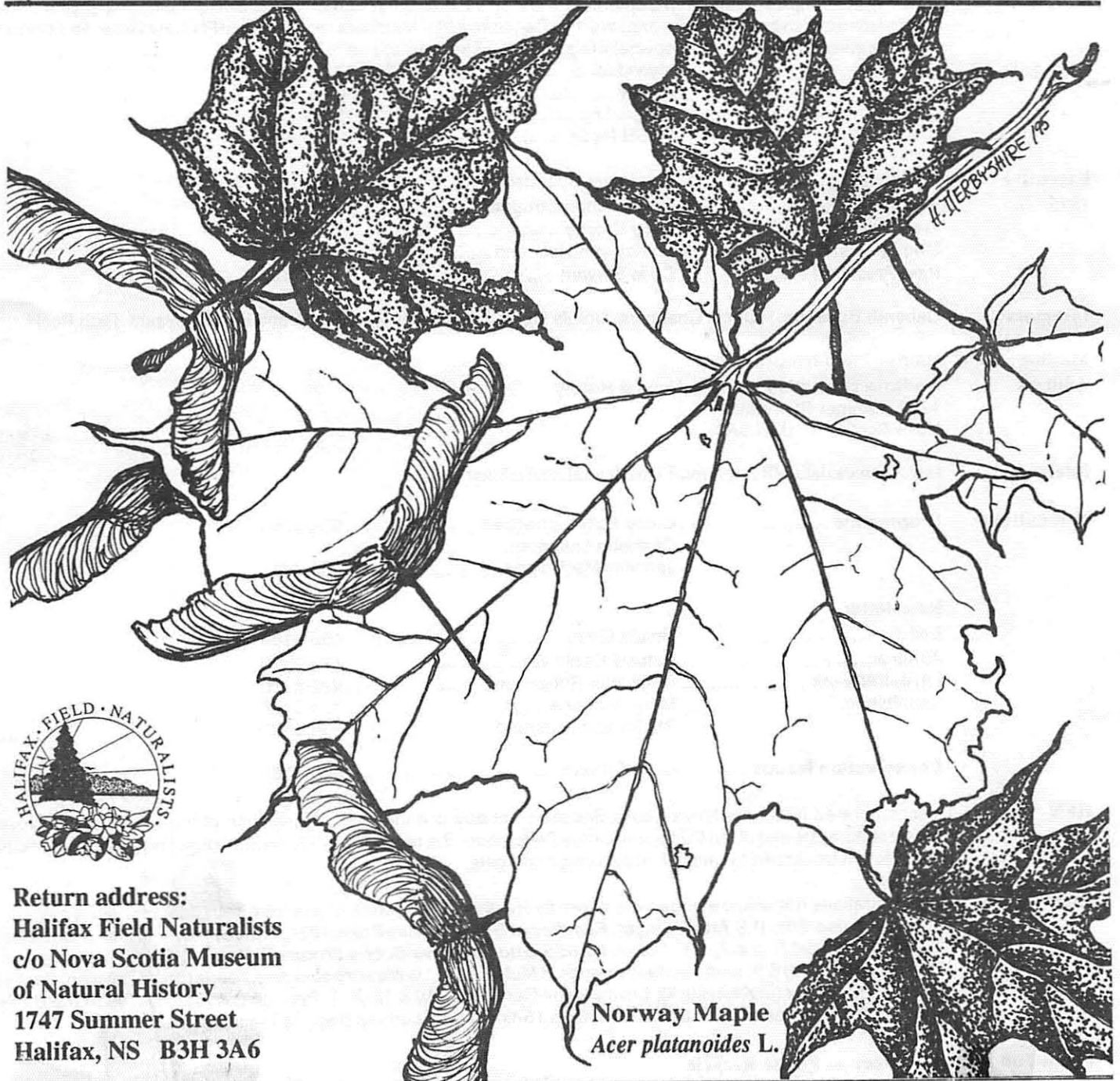


# HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS' NEWSLETTER

September to November 1995

No. 80



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

Norway Maple  
*Acer platanoides* L.

---

---

# 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 1995**
- |                            |                              |          |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| President .....            | Stephanie Robertson.....     | 422-6326 |
| Secretary .....            | Cathy Fulton-Strugnell ..... | 835-8289 |
| Treasurer .....            | Greg Crosby .....            | 422-4650 |
| Membership Secretary ..... | Shirley van Nostrand .....   | 835-3673 |
| Past President .....       | Colin Stewart .....          | 466-7168 |
- Directors** Deborah Burleson, Patricia Chalmers, Ursula Grigg, Bernice Moores, Linda and Peter Payzant, Rich Peckham
- Mailing Address** Halifax Field Naturalists  
c/o Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History  
1747 Summer St., Halifax  
Nova Scotia B3H 3A6
- Internet** <http://ccn.cs.dal.ca/Recreation/FieldNaturalists/fieldnat.html>
- Committees**
- |                        |                              |          |
|------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Programme</b> ..... | Cathy Fulton-Strugnell ..... | 835-8289 |
|                        | Charlotte Lundgren           |          |
|                        | Jennifer MacKeigan .....     | 883-9766 |
- Newsletter**
- |                      |                            |          |
|----------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Editor .....         | Ursula Grigg.....          | 455-8160 |
| Almanac .....        | Patricia Chalmers .....    | 422-3970 |
| Layout/Artwork ..... | Stephanie Robertson .....  | 422-6326 |
| Distribution .....   | Mary Primrose .....        | 423-5165 |
|                      | Shirley van Nostrand ..... | 835-3673 |
- Conservation Issues** ..... Colin Stewart ..... | 466-7168 |

**HFN** is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and 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.

**Illustrations** (All illustrations not acknowledged are either by Haythorn Derbyshire or are from copyright-free sources)  
**This Issue (No. 80):** P.3-Arthur Singer, *Families of Birds*, Golden Press 1971, & S. Kaicher/T. Dolan, *Pond Life*, Golden Press 1967; p.4-7, J. F. Donly, *Identification of Nova Scotia Woody Plants in Winter*, Dept. Lands & Forests, 1960; p. 8 & 9, map courtesy Friends of McNabs; p. 10-*Mushrooms and Toadstools*, Crescent Books, 1972; p. 11-*Ferns* (of Kejimikujik), Environment Canada; p. 10 & 12-R. T. Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*, Fourth Edition, 1980; p.15-tide table courtesy Dept. of Transport

# HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## EDITORIAL



This issue contains the first instalment of HFN's 20-year history by Doris Butters, who has been with HFN since 1976 as typist, newsletter editor, and much more. There are many, many other people who have been volunteers forever who have not yet been mentioned in this particular issue. Further instalments will follow in subsequent issues. The Halifax Field Naturalists held its first formal meeting in October, 1975.

The Federal and Provincial governments are finally coming to some agreement about turning McNabs, Devil's, and Lawlor Islands into a park. Shortly there will be public hearings to see how these islands will be used. HFN's Conservation Committee will submit recommendations and our Directors hope that members will also take part. See the Special Report on McNabs on page 8.

HFN extends its sincere congratulations to the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History for having won an award from the Nova Scotia Environmental Assessment Board for its "Frogwatch" Programme. Nothing could be better deserved. Amphibians all over the world are excellent "assessors" of the effects of pollution, acid rain, and other environmental degradations. We would also like to draw attention to the wonderful new gift shop at the Museum. It has some uniquely Nova Scotian items. Christmas is coming!



—Ursula Grigg

## GEORGE ARCHIBALD WILL VISIT NOVA SCOTIA

George Archibald is one of the most important people in the world of cranes!

George Archibald was born in Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia, and graduated from Acadia University. While completing his PhD at Cornell University, he joined the late Ron Sauvey to start one of the most important research foundations in the world of ornithology. They developed the International Crane Foundation, to ensure the survival of the cranes of the world — fifteen species, of which approximately half are endangered.

Borrowing scarce breeding stock from zoos and far-flung habitats, the Foundation's staff and volunteers created some unique and sometimes amusing breeding situations for the much-loved birds. They were successful; the birds co-operated and produced young!

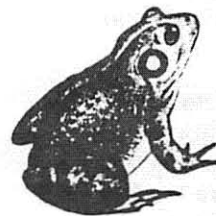
We have heard that George Archibald is coming home to Nova Scotia for a visit. The Nova Scotia Bird Society, Halifax Field Naturalists, and the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History hope to host a special fund-raising event for the International Crane Foundation while he is here, and to hear him speak about ICF's unique work.

Further information for HFN members will be available as follows:

1. At regular monthly meetings
2. On the Internet at our web site —

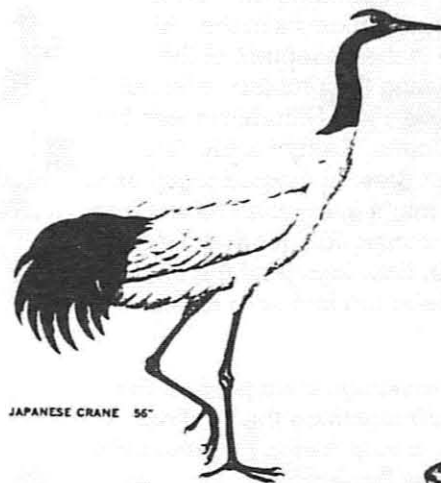
<http://ccn.cs.dal.ca/Recreation/FieldNaturalists/fieldnat.html>

— Bernice Moores

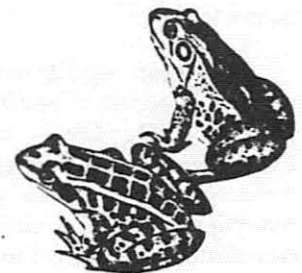


## WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Jennifer Barr  
Marjorie Dunbar  
Janice Hamilton  
Gareth Harding  
Georges Merinfeld  
Patricia Sarrat  
Robert Warrior



JAPANESE CRANE 56"



## CONTENTS

HFN History .....	pp. 4 - 7
Special Reports .....	pp. 8 - 10
Field Trips .....	pp. 10 - 12
Almanac .....	pp. 13 & 14
Tide Table: April - June .....	p. 15
Did You Know? .....	p. 16

# HALIFAX FIELD NATURALISTS THE FIRST TEN YEARS — 1975-85



Downy Alder



Pussy Willow



Speckled Alder



Balsam Poplar



Scotch Elm

## PART 1 - HISTORY

Prior to the 1970s the natural beauty and many unique features of Nova Scotia were not widely appreciated by the general public. Although a vigorous and well-organised Bird Society of Nova Scotia had attracted many people interested in nature, this enthusiasm for bird-life virtually blocked interest in other areas. The only other organised outings in the Halifax area were walks for schoolchildren led by Pierre Taschereau, then a part-time worker at the Nova Scotia Museum; and nature walks for all ages to Cape Split, led by Dalhousie professor of Botany Joe Harvey. There was a clear need for a naturalists' club with broader interests in the general natural history of Nova Scotia.

At about the same time several graduate students in the Biology Department at Dalhousie University began to feel that they were learning too little about living things, and that there were too few opportunities to learn in the field. Anne Linton and Paul Keddy, who were co-operating on a project for Environmental Studies, spent hours in the old Ecology Action Centre in the basement of the Forrest Building discussing the problem, and out of these talks the Dalhousie Field Naturalists was born. Paul, Anne, Winifred Cairns, Cathy Keddy, Scott Cunningham, and Colin Stewart worked together to organise a club which might interest about a dozen people. However, more than 40 attended the first meeting, held in the 8th floor lounge of the Life Sciences Building, to hear Ian McLaren speak on Sable Island.

After that, regular meetings were held on the second Tuesday of each month on the 5th floor of the Biology Building — a map had to be provided for those outside the Biology Department! Then, as Anne recalls... "the real work began; typing articles, making schedules of walks and talks, and printing a newsletter by hand on an old Gestetner in a back room downtown somewhere (I think it was a woman's crisis centre or something), — anyway they let us use their paper and printer for free. I remember spending many a late night there. But in those days it didn't seem like work. We were all enthusiastic about what we were trying to do... learn and educate..."

Enthusiasm developed and membership grew rapidly "but never in those days" says Anne, "to the point where we didn't know everyone. We had helping hands from other Biology students at Dalhousie, while many professors and Nova Scotia Museum staff gladly gave lectures and led walks." Soon, however, it was felt that the name DALHOUSIE Field Naturalists and the meeting place in the Life Sciences Building might be intimidating to the non-university people the club wished to attract, especially at a time when the natural history movement across North America was largely made up of dedicated amateurs.

So in the fall of 1975 the fledgling society changed its name to HALIFAX Field Naturalists. Paul Brodie inaugurated the first meeting with a slide talk on the animal, plant, and human life of the Arctic, providing a glimpse of the aesthetic beauty and power of the landscape, and evincing great respect for the abilities of the Inuit he met there.

The Dalhousie Association of Biology Students donated a grant to help start-up; annual dues were set at \$2.00, and a Constitution was drawn up. Facilities for meetings and a mailing address were sought and generously granted by the Nova Scotia Museum. HFN was off and running.

The first executive — Debbie Burleson, Winifred Cairns, Scott Cunningham, and Anne Linton, under the presidency of Paul Keddy — worked long and hard, often to the detriment of their professional studies. Paul recalls his supervisor's concern that Paul was spending too much time at natural history, to the neglect of his PhD thesis. "There's no doubt" he writes "I could have published at least one more scholarly paper had I not worked with HFN, but in retrospect, which was the more worthwhile experience? I'd do the same thing all over again. I think we all face such difficult decisions every day, when we try to balance the conflicting demands on our time. It's always easy to say, 'Well tonight I'll spend time with the family, or this month I have to write a paper', or whatever our particular pressure happens to be, but when we examine it carefully, the 'other activities' have important rewards too. So I



Daphne



Elm

didn't take my supervisor's advice at that point."

The hard work resulted in monthly meetings both varied and interesting, and popular field trips; some outings became firm favourites, particularly the fall mushroom walk, the late winter visit to the 'sugar bush' for sugaring-off, and of course the annual hike to Cape Split to look for early spring flowers.

By 1975 the newsletter had become a regular feature; at first monthly, then five a year, then six a year, settling finally at four a year. Initial production was a bit rough as by that time Paul, the editor, was printing the newsletter on an old Gestetner in the Biology Department. The content was of a high standard however, as many contributions were by members of science departments. Often, line drawings accompanied the articles, many of them quite amusing. Later, Debbie Bureson became editor and persuaded Lynton Martin, Director of the Nova Scotia Museum, to permit her to print it on museum equipment.

The seventies were years of growing public awareness of dangers to the environment: over-development, acid rain, deforestation, toxic wastes, and chemical pollution. Halifax Field Naturalists played a small part in educating the public through lectures, field trips, and symposia on these problems. As Paul says in an editorial in newsletter No. 1:

Nova Scotia is indeed blessed with a great biotic diversity — from sand dunes to salt marshes, cliffs to hardwood forests, lakes to the ocean, there is an abundance of life forms. They range in size from plankton to whales. Yet few among us are equipped to recognise or adequately appreciate this diversity. The first goal of the Halifax Field Naturalists was therefore to be education — of both our members and eventually the community at large — to increase our appreciation for Nova Scotia's natural history. Our role in conservation activities is under considerable discussion. It is clear that as naturalists we have a vested interest in the protection of wildlife and their habitats. Two avenues of approach need to be considered: one, the creation of wildlife reserves, and two, an attempt to change the destructive aspects of our current technological society which makes such reserves necessary... I hope members will give some thought to our position in this matter. It was most gratifying at the first meeting to see that all members agreed that conservation must be an eventual role of the Halifax Field Naturalists...

To that end the society began to participate in community environmental programs, Letters of concern or protest were sent to government departments, and periodic symposia or panel discussions on conservation issues were held.

From the club's inception in 1975, to December 1976, membership increased from 75 to 208. The first Annual General Meeting, held on January 22, 1977, in Room 2840 of the Life Sciences Building, was highlighted by a Symposium on Nature Preservation in Nova Scotia. Eighty members attended, and President Paul Keddy attributed the reason for success to the willing way in which many members had helped so that not all the work fell on the shoulders of the Executive.

1976 and 1977 proved to be particularly productive years for community involvement by HFN members often working quietly and consistently behind the scenes. A Seminar on Budworm Spraying and a Planning Workshop on Kejimikujik were held, a submission was presented to the Berger Commission, and a protest was lodged against City trees being sprayed with chemical pesticides. The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) recommendations for setting aside lands for seven parks had been superseded by 'The Porter Plan' which greatly reduced the amount of proposed parkland, and it was felt necessary for the society to express its concern on this issue by letters to the government.

Also in 1977, the Halifax/Dartmouth Annual Regional High School Science Fair was inaugurated and HFN offered a book prize — a scroll beautifully hand-lettered by Pat Evans — and a year's membership for the best project in natural history or conservation. The judges — Estelle Laberge, Howard Ross, and Paul Keddy — were disappointed by the emphasis placed on technology and engineering. There were few entries in HFN's categories. However, a prize was awarded to Stella Couban, Grade 10, Sir John A. MacDonald High School, for her work on Water Quality in various Lakes and Bedford Basin.



Crack Willow



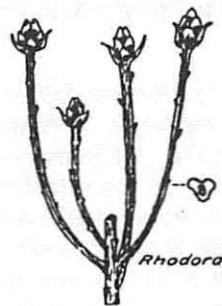
Purple Osier



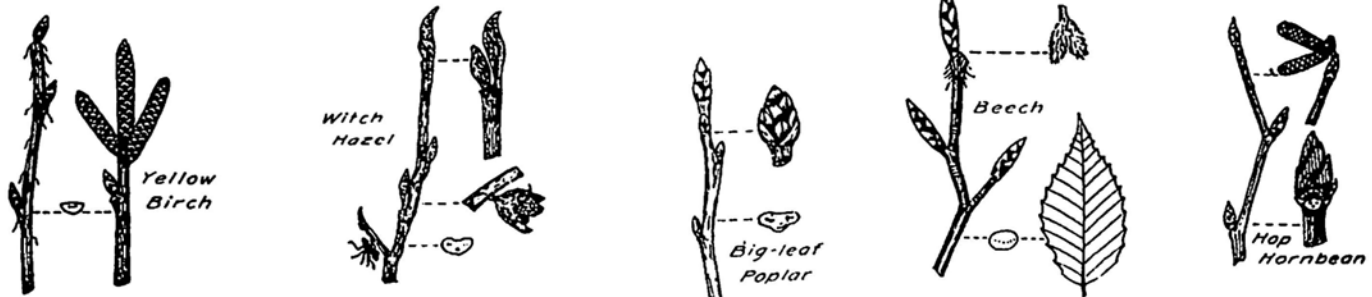
Balm-of-Gilead



Trembling Aspen



Rhodora



For 1977 Heather Harbord succeeded Paul as President, and at the first meeting of the new Executive it was decided "...not to have speakers interviewed on radio as this results in too large an audience for the space available"! Then the question was raised as to whether both auditorium rooms should be opened up. Halcyon days? However, the 1976 Salamander Crawl had been taped for Sunday morning's Maritime Magazine and appeared later on the 'National' programme "Five Nights". Ten years later, media interviews were more than welcomed! Also that year the first HFN brochure was designed and produced by Paul Keddy.

Early in 1977, it became obvious that NSM's commitment to the Department of Education had increased to the point where their print shop could no longer handle outside newsletters. HFN was trying to produce five issues a year with programme flyers in the intervals; members tried to print these themselves on equipment at MOVE — Movement for Citizens Voice and Action — a recently-formed citizens' advocacy group located in downtown Halifax. Fortunately by the end of 1978 the Nova Scotia Museum was once again able to print our newsletter — a courtesy for which the society was eternally grateful.

Before the end of her term of office Heather transferred to the West Coast and Kathy Aldous served the rest of her term as Acting-President. At that time administrative tasks were divided between the Treasurer and the dual position of Secretary and Membership-Secretary, and the club had no official Programme Committee. Executive meetings were not held on a regular basis but called when deemed necessary, and they were often held during a noon hour in the Botany Lab at Dalhousie University. Programmes were usually discussed at such Executive meetings, and proposals for walks and talks were put forward and implemented by the Executive.

By 1978 membership had risen and enthusiasm was high. At the Second Annual General Meeting in February 1978, Joe Harvey was elected President and Anne Linton the first Vice-President. In her presidential report, Kathy Aldous commented on the rapid growth of the club noting that membership had passed the 300 mark, and that HFN was now recognised as a responsible conservation

organisation as well as an active natural history society. In paying tribute to the dedication and hard work of the founding Executive (led by enthusiastic and apparently tireless Paul Keddy), and the volunteers who performed the majority of tasks, Kathy called on members to become more active in supplying ideas, leadership, enthusiasm, and effort. Writing for, and helping publish the newsletter, keeping accounts, writing briefs, leading walks, and presenting programmes were all areas where help was needed, as well as in the sharing the many small but important jobs within the group. Increasing costs necessitated dues being raised again, this time to \$5.00 for an individual and \$7.00 for a family.

1978 was a comparatively quiet, mainly routine year. Interesting and informative slide talks continued, and monthly field trips usually attracted a good turnout. Letters of protest were written, mostly by individuals, and Joe Harvey continued to keep a wary eye on the annual tree spraying program in Halifax.

In 1979 Paul was appointed to the Department of Botany and Genetics at Guelph University, and the Keddys transferred to Ontario; Paul's work on Nova Scotia's Forgotten Corner — the Tusket River Valley — had developed into a continuing research project on rare and endangered plant species of the disjunct coastal plain in the southern corner of the province.

As the original graduate students and university teachers in HFN moved on to positions elsewhere, and as the membership changed, lay people from outside began to replace the university community on the HFN executive. Unfortunately, more and more administrative work and newsletter writing fell on the president's shoulders. In fact it became difficult to find anyone to write on science subjects for the newsletter. To encourage contributions from less science-oriented members, and to create a useful and permanent record of outings, a more formal Field Trip Report Section was started. (In 1982, Filip Volckært, a marine biology student from Belgium, designed a format for field trip reports which simplified writing them.) Members were also encouraged to send in verse, anecdotes, helpful hints, reports on symposia or meetings, and book reports — so long as it was about natural history, the contribution need not be scientific.

Basswood,  
Linden



Silver Maple



Anne Linton, who had spent several summers studying seabirds in the Arctic, had become increasingly perturbed about the potential damage to their habitats from the proposed test drilling for oil in the Beaufort Sea. For the society's AGM in February 1979, a successful Symposium was held on this topic, resulting in many letters of concern being sent to the Prime Minister.

Although 1979 proved to be a year of reduced activity in many natural history societies, and HFN membership declined to 181, individuals continued to work at personal projects.

Anne became president for 1980-81 and in that year Marjorie Willison, then Membership Chairman, modernised HFN's mailing list and introduced the computerised address and label printing system which has become permanent. And in that year also, a programme of area studies was initiated to find out just what did exist in local natural areas.

In 1981 the Museum kindly offered HFN space on the bottom shelf of the bookcase in the foyer; magazines, newsletters from other clubs and government information were readily available there for club members to read.

In the summer of 1981 Erick Greene's research program took him to Princeton University, and the society lost the expertise of both Erick and Anne, now Mrs. Greene. Doris Butters agreed to serve as Acting President for the remainder of Anne's term, with John van der Meer as Co-president; Doris and John continued as Co-presidents during 1982 and 1983. John was elected President for the period of 1984-85.

In 1982 and 1983, budget cuts made it necessary for the Museum to ask us to supply our own paper, though they continued to print the newsletter and provide coloured covers. Mailing costs had also increased significantly, as had all supplies. So HFN increased annual membership dues once again — this time to \$7.00 per individual and \$10.00 per family, plus a new sustaining membership for \$15.00.

HFN still offered a prize in the annual High School Science Fair, although in some years it was not awarded, as emphasis on technical and engineering projects increased. But in 1983 there were two prizewinners, and they were asked to

present their projects at regular monthly meetings: Lara Keith's work on Spider Webs, and Jacqui Shaw's on The Microenvironment of the Pitcher Plant, were both nicely done and well received. In 1984, prizewinners Tanya MacNeill (with a project on Acid Rain) and Raghu Durvasala (Pesticides and Fresh Water Ecosystems) both gave good presentations to club members.

During 1984 HFN continued to operate, though less dynamically, and several projects were shelved. Then early in 1985 Parks were again in the news and the Annual General Meeting celebrated the society's Tenth Anniversary with a mini-symposium on the Projected Parks Along the Eastern Shore. The panel of specialists was headed by Derek Davis, Science Director at the Museum.

About this time, membership which at one point had fallen to 150 had increased to 175 and interest was reviving. Colin Stewart and Michael Downing proposed re-writing and simplifying the Constitution. Administrative responsibilities had again been divided, as during 'the lean years' it had proved difficult to find enough help to share the workload. In addition to President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Membership Secretary, the club now had a good Programme Committee of three efficient and willing members. A larger newsletter staff had been formed under Edna Staples as editor. This staff included Doris Butters, who had been typing the newsletter almost from its beginning. A group of five or six people met at Aileen Meagher's home to collate and mail the newsletter. The nucleus of a Publicity Committee concentrated on attracting new members and finding ways of making the society more widely known. By again encouraging the active participation of as many members as possible, it was hoped that the society would soon be able to revive shelved projects and initiate new ones.

In 1985, as part of the Centenary celebrations of Parks Canada, Kejimikujik National Park honoured HFN with a plaque in recognition of the society's valuable input during the planning process for Keji ten years earlier.

Michael Downing's election as President in 1986 ushered in Halifax Field Naturalists' second decade.

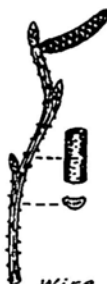
— Doris Butters



Balsam Poplar



Wild Pear



Wire Birch



White Birch



English Oak



Northern Red Oak



Chokeberry

# SPECIAL REPORTS

## MCNABS ISLAND — A PARK AT LAST?

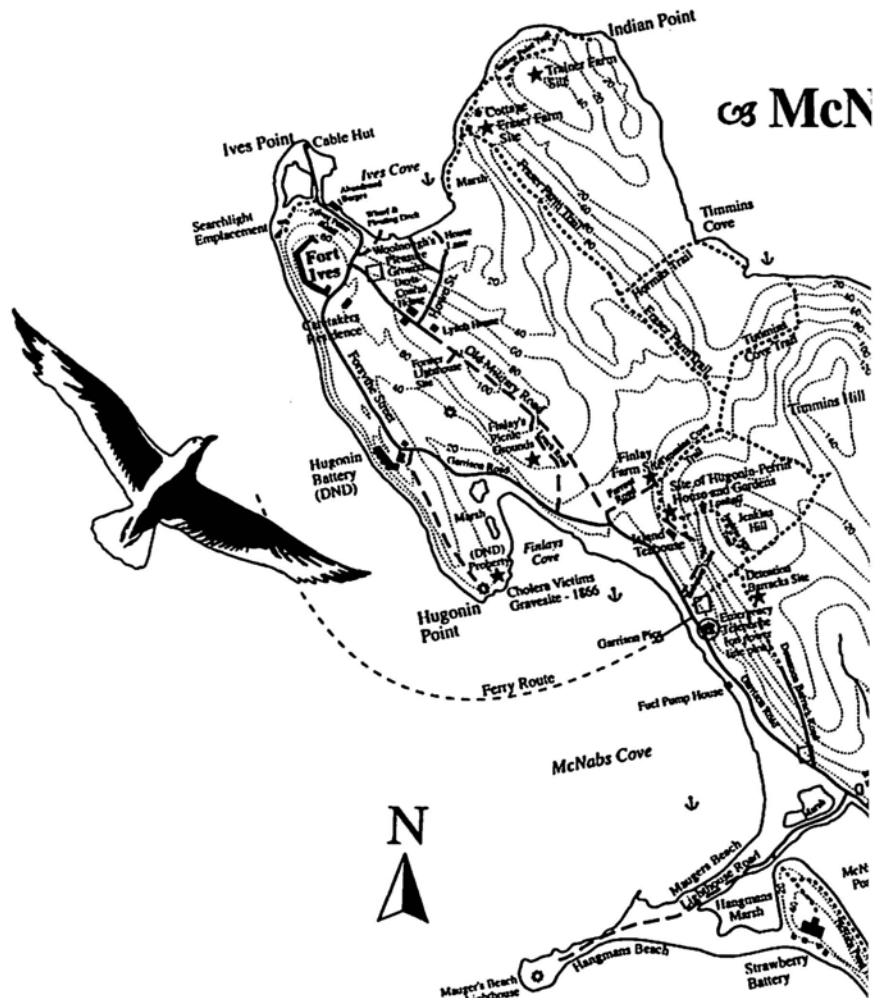
A few weeks ago, a couple of vacationers from New York caught an aerial glimpse of the green islands in the mouth of Halifax Harbour and decided that they had to be visited. The vacationers explored the waterfront that night, made their plans, and next morning crossed to McNabs and joined the beach stroll which I led. They were enchanted by the island, and thought us very fortunate to have such beautiful wilderness close by. When a Grey Seal came up beside the ferry on the return journey, their envy was complete.

McNabs Island has been a camp and pleasure ground for centuries, first for the Mi'kmaq, and until recently, for local residents. The first public picnic drew more than 3,000 visitors on July, 1845 before cars and highways made it easier to drive out of town. In the 1980s, John Jenkins established a regular ferry service and built the little stone teahouse on the Hugonin-Perrin site. During 1987, his peak year, he ferried 15,000 visitors! The usual number was 10,000 per year.

Over the past 20 years, McNabs Island, Lawlor, and Devils Island have been threatened with development. On the other hand, the Islands have been listed as part of the east coast chain of parks which includes Crystal Crescent Beach, Cole Harbour Marshes, and Lawrencetown Beach. The Department of Defence has gradually withdrawn from McNabs, and all but the fort sites may be given to Nova Scotia, whose Department of Natural Resources keeps a year-round caretaker on McNabs. (It's the caretaker David Seaboyer's dogs who greet visitors at the Garrison Pier.)

The Friends of McNabs formed in 1990 to protest the establishment of a sewage treatment plant there, and to promote the use of McNabs, Lawlor, and Devils Islands as a public park. The Friends have greatly improved the amenities with more toilets and garbage bins, and the beaches are cleaned twice a year (Clean Nova Scotia Foundation helps with that). Hiking trails have been cleared and maintained — even people accustomed to visiting McNabs have found new routes — and a programme of historical and nature walks has been carried out (HFN's Conservation Committee helped here).

The Friends have fulfilled another ambition with the publication of a descriptive book, "Discover McNabs Island". It contains a very fine map,

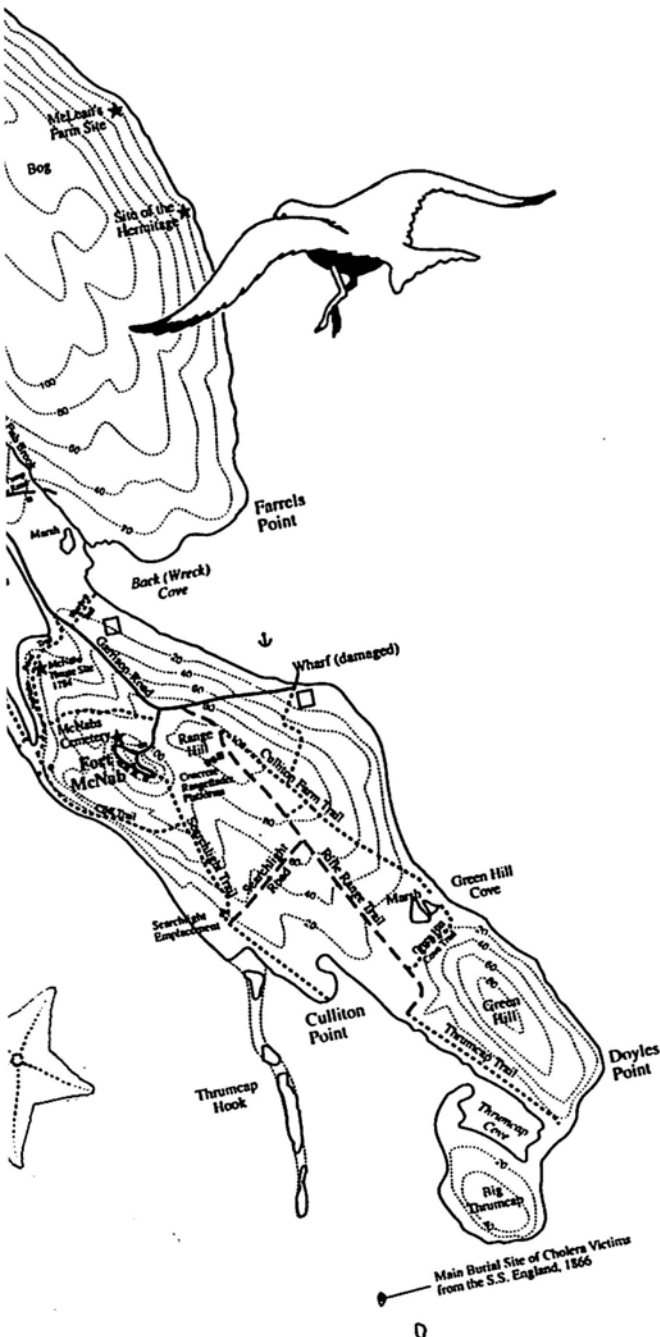


showing the topography and natural areas of the island, and also the sites of historical homes and businesses. I learned that Peter McNab built his house on the southwest of the island, rather than the





## McNabs Island



north, where I had always imagined it. No wonder he objected to the position of the naval gibbets! If Thomas Raddall is correct in his novel 'Hangman's Beach', they must have been right in front of McNab's living room windows.

The Federal and Provincial Governments plan to hold meetings this fall to hear the views of the public on which direction to take for the islands. A certain amount of development is desirable to make the Island Chain pleasant to visit, and to cover the costs of maintenance. HFN's Conservation Committee supports the Friends of McNabs in wanting to preserve the natural and historic character of the area.

HFN's Conservation Committee has identified the McNabs' natural areas most at risk from over-use; for example the sand dunes behind Mauger's Beach, and the old woodland on the northeast end. The Committee will suggest management as in national parks, with remote areas accessible only by rough hiking trails; then deer and bear will continue to visit, owls will still roost in winter, osprey and heron will still nest, and migrating birds will still use the Island as a staging place. They will also recommend the provision of a safe and easy landing place for visitors, including those in wheel chairs. Accessible, safe, drinking water, a teahouse or small food store, and camp grounds and picnic areas will be recommended for the west — from Ives Cove to the lighthouse. The two big historic houses will be recommended for school nature classes and perhaps a seasonal International Hostel.

HFN hopes that members will take part in the public discussions themselves, and through letters to the Minister of Natural Resources, The Honourable Don Downe, Department of Natural Resources, 1701 Hollis St., PO Box 698, Halifax, N. S., B3J 2T9). We must speak up to protect our "green gems" that those New York visitors envied so much.

HFN members who have not been over to McNabs Island lately might want to visit. The Friends have planned two more trips this year — a "Beach Sweep" (Sept. 24) and a "Fall Foliage Foray" (Oct. 22) — encompassing historical, beach, and bird strolls (see Organisational Events, page 13, for times and contact telephone numbers). Ferry service can be arranged privately too — not only from the Cable Wharf in Halifax, but also from the fishing wharf in Eastern Passage.

"Discover McNabs Island" is available in bookstores, from Friends of McNabs, and from HFN, for \$9.95).

— Ursula Grigg

# FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA NATURALISTS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

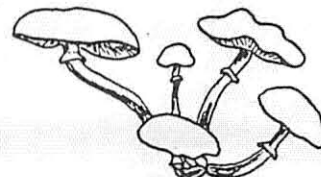


The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists held its annual conference in June in Wolfville, as guests of the Blomidon Naturalists Society. Approximately one hundred and thirty members, from all over the province, registered for the weekend event, centred at Acadia University. A full programme of talks, slide shows, short early morning nature walks, longer field trips, and social events was prepared for us. The programme this year was more explicitly concerned with conservation issues than in the past. The speakers addressed the question of what volunteers and non-government organisations could do to protect the diversity of wildlife and landscape, and we heard about some local and provincial initiatives. The outings gave us an opportunity to see some of the most interesting natural areas in King's County, under the guidance of local experts. The keynote speaker, Harry Thurston, led a thoughtful reflection

on our place in nature, and our banquet speaker, Alex Colville, spoke about the influence of nature on his art.

This was a wonderful opportunity to spend several days learning about issues that concern us deeply as naturalists. The social events gave us an opportunity to see old friends and meet congenial new people from around the province, and the outings were wonderful. Despite some heavy rain during the Saturday afternoon trips, none turned back. We naturalists aren't to be deterred by a bit of maritime weather! The only complaint was that there were so many field trips that sounded interesting and one couldn't go on them all! Our friends in Wolfville were excellent hosts, and earned the thanks of the enthusiastic group. Our next conference will be in Annapolis Royal next summer. Plan to come, and watch for further announcements.

— Patricia L. Chalmers  
HFN rep on the FNSN Board



## FIELD TRIPS

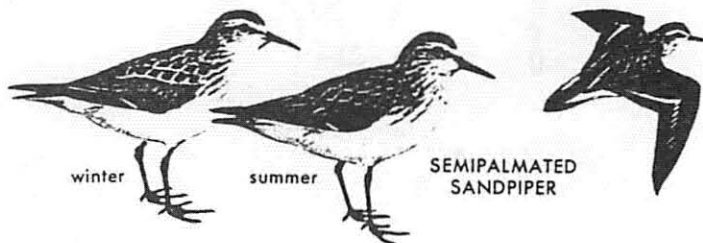
### SHOREBIRDS AT DORCHESTER CAPE



At the end of a wonderful holiday in south-eastern New Brunswick, I was taken to Dorchester Cape on August 5th to see the migrating shorebirds.

I had seen flocks of these migrants before, but never on an open beach, so had never understood how flights of peeps could be described in terms of smoke. Here, enormous flocks — sometimes thousands — took off from the beach, disturbed, or crowded or for some other piperly reason, and flew out over the sea, then turned and flew back again. The effect was very much like smoke from a beach fire in a chancy wind, forming a thin column near the source, billowing into dense clouds further out, swirling and falling to sea level before returning to the strandline. Against the sky and close to the sea, the flocks looked black, but in the air, against the background of sea and forest, the effect was bronze when the birds' backs were towards us, and white as they showed their undersides. It was quite fantastic.

On the previous evening, we had watched shorebirds resting on islets in Sackville Wildfowl Marshes, then taking off in small parties towards the sea, where the tide was beginning to ebb (how did the birds know?). These were mostly Greater Yellow-legs, with quite a lot of Dowitchers and a few other species. However, these species did not turn up on the Dorchester Cape beaches, where the flocks were almost entirely Semi-palmated Sandpipers. They flew in, low over the sea, mostly in parties of 50 or less, settling above high tide mark, from which the sea was beginning to recede. The birds were packed so closely it was barely possible to see the colour of the sand; most of them were resting, but a few hungry ones prospected the waterline, and some walked about or preened. They were not disturbed by people parked only a few yards from them at sea-level.



Before leaving the Cape, we went to the top of the low cliffs and saw 31 Black Scoters forming a pear-shaped raft on the sea. All the ducks were turned towards the 'stalk' end of the pear, and when the foremost duck dived, the rest followed in turn, surfacing later in a scattered pattern and reforming before doing it again. The last duck at the rounded end of the raft was a non-conformist; it sometimes faced sideways, and flapped its wings when it should have dived. Black Scoters feed on clams and crustacea in shallow water, and were presumably vacationing while their flight feathers grew in after the summer moult.

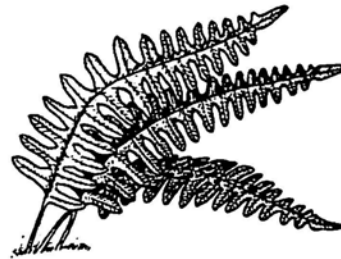
— Ursula Grigg



An information site was established, with two educational signs identifying the species in the area, and explaining the importance of conserving natural places. There are also several picnic tables nearby.

This small area of the Industrial Park exhibits a variety of habitats and a diversity of species in a relatively small area within the City, and is well worth a visit by interested naturalists.

— Patricia L. Chalmers



## WILDLIFE CORRIDOR PROJECT AT BAYER'S LAKE

This spring a visitor from Germany turned up on several HFN field trips, eager to see more of our province and to increase her knowledge of our local species. Marion Radszweit, a student in landscape architecture and environmental management at Nuertingen Polytechnical University in Germany, was in Halifax to work on a project "to demonstrate that a wildlife habitat can be developed and maintained even within an urban or industrial environment". Under the auspices of the Nova Scotia Wildlife Federation, Marion undertook a survey of flora and fauna in an 11-acre natural site in the Bayer's Lake Industrial Park. The Wildlife Corridor includes Bayer's Lake itself, detention ponds, the surrounding woodland (composed of older softwoods and hardwoods), and the thickets along the roadsides and railway tracks.

Several local naturalists assisted with the surveys, which identified 22 bird species, 28 wildflowers, four mammals, and two amphibians. I enjoyed the several visits which I made to the area; we saw many wildflowers along the narrow woodland paths, and the thickets bordering the railway tracks were alive with warblers in the early morning as well as in the evening.



## SHORE BIRDS OF THE MINAS MUD FLATS

**DATE:** Saturday, 12 August 1995  
**PLACE:** various locations along the Minas Basin  
**WEATHER:** warm, +22, sunny, with strong winds  
**INTERPRETER:** Judy Tufts  
**PARTICIPANTS:** 5 HFN'ers plus members of the Blomidon Naturalists Society

We met in sunshine at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre in Wolfville. Judy had us gather around to listen to a tape recording of an interview Sherman Boates gave earlier on CBC radio, in which he talked about why the Minas Basin is so attractive and necessary for millions of migrating shorebirds. Dr. Boates spoke of the interconnections between the migrating shorebirds and the tiny crustaceans and worms of the mudflats as an "intimate dance of nature rather than a predator/prey relationship". In late July and August the mudflats are a critical feeding and staging ground for a number of species of sandpipers, plovers, and other wading birds.

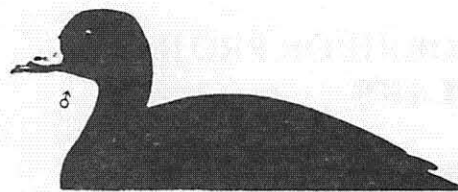
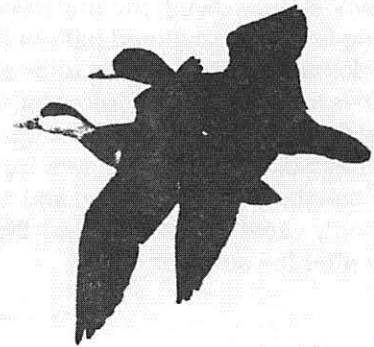
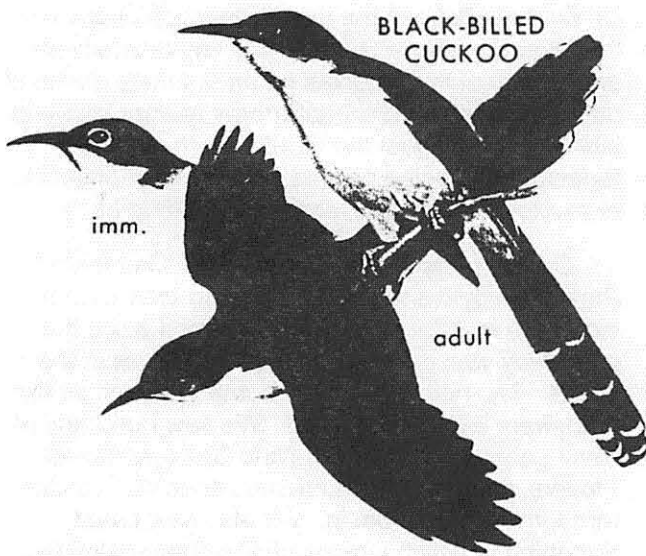
Our first stop was at the Windsor Causeway Park. The dykes here afford a good view over the extensive mudflats which have formed since the causeway was built across the Avon River in the 1960s. The tide had not yet come up much so the birds were widely dispersed. We saw hundreds of Semi-palmated Sandpipers and Semi-palmated Plovers, the two most numerous species to migrate through the Minas Basin. We also saw Least Sandpipers, which look much like Semi-palmated Sandpipers, but are slightly browner and have green legs rather than black. This was difficult to observe, since their legs were usually covered in mud! There were also a few Black-bellied Plovers among the



tidal grasses. A Bald Eagle in adult plumage, sitting out on the flats beside one of the rivulets, looked enormous compared to these tiny birds. Our scopes shook in the strong wind off the Basin. We sat down to have our lunch at the picnic tables beside the pond, where a solitary muskrat was swimming about; a kingfisher rattled overhead. After lunch we climbed up to the crest of the dyke again: as the tide had been coming in the birds were pushed back closer to shore, so we had better views.

Our next stop (after a quick break at a farm market for ice-cream cones) was at Avonport Beach, on the east side of Oak Island. Here the incoming tide had forced the "peeps" to roost on some gravelly ledges. Periodically they rose in a silvery flash, to wheel out over the water in wonderfully synchronized flight. Some people took photographs of this wonderful sight. A flock of Short-billed Dowitchers flew by as we watched, and we also had a good view of an immature Northern Harrier, hovering over the fields, wings a-tilt. Its cinnamon breast and white rump were clearly visible. While standing at the water's edge amongst the eel grass and sea lavender, studying the birds overhead, we realized that the water was creeping up quickly on us — and our cars! We beat a hasty retreat, some of us with soaking feet.

The third site was the extensive dykelands of Grand Pré. Some of the farmers who use the dyke roads object to the presence of visitors, and warning signs have been posted by the Marsh Body. Judy cautioned us to give the farmers every courtesy and



BLACK SCOTER

not to get in the way of agricultural machinery. We found several hundred Black-bellied Plovers roosting on a grass sod field on the east side of Grand Pré, together with Semi-palmated Sandpipers. At East Grand Pré we got out near the dyke overlooking Boot Island. There were more flocks of shorebirds here, but we were startled to hear an unusual call from the low shrubbery. Judy identified this as the Black-billed Cuckoo, and we walked towards it, hoping it would show itself. However the bird fell silent and didn't flush. Judy had a tape recording of a Black-billed Cuckoo which she played several times, but this did not provoke a response either.

Our final stop was on the west side of Grand Pré at the Wolfville Sewage Ponds. We all climbed slowly up the dyke and stood with binoculars at the ready, to peer out over the crest at — a beach with a young couple oblivious to our presence! I think we all felt like we were in some Monty Python skit about birdwatchers. There were no birds on the tidal side of the dyke, and the ponds were empty too. However, this can be a good area for ducks and gulls later in the migration season.

We saw a number of species of shorebirds this day, as well as landbirds, and with the aid of the scopes which several people brought and kindly shared, we all had a good chance to look at them. It was a most rewarding day, to see so many birds and to learn some of the good spots to find them. Thank you Judy!



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 Flora of the fall, comprising asters, golden rods and wild-everlastings were all out, encircling the pearly grey rocks which strewed the barren, and every bush was wreathed with lines and webs of little spiders, marked by the myriads of minute dew-drops with which they were strung. Gradually warmed by the rays of the sun when, overcoming the surrounding barrier of the forest, they poured over the whole face of the scene, the little barren sparkled like fairy-land, the morning resolving itself into one of those glorious days for which the fall of the year is noted.

— Campbell Hardy, Forest Life in Acadie (1869)

## NATURAL EVENTS

<b>early Aug. — early Oct.</b>	Several species of the orchid <i>Spiranthes</i> bloom.
<b>September</b>	The busiest month for most fall migrating birds.
<b>8 Sept.</b>	Full moon — this is the "harvest moon".
<b>mid-Sept.</b>	Our native Beechnuts ripen — good eating if you can get them before the squirrels!
<b>mid-Sept.</b>	Common Loons leave fresh-water lakes to winter on the sea.
<b>mid-Sept. — mid-Oct.</b>	Rough-legged Hawks arrive in the Valley from their northern breeding grounds, and stay the winter.
<b>23 Sept.</b>	Autumnal equinox at 9:15 a.m. ADT: fall begins.
<b>3 Oct.</b>	Ruby-throated Hummingbirds depart.
<b>8 Oct.</b>	Full moon — this is the "hunters' moon".
<b>16 Oct. — 26 Nov.</b>	Mercury visible in east before sunrise.
<b>18 Oct.</b>	Snow Buntings arrive.
<b>22 Oct.</b>	Our provincial bird, the Osprey, leaves.
<b>22/23 Oct.</b>	Orionid meteor shower — rate: 25/hour.
<b>29/30 Oct.</b>	Return to standard time — turn clocks back one hour.
<b>early — mid Nov.</b>	You know that winter must be coming when the Public Gardens close.
<b>3—5 Nov.</b>	Southern Taurid meteor shower.
<b>17/18 Nov.</b>	Leonid meteor shower — rate: 10-15/hour.
<b>14 Dec.</b>	Geminid meteor shower — rate: 95/hour.
<b>22 Dec.</b>	Winter solstice at 4:19 a.m. AST: winter begins.
<b>24/25 Dec.</b>	Annual nocturnal circumglobal migration of Arctic Reindeer.



**Sources:** — Blomidon Naturalists Society, A Natural History of King's County, 1992; Colombo's Canadian Global Almanac, 1995; Gibson's Summer Nature Notes for Nova Scotians, 1982; Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Observer's Handbook, 1995; Tourism Nova Scotia; Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia, 1986; the personal observations of the compiler

## ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS

### Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

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

**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.

**18 Sept.** "Scoping Study for the Bay of Fundy" by Alison Evans.

**16 Oct.** "Underwater Photography in Rivers of the North Atlantic Coast" by Gilbert van Ryckevorsel.

**Dartmouth Volksmarch Club** — Meets for organised 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** — For more information phone 434-2254 or 422-1045.

**19 Sept.** "The Ongoing Story of McNabs and Lawlor Islands". Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 7:30p.m.

**24 Sept.** "Fall Beach Sweep". Depart from the Cable Wharf at 10:00 a.m.

**22 Oct.** "Fall Foliage Foray". Depart from the Cable Wharf at 10:00 a.m.

### Friends of the Public Gardens

**25 Sept.** An important public meeting regarding the future of the Public Gardens. Phone Dan Norris at City Hall for time and place details.

**Mainland South Heritage Society** — Indoor meetings take place on the last Thursday of the month at the Captain William Spry Centre in Spryfield, 7:30 p.m. Outings usually last 3 to 4 hours, and can be rugged. Wear sturdy footwear. Phone 477-2234 for more information.

- 24 Sept. Old St. Margaret's Bay Road. Meet at the Capt. William Spry Centre at 1 p.m.
- 1 Oct. Trail to Harry's Lake, Harrietsfield. Meet at the Capt. William Spry Centre at 1 p.m.
- 15 Oct. Thompson Road, Harrietsfield. Meet at the Capt. William Spry Centre at 1 p.m.

**Maritime Museum of the Atlantic** — Evening programmes begin at 7:30 p.m.

- 10 Oct. "Beach Sweeps: More Than Just Jetsam" by Randy Miller.
- 7 Nov. "New Ocean Mapping: Finding Shipwrecks and Beaches on the Ocean Floor" by Gordon Fader.

**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.

Phone the NSBS. Bird Information Line at 852-CHAT (2428) to hear news of what birds are around province-wide, and any other Society news of note such as field trips, meetings, etc. This line is usually updated at least twice a week. There are many field trips this fall in other parts of the province, so phone for details.

- 28 Sept. "Birding in Pictou County" with Ken McKenna.
- 30 Sept. Hartlen's Point and Eastern Shore with Fulton Lavender (455-4966). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the old entrance to the Hartlen's Point Golf Course.
- mid — end Dec. 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 with Fulton Lavender (455-4966). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Hartlen's Point (if bad weather, then the 14th).

**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History** — Evening programmes begin at 7:30 p.m.

- 22 Sept. "Wild Mushrooms — Should I or Shouldn't I?" by Scott Cunningham.
- 23 Sept. "Tidepool Tango" with Cathy Fulton-Strugnell. Meet at Martinique Provincial Park, 2nd parking lot, at 1:30 p.m. Phone 424-7353.
- 18 Oct. "Sable Island Sparrow Survey" by Merilee Temple.
- 1 Nov. "All About Linen: The Natural Fabric" by Joan Waldron.
- 5 Nov. "Oh, Christmas Tree, Oh, Christmas Tree: Nova Scotia's Christmas Tree Industry" by Alex Wilson, at 2 p.m.
- 8 Nov. "Primate Evolution" by Paul Erickson
- 15 Nov. "Will You Become A Fossil?" by Tom Martel.
- 19 Nov. "Do Frogs Hibernate With Their Eyes Closed?" by Andrew Hebda at 2 p.m.

**Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society** — Meets fourth Monday of the month at the NS Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information phone 423-7032.

**Orchid Society of Nova Scotia** — Meets second Sunday of the month at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m.

- 22 Oct. Sergio Englert of 'Ricsel Orchids' in Brazil will speak on the Cattleya Orchids of Brazil.
- 18/19 Nov. Look for a Fall Orchid Display. Location to be announced


**Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia** — for more information call 463-2695

- 22/23 Sept. Tenth Annual Halifax International Exhibition of Photography and Fall Show, Burke Education Centre, St. Mary's University, 8 p.m.
- Oct. 27 Freeman Patterson's "Creation & Creativity". Burke Education Centre, St. Mary's University.

**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. There are regular shows scheduled from 7 September to 14 December. These last about an hour.

## SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON FALL AND EARLY WINTER SATURDAYS

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

2 Sept.	6:37	19:50		4 Nov.	6:56	17:00
9 Sept.	6:46	19:37		11 Nov.	7:05	16:51
16 Sept.	6:54	19:24		18 Nov.	7:15	16:44
23 Sept.	7:02	19:11		25 Nov.	7:24	16:39
30 Sept.	7:10	18:58				
7 Oct.	7:19	18:45		2 Dec.	7:32	16:35
14 Oct.	7:28	18:32		9 Dec.	7:39	16:34
21 Oct.	7:37	18:21		16 Dec.	7:45	16:35
28 Oct.	7:46	18:10		23 Dec.	7:49	16:38
				30 Dec.	7:51	16:42



— compiled by Patricia L. Chalmers



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Maple Trees in Nova Scotia

One of the rare times that I had to go back on my word was one past spring, when I foolishly offered one of my sons and his friend a nickel for every maple seedling pulled from the garden. And every autumn the deep, colourful sea of maple leaves reminds me of this embarrassing incident as I gaze out across our city property, rake in hand.

Maples, especially Norway Maple —the “street tree” of choice due to its hardy resistance to smoke, dirt, fumes, insects, and disease, I sometimes consider to be more like a weed than an ornamental shade tree. We have five very large city ones growing along the grass verges of our corner lot. We have another stubbornly persisting near the foundation of our house. I tear it up every year; it appears again every spring. It senses when we are not looking or are away on holiday, sending out huge leaves from miniature stems to gather more nourishment for its hardy, unkillable roots. One of the distinguishing features of Norway Maple is that it is the only one to exude a milky sap when the leaf or leaf stem is broken. Its leaf also has seven lobes rather than the usual five. It is not native to Canada, having been introduced from Europe and Asia along with the Sycamore, *Acer pseudoplatanus* L.

Maples comprise about 150 species of shrubs and trees belonging to the Family Aceraceae. Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum*, supplies not only mouth-watering syrups, sugars, and butters, but also the preferred wood for bowling alleys, fine furniture, interior finishing, veneers, and plywoods. It matures in 200 to 300 years and will grow to around 33 metres tall and one metre diameter. It thrives best on Cape Breton slopes, Musquodobit uplands, and on North and South Mountains in the Annapolis Valley. Both it and the Red Maple, *Acer rubrum* L., are responsible for our Nova Scotia woodlands' flaming scarlet autumn displays. Early settlers tapped both of these maples when sugar was scarce.

Mountain Maple (White Maple, Dwarf Maple, Whitewood), *Acer spicatum*, is the smallest of native Eastern Maples, and rarely reaches a height exceeding eight metres. It has a grey down on the last cm or so of its twigs, prevents soil erosion on slopes, and provides winter browse for Deer and Moose, and winter buds for Ruffed Grouse. Striped Maple (Moose Maple, Moosewood), *Acer pennsylvanicum*, has conspicuous white stripes on its smooth, greenish bark and like Mountain Maple provides both soil stabilisation and winter browse for wildlife. Two other maples are Silver Maple, *Acer saccharinum* L., and Manitoba Maple, *Acer negundo*. These are introduced North American exotics.

The Canadian flag shows a symbolic leaf combining the features of various Maples.

— sources, *Trees of Nova Scotia, A Guide to the Native and Exotic Species*, Gary L. Saunders, pub. NS Dept. Lands & Forests; and *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol 16, p. 239

— Stephanie Robertson

### ! NEXT DEADLINE !

5 NOVEMBER FOR DECEMBER ISSUE

contributions to the Editor, HFN  
c/o NS Museum of Natural History  
Please phone 455-8160 to alert the editor