fine Morning

by Ed Sulis

✂ A few mature poplar trees are being cut just south of our property on Mill Brook to be milled and used as blocking for a very innovative duplex being built on Canaan Avenue. But that is another story.

All this activity is most interesting, and I make frequent visits. As I returned home from one such visit in late May, three crows were making a ruckus as they frequently do, and it is always useful to check what they are up to. The blackflies are out and the trees are in new leaf, so it is hard to observe and I move along quickly, only to backtrack a bit as the crows are rather obnoxious. And in a tall tree nearby is an owl.



So I run home (walk quickly is more like it), get the camera and return. The marker crows have retreated, but the owl is again located and continues to rotate his/her head, watching me with large brown eyes as I circle the tree. Photos are taken, and as I move on the mate arrives, so more staring at each other and more photos. The accompanying photograph is the second of the barred owl pair.

What a wonderful sight.



Spring Weather 2017, Eastern Annapolis Valley

by Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station

	TEMPERATURE			PRECIPITATION
	Max (°C)	Min (°C)	Mean (°C)	Total (mm)
March 2017 (30 yr. average)	1.5 (3.4)	-7.0 (-5.3)	-2.8 (-1.0)	80 (122)
April 2017 (30 yr. average)	11.6 (-1.3)	1.2 (0.6)	6.4 (5.3)	27 (116)
May 2017 (30 yr. average)	16.7 (16.4)	5.9 (5.6)	11.3 (11.0)	110 (101)
Season (Spring) (30 yr. average)	10.0 (10.0)	0.1 (0.4)	5.1 (5.2)	217 (339)

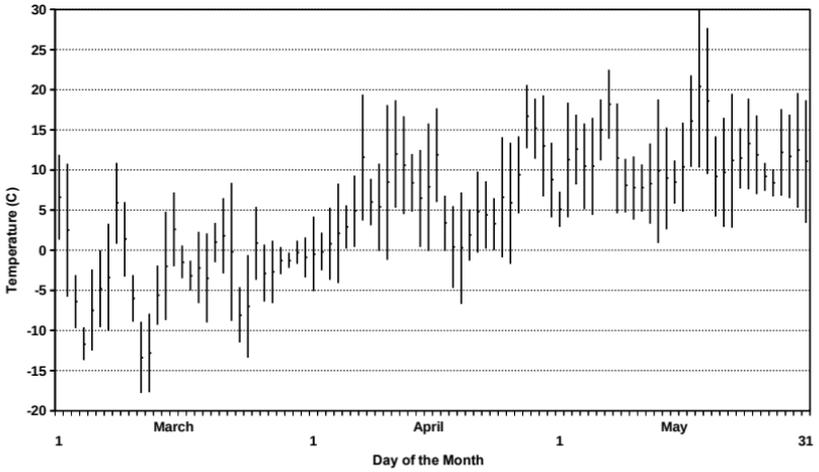
Source: Environment Canada data for Kentville, NS (<http://weatheroffice.gc.ca>). 30-yr. averages: 1981-2010.

The weather was up and down during the spring. A late March snow did not disappear until early April, but the below-normal temperatures of March increased quickly to above normal in April.

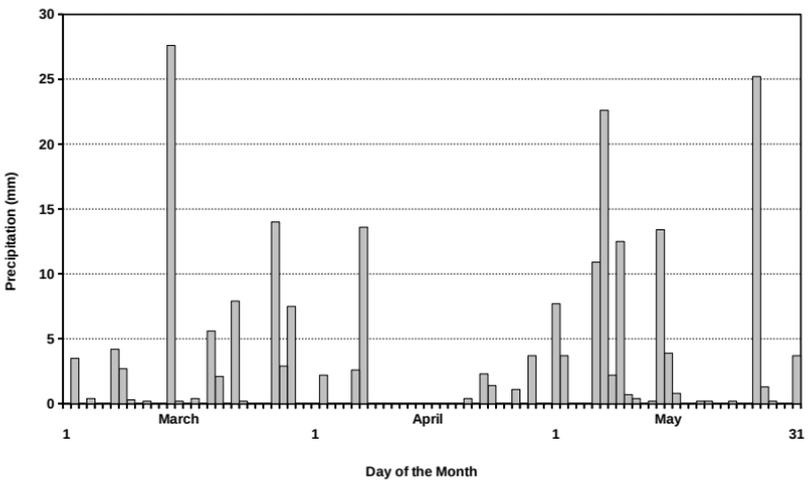
Temperature

The graph of spring temperature illustrates the up and down, especially in March, when temperatures ranged from -17°C to

Daily Temperatures - March, April, May 2017
Kentville, N.S.



Daily Precipitation - March, April, May 2017
Kentville, N.S.



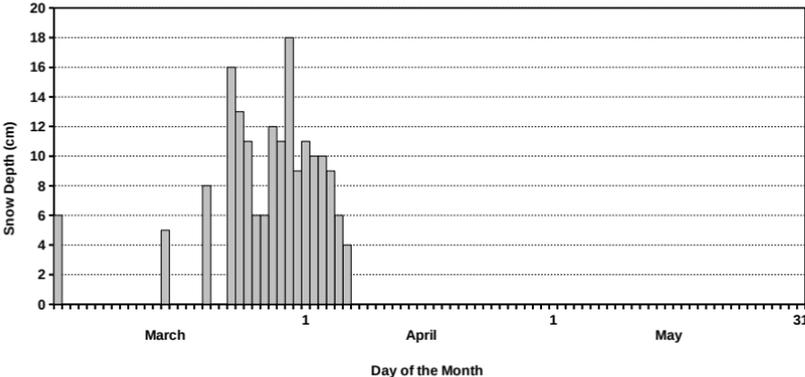
+12°. Starting in the last week of March, the mean daily temperature continuously warmed from -3° to +13° in mid-April. After a cold period from April 17 to April 25, when temperatures were in the single digits, the weather warmed to normal. March was below the 30-year average; April and May both exceeded the average. Overall, the spring was average.

Precipitation

After the snow left on April 6 and it rained on the 7th, we had a two-week dry period. That put April in a deficit for moisture of only 27 mm, or 30% of the average 93 mm. But because of the snow on the ground, there was actually minor flooding in some areas. In May there was more rain, and the 110 mm we received was slightly above the 30-year average. But the large deficit in April caused the spring to end up with only 70% of normal spring precipitation. This is in contrast with other parts of the Maritimes where the spring rains were significantly above average.

Depth of Snow on the Ground - March, April, May 2017

Kentville, N.S.



What's in the Sky?

by Roy Bishop

Highlights for July through October 2017

JULY 3: Earth farthest from Sun (aphelion)

JULY 9: Full Moon

JULY 20: Venus near crescent Moon in eastern sky 3:30 to 5 a.m.

JULY 23: New Moon

JULY 24, 25: Large tides

JULY 27: Mars passes behind Sun

JULY 28, 29: Nova East Star Party (Smileys Provincial Park)

AUGUST 7: Full Moon

AUGUST 11, 12: Perseid Meteor Shower (moonlight interferes)

AUGUST 19: Venus above crescent Moon in eastern sky 4 to 6 a.m.

AUGUST 21: New Moon and a Solar Eclipse (see below!)

SEPTEMBER 5: Neptune at opposition

SEPTEMBER 6: Full Moon

SEPTEMBER 10–25: Mercury in eastern sky 6:15 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 18–30: Zodiacal light in eastern sky 5:15 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 20: New Moon

SEPTEMBER 22: Equinox (17:02 ADT), autumn begins

OCTOBER 5: Full Moon (Harvest Moon)

OCTOBER 19: New Moon

OCTOBER 19: Uranus at opposition

OCTOBER 26: Jupiter passes behind Sun

The Great North American solar eclipse

The 2017 August 21 eclipse will likely be the most well-observed eclipse in history. The eclipse is total along a narrow strip of land (about 100 km wide) that extends across a dozen states in the contiguous United States, from Oregon in the northwest to South Carolina in the southeast. For anyone in that path of totality, the Moon will cover all of the Sun for a priceless couple of minutes. Outside the path of totality, the eclipse is partial over all of North America, the northern third of South America, and westernmost Europe and Africa. It is the first total solar eclipse to occur in the continental United States in 38 years, it occurs at the height of summer, when many people are free to travel to the path of totality, people today are more mobile than ever, and nearly everyone has a smartphone camera plus Internet access! Hundreds of Canadians have made plans to be somewhere in that magical path of totality so they can be immersed in the lunar umbral shadow on August 21.

As a celestial spectacle, on a scale of 1 to 10, a total solar eclipse is a 10. If you have witnessed such an eclipse, no words are necessary. If you have not, no words can adequately describe the overwhelming impact of the experience. For more information about the eclipse (more information than you could ever imagine) see: <http://www.eclipsewise.com/solar/SEnews/TSE2017/TSE2017.html>

A partial solar eclipse for Nova Scotia

During the past 17 years, three partial solar eclipses could have been observed from Nova Scotia had the skies been clear. The dates when the Moon partially blocked the light of the Sun:

2000 December 25, snowstorm

2008 August 1, cloudy

2013 November 3, cloudy

Thus there has not been a solar eclipse visible from Nova Scotia in this century.

Our next chance to see a partial solar eclipse from Nova Scotia occurs on August 21. At maximum eclipse, about half the Sun's disk will be hidden behind the Moon. That does not mean we will experience half the spectacle of totality, for even a 99% partial eclipse does not come close to matching the visceral impact a 100% eclipse. Nevertheless, it is a rare day that the Sun, Moon, and Earth are in syzygy, and the Sun resembles a cookie with a large bite taken out of it! In the Wolfville area on Monday, August 21, the partial eclipse begins at 14:40 ADT, reaches a maximum at 15:51, and ends at 16:57, just in time for supper.

Although a total solar eclipse is the most spectacular natural phenomenon that you can see with the unaided eye, a partial solar eclipse can cause permanent partial blindness if you try to see it with the unaided eye. It is not that an eclipse produces some sort of dangerous "eclipse rays"—the Sun is just as dangerous on any sunny day, but there is no reason to stare at it, so no one does. The rule is simple: Never look at the surface of the Sun, either directly with the unaided eyes or through binoculars or a telescope! Permanent partial blindness can occur almost instantly in the case of telescopic viewing.

Fortunately, there are simple ways to view a partial solar eclipse. Here are three of them:

1. Look at the Sun through a #14 welder's glass filter (obtainable from some welding supply stores). A #14 filter provides sufficient protection from the Sun's invisible ultraviolet and infrared radiation and dims its visible light to a safe, comfortable level. If available, commercially-made eclipse viewing glasses work well too.

2. Take an ordinary flat pocket mirror and, with masking tape, cover all of the mirror except for a small area about 6 mm (1/4 inch) in size. The shape of the opening does not matter; a square opening works well. Hold the mirror in sunlight and reflect the sunlight onto a light-coloured, flat surface a few

metres away. The flat surface, which acts as a viewing screen, should itself not be in direct sunlight but in a shaded, darker location. An image of the Sun will appear. If you are indoors, prop the mirror up on a sunny window ledge and aim the reflected beam onto a wall or ceiling in the room. Outdoors, if you use the entire mirror (without masking tape), a long projection distance will work to produce a large image of the Sun on the shaded side of a house tens of metres away.

3. Cover one side of a pair of binoculars with a glove or piece of cardboard taped over the large lens. Attach the binoculars to a camera tripod so that they are held fixed and steady when aimed in any direction. Point the binoculars at the Sun, not by looking through them, but by watching for an image of the Sun on a sheet of white cardboard held 30 or 40 cm behind the binoculars. The contrast of the image can be improved if another cardboard sheet is used to block direct sunlight from shining on the viewing screen. Focus the binoculars so the projected image is sharp. The further back the viewing screen is, the larger but dimmer the image of the Sun will be. If children are present, or if there is anyone else who may not understand what you are doing, be vigilant to prevent them from trying to look through the binoculars! Position a couple of chairs in the way as a precaution.

For personal reasons I am not travelling to the path of totality for the August eclipse. With a solar-filter-equipped telescope, I will observe it as a partial eclipse, from either Avonport or Evangeline Beach. If anyone wants to drop by to have a look, e-mail me a day or two before to arrange <RLB@eastlink.ca>. If we are clouded out on August 21, our next chance to see a partial solar eclipse from Nova Scotia will occur four years from now, on June 10, 2021.

June 10

This excerpt is from The Canadian Naturalist, by P.H. Gosse, originally published in 1840 (London, England: Van Voorst). The book is a series of conversations over the course of a year between a father and son about the natural history they observe on their farm in the Eastern Townships of Quebec (or “the Lower Province” as it was known to Gosse). The following is from the father’s introduction to June [with some editing of punctuation for the modern reader].

We may now say that summer is here in all its rich and gorgeous beauty: “the glorious summer time;” a time which, to the naturalist, is like the opening of the gates of Eden. It is indeed delightful to walk forth and behold Nature in her majesty and loveliness—the glorious sunshine, the verdant field, the glittering insects—to feel the balmy and fragrant breeze; to hear the melody of the birds, as they glide among the leafy shades of the forest; to see the trees with their weight of massy foliage, fragrant with blossoms; to observe the profusion, the almost excess of life and gladness, which pervades the vast temple of nature. Look at yonder maple woods: how rich an effect is produced by the contrast of light and shade—masses of the most soft and refreshing green, prominent in the bright sunshine, relieved by the dark sombre recesses which the eye cannot penetrate, while the leaves quivering in the air seem as if each one were possessed of an individual life and were frolicking in mirth and gaiety. The bushes and shrubs are studded with myriads of happy insects of all sorts, merrily hurrying to and fro and enjoying their brief but joyous span of life in the gladdening beam.

BLOMIDON NATURALISTS SOCIETY

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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.
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