

HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS' NEWSLETTER

September to November 1994

No. 76



Jeff Mason, Terence Bay School



Return address:
Halifax Field Naturalists
c/o Nova Scotia Museum of
Natural History
1747 Summer Street
Halifax, NS B3H 3A6

HALIFAX • FIELD • NATURALISTS

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

Meetings On the first Thursday of every month at 8:00 pm in the auditorium of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax. Meetings are open to the public.

Field Trips Are held at least once a month, **and it is appreciated if those travelling in someone else's car share the cost of the gas.** Everyone, member or not, is welcome to take part in field trips.

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

Individual	\$12.00 per year
Family	\$18.00 per year
Supporting	\$20.00 per year
FNSN (opt.)	\$5.00 per year

Executive 1994	President	Roy John	868-2373
	Secretary	Cathy Strugnell	835-8289
	Treasurer	Greg Crosby	422-4650
	Membership Secretary	Shirley van Nostrand	835-3673
	Past President	Colin Stewart	466-7168

Directors Patricia Chalmers, Ursula Grigg, Bob McDonald, Bernice Moores, John Newbery, Mary Primrose, Bonnie Saxton, Cathy Strugnell

**Mailing
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c/o Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History
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Committees	Programme	Roy John.....	868-2373
		Charlotte Lundgren	
		Jennifer MacKeigan.....	883-9766
		Cathy Strugnell.....	835-8289

Newsletter

Editor	Ursula Grigg.....	455-8160
	Patricia Chalmers	422-3970

Conservation Issues Colin Stewart 466-7168

Membership .. Shirley van Nostrand..... 835-3673

HFN is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and is a member organization of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists and of the Canadian Nature Federation. It is registered for federal income tax purposes. Official receipts will be issued for individual and corporate gifts.

Illustrations **This Issue (No. 75):** p. 11 — tide table courtesy Dept. of Transport; other illustrations from copyright-free sources.

HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDITORIAL

Settling of the dust and ashes from the eruption of Mount Pinatubo may or may not have given us that lovely summer, but we made the most of it. The main event for Halifax Field Naturalists was the CNF Conference, which was well attended and enjoyed, and which, incidentally, ended up in the black. After all the hard work which many members exerted to make it so successful, it's not surprising that everyone vanished afterwards; it almost needed a field trip to find people before September! Reports on the Conference will appear in the next Newsletter. Perhaps there will also be some reports on what people did with the rest of their summer.

I visited the Czech Republic, hunting for microfossils. My party spent a week in Prague, where many of the towering buildings provided nesting sites for pairs of Kestrels. It was easy to pick these out; they were the roofs without clouds of pigeons around them. We subsequently saw hawks being flown by falconers, in the courtyard of a castle, where the small, bright and agile Kestrels stole the show.

Now that autumn is coming, I'm collecting tree seeds and tucking them into the corner of a flower bed, to see if they will germinate. It appears that some of the cultivated maples are sterile; their keys have nothing in them. Our city tree is a Black Locust, with a Mountain Ash growing in the lowest fork, presumably from a seed left there by a bird; both these trees grow easily from seed.

The club still has some Piping Plover T-shirts and sweatshirts, and a few Endangered Spaces shirts for sale; these are especially popular with youngsters, and Christmas is coming... Cathy Strugnell has the shirts (835-8289).

The discussion of a spring bear hunt for Nova Scotia has not ended with Department of Natural Resources's refusal to permit it next year. Opposition to the hunt is perceived in some circles as being more sentimental than reasonable, so the matter will come up again.



Ursula Grigg

!! TIME TO RENEW !!

It's time to renew memberships; fees for 1995 have been raised a bit, to \$12 for individuals and \$18 for families, so as to continue to cover the Society's operating expenses.

Please send renewals to the Membership Secretary, Shirley van Nostrand, at the Nova Scotia Museum, or give them to her at the next meeting.



CALENDARS

Mary Primrose has a few Canadian Nature Federation Calendars for 1995, for \$12.95 each. These are large wall calendars, with a colour photograph of a bird and a plant for each month. Call Mary at 423-5165 to reserve one.

A CHALLENGE: THE NEWSLETTER NEEDS

more people to tell us where they went, what they saw there, or what they know about some aspect of Natural History.

someone to tell us where our many illustrations should appear, and maybe make more when necessary.

If you can do it, tell Ursula Grigg, 455-8160, or Patricia Chalmers, 422-3970.



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SPECIAL REPORTS

Halifax Field Naturalists

Receipts and Expenditures
for the year ended December 31 1993
(unaudited)

RECEIPTS	1993	1992
Memberships 1993 131 1994 to date 75	1717.00	1831.00
Interest Income: bank interest 36.84	446.24	497.00
investment interest 409.40		
Other Income (1A)	1105.00	807.40
Project Income (1B)	436.00	3910.76
TOTAL INCOME	3704.24	7046.40

EXPENDITURES

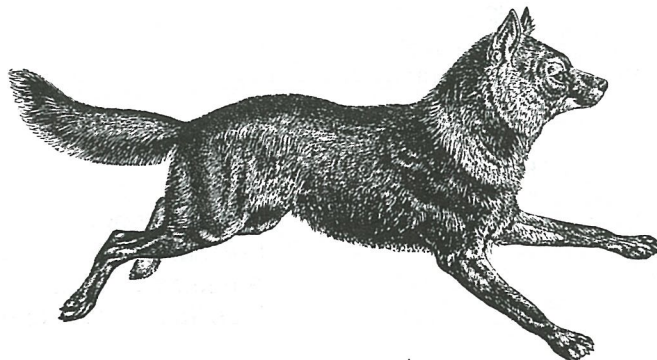
Meeting Expenses	60.59	54.52
Newsletter 1120.98	2962.10	1880.61
& Postage 1780.53		
Bank Charges	33.64	22.00
Memberships:		
Canadian Nature Federation (2Yrs)	70.00	35.00
N.S. Trails Federation	0.00	50.00
Federation of N.S. Naturalists(owing)	330.00	245.00
Expenses for Fed. N.S. Naturalists	0.00	17.60
Recreation Association of N.S.	55.00	55.00
Bell & Grant - liability insurance	75.00	130.00
Rec. Assoc. N.S. administration fee	20.00	20.00
Miscellaneous: see (2A)	2632.05	224.25
Projects see (2B)	966.17	5390.86
Donations:		
Canadian Nature Federation	150.00	0.00
Tobatic Wilderness Committee	50.00	0.00
Sponsor child Space Ship Earth Camp	135.50	0.00

7539.55 **8124.85**

RECEIPTS over EXPENDITURES

-3835.31 **-1078.45**

loan for CNF conference 1000.00
income from sale of shirts
and hasti-notes, both of which
were expenses to purchase in 1993.



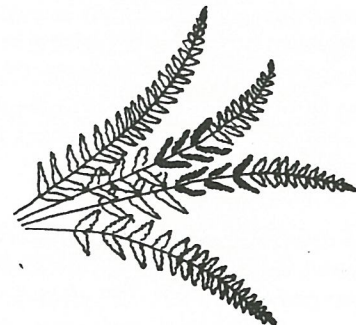
HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS
Schedules to the Financial Statement
for the year ended 31 December 1993

	1993	1992
Schedule 1A		
Other Income		
Lapel pins	100.00	0.00
Hasti-notes	79.00	4.00
Piping Plover Shirts	116.00	0.00
Donations -Govt. Grant 800.00	810.00	550.00
From Projects	0.00	253.40
Bus Field Trip	535.00	0.00
	1640.00	807.40
1B Project Income		
Endangered Spaces Show	0.00	49.98
Endangered Species Project	336.00	1616.78
Piping Plover Fund	100.00	819.00
Environment Canada Coloring Book	0.00	1200.00
In Memoriam	0.00	225.00
	436.00	3910.76
2A Other Expenditures		
Loan for Cndn. Nature Fed. Conf, 1994	1000.00	
Bus Field Trip	539.24	
Purchase of Piping Plover Shirts	867.47	
Purchase of Hasti-notes	225.34	
	2632.05	
2B Project Expenditures		
Endangered Species	690.17	2841.50
Sacred Earth Show	0.00	859.88
Piping Plover Brochure (reprint)	276.00	489.49
Environment Canada Coloring Book	0.00	1200.00
	966.17	5390.87

LEARNING TO SEE

One summer day, I discovered a boy in my garden.
Hunting softballs? Stealing flowers? Trespassing?
He said his name was Adam. I smiled.
"Do you have any feathers in your garden?" he asked.
How could I know? I was blind to feathers.
I shook my head. Toads. Weeds. Caterpillars.
These I had seen and recognised.
Hopeful, Adam looked straight into my eyes.
"My favourites are Blue Jay feathers," he said.

Since that day, I trip over feathers.
They perch on blades of grass, float in puddles,
Lie waiting for me on sidewalks and sandbanks -
In every meadow. The world is full of feathers.



TERENCE BAY SCHOOL

This is a report of a school trip that took place in October 1992. Mrs. Norma Henebury asked HFN for someone to lead a field trip to the sea shore for Grades 4-5 at Terence Bay School, and I agreed to do it.

We picked a day when tides would be reasonably low in the morning, and Mrs. Henebury suggested Wreck Cove as a suitable place. Terence Bay is a rather isolated community, founded by survivors of a long-ago shipwreck off Wreck Cove.

It turned out that Grades 4-5 had chosen the sea-shore as their topic for the term, and were sharing their information with other grades by means of murals in the school hall. The first thing to catch my eye in the classroom was a stack of library books; around the walls, individual assignments pictured, modelled and discussed star-fish, crabs, sea urchins and other organisms with accuracy and enthusiasm.

After we'd met, and talked a bit about tidal zones, we formed a crocodile and marched along the road to Wreck Cove in the breezy, sunny October weather. A number of parents accompanied us, there to ensure safety, but glad of an excuse to spend the lovely morning out of doors. (The weather broke the next day, leading into one of the longest, coldest winters in recent years.)

Most of the children pointed out their homes to me, and we met many of their families as everyone who saw us waved or stopped to speak. We passed the little convent, on the point of closing because there were not enough sisters to staff it, which had been the focus of the village since it was founded.

Wreck Cove has a rocky beach. We explored pools and the under sides of reefs; the children already had a good understanding of tidal zonation. We admired the practicalities of animal design and the beauty of seaweeds, and added to the children's collection of shells, crab claws and other discarded items - there was a rule that anything living could be examined but must be replaced undamaged.

Tidal cycles were discussed, and the ways in which plants and animals survive alternate immersion and exposure. We also discussed favourite ways of cooking mussels; while each of us knew at least one gourmet recipe, it seemed that

everyone serves them steamed, with butter!

When our time on the shore was up, Mrs. Henebury confirmed my belief that this was a magical morning: she stood at the top of the beach and raised her hand, and an empty school bus appeared from nowhere and took us back.

In the classroom again, we summarised what we had seen, and then I was presented with a beautifully decorated little basket containing a card of thanks - printed for the school with students' drawings on it - and two surf clam shells with lighthouse scenes painted on them by a local artist. The big shell stands on my mantelpiece to remind me of a memorable morning, and I wear the small one as a pin on special occasions. The class also made me a book of their thank-you letters, and decorated it with their drawings and poems, including the poem which formed their 'mission statement.'

I hope the children enjoyed themselves; I did, and came away feeling that schools which do such a good job of introducing natural history and conservation deserve our praise and our support.

Ursula Grigg



Hurt No Tidal Thing
Sand dollar, nor starfish
Nor blenny with scaly fin
Nor barnacle or common
whelk.
Nor beach hopper so light
of leap.
Nor dancing crab, nor
jellyfish flat
Nor harmless worms
that creep



SPECIAL ARTICLES

AN INADVERTENT BAT KILL

The house in which we live is equipped with a fireplace, which opens directly into an insulated metal chimney. The chimney has an inside diameter of eight inches, and a height of about 12 feet. At the top there is a steel cap mounted on struts, leaving about a three inch gap between the bottom of the cap and the top of the chimney. The fireplace is not used in the summer.

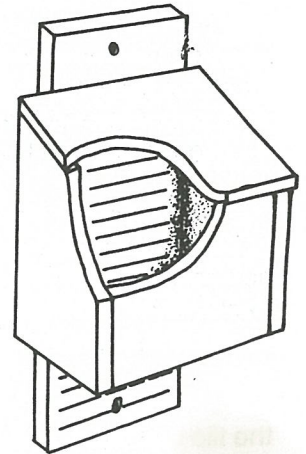
Around August 8, 1994, we began to hear noises coming from the fireplace. Our first guess was that they must be due to mice, because we have had Deer Mice in the house on and off over the last fifteen years. The noises consisted of various shrill squeaks coupled with sounds of small bodies moving around. The noises were present during daylight hours and after dark. A casual investigation persuaded us that the animals were located above the firebox, i.e. at the base of the chimney.

Our initial response consisted of hoping that the animals would move on, when they ran out of food, the young matured, the weather changed, or whatever. After about two weeks, the noises had not stopped. By this time we were wondering how mice could have entered this location, when the only entrance was via the chimney. The chimney is not only fairly high, but it has a bright mirror-like finish, making climbing the outside of it impossible. We began to consider the possibility that the animals were bats, rather than mice. If they were bats it seemed unlikely to us that they would be able to fly up the inside of the chimney to escape. The fact that the noises continued all night might be explained by the fact that the bats were trapped. A brief examination with a flashlight revealed what appeared to be bat feet and claws showing around the edge of the damper opening.

On the night of August 22, we resolved to try to release the animals, whatever they were. Holding a large plastic bag up to the "ceiling" of the fireplace, we opened the damper. About 30 bats fell into the bag. A few managed to escape, but they were easily caught before they left the fireplace, and these were placed in the bag as well. Some remained clinging to the damper; these were simply grabbed and deposited in the bag.

We took the bag outside and emptied it on the ground. About eight bats immediately flew off. The remainder consisted of 17 dead bats and three moribund ones. These last crawled slowly away and

Batbox alternative, cutaway view
(Newsletter has the plans)



immediately began lapping up water from the damp asphalt (it had recently rained). After half an hour or so, we moved these three from the ground to the sides of trees, on damp moss, where we hoped that they would be able to get a little more moisture. In the morning, one of these three was dead, and the other two had disappeared.

The following evening (August 24), we again checked the chimney, and there were two more bats present. We liberated these (they were active flyers), and then placed a large plastic bag over the top of the chimney to prevent any further entry by the bats.

The fact that two bats appeared after we first emptied the chimney implies that the chimney had been used as a roost by these two individuals before. This further implies that they must have been able to successfully leave the chimney until they fell to the bottom of the chimney that day. We assume that they must normally have roosted somewhere very near the top of the chimney, and that from time to time a bat would fall down, becoming trapped at the bottom. As long as this happened infrequently, sufficient numbers of mobile bats would remain to make this an active roost.

In retrospect, if we had investigated the noises earlier, we might have prevented the deaths of perhaps 20 of these fascinating and persecuted creatures. We suggest that owners of these insulated metal chimneys take steps to make them inaccessible to bats (by installing a layer of hardware cloth over the opening, for example). And, if you hear strange noises coming from your fireplace, don't hesitate to find out what's going on.

Linda and Peter Payzant

A GOOD REASON TO BE NOCTURNAL

At least once a year, I check the chimney flue to ensure it isn't blocked. On my chimney this is easy, since the flue has no bends. Opening the clean-out door at the base of the chimney, I hold a mirror at a 45 degree angle so I can see up to the sky above.

Chimneys get blocked, most commonly by pieces of the flue liner deteriorating and falling across the flue; less commonly by squirrels, or starlings building nests. Even a partially blocked flue allows dangerous gases to escape into the house.

This year, I was surprised to find that a piece of the tile had fallen, partially blocking the gases from escaping. Within days, I had contracted to have the top 3-4 feet of chimney rebuilt.

While standing in the laneway, looking in admiration at the workers skilfully laying new bricks to replace the broken portion they had removed, my attention was refocussed on three noisy crows.

A pair of crows had nested in a tall oak across the street and successfully raised one young. (Two other young crows were found dead at the base of the tree; cause unknown.) The three crows returned to this area frequently during the day, but spent hours away foraging for food. Several times a day they raised a noisy alarm. Often the cause was a cat; sometimes it was a 'stranger' - a crow trespassing or a hawk. Occasionally the intruder was a Great Horned Owl, in which case every crow within earshot soon came hurriedly to enjoy the fun of pestering the owl. (No doubt many a crow pays the price come nightfall.)

On this occasion the three crows were circling and climbing in pursuit of what I at first thought was a bird, but which resolved itself into a bat. Probably a Big Brown Bat.

The bat was fluttering furiously, trying to gain height, but within seconds the crows easily flew higher and one grabbed the bat's wing in its beak. The bat tore free and fell to earth, pursued by the three diving crows. All disappeared from my view behind trees. I have no doubt that the bat was despatched and eaten by one of the crows.

I had always supposed bats were active at night because their insect food was more plentiful then. Perhaps another reason is that their powers of flight are not equal to birds', and in daylight they become easy prey for any number of birds. Falcons and

accipiters, birds of prey, would find them easy pickings. Opportunistic-feeding birds like crows and gulls wouldn't hesitate to catch such an easy meal. The bats' inability to compete with birds in flying may be the primary reason they are nocturnal and the reason they hide away in caves, attics and hollow trees during the hours of daylight. Who could blame them?

**Jack Holiday, from Trail and Landscape, Vol 28,
No 1, P12**



A FRIEND OF MINE ONCE SAW...

Now here's what a friend of mine once saw... He was going home one moonlight night by a footpath through the woods when he heard a very strange noise a little distance ahead, a low whistling sound, very sharp, like the continuous twittering of a little bird with a voice like a bat, or a shrew, only softer, more musical. He went on very cautiously until he spied two hedgehogs standing in the path facing each other, with their noses almost or quite touching. He remained watching and listening to them for some moments, then tried to go a little nearer and they ran away...

"But no doubt," I said, "You've seen other queer things in hedgehogs and other little animals which I should like to hear."

Yes, he had, first and last, seen a good many queer things both by day and night, in woods and other places, he replied, and then continued: "But you see it's like this. We see something and say, 'Now that's a very curious thing!' and then we forget all about it. You see, we don't lay no store by such things; we ain't scolards and don't know nothing about what's said in books. We see something and say, *That's* something we never saw before and never heard tell of, but maybe others have seen it, and you can find it in the books. So that's how 'tis, but if I hadn't forgotten them I could have told you a lot of queer things."

From: W. H. Hudson, A Shepherd's Life

ALMANAC

This almanac is for the dates of events which are not found in our 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.

"The hills all round, as seen from our celebrated platform [Dufferin Gate, Quebec Citadel], are of the most lovely autumn colours, and covered, as they are with red and orange trees, they really look like flames in the distance, or like gigantic flower-gardens; for our *trees* are quite as brilliant as your best *flowers*, and if you can imagine your conservatory magnified a million times, and spread over miles and miles of hill and dale, you will begin to understand how we do things in this Canada of ours."

Lady Dufferin, "My Canadian Journal", 1891.

Natural Events:

1 Sept.	Consider the Passenger Pigeon. The last one died in captivity in a Cincinnati Zoo on this day in 1914
late Aug. - early Oct.	most species of warblers leaving - waves of migrants may be seen
September	the busiest month for most fall migrating birds
mid-Sept.	Loons leave fresh-water lakes to winter on the sea
mid-Sept.-mid-Oct.	Rough-legged Hawks arrive in the Valley from the northern breeding grounds, and stay the winter
19 Sept.	Full Moon - this is the "Harvest Moon"
23 Sept.	Autumnal Equinox: fall begins
3 Oct. -	Ruby-throated Hummingbirds depart
18 Oct. -	Snow Buntings arrive
18 Nov.	Penumbral Lunar Eclipse
19 Oct.	Full Moon - this is the "Hunters' Moon"
22 Oct. -	our provincial bird, the Osprey, leaves
29/30 Oct.	Standard Time begins - turn clocks back one hour
early-mid Nov.	you know that winter must be coming when the Public Gardens close
14 Dec.	Geminid meteor shower
22 Dec.	Winter Solstice: winter begins
24/25 Dec.	annual nocturnal migration around the world by arctic reindeer

Sources: Blomidon Naturalists Society, A Natural History of King's County, 1992; Royal Astronomical Society, Observer's Handbook, 1994; Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia, 1986; the personal observations of the compiler.

Sunrise and Sunset on late Summer and Autumn Saturdays:

3 Sept.	6:39	19:49	1 Oct.	7:12	18:55
10 Sept.	6:47	19:35	8 Oct.	7:21	18:42
17 Sept.	6:55	19:22	15 Oct.	7:29	18:30
24 Sept.	7:04	19:08	22 Oct.	7:39	18:18
			29 Oct.	7:48	18:08
5 Nov.	6:57	16:58	3 Dec.	7:33	16:35
12 Nov.	7:07	16:50	10 Dec.	7:40	16:34
19 Nov.	7:16	16:43	17 Dec.	7:46	16:35
26 Nov.	7:25	16:38	24 Dec.	7:50	16:38
			31 Dec.	7:51	16:43

courtesy of David Lane, Burke-Gaffney Observatory, St. Mary's University

Organizational events:

Blomidon Field Naturalists: meets 7:30 p.m. Room 244 Beveridge, Acadia U.
19 Sept. Life North of the North Pole, by Dr. Olga Kukal
24 Sept. Wolfville Area Fall Birds with Jim Wolford - meet at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre at 10:00 a.m.
17 Oct. Coyote Update by Barry Sabeau, Dept. of Natural Resources

Friends of McNab's Island: For more info. call Cathy McCarthy at 434-2254

25 Sept. Beach Sweep
16 Oct. Fall Foliage Foray

Mainland South Heritage Society: For more info. call Iris Shea 479-3505

All events meet at the parking lot of the William Spry Community Centre, Sussex St., Spryfield, at 1 p.m. for carpooling.

18 Sept. Trail to Harry's Lake, Harrietsfield
25 Sept. Working party at the Rockingstone - bring a garbage bag!

Nova Scotia Bird Society:

Phone the N.S.B.S. Bird Information Line at 852-CHAT (i.e. 2428) to hear news of what birds are around, provincewide, and any other Society news of note - field trips, meetings, etc. This line is usually updated at least twice a week. Their next meeting is 22 Sept., 8 p.m., at the N. S. Museum.

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History:

22 Oct. Mammoth versus mastodon, by Bob Grantham, 2-3 p.m.
29 Oct. Bats up close: myths and reality, with Fred Scott, 2 & 3 p.m.
19 Nov. Dawning of the dinosaurs, by Harry Thurston 1-2 p.m.

Orchid Society:

22-23 Oct. Fall show and sale at the Nova Scotia Museum

Wild Flora Society: meets 7:30 p.m. at the N.S. Museum Auditorium

17 Sept. Bissett Lake Park, Cole Harbour - Flora with Bill Graham
Meet at the N.S. Museum at 9:15, or at the Park at 10 a.m.
26 Sept. Insects and our woodlands, by Eric Jorgensen
1 or 8 Oct.? Cole Harbour Natural History with Rose Mary Eaton - Meet at the N.S. Museum at 9:00, or at the Barn on Bissett Rd. at 10:00.
Check date with Bill Graham 435-0041
24 Oct. Spotting orchids from the road, by Heather Drope
28 Nov. Natural history of Brier Island, by Marion Zinck

And a final note on the hunting seasons:

The Black Bear season is from 15 Sept. to 27 Oct., and from then through the bow-hunters' deer season (24 Sept. - 15 Oct.), the Ring-necked Pheasant season (1 Oct.-15 Dec.), the Ruffed Grouse and other small game season (1 Oct.-31 Dec.), the Duck and Geese season (8 Oct. - 31 Dec.), the regular Deer season (28 Oct.-3 Dec.), and the Rabbit season (5 Dec. - 15 Feb.), there are hunters abroad: **Remember, it's hunting season, so dress to be seen in the woods!**

compiled by Patricia L. Chalmers

Indian Summer

Along the line of smoky hills
The crimson forest stands,
And all the day the blue-jay calls
Throughout the autumn lands.

William Wilfred Campbell, 1889

1994

OCTOBER-OCTOBRE

NOVEMBER-NOVEMBRE

DECEMBER-DECEMBRE

Table with columns for Day, Time, Ht./ft., Ht./m, Jour, Heure, H./pi, H./m for each month. The table lists tide data for October, November, and December 1994.

Plant patterns in coal:

Sigillaria elegans

Asterophyllites equisetiformis



! NEXT DEADLINE !

5 November for December Issue

Contributions to the Editor, HFN
c/o NS Museum or phone 455-8160