HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS' NEWSLETTER

December 1995 to February 1996

No. 81



Return address: HFN, c/o NS 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:

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

Executive	President	Stephanie Robertson	422-6326
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HFN is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act. It is a member organisation 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.

Conservation IssuesColin Stewart466-7168

Illustrations (All illustrations not acknowledged are either by H. Derbyshire or are from copyright-free sources) This Issue (No. 81): P. 5 - David Suzuki's *Looking at Weather*, Stoddart Press; p. 7 - collection D. Butters; p. 8 - J. W. Anglund, p. 11 - Halifax Tide Table courtesy Dept. of Transport, p. 12 - poem from *Golden Treasury* of *Poetry*, Golden Press, 1966, illustration by William Ahrendt, *Arizona Highways*, December 1987, Vol. 63, No. 12.



HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEST WISHES FOR THE SEASON TO ALL !

HFN 1996 MARCH AGM

" 'Tis the season" to plan for the 1996 HFN executive roster. Now is the time for members to come forward and express their interest in serving on the Board of Directors and/or various committees. Also, if you have a favourite walk or subject of interest you would like to see us carry out, please let us know. Committee members' phone numbers and our Internet contact site are listed on page 2. We welcome new ideas and fresh perspectives in all aspects of running the club; especially for our "walks and talks". You will meet some wonderfully interesting people with a shared zeal for all things biological, geological, and geographical, and have lots of fun to boot! You need not be a long-time member; just come armed with a great enthusiasm for natural history, and the rest will come naturally!



BUTTERFLY CHECKLIST

Debra Burleson, Director of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, has written to HFN formalising our Butterfly Field Checklist production partnership. HFN will design and produce the checklist, while NSMNH will cover the cost of printing. This checklist will be on sale for a nominal fee in anticipation of a Butterfly Field Check programme to take place sometime in July, 1996. It is expected to provide much-needed data and to increase public interest in, and awareness of, Nova Scotian butterflies.

1996 PIPING PLOVER CENSUS

Sherman Boates has agreed to be responsible for the coordination of the 1996 Nova Scotia Census of Piping Plovers. The Piping Plover beaches to be monitored are the three or four that range from Peggy's Cove to Tor Bay. This census will be a featured activity of Environment Week, June 6 - 9, and all beaches should be visited one or twice during that week. HFN may take on responsibility for these beaches. More information will be forthcoming.

FEDERATION '96 ANNUAL MEETING IN ANNAPOLIS ROYAL

The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists AGM and accompanying programme of talks and field trips will take place June 7 - 9, 1996. It will be hosted by the Annapolis Field Naturalists in Annapolis Royal and promises to be just as enjoyable and rewarding as last year. More details will be forthcoming through subsequent newsletters, meetings, and field trips.

For registration information contact:

FNSN AGM c/o AFNS, P.O. Box 576.

Annapolis Royal, N.S., BOS 1A0

The Editor of the FNSN Newsletter invites all to

contribute articles and items of interest to their publication.

GARDENS IN WINTER

It is still not too late to put out feeders. A mix based on millet and black sunflower seed is better than one based on corn. Cereal grains like cracked corn and oats attract pigeons and rats. Peanuts and white or grey sunflower seeds are very good for birds like jays and grosbeaks.

Birds like a bit of shelter nearby. If you have no shrubs or trees on your property near your feeder, this can be provided by your used Christmas tree, either propped up or lying flat nearby. You then can throw it away come late spring.



WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Fran Barclay Gloria Chaffie Jan Chapman Marjorie Dunbar Janice Hamilton Richard Hatch Belinda MacTavish Scott MacTavish Marie Moverley Claudia Richards Darlene Tan

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WINTER IN HALIFAX 🛛 🖓

Every winter in Halifax there is something new to see and think about. The natural calendar of the turning seasons and the progression of the moon, stars, and planets underlie changeable biological events.

Before the Southern European invasions, people who lived in the cold North divided their year into halfmonths, which actually fit the constant advances of the seasons better. We still have a few of these divisions — for example, the feasts of St. Lucia on December 12 and Valentine's Day on February 14, which bracket the pit of winter. St. Lucia's candles lighten the longest nights of the year, and the deepest cold is over by Valentine's Day, when summer plans start to become believable. This midwinter period is punctuated by Christmas, Epiphany, and Candlemas, and was a shutin time before we had electric light, when the full moon of January was ominously called the Wolf Moon.

In the brightly lit modern city snowfalls still reveal a great deal of unsuspected activity. In periods of fine weather it is a pleasure to walk by night along the Gullies (the path beside the railway allowance) and into Flynn Park if there's a glimpse of another dogwalker whose young dog Tagalong will warn of danger.

We don't draw our living room curtains, and the moon and stars shine through the branches of the street trees. Our Black Locust was cut down recently, so this winter we have to wait until the moon appears behind our neighbours' tree to enjoy this particular beauty. The North Star is visible from the window, but Orion hunts behind the house and is over the roof in the midnight sky at present.

The Black Locust provided crannies for roosting chickadees; they're going to miss it this winter. However, they still come prospecting, so it's not too late to put up bird feeders. Once chickadees come, other birds will follow. We use a mix based on millet and black sunflower seed; cereal grains in the cheaper mixtures attract pigeons and, unfortunately, rats. Bread and scraps are likely to bring starlings; only chickadees refuse raisins!

After Christmas we put the tree outside near the feeder, either propped up or lying down, to provide cover, although the sparrows seem satisfied with the privet hedge. New snowfalls show us the tracks of the various species, which walk and which hop, and which has lost a toe. They also tell tales of predation; we always have a Sharp-shinned Hawk which preys on birds at the feeders. It usually takes cock sparrows, and leaves a few feathers and a small crater in the snow.



Red Foxes live in many cities in the USA and Europe, but we have never seen signs of them in Halifax. Their smell gives them away, and there are dens just outside the city. Why are they not in the Gullies? Do they avoid Raccoons, which do live there?

When we walked dogs every day, we learned the prints of the other local dogs and their handlers; Marie has new boots? — I hope high-topped this time, her enormous Southern Buckhound leads her into all sorts of deep drifts. His thin coat makes him sensitive to cold, so they walk less in winter. The many Halifax Dogs (a mixture of Beagle, Spaniel, and Other) are better equipped, with thick underfur.

In the Buckhound's track, right and left prints are far apart and form two distinct lines; like most cats and also foxes, some breeds make a single line, though Tyler the Duck Toller, with fox in his ancestry, leaves tracks more like a Golden Retriever's (also in his blood lines). Emma the Boston Pug makes a series of clusters, coming down on all fours in enthusiastic bounces. Her skin fits her like a sausage, but she doesn't seem to feel the cold; enthusiasm and a layer of blubber apparently compensate for sparse fur and small size. Dog breeds and their histories really are fascinating.

There are fewer cats around in winter; we don't know who patrols our premises in a single pre-dawn round each day. Of course the rancher, Nubs, does so later in the morning, and the other one is probably a tom, who puts his large feet down exactly in yesterday's tracks. Why? Is he nervous of Nubs?

The idea that cats keep ranches, and take care of their livestock, especially humans who are generous with food, comes from "The Tribe of Tiger," by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, a book that has enthralled us all this year. She says that cats who don't want to be noticed by us or by bigger, fiercer ranchers, leave no tracks at all, and have to be recognised by scats, bits of prey, and hairs. She thinks this is why cougars have neither been acknowledged in Maine, where she lives, nor, of course, in the Maritimes.

A professional tracker told Elizabeth Marshall Thomas that "a dog walking on a soft matrix such as dust, mud, or snow leaves a tiny ridge of the matrix between the toes and the large pad, ... a cat, in contrast, lays down his foot very smoothly and gently, leaving no mark but the faint dents of his pads and only then if conditions are optimal, such as after a dusting of fresh snow." If this is true, we have another way of interpreting those single-line tracks along the Gullies, paths: cat, — or Red Fox?

Between watching the animals' comings and goings and reading about them in library books, winter wont be long enough.

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SNOWFLAKE FORMATION

Wilson Bentley from Boston, Massachusetts, spent his lifetime researching and photographing upwards of 6,000 snowflakes. Not one of them was exactly like any other. These truly beautiful photographs can be seen in his book "Snow Crystals". He calculated that one big snowstorm could drop 50 quadrillion snowflakes on a city, and that out of these there would be no duplicates. Is your back aching yet in anticipation?

A water molecule, as everyone probably knows, consists of three units — two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen arranged in such a way that when this molecule freezes to form a snowflake — either a threesided or six-sided crystal is produced. This process results in the beautiful stellar and plate flakes that artists love to portray on Christmas publications and cards.

There are seven basic shapes of snowflakes or snow crystals: plates; stellars; columns; needles; spatial dendrites; capped columns; and irregular crystals. There are three types of other solid precipitation: graupel; sleet; and hail. Which type of snowflake will form depends upon different combinations of air temperature, humidity, the altitude of the formation, and the changing conditions which the growing snowflake encounters as it falls to earth.

The needle snowflakes are the type that really sting when blown in eyes and faces during a winter storm. Hail (layered spheres of ice), and graupel (tiny, window-rattling snowballs), also sting. Sleet can be formed from frozen raindrops or melted and refrozen snowflakes. It takes roughly 10¹⁸ water molecules to make up one snowflake. Like raindrops, they are started in clouds. When the temperature of a cloud drops to below 0°C, water droplets start crystalising into ice around bits of atmospheric dust. The other water vapour molecules in the cloud then start to adhere and also crystalise around this budding ice particle, building up on that first frozen crystal into typical hexagonal snowflake patterns.

If a cloud doesn't have much water vapour (which it won't if it is very cold, because warmer air can hold more moisture than cold air), the snow crystals will be small and simple in shape. If a lot of water vapour is present (as in warmer air), snow crystals can attain a larger size before they start falling to earth. The more intricate forms of snowflakes have had lots of time to cling together and grow into shapes that may have up to 100 crystals. These huge lazy flakes occur on warmer winter days when you can feel the dampness in the air. Their diameters can be up to 2.5 cm across. The largest and most beautiful stellar flakes are formed in temperatures around 15°C.

The snowiest part of the world is found between latitudes 40° to 66°. The air at the Poles is so cold that snowfalls there are relatively light. Once fallen, however, they do not melt. Thus — "little snow (size of flake) - big snow (depth on ground and time it stays on the ground); big snow (size of flake) - little snow (depth and time it stays on the ground)". Larger flakes indicate the warmer temperatures that for the most part do not support a lot of snow on the ground — it melts quickly. Smaller flakes mean colder air, more continuous snowfall, and deeper groundcover, creating all those deep drifts we love to shovel.

adapted from the same article in HFN Newsletter



Hexagonal Plates



Hexagonal Columns



Capped Columns



Irregular Crystals



Needles



No. 61, Dec. to Feb. 1991.

- S. Robertson

Stellar Crystals

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Spatial Dendrites

CONRAD'S BEACH IN SUMMER AND AUTUMN

DATES: Saturday, July 22 and Saturday, October 21, 1995 INTERPRETER: Glen Gibson PARTICIPANTS: 6 in July and 17 in October (plus two dogs)

The memories of Conrad's Beach in summer have faded with the warmth of July's sun, but several highlights come to mind. As in the spring, our summer trip was conducted by Glen Gibson, who pointed out areas of interest and provided a brief history of the area. We encountered a rich diversity of habitat - a wooded area, marshland, sand dunes, and shoreline. Wild strawberries and blueberries competed to offer their fruit to those with the keenest eye, and wild Beach Peas bloomed in profusion in the sandy soil, along with numerous grasses and wildflowers. As on our spring trip, no mammals were seen, but an exciting discovery was made in the water - a clam worm. Some of the braver participants held it for closer examination, while those less brave were satisfied to read about it in the field guide. Further on up the beach, we encountered two Piping Plover guardians who shared plover stories with us. Although we didn't see any plover chicks that day, it was a small disappointment given the wonderful weather and beautiful location.

Our October trip took place on a sunny autumn day. (The Programme Committee should be commended for the excellent weather on their field trips.) The group was large this time, and, once again, Glen gave a brief overview of the very interesting history of the area before we proceeded on our trip. We hadn't travelled far when we spotted a very rare find — Busis linus-acadius— an Acadian Lines Bus which had somehow made its way into the very small parking area already filled with our cars. Keen naturalists that we were, our group immediately trained 'scopes and binoculars on the wayward bus with much speculation as to how it was going to extricate itself. After awhile, we resumed our trip into the wooded area nearby. Once again, we saw no mammals but did see a fox hole with paw prints just outside. In the marshy area, we saw a Golden Plover. On the beach we saw deer tracks, and on the distant horizon, on Fox Point, we saw seals (or maybe big rocks). We also saw a great deal of erosion taking place on the sand dunes, with whole trees fallen over and pointing their roots to the sky. As well, we encountered a group of trees whose roots were gradually being exposed by retreating sand, leaving a network reminiscent of arteries and veins. As we walked along the beach, a seagull performed for us by dropping mussels on the shore. When we reached the area where the plovers

had nested, we were so intent on looking for them that we almost missed the Horned Larks foraging for food very close by. In fact, they were so close that they could be seen better with the naked eye than with binoculars.

Many thanks to Glen Gibson who conducted the spring, summer, and autumn trips.

- Jennifer MacKeigan



UNIACKE ESTATE MUSEUM PARK

DATE: Sunday, 17 September 1995 PLACE: Uniacke Estate Museum Park WEATHER: warm and sunny INTERPRETER: Joan Waldron PARTICIPANTS: + or - 15

At the age of 60, in 1815 - 1816, Richard John Uniacke finally acquired the last parcel of land that enabled him to move from his small house and build his grand retirement home; it is on a site of natural beauty and mixed habitats bordering the old route from Bedford to Windsor.

Joan Waldron, from the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, met us at the Uniacke Estate grounds. First we were guided down to the basement kitchen, where, on the large old kitchen tables, Joan had thoughtfully laid out for us a hand-picked collection from Mr. Uniacke's personal library of natural history books. After donning protective white gloves, we were allowed to touch and peruse these old treasures. John Uniacke was an avid horticulturist and natural history buff; he was one of the first Nova Scotians to cultivate geraniums, and had up to 80 different varities in his large greenhouse. 200 years later, here we were, more natural history enthusiasts, studying with the same interest his reference material. We were given a private tour of this beautiful old home before venturing outside for our walk along some of the newly improved pathways through his wooded estate.

Out into the grounds and a beautiful sunny fall day, we followed an original tumbled dry stone wall generously frosted with thick green moss, and then an ancient wood fence, to the site of John's greenhouse, long since gone. All that remains are signs of a recent archaeological dig which unearthed some artifacts from the greenhouse area. This was a permanently damp site drained by small streams and brooks into Uniacke Lake. Afterwards we followed the Lake Martha Loop trail — a hard-packed gravel path that skirts the lake and adjacent woodlands and that was once part of the old road to Windsor.

Through the woods we came to the Drumlin Field Trail, a wooded path that leads up to a high, grasscovered drumlin. All of the newly improved tracks have signs giving distance and direction. They were upgraded to keep as much as possible to John Uniacke's original pathways. Some are covered with wood chips, and have been widened and graded for easier walking. Not too easy, however, as one of us tripped and then fell over a small stump.

The last pathway we followed was the Hothouse Hill Trail. Here we saw a mature American Chestnut, (*Castanea dentata*), that John Uniacke had planted 200 years ago. We went on through the woods, turned down the possibility of a longer route at a fork, and returned to the house. Near the homesite, we saw the remains of the old sheep wall, constructed to keep John's herd from coming up to the formal lawns and gardens. We ate our lunch in the warm subshine on the picnic tables around the house, watching the interesting activities connected with a steam engine exhibit. Several steam engines had been put on display and the exhibitors and their families and friends were making an outing of the affair.

After lunch, Pat Chalmers and Shirley Van Nostrand explored the brooks, mossy bogs, and pristine stand of Red Spruce along the longer and more rugged Red Spruce Trail. There were two more difficult trails which we did not explore; these were the Post Road Trail and the Wetlands Trail. The Post Road Trail was the original road between Bedford and Windsor which became the post road in 1800. The Wetlands Trail traverses beautiful brooks, two lakes, glacial boulder erratics, and beds of pitcher plants.

Thank you, Joan, for a thoughtful and very wonderful guided tour of the Uniacke Estate Grounds.

- Mary Primrose and Shirley Van Nostrand as told to S. Robertson



MOUNT SAINT VINCENT ARBORETUM

DATE: Saturday, December 2, 1995 PLACE: Mount Saint Vincent University Grounds WEATHER: Overcast and cold! INTERPRETER: Catherine Deveau, Groundskeeper since 1988 PARTICIPANTS: 23

Setting off from the foyer of the Seton Academic Centre, we knew we were in for a cold field trip. The wind came up just enough to effect a wind-chill factor, and the temperature dropped noticeably throughout the morning. Catherine's accompanying hand-out sheet was titled "Plants To Consider for Winter Landscape". Attractive characteristic categories to keep in mind for the winter garden were: Interesting Bark; Ground Covers and Vines; Interesting Form; Deciduous Leaves Remaining on Trees; Persistent Winter Fruits; and Evergreens.

We began our observations at the Seton Centre itself which is festooned with Creeping Hydrangea, Climbing Euonymous (Fortunei vegetus), and Boston lvy (Parthenocissus tricuspidata). The Euonymous will tolerate full sun or heavy shade. The Boston Ivy, like the Virginia Creeper, turns brilliant red in the fall; but it is not as hardy as the Virginia Creeper. These three vines added interesting texture and an attractive tracery pattern to the bare concrete walls. Turning West across the grounds, we stopped to look at a beautiful Spreading Yew (Taxus sp.) and a Kwanzan Cherry (Kwanzania sp.). This ornamental cherry had been produced by grafting, which often causes problems in the cherry family. The grafting scars had split in several places, allowing disease and insects to enter. The tree was indeed not a very healthy specimen. The spreading Yew had distinctive red winter fruit. Yews include the highest quality needletype evergreens in landscape use. They provide yearround colour and are used for hedges, foundation plantings, and broad mass plantings.

Did you ever wonder how you can distinguish between a Cedar and a Cypress? Catherine pointed out that cedars' leaves are more flat while those of the Cypress are fingery and pendulous in appearance. Near the Seton Centre there is a beautiful 25-year old specimen of a Weeping Nootka Cypress (*Chæmcyparis nootkatensis*) which looks to be perfectly designed for hanging bird-feeders. It resembles a particularly long-armed Christmas tree that someone has thickly decorated with very long matt-green tinsel. Nearby was a thick and healthy Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens hopsii*).

There is a pond just above the Nootka Cypress; it has regular flock of many black ducks and one drake. This pond was once planted with bulrushes which quickly became too abundant and had to be removed. Remnants were still visible, poking their tops through the surface of the water. Near this pond was a 13-year old Corkscrew Witch Hazel (Corylus avellana contorta) with very tightly-curled branches - a bush with a perm, as curly as grape tendrils; wonderful to see as a winter decorative without its leaves. The birches that we passed as we trudged up the hill behind the Seton Centre were not in good shape. Catherine explained that birches don't like salt (they were near one of the many winding campus roads), and are expensive to maintain because under non-ideal habitat (salt) they are even more prone to diseases such as Birch Leaf Miner.

Further up the road through the campus, and against another building's wall, was a very low-growing and spread-out Japanese Quince (*Cydonia japonica*). Lots of useful fruit was still clinging to the branches, and I mourned losing the use of my Japanese Quince fruits when we moved from Dartmouth to Halifax 10 years ago.

There was a Euonymous tree nearby — it is the standard "Burning Bush" tree. The walls of a building further up wore cloaks of bare Boston Ivy, and heavily-leaved, still-green, Baltic English Ivy (*Hedera helix*). We passed a Firethorn with its red berries, and some Pyramidal Oaks still with leaves as this is one of their valuable winter landscape characteristics. We also passed a rather wild looking plot which had both large and small Striped Maple, and some more ordinary Witch Hazel, with the woody, red petalled remnants of its recent yellow flowers. Hemlock (*Tsuga spp.*), one of Catherine's favourite trees, and some Japanese Maple, with their bright red leaves, were also seen here. A Beech in this plot did not look very healthy and Catherine talked of their viral diseases and cankers.

Soon we came to an area where we were asked to identify a certain shrub. All said "Holly" — but it was not. Catherine identified it as Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquafolium*) which has very holly-looking evergreen leaves. This plant sports yellow berries, not red (there were no berries when we were there), and likes some protection and an acid soil. There were rose bushes, still bearing blooms, and some creeping Cotoneaster. Near a mesh fence bearing the five-lobed leaves of the Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocisus cinquefolia*), there were some fragrant Viburnum bushes and some redtwigged and yellow-twigged Dogwood. Here I finally learned the identity of those beautiful red-barked and yellow-barked shrubs often seen on dog walks in Fort Needham Park! Most of the plantings we saw were near building walls. One of these, a Redspire Pear tree (*Pyrus calleryana*), grown for its showy spring flowers, was doing very well due to the retained heat of the cement wall behind it and also of the surrounding asphalt in the pathways.

Down to the grounds fronting the main highway, we saw tall Black Locusts which some had thought to remove; Catherine decided to keep because of their height and very attractive dark bark. Near here were some Columnar Norway Maples and a Camperdown Elm (one of those grafted trees the branches of which resemble a trees gnarled and curly root system rather than the usual crown of an average tree). Along a new gravelled path parallelling the Bedford highway, there were Mugo Pines, more Kwanzan Cherry, and some very large recently transplanted Rhododendron that had survived the move surprisingly unscathed. Catherine shared some of the process that was behind the transfer of plants from site to site, the redoing of the pathways, and other recent landscape changes. Here I learned that by removing a Rhodendron's finished flowerheads at the end of their flowering, they will fare much more vigorously.

From here we climbed the hill again to the Rosaria Patio, which is a lovely, vari-levelled, semi-hidden retreat lush with Juniper, Amelanchier, Rhododendron, and Creeping Cotoneaster. The ground around is almost completely engulfed by the green and hardy Baltic English Ivy. It must be beautiful here on a warm summer's day.

Up further we walked on to the grounds of the President's house, past some Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) with their distinctively antler-shaped dried fruits and branches; then on to view some thick hedges of real Holly this time (*llex aquifolium*). There were both male and female plants — the female leaves being darker, shinier, curlier, and more attractive than the leaves of the male.

The tour over, we returned to our cars from the President's residence past a now bare stand of yellow Forsythia branches. Thank you Catherine, for braving a cold day to give us a very informative and useful tour.

- S. Robertson





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.

I remember the first Christmas Day I passed in Canada - being laughed at because I wandered out on to the plains near Peterboro', and brought in a wreath of the boxleaved trailing wintergreen (which with its scarlet berries reminded me of the varnished holly with which we were wont to garnish the old house at home) and hanging it over the mantel piece, and above the pictures of my hosts' parlor, in honor of the day. It seemed to me these green branches might be held as emblems to remind us that we should keep faith bright and green within our hearts.

-Catharine Parr Traill, Canadian Settler's Guide (1855)

NATURAL EVENTS

mid-NovApril	American Tree Sparrows winter here								
late Novearly Dec.	Striped Skunks enter hibernation								
22 Dec.	Winter Solstice at 4:19 a.m. AST: Winter begins								
24/25 Dec.	Annual nocturnal circumglobal migration of Arctic Reindeer								
JanMay	Venus can be seen, bright in the west in the evening								
1 - 12 Jan.	Mercury is visible low in the southwest in early evening								
4 Jan.	Quadrantid meteor shower								
22 Jan.	Venus appears near the crescent Moon								
February	Jupiter rises in the southeast before morning twilight begins: Saturn is in the southwestern sky as								
	evening twilight falls, and sets in the early evening								
21 Feb.	Venus appears near the crescent Moon								
March	Jupiter rises about 3 a.m. and is prominent in the southeast sky as dawn begins								
mid-March	sap starts running in the Sugar Maples								
mid-late March	Snowdrops bloom in sheltered gardens								
mid-March/mid-April	rafts of thousands of Common Eider can be seen near the Halifax Harbour approaches								
20 March	Spring Equinox at 4:03 a.m. AST: Spring begins								
21-23 March	Venus appears near the waxing crescent Moon								
23 March	Killdeer return								
last week March?	first tentative peeps of awakening Northern Spring Peepers heard in Halifax County								
last week March	Skunk Cabbage in bloom in Digby and Yarmouth counties								
28 March	noisy flocks of Common Grackles signal the beginning of the migratory season								
late March	Striped Skunks emerge from hibernation								
late March	Pussywillows appear								
late March	Crows start nesting; they lay eggs in later April								
late March/early April	Woodchucks (aka groundhogs) emerge from hibernation								
3-4 April	total lunar eclipse, visible from eastern North America								
5 April	Piping Plover returns								
6/7 April	Daylight Savings Time begins: turn clocks ahead one hour								
first week April	Coltsfoot comes into bloom								
mid-April	Eastern Dwarf Mistletoe blooms								

Sources — Blomidon Naturalists Society, <u>A Natural History of King's County</u>, 1992; Colombo's <u>Canadian Global</u> <u>Almanac</u>, 1995; Erskine's <u>Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Maritime Provinces</u>, 1992; Sue Brown of Frogwatch '95; Gibson's <u>Winter Nature Notes for Nova Scotians</u>, 1980; Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's <u>Observer's</u> <u>Handbook</u>, 1996; Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia, 1986; the personal observations of Bob Guscott, Jim Wolford, Gordon Yeadon, and the compiler.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON LATE AUTUMN AND WINTER SATURDAYS

2 Dec.	7:32	16:35		6 Jan.	7.51	16.49
9 Dec.	7:39	16:34		13 Jan	7.40	16.57
16 Dec.	7.45	16:35		20 Jan	7.45	10.57
00 0	7.10	10.00		20 Jan.	7:45	17:06
23 Dec.	7:49	16:38		27 Jan	7.39	17.15
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17 5.	7.20	17.55	WIND AUT LOOK AND	9 Mar	6:37	18:13
17 Feb.	7:13	17:45	0 0 0 0	16 Mar	6:24	18:22
24 Feb.	7:01	17.54		22 Mar	6.11	10.01
		17.04	0 0,0	23 Wal	0.11	18:31
			0	30 Mar	5:58	18:40
					9	



ORGANIZATIONAL EVENTS

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

20 Jan./96 Opening of exhibit "An Elemental Landscape: Sable Island", photographs by the prominent landscape photographer Thaddeus Holownia.

6 Feb. "Natural History of Sable Island" with Alex Wilson, 12:15 p. m.

Blomidon Field Naturalists — Indoor meetings take place on the third Monday of the month at Room 244 in the Beveridge Arts Centre, Acadia University, 7:30 p.m.

15 Jan. "Seaweeds". Speaker yet to be confirmed.

Dartmouth Volksmarch Club — Meets for organized walks, usually at least 10K, every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. Pick up their schedule at the Trail Shop on Quinpool Road, or phone 435-5252 for information.

Friends of McNabs Island — Usually holds a number of ski and snowshoe trips to the Island: no dates have been set yet. For more information call Dusan Soudek at 422-1045; or 434-2254.

Nova Scotia Bird Society — Indoor meetings take place on the fourth Thursday of the month at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 8 p.m. For more information phone 852-2428 or http://cfn.cs.dal.ca/Recreation/NS-BirdSoc/nsbnmain.html. Phone the N.S.B.S. Bird Information Line at 852-CHAT (i.e. 2428) to hear news of what birds are around, province-wide, and any other Society news of note - field trips, meetings, etc. This line is usually updated at least twice a week. There are many field trips this winter, in other parts of the province, so phone for details.

- 16 Dec/2 Jan. Join in a Christmas Bird Count in your area: phone Fulton Lavender or the N.S.B.S. Bird Information Line for information.
- **13 Jan.** Sewer Stroll leader Fulton Lavender (455-4966) Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Hartlen's Point. (If bad weather, then the 14th.)
- 25 Jan. Members' Slide Night
- **10 Feb.** Sewer Stroll II leader Fulton Lavender (455-4966) Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Hartlen's Point. (If bad weather, then the 11th.)
- 22 Feb. "Rare and interesting bird sightings in Nova Scotia" with Peter MacLeod
- 23 March "Better birding made easy" with Fulton Lavender

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History

Evening programmes begin at 7:30 p.m.

6 Jan. - 18 Feb. Exhibition "Klondike Gold", a travelling exhibit from the Dawson City Musuem

- 17 Jan. "The Klondike Story" with Frank McGill.
- 31 Jan. "Nova Scotia's Gold Rush' with Craig Miller
- 21 Feb. "Sable Island and the Ipswich Sparrow" with Merilee Temple

Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society — Meets fourth Monday of the month at the N.S. Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information phone Heather Drope at 423-7032, or http://fox.nstn.ns.ca:80/~csensen/

- **22 Jan.** Photographer Terry Carrol will share with us his celebrated system for sorting and filing photographs and slides for easy retrieval. A second speaker (not yet confirmed) will give a presentation on different methods of writing field notes.
- **26 Feb.** Christoph Sensen will take us on a European journey with a slide presentation of the many species of flowers he photographed thousands of feet up in the Alps.
- 25 March Marion Zinck has been working on the newest edition of the Museum of Natural History's book, "The Wild Flora of Nova Scotia". She will tell us what is new with the new Flora book and why the Museum is updating it.
- Orchid Society of Nova Scotia Meets second Sunday of the month at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m.

Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia — Meets second Monday of the month, as well as the first and third Sundays of the month, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. Special Seminars and Shows are held at St. Mary's University, Theatre A, Burke Education Centre. For more information phone Branimir Gjetvaj 422-3407.
16 March Special seminar with Sherman Hines

27 April Spring Show

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Halifax Chapter) — Public shows are presented at 7 p.m. on most Thursdays at the Planetarium in the Sir James Dunn Building, Dalhousie University. These last about an hour.





— courtesy of David Lane, Burke-Gaffney Observatory, St. Mary's University — compiled by Patricia L. Chalmers





TIDE TABLE



	January-janvier						February-février								March-mars								
Day	Time	Ht./ft. Ht	t./m	Jour	Heure	H./pi	H./m	Day	Time	Ht./ft.	Ht./m	Jour	Heure	H./pi	H./m	Day	Time	Ht./ft.	Ht./m	Jour	Heure	H./pi	H./m
1 MO LU	0430 1130 1715 2340	5.6 1.2 5.1 1.8	1.7 0.4 1.6 0.5	16 ти ма	0325 1030 1605 2235	5.7 1.4 5.0 1.7	1.7 0.4 1.5 0.5	1 TH JE	0545 1230 1825	5.5 1.2 5.2	1.7 0.4 1.6	16 FR VE	0520 1215 1810	6.0 0.6 5.7	1.8 0.2 1.7	1 FR VE	0515 1150 1755	5.2 1.4 5.1	1.6 0.4 1.6	16 SA SA	0505 1155 1755	5.7 0.6 5.8	1.7 0.2 1.8
2 TU MA	0525 1220 1805	5.7 1 1.1 (5.3 1	1.7 0.3 1.6	17 WE ME	0430 1130 1715 2340	6.0 1.0 5.3 1.5	1.8 0.3 1.6 0.5	2 FR VE	0040 0630 1310 1905	1.8 5.7 1.1 5.4	0.5 1.7 0.3 1.6	17 SA SA	0030 0620 1305 1900	1.2 6.4 0.2 6.1	0.4 2.0 0.1 1.9	2 SA SA	0005 0605 1230 1840	1.9 5.4 1.3 5.3	0.6 1.6 0.4 1.6	17 su DI	0020 0605 1250 1845	1.1 6.1 0.4 6.2	0.3 1.9 0.1 1.9
3 WE ME	0030 0610 1300 1850	1.8 (5.8 1 1.0 (5.4 1	0.5 1.8 0.3 1.6	18 TH JE	0535 1230 1820	6.3 0.6 5.7	1.9 0.2 1.7	3 SA SA	0115 0715 1340 1945	1.7 5.9 1.0 5.6	0.5 1.8 0.3 1.7	18 su DI	0125 0715 1355 1950	0.9 6.7 0.0 6.4	0.3 2.0 0.0 2.0	3 SU DI	0045 0650 1310 1915	1.6 5.6 1.1 5.6	0.5 1.7 0.3 1.7	18 MO LU	0115 0700 1340 1930	0.8 6.3 0.2 6.5	0.2 1.9 0.1 2.0
4 TH JE	0110 0650 1335 1930	1.7 C 5.9 1 0.9 C 5.5 1	0.5 1.8 0.3 1.7	19 FR VE	0040 0630 1325 1915	1.2 6.6 0.2 6.0	0.4 2.0 0.1 1.8	4 su Di	0145 0750 1415 2020	1.6 6.0 0.9 5.7	0.5 1.8 0.3 1.7	19 мо LU	0215 0805 1445 2040	0.7 6.8 -0.1 6.6	0.2 2.1 0.0 2.0	4 мо LU	0120 0725 1340 1950	1.4 5.8 1.0 5.8	0.4 1.8 0.3 1.8	19 ти ма	0205 0750 1425 2015	0.5 6.5 0.2 6.6	0.2 2.0 0.1 2.0
5 FR VE	0145 0735 1410 2010	1.7 C 6.0 1 0.8 C 5.6 1).5 1.8).2 1.7	20 SA SA	0135 0725 1415 2010	1.0 6.8 -0.1 6.4	0.3 2.1 0.0 2.0	5 MO LU	0220 0830 1445 2055	1.5 6.0 0.9 5.8	0.5 1.8 0.3 1.8	20 TU MA	0305 0855 1535 2125	0.6 6.8 0.0 6.7	0.2 2.1 0.0 2.0	5 TU MA	0155 0805 1415 2025	1.2 5.9 0.9 6.0	0.4 1.8 0.3 1.8	20 WE ME	0250 0835 1510 2055	0.4 6.5 0.3 6.6	0.1 2.0 0.1 2.0
6 SA SA	0215 0810 1440 2045	1.7 0 6.0 1 0.9 0 5.7 1).5 .8).3 .7	21 su DI	0230 0820 1505 2100	0.9 7.0 -0.2 6.6	0.3 2.1 -0.1 2.0	6 TU MA	0255 0905 1515 2130	1.4 5.9 0.9 5.9	0.4 1.8 0.3 1.8	21 WE ME	0400 0940 1620 2205	0.6 6.6 0.3 6.6	0.2 2.0 0.1 2.0	6 WE ME	0235 0840 1450 2100	1.1 5.9 0.9 6.0	0.3 1.8 0.3 1.8	21 TH JE	0335 0920 1555 2140	0.4 6.4 0.6 6.4	0.1 2.0 0.2 2.0
7 su DI	0245 0850 1510 2125	1.7 0 6.0 1 0.9 0 5.7 1).5 .8).3 .7	22 мо LU	0320 0910 1555 2145	0.9 6.9 -0.1 6.6	0.3 2.1 0.0 2.0	7 WE ME	0330 0940 1550 2205	1.4 5.9 1.0 5.9	0.4 1.8 0.3 1.8	22 TH JE	0450 1025 1710 2250	0.8 6.4 0.6 6.3	0.2 2.0 0.2 1.9	7 TH JE	0310 0915 1525 2135	1.0 5.8 0.9 6.1	0.3 1.8 0.3 1.9	22 FR VE	0420 1005 1640 2220	0.5 6.1 0.9 6.2	0.2 1.9 0.3 1.9
8 MO LU	0315 0930 1540 2200	1.705.911.005.81).5 .8).3 .8	23 TU MA	0415 1000 1645 2235	1.0 6.7 0.1 6.6	0.3 2.0 0.0 2.0	8 TH JE	0410 1015 1630 2240	1.5 5.7 1.1 5.9	0.5 1.7 0.3 1.8	23 FR VE	0540 1110 1800 2335	1.0 6.0 1.0 6.0	0.3 1.8 0.3 1.8	8 FR VE	0350 0950 1605 2210	1.0 5.8 1.1 6.0	0.3 1.8 0.3 1.8	23 SA SA	0505 1045 1725 2300	0.7 5.8 1.3 5.8	0.2 1.8 0.4 1.8
9 TU MA	0350 1005 1615 2235	1.8 0 5.8 1 1.1 0 5.8 1	.5 .8 .3 .8	24 WE ME	0515 1045 1740 2320	1.1 6.4 0.5 6.4	0.3 2.0 0.2 2.0	9 FR VE	0455 1050 1710 2315	1.6 5.6 1.3 5.8	0.5 1.7 0.4 1.8	24 SA SA	0635 1200 1855	1.2 5.6 1.4	0.4 1.7 0.4	9 SA SA	0435 1030 1650 2250	1.1 5.6 1.2 5.9	0.3 1.7 0.4 1.8	24 su DI	0555 1130 1815 2340	1.0 5.5 1.7 5.5	0.3 1.7 0.5 1.7
10 WE ME	0435 1040 1655 2310	1.9 0 5.6 1 1.3 0 5.8 1	.6 .7 .4 .8	25 TH JE	0615 1135 1835	1.2 6.1 0.9	0.4 1.9 0.3	10 SA SA	0550 1130 1800 2355	1.7 5.4 1.5 5.7	0.5 1.6 0.5 1.7	25 su DI	0015 0730 1245 1945	5.6 1.4 5.2 1.8	1.7 0.4 1.6 0.5	10 su Di	0530 1115 1740 2335	1.2 5.5 1.5 5.8	0.4 1.7 0.5 1.8	25 мо LU	0645 1215 1910	1.2 5.2 2.0	0.4 1.6 0.6
11 TH JE	0525 1115 1740 2345	2.005.511.405.71	.6 .7 .4 .7	26 FR VE	0005 0715 1225 1930	6.1 1.4 5.6 1.2	1.9 0.4 1.7 0.4	11 SU DI	0650 1215 1855	1.7 5.2 1.7	0.5 1.6 0.5	26 мо LU	0105 0820 1340 2040	5.3 1.5 4.9 2.0	1.6 0.5 1.5 0.6	11 мо LU	0630 1200 1845	1.3 5.3 1.7	0.4 1.6 0.5	26 TU MA	0025 0735 1305 2000	5.1 1.4 4.9 2.2	1.6 0.4 1.5 0.7
12 FR VE	0620 1155 1830	2.0 0 5.3 1 1.6 0	.6 .6 .5	27 SA SA	0055 0810 1320 2020	5.8 1.5 5.2 1.6	1.8 0.5 1.6 0.5	12 мо LU	0045 0755 1315 2000	5.6 1.7 5.0 1.8	1.7 0.5 1.5 0.5	27 TU MA	0200 0915 1450 2135	5.0 1.6 4.7 2.1	1.5 0.5 1.4 0.6	12 ти ма	0020 0740 1300 2000	5.6 1.4 5.0 1.9	1.7 0.4 1.5 0.6	27 WE ME	0120 0825 1405 2055	4.9 1.6 4.7 2.2	1.5 0.5 1.4 0.7
13 SA	0030 0720 1245 1925	5.7 1 2.0 0 5.1 1 1.7 0	.7 .6 .6 .5	28 SU DI	0150 0905 1420 2115	5.5 1.5 4.9 1.8	1.7 0.5 1.5 0.5	13 ^{TU} MA	0145 0900 1420 2115	5.5 1.6 4.8 1.9	1.7 0.5 1.5 0.6	28 WE ME	0310 1010 1600 2230	4.9 1.6 4.7 2.1	1.5 0.5 1.4 0.6	13 WE ME	0120 0845 1410 2110	5.4 1.3 4.9 1.9	1.6 0.4 1.5 0.6	28 TH JE	0220 0915 1515 2145	4.7 1.7 4.7 2.2	1.4 0.5 1.4 0.7
14 su DI	0115 0820 1340 2020	5.6 1. 1.9 0. 4.9 1. 1.8 0.	.7 .6 .5 .5	29 мо LU	0250 1000 1535 2215	5.3 1.5 4.8 2.0	1.6 0.5 1.5 0.6	14 WE ME	0255 1010 1545 2225	5.5 1.3 4.9 1.8	1.7 0.4 1.5 0.5	29 TH JE	0415 1100 1705 2320	5.0 1.6 4.8 2.0	1.5 0.5 1.5 0.6	14 TH JE	0230 0950 1535 2215	5.3 1.1 5.0 1.8	1.6 0.3 1.5 0.5	29 FR VE	0330 1005 1620 2235	4.7 1.7 4.8 2.1	1.4 0.5 1.5 0.6
15 мо LU	0215 0925 1450 2125	5.6 1. 1.7 0. 4.9 1. 1.8 0.	.7 .5 .5 .5	30 ти ма	0355 1055 1640 2310	5.2 1.5 4.8 2.0	1.6 0.5 1.5 0.6	15 TH JE	0410 1115 1705 2330	5.7 1.0 5.2 1.5	1.7 0.3 1.6 0.5		T.			15 FR VE	0355 1055 1655 2320	5.4 0.9 5.3 1.5	1.6 0.3 1.6 0.5	30 sa sa	0440 1055 1715 2325	4.9 1.6 5.1 1.8	1.5 0.5 1.6 0.5
		2		31 WE ME	0455 1145 1740 2355	5.3 1.3 5.0 1.9	1.6 0.4 1.5 0.6						6	A						31 su DI	0530 1140 1800	5.1 1.5 5.4	1.6 0.5 1.6

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! NEXT DEADLINE ! 5 FEBRUARY FOR MARCH ISSUE contributions to the Editor, HFN c/o NS Museum of Natural History

Please phone 455-8160 to alert the editor

THE SNOW

It sifts from leaden sieves, It powders all the wood, It fills with alabaster wool The wrinkles of the road.

It makes an even face Of mountain and of plain,— Unbroken forehead from the east Unto the east again.

It reaches to the fence, It wraps it, rail by rail, Till it is lost in fleeces; It flings a crystal veil

On stump and stack and stem,— The summer's empty room, Acres of seams where harvests were, Recordless, but for them.

It ruffles wrists of posts, As ankles of a queen,— Then stills its artisans like ghosts, Denying they have been.

-Emily Dickenson