

# THE HALIFAX FIELD NATURALIST



No. 134  
March to May, 2009



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

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# HFN

is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and holds Registered Charity status with Canada Revenue

Agency. Tax-creditable receipts will be issued for individual and corporate gifts. HFN is an affiliate of Nature Canada and an organisational member of Nature NS (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, and 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; they are open to the public. Field Trips are held at least once a month; it is appreciated if those travelling in someone else's car share the cost of the gas. Participants in HFN activities are responsible for their own safety. Everyone, member or not, is welcome to take part in field trips. Memberships are open to anyone interested in the natural history of Nova Scotia. Forms are available at any meeting of the society, or by writing to: Membership Secretary, Halifax Field Naturalists, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History. Members receive the quarterly HFN Newsletter and HFN Programme, and new memberships received from September 1st to December 31st of any year are valid until the end of the following membership year. The regular membership year is from January 1st to December 31st.



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### GRAPHICS

All uncredited illustrations are by H. Derbyshire or from copyright-free sources. **Cover** - Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, David Patriquin, Rte 215, near Meander River, Hants County; **Back Cover**, - Rhodora, *Rhododendron canadense*, Bob McDonald; **Tide Table** - Canadian Hydrographic Service, Fisheries & Oceans Canada.

### HFN ADDRESS

Halifax Field Naturalists, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, N.S., B3H 3A6

Website: [hfn.chebucto.org](http://hfn.chebucto.org)

### NNS ADDRESS

Nature Nova Scotia, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6

Email: [doug@fundymud.com](mailto:doug@fundymud.com) (Doug Linzey, FNSN Secretary and Newsletter Editor)

Website: [naturens.ca](http://naturens.ca)

### EXECUTIVE

#### 2009/2010

<b>President</b>	David Patriquin .....	423-5716
<b>Vice-President</b>	Peter Webster .....	453-9244
<b>Treasurer</b>	Janet Dalton .....	443-7617
<b>Secretary</b>	Richard Beazley .....	429-6626
<b>Past President</b>	Allan Robertson .....	422-6326
<b>Directors</b>	Grace Beazley, Jim Medill, Bob McDonald, Burkhard Plache, Ingrid Plache, Lillian Risley, Stephanie Robertson	

### COMMITTEES

#### 2009/2010

<b>Membership Programme</b>	Lillian Risley .....	422-8652
<b>Talks/Trips</b>	Burkhard & Ingrid Plache .....	475-1129
	Bob & Wendy McDonald .....	443-5051
	Jim Medill .....	405-7446
	Stephanie Robertson .....	422-6326
<b>Design</b>		
<b>Newsletter</b>		
Editor	Stephanie Robertson .....	422-6326
Design	Stephanie Robertson .....	422-6326
Almanac	Patricia Chalmers .....	422-3970
Taxonomy	Ursula Grigg .....	681-1264
Distribution	Bernice Moores .....	422-5292
Labels	Doug Linzey .....	582-7176
<b>Tea Break</b>	Regine Maass	
<b>Conservation</b>	Peter Webster .....	453-9244
	Bob McDonald .....	443-5051
	Peter Webster .....	453-9244
<b>NNS Rep.</b>	Brian Bartlett .....	420-0315
<b>YNC Rep.</b>	Jim Medill .....	405-7446
<b>PSAs</b>	Linda Payzant .....	861-1607
<b>Web Design</b>		

### FEES 2008/2009

<b>Student</b> .....	\$15.00 per year
<b>Individual</b> .....	\$20.00 per year
<b>Family</b> .....	\$25.00 per year
<b>Supporting</b> .....	\$30.00 per year
<b>Nature NS (opt.)</b> .....	\$5.00 per year

### Almanac .....

#### Natural Events .....

Important seasonal phenomena

#### Organisational Events .....

**Blom. Nat. Society** – Fundy, ponds, canoeing, birds .....

**Burke Gaffney Observatory** – 1st & 3rd Saturdays .....

**N.S. Bird Society** – 21 trips & 3 talks! .....

**N.S. Mus. of Nat. Hist.** – ice age, climate, bats .....

**N.S. Wild Flora Soc.** – AGM & alpine flowers .....

**N.S. Inst. of Science** – threats to bees .....

**Royal Astronomical Society** – 3rd Fri. each month .....

**Halifax Tide Table** – April to June; all times are AST .. 15

#### Nature Notes .....

**January** – Snowy Owl; mergansers; seals, P. Woodpecker

**February** – Robins; waxwings; Pine Siskins, Dovekie .....

# HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## EDITORIAL

– *Stephanie Robertson*

What a winter! Not so much the amount of snow and cold, but the weather conditions and combinations that gave rise to solid, deep, undulating ice surfaces on many side walks, pathways, and streets. For we naturalists who want to get out walking, it was difficult to negotiate at a decent rate without slipping or falling; it was very rough going indeed.



Ironically, in nearby Point Pleasant Park, with the recent warming into spring, many of the pathways have remained in this condition, while the surrounding forest floor has had its ice and snow melted away. It reminds me of ATV activity; path users are going off to the sides to continue their perambulations. Thankfully, however, without heavy wheels, no damage is occurring to the rich needle and leaf litter that has been uncovered, although in some places, the melt has revealed extensive, deleterious crusher dust and gravel washes far into the surrounding forested areas from the roads and paths.

The recent few glorious and cloudless sunny days have lifted everyone's spirits; we had such a one for the Long Lake Lichen Trip on Sunday, March 15th. This report will be in the Summer Issue, #135.

Sincere congratulations are in order to Bob and Wendy McDonald for all their hard conservation work over the years which earned them the 2009 Colin Stewart Conservation Award, outlined under "Conservation" (p. 4).



## 2009 NATURE NS CONFERENCE

This year the Nature Nova Scotia conference will be held in and around Wolfville, on the weekend of June 13th and 14th.

The following is a tentative schedule of events:

### Saturday, June 13th:

Arrive Saturday afternoon for talks/field trips; group dinner at local restaurant; evening speakers; Chimney Swift observation at dusk; overnight at local inns/motels or campgrounds.

### Sunday, June 14th:

Early morning birding/botanising; Nature NS breakfast; Annual General Meeting; educational presentation; lunch; field Trips; departure for home.

Nature NS conferences are always extremely enjoyable. Don't forget to mark this on your calendar, and to check with the NNS website for more details!

## 2009 BIOBLITZ



This year, Dr. Jeremy Lundholm of St. Mary's University is in charge of organising the vascular plant group for the 2009 BioBlitz. The event will be held at Blue Mountain/Birch Cove proposed wilderness area. Many of you have probably already been there.



A wonderful time was had last year, and it's probable that there will be some additional species found on this trip. There will be other groups as well. They'll be focusing on birds, insects, bryophytes and lichens, aquatic invertebrates, and other things. If you want to be involved with one of these groups contact Jeremy and he will put you in

touch with the right people. Also, please contact him if you know of anyone else who might want to participate.

The dates will be Friday, June 5th for the scientists and their assistants to go out and collect data and specimens; and Saturday, June 6th for general viewing, to see what was found, at the Diman Lebanese Centre, 345 Kearney Lake Road.

Jeremy can be found at St. Mary's Department of Biology/Environmental Studies, 420-5506; or go to <http://husky1.smu.ca/~jlundholm/about.htm>.

## OUR LIVING BEACHES



– *Wendy McDonald*

On the Front Lines: Strategies for Healthy Beaches in Nova Scotia, by Sadie Beaton, EAC Coastal Researcher, was launched on March 5, 2009. The stage was set by author Silver Donald Cameron, who spoke and read from his book, The Living Beach, when he said, "The beach is not just a strip of sand: it is a community, a wild and living thing."

Go to EAC's website, <http://www.ecologyaction.ca/content/coastal-issues-committee-publications> to learn more about the background document as well as the Strategy piece. There are seven 'Goals' which engage us all as to protect our beaches. More steps will follow after pressure on government at all levels.

EAC, St Mary's, Dalhousie, and the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia are partnering in a series of informative lectures about our beaches over the next months. Go to [www.ecologyaction.ca/content/coastal-nova](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/content/coastal-nova) to read more as further details are posted.

## EAGLE HILL

– *Patricia Chalmers*

Field seminars in natural history, at a variety of levels (introductory, advanced, professional, and specialty) are offered by the Eagle Hill Foundation near Acadia National Park, Maine.

Most seminars and workshops are one week long, and conducted at the Humboldt Field Research Institute, nestled in 150 acres of woodland on the summit of Eagle Hill. The buildings are only a short walk away from the seashore, a blueberry field, and a number of spectacular panoramic overlooks of the coast of Maine.

Offerings this summer include seminars on amphibians, aquatic insects, beetles, lichens, mosses, mushrooms, rushes and sedges, truffles, and wetlands; as well as workshops on scientific illustration, sketching from nature, medicinal plants, etc.

For more information, go to <http://www.eaglehill.us/programs/nhs/nhs-calendar.shtml>.



## NEW AND RETURNING

Emily Gregus

# SPECIAL REPORTS

## YEAR-END COMMITTEE REPORTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

– *Allan Robertson, President*

We had very interesting walks and talks this past year, thanks to our hardworking Programme Committee headed by Burkhard Plache. Our quarterly newsletter, the Halifax Field Naturalist, contained reports of these activities, natural history news, the seasonal almanac, announcements, and other tidbits. Thanks to Editor Stephanie Robertson, past editor Ursula Grigg, Patricia Chalmers (Almanac), Bernice Moores (distribution) and Doug Linzey (mailing labels), as well as those of you who write up the presentations and field trip reports in the first place.

The annual conference of Nature Nova Scotia this year was held on the May 30th - June 1st weekend in Barrington, with presentations and interesting field trips bracketing the AGM held on Sunday morning. Thanks to the naturalists of South West Nova Scotia and to Joan Czapalay, Lillian Perry, and Claire Diggins for organising the weekend event.

HFN has a dedicated Board of Directors. Our Vice President, Peter Webster, coordinated conservation-oriented activities on behalf of HFN, working closely with Past President Bob McDonald and also with David Patriquin who is taking an increasing interest in conservation issues. Our treasurer Janet Dalton once again took very good care of our financial affairs, and Richard Beazley, our secretary, produced letter-perfect minutes of our meetings. Brian Bartlett handled PSAs and represented HFN at the Young Naturalists, Lillian Risley very ably looked after our membership database and related issues, and Linda Payzant once again handled our website and email system with great skill.

Our very special thanks is extended to loyal volunteer Regine Maass, who continues to provide refreshments after our talks, occasionally homemade!

## CONSERVATION

– *Peter Webster, Conservation Chair*

HFN members have been active with a number of ongoing conservation efforts, and we continue to work cooperatively through Nature Nova Scotia on issues of provincial concern.

Activities this year have included:

Participation in the review of the Blue Mountain, Birch Cove Lakes candidate protected area;

Submissions to the Volunteer Planning, Citizens Policy Forum on Natural Resource Strategy – (Phase I of the Nova Scotia Natural Resources Strategy process);

Expert Panel member selection for Phase II to the Nova Scotia Natural Resources Strategy process;

Submissions to government on Sustainable Coastal Strategy;

MacNab's Island Public Advisory Committee; and the Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee.

## THE COLIN STEWART CONSERVATION AWARD

HFN's 2009 Colin Stewart Conservation Award was presented to Bob and Wendy McDonald at our March meeting. Established by the HFN Board while Bob was President in 2004, the award honours conservationist and long-time

HFN member Colin Stewart (1954-2004), and highlights the achievements of Nova Scotians who have demonstrated significant conservation efforts in the province. Previous recipients were Colin Stewart, Jim Wolford, and the Ecology Action Centre. At the meeting, the McDonalds were praised for their advocacy and wide-ranging work on behalf of conservation activities.

During a four-year period they played leading roles working with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-NS) in a campaign to have Crown lands of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes become a protected wilderness. Bob represented HFN in that land-conservation campaign; Wendy represented the local trails group. Through media interviews and presentations, both spoke out in support of conservation. Within Bob's Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas square, this area became a beneficiary of his through bird surveys. Both completed other detailed biota surveys, leading many field trips for HRM residents. This 1,350 hectare (3,350 acre) area includes forests, lakes, barrens, and wetlands, providing unique wilderness access within HRM, and is one of the largest near-urban protected areas in Canada. Due partly to the McDonald's efforts, the province announced in October of 2007 its plans to designate Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. At the time of the award, HFN learned designation is anticipated within months.

Bob and Wendy were also among the founding members of the Halifax North West Trails Association. Since its 2003 inauguration, Wendy has served as Chair and Bob as Treasurer. In 2004 they arranged student help from St. Mary's University Geography Dept. to examine pond life and to establish a water quality monitoring protocol at nearby urban wetland, Belcher's Marsh. Bob and Wendy have monitored its water quality twice each year, and have led trail field trips for naturalists and historical associations.

In 2003, Bob represented HFN during transfer of the Captain Arnell Conservation Lands in Purcell's Cove from the Field family to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, by arranging a Halifax Field Naturalists' donation to contribute toward the legal and survey costs. As part of HFN's ongoing biota surveys there, Bob and Wendy have led several trips, recording their findings and introducing a number of groups to this gem on our doorstep. This area consists of 12 hectares (30 acres) of superb granite barrens, woodlands, a lakeshore, and wetlands, now preserved in perpetuity for the use of residents.

Bob has served on the HFN Board as HFN President for two multi-year terms, and has been a valuable board member for many years. He ably chaired the organising committee for HFN's hosting of the Canadian Nature Federation's (now Nature Canada) 1994 Annual Conference in Halifax, and subsequently represented Nova Scotia on the CNF Board. Both Wendy and Bob have encouraged and contributed to the activities of the Young Naturalists Club since its formation three years ago, with presentations and field trips for its eight years old and up members.

Both have given much time presenting submissions to different levels of government, providing HFN's viewpoint on many conservation issues. These included the Highway 113 Focus Report, and the Environmental Assessment Report regarding the Avon Peninsula quarry expansion. They've also made submissions regarding various conservation matters on their own behalf, and are long-time



occasional Piping Plover Guardians. They've led field trips for the Halifax Field Naturalists, NS Wild Flora Society, NS Bird Society, Halifax North West Trails Assn., NS Nature Trust, and the Sierra Club, to name a few, focusing on a wide variety of natural history topics including birds, flowers, trees, shrubs, insects, and general natural history.

Through their travels to Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, the Arctic, and the Antarctic, the McDonalds have increased their knowledge of natural history and conservation issues and have been extremely generous in sharing their information. Following the Colin Stewart model in negotiating with developers and decision makers, they continue to engage local politicians at all levels in the appreciation of nature – making presentations to Councillors, community meetings, and developers, advocating for the setting aside of green spaces, wetlands, and other natural assets.

During Wendy's work in the library of several of Halifax's public schools, she always focused on enabling students – through displays, author visits, presentations, and the book collection – to gain a greater appreciation for the conservation of Nova Scotia's natural history.



## MEMBERSHIP

– *Lillian Risley, Membership Secretary*

In 2008 we have remained at a level consistent with recent years, with new members roughly balancing those who left. The 2008 roll of 127 memberships was made up of 75 individual, 33 family, and 19 supporting memberships. In addition, we had four dues-paying institutional members (all were libraries). Fifty-eight of our members also chose to join Nature Nova Scotia when joining or rejoining the HFN. This year the number of members who have provided us with their email addresses has risen to 95; we have been able to use this to advise members of one change of meeting date and also to provide information on some special events. We have had some helpful feedback and welcome your comments at any time.

Once again, thanks to Doug Linzey for maintaining the membership database and newsletter labels.

## TOTAL MEMBERSHIPS BY YEAR

2005	2006	2007	2008
123	129	129	127

## PROGRAMME

– *Burkhard Plache, Programme Chair*

Over the past year, the Halifax Field Naturalists offered regular presentations at the nine monthly meetings and 15

field trips throughout the year, predominantly during the warmer seasons.

The presentations took us from neighbouring Point Pleasant Park through various parts of Nova Scotia, Nahanni Park in northwestern Canada, and to far away Ethiopia. On our field trips, we visited some better and some lesser known places of our province.

The programme committee wants to thank all who contributed. This last year was also notable for the high number of members who offered to share their knowledge and experience (1/3 of the talks, nearly 1/2 of the field trips). This is an encouraging sign of an active and engaged membership.

## NEWSLETTER



– *Stephanie Robertson, Editor*

In preparing for this 2009 Halifax Field Naturalist year-end report, I did a little research. To my great surprise, 20 years and 80 issues of its laying out and production will have passed under the bridge since I first took over the reins from Doris Butters in the spring of 1989. During my family's posting to Barbados from 1991 to 1994 (no PDF or email capability), Ursula Grigg, our Past Editor, produced thirteen of those.

During this time, after being produced originally with the Provincial Printer courtesy the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, then at our expense with DalPrint, then Mt. Saint Vincent Printing Services, it's once again back with DalPrint!

Last year I reported expense problems; the last issue I had submitted to them was adamantly quoted as double the price of the one before. At the last moment we found another print shop which did wonderful work for much less, but after a few issues, when I went to deliver the Winter 2008/9 master for printing, without warning I was told they just couldn't do it! In desperation I had to fall back again on Dal, and behold, rounding the corner in the Life Sciences building – I found a complete physical plant makeover had taken place and the price quoted was much better than that which they had been charging before.

The last four issues of The Halifax Field Naturalist, which comprised 60 pages in total, included 13 HFN field trip reports, and eight HFN talk write-ups. A sincere thank you once again to all who submitted these. We also had four very interesting special reports this past year. Two were about Nova Scotia's natural resources: a report on a public meeting on the Future of Natural Resources in Nova Scotia, by Jamie Simpson of the EAC's Standing Tall Campaign; and David Patriquin's able and broadly encompassing submission regarding their stewardship and sustainability, on HFN's behalf, to Voluntary Planning, the Citizens' Policy Forum on Nova Scotia Natural Resources. The third was Pat Leader's humorous and tongue-in-cheek piece on the latest about the Bedford Waterfront development (or lack of it), and the fourth delineated the great importance of trees to cities, by Bob and Wendy McDonald.

Our local HFN News and Announcements, seasonal Tide Table, Nature Notes, and Pat Chalmers' useful and informative Almanac rounded out another year of The Halifax Field Naturalist for you, the HFN membership.

Please make any suggestions for any changes you would like to see, or submit articles, reports, or tidbits on anything you yourself think is important to the natural history of Nova Scotia and/or to the Halifax Field Naturalists. Don't forget, this is *your* newsletter!

**Halifax Field Naturalists  
Financial Statement (Balance Sheet)  
As At December 31, 2008**

	2008	2008	2007	2007	2006	2006
<b>Assets</b>						
Cash		\$1,106		\$1,158		\$1,433
Royal						
Accounts Receivable and Accrued Income		\$765		\$531		\$395
Inventories and Prepaids		\$724		\$734		\$825
Investments		\$12,480		\$12,288		\$12,090
Fixed Assets						
		<u>\$15,074</u>		<u>\$14,711</u>		<u>\$14,743</u>
<b>Liabilities and Surplus</b>						
Accounts Payable	- General					\$0
	- FNSN	\$270		\$260		\$260
<b>Surplus</b>						
Restricted		\$6,480		\$6,288		\$6,090
Unrestricted		\$8,324		\$8,423		\$8,653
	\$14,804		\$14,711		\$14,743	
		<u>\$15,074</u>		<u>\$14,711</u>		<u>\$14,743</u>

**Halifax Field Naturalists  
Statement of Income and Surplus  
Year Ended December 31, 2008**

Actual	2008 Actual	2007 Actual	2006 Actual	2005 Actual
<b>Revenues</b>				
Membership	\$2,519	\$2,440	\$2,218	\$1,690
Product Sales		-\$82	\$16	\$0
GIC	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Interest	\$157	\$198	\$162	\$140
Donations	\$60	\$0	\$70	\$35
DF List	\$5	\$59	-\$21	\$48
	<u>\$2,741</u>	<u>\$2,616</u>	<u>\$2,444</u>	<u>\$1,913</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Field Trips	\$0	\$0	-\$31	\$0
Special Projects	\$31	\$0	\$0	\$0
Socials	\$16	\$33	\$91	
Grants/Donations	\$370	\$25	\$125	\$125
Insurance	\$200	\$225	\$225	\$225
Meetings	\$45	\$403	\$139	\$400
Memberships	\$464	\$400	\$555	\$425
Miscellaneous	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Newsletters				
Postage	\$436	\$405	\$367	\$388
Production	\$1,279	\$1,326	\$1,100	\$619
Office Supplies & Expenses	\$0	\$30	\$187	\$10
	<u>\$2,840</u>	<u>\$2,846</u>	<u>\$2,758</u>	<u>\$2,193</u>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-\$99</b>	<b>-\$230</b>	<b>-\$314</b>	<b>-\$280</b>
<b>Surplus, beginning of year</b>	<b>\$8,423</b>	<b>\$8,653</b>	<b>\$8,967</b>	<b>\$9,246</b>
<b>Surplus, end of year</b>	<u><b>\$8,324</b></u>	<u><b>\$8,423</b></u>	<u><b>\$8,653</b></u>	<u><b>\$8,966</b></u>

– Janet Dalton, Treasurer

**Halifax Field Naturalists  
Operating Budget  
Fiscal to December 2009**

<b>Revenues</b>	2009 Actual	2009 Budget	2008 Actual	2008 Budget
Memberships		<b>\$2,900</b>	\$2,519	\$2,200
Product Sales		<b>\$10</b>	\$0	\$10
Donations		<b>\$35</b>	\$60	\$10
Interest		<b>\$120</b>	\$157	\$170
Dragonfly Lists		<b>\$25</b>	\$5	\$20
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$3,090</b>	\$2,741	\$2,410
<b>Expenses</b>				
Field Trips		<b>\$0</b>	\$0	\$0
Special Projects		<b>\$50</b>	\$30	\$0
Socials		<b>\$20</b>	\$260	\$260
Grants/Donations		<b>\$370</b>		
Insurance		<b>\$200</b>	\$6,288	\$6,090
Meetings		<b>\$50</b>	\$8,423	\$8,653
Memberships in other Organisations		<b>\$500</b>	\$464	\$130
Miscellaneous		<b>\$0</b>	\$0	\$0
Newsletter				
Postage		<b>\$500</b>	\$436	\$400
Production		<b>\$1,400</b>	\$1,279	\$1,030
General Supplies		<b>\$0</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$3,090</b>	\$2,741	\$2,410
<b>Net Income</b>			(\$99)	



**OUR OCEANS**

**4 DEC.**  
– *David Patriquin*

Bob Branton gave us an insightful overview of the “Censusing (of) Marine Life – Diversity, Distribution, and Abundance”. He then went on to discuss the Ocean Tracking Network for which he is Director of Data Management. His account was spiced with many regional examples, giving us more reasons for appreciating the natural history of our particular corner of the planet.

The activities he outlined are ‘megascience’ projects involving many millions of dollars, the latest technologies, and over 2000 scientists in 80 countries worldwide. A number of Halifax-based scientists, including Ron O’Dor, Boris Worm, Heike Lotze, Ellen Kenchington, Anna Metaxis, and the late Ransom Myers, to name only a few, have played key roles in developing these projects. Also, they have moved quickly to process their data and highlight the results, along with their sometimes alarming implications, in prominent scientific journals such as Nature and Science.

Begun in 2000, The Census of Marine Life is a ten-year research program to “assess and understand the diversity, distribution & abundance of marine life – past, present & future.” Data collected globally is fed into OBIS (the Ocean Biogeographic Information System) which in turn gener-

ates a variety of mapping and visualisation tools. Many of the visualisations Bob showed were global maps with diversity and abundance of ocean life represented by blue through red colors, red representing the hot spots. One striking set of maps showed the intensity of data available by depth, and highlighted how little we know about life in the very deepest of our oceans (greater than 3,000 m); this is of concern because most of the ocean is deep (average depth, Bob told us, is about 4000 m) and we are already impacting it.

The Ocean’s biota are classified into six realms – Human Edges, Hidden Boundaries, Central Waters, Active Geology, the Ice Oceans, and the Microscopic. For each, projects are compiling what we know and asking “What can we learn?”. For example, there are about 100,000 isolated seamounts and we have sampled only 250 of them, but, already, some are being very heavily fished. Meanwhile, over 700 new invertebrate species have been discovered in Antarctic waters. Another example is from the Arctic Ocean. Algae research there has shown how ‘snow algae’ on top of the ice, algae in ephemeral open water, and algae in the ice and in ‘ponds’ trapped under the ice, form the basis of productive ecosystems that support a wealth of invertebrates, fish, seals, and polar bears.

The delineation and intensive study of a 'Discovery Corridor', extending from the intertidal zone of the lower Bay of Fundy across the northern Gulf of Maine, is a key Canadian contribution to the Census of Marine Life. This area includes habitats for the Northern Right Whale, deep corals, and important fisheries. The 800-km long Corridor is 90km wide at its inner, intertidal boundary, and 220 km wide and 6,000m deep at its outer limit.

We read almost daily about sometimes bizarre new species of oceanic fish and invertebrates being discovered, but it is in regard to the oceans' microscopic life that we have truly just scratched the surface. New, molecular methods are revealing 100-fold greater diversity than we had documented before using the traditional cultivation techniques. Relatively few types or populations dominate numerically, but there are thousands of low-abundance types making up a 'rare biosphere'. These organisms are "very ancient and may represent a nearly inexhaustible source of genomic innovation; [they] are highly divergent from each other and, at different times in our earth's history, may have had a profound impact on shaping planetary processes", write authors Sogin et al., in an article entitled "Microbial diversity in the deep sea and the underexplored 'rare biosphere'." (PNAS 103(32): 12115-12120, 2006).

In 2010, the Census of Marine Life will release a comprehensive report, "The first Census of Marine Life", which will mark the end of this initial ten-year effort. Amongst one of its spin-off projects is the Ocean Tracking Network (OTN). It is headquartered at Dalhousie University and employs Canadian-developed technology, with some of its key components being manufactured in Bayer's Lake Business Park. Led by biologist Ron O'Dor, the objective of the OTN is to track the movements of fish, whales, and invertebrates, as well as diving mammals and birds, on a global level.

OTN has been described as 'the ocean's internet', and promises to revolutionise our methods of stock management while providing crucial information about our oceans' climate as well as global warming. Small electronic transmitters are placed in target species such as salmon, tuna, whales, sharks, penguins, crabs, and seals. Then, through invisible 'listening curtains', their movements are monitored. These 'curtains', created by lines of sensors 800m apart, have been placed on the seafloor at strategic locations in 14 regions around the globe. Every time an animal with a transmitter passes over a curtain, the specific animal, the time, the depth, and the location are logged.

Also, a pilot project began monitoring movements of wild salmon species on the west coast in 2004, and a listening curtain is being set up off the coast of Halifax. As well, large animals are fitted with 'archival tags' that can be read by satellites, and technology is being developed which will allow larger, highly mobile animals such as seals to act as sensors (receivers) as well as transmitters.

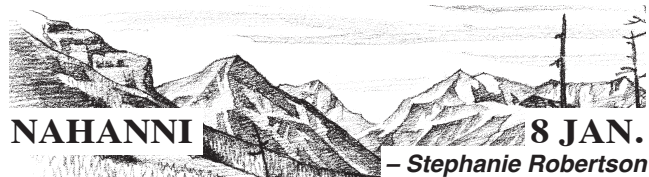
Besides the locations of individual animals, sensors track depths, currents, temperature, and salinity of ocean waters, greatly increasing our coverage of the ocean's climate and its response to global warming.

There was much more Bob talked about and illustrated with both videos and slides, all of it exciting but concerning at the same time. We know so little about so much but meanwhile we are already impacting a very great deal of it. Bob suggested the following web sites for follow up:

- Census of Marine Life: <http://www.coml.org>.

- Centre for Marine Biodiversity (Atlantic Canada): <http://www.marinebiodiversity.ca>.
- Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS): <http://www.iobis.org>.
- Ocean Tracking Network: <http://oceantrackingnetwork.org>.

Also, see the section on the Discovery Corridor, with the film Bob showed, at: <http://www.marinebiodiversity.ca/cmb/research/discovery-corridor>.



In August of 2008, HFNers and waterfall enthusiasts Grace and Richard Beazley arranged a tour of the Southern section of the South Nahanni River (SNR), in Nahanni National Park Reserve (NNPR) near the southwest border of the Northwest Territories, with Neil Hartling, owner and guide of Nahanni River Adventures. (Nahanni was the name used by the Athapaskan tribes to describe 'people who live far away').

Grace and Richard took turns presenting their wonderful images and information about their adventure, with Grace the first up to tell of their 'trip-of-a-lifetime'.

They arrived by plane in Fort Simpson on the MacKenzie River, which flows from Great Slave Lake to the Beaufort Sea. From there, with another participant, they flew 147km – a 1 1/2 hour flight – in a single-engine Cessna to Virginia Falls, NNPR. Another ten of their group were flown in a twin otter aircraft, and two of the guides had gone two days earlier (the total comprised three guides and 12 guests; seven of those were a family with a canoe). It was from Virginia Falls that they began their 210km South Nahanni River rafting journey to the village of Nahanni Butte, a village just outside the 4,776km<sup>2</sup> Nahanni National Park Reserve.

The NNPR was established in 1972, and was designated a World Heritage Site on the 8th of September, 1978 – one of the first World Heritage Sites chosen by UNESCO. This confirmed its universal value as a natural and cultural gem that requires protection for the benefit of all humanity. It contains Virginia Falls, canyons, the South Nahanni River (the park's centrepiece), limestone mountain ranges, karst landforms, boreal forests, and hot springs. In addition, 51 species of mammals, 170 species of birds, several species of fish, and nearly 600 plant species have been observed in the park!

The SNR flows for about 300km from the Park's northern boundary through successive spines of the Mackenzie Mountains, where it empties into the Liard River at the Village of Nahanni Butte. This section of the river was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1987 because of its natural history, human history, and recreational value. It's known around the world as a premier wilderness river, accessible only by boat and aircraft, and safely navigable from June to September.

It had been a hazy evening on the Virginia Falls flight, yet from their plane's window, they were able to shoot glorious long-range images of the Eastern edge of the Nahanni Range of Mountains with the Mackenzie River in background; the Ram Plateau with its dry valleys and gorges formed by streams that dissolved limestone and





then drained into caverns below; the Mackenzie Mountains; a forest fire, which was burning uninhibited by any human interventions; and finally, Virginia Falls with its boat and airplane docks on the majestic SNR, about 500m above Virginia Falls themselves.

About 600 people per year arrive here for the trip down this large and silt-laden waterway which boasts a total elevation drop of 396m. From the bottom of Virginia Falls to Kraus Hotsprings (150km) the mean river gradient is 1.7 m/km with many Class I to Class III rapids; however, the rapids in mid-August are mostly Class I, while only a few are Class II.

Grace stressed the precise and comprehensive organisation of everything for the participants, from the food, the 'biffy', the disposal of waste, the watercraft, and the detailed instructions for safety. The first breakfast was a scrambled omelet at Virginia Falls Campground (it was -1°C!), with dish- and hand-washing stations set up and at the ready. The outhouse had been raised because permafrost prevents digging.

They then portaged their gear one km to the river below the falls, with the 1,555m high, limestone and shale Sunblood Mountain in the background. The 27m high 'Sluice Box Rapids' is a slanted bedrock-and-rapids section immediately above Virginia Falls, one of the most impressive wilderness falls in the world. The water was pretty low for their trip; but they imagined all the visible bedrock that they viewed being covered by deep, rushing, and more dangerous water in June!

At the top of Virginia Falls there is a central stack, which is informally named Mason Rock, after Bill Mason, a Canadian outdoorsman and filmmaker. (These 200m-wide falls were named in 1929 after the daughter of an American explorer, Fenley Hunter.) Images showed Virginia Falls, of which the left side is 90m high, and the right is 52m high. Add the Sluice Box Rapids' 27m height to the left sides' 90m and they are nearly twice as high as Niagara Falls! The bedrock here consists of dolomite and limestone. Dolomite (magnesium carbonate), is the oldest rock in the Park, and is buff to apricot in colour; the limestone (calcium carbonate), is grey.

The rafting began with a 20km trip through Fourth Canyon then downriver to the second campsite. Images of the the raft being loaded showed the river bags, tent bags, boot bags, and kitchen and frozen food chests. All the gear was colour-coded, with identifying names, and was attached to the rafts' frames. Before starting off, Neil Hartling gave a 45-minute pre-boarding safety talk about the trip and the river. The air temperature was 18°C; the water was 13°C. Fourth Canyon's 70m high walls were a mixture of limestone, dolomite, and perhaps some silt and clay. There were strange mask shapes on its walls.

Their second campsite was a typical setup on a gravel bar beside the river, mostly two people per tent, the rafts tied to rocks or trees as they were too heavy to be taken out of the water. The heavy frozen-food chests stayed in rafts (they also served as seats for the rowers).

With images taken while rafting through the Arnica Range of Mountains, Richard took his turn as presenter. The Arnicas stretched for 30km along the meandering 'antecedent' South Nahanni River and the air temperature was now 20°C. Some of these limestone and shale mountains were eroded by rain, snow, ice, and wind into softly rounded domes with 'soft' edges, while others were colluvial-sloped (u-shaped) with 'sharp' edges.



The SNR is an 'antecedent' river because it pre-dates the formation of the surrounding mountains and plateaus. The entrenchment of such rivers usually proceeds at the same rate as surrounding mountain formation, so these rivers are extremely rare in the world. Richard said that after the Yukon gold rush of 1898, rumors of a gold find in this area by prospectors Frank and Willie McLeod led other prospectors into the Mackenzie Mountains and up and down the SNR. Little gold was found, but tales of hidden gold, murder, and headless men made the Nahanni a land of legends.

Just past the Mary River/SNR confluence is the entrance to Third Canyon. The walls of this canyon consist of thin limestone, weak shale, and sandstone, thus they are erosion prone and colluvial-sloped (u-shaped). Third Canyon is a 40km gash through the Funeral Range of Mountains, and it marks the entrance to Canada's deepest river canyons.

The group encountered some forest-fire smoke for about four hours in this part of Third Canyon – the smoke from the fire that they had seen from the Cessna – and it proved to be irritating to both throats as well as eyes.

The next 'landmark' was The Gate, a 50m-wide gap through which the SNR flows, flanked by vertical limestone and dolomite walls 460m high, and centered by Pulpit Rock (70m). Eight of the group hiked to the top left-side viewpoint, on a trail through the trees and scree. The views from the top showed the third campsite and Pulpit Rock. An image of the campsite kitchen showed a table (it was also used for gear storage in the raft), water purifier (which used gravity filtration through a ceramic filter device, hung on three oars – lots of gear had multiple uses), a propane stove, and a net dish-drying arrangement. Rain brought out the tarps and waterproof suits.

The storm clouds lifted for the 20km rafting through the second half of Third Canyon to the end, Big Bend. Its 700m high vertical walls are comprised of limestone, dolomite, slate, and other sedimentary rock.

A short section approaching Second Canyon is one of the most scenic views on the river. On entering Second Canyon, the watercraft were transported overland because of anticipated rapids. They passed the limestone mound called Little Butte (a butte is a steep-sided, often flat-topped hill that stands alone). With its 800m-high, colluvial-shaped, scree-strewn limestone and shale walls, Second Canyon cuts through 15km of the Headless Range of Mountains. Back to the human history – in 1908, after a couple of years of not being seen or heard from, the two gold prospecting McLeod brothers were found at a campsite on a creek off the SNR, or at least their headless skeletons were discovered. This best known Nahanni legend has given unusual names to some of the mountains, such as Funeral and Headless; to a creek – Headless; and to a valley – Deadmen.

NNPR has widespread permafrost (ground that remains frozen for two or more years). In Deadmen Valley images showed 'slumps' and 'drunken' forests. Water can create a slippery layer under a block of soil when the permafrost melts, and then the block becomes unstable. A surging river and/or heavy rain cuts the footing from under this unstable block, and the soil 'slumps'. With their roots severely disturbed, the trees perched on any of these slumps point in all directions, thus the reference to 'drunken' forests. Sadly, as climate change has progressed, more slumps are being noticed.

At the mouth of Prairie Creek, an alluvial fan or delta was born and has grown because the fast-moving creek slows down as it nears the SNR, where it deposits its load of gravel, silt, and other debris. Over time this delta has become the largest alluvial fan located in the park, occupying 15km<sup>2</sup>. Its 4km gravel-bar front edge continues to push the SNR into its far bank.

Grace took the microphone once again and talked about the entrance to the 26km-long First Canyon, which is the most spectacular of the four canyons because it cuts through the more erosion resistant limestone and dolomite of the Nahanni Plateau to create 900m high, v-shaped, multi-colored walls. It was a lot warmer here, 22°C. One image showed a forty-sixth anniversary picture taken for the occasion, with their waterproof pants and rubber boots. To illustrate the paucity of water depth, there was a shot of a natural high-water marker that was 3 or 4m above the August water level.

We saw the opening of Grotte Valerie (off-limits to visitors), Nahanni's most famous cave out of its more than 200. This one boasts 2km of passages and caverns. Four separate passages were formed as water drained downward from sinkholes in the Nahanni Plateau's limestone, one of which contains ancient skeletons of nearly 100 Dall sheep, some over 2,000 years old. Over time, the four passages have merged gradually into one.

Other caves are up to 16km long and extend north into the plateau's karst landforms. (Karst is an irregular limestone region marked by gullies, sinkholes, caverns, and underground streams.) Nahanni karst is "one of the best examples of karst landforms in the world", and one reason for the park's World Heritage Site designation.

Kraus Hot Springs, with one spring a man-made 35°C pool on the riverbank, was the group's 5th campsite. The hot springs got its name from Gus and Mary Kraus who resided here intermittently from 1940 to 1971. The check-in cabin there is the Kraus's old generator shack. Breakfast the next morning (air temperature 15°C) was hot coffee, porridge, and cheese and cinnamon rolls, all cooked on a portable firebox fuelled with briquettes, and drift wood found on the gravel bar.

Back with Richard: from Kraus Hot Springs they rafted 60km through the broad valley and flood plains of the SNR past the Nahanni Butte (1,396m high), and on to the Village of Nahannie Butte, where their river trip ended. The mean river gradient there was 1.1m/km, with no rapids. Images showed clay river banks, slumps, and the highest gravel pile on the whole trip. At a section known as The Splits the river became a braid of shallow channels; the guides' knowledge here was crucial. On this lower part of the river, the group left the Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada, which will remain a reserve until its boundaries have been firmly established following completion of native land claims. (When these ongoing negotiations between the federal government and First Nations people conclude, the park could end up being nearly 40,000km<sup>2</sup>.)

At the 6th and final campsite (air temperature 14°C), there were screened houses for protection from mosquitoes and rain, and lots of gear from dismantled rafts. Images showed one of these being washed, folded, and carried to a waiting barge. The power barges and a boat, owned and piloted by Dene men, had arrived for the group's pick up; the Dene have lived and travelled throughout the area for over 5,000 years. Their contact with Europeans came with

the fur trade after 1822.

The barges were loaded with everyone's gear, and off the group went to Blackstone Territorial Park and the Liard Highway, 40km down the SNR and the Liard River. The group power-boated to the village of Nahanni Butte. At the village waterfront, there was an information kiosk about Dene culture, a store, Band Office, and a Wolverine Air plane, ready for the 45-minute, 90-mile flight back to Fort Simpson.

The meeting place of the Liard and Mackenzie Rivers in Fort Simpson is also the meeting place of the Dene First Nation. The rivers' junction became a focal point for the fur trade between the Dene and the Hudson's Bay Company. Also, it has always been important to the spiritual life of the Dene, and still is as indicated by Pope John Paul II's visit in 1987. Sports events are held here too.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System was established in 1984 to give national recognition to important rivers in Canada. A cooperative program between the federal and provincial/territorial governments, it conserves the features and heritage values of significant rivers. Rivers included must be outstanding in one or more areas: human history, natural history, and/or recreational value. Also, the river must be managed to protect and enhance it for the benefit of future Canadians. Of the 30 designated Canadian rivers, two are in Nova Scotia – the Shelburne River (1997), and the Margaree-Lake Ainslie River (1998). Currently, the Ottawa River is being considered.

Many thanks to Grace and Richard for a really great presentation.



**WILD NOVA SCOTIA** — **3 FEB.**  
— Lillian Risley

Len Wagg's work with the Chronicle Herald since 1984 has taken him to many parts of the globe, and as well, his photographs have appeared in many magazines and newspapers all over the world. Len grew up in the Annapolis Valley and now makes his home in Wellington, near Fall River.

Len Wagg has been taking spectacular photographs of Nova Scotia for more than 20 years, from high in the air to the level of a bullfrog's nose. His book of aerial photographs, Nova Scotia Landmarks: Portrait of a Province from the Air, was published in 2004, and his 2007 book, Wild Nova Scotia, won the Award for Excellence in Illustration at the 2008 Atlantic book Awards. Len drew on his collections of photographs to give us an overview of what can be found in Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas.

Nova Scotia began designating Wilderness Areas in 1998 and, to date, about 8.7% of the province has been protected in 33 Wilderness Areas, chosen because of their significant geological and archaeological features and the flora and fauna present. Len decided to visit all 33 areas currently designated in order to make a pictorial record and these pictures became the source for the Wild Nova Scotia book. He described for us the tremendous variety of terrain to be found in the Wilderness Areas: mountains; canyons (Aspy River); bogs; beaches; rivers; lakes; ocean coastal area; forests; rocky outcrops; and salt flats. Diver-

sity is there to be found. A list of the wilderness areas and a map showing them can be found at the Dept. of Environment website, [www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas/map.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/protectedareas/map.asp). Len spent a total of 100 days on this project – hiking, snowshoeing, kayaking, rowing, camping, flying, and – taking pictures.

While the staff of the Dept of Environment have done a good job of selecting and promoting the Wilderness Areas, there are some problems. Wilderness Areas prohibit logging and mining and the use of mechanical equipment. However, the lands surrounding them are often so heavily exploited that, with the relatively small size of some of the protected areas, the viability of the threatened wildlife populations that are found in them is doubtful. Also there are no resources to patrol the Wilderness Areas and activities such as the operation of ATV's have been found to spoil them, with vegetation destroyed and debris left behind.

A number of the sites are contiguous with Wildlife Sanctuaries. Unfortunately, while this sounds like a good thing, there is often more approved tree cutting in Wildlife Sanctuaries than takes place in the surrounding 'unprotected' areas. Despite these drawbacks, it was heartening to hear that at least some progress is being made and those of us who were able to attend the showing were given lots of reason to go out there and see these natural treasures.



It has become a tradition that HFN Annual General Meeting nights finish up with a selection of photographic presentations by HFN members and meeting attendees. After the AGM concluded, the evening featured stunning pictures from Nova Scotia and around the world by seven presenters.

Well-known photographer Keith Vaughn led off the presentations with a half dozen of his favourite images of Nova Scotia. He began with a strikingly constructed multiple exposure with a field of tulips in the foreground and a forest rising behind. The image was actually a blending of the beauty of flowers in the Halifax Public Gardens and a forest scene from Kejimikujik National Park. Several of Keith's images featured early morning mist in Kejimikujik and along the South Shore. He also showed stunning sunrises and sunsets, and finished with a remarkably composed picture of split rail farm fences and fields in the morning light near Smiley's Provincial Park.

Richard Beazley was next with his presentation entitled "Autumn Reflections 2008". This featured his excellent photographs of Big Dam Lake, Heber Meadow Brook, and Rogers Brook in Kejimikujik Park; West Dover and Welsh Lake on the south shore; and McIntosh Run in the Halifax area. Richard began with a canoe photograph to demonstrate what he describes as his favourite method of travel. His pictures took us from early to late Autumn and from early morning to sunset. They often featured the shoreline merging of water, land and sky, and the mirrored reflection of trees and clouds in the water. His pictures move from just a hint of autumn colour, to the striking red of huckleberry bushes on granite outcrops, then to a first dusting of snow.

The rocky shoreline of Newfoundland's Tor Bay was the subject of Richard Ballard's series of images. Richard got some remarkable pictures of the Caplin coming in to spawn along the beach; the great dark mass of fish could be seen just off shore. He also captured whales wheeling in the surf to feast on the bounty of fish, as well as shorebirds, and a magnificent grounded iceberg.

From Newfoundland our journey moved on to South America. John Carpenter gave us a look at his recent trip the Pantanal region in west central Brazil, the largest tropical wetlands in the world at 75,000<sup>2</sup> miles, and a UNESCO Heritage Site. John captured excellent images of this beautiful area and its unique animals – a Giant Anteater; Capybara (the world's largest rodent); a Ring-tailed Coati; and a Caiman alligator. He also captured some excellent pictures of birds, including the tiny Potoo (Nightjar family); several species of parrots including the endangered Blue Hyacinth Macaw; a Black Skimmer (a tern); a Roseate Spoonbill; a Red-legged Seriama (the last extant member of the Cariamiidae); a Rufescent Tiger Heron; a Jabiru Stork; a hawk; and a Crimson-crested Woodpecker.

Karen McKendry brought us back to Nova Scotia with photographs from Young Naturalists Club (YNC) events. Karen founded the Young Naturalists Club several years ago, and it has been a great success since. She featured images of her young naturalists visiting Hope for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Rescue Centre, in Seaforth Nova Scotia, interacting with several animals including a young Pine Marten. Also included were several photographs taken by young naturalists themselves using the club's donated digital cameras. Karen's shots also showed the enthusiasm and keen attention of the young participants at YNC speaker presentation.

Bob McDonald took us away again, to give us just a taste of the beginning of his and wife Wendy's trip to the South Atlantic. Bob covered their arrival in Ushuaia Argentina at the very southern tip of South America. He showed some of the local flowers and birds including striking black and white Rock Cormorants, also Kelp gulls, not unlike our local Black-backed Gulls. Some pictures were of their cruise across the Beagle channel, one of the most notoriously storm-tossed waterways in the world. He included several images from the Falkland Islands – Black-browed Albatross, endangered Rock Hopper Penguins, and the stark beauty of the tussock grass meadows on these rocky islands.

Burkhard Plache finished our night with photographs from a recent trip to New Zealand. He noted that it's largely a 'bird island' with no native mammal species, so he focused on those, both native and naturalised. He included some species of gulls – the Karoro (*Larus dominicanus*), and Silver- (*Larus novaehollandiae*) and Black-billed (*Larus bulleri*) gulls, and we also saw a Karuhiruhi or Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax varius*). Several ducks were also featured, including those with such wonderful names as the Putangitangi or Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna vari gata*) and the Papango or New Zealand Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*). As well, there were Mallard and Canada Geese, well-known to North Americans. The Kereru or New Zealand Pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), Weka (*Gallirallus australis*), and mischievous green parrot, the Kea (*Nestor notabilis*), were other native birds shown, in addition to introduced species such as the California Quail (*Callipepla californica*).



# FIELD TRIPS

## SEWER STROLL

– Bob McDonald

**Date:** Sunday, February 8th

**Place:** Around Halifax Harbour

**Weather:** Overcast; mild (4°C), little wind

**Interpreter:** Suzanne Borkowski, Bob McDonald

**Participants:** ± 30



Suzanne and I led the new, jointly-combined Harbour Hop/Annual Sewer Stroll for the Nova Scotia Bird Society and the Halifax Field Naturalists respectively. Participants included both experienced birders and beginners and they came from across the Province and beyond: HRM, Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne, Colchester, and Annapolis Counties, as well as New Brunswick and as far away as Colorado!

Despite predictions of a major rain/snow storm, the weather remained nearly perfect until about 4:00 p.m. Viewing conditions were great. Our sightings at McCormack's Beach were a preview for a wonderful day, and close in we saw the usual three gull species along with several Iceland and one Glaucous Gull. Further out were Red-breasted Mergansers, Black Guillemots in their subtle winter attire, White-winged Scoters, and a few Black Scoters mixed in. One lone Canada Goose, several Common Loons, and, near the shore of Lawlor's Island, a Red-necked Grebe were observed. Enroute to Hartlen's Point, in Eastern Passage, a flock of Common Eider was seen; then a pair of Surf Scoters flew by. A stop at a roadside pond added Northern Pintail to the tally.

At Hartlen's, a Northern Harrier was hunting over Devil's Island but no Rough-legged Hawks or Snowy Owls were seen. Wintering ducks included Long-tailed Duck and Common Goldeneye. American Pipits and Lapland Longspurs were feeding on the kelp beds while a flock of Snow Buntings flew behind us over the golf course.

After the obligatory pit-stop at Tim's, we proceeded on to Dartmouth Cove where we had good looks at Greater and Lesser Scaup and at least two Barrow's Goldeneye amongst a flock of Common Goldeneye. At Sullivan's Pond, we saw a few American Wigeon and two each of American Coot and Common Merganser. Suddenly, all the resting gulls took off and we looked around to see a Bald Eagle float leisurely by.



Tuft's Cove gave us good views of Bufflehead (ducks) and a few Great Cormorants perched on a buoy.

Enroute to Bedford, our caravan stopped for a large flock of Bohemian Waxwings. When Suzanne and I arrived at the usual stop at the mouth of the Sackville River, we were informed that we had just missed the fly-by Merlin! But, we did note the Mute Swan keeping company with Mallards and Black Ducks. (This could become a 'countable' bird one day!)

While things were rather quiet at the Mill Cove outflow, there was a lot of activity at the end of Arthur Lismer Court just off Convoy Ave. There, the Northern Mockingbird perched nearby, along with an American Robin and several Cedar Waxwings, an unusual species in winter. Several of us heard the distinctive call (song?) of a Northern Cardinal but couldn't see the bird.

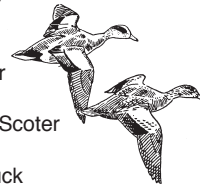
By this time, our numbers were dwindling and the weather was deteriorating so we hurried along for our last few stops. Jean Hartley's feeders in Rockingham were still hosting the Gray Catbird, and the greater White-



fronted Goose was very obliging at Horseshoe Island in the Northwest Arm. Our final species for the day was the female King Eider (Queen Eider?) at Point Pleasant Park (in the steady rain!) And so concluded a most enjoyable and productive (59 species!) field trip – a great group, good weather for the most part, and some terrific birds!

## SEWER STROLL SPECIES

Great White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>
American Black Duck	<i>A. ribripes</i>
Mallard	<i>A. platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>A. acuta</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Lesser Scaup	<i>A. affinis</i>
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
Common Eider	<i>S. mollissima</i>
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>
White-winged Scoter	<i>M. fusca</i>
Black Scoter	<i>M. niger</i>
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>
Common Goldeneye	<i>B. clangula</i>
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>B. islandica</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>M. serrator</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Red-necked Grebe (Dorothy Poole)	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
Herring Gull	<i>L. argentatus</i>
Iceland Gull	<i>L. glaucooides</i>
Glaucous Gull	<i>L. hyperboreus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>L. marinus</i>
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columbia livia</i>
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
Red-bellied Woodpecker (D. Hippern)	<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>P. villosus</i>
Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>
White-breasted Nuthatch (heard only)	<i>S. carolinensis</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Grey Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
American Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>
Cedar Waxwing	<i>B. cedrorum</i>
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
Northern Cardinal (heard only)	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
American Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis tristis</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
	<b>Total: 59 species</b>



# ALMANAC



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.

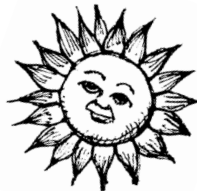
“We tell ourselves, ‘The birds are flocking back, the sky has grown soft and luminous, the air is warming, the rains have gentled. This is spring!’ We should know better [...]”

– Evelyn Richardson, “Can Spring Be Far Behind?” in *Living Island* (1965)

## NATURAL EVENTS

- 20 Mar.** Vernal Equinox at 08:44 ADT: Spring begins in the Northern hemisphere.
- 23 Mar.** Daily average temperature rises above 0°C.
- 9 Apr.** Full Moon. Moonrise at 20:23.
- 16 Apr.** The daily minimum temperature at Shearwater is above 0°C.
- 22 Apr.** Earth Day.
- 26 Apr.** The Pleiades, Mercury, and the crescent Moon will appear together in the early night sky.
- early May** Venus will be bright in the predawn sky.
- 9 May** Full Moon. Moonrise at 21:34.
- 9 May** North American Migration Count Day.
- 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.** World Oceans Day.
- 9 Jun.** Full Moon. Moonrise at 21:23.
- 14-16 Jun.** The earliest mornings of the year: Sun rises at 5:28.
- 21 Jun.** Summer Solstice at 02:45. Summer begins in the Northern hemisphere: the longest day of the year, with 15 hours and 34 minutes of daylight at Halifax.
- 22-30 Jun.** The latest evenings of the year: Sun sets at 21:04.
- 23-25 Jun.** Moon at close perigee; large tides for several days.

## SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER SATURDAYS FOR HALIFAX: 44 39 N, 063 36 W



<b>7 Mar.</b>	6:41	18:10	<b>4 Apr.</b>	6:50	19:46
<b>14 Mar.</b>	7:28	19:19	<b>11 Apr.</b>	6:37	19:55
<b>21 Mar.</b>	7:15	19:28	<b>18 Apr.</b>	6:25	20:03
<b>28 Mar.</b>	7:02	19:37	<b>25 Apr.</b>	6:13	20:12
<b>2 May</b>	6:03	20:21	<b>6 Jun.</b>	5:30	20:57
<b>9 May</b>	5:53	20:29	<b>13 Jun.</b>	5:29	21:01
<b>16 May</b>	5:45	20:37	<b>20 Jun.</b>	5:29	21:03
<b>23 May</b>	5:38	20:45	<b>27 Jun.</b>	5:31	21:04
<b>30 May</b>	5:33	20:51			

– Sources: Atmospheric Environment Service, Climate Normals 1951-80 Halifax (Shearwater A) N.S.; Blomidon Naturalists Society’s 2009 Calendar; United States Naval Observatory Data Services.

## ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS

**Blomidon Naturalists Society:** Indoor meetings are the 3rd Monday of the month, in the auditorium of The K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, University Avenue, Wolfville, 7:30 p.m. Field trips usually depart from the Wolfville Waterfront, Front Street, Wolfville. <http://www.blomidonnaturalists.ca/>.

- 21 Mar.** “Along the Fundy Shore”, with leader Wayne Neily, 902-765-2455; [neilyornis@hotmail.com](mailto:neilyornis@hotmail.com).
- 18 Apr.** “Pond Life Through a Microscope”, with leaders Todd Smith, [todd.smith@acadiau.ca](mailto:todd.smith@acadiau.ca), and H el ene D’Entremont, Department of Biology, Acadia University.
- 20 Apr.** “...The Impact of Tidal Power Generation on Marine Organisms”, with speaker Mike Dadswell, Acadia University.
- 25 Apr.** “Herbert River Canoe Trip”, with leader Patrick Kelly, 472-2322; [patrick.kelly@dal.ca](mailto:patrick.kelly@dal.ca).
- 25 Apr.** “Earth Day Native Plant Sale”, Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens, Acadia University, 9:00 a.m - 12:00 p.m.
- 26 Apr.** “Early Spring Birds”, with leader Jim Wolford, 902-452-9204; [jimwolford@eastlink.ca](mailto:jimwolford@eastlink.ca).
- 18 May** To be announced.
- 23 May** “Blomidon Provincial Park”, with leader Jim Wolford, 902-452-9204; [jimwolford@eastlink.ca](mailto:jimwolford@eastlink.ca).
- 15 Jun.** A talk by Marian Munro, Curator of Botany at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History.

**Burke-Gaffney Observatory:** Public shows at the Burke-Gaffney Observatory at Saint Mary's University are held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, except from June through September when they are held every Saturday. Tours begin at 7:00 p.m. between November 1st and March 30th, and at either 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. (depending on when it gets dark) between April 1st and October 31st. Phone 496-8257; or go to <http://apwww.stmarys.ca/bgo/>.

**Friends of McNabs Island:** <http://www.mcnabsisland.ca/>

**Nature Nova Scotia (formerly the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists):** <http://www.naturens.ca/>

**13-14 Jun.** "Nature Nova Scotia AGM", Grand Pré National Historic Site.

**Nova Scotia Bird Society:** Indoor meetings take place on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to April, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. Phone Suzanne Borkowski, 445-2922; or go to <http://nsbs.chebucto.org/>.

**26 Mar.** "Why Bird Migration in Nova Scotia is So Interesting", with speaker Dr. Ian McLaren.

**28 Mar.** "Baccaro & Blanche Peninsula", with leader Donna Ensor, 875-4269; [smokeytow@yahoo.ca](mailto:smokeytow@yahoo.ca).

**4 Apr.** "Martinique Beach", with leader Ian McLaren, 429-7024; [iamclar@dal.ca](mailto:iamclar@dal.ca).

**23 Apr.** "...Magnificent Migrations of the Greater Shearwater", with speaker Dr. Rob Ronconi.

**25 Apr.** "Beginning Birders Trip (Halifax)" with leaders Bonnie Carmichael, 477-9945; [bonniecarmichael@hotmail.com](mailto:bonniecarmichael@hotmail.com), and Gail Bruhm, [gcbuhrm@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:gcbuhrm@ns.sympatico.ca). **Pre-registration is necessary!**

**25 Apr.** "Beginning Birders Trip (Annapolis Valley)" with leader Wayne Neily, 765-2455; [neilyornis@hotmail.com](mailto:neilyornis@hotmail.com). **Pre-registration is necessary!**

**26 Apr.** "Wolfville Area", with leader Jim Wolford, 542-9204; [jimwolford@eastlink.ca](mailto:jimwolford@eastlink.ca).

**2 May** "Cape Sable Island", with leader Murray Newell, 745-3340; [dowitcher@eastlink.ca](mailto:dowitcher@eastlink.ca).

**9 May** "Spring Migration Count", Contact Hans Toom, 868-1862; [htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:htoom@hfx.eastlink.ca), to participate.

**15-18 May** "Bon Portage Island", with leader Claire Diggins, 825-6152; [claire\\_diggins@hotmail.com](mailto:claire_diggins@hotmail.com). **Pre-registration is necessary!**

**16 May** "Beginning Birders Trip (Halifax)", with leader Suzanne Borkowski, 445-2922; [suzanneborkowski@yahoo.ca](mailto:suzanneborkowski@yahoo.ca). **Pre-registration is necessary!**

**18 May** "Historic Hants County", with leader Suzanne Borkowski, 445-2922; [suzanneborkowski@yahoo.ca](mailto:suzanneborkowski@yahoo.ca).

**20 May** "The Fred Dobson Warbler Walk", with leader Joan Waldron, 477-4273; [waldrojo@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:waldrojo@ns.sympatico.ca).

**23 May** "Port L'Hébert", leaders Dorothy Poole, 354-4844; [dpoolex@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:dpoolex@ns.sympatico.ca), and Clyde Stoddart, 745-2105.

**24 May** **Rain date 31 May.** "Conquerall Mills", with leader James Hirtle, 766-4642; [jrhbirder@hotmail.com](mailto:jrhbirder@hotmail.com).

**30/31 May** "Out-of-Area Meeting/Atlas Workshop", speakers Becky Stewart (Coordinator), Patrick Kelly, and Paul Gould.

**30 May** "Kejimikujik Seaside Adjunct", with leaders Gary Hartlen, 354-7250; [garych@eastlink.ca](mailto:garych@eastlink.ca), and Peter Davies, 354-5389; [p.davies@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:p.davies@ns.sympatico.ca).

**31 May** "Beginning Birders Trip (Truro)", with leader Ross Hall, 893-9665; [ross.hall@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:ross.hall@ns.sympatico.ca).

**6 Jun.** "Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary", with leader Kathleen Spicer, 392-2815; [kbspicer@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:kbspicer@ns.sympatico.ca).

**6 Jun.** "Beginning Birders Trip (Mid. Musquodoboit)", with leader Verna Higgins, 384-2286; [vjhiggins@xplornet.com](mailto:vjhiggins@xplornet.com).

**13 Jun. Rain date 14 Jun.** "Herbert River Trail", leader Patrick Kelly, 494-3294(w) 472-2322(h); [patrick.kelly@dal.ca](mailto:patrick.kelly@dal.ca).

**20 Jun.** "Shubenacadie", with leader Rob Woods, 261-2122; [rtrwoods@yahoo.com](mailto:rtrwoods@yahoo.com). **Pre-registration is necessary!**

**27 Jun.** "Beginning Birders Workshop and Trip (Parrsboro)", with leader Joan Czapalay; [joancz@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:joancz@ns.sympatico.ca). or call 1-866-856-DINO. **Pre-registration is necessary!**

**28 Jun.** "Beginning Birders Workshop and Trip (Port Greville)", with leader Joan Czapalay; [joancz@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:joancz@ns.sympatico.ca), or call 1-902-348-2030. **Pre-registration is necessary!**

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

**1 Feb. -31 May** "Ice Age Mammals", an exhibit produced by the Canadian Museum of Nature.

**11 Feb.** "Secrets in Your Backyard Boulders", with presenter Dr John Gosse, Earth Sciences, Dalhousie University.

**TBA Apr.** "Salamander Meander". **Pre-registration required starting March 21.** Phone 424-3563.

**1 Apr.** "Discovering Arctic Alpine Shorebirds in Beringia" with presenter Laurel Mclvor, Museum of Natural History.

**15 Apr.** "Ice Age to Climate Change/Shubenacadie Waterway" with presenter Dr. Ned King, Geo. Survey of Canada.

**22 Apr.** "Climate Catastrophe: A 1000-year Cold Snap" with presenter Rudolf R. Stea, DNR

**7 Jun.** "BioBlitz 2009" in the Blue Mountain/Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area; [www.smu.ca/bioblitz](http://www.smu.ca/bioblitz).

**8-19 Jun.** "Know Farms, Know Food/Sustainable Living": Dept. of Agriculture; EAC; NS Young Farmers' Forum; 4H.

**20 Jun.** "Bat Walk at Smiley's Provincial Park" with Museum Zoologist Andrew Hebda. **Pre-registration required!**; call 424-3563.

**Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society:** Meets 4th Monday of the month, September to May, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. Phone Heather Drope, 423-7032, or go to <http://www.nswildflora.ca/>.

**27 Apr.** "Annual General Meeting", then "Alpine Flowers of the Swiss Alps", with speaker Shirley McIntyre.

**Nova Scotian Institute of Science:** Meets 1st Monday of the month, September to April, usually at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information go to <http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Science/NSIS/index.html>.

**6 Apr.** "To bee or not to bee - threats to pollinators ...in Nova Scotia", with speaker Dick Rogers, Wild Wood Laboratories.

**Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Halifax Chapter):** Meets 3rd Friday of each month in Room L176 of the Loyola Academic Building, Saint Mary's University, 8:00 p.m. <http://halifax.rasc.ca/>.



– compiled by Patricia L. Chalmers



## Nature Notes

### January

Nature notes began with Janet Dalton's report of a puffed-against-the-cold **Robin** in a tree in her backyard. A dozen robins were observed in Point Pleasant Park by David Patriquin, 20 on Kirk Road by Regine. David Chaisson reported a **Snowy Owl** at Pennant Point and another at Chebucto Head, and four **Hooded Mergansers** in Ketch Harbour. A few days earlier he recorded his life Hooded Merganser in fresh water. On three December days, the 7th, 21st, and 26th, Lesley Butters observed a **Winter Wren** feeding perkily in a treed part of Point Pleasant Park. Winter Wrens breed throughout the province, and while sightings to about the 10th of December are common, sightings after that date are uncommon. There are very few reports of Winter Wrens surviving Nova Scotia winters. **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, **Black-capped Chickadees**, **Goldfinches**, and **Purple Finches** fed at Lesley's home feeding station, while **three Robins** consumed the holly berries in her Christmas decoration. A **White-throated Sparrow** may have been there too. She also watched a **skein of Canada Geese** flying down the Northwest Arm. Around 7:00 p.m. one evening Stephanie Robertson heard geese flying over her home near Point Pleasant Park. She also reported **seals** on the Hens and Chickens Shoals of the park and a possible **Pine Warbler** at her feeder. Lillian Risley enjoyed close-up views of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Black-capped Chickadees** as they fed from her hand in Point Pleasant. Karen McKendry watched one male and three female **Red-breasted Mergansers** as she canoed across the Northwest Arm. A **White-fronted Goose** has been seen on and near Horseshoe Island in the Northwest Arm. Ingrid and Burkhard Plache observed a noisy male **Pileated Woodpecker** at Uniacke Estate Museum Park.

– Bernice Moores

### February

Karen McKendry spotted seven **Red-breasted Mergansers** in the Northwest Arm; five were female, and two were male. Joan Czapalay reported that **Monarch Butterflies** were being traced on their journeys north. She had also seen some bulbs coming up. Jack Workington saw a **Robin** perched on a maple tree beside his front porch, on the 15th of January. Regine Maass reported that the **White-fronted Goose** from Greenland that has been seen on Horseshoe Island has also been spotted at the Dingle. Shirley McIntyre, a week before the February meeting, saw six or seven **White-winged Crossbills** in Hemlock Ravine, both male and female. Katlinga also spotted a Robin. Bob McDonald saw many Robins everywhere. They like apple, globe grapes, blueberries, and currants; they *don't* like raisins! Peter Webster observed a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** in a Hawthorne tree in the SMU quad; one Robin had joined them in their feast. Janet Dalton noted that **Bohemian Waxwings** have a rust patch above their tails, and that they are more prevalent than the Cedar Waxwings. Also, Cedar Waxwings migrate, while Bohemians do not. Stephanie Robertson spotted some **Red-breasted Mergansers** off Point Pleasant, and a Robin in a Hawthorne there as well. Her sighting of a **Pine Warbler** at her suet feeder in January was confirmed by a park user who feeds them there every morning (she lives near the park). Lesley Butters saw six **Pine Siskins** at her 'makeshift' feeders; her neighbour has a 'real' feeder, but they won't go there, they prefer her feeders constructed in a hole in her fence. She also reported a Robin with 'the runs' feeding on a Cox's Orange apple, and an avian fight between six **Starlings** and one Robin; the Robin won! She also saw one **Dovekie** in her neighbourhood. Judy Keating saw two Robins in her backyard and another in Glenhaven on an open area on the ice.

– Jennifer McRuer

### NEXT DEADLINE

21st of May for the June Issue

Send contributions to 'Newsletter', c/o NS Museum of Natural History, or email submissions to [sdhaythorn@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:sdhaythorn@ns.sympatico.ca)