

THE HALIFAX FIELD NATURALIST



No. 118
March to May, 2005



Gaspereau River

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Return address: HFN, c/o NS Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, NS, B3H 3A6



is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and holds Registered Charity status with Revenue Canada. Tax-creditable receipts will be issued for individual and corporate gifts. It is an affiliate of the Canadian Nature Federation and an organisational member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, the provincial umbrella association for naturalist groups in Nova Scotia.

OBJECTIVES are to encourage a greater appreciation and understanding of Nova Scotia's natural history, both within the membership of HFN and in the public at large. To represent the interests of naturalists by encouraging the conservation of Nova Scotia's natural resources.

MEETINGS are held, except for July and August, on the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax. Meetings are open to the public.

FIELD TRIPS are held at least once a month, and it is appreciated if those travelling in someone else's car share the cost of the gas. All participants in HFN activities are responsible for their own safety. Everyone, member or not, is welcome to take part in field trips.

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MEMBERSHIP is open to anyone interested in the natural history of Nova Scotia. Memberships are available at any meeting of the society, or by writing to: Membership Secretary, Halifax Field Naturalists, c/o NS Museum of Natural History. New memberships starting from 1 September will be valid until the end of the following membership year. The regular membership year is from 1 January to 31 December. Members receive the HFN Newsletter and notices of all meetings, field trips, and special programmes. The fees are as follows:

Individual	\$15.00 per year
Family	\$20.00 per year
Supporting	\$25.00 per year
FNSN (opt.)	\$ 5.00 per year

EXECUTIVE	President	Allan Robertson	422-6326
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	Ingrid & Burkhard Plache	475-1129	
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HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDITORIAL



Weather; always a little unreliable, always different in Nova Scotia, where the Atlantic systems constantly vie with those coming from the west. At our house, when the wind is a rainy easterly, my bird feeders have to be taken in and the seed taken out and dried, to be re-installed for the impatient Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches, and also the American Goldfinch and Bluejays. The Downy Woodpecker is still coming to the impermeable fresh suet chunks, but I have seen neither a Hairy, nor a Pileated, as yet this season.

We have excellent and timely reports in this issue: our President's Report; Treasurer's Report; and end-of-year Committee Reports, especially in the Conservation Section (pp.6-9), with detailed updates on Blue Mountain/Birch Cove Lands, a new threat to Shubie Park in Dartmouth, the mysterious Point Pleasant Park 'International Design Steering Committee Competition', some very good news from the Friends of PPP, and Part I of the history of HFN's third decade (p.18).

Dr. Davis's NS Theme Regions talk, (p.13), inspired the newsletter committee to reference it in our Field Trip reports.

— Stephanie Robertson

LETTERS



To the Executive and Members of the Halifax Field Naturalists:

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since Colin's death. It has been a difficult year, learning to live without him, to carry on every day, and to find a purpose to carry on. Nature and the outdoors was always the constant for both of us and has continued to sustain me through this past year. I would like to thank the executive and members of the Halifax Field Naturalists who have been so kind to me over the past year, maintaining contact and including me in events. I would also like to thank everyone who made donations in Colin's memory. Ensuring the ongoing work of protecting nature was very important to Colin.

Thank you all, you are all special people.

— Betty Hodgson Stewart

FNSN 2005 AGM



The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists will be holding its AGM and Conference on the weekend of June 24-26, in Truro. As always, this will be a wonderful opportunity to meet and enjoy the company of other naturalists from all parts of the province. And, as always, you will have the opportunity to hear some stimulating speakers and to pick and choose from a variety of wonderful local field trips.

Events (Friday reception, meals, talks, poster display, AGM) will take place on the NS Agricultural College campus. A very reasonably priced conference package will include accommodation and meals. Keep an eye on the Federation Web site <naturens.ca> for details, which will be posted soon. Mark your calendar now,

and we'll see you in the hub of Nova Scotia on June 24-26 for a great natural history weekend.

— Doug Linzey



NATURE CANADA 2005 AGM

The 2005 Nature Canada (previously CNF) AGM and Conference will be in North Bay, Ontario, June 3-5, hosted by the Nipissing Naturalists (<www.nipissing-naturalist.com/ON/conference.htm>. On-line registration will be available at the end of February. This is a joint venture with the 74th Annual Ontario Nature (Fed. of Ont. Naturalists) AGM and Conference.

A meeting of nature lovers from across the country, Nature Canada's AGM changes to a new host province each year. This allows our members to meet face to face, to share ideas, and to learn about the natural history, wildlife, and challenges which face the host community, and Canada overall.

Ontario Nature information is available at <www.ontarionature.org>, and Nature Canada information is available at <www.naturecanada.ca>.

— Stephanie Robertson



BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND SWAP

In the second week of January, a meeting of the Bedford Watershed Advisory Committee took place. Chris Miller and I attended in order to make a case for the preservation and protection of this area. We heard there that behind-closed-doors negotiations are underway between Sobey's and the NS Government (presumably DNR) for a land swap in the Blue Mountain area that has to do with the Moirs Pond infill fiasco.

I do not pretend to understand all the innuendos here but I don't really think it is relevant. I strongly oppose these land swaps which involve the trading of crown land for private land elsewhere. The Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) area is being used as a cash-cow by the government, much to the detriment of this proposed Protected Wilderness Area. I've written a letter to The Minister of DNR opposing the proposed land swap, indicating that I represent HFN in this view. There may be some urgency in this matter since this swap could take place any time and possibly soon.

Please see the letter I sent on behalf of HFN to Minister Richard Hurlbert on January 23 (p.7).

— Bob McDonald

NEW AND RETURNING

Susan Clarke
Gregory Crosby
Lucas Berrigan
Suellen & Michael Bradfield
David & Phyl Bryson
David & Janey Hughes
Virginia MacLeod & Mark McInnis
Sharon Taylor



SPECIAL REPORTS

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Preparation for our Annual General Meeting and assembling of Executive Reports to our membership gives each of us an opportunity to reflect on past happenings and to expand on the vision which will carry us through the coming years.

My comments in this report cover only the period from our last AGM to mid-November, as personal and business matters required that I step down from the executive at that time. I can say that this was a most difficult decision, but necessary, as I was not prepared to be an 'absentee' president in an organisation as important as HFN. I look forward to a more active role in the future.

I consider that there are six essential elements that make up HFN:

1) Monthly Meetings/ Field Trips

Jennifer MacKeigan has worked very hard to make our year interesting through a variety of enthusiastic speakers and field trip leaders who have brought us new adventures and experiences. Even though the weather didn't always co-operate, we gained new insights into many different areas of our natural world.

2) The Halifax Field Naturalist

Local naturalist news items, special reports and articles, field trip and meeting reports, and the special artwork elevate our newsletter to a level not equalled in other similar publications. Here we have to pay special tribute to those who spend so many hours in the preparation of each and every issue — Stephanie Robertson, Ursula Grigg, Patricia Chalmers, and Bernice Moores who write, compile, and distribute the newsletter; also to the many, many others who submit timely articles and write-ups.

3) Executive Positions

Much work goes on behind the scenes within the executive; Janet Dalton, our fearless treasurer, works quietly banking, paying bills, preparing financial statements, and doing the endless reports for CRA and Society status. Peter Payzant, our secretary, prepares wonderful minutes and executive 'to-do' lists (which seem to arrive as soon as we get home from the meetings!); and our membership secretary Elizabeth Keizer keeps all membership records and has worked diligently to improve our membership position and keep us current on all membership matters.

4) Directors 'at-Large'

These wonderful people give guidance and work on many committees. Doug Linzey keeps our database current, dependable and talented Regina Maass enhances our monthly meetings greatly by serving tea and cookies, and Suzanne Borkowski is our conservation representative, actively (and constantly) involved in representing us in so many areas, e.g. McNabs, Hemlock Ravine, Point Pleasant Park, to name a few.

5) Membership

This is so important to HFN — our attendance at meetings and field trips, and participation through our other activities as well. Where else today can you contribute to the need for knowledge of our natural world, get a wonderful newsletter, attend informative and interesting meetings (including our Christmas social), participate in field trips, and be a part of a Naturalist Group, for such a reasonable annual fee?

6) Outreach Activities and Support Areas

These could really involve full-time staff if we were to become involved in all of the concerns about our wild areas which seem to be under attack. More notably, this year we have been in active support of the Voluntary Planning efforts to control the use of OHVs. Past President Bob McDonald submitted an excellent report detailing our position, and continues to be our point person on this matter. Bob is also very active in conversation of the Birch Cove Lakes/ Blue Mountain area, where there is an obvious need for good vision and good planning in order to ensure protection of undeveloped lands near the city.

Our continuing involvement with The Captain Arnell Conservation Lands has been written about earlier and is another example of our conservation outreach activity.

A most interesting example of HFN talent has been the production of the Dragonfly and Butterfly checklists by Peter and Linda Payzant, with illustrations by Stephanie Robertson. These are available for sale at our meetings and at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History Gift Shop.

In closing, there are several items which require attention, the first being the passing of our colleague and friend Colin Stewart. Much has been written about Colin, and HFN — through a committee led by Bob McDonald — has created the Colin Stewart Conservation Award, about which more information is available in our previous issue, #117.

While my term as President had to be cut short, I want to thank the executive and membership for their unparalleled support. Vice President Bernice Moores stepped into the chair for the balance of the term, and we know that with her ability and effectiveness HFN is in good hands.

Judi and I continue our membership and look forward to a more active role in the future.

— Elliott Hayes



**Halifax Field Naturalists
Financial Statement (Balance Sheet)
As At December 31, 2004**

	2004	2004	2003	2003	2002	2002
Assets						
Cash						
Royal		\$2,085		\$3,593		\$2,981
						\$427
Accounts Receivable and Accrued Income		\$337		\$473		\$59
Inventories and Prepaids		\$825		\$832		\$829
Investments		\$11,881		\$9,787		\$9,718
Fixed Assets						\$269
		<u>\$15,128</u>		<u>\$14,685</u>		<u>\$14,284</u>
Liabilities and Surplus						
Accounts Payable						
General		\$0		\$101		\$50
FNSN		\$0		\$540		\$290
Surplus						
Restricted		\$5,881		\$5,787		\$5,673
Unrestricted		\$9,247		\$8,257		\$8,271
	\$15,128		\$14,044		\$13,944	
		<u>\$15,128</u>		<u>\$14,685</u>		<u>\$14,284</u>

**Halifax Field Naturalists
Statement of Income and Surplus
Year Ended December 31, 2004**

	2004	2003	2002	2001
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Revenues				
Membership	\$1,927	\$1,837	\$1,925	\$2,325
Product Sales	\$8	\$3	\$18	\$95
GIC	\$0	\$0	\$4,599	\$0
Interest	\$121	\$37	\$202	\$343
Donations	\$746	\$530	\$50	\$235
DF List	\$65			
	<u>\$2,866</u>	<u>\$2,407</u>	<u>\$6,794</u>	<u>\$2,998</u>
Expenses				
Field Trips	\$0	\$15	\$0	\$0
Special Projects	\$0	\$0	\$269	\$0
Socials	\$0	\$21	\$21	\$0
Grants/Donations	\$125	\$125	\$5,225	\$175
Insurance	\$200	\$175	\$85	\$85
Meetings	\$254	\$278	\$229	\$308
Memberships	\$405	\$485	\$463	\$305
Miscellaneous	\$37	\$0	\$204	\$0
Newsletters				
Postage	\$318	\$611	\$421	\$501
Production	\$442	\$687	\$551	\$409
Office Supplies & Expenses	\$96	\$23	\$47	\$183
	<u>\$1,877</u>	<u>\$2,421</u>	<u>\$7,515</u>	<u>\$1,966</u>
Net Income	\$989	-\$14	-\$722	\$1,032
Surplus, beginning of year	\$8,257	\$8,271	\$8,993	\$7,961
Surplus, end of year	<u>\$9,246</u>	<u>\$8,257</u>	<u>\$8,271</u>	<u>\$8,993</u>

PROGRAMME

2004/05 PROGRAMME COMMITTEE REPORT

The Programme Committee offered a range of talks and field trips this year. Some of the topics for the talks included dragonflies, cougars and sharks. As well, we learned about what other Nova Scotians are doing through the CRABapple Project and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. Field trips included many old favourites such as the Cape Split walk, the Sewer Stroll, the Cranberry Pick, and the Butterfly trips. Some new locations were explored as well. The Christmas social was very well attended and will likely become an annual event.

As always, the ongoing challenge the Programme Committee faces is finding locations and topics that are new and interesting to the Halifax Field Naturalists. Last year, a survey was distributed to HFN members and already we've used many of the suggestions provided, while others will be used in the future. Please continue with these suggestions.

The Programme Committee is very grateful to the people who gave the talks and conducted the field trips. We appreciate the time taken from their busy schedules to contribute to our organisation. We would also like to extend a thank you to those members of the Halifax Field Naturalists who have taken the time to lead field trips this year.

The members of the existing Programme Committee will not be returning next year but we'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made suggestions or offered words of encouragement. It was a pleasure to have been able to contribute to the Halifax Field Naturalists and we hope that you will be as kind to the new members as you've been to us.

— Respectfully submitted, Jennifer MacKeigan,
Burkhard Plache, Ingrid Plache



NEWSLETTER

From March/04 to Dec./04, four newsletters were produced — two were 20 pages long; one had 12 pages; and the fourth had 16 pages.

This past year, there were a total of 13 excellent Field Trip reports; eight were HFN trips, and five were non-HFN trips. Ten monthly HFN talk write-ups were submitted, and two other important talk reports were submitted as well.

We had six thought-provoking articles and news items of length, plus other tidbits such as the New and Returning Member List for each issue (thank you Elizabeth Keizer); Hunting Season information to

keep us watchful on field trips (instituted by Patricia Chalmers, thank you); our informative Almanac, also by Pat; the useful Halifax Tide Table (instituted by Past Editor Ursula Grigg); our Nature Notes; and many other articles reflecting our continuing passion for the natural environment and our commitment to conservation in both in HRM and Nova Scotia.

You might have noticed that the number of newsletter pages is always a multiple of four. Before, it was published on double-sided 8 1/2" x 11" sheets, stapled together. Since our Summer /84 issue #36, it has been consistently published on double-sided, 11" x 17" sheets of paper, with two pages on each side (four pages in total on one sheet). This format was first tried with our Winter /76, issue #8. It eliminates the need for staples, which makes a significant saving in postage costs. However, if the amount of submitted material for a certain issue goes over, say, 12 pages, then three more pages of other text has to be found in order to complete the 'multiple of four' that is required. If no usable extra material can be found, articles will be reserved for a later newsletter.

Last March's issue #114 was 'set-up' with my laptop computer in B.C. I was on holiday there with our family, and submissions and communication about the newsletter was received and sent by email! This shows how much the newsletter process has changed since the time when Doris Butters was editor, producing the whole thing by typewriter and 'cut and paste' methods. I don't know how she did it, but she did — for nine years — and a wonderful job it was too.

The technology switched forever from typewriter to computer for the Spring /89 issue (#54), when I joined Editor Doris Butters, Assistant Editor Ursula Grigg, and newsletter staff Marjory Hansen and John Strong, doing the artwork and computerised layout and design. The computerisation of our programme started a bit earlier than that of the newsletter, as I had joined Milton and Norma Gregg on that committee in March, 1988, and did the first programme by computer for the March/88 issue (#51).

I enjoy doing the newsletter very much, and 16 years and 52 issues later (Ursula Grigg did 12 of these issues while our family were away for three years), I'm still doing it — along with our programme insert. I am always delighted when there are so many people who are very willing to give material for our newsletter; the items are always very interesting, well-written, and of importance to naturalists.

The Halifax Field Naturalist is a reflection of our membership and their dedication to and love of our Nova Scotian natural environment.

— Stephanie Robertson



CONSERVATION

2004/05 CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

HFN has been quite active in conservation issues this year. The aftermath of Hurricane Juan has required some major restorative measures.

McNab's and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park suffered severe damage and required extensive clean-up. Fortunately, DNR focused on clearing the walkways and, wherever possible, left fallen trees to deteriorate naturally.

That wasn't the end of the story, however.

The CFIA has insisted on taking advantage of the situation to get into the more heavily wooded areas of the islands to track down and eradicate that pesky Brown Spruce Long-horned Beetle. More trees are being cut right now and chipped on site to destroy the beetle while it is still hibernating. They hope to be finished by the end of May.

Point Pleasant Park is still undergoing restoration. HFN feels strongly, as do all conservationists, that the Park should be left as natural as possible. We've indicated that any replanting which needs to be done should be with native species and, if possible, bird-friendly ones. Let's hope HRM listens.

The Management Plan Committee of Long Lake Provincial Park is still working on developing a plan that will meet the needs of its various user groups – the largest provincial park within HRM. There are a lot of challenges facing this committee. Their task is not an easy one.

Other issues HFN has been monitoring this past year include collaborative stewardship of the Chebucto Peninsula by the Five Bridge Wilderness Heritage Trust, and the proposed Highway #113 through the Blue Mountain/Birch Cove Lakes area.

— Suzanne M. Borkowski
Conservation Chair



BLUE MOUNTAIN/BIRCH COVE LANDS

Many thanks to those who sent their comments on the letter I sent on our behalf about the proposed land swap. In addition to Minister Hurlburt, it has been sent to another 15 to 20 people in political office.

Let's hope it makes a difference.

"23 January 2005

Dear Minister Hurlburt:

I write to you on behalf of and as Past-President and Board member of the Halifax Field Naturalists (HFN). We are a 120-member natural history society which is keenly interested in the preservation and protection of natural areas in all of Nova Scotia and, particularly, within the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Our focus just now involves the provincial crown land in the Blue Mountain/ Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) area. The Ecology Action Centre and the Nova Scotia Public Lands Coalition have recommended that this area be protected under the Protected Wilderness Area legislation. As well, our local MLA, Diana Whalen, introduced a

private member's bill in the N. S. Legislature to have the area so declared. The BMBCL area provides a pristine 1750-hectare habitat for many species of flora and fauna and contains the headwaters of several major waterways as well as many wetlands. Blue Mountain itself is the highest point of land within the HRM affording the visitor splendid scenic vistas. Specifically, members of the N.S. Bird Society have identified over 140 species of birds within the variety of habitats in the BMBCL area and many uncommon-to-rare wetland and barren land species of plants have been found here by members of the HFN and botanists working with the N.S. Museum of Natural History. In addition, there is evidence that this area provides crucial habitat for the endangered mainland moose, a creature that requires large tracts of remote wetlands for its survival. The HFN is supportive of the preservation and protection of this crown land for these natural values and the many educational and recreational opportunities that it provides. Local residents use the area for a variety of recreational pursuits including canoeing, hiking, wilderness camping, snow shoeing, berry picking and bird watching. The HFN, partnered with the Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Society, the Ecology Action Centre and the Halifax North West Trails Association, our local trails group, led a series of three hikes into the BMBCL area last summer, which introduced over 100 people to its natural values.

Among the current threats to the integrity of the BMBCL is the trading off of crown land here for private land elsewhere. Most, if not all, of these "land swaps" take place behind closed doors without public participation or knowledge, even though this land belongs to us, the citizens of Nova Scotia. I find this behaviour distasteful to say the least. One only has to take a quick glance at a map of the Birch Cove Lakes area to see that much of the former crown land around the lakes is now in private hands. Further, one wonders how the private in-holdings, surrounded on all sides by crown land, got that way. We know that these land swaps within the BMBCL continue to this day and that another is being considered in negotiations with Sobey's regarding Moir's Pond. (Two of us were informed of this by District 21 Councillor Len Goucher at a meeting of the Bedford Watershed Advisory Committee that we attended last week.) I urge you, Mr. Minister, not to trade off any more land within the BMBCL area. As you know, HRM is in the midst of a Regional Planning Process, part of which involves the identification of significant 'green space', that is, natural areas which can be used by the 400,000 citizens of the HRM for recreational and educational purposes. The Blue Mountain/Birch Cove Lakes area ranked very high among the proposed natural areas worth preserving in its current state.

Nova Scotia has a rather small proportion of its land in public ownership compared with other provinces. We want to add to this natural resource, especially one so accessible to so many people, not to take away from it. We hope that you will agree with us that the time has come to stop trading away our public land in the BMBCL area.

Sincerely,

Robert S. McDonald, Ph.D., F.C.I.C.

Past President Halifax Field Naturalists"

— Bob McDonald

POINT PLEASANT PARK

The International Design Competition

Last September, in partnership with local developer Southwest Properties, HRM announced an international design competition as part of Point Pleasant's restoration. Southwest donated \$100,000 towards the competition to assist in the Park's renewal. The money will be used for the competition's associated costs.

A 16-member Steering Committee was established to develop terms of reference for the competition, to conduct the competition, and to prepare a report for Halifax Regional Council.

Most residents will remember that Point Pleasant was closed for almost a year after Hurricane Juan while damaged trees were removed. The Park reopened in June, 2004, and if you take a walk there today, the devastation is obvious.

The first major task, gathering public input and opinions prior to developing the competition's terms, was undertaken in three steps.

First, a questionnaire soliciting opinion and advice was distributed to park users, local residents, and others. About 350 completed questionnaires were returned – a record response from any HRM questionnaire.

Second, a public information session was held on January 29th in the Shakespeare-by-the-Sea building in the lower parking lot. It provided background information on the history and ecology of the park, and on the damage and restoration to date. About 300 people visited.

Third, a public consultation session was held on January 31st at The Tower at St. Mary's University. Approximately 200 people attended this session.

The two sessions were moderated by the Atlantic Provinces Association of Landscape Architects (APALA) as their contribution to the process.

Analysis of the results showed a very consistent response among residents. Following are a few selected responses to the question "What does the Park mean to you?":

A natural oasis on the edge of the city...

A breath of fresh air, a view of the open ocean, respite from city life and any problems...

A wild/tame place – leave the city behind – bird and squirrel watching – trees, trees, trees...

Feeling away from the city while in the city...

An oasis of nature, quiet and calm away from the hustle and bustle of the city. It brings us face to face with the origins of our city — the ocean that frames it; the forest that clothed it; and the navy that needed it...and it keeps me and my dog alive...

The results of the public consultation session confirmed that almost all participants wanted to "keep things as they were before the trees came down".

The format of this session included short opening remarks followed by each table of six to eight people discussing what they liked or didn't like about the Park, and what they recommended be done in restor-

ing the Park. They were asked to describe their recommendations on a map of the area. One person from each table reported back to the group, and then the maps were gathered as a record of what people thought. An analysis of opinions and recommendations was carried out by APALA, the moderators of the session, and a synopsis of their findings tended to group responses into four areas:

1. the features of the Park they liked;
2. their favourite ways of using the Park;
3. the qualities of the Park they most appreciated;
4. their thoughts on managing the Park.

1. The ten most popular features of the Park were:

Newly-exposed view planes

Link to down town and city

Universal (wheelchair) access

Natural shoreline

Off-leash areas for dogs

Gazebo/bandstand/pavilion

Waterfront walkway/boardwalk/trail/path

Access to ocean

Art installations

Commemorative trail of Hurricane Juan damage; allow natural regeneration in some areas

2. The ten most favourite ways of using of the Park were:

Interpretation/appreciation/study of nature

Interpretation/recognition/respect/protection of history, including First Nations

Swimming/beach

Walking/hiking

Cycling

Picnicking/family gatherings/barbecues

Skiing

Dog walking

Exercise (Tai-Chi/fitness circuit)

Passive recreation

3. The ten most appreciated qualities of the Park were:

Tranquility/serenity/escape

Privacy/sanctuary/respite

Solitude/different from city

Trees-forested

Informal layout/unregimented

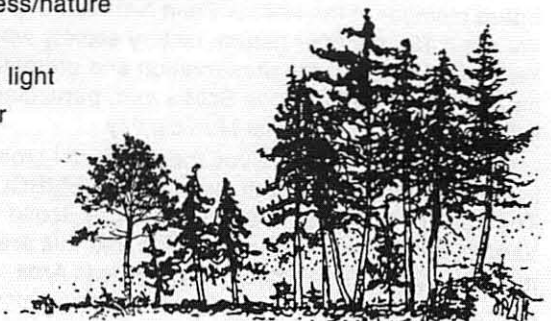
Minimal directions/relaxed/casual

Wilderness/nature

Non-urb

Dappled light

Fresh air



5. The ten most popular management approaches for the Park were:

- Trees & shrubs – diversity of species and habitats/ promote resiliency
- Trees & shrubs – use native plants
- Stabilise archaeological features
- No further encroachment/no new infrastructure
- Restore ecology
- Rules and regulations/signage
- Promote functioning ecosystem, healthy forest
- Keep natural, restore things
- Preserve grassy areas
- Restore soils

These opinions and recommendations will form the basis of a Design Brief outlining the terms of reference for the competition. In addition to the above opinions, the Brief will include the history and uses of the Park, its physical condition, the likely types of expertise needed, an outline of the judges who will assess entries, and, in general, how the competition will be organised.

These details are currently being established by the Steering Committee. For more information, go to <halifax.ca>; click 'Residents' at the top of the page; under 'Spotlight' on the right, click 'Point Pleasant Park Design Group'.

— Allan Robertson
International Design Steering Committee



Friends of Point Pleasant Park (FPPP)

From the President: A month or so before Hurricane Juan, a couple of the Friends of Point Pleasant Park were discussing with me whether there was much more the Association might be able to do in the short term for the Park.

Despite our best efforts, the CFIA, along with provincial agencies and HRM, and some scientists who really should have known better ("BSLB attacking healthy trees indeed — still no proof on that!") had forced removal of nearly 2000 trees for the supposed 'infestation'. These losses increased as windfall spread the destruction into the newly opened areas. For Juan's arrival the Park's official guardians had, in effect, rolled out the welcome mat, allowing the destruction deep into the woodland. Seventy percent of the Park's trees were lost and their logs, the future soil of any forest, later carted away as a potential fire hazard.

Only those areas which had been spared the worst of the beetle cuts resisted Juan's impact.

Now, a year and a half later, FPPP is busy again, this time having strong input into the proposals

coming from the Advisory Committee on Park Restoration (the Jim Spatz Design Competition). I represent FPPP on the Design Steering Committee, and while there is still some time before the final brief has been finalised, we are encouraged that the Committee is now paying close attention to the fundamental premise that the restoration of the Park must be based on sound biological and other scientific principles.

In our view, any truly inclusive recommendations must encompass such aspects as soil health, good drainage, micro-flora and fauna, as well as the bushes, trees, and cultural objects. The goals must be the long-term environmental sustainability of the Park which will see it recover all aspects of its natural ecology as soon as nature and its helpers will allow.

In addition, plans move forward to convert FPPP into a charitable association. This will allow for fund raising to support those activities we believe will further the true long-term health and good management of the Park. The FPPP Executive is continuing to meet frequently to carry this forward.

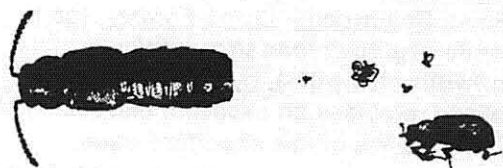
— Dr. Iain C. Taylor

Entomological Research: Entomologist Christopher Majka, staff member and research associate of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, and a founding member of the FPPP, has for the past five years been engaged in entomological surveys of Point Pleasant Park. Since 2000 when the CFIA announced its cutting plans in the Park claiming an 'infestation' of the Brown Spruce Long-horned Beetle (*Tetropium fuscum*) Chris has been engaged in a comprehensive study of the beetle fauna of the Park.

He collected specimens there year-round and discovered and named a new species of beetle not previously known to science! Every habitat in the Park was extensively sampled, and information gathered in the past by Douglas Ferguson and Paul Doleman in the late 1960's, and by Stephanie Robertson, Gareth Harding, and Rick Ballard during their 1990 study of bark beetles, were also integrated into the study.

To date 5,746 specimens of 484 species in 60 families have been collected. Of these, approximately 178 species were not hitherto recorded from Nova Scotia in 1991 when the Checklist of Beetles of Canada and Alaska was published. Nine of these 178 are newly recorded for Canada, two are newly recorded for North America, and two were previously undescribed.

One of the new species, *Leptusa jucunda*, was in fact named in honour of Point Pleasant Park from the Latin word *jucundus* meaning 'pleasant' or 'pleasing.'



Chris has also found that 18.5% of the Park's fauna are introduced species. As a result of all this work there is now a very extensive and thorough baseline of information on the beetle fauna in Point Pleasant Park.

In 2004, two scientific papers based in part on this study were published — *Phloeocharis subtilissima* Mannerheim (Staphylinidae: Phloeocharinae) and *Cephennium gallicum* Ganglbauer (Scydmaenidae) new to North America: a case study in the introduction of exotic Coleoptera to the port of Halifax, with new records of other species., C.G. Majka & J. Klimaszewski, *Zootaxa*, 78: 1–15.; and *A revision of Canadian Leptusa Kraatz* (Col., Staphylinidae, Aleocharinae): new species, new distribution records, key and taxonomic considerations., J. Klimaszewski, G. Pelletier and C.G. Majka, *Belgian Journal of Entomology*, 6: 3–42.

There is other ongoing ecological research in Point Pleasant Park as well. Jeremy Lundholm, a botanist at Saint Mary's University, has started a research project on plant regeneration while Sinha Adl at Dalhousie University has been investigating the soil physiology there. Doug Strongman at Saint Mary's University has completed a study on the blue-stain fungi, *Ophiostoma* sp., which grow in decomposing wood in the Park.

In terms of the future of the Park, monitoring its environmental integrity by means of its invertebrate fauna can be potentially very useful. Invertebrates are widespread, numerous, species-rich, and easily sampled. They exhibit greater site specificity than vertebrates, and often respond to environmental changes more rapidly than vascular plants or vertebrates. Furthermore, no group of invertebrates is better suited for this than are beetles since they are the most species-rich of any group of animals. In Nova Scotia there are approximately 2,230 species known.

Many beetle species are extreme habitat specialists, so monitoring their populations allows one to examine the environment in great detail. In relation to a forested area such as Point Pleasant Park with its history of environmental problems, beetles are of particular interest and value. In Point Pleasant Park some 53% of the beetle fauna is 'saproxylic'; these are species which are involved in the processes of the decay and decomposition of wood. The processes of forest dynamics, and in particular of the decay of wood and the many important roles of dead wood in forests, are of considerable relevance to Point Pleasant Park and its future health and sustainability.

For those interested in more information on this environmental topic, the recent report by the World Wildlife Fund, *Deadwood – Living Forests*, (go to <www.panda.org/downloads/forests/deadwoodwithnotes.pdf>), by Nigel Dudley and Daniel Vallauri, provides an excellent discussion of the many dimensions of this important issue.

– Stephanie Robertson

Summary of Point Pleasant Park Beetles

Family of Beetles	no. of species
Aderidae — Ant-like Leaf Beetles	1
Anobiidae — Deathwatch Beetles	4
Atelabidae — Leaf-rolling Weevils	3
Brachypteridae — Short-winged Flower Beetles	1
Brentidae — Pear-shaped Weevils	4
Buprestidae — Jewel Beetles	9
Byrrhidae — Moss Beetles	3
Cantharidae — Soldier Beetles	10
Carabidae — Ground Beetles	40
Cerambycidae — Longhorn Beetles	22
Cerylonidae — Minute Bark Beetles	1
Chrysomelidae — Leaf Beetles	37
Ciidae — Minute Tree Fungus Beetles	2
Clambidae — Minute Beetles	1
Cleridae — Checkered Beetles	6
Coccinellidae — Lady Beetles	19
Cryptophagidae — Silken Fungus Beetles	4
Cucujidae — Flat Bark Beetles	1
Curculionidae — Weevils & Bark Beetles	72
Dermestidae — Skin Beetles	3
Derodontidae — Tooth-necked Fungus Beetles	1
Dytiscidae — Predaceous Diving Beetles	7
Elateridae — Click Beetles	41
Endomychidae — Handsome Fungus Beetles	1
Eucnemidae — False Click Beetles	3
Gyrinidae — Whirligig Beetles	4
Halplidae — Water Crawling Beetles	1
Histeridae — Clown Beetles	6
Hydrophilidae — Water Scavenger Beetles	8
Laemophloeidae — Lined Flat Bark Beetles	1
Lampyridae — Fireflies	1
Latridiidae — Minute Brown Fungus Beetles	8
Leiodidae — Round Fungus Beetles	4
Lycidae — Net-winged Beetles	3
Megalapodidae — Megalapid Leaf Beetles	1
Melandryidae — False Darkling Beetles	11
Monotomidae — Root-eating Beetles	1
Mordellidae — Tumbling Flower Beetles	4
Mycetophagidae — Hairy Fungus Beetles	1
Nemonychidae — Pine Flower Snout Beetles	2
Nitidulidae — Sap Beetles	13
Orsodacnidae — Orsodacnid Leaf Beetles	1
Phalacridae — Shining Flower Beetles	1
Ptiliidae — Featherwing Beetles	2
Pythidae — Dead-log Beetles	3
Salpingidae — Narrow-waisted Bark Beetles	1
Scarabaeidae — Scarab Beetles	4
Scirtidae — Marsh Beetles	5
Scraptiidae — False Flower Beetles	4
Scydmaenidae — Ant-like Stone Beetles	2
Silphidae — Carrion Beetles	7
Silvanidae — Flat Bark Beetles	1
Staphylinidae — Rove Beetles	75
Stenotrachelidae — False Longhorn Beetles	1
Synchroidae — Synchroa Bark Beetles	1
Tenebrionidae — Darkling Beetles	9
Tetratomidae — Polypore Fungus Beetles	2
Throscidae — Throscid Beetle	2
Trogossitidae — Bark-gnawing Beetle	1

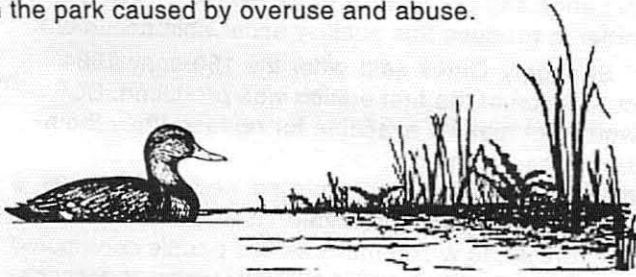


SHUBIE PARK

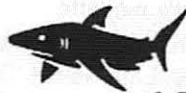
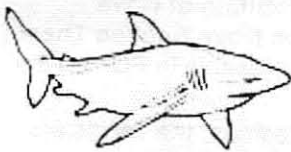
Early this year the construction of a new interchange linking Highway #118 and a new section of Burnside Industrial Park was announced by the NS Department of Highways. Construction is to begin early this spring and will involve loss of some land from Shubie Park.

The Halifax Regional Municipality voted to allow this construction and loss of park land to proceed. A small citizens group, Save Our Shubie (SOS), was formed, spearheaded by Gail Collins, 435-6363 and Rhonda Totten, 435-6332. They would welcome support from anyone interested in lobbying to protect this park.

Shubie Park is the only real nature park in Dartmouth. It is certainly not pristine natural space, having been disturbed by construction of the Shubenacadie Canal in the mid 1800s, and by the construction of the #118 highway in the 1970s. Nevertheless, in my 15 years of dog walking in the park, I have been fortunate to observe Ospreys and Loons, Wood Ducks and herons, the first Cardinals I had seen in Nova Scotia, deer, hare, and turtles. Without leaving the paths, I have seen several species of orchids and two species of trillium. Sadly, over the years, I have also seen a deterioration of the habitat in the park caused by overuse and abuse.



HFN TALKS



CANADIAN SHARKS

6 JAN.

Dr. Steven Campana, from the Shark Research Laboratory, Marine Fish Division at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, opened by telling us that there are 19 different species of sharks in our waters, ranging in size from the Great White to the Spiny Dogfish. There is a total population of about 200 million sharks (many only during warm periods of the year), and it was reassuring to hear that "ours are friendly".

More specific information was provided regarding the more prevalent and important species. First up was the Spiny Dogfish, named for the two sharp spines on its back. It has been caught in fishing nets used for other fish for many years and was always dumped. Presently, there is a market developing for

In discussions with Peter Bigelow from HRM, I have learned that no survey of the natural history of Shubie Park has ever been done, no management plan for the park exists, and there is no plan to create one.

This is a matter of concern; surely if the city is willing to allow destruction of part of a park, they should have the obligation to at least know what it is they are destroying.

For anyone interested in helping to protect this Park, the councillor to call is Andrew Younger, 490-4050.

— Betty Hodgson

COLIN STEWART CONSERVATION AWARD (CSCA)

On February 6, at a meeting of the HFN Board of Directors, a motion was passed to the effect that the CSC Award would not be given in 2005, as no nominations were received by the deadline of January 31.

We presume that this was due to the rather short nominations period this year. Certainly, it is not due to any shortage of deserving candidates within the province. However, this means that there is plenty of time for members to make nominations for the 2006 Award, the deadline for which is 30 November 2005.

Copies of the Terms of Reference and the Nomination Form for the Colin Stewart Conservation Award may be obtained electronically, or by post. Email your request to <hfnexec@chebucto.ns.ca>. Or, you can drop a note to the Halifax Field Naturalists (Colin Stewart Conservation Award), c/o Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, N.S., B3H 3A6. Alternatively, you can phone me, 443-5051, and I will ensure that you receive the materials.

— Bob McDonald

the dogfish, and interest has increased in learning more about it. Researchers have been getting good age information from the spines, and have found the many of those caught are easily 60 or 70 years old.

The Porbeagle shark can grow up to 12 feet long, has a white trailing patch on its dorsal fin, and its sharp teeth have cusps on their edges. Harvesting of Porbeagles is now a directed fishery and is carried out using baited hooks on lines up to 30 miles in length. These sharks are caught well offshore, down 100-150 metres. In the 1960's, the Norwegians fished this shark heavily, and the population collapsed over the next 10 years. The Canadian Porbeagle industry has itself been developing over the past 10 years, with an initial quota of 1000-2000 tonnes.

Intensive scientific study has accompanied this development through government and industry cooperation. One activity involves injecting a coloured marker into the backbones of baby Porbeagles, which enables measurement for age when the individual is caught/found later—we now know that these sharks can live up to 40 years. They feed on fish and squid

and prefer water temperatures of 7-8°C. The gestation period for Porbeagles is about 9 months, with a maximum of 4 pups being born. As part of their study, researchers have used an archival satellite pop-up tag, which is inserted in the shark and programmed to be released from one to twelve months later. During this time it records water temperature as well as light (indicating the sunrise to sunset period, which can be used to estimate the approximate geographic location of the shark). This research has shown that, compared to other sharks, Porbeagles are slow growing. The population has gone down sharply, especially for large ones (down to 20% or less). However, with the co-operation of the industry, the quota has been cut by 80% and the population has begun to recover.

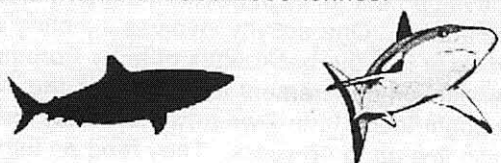
Other sharks in our area include Basking sharks which can be 20-25 feet long, with a fin very much like that of the Great White. Very little is known about these sharks, but studies are underway. It is thought that the Parker's Cove 'sea monster' was a Basking shark. Great White sharks do come here, but very rarely. In the 90's, one was found in PEI with a length of 17 feet and weight of 3000 lbs. Despite its size, this shark was barely sexually mature.

The Mako is a very beautiful shark and is the principal shark targeted in shark-fishing tournaments. The record catch was an 11-foot, 1100 lb. Mako caught in the Yarmouth tournament in August of 2004. While Makos do not come right to shore, they do come to inshore waters.

Research teams attend the fishing tournaments to gather scientific information from the specimens caught. The Blue shark is the most common off our shores. Concerns for its status have been created by an absence of mature females in the catches of recent tournaments, both here and in the US. Also the catch rate of blue sharks by swordfishing boats is declining. Tagging is now being done to see if the discarded sharks survive.

The possible presence of Greenland sharks in waters off Sable Island was indicated by hundreds and hundreds of grey seal carcasses washing ashore each year with a large spiral bite out of the forward part. The Greenland shark has teeth that could make such a bite; a Greenland shark was filmed off Sable; and one that had been caught had seal blubber in its stomach. This study continues.

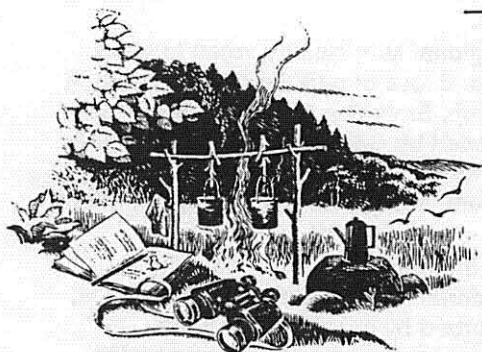
In general, sharks play a key role in the ocean ecosystem because of their position as an apex predator. Shark populations around the world are in danger of collapse. One important contributing factor is harvesting techniques which are not effectively focused, with a resulting high bycatch of sharks. For example, our longlining fisheries result in an annual bycatch of blue sharks of 1500-2000 tonnes.



Research is key to understanding and protecting our shark populations.

And on the topic of shark attacks, the most recent attack occurred in 1956 off Cape Breton and involved a Great White. With attacks so rare, we should not be worried.

— Lillian Risley



N.S. THEME REGIONS 3 FEB.

Dr. Derek Davis, former NSMNH Chief Curator of Natural History, presented a 10-year retrospective of the two-volume publication The Natural History of Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History had collaborated with the Province's Department of Natural Resources (formerly the Department of Lands and Forests, DLF) for almost 20 years in order to produce this publicly accessible document.

Strangely, Derek said, after the 150-copy 1984 publication of the first edition was produced, DLF would not make it available for release (they themselves had approximately 75 copies!). In 1989 however, 500 more were printed, and then in 1996, a revised edition was produced. It was a dynamic sort of exercise, to which many skilled people contributed, and Derek headed up the NSMNH team. It describes all the physical and biological features of our province and its surrounding ocean, and reflects the abundant diversity of NS habitats and regions. Volume One is divided into the **Topics and Habitats of Nova Scotia**; Volume Two delineates **Nova Scotian Theme Regions**. This publication is available in PDF on the NSMNH's website.

In Volume One of the 1996 edition, the Topics are Geology, Landscape Development, Colonisation (plants and animals), Climate, The Coast, Fresh Water, Soils, Plants, Animals, and Cultural Environments. The Habitat categories are Offshore, Coastal, Freshwater, Freshwater Wetlands, Terrestrial Unforested, and Forests. To give an example, under Habitats, 'Soils' is an eight-page section containing detailed historical and present data on the parent materials of different soils and where they are found in the province.

The 1996 Volume Two has a numbered hierarchical system of Theme Regions which are Cape Breton Plateau Taiga (100), CB Highlands (200), Avalon Uplands (Hardwood Forest) (300), Atlantic Interior (400), Carboniferous Lowlands (500), Triassic Lowlands (600), Fundy Coast (700), Atlantic Coast (800), and Offshore/Continental (900).

It is an extremely important useful resource, and would be especially good to research before field trips. Moreover, an overlay of species distribution, etc. on the various regions and maps, along with NS geological and water drainage history, sheds more understanding on their presence, or — absence.

Because of its holistic approach and block diagram illustrations (three-dimensional cross-cuts of sections of NS lands) it can be seen more easily how all things interact to create the different habitats and regions, such as geology, water courses, soil, and plants.

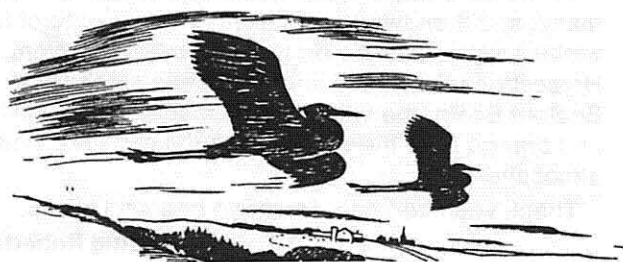
Geology has the biggest impact on NS topography and regions, and Derek illustrated this with a bog, the cross-section illustration of which allowed the reader to see its causative underlying rock formation. There were similar types of diagrams of the karst topography, soils, and rocks that held the young mastodon found in Shubenacadie. It was easy to see how the young animal became trapped those many years ago. As well there were instructive chronological maps of the retreating glacial ice in Nova Scotia. One could see from them how the glaciers were very important for the understanding of the distribution of NS species and present land formations.

Dr. Davis's passion and speciality is fresh-water molluscs; he used this subject to show how the books can be utilised to broaden one's understanding of the workings of NS natural history, habitats, and environments.

Fresh-water molluscs are now the most threatened group of animals in Nova Scotia. We saw slides of a common local species such as *Elliptio complanata*, found in Lake Banook. *Lampsilis radiata* is not so common, and *Lampsilis cariosa* is a real puzzle because it is found only in Sydney River! Muskrat middens are an excellent source of mollusc shells for study.

Fresh water molluscs are vulnerable to acid rain because of their calcium carbonate shells, and there are useful maps of these freshwater pH fluctuations. Lake Kejimikujik has a low pH problem; many *Elliptio complanata* are found there because they are low pH-tolerant. However, Lake Keji should have lots of species, but because of the low pH, there are instead only one or two. Mersey River, with its extreme pH problems, has no fresh-water molluscs, and Cheticamp has only three or four. Lake Egmont in Dollar Lake Park seems to be in better shape; it has a nice set of mussels.

Most interesting, molluscs can move from the Northumberland Strait shore area to the Atlantic regions through the Shubenacadie Canal.



Fish are the chief dispersers of molluscs, in the parasitic larval stage. The female adults have various species-specific appendages and/or ways of attracting fish when the molluscs are ready to 'lay'. When the fish come near, the larva are ejected into the fish's mouth, and they immediately swim in to become attached to the gills. Once there, they take sustenance until they are mature enough to drop away as very small molluscs — an example of molluscs 'fishing' for fish!

Good water quality is needed by both fish and mussels. A mussel population can be 40 or 50 years old; some live to be 100 years! Mentioned briefly were the famous exotic Zebra Mussels introduced by ship ballast into the Great Lakes. Despite the devastation to other local species, the water is much cleaner there now.

Presently, Derek is working on all the background details of NS Mollusc distribution. He feels that when all the glacial ice was melting, the salinity in the Northumberland Strait could have been quite low and therefore mussels could have 'river-hopped' all along the shore from the United States, and then into New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Thank you Derek, for reminding us of this important resource, and illustrating to us how useful it is.

— Stephanie Robertson



AGM & SLIDES

4 MARCH

This year, our AGM's committee reports were less formal and shorter than previously. The 2005/2006 HFN Executive roster (by acclamation, there were no nominations from the floor) is as follows:

President	Allan Robertson
Vice-President	Peter Webster
Past President	Bob McDonald
Treasurer	Janet Dalton
Secretary	Peter Payzant

Directors: Brian Bartlett, Elizabeth Keizer, Burkhard Plache, Ingrid Plache, Stephanie Robertson, Christine-Anne Smith, and Jim Wolford.

Committee Chairs: Conservation — Peter Webster; Membership — Christine-Anne Smith; Programme — Allan Robertson; Newsletter Editor — Stephanie Robertson; FNSN Representative — Bob McDonald.

Volunteer Assistants: Conservation — Suzanne Borkowski; Conservation and Newsletter — Patricia Chalmers; Newsletter Labels — Doug Linzey; Newsletter Distribution — Bernice Moores; Meeting Refreshments — Regine Maass; Website and PSAs — Linda Payzant.

After our Annual General Meeting, four people had brought slides to show.

Regine Maass and her son Oliver visited Alberta last September, specifically the World Heritage Site Dinosaur Provincial Park, and the Alberta Badlands among other areas. They managed to snap a close-

up of a rather large coiled rattlesnake in Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park (ready to strike?), and some wondrous shots of very large, round, ironstone erratics in the area.

Other highlights were panoramic, colourfully banded cliffs of the Alberta Badlands, reminding me of the Painted Desert in Arizona; white, lime-laden foamy water bursting through a jumbled-stone rock face from underground sources; a Pika (*Ochotona* sp.), a small rabbit-like mammal but with much smaller ears; some large, scaly looking mahogany-coloured mushrooms (delicious at a younger stage apparently, rather like puff-balls are); and a magnificent close-up of a Great-horned Owl, Alberta's provincial bird.

I found very interesting a provincial campsite photo — the campfire/eating areas were placed far from tents, and a large football-goal looking affair was really for hanging food out of reach of bears.

Jim Wolford had slides from the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Once again — breathtaking panoramas of colourfully banded cliffs and canyons, but also photos of curious rocks and pinnacles shaped by erosion, with names such as 'Coffee-pot Rock' and 'Cathedral Rock'.

There were some beautiful plant slides including ones of Prickly Pear Cactus and a Wild Rosebush sheltering a Desert Cottontail Rabbit. A real road-runner was photographed; it does not make a 'beep-beep'-like call, but is a very large, silent bird, reluctant to fly. Jim managed to get a slide of a Gunnerson's Prairie Dog, and in a distant shot of cliffs and shrubs, there were, just discernable, mountain sheep and mule deer. There were good slides of the magnificent California Condor, the entire population of which was at one time in captivity to ensure its survival with a captive breeding programme. They are now successfully reproducing in the wild, Jim told us, but are still highly susceptible to lead poisoning. All individuals are marked with wing tags.

A slide of a Rock Squirrel on a backpack at a picnic site showed an interested canine very close by. Apparently, one has to be careful around these squirrels as they carry Bubonic Plague.

There was a beautiful 'rabbit bush' in full yellow bloom, and also some ubiquitous pretty purple asters.

Patricia Chalmers' slides were a lovely seasonal sequence taken over a span of four to five years in her favourite place to walk — the Frog Pond in Fleming Park in Jollimore. Patricia has taken many slides there, so her selection for this showing was spectacular. There was a wonderful selection of flora and fauna, interspersed with dramatic scenic shots at different times of day and different times of the year.

Pat started out with a slide which illustrated her only complaint about the Park — the very negative signage at its entrance. There were at least six signs, all couched in negative terms such as — 'no this', 'don't do that', 'no winter maintenance', etc.

We saw some fairly close shots of Beaver, and one of a Beaver lodge; Black Ducks and an interesting hybrid pintail; and Black Duck ducklings on a rock. Some of the plants shown were lovely shots of Rock Polypody and Coltsfoot; rock lichen; Mountain or False Holly; a magnificent close-up of pink Ladyslippers; water lilies; Pickerel Weed; Red Canada Holly (attracts Robins); and Goldenrod.

Fleming Park lost a lot of tall White Pines to Hurricane Juan; there was a particularly poignant slide of two giants tangled and down together, somehow having dislodged a whole park bench 'up' into their wide expanse of downed branches. We saw one of the protective boardwalks; there are six that cross either a marshy or muddy areas in the Park.

Keith Vaughan, professional photographer extraordinaire, showed slides from Greece, England, Germany, and Nova Scotia.

First highlights were brilliant red poppies with the Athenian Agora as a backdrop and a close-up of a variety of sage, taken while in Athens. From the Greek Isle of Santini there were many shots of robust, vibrant red flowers; interesting derelict wind-mills; a dark pink Ice Plant; Crown Daisies; Gold Grass; Rock Roses; a Yellow-horned Poppy; pink Sea Stock; Yellow Everlasting; Bird's-foot Trefoil; Prickly-pear Cactus; and a lizard, of which there are many, Keith said. From the Isle of Eos — a slide of a beautiful Bee Orchid.

Summer slides from around Liverpool, England and Martin's Mere Wildlife Bird Reserve produced wonderful shots of wood ducks; a moorhen nesting; pintails; and — flamingos! Outside London, he had found and taken slides of different wild orchids, plus a cultivar.

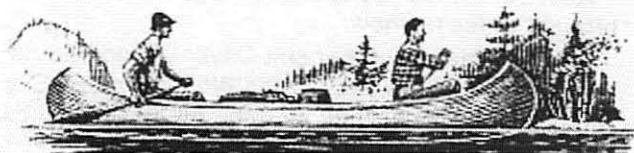


Shot in Nova Scotia for the publication Maritime Flavours, was an excellent close-up of a Bullfrog; another of two damner dragonflies in the heart-shaped mating position; and shorebirds at Evangeline Beach.

There were some of winter-frosted shrubs in Germany; and then two breathtaking slides — one of the winter solstice sunrise on the Northwest Arm from Horseshoe Island, and another of sea-smoke over the Bedford Basin, the whole scene made brilliant yellow and orange from the sun through the moisture laden atmosphere.

Thank you everyone, for these beautiful slides.

— Stephanie Robertson



FIELD TRIPS

SEWER STROLL

DATE: January 29

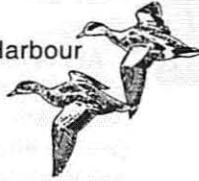
PLACE: Various locations around Halifax Harbour

REGION: 833; Eastern Shore Beaches

WEATHER: Clear, high of -6° C

INTERPRETERS: Peter Payzant

PARTICIPANTS: 12



This field trip took place during a period of very cold weather, but fortunately the wind of the previous few days had died down and so it was not terribly uncomfortable. The cold weather had created a layer of ice along the shore in several places, so many birds weren't as close as we would have liked.

We spent the first few minutes checking out Eastern Passage from the fishing wharf, and saw, at a distance, several Scaup (probably Lesser), as well as a Black Guillemot and a few Red-Breasted Mergansers. Following a brief stop at Tim's, we had a look at the north entrance to the Passage and here saw a Common Loon, several Common Goldeneye, more scaup and mergansers, and our first Iceland Gulls of the day.

Recent heavy snows made access difficult to some locations, and this was particularly true at the hill-top lookoff behind the North Woodside Community Centre. It was a bit of a struggle to get to our observation point, but once there we had great views of a variety of gulls in brilliant sunshine. Some very enthusiastic young participants (Lucas and Kier) mentioned that they had had a Brown Thrasher at a nearby location, so we checked out the brush along the edge of Prince Arthur field. It is excellent habitat for birds, but as is often the case, the thrasher couldn't be relocated this time.

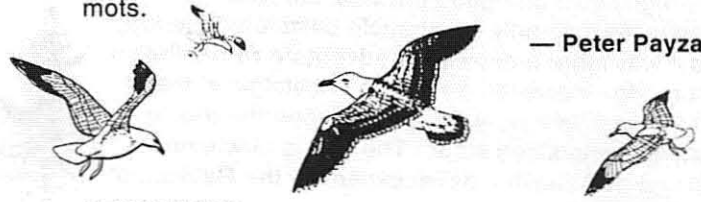
Following a brief pit stop at the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal, we had a look at the huge mob of ducks and gulls at the sewer outfall near the terminal, and then trudged through the snow to the shelter of the World Peace Pavilion, the goal being the Ivory Gull which had been delighting us all for several weeks. It must have been our lucky day, because the gull was perched on a rock at our very feet, in beautiful light with the blue water behind it. Many photos were taken, and the gull was rewarded with bits of buttered bagel. It has learned to accept handouts as shamelessly as any Ring-billed Gull.

We finally tore ourselves away, and after admiring a Northern Pintail, a Widgeon, and a couple of Cardinals at Sullivan's Pond, we headed to Tufts Cove. The cove itself was full of ice, but we had arranged to have the Military Police unlock the fence to allow us access to the beach. We struggled through knee-high snow to the shore, and had great looks from a relatively sheltered location at the Goldeneye (both Common and Barrow's), a few Buffleheads, and various gulls in the warm water outflow from the power plant. A dozen or so Great Cormorants kept us company on a nearby pier.

Time was pressing, and we decided to make our final stop Pier 9, also known as the old Volvo plant. The highlight here for many of us was very close looks at Black-headed Gulls, in several plumages. The final bird of the trip was a Great Cormorant flying up the harbour, showing the diagnostic white flank patches.

A couple of generalisations: American Robins seemed to be everywhere, in spite of the hard winter; and we had no grebes or alcids apart from Guillemots.

— Peter Payzant



REGION 833

Coastal forests — typically White Spruce, Balsam Fir, with Red Maple, birch and poplar on better soil.

Shores — barren headlands with stunted White Spruce, salt marshes, sand dunes, and eelgrass beds; a wide diversity of coastal habitats, therefore a large number and wide diversity of waterfowl and shorebirds.

SEWER STROLL SPECIES

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Common Loon | <i>Gavia immer</i> |
| Great Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> |
| American Black Duck | <i>Anas rubripes</i> |
| American Wigeon | <i>Anas americana</i> |
| Northern Pintail | <i>Anas acuta</i> |
| Gadwall | <i>Anas strepera</i> |
| Green-winged Teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> |
| Lesser Scaup | <i>Aythya affinis</i> |
| Common Goldeneye | <i>Bucephala clangula</i> |
| Barrow's Goldeneye | <i>Bucephala islandica</i> |
| Bufflehead | <i>Bucephala albeola</i> |
| Red-breasted Merganser | <i>Mergus serrator</i> |
| Bald Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> |
| Black-headed Gull | <i>Larus ridibundus</i> |
| Ring-billed Gull | <i>Larus delawarensis</i> |
| Herring Gull | <i>Larus argentatus</i> |
| Iceland Gull | <i>Larus glaucooides</i> |
| Great Black-backed Gull | <i>Larus marinus</i> |
| Ivory Gull | <i>Pagophila eburnea</i> |
| Black Guillemot | <i>Cephus grylle</i> |
| Rock Dove | <i>Columba livia</i> |
| Blue Jay | <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i> |
| American Crow | <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i> |
| American Robin | <i>Turdus migratorius</i> |
| European Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> |
| Northern Cardinal | <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> |
| House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> |



OLD COACH ROAD TRAIL

DATE: 6 February

PLACE: Bedford

REGION: 413a; Halifax Quartzite Barrens

WEATHER: Around 0°C, but sunny

PARTICIPANTS: 8; dwindling to 4

INTERPRETER: Patricia Leader



This trip had been advertised several times, with ice and winds taking their toll and causing postponement, but this day we only had deep snow, and brilliant sunshine. Unfortunately, the deep snow limited the hike to those with either snow shoes or very high boots and good physical stamina. For various reasons only four people completed the trip, and it was more a snowshoe adventure rather than a nature trip. However, it was a bit nostalgic in that it was the last time we were going to see the trail in its relatively untouched state. The trail is now embedded in a new Clayton development — the Ravines of Bedford South.

PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS

Although work began on the development two years ago, it wasn't until this fall that the trail was bisected by a newly cleared road and a corridor for water. In the spring it will be 'groomed', — a process that involves tree thinning, and attention to the walking surface of the trail. Even now it is possible to see the houses of the emerging development between the trees. More trees have still to be removed, as a result of Hurricane Juan.

As the development's title suggests, there are a series of ravines in the area and an effort has been made to retain these where possible. A series of cascading ponds also exist, although their character and possibly water supply, have changed. A smaller pond on the edge of the trail was once a safe haven for birds, but tree thinning and the close proximity of houses above a man-made stone wall may alter that. Gone too are areas of lady slippers and chanterelle mushrooms. It will be some years before a full assessment of the development's impact on the natural life can be made.

On a positive note, the developers are advertising the trail as one of the area's assets. HRM is also involved in some aspects of the planning and eventually the trail will be turned over to the city. With its 2004 proposed regional plan for future growth, HRM has been cognisant of the public's request for trails and more protection of the environment. Public input is key to the success of the plan. To this end they have financially supported the Halifax Regional Trails Advisory Team (HRTAT).

Under this umbrella, there are volunteers representing over twenty trail associations throughout Halifax and the surrounding area. If you are a hiker you will have noticed the increasing number of trails that you can now access. The grand plan is to have a comprehensive system of trails throughout the area, with a central hub. Perhaps it would be a negative connotation to call it a trail version of the Armdale Rotary, but it does provide a mental image of inter-



secting trails.

It is hoped that by providing such a network it would do much to foster healthy pursuits, and even cut down on gas emissions, by encouraging the use of more active transportation — e.g. walking, cycling, skiing.

At the local level, the Coach Road Trail will be one of the trails included in The Halifax North West Trails Association (HNWTA), a voluntary body utilising both private and public funding. Four members of HRTAT are working members of the HNWTA, including Wendy Macdonald, who is the present Chair.

Our area extends south to the rotary, north to Hammond's Plain, east to Bedford Basin, and west to the Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness area. Other trails under the HNWTA include Belcher's Marsh Trail, Mainland North Linear Parkway in Clayton Park, those in Hemlock Ravine, and those around Kearney Lake. Future trails will be planned for the Mainland Common and the Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness area.

The latter is currently the area being proposed for a new highway, #113, linking the 101 and 102. It is also a possible source of lands which could be exchanged for developing more highly sensitive areas. For instance there seems to be a move by the Federal Government to exchange land from the Birch Cove Lakes area instead of developers in-filling the Moirs Pond area. This could well set a precedent for future exchanges, thus diminishing a superb wilderness area on the edge of Halifax.

HFN, along with other environmental groups, has been lobbying to retain this wilderness area. Some months ago Dianne Whalen introduced a private member's bill concerning the protection of Birch Cove Lakes lands.

COACH ROAD TRAIL HISTORY

The above describes the present situation, but you may be asking yourself what is the Old Coach Road Trail and how does this Bedford-upland forested section fit in with our perception of Nova Scotia's earliest road, which ran from Halifax to Windsor?

It's a question that I've been asking myself for several years as I talk to my neighbours and explore the Nova Scotian Archives.

My primary interest in the trail stems from living in the vicinity, and since moving here, hearing many references to this trail. My neighbours have lived in this area long enough to have introduced grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, to the trail — for swimming, picnics, and ice skating. One of our own members, Patricia Chalmers, grew up in the area and still goes bird watching there. Dogs and their owners, including the Sawyers and myself, have enjoyed countless walks along the trail as well.

The main trail running south to north above the Basin was, and is referred to as, the Coach Road Trail, the old Windsor Trail, and even the old Annapolis trail. Despite many conversations and research, I have yet to find any basis for the title, 'Coach Road Trail'.

When I walk along it on a pleasant summer's day, it indeed could have been a coach trail. It is about ten feet in width, and despite a few hills and curves, it generally heads north towards Sackville through an avenue of mixed trees which form a canopy above.

Here and there are evidences of the road being shored up by moss-covered rock walls. Some 200 feet below, yet hidden from view and mostly unheard, the Bedford Highway and the railroad continue in the same direction. I can well imagine Joseph Howe sitting on top of a coach, his preferred spot, enjoying his surroundings. But, what is the coach trail doing up in this area when the most logical place would have been along the shores of the Basin?

Perhaps we should begin with a little more history. (Co-incidentally, our hike took place close to the 188th anniversary of the first Halifax to Windsor coach trip.) On February 14th, 1817, Isaiah Smith, who had petitioned the Assembly the previous year, set forth on his first coach run. He had offered the public two sets of coaches, each of which could take six passengers at \$6.00 apiece. By the summer, he was able to reduce the fare to \$4.50.

We know a considerable amount about the coaches, the road conditions, and even the menus at the various inns along the route (during the period of coach travel which lasted until 1867, when Howe then exchanged coach travelling for the train). The journey from the town of Halifax would have followed a prescribed route which we can, in part, still recognise today.

The coach would have travelled by the south gate of the town, up Spring Garden Road, along by Camp Hill, and then the southern slope of Citadel Hill. Further on, the coach would have passed the Egg Pond through which ran the Freshwater Brook (now well below our present city) and skirted the edge of the marshy common. From here, the coach would have gone via the Willow Tree intersection of what is now Quinpool and Robie, to reach Windsor Street.

Soon the travellers would be passing the farmlands of the early German settlers and arrived at what is now the cemetery of St. John's Anglican Church. At this elevation, passengers were afforded a spectacular view of the Bedford Basin before the road dropped down to Fairview Cove, not yet adorned with today's cranes and container ships. Here was one of many inns, the Three Mile Inn, at which passengers could alight or join the coach. Other inns, like Fultz's Twelve Mile Inn, provided substantial refreshment and fresh horses.

From Fairview we know that the Coach Road continued along the Basin passing the various inns at intervals of a mile. It ran in an area similar to that occupied by the present Bedford Highway, skirting Rockingham, and continuing over a bridge at Birch Cove where Kearney Lake Road now joins the highway. Remnants of the original Coach Road ran behind today's Wedgewood Motel and along Dakin Drive.

After passing the Wentworth Estate, the location of the Coach Road is uncertain. From here until the Nine Mile River, or the Salmon river at today's Mill Cove, we have no clear documentation.

It has generally been assumed that the Coach Road continued to follow the shores of the Basin. However, just beyond the Bluenose Motel, one may find a trail which eventually leads behind the Fernleigh and Millview subdivisions and is a continuation of the so called Coach Road Trail going through the new development and out towards Bedford. It currently ends at Southgate, but it did proceed further north to the Mill Cove area.

Was this trail actually a coach trail? What would be deterrents to continuing a coach road along the Basin?

Many articles written in the early days of settlement talk about areas of wetlands and marshes — great impediments to a coach with four horses, a driver, at least six passengers, and baggage. In this case, would it would have been easier to build a coach road on higher ground particularly where a trail had existed earlier?

Tozer's map of 1808 clearly shows a trail at a similar angle and marked as a military road. A military road which ran inland from the exposed Basin road would obviously have provided more protection, particularly if you were wearing a scarlet tunic. A further asset to marching soldiers, (and later on, horses), using this area, would have been the abundance of fresh water from the many streams.

Historical accounts also mention that in order to aid solitary travellers traversing the countryside, the main paths were built from hill to hill. In this way individuals on a high piece of land could see more clearly the direction they were to follow. As in England, there was no regulated system of signposts, but there was the occasional mark or distances given from a local landmark to aid the traveller.

A third reason for the trail being in this area could have been that it was one of the many logging roads connected to the mills around the water systems of Nine Mile River, Paper Mill Lake, and Mill Cove. The industries here are well documented. Whether for the military, the coaches, or for logging, the trail was well used. Even today we can see at least nine places where stone wall sections were used to reinforce the trail on its downward edge.

This is all the information I have on the Coach Road. Perhaps somebody reading this may have further ideas.

From Mill Cove and its Nine Mile Inn, the route of the Coach Trail is well known. The road continued over the Sackville River, wound along Shore Road and up between Fort Sackville and Scott's Manor House, with its Ten Mile Inn close by. From the Twelve Mile Inn, the refreshed passengers continued on a route now occupied by highway #1. It followed the traditional Mi'kmaq route to the Minas Basin, a route which they shared later with the Acadians. The coach would have passed the Uniacke Estate,



Lakelands, Newport Corner, and finally arrived in Windsor, a total distance from Halifax of just over 40 miles. On a good day the journey could take some seven and a half hours!

If all goes according to plan, walkers will be able to enjoy the Old Coach Road Trail this summer. Some groundwork at interpreting the road, historically and naturally, was begun last fall by HNWTA and HFN members.

When all has been accomplished, we can include the area again in future programming.

— Patricia Leader



HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS THE THIRD DECADE, 1995 - 2005

PART I, 1995 - 1997

1995 was HFN's 20th anniversary, and the Executive decided we should publish a summary of our history and activities every ten years. Doris Butters outlined the first decade in the Fall/95 Issue, #80 and the Spring /96, issue #82. Ursula Grigg covered the second decade in the Fall /96 Issue, #84, and the Summer /97 issue, #87.

Following are some highlights from HFN's third decade.

1995

We continued throughout the next ten years to sponsor a child to attend Sunship Earth Camp in Windsor. This special summer programme was developed by the Institute of Earth Education, and is run on three continents.

Spring /95 — Roy John began his second term as President; Stephanie Robertson was Vice-President; Greg Crosby, Treasurer; Cathy Fulton-Strugnell, Secretary; Past President, Colin Stewart; Membership, Shirley van Nostrand; Programme, Cathy Fulton-Strugnell, Charlotte Lundgren, and Jennifer MacKeigan; Newsletter, Ursula Grigg (Editor), Patricia Chalmers, Stephanie Robertson (layout), and Mary Primrose, Shirley van Nostrand (distribution); Regine Maass, Refreshments; and Conservation, Colin Stewart.

The first of our annual March AGM Reports was published in the Spring /95 issue #78; there were no membership statistics.

On February 7th, Roy made a presentation on behalf of HFN to a Public Review Committee about a Proposed System Plan for Parks and Protected Areas. There had been 25 public meetings held in January and February around the province for these presentations. Our submission spoke for every ordinary citizen with an interest in the natural environment.

HFN continued its tradition of awarding a prize/prizes for the best natural history project(s) at the annual Hfx./Dart./Bed./Hfx. Co. Science Fairs. The March /95 junior winners were Seela Amaratunga and Jennifer White (Sacred Heart School, Grade 7) for

REGION 413a

Soils — well-drained, stony, sandy Halifax loams derived from quartzite. Hemlock Ravine is a site of special interest in this region.

Flora — mixed stands of Balsam Fir, Yellow Birch, Eastern Hemlock, and White Spruce.

Fauna — Small-mammal diversity moderately high in well-drained mixed and hardwood forest habitats, especially along streams and brooks.



their project on low technology methods for "Gel Extraction from Seaweed". The senior prize was awarded to Michael Shaver (Prince Edward HS) for his important "Oleophilic Properties of Canadian Sphagnum and its application to Oil spill Recovery Systems". They each received an Award Certificate, a Wild Bird Co. gift certificate, and an HFN Brochure.

Summer /95 — Roy moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan for an exciting post in his specialty — nuclear chemistry. Vice-President Stephanie Robertson stepped up to the helm for the term's remainder, and Linda Payzant set up and inaugurated HFN's web page!

Patricia Chalmers took part in a Wildlife Corridor Survey with Environmental Management student Marion Radszweit at an 11-acre natural site in Bayers Lake Industrial Park, under the auspices of the NS Wildlife Federation. It was a project which demonstrated that "... a wildlife habitat can be developed and maintained even within an urban or industrial environment." They identified 22 bird species, 28 wildflowers, four mammals, and two amphibians. Two informative signs about the area and its species were erected, with picnic tables nearby.

Fall /95 — The most important conservation event was the Federal/Provincial consultation on the future of McNabs and Lawlor Islands. Colin Stewart, Ursula Grigg, Greg Crosby, and Patricia Chalmers comprised the 1995 HFN Conservation Committee. After a summer of meetings, Ursula and Colin presented HFN's recommendations, and Pat and Ursula wrote them up for HFN's submission.

Winter /95 — Anticipating a July /96 butterfly count, HFN formalised a partnership with the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History (NSMNH) to produce the Butterflies of Nova Scotia Field Checklist, with HFN doing the artwork and layout, and NSMNH covering the printing costs. HFN also looked forward to possible participation in the 1996 Piping Plover Census, under the leadership of Sherman Boates.



1996

Spring /96 — Stephanie Robertson continued as President; Peter Payzant was Vice-President; Greg Crosby, Treasurer again; Linda Payzant had taken over as Secretary earlier in the year; Past President was still Colin Stewart of course; Membership remained with Shirley van Nostrand; Programme still with Cathy Fulton-Strugnell and Jennifer MacKeigan (Charlotte Lundgren had stepped down); and the other positions remained the same.

Many natural history surveys were announced for the coming summer: Frogwatch; Plantwatch; Ladybugs; Butterfly Count; and CNF's International Important Bird Areas (IBA) Campaign. HFN was involved directly in one or two of them. We included as inserts in our Spring /96 issue an information sheet, a form, and an identification guide for the 12 spring flowers chosen for the Plantwatch Survey; and we disseminated more detailed information about the IBA Campaign and the 1996 Ladybug Survey.

Under Peter Payzant, HFN decided to set up a Breeding Bird Census plot somewhere in Nova Scotia. Also, HFN planned a four-season biota survey of the Mount Uniacke Estate Museum Lands for the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, and was exploring the possibilities of the same sort of survey along the Sackville River Greenway.

HFN, along with the NS Bird Society and the NSMNH, was preparing for a much anticipated presentation on cranes by NS native George Archibald to raise awareness and funds for the International Crane Foundation in Wisconsin. We planned a raffle of a tote bag hand-painted with Sandhill Cranes (S. Robertson), and a very pleasant pot-luck supper in Bernice Moores' garden (\$25.00 per ticket plus a potluck donation).

Planning and interest was afoot for local parks; specifically the Mainland Common, Halifax North Common, and Birch Cove Park in Rockingham.

Bob McDonald had been working for a long time on behalf of the Mainland Common. With much chagrin he reported in our Spring /96 issue (#82) that despite user's wishes for low impact outdoor activities such as hiking, walking, running, bicycle trails, opportunities for nature observation, and the placement of playing fields only in already open areas (expressed at many public meetings since 1991) — what was taking place instead was extensive clear-cutting, back-filling, and the building of eight baseball diamonds and two other playing fields. The public's wishes had been ignored, and the proposed citizen's liaison committee had not been established.

Bob and Wendy McDonald, Ursula Grigg, and Shirley van Nostrand attended a public input workshop regarding the new park at Birch Cove. About one hundred citizens attended. Wendy McDonald attended two more public meetings about these two parks in early March/96.

At the March /95 AGM, total membership from March /94 to March /95 was 141.



Summer /96 — Our cover, Issue #83, was a photocopy of the tote bag raffled to support the International Crane Foundation. George Archibald's Crane presentation at Dal was a great success, and HFN activities raised \$1,532.00 for the Foundation.

Peter and Linda Payzant finished the Breeding Bird Census Plot census in Mt. Uniacke Estate Park. The yellow NS Butterfly Checklist was successfully published, and made available for sale at the Museum and at our meetings. Two Butterfly Training Workshops, and one July Butterfly Field Trip took place with Peter and Linda Payzant. Our insect interests also extended to a dragonfly field trip to the Frog Pond in Jollimore with renowned specialist Paul Brunelle.

It was decided at the 1996 FNSN AGM held in Annapolis Royal, that HFN would host the next one in the Summer of 1997.

Etta Parker kept us up to date about the Piping Plover Guardian Programme with an imaginative and innovative video it had commissioned, and a talk.

Fall/96 — The Federal Government announced the beginning of cutbacks; specifically, Phase I of these cutbacks looked forward to a 25% reduction by 1998. By 1997, Parks Canada was to become an agency, able to keep any revenues it generated from park use, and some park work was to be contracted out.

The provincial summary of the McNabs/Lawlor's Public Meetings showed that everyone wanted them to remain close to their natural state, but with the provision of landing facilities and basic amenities.

Environment Canada was formulating a Canadian Landbird Conservation Programme, as populations were declining due to habitat destruction.

We still had for sale our Logo Lapel Pins, HFN Hasti-notes with art by late HFNER Eileen Meagher, Piping Plover Sweatshirts, Endangered Spaces T-shirts, and — we offered books for sale that year — Peterson Field Guides and the Opler butterfly Guide (buying them through HFN ensured no sales tax).

Winter /96 — In November, dues for an individual membership were increased to \$13.00 from \$12.00, and our By-laws were amended. Halifax Harbour Cleanup was in the news; no buildings for it would be put on McNabs Island, but Fort McNab was to be stabilised and renovated in the following Spring/Summer.

To everyone's dismay, the NS Government agreed to allow mineral prospecting on Jim Campbell's Barrens, which contains rare NS flora.

The Sierra Club denounced the decision.

We advertised the first of our Mount Uniacke biota surveys, to take place in March /97, all under the very able direction of botanist Pierre Taschereau.

200 people participated in the 1996 Plantwatch, and the results were databased by the faculty of Environmental Science at St. Mary's University for comparison with Alexander McKay's work in 1896.

1997

Spring /97 — Because of a storm, our usual March AGM was postponed until April. Peter Payzant took over the Presidency; Doug Linzey was Vice-President; Greg Crosby, Treasurer; Linda Payzant, Secretary; and Past President was Stephanie Robertson. The Membership and Newsletter people remained the same, and Regine Maass, Refreshments, now had a helper, Theresa White.

HFN monitored and supported efforts to protect the Dingle Walking Trail, Bissett Road Lands, Jim Campbell's Barrens, and Point Pleasant Park; we also supported Plantwatch again.

We advertised two more Mount Uniacke biota survey field trips in our Spring /97 issue #86; one for April 5th, and another for May 31st.

There was a mix-up in our annual Science Fair Natural History Awards; the schools themselves awarded our prizes without consultation from HFN! The winning project, picked on our behalf, was titled "The Opposable Thumb".

NatureNS List Serve was inaugurated. One of the first and most exciting postings were the sketches that Sherman Williams made of comet Hale-Bopp on March 28.

Total membership for March /96 to March /97 was 139.

Summer /97 — HFN became interested in the most recent scientific information about pesticides on human health, especially children's health, being released by the Ecology Action Centre.

Connie Eaton was a long-time member of HFN. Her irrepressible Airedale, Sam, was a familiar and happy figure on many of our outings. That summer, tragically, Sam died because of pesticide exposure to lawn chemicals in July. We published several informative articles in two or three newsletters about the terrible effects of pesticides on human and animal health, about organic gardening, and about how to 'get your lawn off drugs'.

HFN hosted the 1997 FNSN AGM and Conference, entitled "Green Spaces in Urban Places"; Patricia Chalmers was at the helm. There were many great presentations, and 18 wonderful field trips, the highlight of which was a boat trip to McNabs Island, offering a choice of five forays while there. There were approximately 60 attendees, low for an FNSN Conference, but people did not expect to see much of interest in and around a large urban centre.

Woe to those who did not attend!

All attendees were greatly impressed and surprised with what HRM had to offer. They discovered many unsuspected and unique places of natural history interest, and they enjoyed the weekend immensely.

The April 5 Mount Uniacke biota survey results were published in our Summer /97 issue #87, and another was advertised in its programme for August 23rd.

Fall /97 — HFNER and HRM Land Planner Oliver Maass gave us a wonderful slide presentation about five areas HRM had proposed for protected status:

Tangier/Grand Lake; Musquoidobit Harbour/White Lake; Dollar Lake Provincial Park and surrounding areas; Martinique Beach; and Terence Bay to Pen-nant Point.

In September, Stephanie Robertson (PPP Bark Beetle Survey, Summer /89) and others from HFN attended the first of a two-session HRM Public Workshop about a Point Pleasant Park Master Plan.

There were more than a few HRM formal presentations, and the process was very rigidly structured. Participants finally stated that what they had really come to discuss were issues such as over-cutting, park ecology, and past park management practices. Because of the style of the meeting, there were fewer attendees at the next session. It was once again tightly controlled by the same hired consultant (whose style was that of a kindergarten teacher addressing six-year olds), and those who wanted to have the park's ecology addressed as of prime importance were frustrated and unsatisfied once again. The findings at these meetings were to have lead to the release of a set of draft goals and objectives in November and December /97.

A Mount Uniacke biota survey was advertised for October 11th in the Fall /97 issue #88.

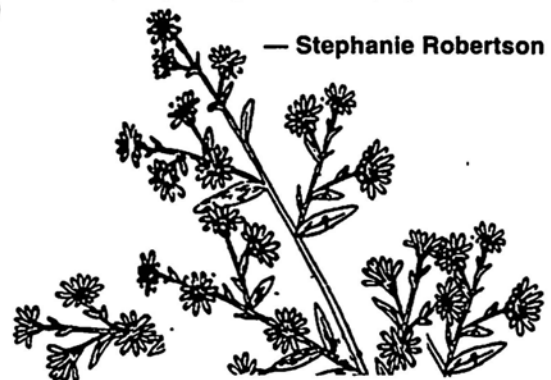
Etta Parker of the Piping Plover Guardian Programme supplied us with the Piping Plover nesting statistics; there were 43 nesting pairs, two single adults; and 73 fledged chicks.

Winter /97 — The October 11th Uniacke biota survey results were published in the Winter /97 issue #89, and another biota trip was advertised for March 6th, /98.

Locally, DNR announced a survey of Moose occurrences in mainland Nova Scotia. We published a Moose Sighting Report form in our Fall issue for people to copy and use.

Globally, the dreaded spectre of the Multinational Agreement on Investment, MAI, loomed over the new year to come. The chief example was the suit by American Ethyl Corporation against Canada who wanted to ban the use of the gasoline additive MMT, a deadly neurotoxin. Ethyl Corporation claimed that Canada was expropriating its potential profits. HFN urged pressuring of local politicians and submissions to local papers. (Ethyl Corporation won, and we now have this additive in our gasoline. For myself, I never go to 'self-serve' pumps at gas stations). *(To be cont'd.)*

— Stephanie Robertson





This almanac is for the dates of events which are not found in our HFN programme; for field trips or lectures which members might like to attend, or natural happenings to watch for, such as eclipses, comets, average migration dates, expected blooming seasons etc. Please suggest other suitable items.

"It was the apple-blossoms that started me. I had heard of them from many travelers, read of them, seen pictures of them, and finally I began to dream of them. Always my joy had been vicarious. And then the day came when I said to myself that I must see them with my own eyes. Those apple-blossoms in the rich orchards of Nova Scotia, I mean; those miles on miles of miraculous trees in the Annapolis valley."

— Charles Hanson Towne, "Following the Spring North" in Ambling through Acadia (1923)

NATURAL EVENTS

- 20 Mar. Vernal Equinox at 08:31 AST. Spring begins in the Northern hemisphere.
- 23 Mar. Daily average temperature above 0°C.
- 25 Mar. Full Moon. Moonrise at 18:31 AST.
- 2 Apr. Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 AST. Turn clocks ahead one hour.
- 16 Apr. The daily minimum temperature at Shearwater is above 0°C.
- 22 Apr. Earth Day.
- 24 Apr. Full Moon. Moonrise at 20:51 ADT.
- 14 May North American Migration Count Day.
- 19 May The Moon will be near Jupiter in the evening sky.
- 23 May Full Moon. Moonrise at 21:06 ADT.
- 28 May The date of last spring frost in Halifax (i.e. Env. Canada says there is only a 1:10 chance that a spring frost will occur after this date); look forward to 155 frost-free days.
- 8 Jun. Oceans Day
- 10-20 Jun. The earliest mornings of the year: sun rises at 5:29 ADT.
- 21 Jun. Summer Solstice at 3:47 ADT. Summer begins in the Northern hemisphere. The longest day of the year, with 15 hours and 33 minutes of daylight at Halifax.
- 22 Jun. Full Moon. Moonrise at 22:19.
- 22-30 Jun. The latest evenings of the year. Sunset at 21:04 ADT.



— Sources: Atmospheric Environment Service, Climate Normals 1951-80 Halifax (Shearwater A) N.S.; Blomidon Naturalists Society's 2005 Calendar; Burke-Gaffney Observatory, Saint Mary's University.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER SATURDAYS



5 March	6:45	18:08	2 April	5:54	18:44
12 March	6:32	18:17	9 April	6:41	19:52
19 March	6:19	18:26	16 April	6:29	20:01
26 March	6:06	18:35	23 April	6:17	20:10
			30 April	6:06	20:18
7 May	5:56	20:27	4 June	5:31	20:55
14 May	5:48	20:35	11 June	5:29	21:00
21 May	5:41	20:42	18 June	5:29	21:03
28 May	5:35	20:49	25 June	5:31	21:04

— courtesy of David Lane, Burke-Gaffney Observatory, Saint Mary's University

ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS

Blomidon Naturalists Society: Indoor meetings take place on the 3rd Mon. of the month, Room 241, Beveridge Arts Centre, Acadia University, 7:30 p.m. Field trips usually depart from the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front St., Wolfville. For more information, go to <<http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/>> .

- 20 Mar. "Along the Fundy Shore", with leader Jim Wolford, 542-9204; <jww.triv@ns.sympatico.ca>.
- 21 Mar. "Flowers, Birds, Waterfalls, and Volcanoes in Costa Rica", with Ron and Carol Buckley.
- 10 Apr. "Pond Life Through a Microscope", with leader Todd Smith, Acadia Biology Department.
- 18 Apr. "Sable Island: Legend & Mystery", with speaker Paul Illsley, Centre of Geological Sciences, Lawrencetown.
- 24 Apr. "Early Spring Birds of Kings County", with leader Jim Wolford, 542-9204; <jww.triv@ns.sympatico.ca>.
- 16 May "Walk the Long Walk: Hiking the Pacific Crest Trail", with speaker Janet Roberts.
- 20 Jun. "Kentville Migratory Bird Sanctuary", with speaker Bernard Forsythe.

Burke-Gaffney Observatory: Shows are held at St. Mary's U. on the 1st & 3rd Sat. of each month, except from Jun. through Sept. when they are held every Sat. Tours begin at 7:00 p.m. between Nov. 1 and Mar. 30, and at either 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. (depending on when it gets dark) between Apr. 1 and Oct. 31. Phone 496-8257; or <<http://apwww.stmarys.ca/bgo/>>.

Nova Scotia Bird Society: Indoor meetings on the 4th Thurs. of the month, Sept. to May, at the N.S. Museum of Natural History (NSMNH), 7:30 p.m. Phone Suzanne Borkowski, 445-2922; or go to <chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/NS-BirdSoc>.

- 24 Mar. "Surveying for Owls", with speaker Becky Whittam, Bird Studies Canada .
- 2 Apr. **Rain date-3 Apr.** "Baccaro/Blanche Peninsula", with leader Donna Ensor, 902-875-4269; <smokeytow@yahoo.com>.
- 9 Apr. "Martinique Beach", with leader Ian McLaren, 429-7024; <iamclar@dal.ca>.
- 28 Apr. "In Search of Breeding Boreal Owls", with speaker Randy Lauff, NSMNH research associate.
- 1 May "Beginning Birders Field Trip", with leader Suzanne Borkowski, 445-2922; <sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca>.
- 7 May "Cape Sable Island", with leader Murray Newell 745-3340; <dowitcher@eastlink.ca>.
- 14 May "North American Migration Count", Prov. Co-ordinator Judy Tufts, 542-7800; <tandove@ns.sympatico.ca>.
- 15 May "Belleisle Marsh", with leader Richard Stern, 678-1975; <rbstern@ns.sympatico.ca>.
- 20-23 May "Bon Portage Island", with leader Clair Diggins, 825-6152; <Claire_diggings@hotmail.com>. Pre-register!
- 21 May -12 Jun. "Big Day Event!", Co-ordinator Suzanne Borkowski, 445-2922; <sborkowski@hfx.eastlink.ca>.
- 25 May "F. Dobson Warbler Walk", with leader Joan Waldron, 477-4273; <waldrojo@ns.sympatico.ca>. Pre-register!
- 26 May "Paternal Care and Paternity in Eastern Bluebirds", with speaker Sue Meek.
- 28 May "50th Anniversary Hants Co. Trip", with leader Margaret Clark, 443-3993; <themargs@ns.sympatico.ca>.
- 29 May "Lewis Lake Provincial Park Warbler Walk", with leader Hans Toom, 868-1862; <htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca>.
- 4 Jun. "Canso Area", with leaders Steve Bushell, 366-2527; Tom Kavanaugh, 366-3476; <terri.crane@ns.sympatico.ca>.
- 4 Jun. "Kejimikujik Seaside Adjunct", with leaders Gary C. Hartlen, 354-7250; <garych@eastlink.ca> and Peter Davies.
- 5 Jun. "Crystal Crescent Beach Provincial Park", with leader Hans Toom, 868-1862; <htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca>.
- 11 Jun. "Conquerall Mills, Lunenburg County", with leader James Hirtle, 640-2173; <jrhbirder@hotmail.com>.
- 11 Jun. "Grand River, Cape Breton", with leader Shirley Halliday, 562-5698.
- 18 Jun. "Cumberland County", with leader Clarence Stevens, Sr., 464-1664.

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources: Many outings in Provincial Parks are listed in "Parks are for People", free from DNR, 424-4321; also at museums, parks, tourist bureaus, and the web; go to <parks.gov.ns.ca/programs.asp>.

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society: Monthly meetings, and organised lighthouse trips, inc. boat trips to islands. Phone Dan Conlin, 424-6442, or go to <nslps.com>.

- 27 Apr. "Resurrecting Borden's Wharf Lighthouse", with Fieldwood Heritage Society of Canning. It follows the AGM.

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History: Phone 424-6099, or 424-7353; or go to <museum.gov.ns.ca/mnh/>.

- to 30 Jun. "Trace Fossil Mystery", an interactive exhibit.
- to 15 May "DINOSAURS — BIG, BAD . . . they're BACK !".
- 23 Mar. "The Rocky Planets: A Field Trip through the Solar System", with Dr. Simon Hanmer, Geological Survey Canada.
- 30 Mar. "Birding: The Organised Co-operative Approach", the 1st of the "50th Anniversary Bird Lecture Series".
- Apr. "Annual Salamander Meander", with John Gilhen, NSMNH research associate. Register, 424-3563, after March 1.
- 6 Apr. "Robie Tufts (1884-1982): Documenting Nova Scotia Birdlife".
- 13 Apr. "Thousands of Shorebirds: More or Less?".
- 27 Apr. "Ducks and Geese Over the Past 50 Years".
- 4 May "A Taste for the Exotic: Oriental Inspiration in Western Gardens", with NSMNH Collections Mgr., Alex Wilson.
- 11 May "Bear Essentials", with bear researcher, Jim Simpson.
- 17 May "Close Encounters with Minerals", with André Lalonde, Prof. of Mineralogy, University of Ottawa.
- 18 May "Great Canadian Fossils: A Journey Through Time", with Godfrey S. Nowlan, Geo. Survey of Canada.
- late May - Oct. "Under the Weather", an exhibit on climate change.
- 25 May "Underground Halifax — Stories of Archaeology...", a Book Launch with Nimbus Publishing and authors.
- Jun.-Oct. "Sable Island", an exhibition.
- Jun.-Oct. The Butterfly Pavilion is open.
- 8 Jun. "Sable Island — A Dune Adrift", with authors Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle.
- 11-12 Jun. "Celebrate our Reptilian Friends", an annual 'Show and Tell'.
- 21 Jun. "Rock Walk at Peggys Cove", with geologists Martha and Bob Grantham.
- 1 Jul. "Canada Day Butterfly Social".



Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society: Meets 4th Mon. of the month, Sept. to May, at NSMNH, 7:30 p.m. Phone Barry Sawyer, 449-4938; or go to <chebucto.ns.ca/~nswfs/>.

- 20 Mar. "Spring Outing at Long Lake Provincial Park", contact Heather Drope, 423-7032 or evenings, 440-5032.
- 28 Mar. "Ecological restoration using native plants", with speaker Diane LaRue, N.S. Dept. of Transp. and Public Works.
- 25 Apr. "Ferns: a site for sori", with Alex Wilson, NSMNH.

Nova Scotian Institute of Science: Meets 1st Mon. of the month, Sept. to April, at the NSMNH, 7:30 p.m. Go to <chebucto.ns.ca/Science/NSIS/index.html>.

- 4 Apr. "Hurricanes and the Forests of Nova Scotia", with speaker Peter Neily, DNR.

Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia: Meets 2nd Mon. of the month, and the 1st and 3rd Sun. of the month, at the NSMNH, 7:30 p.m. Shows are at Saint Mary's University, Theatre A, Burke Education Centre. Go to <photoguild.ns.ca/>.

- 3 Apr. "N.S. Bird Society Trophy Competition and Atlantic Geoscience Society Trophy Competition".
- 23 Apr. "Annual Spring Show".

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Halifax Chapter): Meets 3rd Fri. of each month, Room L176, Loyola Academic Building at Saint Mary's University, 8:00 p.m. Go to <halifax.rasc.ca>.

— compiled by Patricia L. Chalmers

TIDE TABLE



HALIFAX

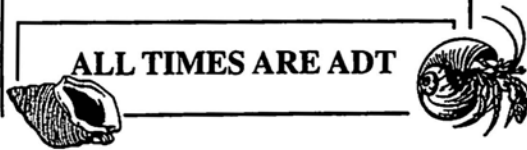
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ALL TIMES ARE ADT



Nature Notes from HFN Monthly Meetings

January Meeting

Stephanie Robertson had seen **no woodpeckers** so far at her suet feeders; perhaps the dearth of older trees with insect grubs in Point Pleasant Park has affected their population numbers there. Bob McDonald reported seeing a **Black-backed Woodpecker** in the park, and Pat Chalmers concurred. Ursula Grigg reported **not as many starlings as usual** in her neighbourhood, **nor sparrows, woodpeckers, nor nuthatches**. She did report seeing a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** though. Bob McDonald reported an **Ivory Gull**, very rare in Nova Scotia, at Sullivan's Pond on Wednesday, 5 January; it was feeding on a dead goose. Lesley Butters on New Year's Eve at the Waegwoltic saw an **Otter** with a **crab**, which dropped it at the appearance of a **Raccoon**; she also saw three **Dandelions** in 'ratty' bloom on a south slope. The Raccoon won the crab, and then chased Lesley! Pat Chalmers reported a **Red-bellied Woodpecker** in Conrose Field. Peter Payzant saw some very **tiny flies** in the last week of December; the temperature was above 0°C and there was snow on the ground. Jim Wolford said that long-time naturalist and Blomidon Naturalist Eva Urban had died recently at the age of 93.

February Meeting

Patricia Chalmers reported that the immature **Ivory Gull** was still present at Sullivan's Pond and the Dartmouth Cove area. At this time of year Ivory Gulls would normally be on Arctic ice pans following Polar Bears and feeding on their kills. For the first two weeks of its stay in Dartmouth this gull fed on a goose carcass, and then a seal carcass; recently it has developed a taste for weiners supplied by local birders! Suzanne Borkowski reported an influx of **Great Grey Owls in Ontario**. Apparently food is short in their usual winter home in the boreal region of western Canada. Stephanie Robertson was happy to report that **Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers** were now coming to her feeders. Peter Webster observed **two mink** at Black Rock Beach, Point Pleasant Park. Regine Maass was pleased to see a nice stand of **Jack Pine** near Williams Lake. She noted that some cones were open, although there was no evidence of a recent fire. Charlie Cron advised that some Jack Pine cones open without the aid of fire. Janet Dalton highly recommended the book **Tree: A Life Story** by David Suzuki and Wayne Grady, with illustrations by Robert Bateman, a life story of a Douglas Fir. Lillian Risley saw a **Black-backed Woodpecker** in Point Pleasant Park. Judi and Elliott Hayes are enjoying visits to their feeders by **woodpeckers, Purple Finches, Goldfinches, nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, and Mourning Doves**, some in good numbers. Ingrid and Burkhard Plache have seen **Coyotes** at night in the vicinity of their home near the Dingle, and recently saw one at the Frog Pond at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon! On January 30th, Verna Higgins was surprised to see a **Bobcat** in her backyard near Middle Musquodoboit. On February 2nd, she was again surprised to see an **American Black Duck** on a nearby paved road. Verna is not aware of any open water within 30 kilometres.

March Meeting

Regina Maass recounted watching a **Red-tailed Hawk** in her garden. At first the Hawk perched, undisturbed by a group of crows near by. But once it took flight, the Hawk was vigorously pursued and harassed by the crows. Patricia Chalmers described encountering a **Barred Owl** in Bedford. Patricia saw the tracks of the Owl first in the snow, before later seeing it close up and undisturbed by human observation. Patricia suspects the Owl might prey on mice drawn to nearby bird feeders. Another audience member reported seeing a large black owl on the North West Arm side of Point Pleasant Park. Suggestions were that this was likely a **Barred owl** as well. An **eagle** was also reported over Point Pleasant Park. Eagles were also reported near the Prince's Lodge on the Bedford Basin, and over the Waegwoltic Club on the North West Arm. Jim Wolford reported that the East Kings county annual eagle and hawk count was conducted on February 12. Though over 400 were expected, only 217 eagles and hawks were sighted. Jim reported that no count took place in 2004, but 425 were counted in 2003. 600 was the largest number counted. Jim does not know the reason for the low count this year, but he does not feel it indicates a real decline in populations. Stephanie Robertson reported that a growing variety of ducks and other waterfowl are appearing at Point Pleasant Park as well at this time of year. Audience members reported the first sightings of **Coltsfoot** and other spring flowers 'emerging' around the city. Ursula Grigg described observing a nest of **Orange Grove Wasps** (a paper wasp) who are getting into her bathroom from the eaves. Ursula reported that the queen had recently hatched (a sure sign that spring is close) and had to be escorted outside. The audience was impressed by this dedicated naturalist's interest in observing the wasps, and lack of concern about their inhabiting her bathroom. Finally, Jim Wolford recounted newspaper reports about two young seals coming in to New Minas from the Cornwallis River. Jim suspects that they are **yearling Harp Seals**.

! NEXT DEADLINE !

21 May for June Issue

Contributions to the 'Newsletter', c/o NS Museum of Natural History.

Email submissions to sdhaythorn@ns.sympatico.ca.