# THE HALIFAX FIELD NATURALIST



No. 90 March to May 1998



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	Almanac
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Tide Table: April - June	·····

Return address: HFN, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, N.S., B3H 3A6

HFN	Scotia Naturalists and of the Official receipts will be issue	ova Scotia Societies Act. It is a member Canadian Nature Federation. It is reg of for individual and corporate gifts. H ne provincial umbrella association for I	er organisation of the Federation of Nova gistered for federal income tax purposes. FN is a member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalist groups.	
Objectives	are to encourage a greater appreciation and understanding of Nova Scotia's natural history, both within the membership of HFN and in the public at large. To represent the interests of naturalists by encouraging the conservation of Nova Scotia's natural resources.			
Meetings	are held, except for July and Nova Scotia Museum of Nat	August, on the first Thursday of every ural History, 1747 Summer Street, Hal	month at 8:00 pm in the auditorium of the ifax. Meetings are open to the public.	
Field Trips	are held at least once a mont the gas. All participants in HFN to take part in field trips.	th, and it is appreciated if those travellin lactivities are responsible for their own sa	ng in someone else's car share the cost of fety. Everyone, member or not, is welcome	
HFN Post	Halifax Field Naturalists			
111 14 1 036		Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Ha	lifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6	
E-mail Web Site	hfnexec@chebucto.ns.ca	tion/FieldNaturalists/fieldnat.html		
FNSN Post	Federation of Nova Scotia N c/o Nova Scotia Museum of	aturalists Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Ha	lifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6	
E-mail		g Linzey, FNSN Newsletter Editor)		
Membership	of the society, or by writing t History. New memberships year. The regular membersh	o: Membership Secretary, Halitax Fie starting from September 1 will be valid	Memberships are available at any meeting Id Naturalists, c/o NS Museum of Natural until the end of the following membership 31. Members receive the HFN Newsletter he fees are as follows:	
	Individual	\$13.00 per year		
	Family	\$19.00 per year		
	Supporting	\$25.00 per year		
	FNSN (opt.)	\$5.00 per year		
Executive	President	Peter Payzant	061 1007	
1998/99	Vice-President	Doug Linzey	<u>429-5997</u>	
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Directors	Debra Burleson, Ursula Grig	g, Linda MacKay, Shirley McIntyre, Be	rnice Moores, Colin Stewart,	
Committees	Programme	. Bernice Moores	422-5292	
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	Refreshments	-		
	Membership	. Shirley McIntyre	835-3673	
· ·	Newsletter			
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	Layout/Artwork	. Stephanie Robertson	422-6326	
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	Conservation	. Colin Stewart	400-/168	
Illustrations	past Editor Doris Butters. H	alifax Tide Tables are courtesy Canad (No. 90): Cover - photoprint by Mary F	copyright-free sources, or the collection of lian Hydrographic Service, Fisheries and Primrose; p. 3 - NSMNH leaflet "Crabs"; p.	

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# **HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**



#### **EDITORIAL**

By this time, the days are longer, continued cold isn't such a burden and this year we may have an early spring! Time to plan for summer, while the weather warms up.

Sadly, we have lost Mary Primrose, our field companion of many years, with her eye for beauty and her camera ready to record it. A tribute to her appears on page 6.

There are three weekend meetings to be enjoyed, all with chances to meet fellow naturalists from Nova Scotia and beyond. Unfortunately two of them coincide. The FNSN Conference is planned for Antigonish, on 4-6 June, with the usual lively itinerary (see this page). A joint meeting with the Chignecto Naturalists takes place in Sackville, New Brunswick, on the same weekend, to look at the unique provincial boundary terrain (see included HFNprogramme for details).

The CNF Annual meeting is again in the Maritimes (see below). For other things to do, a subscription to CNF is worthwhile, or pick up a copy of their magazine, Nature Canada, at a newsstand.

There are several studies to assist in. PlantWatch is continuing for another year; this consists of noting the blooming dates of twelve common plants (see page 14). Canadian Nature Federation continues the study of ladybugs — fax 1-613-562-3371. To help protect Piping Plovers, call Etta Parker, 423-0816.

"Roland's Flora of Nova Scotia" will appear on 14 May (see page 14). "The Natural History of Nova Scotia" was launched on 17 February; available at The Museum Shop.

Real Alternatives to Toxins in the Environment (RATE) has strategies for keeping gardens neat without poisons. Information can be obtained from 479-1440.

— Ursula Grigg

#### **CNF 1998 AGM**

This year, CNF will be holding its AGM in concert with the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists at Sackville, N.B., from August 6 - 9. Sackville sits on the narrow isthmus between the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Dominated by the Tantramar marshes, it is one of the most attractive destinations for naturalists in the Maritimes.

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	malletra@nbnet.nb.ca (R. Mallet)
Internet	<http: maryspt.cnf="" www3.nbnet.nb.ca=""></http:>
Phone	1-613-562-3447
	— Jodi Jov. Administrative Assistant

#### **FNSN 1998 CONFERENCE, JUNE 5-7**

The Eastern Mainland Field Naturalists will be hosting this year's Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists conference in Antigonish. It will be similarly structured to those that have gone before, with mind-boggling field trips and charismatic, educational speakers.

Our theme this year is 'Shorelines — Life on the Edge'. Organisms of all descriptions make their living on the precarious and extreme edge of Nova Scotian shorelines; several of our many field trips will be centered on the shorelines of the Antigonish area. On Saturday afternoon alone, we are providing you with a choice of seven extended field trips! Other walks will focus on plants, birds, insects, and nightlife.

There is a new hiking area, the Fairmont Ridge Trail, which will be used for both afternoon and morning trips. Also at this conference, the FNSN will be inaugurating a project of province-wide scope — the Nova Scotia Herpetology Atlas.

Conference registration forms will be available from your home club or in the next issue of FNSN News. We are greatly anticipating your arrival!

#### CPAWS — PARKS VISION '98

A conference on 'The Future of Halifax's Green and Blue Natural Areas' will take place on April 25/26. The tentative location is Dalhousie University. Contact Doug Linzey, 429-5997.

#### **NEW NEWS**

Yesterday, 16 March, a Supreme Court of Nova Scotia ruling declared that the Provincial Government was within its mandate in restoring Jim Campbells Barren to the list of protected sites.



#### **NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS**



Alan & Joanne Chilton Catherine Deveau Jane Grantmyre & James Frost Terri Gagnac Karen Jensen Grace Kendall Joseph Kerekes Cartlin & Krista Leonard Carolyn Moore John & Valerie Osborne

# SPECIAL REPORTS

### ANNUAL REPORTS

#### FROM THE PRESIDENT

#### **Looking Back**

Your Board of Directors held eight executive meetings this year. We continued our support for the Piping Plover Guardian project, and hosted a wonderful FNSN Annual General Meeting. Largely organised by Patricia Chalmers with help from others, although the turnout was modest, this event was a big success. It didn't cost the HFN anything, and we all had a roaring good time! We took part in discussions about the future of Parks in Halifax, particularly Point Pleasant Park. Your Treasurer Greg Crosby and Vice-President Doug Linzey consolidated our bylaws, and secretary Linda Payzant published them on HFN's web site. And, once again this year, we sponsored a child to attend Sunship Earth Camp.

My thanks are extended to Board members Doug Linzey, Greg Crosby, Linda Payzant, Stephanie Robertson, Debra Burleson, Jan Chapman, Keith Jensen, Linda MacKay, Shirley McIntyre, Bernice Moores, Colin Stewart, and Michael White for having the committment and perseverence to contribute to both the humdrum and the more controversial decisions that have to made in any society. Shirley MacIntyre has continued to ably maintain and administer our membership database and all that it entails. Regine Maass is still quietly and expertly supplying us with delicious refreshments after each monthly presentation. Bernice Moores and Carol Klar continue to supply a strong and full backbone of wonderful field trips and monthly talks. Ursula Grigg wisely and scientifically edits, and Stephanie Robertson produces the 'hard copy' of your interesting, reliable, and informative newsletter.

#### **Looking Forward**

MEMBERSHIP

At the end of one year and the beginning of another, it's customary for the President to deliver some sort of outlook for the coming year. I have to tell you that your Board has had to make some difficult decisions. Let me start by setting the scene: we're a small society, yet we get a lot done. This is because, like many small societies, we have a core group of people who cheerfully propose and take on tasks year after year. If you look at old newsletters, you will see many of the same names on Page 2 issue after issue. But, people get tired of doing the same thing year in and year out, their personal circumstances change, and often they just want a rest. We got a sense of this with the resignation of two board members half-way through the year, and the sharply-reduced attendance of others. At one board meeting we failed to reach a quorum. Although we were able to recruit one new board member during the year, we were aware that finding a slate for next year was not going to be easy. In fact, it was almost impossible. At one point we were faced with the possibility of a sharplyreduced board, and perhaps some vacancies on the list of Officers — President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer. It looked as if we might not be able to put together a Board containing very much in the way of experienced members.

At a special meeting of the board, we discussed the situation, and considered the options. The feelings of those who did not wish to offer for next year were completely respected by the other board members, and we approached the situation in a businesslike way. It became apparent that the main problem seemed to be that many of us were just burnt out, and no longer had the emotional energy to devote to running the society in the present way. One member recalled that in the early days, it ran on a more 'collegial' model, where we mainly devoted ourselves to enjoying the world of Nature without getting caught up in advocacy work, letter writing, committees etc. You can guess what followed.

Everybody present said that they would be happy to stay on under these conditions. For at least the coming year, then, your Board is going to involve itself in a bare minimum of work. We're going to take a rest. We will not take on issues, we will ignore most of the incoming mail, and we'll concentrate on the core activities of presenting programmes and field trips, publishing a newsletter, and maintaining membership records. But, even these activities take a lot of energy and dedication. And, I have to point out that the programme committee, the newsletter folks, and our membership person, are among the longest serving workers on your behalf, and that it is not reasonable to expect them to carry on without protest much longer. Without meaning to be dramatic, I have to say that your Board is still frail and tired. We need new blood, lots of it, and we need it this year if the HFN is to continue on as a living organism. To put it a little more plainly, we need you to take up some of the load if you want your society to keep functioning in its present form. This isn't the end of the Halifax Field Naturalists, but a warning that we are on borrowed time. We can look forward to enjoyable and exciting times ahead, but it's going to require you to make it happen.

#### - Peter Payzant

1996 - 1997	NEW	INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY	SUPPORTING	TOTAL	FNSN
	12	98	40	11	149	59
1997 - 1998 (to date)	19	74	23	10	107	40

#### PROGRAMME

Twenty eight field trips were arranged during the year just ending. Two were cancelled due to unfavourable weather conditions, but both have been rescheduled.

The numbers of participants ranged from two to 27. The low numbers occurred in summer, when participation is often down.

Advertising our events on the internmet and through public service announcements may account for some large turnouts. At times non-members outnumber members two to one! We hope this translates into new memberships and always encourage the non-members to join.

#### FROM THE TREASURER

Many thanks to the previous programme committee who handed over a large quantity of well-organised data. We refer to it regularly. Also, thanks to HFN members and others who pass along their suggestions.

We encourage all members to let us have their suggestions for field trips and evening programmes.

--- Respectfully submitted, Carol Klar and Bernice Moores Programme Committee

## Halifax Field Naturalists

#### **Balance Sheet**

As At December 31, 1997

	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>
Assets		
Cash	\$3,503	\$3,145
Accounts Receivable and Accrued Income	377	379
Inventories and Prepaids	1,732	1,759
Investments	10,352	10,641
Fixed Assets	<u>0</u> _	1_
	A45 004	A45 005
	<u>\$15,964</u>	<u>\$15,925</u>
	<u>\$15,964</u>	<u>\$15,925</u>
Liabilities and Surplus	<u>\$15,964</u> .	<u>\$15,925</u>
Liabilities and Surplus Accounts Payable	<u>\$15,964</u> \$181	\$15,925 \$195
		\$195 10,622

#### 1996 PIPING PLOVER REPORT: SUMMARY

In issue No. 89 of The Halifax Field Naturalist, we reported on Etta Parker's 1996 Piping Plover 'nesting success' statistics. Here is the summary from her report on the year1996.

In the first three years there was a full time staff worker, a Beach Coordinator who compiled the statistics, and a Newsletter Editor, plus a Director.

In 1995 and 1996, there were no funds and I have done the job of all these people. Needless to say, I have not been able to do other projects which I have on my agenda, one being a video on a marsh ecosystem. I had no time to visit the marsh this summer.

If it is decided to stay as a Regional network, would it be possible for some other provinces to do some of this work, especially the newsletter, which takes a good bit of time.

Also, the Halifax Field Naturalists do not wish to be the sponsor of this programme anymore for good reasons.

The Piping Plover Guardian Programme has gone very well in Nova Scotia both in 1995 and 1996.

Guardians are very cooperative. Much work has been done on all beaches, not only the designated beaches where Plovers were found. This was a new project for us, namely: to find where the Plovers are and to protect as well as monitor them.

I have a separate sheet of names of people who do not wish to rejoin the programme because of experiences during the first few years of the growing period in this programme. However, they have been quite willing to watch over the Plovers and to report their findings, either to their respective Beach Coordinators, or to myself. They have actually been working hard on the beaches. I do hope that they will rejoin the programme at some point, however, they are just as helpful as if they were in the programme.

#### — Etta Parker, BSc., Coordinator Piping Plover Guardian Programme for Nova Scotia

(Note: Jackie Waddell, of the Island Nature Trust, Prince Edward Island, is now producing the Newsletter. HFN continues to take an interest in the project, but has withdrawn from involvement in its administration. Ed.)

## 🏶 Mary Primrose, 1927 - 1998 🏶

At this year's March AGM, Peter acknowledged the death of one of our first and dearest members — 'our' photographer, Mary Primrose. He read from a tribute written by Shirley McIntyre, who helped Mary a lot in her last year. Here is what Shirley wrote:

Mary Primrose will be missed among her many naturalist friends. She was among the first members of the HFN, her name appearing in a membership list of October 1975. Since Mary worked in the Biology Department at Dalhousie she was probably a member of HFN's predecessor, the Dalhousie Naturalists.

Mary was always generous in giving of her time to help in many various ways with HFN. In the early days she helped with the newsletter preparation and programme planning. She also served as a director, helped in conference planning, and most recently helped in our newsletter distribution.

Mary trained and worked as an x-ray technician. Then, with the help of Alex Wilson, who at that time was a master's student, she became the photographer for the Biology Department at Dalhousie, a position she enjoyed and held for nineteen years. In spite of her physical limitations, Mary could often be found lying on the ground with her tripod and camera, trying to capture yet another marvellous close-up shot. She could always content herself by staying behind the group looking for photo opportunities.

We are all quite familiar with Mary's wonderful slides, particularly of wildflowers and mushrooms. This spring, we will be able to buy a permanent record of some of Mary's beautiful wildflower photographs. A book about the wildflowers of the Maritimes throughout three seasons is about to be published by Formac. The photographs are Mary's, and the accompanying write-up is by Marian Zinck.

During her illness, Mary remained very focussed on completing this book. It's regrettable that she was unable to see the finished publication; it is a wonderful legacy she has left for us all.



# **HFN TALKS**

#### FALCONS

Peter Serwylo, whose falcons keep Shearwater Airfield clear of birds which might fall foul of aircraft, brought a first-year Peregrine Falcon named Jumbo to HFN's New Year meeting. She will fly for two years, then become part of the Peregrine breeding programme, as she is a purebred eastern-race bird (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). Not all peregrine pairs are compatible, and when one of them is as irritable as Jumbo, the mating is by no means sure! She sat hunched on Peter's fist like a buzzard, ruffling her feathers and muttering under her breath. At times she looked in Peter's face as if she would like to pull off his glasses and toss them on the floor. She has enormous taloned feet for catching birds in the air, and a valve in each nostril which controls the entrance of air to the lungs, especially important during a dive.

After discussing falconry, Peter told us why he believes that the natural way is also the most effective and economical way to keep flocks of birds off airfields. A morning flight over a flock of gulls, for example, can keep them off for the rest of the day, and a kill can keep the airfield clear for a week. Birds become used to noisemakers and mechanical scarers, but there's nothing boring about a falcon!

Many species of raptors can be used in falconry, matching size and hardiness to expected prey and climate. However, falconry is a skilled profession for people, and it helps to start very young! Raptors cannot be bossed around, and have to bond with their handlers, so the human is also in it for life.

We saw a video of falcons in various manœuvres, including footage of the gyrfalcon who entertained us two winters ago at Shearwater. After this, there was a general discussion, including questions on ways of losing these valuable birds.

Peter remembered for us the day when a wild Bald Eagle stooped for his falcon, who was stooping on something else. Not knowing what to do, Peter swung the lure, and fortunately the falcon came to it a fraction faster than the eagle, which decided against tackling Peter. This story surprised some, who think of Bald Eagles as rather passive birds, which wait around to be fed.

At teatime, Jumbo retired, while Peter brought in a male hybrid of the gyrfalcon clan, a grayish bird who sat erect on his glove and looked regally back at us.



Don Layton is a retired meteorologist who has learned to be philosophical about the number of times forecasters get it wrong, especially in Nova Scotia.

7 JANUARY

The data on which our forecasts are based is compiled in Philadelphia, and is scantier than it used to be, before the Federal Government reduced the number of reporting stations. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia weather is at the confluence of at least three major influences and a host of minor ones, so the meteorologist has to know his district very well before risking a forecast — which may turn out to be incorrect.

In Nova Scotia, the ocean is the main modifying influence, protecting us from extremes of temperature but delaying the coldest and hottest days by about six weeks after the solstices. The Gulf Stream near the coast in summer and the cold Labrador Current in winter are more influential than El Nino.

Don Layton's advice to naturalists? Buy a weather radio to get the latest forecast, and learn to predict your local weather using it for a guide; then dress appropriately!

## **SLIDE NIGHT**

This is always a night of pleasant surprises and we were not disappointed! Thank you to all who took part.

5 MARCH

Mary Primrose has always previously had something to show us, and we missed her very much.

Teunis Obdam showed pictures of the Golden Canyon, near California's Death Valley, where he had recently been on holiday. This natural ravine has been carved out of much-folded and faulted rock by wind and blown sand. The cliffs and sand vary in colour from gold to charcoal gray, and often take fanciful shapes. There is virtually no vegetation or wildlife, because of the constant sandblasting. This is a very beautiful place, and a great contrast to the water-eroded cliffs and abundance of life in the Maritimes.

Patricia Chalmers returned us to Nova Scotia, with slides taken in '97 and presented in order, from the early flowers of a wind pollinated tree, through summer blooms adorned by butterflies, and birds and whales, to a brilliant display of autumn leaves. The pale green bells of Moose Maple dangling in the wind could almost be heard chiming; this slide is Pat's favourite too.

Linda Payzant's slides took us to yet more contrasting scenery. She and Peter have recently visited the slopes of the Andes and the Pacific Ocean shores of Chile, at the coastal town of Arica. Some of the peaks are volcanic, and at least one is active. Linda showed photos of the local range taken from the valley floor and from the high plateau. We saw the three kinds of South American camel: Ilama, alpaca, and vicuna, and also a viscacha, an unfamiliar animal related to chinchilla. A beach shot showed gulls and shorebirds on a stretch of well-sorted gray sand. The gulls were unfamiliar, but some of the other birds were our own migrant species, on their winter feeding grounds.

-Ursula Grigg

# FIELD TRIPS



#### **1998 WINTER SEWER STROLL**

DATE: Sunday, 25 January 1998 PLACE: Various locations around Halifax Harbour WEATHER: Fog, wind, rain showers. About 5°C. INTERPRETERS: Peter and Linda Payzant PARTICIPANTS: Six

Remember that tremendous rain storm in late January? This field trip was originally scheduled for the Saturday during which most of the rain fell, accompanied by high winds. We had decided the night before to postpone the trip until the next day, Sunday, promising that the trip would take place, come what may.

Well, Sunday began almost as wet and windy as the day before, and it looked most unpromising as a day for a field trip demanding lots of outdoor activity. However, six intrepid adventurers wearing rain gear met at Hartlen Point for what turned out to be a most enjoyable day sampling the harbour birds. While we were down on the shore figuring out the gulls and having a first look at some ducks, two of our number shouted into the wind that they had just seen a large raptor disappearing into the fog! After some consultation, the two experenced birders agreed that it had probably been a Northern Goshawk. We also had a few Common Redpolls, and a iovely male Ring-necked Pheasant which flushed from the deep grass.

We then set out for the 'grand tour' of the harbour. At many locations, we saw Black Guillemots in their mottled winter plumage, so different from their dapper summer appearance. There were lots of Iceland Gulls and Blackheaded Gulls, but we were unable to locate any Glaucous or Bonaparte's Gulls. Sullivan's Pond held a well-known American Coot, and in the trees next to the spillway from Banook Lake we found a few American Robins and a flock of about twenty Cedar Waxwings.

At Tufts' Cove there were a couple of rarities which had been present for several weeks — a trio of Eurasian Wigeon and a sombre Gadwall, with dozens of Common Goldeneye off in the fog nearer the power station.

The outlet of the Sackville River in Bedford held little of interest due to the tremendous volume of fresh water pouring into the Basin and the resulting turbidity, but there was a delightful male Hooded Merganser not far away under a private wharf, easily viewable from the Sackville River bridge. We pressed on to the Mill Cove sewage treatment plant, and the highlight there was a Snow Bunting foraging near the sidewalk. I'm sure that the couple in a van with steamed-up windows (which just happened to be near the Snow Bunting) were unfazed by having six pairs of binoculars and one telescope trained in their general direction. At the Dingle beach on the Northwest Arm we saw yet more Black Guillemots (our final total was 25), but little else of interest, so we decided to get right out to perhaps the most interesting birding hot spot on the harbour - the big sewage outfall at Tribune Head, near Herring Cove.

It didn't disappoint. Most of the participants had never been to Tribune Head before, and they were much taken with it — the scenic vista, the smells of wet Spruce, the relative shelter from the wind, and most of all the hundreds and hundreds of Common Eiders, scoters, gulls, and yet more guillemots. Unfortunately, the hoped-for Harlequin Ducks could not be found, despite a thorough search by six pairs of eyes.

Our final stop was Chebucto Head, high over the water, from where we looked down on yet more Common Eiders and gulls. Although the weather had been moderating as the day wore on, the fog began to roll in as we stood there, and we all realised just how tired and cold we were. The fog finally activated the sensor in the lighthouse, and the fog whistle began its double hoot as we drove away, bringing yet another enjoyable HFN Sewer Stroll to a conclusion.

— Peter Payzant

#### Sewer Stroll Species List

Common Loon Great Cormorant Canada Goose American Black Duck Mallard Gadwall Eurasian Wigeon American Wigeon Greater Scaup Common Eider Oldsquaw Black Scoter White-winged Scoter **Common Goldeneye** Hooded Merganser Common Merganser **Red-breasted Merganser** Northern Goshawk **Ring-necked Pheasant** American Coot Common Black-headed Gull Ring-billed Gull Herring Gull Iceland Gull Great Black-Backed Gull Dovekie (seen by one person only) Black Guillemot Rock Dove Mourning Dove Northern Flicker Blue Jay American Crow **Black-capped Chickadee** American Robin Cedar Waxwing European Starling American Tree Sparrow Savannah Sparrow Snow Bunting Common Redpoll House Sparrow

Gavia immer Phalacrocorax carbo Branta canadensis Anas rubripes Anas platyrhynchos Anas strepera Anas penelope Anas americana Avthya marila Somateria molissima Clangula hyemalis Melanitta nigra Melanitta deglandi Bucephala clangula Lophodytes cucullatus Mergus merganser Mergus serrator Accipiter gentilis Phasianus colchicus Fulica americana Larus ridibundus Larus delawarensis Larus argentatus Larus glaucoides Larus marinus Alle alle Cepphus grylle Columba livia Zenaida macroura Colaptes auratus Cyanocitta cristata Corvus brachyrhynchos Parus atricapillus Turdus migratorius Bombycilla cedrorum Sturnus vulgaris Spizella arborea Passerculus sandwichensis Plectrophenax nivalis Carduelis flammea Passer domesticus

anuenca

Jul Juck



#### **ANNAPOLIS VALLEY EAGLE TRIP**

DATE: Saturday, 14 February PLACE: Sheffield Mills, Kings Co., and surrounds WEATHER: Sunny, -5°C, cool wind, light snow INTERPRETERS: Merritt Gibson and Jim Wolford PARTICIPANTS: 30

We assembled at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre in Wolfville, where we met Merritt and Jim. Then we seated ourselves in the warm bus, driven by another Jim. By 10:20 a.m. we were on our way.

Merritt outlined the plan for the day's excursion and informed us that many of the Bald Eagles, so numerous until a week ago, had left, either to return to breeding grounds in Cape Breton, or, because of the unusually open countryside, to explore other areas on the mainland. Merritt had spotted only three Eagles on a dry run he did the day before.

Jim Wolford gave us lots of informative maps and handouts. We learned that since 1970 the population of Bald Eagles in the Maritimes has been increasing, but nowhere so successfully as in Kings County.

The secret --- chickens! Eagles flock there in the winter to take advantage of the nutritious food source supplied by local poultry farmers. Many years ago, the late Cyril Coldwell from Gaspereau was the first to start a winter feeding programme. He encouraged local poultry farmers to follow his lead, and put out dead chickens on the frozen fields to feed these majestic Eagles. This effort may be looked upon as a pay-back to the birds for the harm that DDT and other pesticides did to decrease their numbers in the past. The Department of Natural Resources has been conducting weekly surveys throughout the winters since 1993. From their results, it is estimated that at least 400 Bald Eagles now winter in the Annapolis Valley. All this has developed into a major attraction for tourists. With provincial help, The Sheffield Mills Community Association and the Blomidon Naturalists Society host Eagle Watch Weekends in January and February.

Now back to the field trip — our first stop was in front of University Hall at Acadia, to see two Red-tailed Hawk nests — one under each eave above the large entrance. The nest on the left was built the first year.

Next, we saw a huge eagle nest in the tallest Pine in the woods just past Noggins Farm. It has been there since 1991 and the yearly building additions have produced quite a cumbersome shape! Young (up to three eaglets) have been fledged there every year.

We drove through Port Williams and turned left on to Church Street; we spotted our first eagle in a tree near a barn, a short distance beyond the old oaks by the church.

Then, on Middle Dyke Road, we saw more eagles adult and immature. The large white head and tail make the adult unmistakeable. Immatures are brown and mottled irregularly with white until their fourth or fifth year. With a body length of up to 32 inches and a wing span of seven feet they are quite awesome. In the same area were Red-tailed Hawks and Common Ravens. The red-tails have light-coloured breasts which make them quite visible in the trees. In flight, the red tail flares out like a fan. We looked for Rough-legged Hawks, but spotted only one, in the Canard Valley area. Near Saxon Street we saw a very large white bird in a distant tree. After much speculation on our part, Jim told us it is believed to be a partial albino red-tail! It has a dark beak and eyes, whereas those of a true albino would be pink. It has appeared in the same general area for nine winters.

On to Sheffield Mills, where we saw only two eagles in the famous Eagle Tree. Unfortunately, this tree has fallen victim to the dreaded Dutch Elm disease, and is rapidly losing limbs and stature.

We got out of the bus at a few stops, where Jim put his scope on some of these majestic birds for a close-up view to show us the difference between adults and immatures. At Kingsport, there were only gulls and crows on the shoreline. We did not see much else but noticed that the Minas Basin tides were seriously eroding the high banks close to the foundations of the cottages built above.

From there we made our way back to the Biology Department at Acadia for lunch. Recapping the morning, we saw flocks of gulls, including many Greater Blackbacks soaring in the cloudless blue sky. It was a lovely bright day, so some eagles and ravens were active too. Our count for eagles was about 40, much lower than expected, but we had a most interesting and comfortable trip. As we ate our lunch among the life-sized eagle mounts, Jim Wolford entertained us with several excellent videos — about the Annapolis Valley Bald Eagles, of course!

Thank you, Merritt and Jim, for a memorable day.

— Margaret G. Cox

#### **Eagle Trip Species**

Baid Eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus
Red-tailed Hawk	Buteo jamaicensis
Rough-legged Hawk	Buteo lagopus
Common Raven	Corvus corax
Greater Black-backed Gull	Larus marinus
	1



#### **TRACKS AND TREES IN WINTER**

PLACE: Island Lake DATE: Sunday, 22 February WEATHER: Sunny and cold **INTERPRETERS:** Mike Crowell PARTICIPANTS: 24



On a pleasant semi-sunny wintery day, 24 people met by the Hwy 101 a little past the Uniacke interchange. We followed an old logging road which led to Island Lake. Mike Crowell, a biologist, led this very informative trip. The trees we saw were:

Red Maple--- the buds are opposite. The first year the bark is reddish brown. In N.S. this is the most abundant hardwood tree.

Spruce: Red Spruce - our provincial tree. This is a lumber and pulpwood species. The needles are yellowgreen with a sharp point. White Spruce - the needles are twice the length of those of Red Spruce, are bluegreen, and pointed. Black Spruce - the needles are blue-green but the tips are blunt.

Pines --- these were identified by their grouping of needles. Red Pine - the needles are long and paired. White Pine - the needles are shorter and in bundles of five ('white' has five letters for the five needles!).

Trembling Aspen — the bark is smoother than the Large-tooth Aspen (Populus grandidentata).

Balsam Poplar - also known as Balm of Gilead. Its large buds are somewhat heart shaped. The resin given off by the buds is harmful to the finish on cars; Friar's Balsam is made from this resin.

English Oak - an introduced species, characterised by the fact that its leaves remain on the tree all winter, and that they are small.

Eastern White Hemlock - the underside of its needle has two white lines. Deer like eating the needles and branches, while porcupines will gnaw the bark.

The shrubs we noted were:

Willow - twigs are hairy. There are many species, which makes identification difficult. Steeplebush --- also known by many names. Bush Honeysuckle - grows in ditches and disturbed areas beside forests. Pin Cherry and Black Chokecherry - hard to tell apart. In fertile soil cherry bark is reddish, while in a farming area, it will be grey. They are susceptible to Black Knot, a fungus disease.

Heather Family: Lamb Kill - a much-branched evergreen shrub which spreads easily in an open area. It has smooth stems and is reddish brown. Labrador Tea - a shrubby evergreen plant with leaves growing around the stem. It reaches a height of 1 metre. Canada Blueberry — has velvety bark when young.

Sweet Gale, or Sweet Fern - grows in shady or barren soils. The plant is a nitrogen fixer and has a symbiotic relationship with the soil. Its leaves are fragrant.

We saw some ferns; a few remain green all winter. I believe he said these were of the family Dryoptera.

We saw these tracks:

Snowshoe Hare, Varying Hare, or Rabbit. This was the commonest track. It is characterised by the first part of the print having a large elongated mark, which is created by the rabbit's hind feet propelling the animal ahead, followed by the print of the small front feet. They eat tree bark and twigs in the winter. An interesting fact that we learned was that they have two types of droppings — the browny-beige hard pellet that we commonly see, and a softer, green pellet. The rabbit eats the green pellets, which therefore go through its digestive system twice. Ruffed Grouse - an upland game bird which lives in open woods and on the margins of streams. It likes the buds of Yellow Birch, Aspen, and Apple leaves, but not Beech or Oak.

Our leader was a continuing source of information, but it was lunch-time and we were hungry! We enjoyed sitting on the wooden sides of a bridge which crossed over an open stream. There was an amazing amount of snow throughout the Island Lake area, so coming home was like returning to spring!

#### - Shirley McIntyre

#### **Tracks and Trees Species**

Trees **Red Maple** Acer rubrum **Red Spruce** Picea rubens Red Pine Pinus resinosa White Pine Pinus strobus Trembling Aspen Populus tremuloides Large-tooth Aspen Populus grandidentata Balsam Poplar Populus balsamifera English Oak Quercus robur Tsuga canadensis Eastern White Hemlock Shrubs Willow Salix spp. Steeplebush Spiraea spp. **Bush Honeysuckle** Diervilla Ionicera Pin Cherry & Black Chokecherry Prunus spp. Lamb Kill Kalmia augustifolia Labrador Tea Ledum grænlandicum

Canada Blueberry Tracks

**Snowshoe Hare Ruffed Grouse** 

Lepus americanus Bonasa umbellus

Vaccinium spp.



### UNIACKE ESTATE MUSEUM PARK

Place: Mt. Uniacke Estate Park Date: Saturday, March 7 Weather: Cool, mixed sun/cloud, fresh, wet snow cover Interpreter: Pierre Taschereau Participants: 9

It started out with a light cloud cover when we assembled in the Mt. Uniacke Estate Parking Lot. Pierre decided to go up the trail beside the caretaker's house. which leads to the Old Post Road Trail. He pointed out the predominance of the introduced English Oaks, which he has noticed becoming more successful and numerous over the years. They usually retain their golden brown withered leaves over the winter, I recognised a grove of small cherry trees; they were covered in that distinctive, black, gall-like fungus which attacks them - Black Knot. There was a plethora of Old Man's Beard hanging from the bare, cold trees as we traipsed along. Pierre said it might harbour insects and other pests but otherwise does no harm to its hosts.

As usual, Pierre encouraged us by example to taste and smell our way along our chosen route. Besides recognising a species by visual markers, human chemical receptors can help with the identification of plants, as so many have distinctive tastes and/or smells. We confirmed a birch as being a Yellow Birch by the wintergreen smell and taste of a scraped twig. This engendered questions and a discussion about the 'genetic messages' of life. The organism, in this case a Q robur Yellow Birch, has a coded message (one of millions of messages) inside its nucleus. This message instructs the tree's cells to take the chemicals and minerals that are available in its soil and make methylsalicylate (wintergreen) out of them. Another Eastern Seaboard plant, Teaberry, does the same. Does this mean for instance that they could be related? Is there an evolutionary advantage to having methylsalicylate in your tissues - as an insecticide for instance? Is methylsalicylate found predominantly in northern climate plants? (My suspicions and intuition say yes, but... ), or in plants that dwell in soils formed by predominantly igneous rocks? These are the kinds of things that always come to mind for me when on a field trip identifying the varying species that are seen.

There were some healthy young specimens of White Birch, with their distinctive, smooth, paper-like streamers. The delicious smell of the flat-needled Balsam Fir was in the air as the sun came out and made the day glorious with white snow, intense blue sky, and a family of cross-country skiers coming out along our trail! There were many hybrid spruce, wearing Asa Grav's Liverwort on its trunk.

Pierre demonstrated his childhood trick of squirting the balsam from an older Balsam Fir blister on its trunk. Balsam is an excellent salve/protection for minor burns. as it covers the injury from the air thereby preventing infection, re-injury, and blisters. However, he told us a story of a young native girl who had been badly burned on a large area of her body with second degree burns, and her family had covered her completely with sticky balsam. Of course, when she was taken to the hospital. where different treatments were the protocol, it had to be taken all off, very painfully. This anecdote got us into



interesting discussions about natural versus hospital remedies, whether two very different courses of treatment could be mixed, or whether it was better to stay with one or the other, and whether indeed the girl would have been healed if she had been allowed to stay in her sticky but protective coat.

As we ventured further along the Old Post Road Trail, the woods gradually changed from mixed forest to predominantly birch. We saw many beautiful dinnerplate tree fungi, and many of the trees had very interesting lichens, mosses, and liverworts. There were beautiful specimens of the gray-green Lung Lichen, more Asa Gray's Liverwort, and a black, spidery, flat lichen. The Lung Lichen had been so called because it resembles the lobes of lungs, and it was therefore once believed to be a good cure for lung diseases.

In this naturally maintained forest, there were a good percentage of snags and dead, riddled stumps; home to many insects, nesting sites for birds, and feeding grounds for woodpeckers. Pierre pointed out the long, sawdusty channels made by Carpenter Ants, and the typical holes of delving woodpeckers. In this area, where birch predominated, it was easy to compare and see the difference between the paper-like White Birch bark (good for writing on and making miniature canoes), and the small, flaky curls of the Yellow Birch. Pierre tried the trick of banging hard on a hollow tree with a large stick, to see if we could flush out any Flying Squirrels, but to no avail.

Some of us had pressing events to attend, so when we had walked an hour and a half in, figuring that we wouldn't be 'stopping to stare' on the way out, we turned back with 30 minutes left until 2:00 p.m. Eerily enough, we heard no birds on this trek, seeing only a few crows when we arrived back at the parking lot. The presence of a Red Oak declared itself when Pierre found a leaf in a parking lot puddle — but he has not been able to find one standing Red Oak in all his years of going to Mt. Uniacke Estate Park!

Thank you once again, Pierre, for your time, expertise, and interesting stories.

#### — Stephanie Robertson

#### Uniacke Trip Species

**Balsam Fir** Yellow Birch White Birch English Oak Red Oak Teaberry

> **Black Knot Fungus** Lung Lichens

Old Man's Beard No common name Asa Gray's Liverwort

American Crow

Abies balsamica Betula alleghaniensis B. alba Quercus robur Q. borealis Gaultheria procumbens

Plowrightia morbosa

Lobaria pulmonaria Lobaria sp. Usnea spp. Hypogymnia physodes

> Frullania tamarisci var. *asagrayana*

Corvus brachyrhynchos





Q. borealis

# ALMANAC



This almanac is for the dates of events which are not found in our programme: for field trips or lectures which members might like to attend, or natural happenings to watch for, such as eclipses, comets, average migration dates, expected blooming seasons etc. Please suggest other suitable items.

Deep among the trees steam stands in the places where the sunshine penetrates through windows in the forest ceiling and releases the frost-bound humidity of the earth. The smells of pungent decay mingle with the spicy scents of running sap and of the sticky bracts that still enfold the virgin leaf. Life, regenerated from the dead, is clean and gainful and apt. In this gentle, timid world of early spring the sun beckons and draws and procreates with its increasingly compelling heat.

- Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, in Mar: a Glimpse into the Natural Life of a Bird. 1976

#### NATURAL EVENTS

20 March	Vernal Equinox at 3:56 p.m. AST: Spring begins.
23 March	Daily average temperature above 0°.
5 April	Daylight Savings Time begins: turn clocks ahead one hour.
11 April	Full Moon — the 'Pine Moon'.
16 April	Daily minimum temperature at Shearwater is above 0°.
22 April	Earth Day.
I. April-e. May	The pale pink flowers of Daphne appear — our earliest blooming shrub.
early May	The big Mayfly hatch.
11 May	Full Moon — the 'Flower Moon'.
15 May-15 Jun.	Hobblebush (Viburnum alnifolium) blooms.
mid-May	The Tick season begins in south-west Nova Scotia.
late May	The showy Indian Pear or Shadbush (Amelanchier sp.) blooms; usually our earliest native fruit tree
25 May-20 Jun.	Pin-cherry ( <i>Prunus pensylvanica</i> ) blooms.
28 May	Last spring frost in Halifax (1:10 chance that a frost will occur after this); 155 frost-free days follow.
1-20 June	Red-berried Elder (Sambucus pubens) blooms.
10 June	Full Moon — the 'Strawberry Moon'.
10-25 June	Choke-cherry ( <i>Prunus virginiana</i> ) blooms.
20 Jun15 Jul.	Witherod (Viburnum cassinoides) blooms.
21 June	Summer Solstice at 11:03 ADT: Summer begins.
	Sources: Atmospheric Environment Service, Climate Normals 1951-80 Halifax (Shearwater A) N.S.;

– Sources: Atmospheric Environment Service, Climate Normals 1951-80 Halifax (Shearwater A) N.S.; Colombo's Canadian Global Almanac, 1997 & 1998; Roland and Smith's Flora of Nova Scotia, 1966; Stevens' Birding in Metro Halifax, 1996; Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia, 1986; and — the personal observations of the compiler.

#### SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON LATE WINTER AND SPRING SATURDAYS

7 March	6:42	18:10	4 April	5:50	18:45	
14 March	6:29	18:19	11 April	6:37	19:54	-
21 March	6:16	18:28	18 April	6:25	20:03	
28 March	6:03	18:37	25 April	6:14	20:12	-
2 May	6:03	20:20	6 June	5:30	20:56	Ĵ.
9 May	5:54	20:29	13 June	5:28	21:01	
16 May	5:45	20:37	20 June	5:29	21:03	
23 May	5:39	20:44	27 June	5:31	21:04	
30 May	5:33	20:51				

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

#### ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS

Blomidon Naturalists Society — Indoor meetings on the 3rd Mon. of the month, Room 241, Beveridge Arts Centre, Acadia University, 7:30 p.m. Field trips usually depart from Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front St., Wolfville. <http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/home.htm>

- 20 April "Parent-offspring Interactions of Tree Swallows" with Marty Leonard.
- 26 April "A Birders' Pond Hop" with leader Jim Wolford.
- **18 May** "Underwater Natural History of the North Atantic" with Chris Harvey-Clark.

#### ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS (cont'd)

Burke-Gaffney Observatory — Info, 496-8257. Public shows at SMU's Burke-Gaffney Observatory are held on the 1st and 3rd Sat. of the month. Tours begin at 7 p.m.

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

Friends of McNabs Island — Info, Dusan Soudek, 422-1045, or Mike Tilley, 465-4563. <a href="http://chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/FOMIS/>">http://chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/FOMIS/></a>

Halifax Outdoor Club — 'Hotline', 492-5450. Weekly outings meet at Bagel Works, Quinpool Road, for carpooling.

Nova Scotia Bird Society --- 852-2428 (recording), or Joan Czapalay, 455-9892. Indoor meetings on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to April, at the MNH, 8:00 p.m. <a href="http://chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/NS-BirdSoc/nsbsmain.html">http://chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/NS-BirdSoc/nsbsmain.html</a>

- 26 March "The Seabird Challenge" with Fulton Lavender.
- 11 April "Martinique Beach" with leader lan McLaren.
- 23 April "Identifying Bird Songs" with Dr. Cindy Staicer.
- 25 April "The Hawk, Shelburne Co." with leader Johnny Nickerson.
- **3 May** "Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary" with leader Alan Smith.
- 9 May "North American Spring Migration Count" coordinated by Judy Tufts.
- 15/18 May "Bon Portage Island" with leader Claire Diggins.
  - 20 May "Halifax County Early Morning Warbler Walk" with leader Fred Dobson.

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History - 424-6099, or 424-7353. <a href="http://www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/museum/mnh/">http://www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/museum/mnh/</a>

- mid-late Apr. "Annual Salamander Meander" with leader John Gilhen. Pre-register, 424-3563.
- 22 Apr.-Jun. 21 "Sacred Worth: Protecting Nova Scotia's Natural Areas". Alice Reed paintings. An NS Nature Trust project.
  - 2 May "Sacred Worth...". Gallery Tour with Alice Reed at 2:00 p.m.
  - mid- May "Eel Crawl" with John Gilhen at Victoria Park, Truro. Pre-register, 424-3563.
  - **13 May** "What an Artist Sees, What a Biologist Sees". Illustrated Talk on Nova Scotia's Proposed Wilderness Areas, with Oliver Maass and Alice Reed at 7:30 p.m.
  - 14 May "Celebration & Book Launch" for Roland's Flora of Nova Scotia revised by Marian Zinck. 5 p.m.
  - **16 May** "Gem of a Field Trip". Bay of Fundy mineral collecting. Meet at MNH Staff parking, 10:00 a.m., or the "Lookoff", just past Canning, at 11:30 a.m.
  - 20 May "Conserving Private Lands: the Nova Scotia Nature Trust". Bob Bancroft and Ian McLaren at 7:30 p.m.
  - 30 May "Reptiles & Amphibians Open House", Project Room, 12:00 noon 4:00 p.m.
  - 6 June "Bat Walk" with Andrew Hebda at Meander River, Smiley's Prov. Park, Hants Co. 9:45 p.m. midnight.
  - 11 July "Dawn Chorus Field Trip to Uniacke" with Museum biologists. Pre-register starting June 22, at 424-3563.

Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society --- Shirley McIntyre, 835-3673. Meets 4th Mon. of the month, Sept. to May, at the MNH, 7:30 p.m.

- 23 March "Flora of Nova Scotia's Islands" with Alex Wilson.
  - 5 April "Native Plants & their Asian & North American Relatives", in Walter Ostrum's garden. Heather Drope, 423-7032.
- 27 April "Use of Field Guides" with Martine Dufresne.
- 16 May "Wentworth Prov. Park & Higgins Mt." with Heather Drope, 423-7032 and Carl Munden, 829-3633.
- 25 May "Biodiversity" with Mary (Pixie) Williams.
- 20 June "Orchid Trip to the Gypsum Mines" with Heather Drope, 423-7032.
  - **4 July** Two Taylor Head trips: "Plant Identification" with Heather Drope, 423-7032, followed by "Identification and Folklore of Edible Seashore Plants" with Janet McGinity. Contact: Heather, 423-7032.

Orchid Society of Nova Scotia — Jean Hartley, 443-3080. Meets 2nd Sun. of the month, Sept. to Jun., at the NMH, 7:30 p.m. Orchids are usually on display before the meeting. <a href="http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/OrchidSNS/orchid.html">http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/OrchidSNS/orchid.html</a>

**18-19 April** Spring Orchid Show at the N.S. Museum of Natural History.

Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia — Gilbert van Ryckevorsel, 463-2695. Meets 2nd Mon. as well as 1st and 3rd Sun. at the MNH, 7:30 p.m. Special shows at SMU, Theatre A, Burke Education Centre. <a href="http://chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/PGNS/PGNS.html">http://chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/PGNS/PGNS.html</a>

25 April "Spring Show", Burke Theatre, 8:00 p.m.



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Halifax Chapter) --- Info, 424-6099, or 424-7353. Mee's 3rd Fri. of each month (except Jul. and Aug.) at the MNH, 8:00 p.m. Public shows at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Thurs. at the Planetarium in the Sir James Dunn Building, Dalhousie University. <a href="http://halifax.rasc.ca"></a>

# NATURAL HISTORY 👳



#### **RAPTOR CLOSE-UP!**

On the 22 of December I had a close encounter with a Sharp-shinned Hawk while participating in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count in Halifax.

I was looking over a large flock of European Starlings, with a few Blue Jays, on the lawn of a suburban house which had neatly clipped English Yews on either side of the front door.

Suddenly most of the birds took flight, and there was great confusion as the starlings rose, bumping into one another as they took off in all directions, with some striking the walls and windows of the house, and bouncing back into the air again (resilient birds, those starlings). At the same moment the most awful shrieking began. Of course I knew that a hawk must have flown in to catch a bird, although it had all happened so quickly I didn't see it. So I ran forward to see what was making the commotion, expecting to see a starling clenched in the talons of a hawk. Instead I saw three birds, two Blue Jays and a Sharp-shinned Hawk, all struggling in different places in the bushes, where they had become ensnared in the plastic mesh with which the shrubs had been wrapped for the winter. This netting is made of fine green plastic filaments, invisible from a distance, and helps to hold plants upright without the branches breaking if they get covered with snow. The birds had obviously tried to dive into the yews to escape the hawk, and the hawk had followed. I ran back to get my team partner, David Henry. By the time we returned to the house the homeowner had come out, as she had seen one of the jays from the window. Betty O'Brien brought scissors to cut the mesh to let the birds free. She worked on one of the jays, while David and I worked to release the hawk, which was an immature Sharpshinned Hawk; the second Blue Jay eventually wriggled out on its own.

It took us several minutes, working together, to get the hawk free, and by then its talons were embedded in one of my gloves, which I had taken off. I was working with bare hands, so I could follow all the little threads of plastic through the soft down to make sure that when I pulled on one bit I wouldn't be tightening another bit around the bird's neck or shoulders. Working its talons loose from my gloves took a little more time. David took a couple of snapshots of the hawk in the bush before we began to cut it free, and I took two shots of them both before we released it.

What a beautiful bird this is! I was most struck by the brilliant yellow eyes with black pupils, with which it glared boldly at us and its surroundings. Its feet were brilliant yellow, with black talons. I was surprised to see how small it was, although it looks so dynamic. The hawk didn't struggle much or attempt to bite, just watched us very warily, unlike the Jay, which nipped its liberator hard, repeatedly. The shrieking I had heard came from the jays; the hawk was silent. After release, both birds flew away strongly. The jay lost a few tail feathers; although I looked hard, I couldn't find any hawk feathers (I confess I half-hoped for a memento). Given the bitterly cold weather, I'm afraid that the birds might have succumbed if they had been entangled for very long. Mrs. O'Brien said that she had had to set free another jay from the mesh only last week.

It seems to me that this netting is a fairly new horticultural product — I wonder how common such entanglements are? I wouldn't use it on any shrubs near a feeder, I don't think.

- Patricia L. Chalmers

### **ROLAND'S FLORA OF NOVA** SCOTIA: HOT OFF THE PRESS

Spring has arrived, with its promise of green grass, wildflowers — and "Roland's Flora of Nova Scotia", completed by Marian Zinck.

Come and join in celebrating the launch of this eagerly awaited book, at the Museum of Natural History, on 14 May, at 5:00 p.m.

This text describes 1,500 plant species found outside of cultivation in Nova Scotia, and is amply illustrated with line drawings and distribution maps. There are also references to plant lore and useage, so if you have ever wondered what Bakeapples, Chokecherries, and Meadowsweet have in common, or how to identify Ostrich Fern and where to find it, this is the book for you.

It is designed to appeal to everyone from armchair travellers to gardeners to students and scientists, is copublished with Nimbus Publishing, and can be bought at The Museum Shop, price \$70.00.

## SPLANTWATCH 1998



This is the third year of collecting data for Nova Scotia Plantwatch, a phenology project to observe and record the bloomimg dates of a selection of our flowering plants. Phenology is the study of seasonal appearances and the timing of life cycle events, and can contribute to our knowledge of such things as the effect of warm winters or drought on natural processes. Observers record flowering dates for twelve species, and describe their geographical location, habitat type, and population size. Data from the previous two years has been entered into a computer by an Environmental Science student at Saint Mary's University for analysis: Statistical comparisons will then be made with Alexander H. MacKay's data for Nova Scotia from the 1890's. Participants will receive a summary of the 1997 results in early spring, together with information about the 1998 Plantwatch. Participants from all over N.S. include school children, gardeners, and naturalists with various levels of knowledge. More volunteers are needed! This year N.S. Plantwatch received a grant from the Friends of the Environment Foundation to help produce a newsletter, poster and surveys. More info, or to volunteer for 1998: .....

Snail Mail:	Prof. Liette Vasseur, Dept. of Biology
	St. Mary's U., Halifax, N.S. B3H 3C3
Email:	Liette.Vasseur@StMarys.ca
	Peta Mudie, mudie@agc.bio.ns.ca
Survey Form:	<www.cciw.ca <="" ecowatch="" eman-temp="" th=""></www.cciw.ca>
	nsplant/intro.html>
Fax:	420-5261

# HALIFAX TIDE TABLE

April-avril		May-mai		June-juin
Day Time Feet Metres jour heure	pieds metres Day Time	Feet Metres jour heure	pieds metres Day Time	Feet Metres jour heure pieds metres
<b>1</b> 0545 <b>0.3</b> 0.1 <b>16</b> 0445 1120 <b>5.9</b> 1.8 <b>16</b> 0445 WE 1810 <b>1.0</b> 0.3 TH 1655 ME 2335 <b>5.9</b> 1.8 JE 2255	5.2 1.6 1155 1.6 0.5 FR 1855	0.7 0.2 16 0515 5.6 1.7 1115 1.6 0.5 SA 1735 SA 2315	1.0   0.3   1   0035     5.2   1.6   0740     2.0   0.6   MO   1315     5.2   1.6   LU   2020	5.2   1.6   16   0650   0.7   0.2     1.0   0.3   1235   5.6   1.7     5.2   1.6   TU   1930   1.6   0.5     1.6   0.5   MA   0.5   0.5
<b>2</b> 0645 <b>0.7</b> 0.2 <b>17</b> 0535 1210 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 1135 TH 1915 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 FR 1745 JE VE 2335	<b>2.0</b> 0.6 SA 1250	5.6   1.7   17   0610     0.7   0.2   1200   1200     5.2   1.6   SU   1840     1.6   0.5   DI   1	1.0 0.3 2 0130 5.2 1.6 0825 2.0 0.6 TU 1410 MA 2110	4.9   1.5   17   0040   5.2   1.6     1.3   0.4   0745   1.0   0.3     5.2   1.6   WE   1330   5.6   1.7     1.6   0.5   ME   2030   1.6   0.5
<b>3</b> 0030 5.6 1.7 <b>18</b> 0630 0750 1.0 0.3 1215 FR 1310 5.2 1.6 SA 1850 VE 2020 1.6 0.5 SA	4.9 1.5 0015	5.2   1.6   18   0000     1.0   0.3   0710     5.2   1.6   MO 1250     1.6   0.5   LU 1945	5.2   1.6   3   0230     1.0   0.3   0910   0910     5.2   1.6   WE   1505     2.0   0.6   ME   2155	4.6   1.4   18   0145   5.2   1.6     1.6   0.5   0845   1.0   0.3     5.2   1.6   TH   1430   5.6   1.7     1.6   0.5   JE   2130'   1.3   0.4
<b>4</b> 0125 <b>5.2</b> 1.6 <b>19</b> 0020 0850 <b>1.0</b> 0.3 0730 SA 1420 <b>4.9</b> 1.5 SU 1310 SA 2120 <b>1.6</b> 0.5 DI 2000	4.9 1.5 MO 1455	4.9 1.5 19 0055   1.3 0.4 0805   4.9 1.5 TU 1350   1.6 0.5 MA 2045	5.2   1.6   4   0335     1.0   0.3   0955   0955     5.2   1.6   TH 1600   JE 2245	4.6   1.4   19   0255   4.9   1.5     1.6   0.5   0940   1.0   0.3     5.2   1.6   FR   1540   5.6   1.7     1.6   0.5   VE   2235   1.0   0.3
<b>5</b> 0235 <b>4.9</b> 1.5 <b>20</b> 0115 0945 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 SU 1540 <b>4.9</b> 1.5 MO 1415 DI 2220 <b>1.6</b> 0.5 LU 2105	4.9   1.5   5   0315     1.3   0.4   1000     4.9   1.5   TU   1600     2.0   0.6   MA   2245	4.6 1.4 20 0200   1.3 0.4 0905   5.2 1.6 WE 1500   1.6 0.5 ME 2150	4.91.5504351.00.310405.21.6FR16501.60.5VE2330	4.61.42004105.21.61.60.510451.00.35.21.6SA16405.91.81.30.4SA23350.70.2
6 0355 4.9 1.5 21 0225 1040 1.3 0.4 0930 MO 1645 5.2 1.6 TU 1530 LU 2315 1.6 0.5 MA 2205	4.9   1.5   6   0420     1.3   0.4   1050     5.2   1.6   WE   1655     2.0   0.6   ME   2330	4.9 1.5 <b>21</b> 0315 1.3 0.4 1000 5.2 1.6 TH 1610 1.6 0.5 JE 2250	5.2   1.6   6   0530     1.0   0.3   1130     5.6   1.7   SA   1735     1.3   0.4   SA	4.9   1.5   21   0515   5.2   1.6     1.6   0.5   1145   1.0   0.3     5.6   1.7   SU   1740   6.2   1.9     DI   DI   DI   DI   DI   DI
7 0500 4.9 1.5 22 0345 1135 1.3 0.4 1030 TU 1740 5.2 1.6 WE 1640 MA ME 2305		4.9 1.5 22 0430 1.6 0.5 1100 5.6 1.7 FR 1705 VE 2350	5.2   1.6   7   0015     1.0   0.3   0615     5.9   1.8   SU 1215     1.0   0.3   DI 1815	1.0   0.3   22   0030   0.3   0.1     4.9   1.5   22   0615   5.6   1.7     1.6   0.5   MO   1245   1.0   0.3     5.6   1.7   LU   1830   6.2   1.9
8 0010 1.6 0.5 23 0455 0555 5.2 1.6 1125 WE 1220 1.3 0.4 TH 1735 ME 1820 5.6 1.7 JE		1.3 0.4 23 0535   5.2 1.6 1205   1.6 0.5 SA 1800   5.6 1.7 SA	5.6   1.7   8   0055     0.7   0.2   0655     6.2   1.9   MO   1300     LU   1855	1.0   0.3   23   0125   0.0   0.0     4.9   1.5   0710   5.6   1.7     1.6   0.5   TU   1340   0.7   0.2     5.6   1.7   MA   1920   6.2   1.9
<b>9</b> 0050 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 <b>24</b> 0005 0635 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 0555 TH 1300 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 FR 1225 JE 1855 <b>5.9</b> 1.8 VE 1825	1.0   0.3   9   0055     5.9   1.8   0645     0.7   0.2   SA   1255     6.6   2.0   SA   1855	1.0   0.3   24   0045     5.2   1.6   0630     1.3   0.4   SU   1300     5.9   1.8   DI   1850	0.3   0.1   9   0135     5.9   1.8   0735     0.7   0.2   TU   1335     6.6   2.0   MA   1935	0.70.22402150.00.05.21.608005.91.81.30.4WE14300.70.25.91.8ME20106.21.9
10 0130 1.0 0.3 25 0105 0715 5.6 1.7 0650 FR 1335 1.3 0.4 SA 1320 VE 1930 5.9 1.8 SA 1915	0.7 0.2 10 0130 6.2 1.9 0.3 0.1 SU 1330 6.6 2.0 DI 1930	1.00.32501405.21.607251.30.4MO13551.8LU	0.0 0.0 5.9 1.8 0.7 0.2 6.6 2.0 <b>10</b> 0210 0815 WE 1415 ME 2015	0.7   0.2   25   0300   0.0   0.0     5.2   1.6   0850   5.9   1.8     1.3   0.4   TH   1520   1.0   0.3     5.9   1.8   JE   2100   6.2   1.9
<b>11</b> 0200 <b>1.0</b> 0.3 <b>26</b> 0155 0755 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 0740 SA 1405 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 SU 1410 SA 2005 <b>5.9</b> 1.8 DI 2000	0.3   0.1   11   0205     6.2   1.9   0805     0.3   0.1   MO   1405     6.9   2.1   LU   2005	0.7 0.2 26 0230 5.2 1.6 0815 1.3 0.4 TU 1445 5.9 1.8 MA 2030	-0.3-0.11102506.21.908550.70.2TH14556.62.0JE2055	0.7   0.2   26   0350   0.0   0.0     5.2   1.6   0940   5.9   1.8     1.3   0.4   FR 1610   1.0   0.3     5.9   1.8   VE 2150.   5.9   1.8
<b>12</b> 0230 <b>1.0</b> 0.3 <b>27</b> 0245 0830 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 0830 SU 1435 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 MO 1500 DI 2040 <b>5.9</b> 1.8 LU 2050	0.0   0.0   12   0235     6.2   1.9   0840     0.3   0.1   TU   1440     6.9   2.1   MA   2040	0.7 0.2 27 0320 5.2 1.6 0905 1.3 0.4 WE 1535 5.9 1.8 ME 2120	-0.3-0.11203306.21.909350.70.2FR15356.21.9VE2135	0.70.22704350.30.15.21.610255.91.81.30.4SA17001.30.45.61.7SA22355.91.8
<b>13</b> 0300 <b>0.7</b> 0.2 <b>28</b> 0335 0905 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 0920 MO 1505 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 TU 1555 LU 2110 <b>5.9</b> 1.8 MA 2135	0.0 0.0 13 0310 6.2 1.9 0920 0.7 0.2 WE 1515 6.6 2.0 ME 2120	0.7 0.2 28 0410 5.2 1.6 0955 1.3 0.4 TH 1630 5.6 1.7 JE 2205	0.0 0.0 13 0410 5.9 1.8 1015 1.0 0.3 SA 1625 6.2 1.9 SA 2220	0.7   0.2   28   0525   0.7   0.2     5.6   1.7   1110   5.6   1.7     1.6   0.5   SU 1755   1.6   0.5     5.6   1.7   DI 2320   5.6   1.7
<b>14</b> 0330 <b>0.7</b> 0.2 <b>29</b> 0430 0945 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 1015 TU 1535 <b>1.3</b> 0.4 WE 1650 MA 2145 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 ME 2225	0.0   0.0   14   0345     6.2   1.9   0955     1.0   0.3   TH   1555     6.2   1.9   JE   2155	0.70.2 <b>29</b> 05005.21.610451.60.5FR17305.61.7VE2255	0.3   0.1   14   0500     5.9   1.8   1100     1.3   0.4   SU   1720     5.9   1.8   DI   2300	0.7 0.2 <b>29</b> 0610 <b>1.0</b> 0.3 5.6 1.7 <b>1150</b> 5.6 1.7 <b>1.6</b> 0.5 MO 1845 <b>1.6</b> 0.5 5.6 1.7 LU
<b>15</b> 0405 <b>1.0</b> 0.3 <b>30</b> 0525 1020 <b>5.2</b> 1.6 1105 WE 1610 <b>1.6</b> 0.5 TH 1750 ME 2220 <b>5.6</b> 1.7 JE 2315	0.30.11504305.91.810351.30.4FR16405.91.8VE2235	0.7 0.2 30 0555 5.2 1.6 1135 1.6 0.5 SA 1830 5.6 1.7 SA 2345	0.7 0.2 5.6 1.7 1.6 0.5 5.6 1.7 LU 2350	0.7   0.2   30   0005   5.2   1.6     5.6   1.7   0655   1.0   0.3     1.6   0.5   TU   1235   5.2   1.6     5.6   1.7   MA   1935   1.6   0.5
	De la	<b>31</b> 0650 1225 SU 1925 DI	0.7 0.2 5.6 1.7 1.6 0.5	
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## NATURE NOTES

Peter Payzant claims the first insect of the year — a lepidopteran crawling slowly across the road, on 1 January.

Pat Chalmers saw Pine Grosbeaks in Bedford in early January.

There is a new beaver lodge in the Frog Pond.

Lesley Butters saw a blooming dandelion in Wolfville.

Coyotes killed a deer on the ice 3 miles west of Mount Uniacke in the first week of January — a very early date.

There are two coyotes on McNabs Island. Bald Eagles have been seen near the North West Arm.

Wasps have been hatching in Ursula Grigg's house in Halifax West during early March; they are sleepy, but their venom is up to standard.

## ! NEXT DEADLINE ! 21 MAY FOR JUNE ISSUE

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