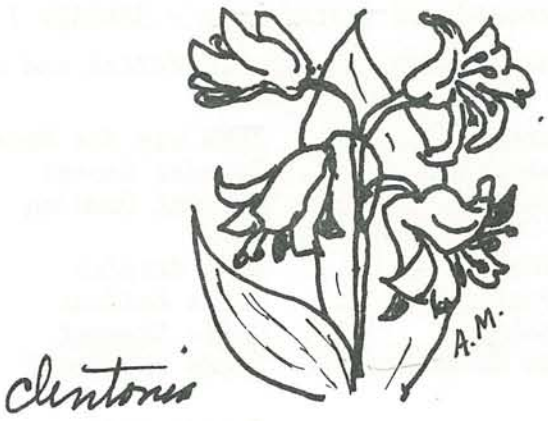
Halifax Field Naturalists Newsletter

DECEMBER 1984 - FEBRUARY 1985 No. 38



ılifax Field Naturalists
'o Nova Scotia Museum
'47 Summer St., Halifax, N.S. B3H 3A6

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MEETINGS: *First Thursday of every month at 8.00 pm in the Auditorium of the Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax.*

FIELD TRIPS: *are held at least once a month *** It would be appreciated if those travelling in someone else's car on field trips share the cost of gas.*

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 Chairman, Halifax Field Naturalists. c/o N.S. Museum.*

Individual memberships	*$7.00 per year*
Family "	*$10.00 " "*
Sustaining "	*$15.00 " "*

This covers our fiscal year - JANUARY 1 to DECEMBER 31.

Members receive the HFN Newsletter and notices of all meetings, field trips and special programs.

EXECUTIVE: 1985 :	*President*	*John van der Meer*	*(r) 455-1029*	*(o) 426-8276*
	Treasurer	*Bernice Moores*	*(r) 422-5292*	*(o) 445-2500*
	Secretary	*Michael Downing*	*(r) 823-2081*	
(Directors):	*Vice-President*	*Edna Staples*	*(r) 868-2919*	*(o) 424-2464*
	Past-President	*Doris Butters*	*(r) 463-0033*	
	Membership	*Colin Stewart*	*(r) 455-6576*	
	Program Co-ordinator.	*Filip Volckaert*	*(r) 479-1095*	
		Connie Eaton		
		Ricki Garrett		
		Ursula Grigg		
		David Lawley		
		Regina Maas		
NEWSLETTER:	*Editor*	*Doris Butters*	*(r) 463-0033*	
		Edna Staples		
		Ricki Garrett		

MAILING ADDRESS: *Halifax Field Naturalists*
c/o Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, N.S., B3H 3A6

HFN is a member organisation of the Canadian Nature Federation.
HFN is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act.
HFN NEWSLETTER is produced by courtesy of the Nova Scotia Museum

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

The past year has been an active one for the Halifax Field Naturalists. Like any year there were highs and lows, but overall, it was another successful effort for the club. There was a full schedule of monthly meetings with slide-illustrated talks on a variety of subjects, both entertaining (eg. an armchair visit to New Zealand, underwater photography, and members' slide night), and informative (eg. freshwater pollution, parks management, and seals in the Maritimes). We also had our most ambitious program of outings ever, ranging from an indoor visit to the Maritime Weather Office to an outdoor weekend at Kejimkujik National Park. Last fall's geology walk to the Minas Basin had to be one of the finest November days ever recorded!. Something new this year was a mid-winter visit to McNab's Island, organized by members of HFN but held in concert with other groups. There was far too much to mention it all, but I do want to thank, on behalf of the HFN, all the people who gave of their time and expertise to lead our outings and present the talks. I also want to give a special vote of thanks to our Program Co-ordinator, Filip Volckaert, for a job well done. Thanks are also due to the refreshment committee for preparing the tea and cookies that help create the friendly ambience after the meetings.

The Newsletter has continued to be the club's most important contact with our members. It was published four times in the past year, almost always on time, although there was an occasional scramble. The editor, Doris Butters, and her helpers have well earned the thanks of the club. In this connection I also want to thank the Nova Scotia Museum for its support in printing the Newsletter and in providing the auditorium for our meetings.

At the Executive level there has been a noticeable change from recent years. Much more of the responsibility and work has been passed from the President to other members of the Executive than was the case in the past several years. The Executive meetings have become more structured and although that has subtracted from the easy informality of past years, we now have records of what transpired, which has to benefit the club in the long run. I believe these have been important changes that will help assure a healthy club in the future. At this time I want to thank all the other executive members for making the President's job so easy this year.

I am hoping that it will be possible to take another step towards decentralisation by involving a larger number of members in the running of the club. Much of what the Executive now does could be done as well or better by interested members with a little spare time on their hands. By spreading the work we can do more and we can do it more effectively.

Our membership went into a somewhat alarming decline during the past year, and not all of it was due to paring lapsed memberships from the mailing list. It appears this decline has turned around and we are again near 150 members. That number is still far below our potential for an area the size of Halifax-Dartmouth and I urge you to continue to keep a lookout for possible new members.

During the summer there was also a sharp drop in the attendance for outings, which in a few cases bordered on the embarrassing. This, too, appears to have changed with excellent turnouts in the past few months.

As we approach this year's annual meeting I sense an increased desire for involvement on the part of the membership, and there is every prospect that more people will seek executive positions than there are positions to fill. A better sign of our members' interest in maintaining a strong, active club would be hard to find.

All things considered, I think it is fair to say that the club is entering its second decade in very good shape.

John van der Meer

Halifax Field Naturalists
Statement of Receipts and Disbursements
For the Year Ended December 31, 1984

Receipts

Membership dues	$1,059.00
Interest income	94.79
Total receipts	$1,153.79

Disbursements

Meeting expense	$ 95.29
Publications and stationery	133.98
Postage	355.99
Dues - Can. Nature Federation	25.00
Donation - Can. Nature Federation	25.00
Bank charges	27.45
Projects - Science Fair Prizes	45.90
	$ 708.61
Excess of Receipts over Disbursements	$ 445.18
Add - Opening balance, January 1, 1984	1,501.47
Surplus Account Balance, December 31, 1984	$1,946.65

Consisting of:

Petty cash fund	$ 25.00
Bank Current Account, December 31, 1984	70.12
Bank Savings Account, December 31, 1984	1,851.53
	$1,946.65

Signed Bessie A. Shore
Treasurer

Accountant's Comments

I have prepared the above Statement of Receipts and Disbursements of Halifax Field Naturalists for the year ended December 31, 1984, from the records of the Society and information supplied to me by its officers.

A. W. Linton, F.C.A.

Halifax, Nova Scotia
February 8, 1985

hfn news

A LETTER FROM THE GREENES -

Those who missed The Greenes during their Christmas visit to Halifax may be interested in catching up on Erick and Anne's recent activities. Anne wrote me a lovely, long, newsy letter in November, which in part describes their visit to Arizona from March to September last year.

Erick's field work towards his PhD at Princeton took them to the Chicicahua Mountains of south east Arizona, to an area which - though very different from the east - Anne describes as "really lovely". They stayed at the Southwest Research Station run by the American Museum of Natural History. "...located about 5000ft up in the mountains and very luxurious accommodation in any field worker's estimation; good lab facilities, three meals a day, nice cabins and even a swimming pool!"

"...Erick is studying a community of insectivorious birds midway up the mountains in primarily juniper-oak-pine habitat. Many of the birds are very similar in size, feeding habits and diet, and (among other things) Erick is interested in how they all manage together on the resources available. He is doing a lot of insect sampling and identification to determine just what the resources are, but ultimately it's the information about the birds that he is after. What subtle differences in foraging strategies enable these birds to breed at the same time and place - are they taking different species of caterpillars for example?..."

Anne found this part of Arizona to have a "tremendous variety of habitat types and plant and animal species. Below the mountains lies the Chihuahuan Desert. Frequently during the summer the temperature there rose above 100°F. Mesquite, cactus, grasses, yucca and agave are the characteristic plants. At the base of the mountains where the creeks run, there is a lovely riparian habitat, very lush and green, and high in species diversion. Big sycamores and oaks line the creek banks as well as walnuts, birches and maples.... higher you move into a dry, scrub oak-juniper habitat which gives way at the top of the mountains (9000ft) to a northern forest of Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir. So in an hour you can essentially drive from Mexico to Northern British Columbia.

"...lots of wierd and wonderful critters also - five species of skunks, javalina (wild pigs), jack rabbits, coatimundi, Mule and White-tailed Deer, Silver Foxes, puma, Gila Monsters, lots of lizards, snakes, frogs and toads. The diversity of insects and their numbers is mind boggling ..."

Erick left Halifax for a short trip to Kenya early in January - hopefully we will eventually receive interesting news of that aspect of his studies.

Meanwhile, Anne is heavily involved in mothering - "most absorbing work", she says.

Thank you again, Anne, for your great letter. Do keep in touch. Best wishes to all three of you.

Doris Butters.

NEXT DEADLINE -

25 April, 1985, for the MAY issue. Mail contributions to the N.S. Museum, OR phone the Editor at 464-0033.

SHOULD MAN MANIPULATE WILDLIFE? -

(*from CURRENT CONTENTS #37, 10.9.84*)

"A heightened interest in nature and wildlife has caused many environmentalists and naturalists to vociferously oppose what they call 'meddling with nature'... Advocates of hands-on wildlife management point to the many organisms whose declining populations have been arrested or revived by manipulating them or their environments. These include bald eagles, black-footed ferrets, peregrine falcons, ospreys, whooping cranes, bobcats, Arabian oryxes, rare ferns and ladyslippers... One of the most articulate spokesmen for managing nature when crises arise is Russell Peterson, president of the Natl. Audubon Society. In an interview he said: ' Years ago we wanted to let nature take its course - no captive breeding or other artificial actions. But things got so bad that we had to do something about it.' Peterson has on many occasions stated his belief that because humans have created many of the conditions that have endangered or wiped out other species, drastic means were often needed to correct them, a chore, he says, 'that is our responsibility.' Many of those opposed to man's jockeying of wildlife say that the problem of habitat destruction should be addressed before wild creatures themselves are manipulated or bred in captivity... 'Man is poor of understanding the consequences of his actions.' David Brower [founder and chairman of Friends of the Earth] said, 'and he shouldn't try to rearrange what he doesn't understand. There is an intricate balance of life on earth, and pulling pieces out and putting them somewhere else, or rearranging them upsets the earth's biota as a whole.'"

(*Bayard Webster in New York Times, 3 July 1984, p.C3. [pd 3709i]*

THANKING YOU IN ADVANCE -

Another year begins for HFN - let's hope it will prove a pleasant and profitable one for all of us. While thanking all who contributed last year to the Newsletter - by submitting articles, notes, sketches, etc., or turning out and helping manually with the collating, stapling and mailing - your Editor is still asking for contributions.

So long as it is nature-oriented we welcome articles, field trip reports, sightings, nature notes, pen-and-ink drawings, prose and poetry. We need a large and varied Ideas Bank to keep the Newsletter lively and developing in a style to please our esoteric readers. While some members attend meetings, some the field trips, others keep in touch via the Newsletter - hence the need for something to hold the interest of all.

One other thing. THANK YOU also to the Refreshment Committee. Help in that area would also be appreciated so that the onus does not fall too heavily on but one or two people. Call Lesley Butters, Ph: 463-0033 if you are willing to help.

Editor.

PART-TIME STUDIES AT DALHOUSIE -

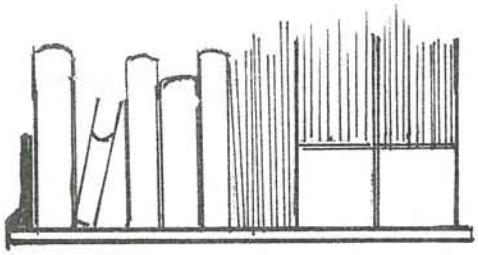
Fish Farming in the Maritimes.

Also being offered is an introductory course on the various forms of aquaculture in the Maritimes, including salmon, trout, oyster and mussel cultivation. This course will appeal to those who have an interest in aquaculture or who might be considering starting a fish farming business. Handouts and follow-up materials will be included and a visit to an oyster farm will be arranged.

Wednesdays - April 3 -24,
Saturdays - TBA;
Fee, including materials, $65.00

Instructor: Chris Corkett, PhD., Biology Dept., Dalhousie University.

Details from Department of Part-Time Studies and Extension, Dalhousie University, 6100 University Avenue, Halifax, N.S., B3H 3J5. phone: 902) 424-2375



on the shelf

Quite a swatch of newsletters from fellow natural history societies came in recently and will be placed on our library shelf in the foyer of the Nova Scotia Museum.

Nature Canada's gorgeous photography is augmented in the December issue by a good feature on the "Rites of the Nature Photographer" written by Freeman Patterson. There's more. Much more.

Catherine Traill Naturalists' Club newsletters contain several interesting items: a report on a trip through the Florida swamps; a delightful description of Mute Swans preening and two informative items on Raptors.

Blomidon Naturalists' Society newsletter - now in a new, compact format - reports on some of their interesting fall trips, and in an article on "Tree Swallows versus House Sparrows", Bernard Forsythe offers some tips on how to outwit the House Sparrow and encourage the Tree Swallow to nest. There is also a good item on the elusive migratory tree bats of Nova Scotia.

Island Naturalist reports on a recent job creation project in Prince Edward Island - a stock assessment of the Atlantic bar/surf Clam (*Spisula solidissima*)"... first part of the global strategy of studying the population dynamics and production of this species in PEI..." with a view to enhancing management and production in the industry.

Saint John Naturalists express their growing concerns regarding tree harvesting practices, and in a short history of fire show the beautiful and devastating aspects of fires.

Nova Scotia Museum's Curatorial Report No.50 - The Hayes Cave Site, South Maitland, Nova Scotia - is now available and a copy has been placed on our library shelf.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS -

Wm. F. Walker
E.A. Dakin ("Al")
John and Evelyn Noble
R. Eaton
L.E. Thompson and R.A. Fensome
N. Buller
Douma Family
Lands & Forests (Dale Smith)
P. Jones
Ernest Adshead
Vivien Frow
Alain and Beth Rankin-Mercier
George and Kathy Taylor
Evelyn MacLeod
The Larsen Family

and welcome back - Capt.John Jenkins

January 3, 1985

HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS
c/o N.S. Museum, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, N. S. B3H 3A6

The Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney,
Prime Minister of Canada,
House of Commons,
Parliament Buildings,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Sir,

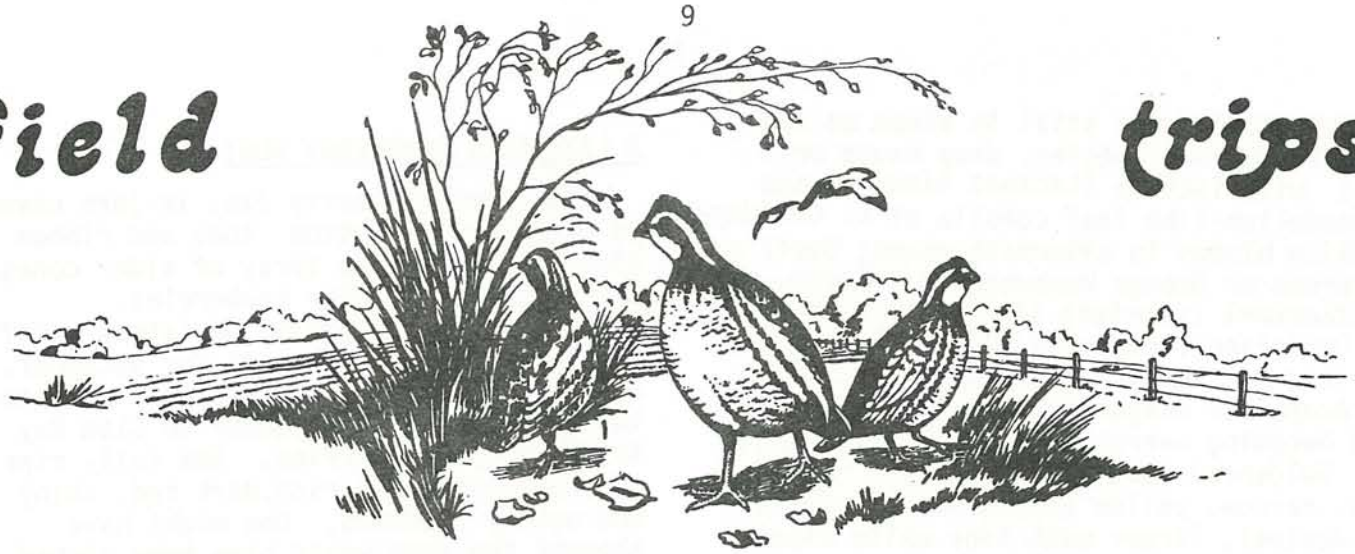
We find it not only unacceptable, but shocking, that the government of Canada would undertake to make such drastic cuts in environmental programs at a time when it is increasingly clear they are badly needed. The whole tone of the recent cuts suggests a strong anti-environment and anti-conservation bias on the part of this government. The depth of the cuts made to the Canadian Wildlife Service is hard to believe and seems particularly harsh. The demise of pollution monitoring programs such as the Herring Gull egg project on the Great Lakes is most shortsighted in view of the current problem of toxic wastes leeching from the Niagara Escarpment into the drinking water of millions of Canadians. Additional examples could be given but these suffice to make the point.

The Halifax Field Naturalists Club is far from a militant organization, but we feel we must add our voice to that of millions of other Canadians who find these recent cutbacks unacceptable. We urge in the strongest possible terms that everything be done to get these actions reconsidered and to make sure that no further cuts are made in environmental areas in the upcoming budget. Surely we do not have to sacrifice our wildlife and environment to balance the books.

Sincerely,

John van der Meer
President, HFN.

field trips



A LATE-SUMMER DAY AT WENTWORTH HOSTEL

Date: Sunday, September 23, 1984
Site: Wentworth Valley in Canadian Youth Hostel area.
Weather: Warm, sunny intervals, with cloud and periodic gusty cool wind.
Leader: Colin Stewart Participants: 5

It was a bright and sunny morning when a small group of Halifax Field Naturalists left for Wentworth.

Our first stop on arrival in the valley was at the Power-Scallion home where Brian was in the process of withdrawing honey from the combs. He demonstrated the de-waxing of the combs and how they were inserted into a centrifuge, and explained all the other steps in the process through to the finished product, ready for market.

As Brian over-winters his bees, they are fed a mixture of glucose and medication to prevent damage and ensure their survival. We were shown a bucket which had been filled with this mixture less than 24 hours before, and noted how it had been depleted by the hungry bees storing up food for the winter. As it was late in the season for bees, they were not in the best of moods at being disturbed when we were shown the inside of a hive and one of the party was stung on the cheek. The sting was promptly removed by Brian, who explained while demonstrating on another bee, why it is important to remove the stinger immediately. If this is not done, the stomach muscles, to which the poison sac is attached, continue to operate thereby pumping venom into the victim.

We left the honey farm with the promise to return to pick up some very fresh honey and continued to the Youth Hostel which was the base for our short expedition.

The hostel was formerly a farm, a fact which is quite evident from the small garden now being cultivated by the house-parent of the hostel, and the surrounding fields and apple trees which have gone wild. The trees were laden with bright red apples which looked better from a distance, but were not in very good condition. Those which were edible tasted quite good, if hard, and made delicious apple sauce.

In the hostel garden we saw a pinky-mauve mallow with two different leaf shapes - some being pale green, rounded and with three broad shallow lobes, others darker with five deeply-cut very narrow lobes (tentatively identified as *Malva alcea*).

For our first walk we went through the open fields, through the woods, crossed the stream and came back along the railway line to the hostel, where we had lunch and a tour of the premises. After lunch we again set out, this time reversing the process, by going through the trees and ending up in a field from which we could see the traffic on the distant highway.

Among the flowers still in bloom we saw asters of various species, deep mauve or white; wild lettuce (*Lactusa biennis*) and the dandelion-like leaf corolla of *L. Canadensis* which blooms in alternate years; Devil's Paintbrush or Orange Hawkweed (*Hieraceum aurantiacium*) Eyebright (*Euphrasia americana*) Fall Dandelion (*Leontodon autumnalis*); Toad Flax (*Linaria vulgaris*) and Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*). In an open field becoming overgrown with White Spruce were Goldenrod (*Solidago puberola*) with short, narrow, yellow spikes and Silverrod (*S. bicolor*), larger with tiny white blooms in clusters spiralling the stem.

The Sensitive Fern was already rusty brown. Other ferns seen were Beech Fern, Interrupted Fern, Xmas Fern, small Woodland Fern and extremely tall bracken.

Among the many species of fungus was one about 2-3" tall, of bright yellow, narrow tubes with red tip.

Other items of interest included Baneberry, shiny white with black eyes on short bright red stalks; small bush rose with every leaf crimped and twisted (aphids - Barry); beeches suffering from canker; a pile of sawdust at the foot of an old spruce with a deep split in the broken, ragged bark and much resin trickling down the trunk (carpenter ants have hollowed out the inside - Barry); and an old deer antler, dried and a little mossy.

The field maples were already turned, showing bright patches of red among the dark green of the coniferous trees. There was very little bird life, in fact, we only saw one robin on top of a power pole and a Pileated Woodpecker.

On our final return to the hostel we made use of the education room in an attempt to identify some of the trees from their bark. We found the hostel to be a very useful centre for our very brief expedition, and as Colin mentioned, they are in much need of funds, most of their income coming in during the winter, from the skiers at Wentworth.

We had a very interesting day which was not in the least taxing and perhaps other walks can be arranged for the same area.

Elizabeth Surette.

A LATE FALL CRANBERRY HUNT -

Apple and Cranberry Jam, in jars covered with gingham cotton tops and ribbon ties trimmed with a spray of alder cones or a cluster of tiny bayberries. Sound like an attractive Christmas gift? That was Bernice's project for December, and to that end three of us went off on the last Sunday in November to Clam Bay to look for Cranberries. Now fully ripe the berries were a rich, dark red, shiny and softly luscious. One might have thought the area would have been picked clean by this time, but not so, though the berries were well hidden among the foliage. No matter how carefully we walked we could hear them pop beneath our boots.

The sun came out, warming our backs as we crouched low to hunt among the leaves and waving marram grass. What a harvest we gleaned! Before our fingers became numb we decided to wend our way back along the deserted beach to the car park for lunch.

To complete her project Bernice collected sprigs of tightly clustered, milky-grey bay-berries from the barrens and the richest brown alder sprays she could find along the highway - where a couple of nuthatches came to investigate.

While picking our berries at the far end of the beach among scattered small spruce trees we appeared to disturb a flock of tiny birds which flew erratically overhead, flashing their buffy underside, and fluttering their wings in a rather nervous manner. We were too busy to make careful observations but Bernice thought they might be kinglets.

Near West Jeddore, where a finger of water pokes into the shore, we spotted - rather unexpectedly - a late Great Blue Heron, standing motionless and stiff-legged on a rock quite close to the highway. With neck drawn in and feathers ruffling slightly in the chill wind, he appeared to be huddling into a shawl.

One final stop for Dorothy Morris to garner some twigs of bright-berried Canada Holly and then we rode into the sunset - literally!

Doris Butters.

FEATURES OF FORESTRY MANAGEMENT AND FALL COLOUR

Date: Saturday, October 13, 1984
Place: Antrim Demonstration Woodlot
Weather: A Sunny, fall day
Leader: Richard Morash. Participants: About 12.

A beautiful fall day was an excellent time to visit the area at Antrim which has been set aside for demonstrating to woodlot owners how a forest can be managed. Richard Morash, a PhD student in Forestry at Dalhousie University, led us on a tour of the three areas which had been cut, using different techniques.

The first area we saw was quite large and had been clear-cut. Because of its size natural regeneration couldn't be depended upon, so Red Pine (*Pinus resinosa* Ait.) seedlings had been planted following the cutting twelve years ago. However, these trees were still only two feet tall as the first growth of this species is slow. Most of the original trees in this area were Red Spruce (*Picea rubens* Sarg., the remaining trees surrounding this area were 50 to 70 feet tall. The new trees that had been planted were almost hidden by the ground cover that had sprung up - lambkill and bracken predominating.

Area two had been patch cut, and as it was a much smaller area it would be expected to entirely regenerate itself; this section was surrounded by a mixed forest.

RED SPRUCE

Area three was strip cut. This means it was a long, narrow piece of land that had been cut. All around the cut were trees which would help in a natural regeneration, although sometimes seedlings are planted to support this. After the logs have been cut the branches are piled for burning. Stumps are left mainly because they are too difficult to get out. A hydraulic skidder does much of the work in clearing the land. This area was still being worked on so we weren't able to see it as we had the first one after a few years had passed. It takes 50 to 75 years before a piece of land like this will have trees the size of the ones that were cut.

We had our lunch at the side of of the wood road and basked in the beautiful fall sun while drinking-in the sight of the coloured leaves around us - who would want to be indoors on a day like this?

On our way back to the cars we stopped here and there along the road, the eternal curiosity of naturalists being ever-present. There were some excellent specimens of Christmas Fern and still some Cinnamon Fern, along with a variety of asters and golden rod to compete with the coloured leaves.

We got closer to the ground and inspected sphagnum and reindeer moss; Gold Thread and various mushrooms; also several plants in the lycopodium family. Moose Maple, with their large leaves, were plentiful. We found three Garter Snakes along the road sunning themselves - actually one of them was dead which made an easy subject to photograph. Its coral belly was admired.

We drove home via Musquodoboit, still enjoying the fall colours.

Mary Primrose
Dorothy Morris.

A VISIT TO THE MARITIME WEATHER OFFICE IN BEDFORD

Date: Sunday, January 13, 1985 Participants: 36.
Place: Maritime Weather Office - 6th floor, Bedford Tower, Bedford, N.S.

About 36 of us went out to Bedford to visit the local weather station and were shown around by the very competent Environment Canada staff there.

They split us into three groups and we had plenty of opportunity to ask questions. It is very well equipped with modern equipment and many computers. The satellite pictures are received from various centres, and enumerable weather stations around the continent and out to sea give data on the air pressure, wind velocity and other such things. The staff manually draw lines between equal areas and the picture becomes quite clear.

What was remarkable to me was that the equipment itself could predict what would happen over the next two, three and even four days. Their computer can progress from the present situation to where they would expect the system to be over the next period.

We are very grateful to the staff of the Weather Office for their patient explanation of all the things that go on.

R.M. Cunningham.

BIRDING IN THE GRAND PRÉ AREA -

On Saturday, January 12, Fulton Lavender led a party of six on a birding trip in the Grand Pré/Canard area. The day was fine and cold and we arrived at the Grand Pré Information Centre at 9.00 a.m. Within minutes of heading out on the dyke road we were treated to the sight of a grey phase gyrfalcon in flight, being harassed by two ravens.

A cold and windy walk out along the dyke brought us an excellent view of a Short-eared Owl perched in some shrubs. We also saw Red-tailed Hawks, Horned Larks, a flock of Canada Geese in flight, Rough-legged Hawks, Bald Eagles, dozens of plump Ring-necked Pheasants, Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrows, Water Pipit, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Blue Jays, an excellent view of a merlin perched in a tree, Evening Grosbeaks, several hundred American Goldfinches, Black-capped Chickadees, junco, cowbirds, Savannah Sparrow, American Crows, starlings and a large, mixed flock of gulls at Canard.

After a last, vain trip back out on the dykes to try to find Grey Partridge, we headed for home. As we approached the Information Centre we met Bernard Forsythe and mentioned that we had been looking for Long-eared Owls. He said there were two behind the Information Centre. We went back and found one Short-eared Owl and two Long-eared Owls. One of the latter flew to a nearby tree and posed for us; we had an excellent look at him through the 'scope.

A wonderful day from beginning to end.

Carol MacNeil.

A CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRIP IN THE WOLFVILLE AREA

Date: Saturday, February 9, 1985
Place: Wolfville area, including Coldwell's farm and Old Orchard Inn area, and Gaspereau Valley.
Weather: Overcast, windy, temperature -9° to +3°C.
Leader: David Lawley. Participants: 15

No matter when and where HFNers meet they always seem to have a wonderful time and return with heads full of new knowledge and memorable experiences. This past weekend was no exception. David Lawley is a terrific guide with a wealth of information on Nova Scotia nature lore.

We met at Acadia University parking lot - fifteen enthusiasts raring to go on a day's adventure. In a car convoy we left for our first destination, Dyke Road in the Grand Pré area, but a cold wind sweeping across the dyked lands made it rather miserable for snowshoers and skiers to explore the snow-covered marshes. Before moving off to our next area of interest a few keen-eyed naturalists spotted Red-tailed Hawks and what appeared to be a Peregrine Falcon showing the beautiful striped markings of its winter plumage. Through our binoculars we also saw a Horned Lark and an occasional raven.

Our next stop was at Cyril Coldwell's farm near Melanson, to see how they care for injured birds and feed birds of prey in winter. Just before reaching the farm we noted several immature Bald Eagles in trees close to the road. This was the first time I had seen a live eagle up close. Once the group gathered we set off to visit the convalescents in their cages. Carcasses of bob-cat, sheep, raccoon, cow, and rabbit lay in a heap by the barn. These contributions by local people provide the winter feed for the injured birds and visiting Bald Eagles, falcons and ravens in the adjacent fields. We were fascinated to see at close quarters recuperating birds such as Barred Owl, raven and Rough-legged Hawk, as well as mature and immature Bald Eagles with angry expressions.

Skis on, and enthusiasm high, we set off to tour the area but the snow being much too deep behind the farm, Dave decided that Old Orchard Inn might provide a more promising area for a good ski and nature hunt. Just before leaving Coldwell's we saw a couple of Bald Eagles soaring overhead - a beautiful picture against the grey sky of a winter day.

En route to the Inn we realised how beautiful the Gaspereau Valley is under its blanket of snow. Arriving at the Inn we were surprised to see so many other skiers - no deterrent of course, to our group. After lunch we waxed our skis and set off to explore. The fun began almost immediately as we struggled up the first incline - one glide forward, three back - but eventually we all made it to the top. The snow was softening due to milder temperatures, and no matter how many stops we made to apply additional wax, our combinations never proved to be just right. A bit frustrating for skiers perhaps, but after all we were not on a marathon run, just out for a relaxing nature ski-hike. And hike we did. Oh! those hills!!

However, Dave's many fascinating tidbits of nature lore helped to keep our minds off aching muscles and the horrid thoughts of MORE RED WAX?! Sliding along, Dave would casually mention such things as - Did-you-know that the hated alder bush actually has an important use in nature? It is a sign that once upon a time good farm land existed there; alder leaves are high in nitrogen and return it to the soil via their roots. Good for stands of hardwood..... On bears. Apparently they give birth at this time of year; all cubs are born now, at the same time, while 'mama bear' is still in hibernation..... Sapsuckers bore holes in a circle around the tree trunk or in a vertical straight line; when the sap begins to flow the birds return to feast..... Purple Finches have a funny little mating ritual. After a dancing

routine, the male bird breaks off a selected twig, holds it in its mouth then falls to the ground and pretends to be dead! This is the first twig used for building the nest..... Do you know how to tell a maple from an oak in winter? ..... have you noticed the nesting habits of flickers?, etc.

Very few animal tracks were found, (other than those of the many skiers) and none at all of bobcats. A little disappointing, but the variety of birds seen and Dave's nature stories made up for it.

By the time we got back to the cars and met up with the group who had gone off on snowshoes, the clouds had begun to break, revealing colours in the western sky ranging from blue to pink to mauve, and highlighting the picturesque Cornwallis (?) River, winding its way through the snowy landscape. It made a perfect finale to a wonderful trip. Overhead - as if in farewell salute - flew two Bald Eagles.

But HFNers never seem to end an outing and just go home. A last get-together, usually in a local cafe, for 'a cuppa' or whatever, is a must - just to sit and relax and review the day's activities. Mary Pratt - one of the group - kindly invited us to her home for tea and biscuits. The fact that it was Dave Lawley's birthday made a further excuse for a celebration. Mary even produced a lovely cake, which was soon demolished by our hungry skiers. Thank you, Mary.

One mishap I must mention - our slide into the ditch. Fortunately Dave was nearby and with the kind assistance of a passerby who crawled into the snowbank to fasten a cable to the car, Dave's Little Red Truck - with much verbal support from the gang - rather theatrically hauled us out onto the road. But Nancy and I did have a moment or two of anxiety as we slid through the deceptive pad of snow at the brink of the ditch and stuck there on an angle. We thought for a moment our lovely day might be ruined.

A special thank you to Dave Lawley who made the ski-hike so worthwhile and not just another "Red Wax Day."

Lesley-Jane Butters.

DAVE - HOPE YOU ENJOYED WHAT WAS LEFT OF YOUR BIRTHDAY WHEN YOU GOT HOME!

Ed.

A VISIT TO THE LIFE SCIENCES CENTRE - DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Date: Saturday, February 23, 1985
Place: Life Sciences Centre, Dalhousie University Campus
Weather: Cloudy; 6°C. (but seemed colder when we had to wait outside in stages because the group was larger than expected)

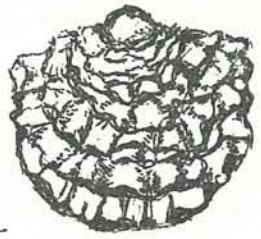
Leader: Filip Volckaert.

Participants: 45 (Good! - Ed.)

Rather a dullish, grey day - a forerunner, I think, of the interior we were to explore. I had been in this building some years previously, before the release of "Star Wars". I now have an excellent analogy with which to describe this megalithic monument of some poor architect who - as Filip told us later - committed suicide after it was built. Another description would be a constantly-repeating mirror -image of the gun bunker in The Guns of Navarrone.

Our group's first stop was the aquaculture laboratory, one of the many specialised warrens of disorienting, constant, grey cement walls, floors and ceilings. A damp, noisy place full of water sounds, water smells and water tanks, where experiments take place with sea urchins, salmon, scallops, quahogs, and -

most importantly - oysters! We should all have worn rubber boots! After a preliminary view of the first marine tanks (the size of basement set tubs and made of cement, with constantly circulating fresh saltwater from the Northwest Arm), off we went to a separate room with rows of long, special lamps to provide the necessary light for 10ft high plastic cylinders full of oyster food. Green algae, yellow algae,and diatoms - the latter to provide the siliceous material for the shells of oysters and other shellfish - are all grown here. The saline tanks are temperature-controlled and suitably aerated so that the algae are more abundantly concentrated (200,000 cells per ml) than occurs naturally in the open oceans. Only a very small amount of these liquids are needed to feed a lot of oysters and other marine animals.



OYSTER — (Ostrea edulis)

Another room. European oysters from the Netherlands (*Ostrea edulis*) being cultivated (in tanks of different sizes and types for different stages of growth) to be released and harvested here in our maritime ocean and bays. Apparently faster growing and healthier than our native oysters, I wondered whether they would retain these same characteristics in our waters, where surely there must be at least slightly differing conditions than the North Sea. However..... with these oysters fertilisation takes place in the animal (unlike, for instance, in the case of salmon) and the gamete, or zygote is expelled,, to sink or swim (Ahem!!) in its salty, watery world. Actually, they swim around for quite a while, gathering nutrients, until at a certain stage of development and heaviness, they sink (a good thing, for them) to the bottom where they begin to grow to resemble tiny scraps of squiggly mother-of-pearl (as we saw in another room) as they accumulate enough silica and carbonates to grow a shell. Oysters have a different mortality pattern than we do. Whereas most of our deaths occur from age 60 or so onwards, oysters naturally die off to about 5% of those born, in the first four years of life. At four years the oyster is mature enough to reproduce and large enough to be harvested; all that manage to survive usually die by being eaten. No one knows how long they can live! Giant clams,for instance, can live 200-300 years. Oysters, being a toothsome delicacy to the human race, never survive that long for us to find out.

Most of the experiments on these marine creatures seemed to be connected with the effects of different balances of foods on growth and health. Surprised that I had heard any of this over the constant noise of burbling, splashing, running water and the poor acoustics, we learned that Canadian scientists are mere novices at aquaculture. The Japanese, who we regularly consult, have been doing it for years and are experts.

On to the geological section - led by geology student John Dickie. Through endless mazes of entropy-grey cement, there were placed (strategically, we hope) various display cases of rock specimens - some privately donated, some belonging to the University. One especially beautiful display was a "purchased" (the owner had bought most of the stones) collection of Gordon Oakey,the son of a friend of mine. It contained some of the more showy and colourful geological quirks such as perfect quartz crystals and iron pyrite "sand dollars". Some cases contained the geological history of parts of Nova Scotia. One sad exhibit was a memorial to three students who had been killed in a rockslide while working on their theses. John Dickie explained how once, with colleagues exploring Joggins, they all agreed to leave a certain cliff face as too dangerous to pick at with their hammers. They sauntered along the beach for three

or four minutes and by chance turned round to where they had been. A huge, widening fissure was snaking up the side of the cliff. In seconds the whole crashed to the beach with tons of rock and debris, underscoring their wisdom in leaving well enough alone, with a horrifying and terrible orchestral finale! Geology is not one of the safer sciences!!

Beautiful polished agates, granites, mysterious and difficult to identify gneisses and porphyries, exquisite plant and animal fossils, and tangled histories of rock movements and the origins of eons past were paraded before our eyes - as any minute I expected to see Darth Vader, a storm trooper or at least a South American guerilla, confront us in one of those eerily empty, grey cement corridors.

Next - the McCulloch Museum of Natural History; a small, glass-walled room somewhere in the centre of the grey mazes, which blazed with colour as soon as Filip switched on the lights. Birds, shells, Lorenzen ceramic mushroom models - it was almost like being back on our own planet again! Speaking of which - our numbers were definitely dwindling - we were slowly being devoured by this monstrous megalith!

The private bird collections were interesting. One in particular, from the 1800's, was one of the first to display the birds in life-like poses, all done by a non-professional. There was an interesting ecologically-oriented display on coral reefs done by a 14-year old. An always-fascinating subject - a cross section of an ancient redwood tracing man's history along its 3,000 or so annular rings from before the birth of Christ to 1945 or so, when some idiot ravager cut it down to be sent around the world, like holy relics, in bits for display.

Now - a choice. View an electron microscope or see the Aquatron? (a new Star Wars character?) Having operated a EMS in a biology lab at the University of Birmingham years before, and never thinking that we would be allowed to actually view some specimens (which really did happen), I took my chances and opted for the Aquatron. By now things were becoming alarming; our numbers down to 5 or 6 (where had the others disappeared to ?)

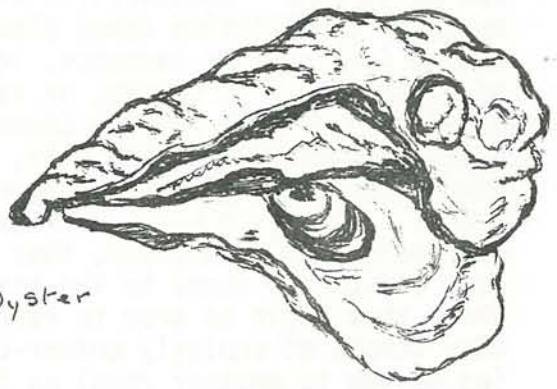
The Aquatron - an immense 10M x 4M salt water tank for the benefit of students and professors who wish to learn in a controlled way about seals, cod, salmon, and other marine creatures. Even murkier and more mysterious than the rest of the beehive, we watched two desultory cod swimming sadly around in the gloom, while Filip explained about the working cranes, moveable, over-water catwalk, dinghies, salmon food, and different types of life forms growing on the inside of the thick-glassed viewing windows on the lower level of the tank. Because fish would be adversely disturbed by any vibrations transmitted through the water by the building, the tank is entirely separate from it. It rests solidly and directly on Nova Scotia bedrock slate. Indeed, if you look carefully at the walks, floors, and walls, you will note that nowhere do they touch the tank itself.

Finally, we were allowed a quick trip to the 'roof', where we were treated to a spectacular vista of the Northwest Arm and the Atlantic Ocean.

Finished - after ensureing by careful search that once again one whole family was lost this time (they didn't name it 'Aquatron' for nothing) we were released outside to planet Earth - fresh air, and a peek of sunshine.

Thank you Filip.

Stephanie Robertson



Eastern Oyster

nature notes

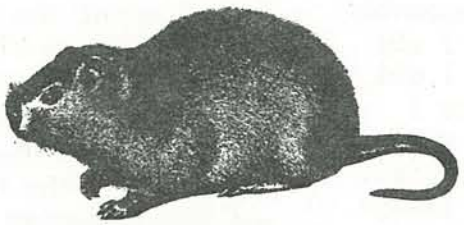
On November 4, along the river at Hantsport, opposite the gypsum plant, Dorothy Morris noted the withered remains of a species of orache originally named by Pierre Taschereau -*Atriplex acadiensis* Tasch.- BUT, the area where the plant was found is a new district for this species in Nova Scotia, says Pierre!.....

Late bloomers - spotted by Dorothy M. during a geology walk on Nov. 4., Evening Primrose, White Sweet Clover and Queen Anne's Lace .....

A Green Woodpecker in a tree behind a Dartmouth apartment block near Sullivan's Pond on December 9 (pointed out to Doris Butters by an ardent Birder)

Early sightings ..... when taking a stroll in Shubie Park on February 26, Dorothy Morris noted Pink Earth Lichen glowing rosily in a patch of earth clear of snow ..... Pussy Willows were blooming and in a sheltered spot Large-tooth Aspen catkins were on the point of breaking out. .....There was also a great deal of activity among the squirrels under some of the trees.

..... Despite the severe winter the catkins on the topmost branches of a tree on Richards Drive in Dartmouth, at the top of the hill above the golf course, also showed silver grey on February 26, a week earlier than last year.



WHERE IS YOUR CAMERA WHEN YOU NEED IT? -

A few weekends ago a friend and I ventured to "Piilomaja" - my little cottage in Albany New – to spend a couple of days in the countryside away from city hustle. The day was lovely but bitterly cold, and on arrival at the cottage we were confronted by 1½m high snow drifts all the way down the driveway.
To get to the cottage with our gear etc., we had a chore ahead of us, a 50 metre chore. But finally we reached the door and by this time we were feeling rather peckish. Inside the cottage it was freezing until the old wood stove got going and did its thing. Now really suffering from hunger we decided to get a meal underway before we froze into non-recognisable lumps, so we headed for the utensil drawer. Right in the middle of the drawer, on top of the plastic covering the kitchen tools was a strange mound. It was about 10cms, high with a round hole a few centimetres deep in the centre; fluffy, and with touches of blue flower petals throughout. For a moment we were baffled as to what the mound was, but our question was soon answered - a rather large mouse scuttled out of the hole, took one look at us and promptly left without a backward glance.

Trying to salvage the nest was not very successful and while carting the ruins off to the compost heap, I felt a twinge of pity for Mrs. Mouse having to face the bitter cold of winter after our weekend visit.. Searching around to see what she had used to make her nest, I noted that there were very few mouse droppings in either the utensil or any other drawer. "Strange", I thought, "but maybe Mrs. M. had only just built the nest, and perhaps had found slim pickings in the way of food supplies". Eventually I did find her building material - an old curtain being used as a table cover had just the perfect texture for raveling, puffing up into little balls and stacking to form the nest. I also noted that my dried grass-and-flower arrangement had been totally destroyed. Blue delphinium petals had been used in constructing the nest (for a reason that still baffles me) and the grasses must have been her food supply. That only left one more question on my mind. Where were the mouse droppings, as so few were in the drawer and around the dried flower arrangement?

In the country,outdoor 'facilities' are the way to go, except when the air is bitingly cold outside and then modern conveniences are more comfortable inside. And this modern convenience proved to be even more of a convenience, and provided us with a good chuckle! In the toilet bowl was a solid chunk of ice with a long stick in the centre to prevent the pan from cracking; on the ice at the bottom of the bowl were hundreds of mouse droppings!! My friend and I just hooted with laughter, and wondered whether our mousie friend was awfully smart or had merely been rather nosey?

Lesley-Jane Butters

DID WE HAVE A MIGRATION OF PEREGRINES ?

Twice last October I had an encounter with a large bird, and now think I saw two Peregrine Falcons: at first I did not believe it. On both occasions I saw a large bird flying at about roof top height in a southwesterly direction, and in a deceptively casual way, swinging from side to side as it came, reminding me of the hawk migration I watched in Ontario in 1982.

On the first occasion, I was on the fourth floor of St. Mary's University Science Building. The bird flew over Gorsebrook Common and I lost sight of it behind St. Francis School. Then three young crows came bombing together round the corner of the school into the University grounds and crash-landed in a maple tree right below me; the second of them, which made a frightful belly-flop, was followed at about six feet by a falcon, which backed off and lifted away as soon as the crows landed. I only saw it for a fraction of a second; I think it was brown but am sure it was as big as the crow though less stocky.

The three crows straightened themselves out, complaining loudly, and after about five minutes flew off, quietly, low and very circumspectly. The second crow had pale secondary feathers and was still about the grounds before Christmas, a more mature bird, and no longer with its (probable) nestmates.

The second time I saw a hawk approaching I was in the Museum Science Lab at the corner near the Citadel. The bird appeared to be passing the building on the Summer Street side and I was just turning away when I saw it back along the edge of the parapet scanning the ledge. When it reached the corner it turned sharply along the east face and flew in front of me, about eight feet away. It had a slate grey back, a streaked breast in shades of brown, gold eyes and beak and a moustache. It was fully the size of a crow (crows and gulls often land on the parapet). It dropped below the level of the parapet so was only in sight for a very short time, but I am sure of its size and colour.

I wonder now if we had a fall migration of peregrines which were looking for easy meals among our city birds, especially as Maud Godfrey apparently saw another hawk like this in the Public Gardens on October 17, 1984. The dates for my sightings were about the 23 October last and again about a week later.

Ursula Grigg.

WINTER MOTHS

Winter moths are not a freak of nature. They normally fly between mid-October and mid-December, depending upon the weather. Nineteen eighty-four was an exceptionally good one for these moths. The green inchworms were abundant during the summer on maples, oaks, birches, basswood and apple trees, and the moths were extremely abundant throughout the late fall due in part, to the mild, dry weather.

There are four kinds of winter moths in Nova Scotia:

November Moth (*Erannis tiliaria*) ;
Fall Cankerworm (*Alsophila pometaria*);
European Winter Moth (*Operophtera brumata*);
Bruce's Spanworm (*Operophtera bruceata*).

Common in the Halifax area are the European Winter Moth and the Fall Cankerworm.

European Winter Moth:

This species was apparently introduced from Europe in the Liverpool area of Nova Scotia in 1932. Between 1960 and 1965 stands of oaks in southern Nova Scotia were repeatedly defoliated and killed. In an effort to control this pest, the Department of Forestry introduced parasitic flies and wasps from Europe and were partially successful. In 1965-6 the winter moth population reached the Cobequids and came into contact with Bruce's Spanworm from which they became infected with a virus which almost wiped them out. Having developed some resistance to the infection, the European Winter Moth has now recovered.

Fall Cankerworm:

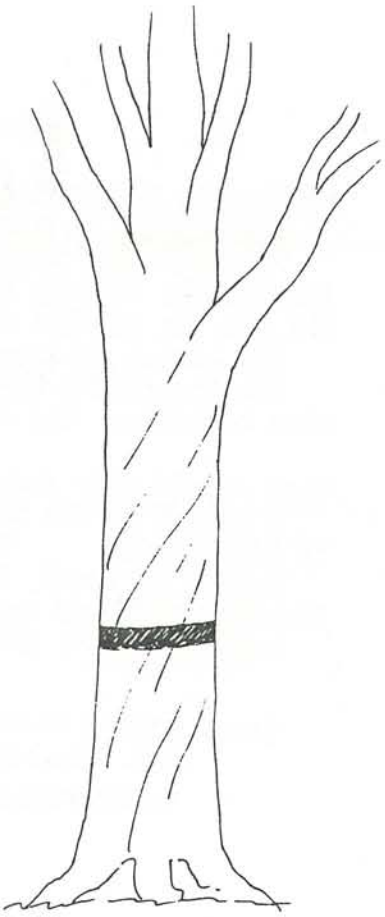
This is our native winter moth which feeds on hardwoods along with the European species and is usually fairly abundant. The larvae are slender and more active than those of the Winter Moth which are sluggish and conceal themselves in rolled-over leaves. The females of all our winter moths are wingless. They crawl up the tree trunk on emergence from the pupa, and give off a scent which attracts males. After mating they lay their eggs on the trunk among lichens, or in the case of the Cankerworm, in batches on twigs.

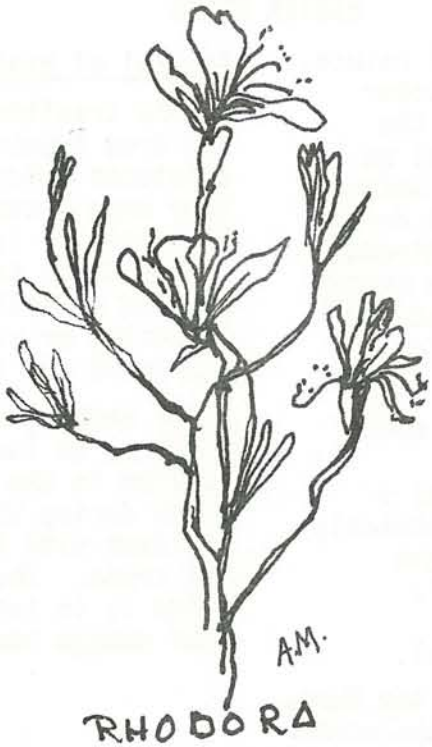
Control of Winter Moths:

The traditional method has been by banding tree trunks with "Tanglefoot", a sticky substance which traps female moths before they have a chance to mate or lay eggs. "Tanglefoot" is applied in a 3" band at waist height in mid-October. It may be applied directly to the trunk or on a strip of burlap or similar material nailed onto the trunk and then removed in late December.

If banding was not done and larvae are a problem, an insecticide will have to be applied in the summer. The eggs usually hatch during the second week in May, coincident with the opening of the leaves on oak trees. The best time to apply insecticide is in late May or early June when leaf damage becomes apparent.

Author Unknown.





SPRING

by
Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring --
  When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
  Thrush's eggs look like little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
  The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
  The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
  A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden. - Have, get, before it cloy,
  Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
  Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning

from: Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose,
W.H. Gardner, ed., London: Penguin Books, p26.
(contributed by Leigh Mazany)