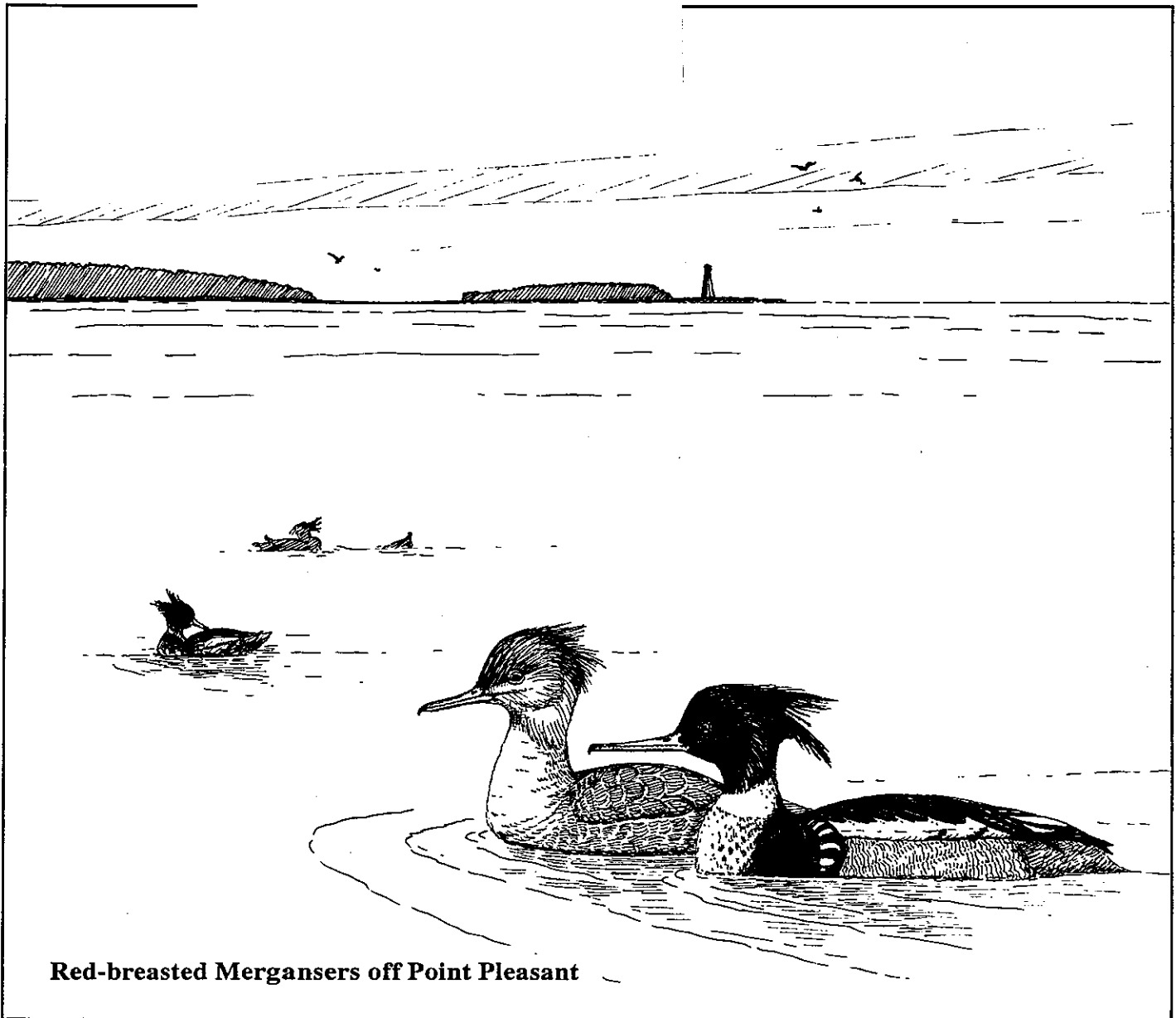


# THE HALIFAX FIELD NATURALIST



No. 98  
March to May 2000



Red-breasted Mergansers off Point Pleasant

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

# HFN

is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and holds Registered Charity status with Revenue Canada. Tax-creditable receipts will be issued for individual and corporate gifts. It is an affiliate of the Canadian Nature Federation and an organisational member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, the provincial umbrella association for naturalist groups in Nova Scotia.

**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 August, on the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. 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. All participants in HFN activities are responsible for their own safety. Everyone, member or not, is welcome to take part in field trips.

**HFN POST** Halifax Field Naturalists

c/o Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6

**EMAIL** hfnexec@chebucto.ns.ca

**WEBSITE** <http://chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/FieldNaturalists/fieldnat.html>

**FNSN POST** Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists

c/o Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3A6

**EMAIL** nstn0308@fox.nstn.ca (Doug Linzey, FNSN Newsletter Editor)

**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 1 September will be valid until the end of the following membership year. The regular membership year is from 1 January to 31 December. Members receive the HFN Newsletter and notices of all meetings, field trips, and special programmes. The fees are as follows:

Individual	\$15.00 per year
Family	\$20.00 per year
Supporting	\$25.00 per year
FNSN (opt.)	\$ 5.00 per year

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Talks & Trips .....	Marie Moverley .....	420-9488
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Editor .....	Ursula Grigg .....	455-8160
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**Refreshments** ..... Regina Maass

**Conservation** ..... Colin Stewart ..... 466-7168

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# HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## EDITORIAL

Our Annual General Meeting is over; reports start on page 4. I am honoured and a bit scared to have been re-elected, and grateful to be part of a very capable Board.

Colin Stewart has been acting on conservation issues and will be reporting on them in the Field Naturalist; the first starts on page 6, about battered Hemlock Ravine.

Members who have something to say on parks to Regional Council or the Nova Scotia Government can get numbers and e-mail addresses through the blue pages in the telephone directory, where both bodies have information lines.

The editors are arranging to have some of our field trip reports, with their species lists, filed among the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History's Site Reports. The Museum has always regarded our information as reliable, but has seldom tried to use it. Electronic transfer is so easy, the reports can be sent each quarter almost as they stand.

This is the start of the outdoor season! Crocuses are showing colour, and paper wasps are emerging from the bathroom wall and being thrown out into sunny mornings. The wasps will shortly be evicted; three years is enough. Big, cold-weather birds are nesting already, and buds are swelling. Some buds which opened in December, especially maple and spiræa, have frozen and died, but others are taking their places lower on the stems. Let's hope the summer which is coming will be fun — however we will use it.

— Ursula Grigg

## FNSN AGM

Hosted this year by the Blomidon Field Naturalists, the theme is 'Nature's Millenium' — a look at the changes in local natural history over the last 1,000 years. What is needed to preserve what we have for the future? Join us for fascinating talks, a wide variety of wonderful field trips, a banquet, fun picnics, and of course the AGM itself. See the FNSN registration and programme form included in this issue. For more information, contact Larry Bogan, 902-678-0446; <larry.bogan@acadiu.ca>.

## CNF AGM

The Canadian Nature Federation and the Natural History Society of Newfoundland and Labrador are holding a joint AGM in 2000. It will be hosted by the Humber Naturalists in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, from July 12-16, 2000. For more information, contact CNF 2000, Humber Natural History Society, 2A 4th Avenue, Pasadena, NF, A0L 1K0 or <nhhs2000@beothuk.swgc.mun.ca>.

These conferences offer talks and field trips led by local experts. The Newfoundland gathering promises to be a wonderful opportunity to see and learn about the natural wonders of this spectacular province in the company of many fellow naturalists. Mark your calendars now!

## HERP ATLAS

Soon Spring Peepers will be peeping! Herpetological records will be even more important if we continue to have hot dry summers in which wetlands are drained to provide irrigation for crops. Cards and instructions for recording sightings can be found at the Museum of Natural History, Summer St., Halifax. or the Biology Department, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S., B0P 1X0, 902-585-1313. Ask for the coloured identification sheet; it's very useful for those who cannot remember which frog wears a black mask, or which one snores and which one wheezes!

## TRAILS FESTIVAL

Sat., May 13, 10:00 am - 4:30 pm

This is an excellent way to discover more about the hiking, trails and natural wonders of Nova Scotia. Various trail association booths will be there. Meet people who plan trails and those who build trails. Learn about Michael Haynes' new book Trails of Halifax Regional Municipality, plus what's new in outdoor gear. Meet members of Halifax Regional Search & Rescue, and learn about their 'Hug A Tree' Program which teaches important life-saving skills to children should they ever get lost in the woods. Children can try their skills at the mini-orienteeing course in the Museum backyard and there will be mini-workshops on outdoors skills new equipment.

## HRM 20/20

Halifax Regional Municipality offers a chance to take part in a vision/planning exercise.

If anyone living in the Municipality has not done so, and there is still time, workbooks are available from any HRM Customer Service Centre, by calling 476-2020 or through the Web site at <<http://www.hrm2020.com>>. The workbooks have 11 questions about the city's future that can be answered by groups or individuals. The deadline is March 31.

## THANK YOU, HFN

I am writing to thank you for the opportunities given me through the Halifax Field Naturalists, but request that you remove my name from the membership list as I am moving to Vancouver in April.

I really appreciate the many hours people put into field trips. I have thoroughly enjoyed those I have been on. I had many new-to-me experiences which I value a lot. Thank you all very much.

— Yours sincerely  
Daniel S. Harmer

## NEW AND RETURNING

Carole Donaldson  
Elliott Hayes  
Hanika Koblents  
Minga O'Brien  
Howard Williams



# SPECIAL REPORTS

## 99/00 ANNUAL REPORTS

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Your Board of Directors held three meetings during the year; it was a learning year for me and seemed to go by very fast. I am very grateful to Board members for the speed with which they have come to my rescue when I needed it.

Two members of the Board have now resigned, and one officer has stepped down. Tony MacKay has been our Treasurer for several years, and has kept us fiscally correct (though some of us still don't understand how!). Thank you, Tony! Linda MacKay has resigned from the Board also.

Linda Payzant has resigned from the Secretary's office but will remain on the board and continue to deal with publicity and, for the moment, our web site. She and Peter have given us a great deal of quiet and friendly help over the past five or six years, and we are very much in their debt. Not least for obtaining the wireless microphone which has helped us to hear our monthly talks much better.

We have continued to support the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund, as well as the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists. We have kept in touch with the Piping Plover project, and Nova Scotia Nature Trust. We are also keeping in touch with events in Halifax Regional Municipality, including the use of Crystal Crescent Beach as a film set and the felling of timber on the edge of Hemlock Ravine.

The Halifax Field Naturalist has appeared quarterly, under my editorship, with Stephanie Robertson at the computer and Pat Chalmers compiling the Almanac. Shirley McIntyre mails them out, using the membership list which she also keeps in apple-pie order. The members of this committee have agreed to continue. Many members contribute to the newsletter, and this makes it more interesting and more fun to produce.

A month ago, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History was offered the lists of species which appear at the ends of our field trip reports. These are valuable as information on sites which Museum staff do not visit frequently. Yesterday, they accepted the lists, and therefore our accuracy as observers; we can be proud of it. The data will be sent electronically.

As the year progressed, Marie Moverley has shouldered the task of producing our Programme alone. We are grateful to her, and the members of the previous committee for the array of interesting talks and field trips which appears with apparent ease each quarter. Marie has even arranged a social event for this spring, including a nature walk on the Uniacke Heritage Museum grounds. She will continue in this post, and expects to be joined this summer by another member, which will make her job

less onerous; however this is a committee which should have a third member.

Regina Maass has continued to treat us to refreshments at the end of each meeting; thank you, Regina, for producing this focus for conversation and exchange of news.

From frivolous newsroom meetings to the excitement of seeing a new butterfly, and the pleasures of learning about our province and making new friends with similar interests, Halifax Field Naturalists is the best club in town. I invite you, as members, to join a committee or consider joining the Board, to contribute to our Society, and learn something new in the process.

— Respectfully submitted, Ursula Grigg

### FROM THE TREASURER

#### For the Fiscal Year ended December 31, 1999

Fiscal 1999 Membership revenue was down \$34 from 1998 to \$2,442 for the year. Expenses were up \$453 in total compared to 1998 for a total of \$2,086. The higher expenses last year were due to the cost of producing and mailing the newsletter as well as increased membership payments over 1998.

We ended 1999 with a Net Income for the year of \$356. This does not sound like much, however, we are in excellent financial shape. Halifax Field Naturalists continues to enjoy a very strong cash position.

Looking to this year, our operating budget for the calendar 2000 year projects \$2,500 of revenue from memberships, product sales and interest combined, offset by total expenses of \$2,500.

— Respectively submitted, Tony MacKay

### MEMBERSHIP

Year	Total	New	Indiv.	Fam.	Supp.	FNSN
1996-97	149	12	98	40	11	59
1997-98	146	26	97	33	16	53
1998-99	138	27	98	29	11	49

— Respectfully submitted, Shirley McIntyre

### PROGRAMME

Our 1999 programme included 23 field trips where we enjoyed a diversity of interests ranging from spiders, amphibians, butterflies, and shore birds to wild flowers, mushrooms, cranberries, and bogs & barrens. Our evening lectures covered various topics such as rocks and minerals, insects, flora and fauna, and the ocean ecosystem.

Our goal is to provide topics of interest to everyone. A very special thanks to all members who have provided suggestions for field trips and to the leaders and lecturers who generously shared their expertise with us. Suggestions for future trips are always welcome. Thanks to all who have contributed over the past year.

— Respectfully submitted, Marle Moverley

## NEWSLETTER

The newsletter continues to be a challenge and a reward, as accumulative experience with computer systems, email access, and reproduction techniques ease the whole production into a less stressful 'deadline' process.

Submissions have been more timely, the cost is still very reasonable, and there is now more free time for

experimentation with scanning, artwork, and graphics.

Thank you to Shirley McIntyre and Doris Young for the hard work of compilation and distribution, and to Doug Linzey for production of the mailing labels; to Ursula Grigg for editorial skill; to Patricia Chalmers for her wonderful 'Almanac' and willingness to do beautifully crafted text sometimes at the last minute; to the Dal Print Centre for high-quality and rapid delivery; and to all who have contributed in any way to this year's issues.

— Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Robertson

## CONSERVATION

Colin Stewart presented a short Conservation Report verbally; the information is contained within the conservation article in this newsletter on page 6.

— Respectfully submitted, Ursula Grigg



### Halifax Field Naturalists Balance Sheet As At December 31, 1999

Assets	1999	1998	1997
	\$1,902	\$5,088	\$3,503
Accounts Receivable and Accrued Income	\$209	\$132	\$377
Inventories and Prepaids	\$1,121	\$1,254	\$1,732
Investments	\$13,908	\$9,908	\$10,352
Fixed Assets	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$17,140	\$16,381	\$15,964
<b>Liabilities and Surplus</b>			
Accounts Payable - General	\$294	\$50	\$181
- FNSN	\$235	\$300	
Surplus	\$9,919	\$9,695	\$10,264
Restricted	\$6,692	\$6,337	\$5,519
Unrestricted	\$16,611	\$16,031	\$15,783
	\$17,140	\$16,381	\$15,964

— Respectfully Submitted,  
Tony McKay,  
Treasurer

## CONSERVATION

### Halifax's Urban Parks — Hemlock Ravine

It's a tough time to be a park. Halifax (or HRM) is growing, but our parks are not. Increasing usage is only part of the problem. There seem to be contentious issues around most of our urban 'natural' parks.

While the boundaries of Point Pleasant seem safe, the results of cutting within the park look worse than the select-cut managed forest HFN visited at Jim Drescher's Windhorse Farm last year.

Parts of the forest at Shubie Park have reached the age when wind-throws are fairly regular. While some are left, others are cut, and sometimes the valuable boles disappear. An opportunity to extend the park along the northern shore of Lake MicMac (in conjunction with the recently built extension of the Trans Canada Trail) was rejected by Council. It is not clear whether there will be an effort to protect any more land along Lake MicMac or Lake Charles.

Hemlock Ravine made the news last summer when an area of private land at the eastern end of the ravine was clear-cut in order to build a block of apartments. The area had been zoned 'Parks and Institutional' (P&I) in the 70s, and the provincially significant stands of old-growth hemlock and red spruce had been vigorously defended through the early 90s. Indeed the Governor Trail had been built on this private property. But in 1995 the city forgot this, and for reasons unexplained re-zoned the back of the property, the P&I part, as 'Commercial', to match the part along the Bedford Highway. This was proposed and approved as part of the Bedford Highway realignment work; again we ask why?

Subsequently the property was sold, the trees cut, and Council was left agreeing with us that it shouldn't have happened.

To the west of the park a new waterline has been routed across park land adjacent to the Bicentennial Highway, to supply expected development between the park and Papermill Lake. This time it appears that land actually in the park was cleared, blasted and trenched. To date, the question of who authorised this has not been answered.

There are two major aspects to Hemlock Ravine Park. The Julie's Pond-Grosvenor Wentworth side is the area most used for recreation, while Hemlock Ravine itself is the low use, more sensitive area. The ravine proper is mostly owned by the province, and was leased to the city with a 'no trails' restriction.

The lease expired in 1998 and has not yet been renewed, but these conservation clauses are expected to continue when it is. However there is now a proposal for a new subdivision on the north side of the park — along the ravine on the Bedford side. The proponent, Kimberley-Lloyd Developments Ltd., wants two access paths to the provincial 'no trails' property. The development is also likely to affect the water resources of the ravine. Hemlock Ravine lost a significant part of its integrity last year and is likely to lose more in the near future.

Over the years HFN has made many efforts to protect and improve our municipal parks; some have helped, others have gone nowhere. We have thus far appeared before HRM Council twice as the result of the loss of the Hemlock Ravine old growth. The first time we asked Council to determine how it happened (both rezoning and the failure to acquire that property for the park) and what steps could be taken to prevent a recurrence there or elsewhere. We also recommended creation of specific management plans for each of HRM's natural parks. While a bit of additional light has been shed on how it happened, neither preventative measures nor management plans have yet been addressed.

Our second presentation suggested that P&I zoning should be subdivided to distinguish natural park (P1 in our example), from corridors or green belts (P2), from playgrounds and sports fields (P3), and from buffers — mandatory beside some highways — (P4). This would lead to an assessment of whether each area of the city has an adequate and appropriate level of P1, P2, and P3. For areas without enough, the shortfall should be remedied.

We went a step further. Currently, if land is subdivided, the City is supposed to receive 5% (10% in old Dartmouth), or cash equivalent, for parks and related use. Yet land which is cleared for (say) 240 apartments without subdivision contributes nothing. Will not the new apartment dwellers place as much strain on HRM's resources and need as much green space as would the inhabitants of a subdivision? We suggest any development which increases population density should contribute.

The ideas were well received and were sent to HRM staff for comment; perhaps I will be able to report progress in my next column?

HFN is planning trips to Hemlock Ravine and Shubie Park later in the year.

— Colin Stewart



# HFN TALKS

## OWLS

7 JAN.

It might be said that there are two sorts of birding: 'owling', and then everything else. So much about these largely nocturnal birds is intriguing and mysterious, that it takes real diligence and persistence to see them, let alone study them, in the wild.



Randy Lauff, a teacher at St. Francis Xavier University for the last ten years, is well-known for leading 'owl-prowls', and for his winter surveys of these early breeders. He began by reviewing the species that we have in Canada, particularly the five known to breed in Nova Scotia. These include the rarely-seen, but common, little Northern Saw-whet Owl, *Aegolius acadicus*: it was formerly known as the 'Acadian Owl' because it was first described here. In 1996 Randy was awarded a research grant from the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History to investigate several rare plant and animal species in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Among the target species was the Boreal Owl, whose nesting in Nova Scotia has long been suspected, but never confirmed.

With great good humour and some hilarious slides, Randy shared with us the adventures of his team. Laden with food and gear, they slogged through alder swamps to reach the remote warden's patrol cabin. They surveyed an area of old forest with large standing dead trees (killed by spruce budworm) which are suitable sites for these cavity-nesters. A probable nest hole of a Boreal Owl was indeed found, and follow-up work continues. Even more exciting, however, was the discovery of an active Northern Hawk-Owl nest. This large owl is known as a rare visitant in Nova Scotia, but its breeding had not even been suspected. Randy's wonderful photographs of parent birds carrying food were documentary proof, and so he has added a new species to the Nova Scotian fauna.

His talk was a fascinating report 'from the field', and attracted one of the largest attendances in HFN history.

— Pat Chalmers

## BOTTLENOSE WHALES 3 FEB.

Bottlenose Whales visit the Gully, an undersea canyon in the edge of the Scotian Shelf near Sable Island, and are being studied in relation to resource exploration.

### Populations of B.W.'s in the Sable Gully

The Arctic Bottlenose Whale is a distinct species. Just outside the Sable Gully 90 individuals were counted, while 40 were in the Gully itself; this is a recurrent pattern. They remain in the area for about 20 days. Over 10 years the population has remained at 130 individuals, which is a bad sign. They have a high mortality rate — 10% per year — and it is suspected that they get caught in fishing gear.

The main technique being used is photo identification of individuals. It reveals gender ratios, social structure, population, and migration, of the population, and allows researchers to become familiar with each individual.

To study diving in Bottlenose Whales, Hal Whitehead

attached signal emitters to their tails. Two whales were studied during dives, one being followed for 20 hours. This one dived often to 1,000 metres! The deepest dive was to 1,450 metres; the longest was 70 minutes.

To find out what they were eating, the stomach contents of stranded whales were examined; they contained squid beaks. Biopsy samples of whale blubber gave the 'fat signatures' of a species of *Griatus* — an 180 gram North Atlantic squid which lives 1,000 metres down.

Comparing their dives with other marine animals such as penguins, sea turtles, and especially the deep-diving Sperm Whale, the Bottlenose Whale dives deepest of all.

### Social Patterns

Adult males form long-term stable relationships — crashing heads playfully, and otherwise interacting. Sub-adult males form somewhat shorter relationships. Friendly females and immature males have the loosest network. When their mothers dive to feed, calves spend their time with one adult on the surface, which may be a male; they may also spend time with continuously different adults among the group. There was no evidence of similar baby-sitting among Sperm Whales, whose young find an adult to stay with after their mothers dive.



	Sperm W.	B'nose Whale	B'nose Dolphin
Groups	Large (20)	Small(3)	Small
Female Bond	Strong	Weak	Weak
Male bond	Weak	Strong	Strong
Pop. Size	Large	Small	Small
Movements	Large	Small	Small

Their social patterns are opposite to those of Sperm Whale but similar to those of Bottlenosed Dolphins, to which they are more closely related. The only difference in the latter two whales' behaviour is in depth of dive; so it is not the depth and length of dive that determines social patterns and behaviour.

### Conservation

Oil and gas sites off Sable Island are affecting the species with the noise of rigs, ships, and seismic vessels. There is chemical pollution as well. Regulations are needed to protect these whales — WWF is working on it.

— Stephanie Robertson

## MEMBERS' SLIDE NIGHT 2 MAR.

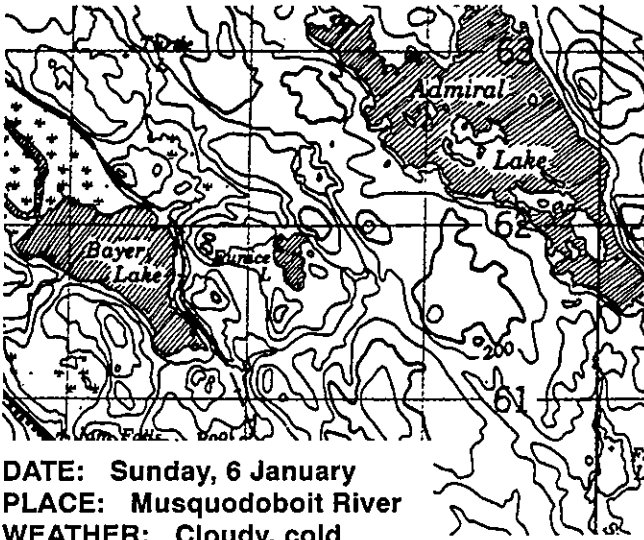


Five people shared the best of their slides with us: Peter Payzant his series on the Monarch Butterfly multitudes overwintering in Mexico; Patricia Chalmers a delightful selection of Nova Scotian scenery, flora, and fauna; Jim Wolford a wonderful Western travelogue complete with Canadian Elk and cacti in the Sonoran Desert; Nancy Meinertzhagan some amazing underwater scenes from her trip to Heron Island off the coast of Australia; and Keith Vaughan — views of mountains, sunsets, flowers, and birds and lots of excellent photo tips.

Thank you, all, for this truly beautiful presentation!

# FIELD TRIPS

## MUSQUODOBOIT



**DATE:** Sunday, 6 January  
**PLACE:** Musquodoboit River  
**WEATHER:** Cloudy, cold  
**INTERPRETER:** John Stanton, Halifax Outdoor Club  
**PARTICIPANTS:** 44 plus Barney the Beagle

"Where are the fanny packs?"

"Do you have your extra sweater?"

"We don't have enough ham for the sandwiches".

"Yes. We *do*. Just slice it very thinly on the diagonal; it will go further..."

"...mumble, grumble, mumble...". Butter is slapped upon bread; cookies, Christmas tangerines, and apples are gathered. It's 7:30 a.m.; it is dark outside. And cold. To be at a local Tim Horton's, mega-caffeine and processed-fat capital of Canada, at 9:00 a.m. is our immediate objective.

Why are we doing this? (A question I asked myself once long ago, in a dark and freezing January blizzard, clinging reluctantly to an ice-encrusted rock just before plunging to my first open-water SCUBA diving test in Cranberry Cove.) There is more last-minute, early-morning, not-done-the-night-before *organising* of hiking gear to do. After having finely orchestrated meal preparation and gifts for a three-week Maritime Christmas reunion of ten family members with two babies and a dog and cat, this is not executed with the usual alacrity and eager anticipation.

Well... fresh air and woods hiking will cure all post-holiday inertia and fuzzy-headedness. At least that's the idea.

At Tim's, eager hikers are clogging up the parking lot or huddling inside over hot cups of various liquids. Outside, John shows us the route on the map, and then we're off to find Hwy 107 and our Musquodoboit Trailway rendezvous at the river near Musquodoboit Harbour.

A wee pre-stop for lunch drinks at a local store,

then a short drive to gather, *many* cars and people, in the designated parking lot for John's pre-hike instructions, and his good advice to break up into smaller more manageable groups.

44 people setting off together are noisy; with chatter, camaraderie, and rustle of winter clothing. It was impossible to hear the blessed, natural quietness of this beautiful spot. On our left was the expanse of frozen Bayer's lake, making those deep-pinging, wide, eerily reverberating bass sounds of cracking ice because of the changing water levels and currents underneath. Not far into the hike a Bald Eagle ('white at both ends' someone pointed out) was sighted very nearby; it slowly flapped in to settle on the tip of a small spruce on the near lakeshore, nonchalantly staring at this noisy gaggle of humans.

We soon left the riverside Musquodoboit Trailway and ventured into the wilder and woody Musquodoboit Trailways Association track in the forest to our right. In this area the Paleozoic Acadian orogeny and the subsequent weathering of millions of years had shaped the land into a jumble of ankle-wrenching granitic rocks, hills, boulders, and deep holes — all thinly disguised with the usual Nova Scotian veneer of mosses, lichens, ferns, scrub, woody ground-covers, and trees.

The pace was brisk. Agility was a necessity, proving all too realistically the HFN programme phrase 'sturdy footgear suitable for the terrain'. What a hike! One participant said later, "The aim of this group is to 'clock up the clicks!'" It was the most difficult HFN trek I have yet attended; very 'up and down', very rocky and occasionally slippery — a real knee-killer. A few wise people had brought walking sticks. Soon, we were very hot, shedding clothing layers along the way. All our rest stops were at high lookouts however, and the cold breezes caused almost immediate redressing due to rapid chilling of perspiring and panting bodies. 'Moderate to difficult' would have been a better assessment of this field trip.

Despite the cold, plant-life was abundant. There were carpets of beautiful mosses and lichens in an array of brilliant greens completely upholstering the massive rocks, including green and amazingly vibrant delicate Rock Polypody. There were areas where one had no choice but to trample on Mayflower, Foxberry, and Club Mosses, the trail was so thickly covered. Spruce, Pine, Larch, Oak, Maple, Fir, the Hazels, and Alder; all the usual Nova Scotian forest cover was there.

This winding and difficult trail led through one 'stand-up-in' tunnel of fallen boulders, was marked in places with stump steps, and had yellow nylon



ropes strung from trees for handholds on the steepest parts. Occasionally, some of the worst holes were infilled with hammered-in logs and branches. In other areas there were ingenious steeper stairways carved from whole tree trunks, some with rope or wooden handholds as well. Barney the Beagle had a wonderful time running forward and back, forward and back..., forward and back... seemingly ensuring everyone was still 'all there and accounted for'.

Lunch was taken on Admiral/Bakers Lake look-off (known by longtime locals as 'Bakers Lake'; labelled by provincial cartographers as 'Admiral Lake'); the less hardy retreating to the lea-side. A magnificent view of Musquodoboit Harbour and its surroundings was the backdrop; the biting winds were the stagehands.

As the hike trickled back down the hillside, the 'smaller groups' straggled further and further apart. At a T-junction near the end of our trip, where the rocky hill trail wound down to a narrow feeder track, only a skilled intuitive sense of direction ensured a successful return to the main trail; there was no sign pointing the way. Along this feeder track, an ancient, rusty car hulk had drowned in the small creek that was adjacent to the right of the Trailway where we had begun our trek.

Afterward, about 15 of us gathered at a Musquodoboit River local coffee shop; maps and future HFN activities were shared over reviving hot drinks, while feet and hands became warm again.

And, yes, all the post Christmas inertia had been banished by the physical exertion and natural wild beauty of Nova Scotia.

— Stephanie Robertson

#### Musquodoboit Species

Club mosses	<i>Lycopodium clavatum</i>
Rock Polypody	<i>Polypodium virginianum</i>
Spruce	<i>Picea</i> spp.
White Pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>
Hackmatack	<i>Larix laricina</i>
Alder	<i>Alnus</i> spp.
Hazel	<i>Corylus cornuta</i>
Mayflower	<i>Epigaea repens</i>
Foxberry	<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>



## ANNUAL SEWER STROLL

**DATE:** Sunday, 23 January

**PLACE:** Various locations around Halifax Harbour

**WEATHER:** Windy, partly cloudy, very cold

**INTERPRETERS:** Peter and Linda Payzant

**PARTICIPANTS:** 4

Once again, stormy weather forced us to postpone the annual Sewer Stroll. A severe winter storm with high winds and heavy snow wiped us out on the scheduled day, and conditions were still unfavourable the following day. The heavy snow cover made it awkward to get to the water in some places, and some of our favourite parking places were inaccessible, but we got some good birding in nonetheless. Here are some of the highlights – Black Ducks, Mallards, and most gulls omitted...

Hartlen Point was unexciting and bitterly cold – at 9:15 a.m. it was still about -17° C with a strong wind, so we didn't spend too much time there. Opposite the Tim Horton's in Eastern Passage we had several Northern Pintails sheltering in the Passage. Here we also saw our first Black Guillemots of the day.

We didn't manage to locate the Tufted Duck at Sullivan's Pond, but there was a Wood Duck drowsing in the sunlight among all the Black Ducks, and we did find a Northern Cardinal in the brush beside the canal at Banook Lake. There were the usual numbers of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, and lots of American Wigeon. There was no sign of a Yellow-Breasted Chat which many observers had reported in previous weeks.

At Tufts Cove we saw the usual Black-Headed Gulls just off the power plant, around ten American Wigeon, and a few Bufflehead came in really close for very good looks.

Two Mute Swans, now reliable and apparently resident in Bedford Basin, accompanied a few Common Mergansers and Black Ducks at the Sackville River bridge. There were about 50 Common Goldeneye visible beyond the two rocky islets from Convoy Pier at Mill Cove in Bedford, but the high winds and cold air didn't encourage lingering on the pier this time.

There were more Guillemots in the Northwest Arm at the Dingle.

Our final stop was Tribune Head sewage outfall, and here it was sheltered and sunny. In perfect lighting we saw a fine group of about ten White-winged Scoters, two Glaucous Gulls, a few Common Loons, and the highlight of the trip, a single female Harlequin Duck. There were no eiders seen at Tribune Head (or anywhere else on this trip, for that matter). While we were enjoying the birds, a Mink flashed in and out among the rocks, our only wild mammal of the day.

All in all, a pleasant day with lots of birds.

— Peter Payzant

## Sewer Stroll Species

Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
American Mink	<i>Mustela vison</i>

## EAGLES

**DATE:** Saturday, 5 February

**PLACE:** Sheffield Mills

**WEATHER:** -10° C; bright, sunny, and cold

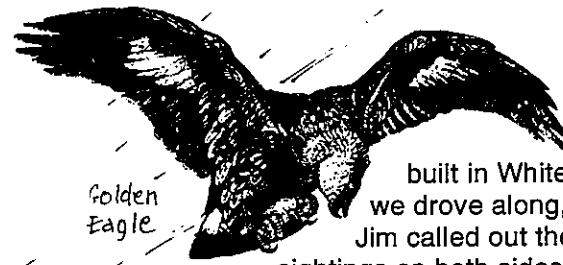
**INTERPRETERS:** Merritt Gibson & Jim Wolford

**PARTICIPANTS:** 33

This annual trip to view the eagles in the Valley was co-sponsored by the Blomidon Naturalists Society. Thirty-three eager participants boarded the bus at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre and at 9:50 a.m. we set out for Sheffield Mills. Merritt Gibson, co-author of *Bald Eagles in the Maritimes*, was our leader, accompanied by Jim Wolford who distributed a flyer, "How to Distinguish the Eagles", as well as a map of the Sheffield Mills 'Eagle-Watch' locations. The temperature was cold and crisp at -10° C, which may have contributed to our dilemma of fogged up bus windows.

Merritt began our journey with an overview of eagles' habits. They tend to sleep in on cold days, generally rise about one hour after sunrise, and are back on their roost around 5:00 p.m. during this time of the year. An eagle becomes adult in its fifth year, with a fully white head and tail, its body and wings dark brown, and beak, feet and eyes yellow.

In the parking lot at Robie Tufts Nature Centre, in a tree by the chimney, we observed two Red-tailed Hawks observing their prey – two pigeons perched on the chimney! We started out on Hwy. 358, the Port Williams Road, where Merritt pointed out a huge structure amid some White Pines – an eagle nest – which has been here for about ten years. The eagles build on it again every year. About



75% of eagles' nests are built in White Pines. As we drove along, Merritt and Jim called out the different

sightings on both sides – Red-tailed Hawks, immature and adult Bald Eagles, and at one point a flood of Bohemian Waxwings behind the bus! We also saw many Ravens perching with the Eagles.

The bus continued along Church Street where Merritt told us there used to be six churches along this road. About 150 years ago Colonel Bob Church encamped here and looted some of the farms.

We turned onto Canard Street, and across from the Grand Dykes of Canard we saw a dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk perched in a tree alongside the road; it then took off in flight allowing us to see the white under its wings. We saw immature Eagles perched in a poplar tree and two Eagles interacting. We turned off Middle Dyke Road onto Saxon Street, all the while with Merritt and Jim calling out the sightings on either side of the bus. From Saxon Street we entered Gibson Woods and saw another Red-tailed Hawk in a Pine on the left, as well as nine Eagles in one tree.

In Sheffield Mills, famous for chicken farms, we came upon the 'Eagle Tree' and observed 19 Eagles feeding on the ground with Ravens in their midst and two Black-backed Gulls. On the crest of a nearby hill, a lone Eagle perched, watching the others feeding.

While driving along Jordan Road, we saw three Red-tailed Hawks, three Common Flickers, and a cluster of 16 eagles in a tree. We then turned right onto Woodside Road heading towards Pereaux. A large number of Eagles come to this area because the farmers feed them dead chickens. 63% of the first-year birds survive their first winter and 75% survive with feeding. As for second-year birds, 73% - 80% survive because of the farmers, and also the fishermen that feed them in Yarmouth and the Tuskets.

Merritt advised that young chicks on the farms are easily disturbed and do not survive their first year, thus becoming eagle-food. He asked if any of us come on our own to visit, to be careful not to disturb the chicks and stay away from the barns.

As we drove towards Kingsport, we saw seven Ring-necked Pheasants running through a farm-yard, past a red barn. On the Wellington Dyke Road we came across a flock of Canada Geese. At Stars Point we saw another eagle nest in a

Poplar near the water, much smaller than the first one we saw, with an Eagle sitting beside the nest. Merritt advised that this nest was first built by Red-tailed Hawks two years ago, but the Eagles have taken it over! From mid-February, one is able to see Eagles rebuilding in preparation for another nesting season.

It was about 12:15 p.m. when we arrived at Acadia's Biology Department for lunch. Jim played a 45-minute video for us – "Saving the Bald Eagle". Merritt had copies of his book available, Bald Eagles in the Maritimes. I highly recommend it if you haven't already purchased a copy (\$5.00). The Bald Eagle, with its strength, beauty, and grace, has been a source of inspiration through the ages.

After two and a half hours observing these graceful, mysterious birds of prey, Merritt left us with this Micmac quote, "Let the eagle be your guide to go further than you can see."

A very special thanks to Merritt and Jim for a truly successful day of Eagle watching. Final tallies for the day (give or take a few): 135 Bald Eagles, 30 Red-Tailed Hawks, 4 Rough-Legged Hawks, and many other interesting sightings.

— Marie Moverley

#### Eagles Species

Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Red-Tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
Rough-Legged Hawk	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Ring-Necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Greater Black Backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Common Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>
Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>



## FALCONS

**DATE:** Saturday, 4 March  
**PLACE:** Shearwater Air Force Base  
**WEATHER:** 1° C; flurries and overcast  
**INTERPRETER:** Peter Serwylo  
**PARTICIPANTS:** 24

On this cold, windy, and snowy day, we wondered if we would get to see the falcons fly at all. Peter Serwylo, the base Falconer, took us inside and introduced us to Baby Huey, a 14-year-old tri-bred falcon (father a Gyrfalcon/Prairie Falcon hybrid; mother a European Saker). Perched on a leather gauntlet on Peter's left hand and wearing a

beautiful leather hood to cover its eyes to keep it calm, Baby Huey sat erect, occasionally rousing its feathers which indicates the bird is calm and relaxed. We also had the privilege to meet 'Forty-five', a female Harris Hawk who was rather vocal (in a large, covered animal cage) during the whole presentation, chatting up a storm!

Falconry is a skilled profession where many species of raptors are trained to hunt. Peter explained that the purpose of using falcons on an air base is to eliminate potential bird strikes (accidental collisions with planes), which can cause millions of dollars of damage to aircraft.

The falcon is a compact and streamlined bird of prey capable of high rates of speed. These long distance hunters cover a large area, whereas hawks, on the other hand, are considered short distance hunters. Three or four birds of prey are kept at Shearwater Air Force Base to keep flocks of birds (pigeons, crows) away from the airplanes.

The trainer builds up trust with the birds by training a couple of hours daily. The birds are fed on the glove and are introduced to a lure (a stuffed pouch of leather, with feathers attached, on a long cord swung around over the head to recall the bird). A strip of leather (a jess) is attached to each leg to hold the bird when it sits on the trainer's gloved fist. A sports whistle is used also and the birds learn to recognize the different whistle blasts. The birds wear a bell on their ankles, enabling the trainer to know its location when flying or when camouflaged on the ground. The birds fly daily for exercise and are allowed to eat a portion of what they catch as a reward. The falcon's diet consists of quail, some beef and chicken – as close to a natural diet as possible.

The weather had cleared a little and Peter decided to take the falcon outdoors for a flying demonstration. It was cold and windy, not ideal flying conditions, and we watched Baby Huey in flight until she landed on the roof of the building we had just left. After a few whistle blasts and swinging the lure, Baby Huey returned to Peter's gloved hand, where she enjoyed her reward of eating the thawed fresh-frozen Quail leg attached to the lure, bones and all!

Peter has always been keenly interested in birds of prey and about 20 years ago learned falconry as a hobby. We would like to thank Peter for sharing his time with us and introducing us to the fascinating art of falconry.

— Marie Moverley



# NATURAL HISTORY

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CASUAL HOUSEKEEPING

Last year the Canadian Museum of Nature published a report on the Rideau River, which has been the subject of the Rideau River Biodiversity Project. The river was examined from Smith's Falls to Ottawa, with water, plankton and benthos samples taken and analysed over a period of six months. This involved teams of water scientists, the Museum's taxonomists, and especially the population living along the banks. Local volunteers have been part of it from planning stages to interpreting results.

Funding came from many sources, the Museum, Friends of the Environment Foundation, Mountain Equipment Co-op, and Rideau Valley Conservation Authority among them.

The report covers many of their results, but the most interesting part is the double-page illustration of two summer cottages and their effects on the river beside them. This picture has been shown to several people, both HFN members and others, and always produces one of two responses – "Yes, of course, how interesting!", or "The one on the left is unsightly." One observer, realising the latter remark was wrong, peered at the picture and added "I think the artwork makes the one on the left look messy!"

Now the cottage on the left is a log cabin, set back from the river in a clearing among mature trees. Vegetation near the riverbank has merely been trimmed, preserving its water filtering function. The riverbed has most of its original flora and plenty of fauna, including two species of turtle. A footpath traverses the shrubs, and leads to a floating dock with a rowboat moored to it; there is a small outboard motor. The dock can be removed in winter, and does not impede the movement of water or ice.

The family from this cottage is birdwatching. One person is hosing off an upturned canoe on trestles in the clearing - we are told the family has just come back from a trip to another waterway, and is cleaning off possible migrants. The Rideau has zebra mussels already, and they are depicted. Last, a brown bullhead is gazing morosely down-river at the barren bed outside the next cottage.

The cottage to the right is of urban type, set close to the river edge, where there is a cement retaining wall. A big cement dock impedes the river, and the boat moored there is a large one with powerful motor and a propeller extending down near the river bed. The bank is eroding where the wall stops. There is no riverside vegetation, very few trees, and the lot is landscaped, with an impeccable lawn and various horticultural specimens. The lawn is being watered from a hose, and mowed by a family member. In fact, everyone visible is occupied with chores, cleaning windows, painting the dock, and so on. As for the river bottom, there are few plants, no water lilies,

some garbage, and only a few pan fish passing through. Without vegetation, there are no birds in this picture either.

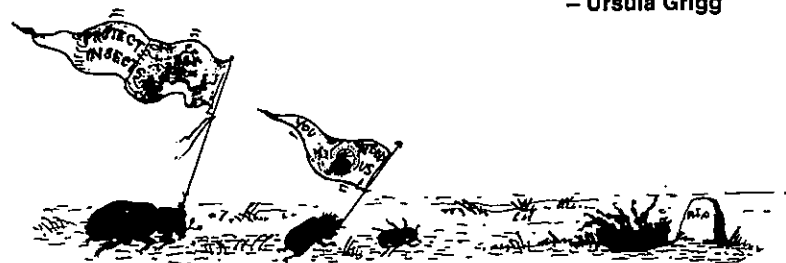
The message is clear: co-operate with nature, protect biodiversity, and enjoy leisure to watch; or impose upon nature, reduce biodiversity and spend your time doing chores. Moreover, the folks in the urban cottage are using a lot of chemicals, on their lawn, in their paints and polishes, and in their boat, and spending a lot of money too. This is not a new observation, but is seldom expressed so clearly.

So the reactions of observers, even naturalists, are troubling. They suggest that we have become so used to the sterility of our urban environments, and to the use of chemicals for purposes which may not even be desirable, that we fail to appreciate natural environments when we see them. The urge to change our Edens may be part of human nature, but it should be restrained. After all, bacteria and insects are seldom malign, in fact they are a necessary part of the environment, and should be accepted. There would be far more garbage around without them! The influence of advertising in all this mayhem should also be acknowledged.

There are some interesting medical observations which bear on this subject: some doctors are going back to ancient methods of dealing with stubborn ailments. For example, they are reintroducing tapeworms to help cure diseases of the lower intestine; wound healing is hastened by using sterile fly maggots to clean off dead tissue; leeches are reducing haematomas. Most recently, there is a suggestion that our children are so protected by vaccines and by attention to cleanliness that they may not develop normal immune systems, and pick up all sorts of germs as soon as they travel. This becomes particularly important when they grow up to roam the world, or join disaster relief teams, where conditions cannot always be controlled.

HFN has worked for land protection and provision of parks, and has had some successes. We must attend now to the use we make of them. Provision of toilets in parks makes sense, but what about motels right outside the fence, and wide paved roadways into forests? What about selective logging? After all, the folk in the log cabin have also tidied up their lot but preserved its natural character. We need to do much more thinking, and particularly ponder the Importance of Casual Housekeeping!

– Ursula Grigg



# 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.



When the maple wears its tassels and the birch-buds grow apace,  
 And the willows gleam out golden in the sunset's tender grace,  
 And the ferns amid the mosses their curly heads uprear,  
 Then awakes our wilding blossom, first and fairest of the year –  
 The Mayflower – oh the Mayflower! Sweet of scent and fair to see,  
 Tiny, trailing, pink arbutus, chosen flower of Acadie!



— Agnes Maule Machar, "The legend of the Mayflower" in Lays of the True North (1899)

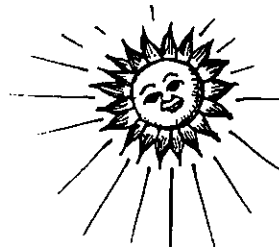
## NATURAL EVENTS

- 20 March** Vernal Equinox at 3:35 AST: Spring begins in the Northern hemisphere.
- 20 March** Full Moon – the 'Worm Moon'.
- 23 March** Daily average temperature at Shearwater is above 0°.
- April** Beaked Hazel blooms, one of our earliest flowering shrubs.
- 2 April** Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 a.m.: Turn clocks ahead one hour.
- 16 April** Daily minimum temperature at Shearwater is above 0°.
- 18 April** Full Moon – the 'Pine Moon'.
- 21 April** Lyrid Meteor Shower.
- 22 April** Earth Day.
- late April** Our native Red Maple blooms before its leaves open.
- late April/early May** Daphne blooms in old Acadian sites.
- early May** Norway Maple blooms, and is fragrant along city streets.
- early-mid May** Indian Pear blooms.
- mid-late May** Pin Cherry blooms.
- 18 May** Full Moon – the 'Flower Moon'.
- late May** Choke Cherry blooms.
- 28 May** Date of last spring frost in Halifax (i.e. Env. Can. says that there is only a 1:10 chance that a spring frost will occur after this date); look forward to 155 frost-free days.
- late May/early June** Mercury will be visible in the west-northwest sky at twilight.
- mid-late June** Mountain-ash blooms.
- 16 June** Full Moon – the 'Strawberry Moon'.
- 20 June** Summer Solstice at 22:46 ADT: Summer begins in the Northern Hemisphere.
- late June** Saturn will be visible in the eastern sky at dawn.



— Sources: Atmospheric Environment Service, Climate Normals 1951-80 Halifax (Shearwater A) N.S.; Colombo's Canadian Global Almanac, 1997, 2000; Jim Wolford (on NatureNS), James Goltz (on NatureNB), and the personal observations of the compiler.

## SUNRISE AND SUNSET FROM LATE WINTER THROUGH EARLY SUMMER SATURDAYS



<b>4 March</b>	6:46	18:07	<b>1 April</b>	5:55	18:42
<b>11 March</b>	6:33	18:16	<b>8 April</b>	6:42	19:51
<b>18 March</b>	6:21	18:25	<b>15 April</b>	6:30	20:00
<b>25 March</b>	6:08	18:34	<b>22 April</b>	6:18	20:08
			<b>29 April</b>	6:07	20:17
<b>6 May</b>	5:57	20:26	<b>3 June</b>	5:31	20:55
<b>13 May</b>	5:48	20:34	<b>10 June</b>	5:29	20:59
<b>20 May</b>	5:41	20:42	<b>17 June</b>	5:28	21:02
<b>27 May</b>	5:35	20:49	<b>24 June</b>	5:30	21:04

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

## ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS

**Blomidon Naturalists Society:** Indoor meetings take place on the third Monday of the month at Room 241 in the Beveridge Arts Centre, Acadia University, 7:30 p.m. Field trips usually depart from the Robie Tufts Nature Centre, Front St., Wolfville. For more information; <<http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/home.htm>>

- 20 March "Where Have all the Salmon Gone?", with Mike Dadswell.
- 30 April "Wolfville Area Birds", with Jim Wolford, 542-7650.
- 10 June "Amphibians & Reptiles", with Jim Wolford, 542-7650.

**Burke-Gaffney Observatory:** Public shows at the Burke-Gaffney Observatory at Saint Mary's University are held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, except from June through September when they are held every Saturday. Tours begin at 7 p.m. between November 1 and March 30, and at either 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. (depending on when it gets dark) between April 1 and October 31. For more information phone 496-8257; <<http://apwww.stmarys.ca/bgo/>>.

**Friends of McNabs Island:** for more information call Dusan Soudek at 422-1045, or Mike Tilley, 465-4563; <<http://chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/FOMIS/>>.

**Nova Scotia Bird Society:** Indoor meetings take place on the 4th Thursday of the month, October to April, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. **Please note new meeting time.** For more information, phone 852-2428 (recording), or Fulton Lavender, 455-4966; <<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/NS-BirdSoc/>>.

- 23 March "Birding Adventures in Arizona", with Joan Czapalay.
- 1 April "Baccaro and Blanche Peninsula", with Donna Ensor, 875-4269.
- 15 April "Martinique Beach", with Ian McLaren, 429-7024.
- 27 April "The Maritime Important Bird Areas Program", with Roland Chiasson and Sabine Dietz.
- 6 May "Cape Sable Island", with Murray Newell, 745-3340.
- 7 May "Amherst Point Bird Sanctuary", with Alan Smith, 506-536-0164 (h) or 506-364-5038 (w).
- 13 May "North American Migration Count"; contact Judy Tufts, 542-7800.
- 19 May "Halifax County Early Morning Warbler Walk", with Fred Dobson, 852-3042.
- 19-22 May "Bon Portage Island", with Claire Diggins, 825-6152.
- 27 May "Hawk Picnic Day, Cape Sable Island", with Lillian Scott Perry, 637-2844.
- 27 May "Bridgetown/Annapolis Royal", with Sharon Hawboldt, 665-4150.
- 28 May "Shubenacadie Area", with Roslyn McPhee, 758-3265



**Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History:** For more information, phone 424-6099, or 424-7353; <<http://www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/museum/mnh/>>.

- 22 March "Terns and Their Survival", with Andrew Boyne.
- 29 March "Cormorants: Black, Bad Birds", with Randy Milton.
- 2 April "The Nature of Hummingbirds", book launch with Harry Thurston.
- 5 April "Eiders and Gulls: Can They Live Together?", with Kim Mawhinney.
- 12 April "A Place in the Country", with Alex Wilson.
- 15-30 April "Annual Salamander Meander", with John Gilhen. Pre-register, 424-3563, starting March 27.
- 19 April "Can the Acadian Whitefish be saved? The Anatomy of a Recovery Team".
- 13 May "The Trails Festival"; an all-day expo of hiking, trails, gear, etc.
- 17 May "Fern Fest", with Alex Wilson and Marian Zinck. Tour the new Living Fern Conservatory.
- 20-21 May "Annual Rhododendron Show & Plant Sale", sponsored by the Rhododendron Society of Canada, Atlantic Region.
- 24 May "Spring Wildflowers of Nova Scotia"; a mini-course with MNH botanists. Pre-register starting May 1: call 424-7353.
- 7 June "The History of Swordfishing", with Franklyn d'Entremont. Co-sponsored by the Ecology Action Centre.
- 10 June "Sable Island: A New Connection: Launch of New Website", with the Sable Island Preservation Trust.
- 17-18 June "Nova Scotia Wildlife Carvers and Artists Association Competition and Show".
- 21 June "Edible Greens" with Marian Zinck. Sample Recipes!



**Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society:** Meets 4th Monday of the month, September to May, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information phone Heather Drope, 423-7032.

- 27 March "Spring Flora", with Carl Munden.
- 24 April "Photographing Wild Flowers", with Charlie Cron.

**Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia:** Meets 2nd Monday of the month, as well as the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. Shows are held at Saint Mary's University, Theatre A, Burke Education Centre. For more information phone Kenneth Moore, 826-1121; <<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/PGNS/index.html>>.

- 29 April "Annual Spring Show", 8:00 p.m.

**Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Halifax Chapter):** Meets third Friday of each month at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 8:00 p.m. For more information; <<http://halifax.rasc.ca>>.

— compiled by Patricia L. Chalmers



# HFN Spring Social, Sunday, 7 May

## Registration Form

We'd love to see you at our Spring Social! Just fill in this form and return it with your cheque or money order to Marie Moverley at the address below; or in person at a monthly meeting. Don't forget to tell us which type of meal you'd prefer — roast beef or vegetarian.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Meal:             Roast Beef             Vegetarian

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Meal:             Roast Beef             Vegetarian

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Meal:             Roast Beef             Vegetarian

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ (\$8.00 per person; cheques payable to "Halifax Field Naturalists")



Return to:

Marie Moverley  
5429 Inglis Street, Apartment 306  
Halifax, N.S. B3H 1J6



### Deadline is 1 May, 2000!











### A FRIVOLITY

Last night in the museum's hall  
The fossils gathered for a ball.  
There were no drums or saxophones,  
But just the clatter of their bones,  
A rolling, rattling, carefree circus  
Of mammoth polkas and mazurkas.  
Pterodactyls and brontosaurus  
Sang ghostly prehistoric choruses.  
Amid the mastodonic wassail  
I caught the eye of one small fossil.  
Cheer up, sad world, he said, and winked –  
It's kind of fun to be extinct.

— Ogden Nash, from Carnival of the Animals

### NATURE NOTES

- There was a walrus seen at Portugese Cove, about 3 days before a sighting at Point Pleasant Park on the 30 January.
- Ursula reported a living wasp in her house.
- Flies & ladybugs were reported inside Martok Lodge.
- 15 February – an otter swimming from the 'seal rock' off Point Pleasant Park, up into the North West arm.
- February through March – a flock of Red-breasted Mergansers off Point Pleasant, Ives Point, varying from two to 24; with the number of females from one to seven. Observations included sleeping, clustering together in bad weather, diving, fishing and eating, pairing off, and courting and aggressive male behaviour. There seems to be one regular pair that is always there very close to the shore.

### ! NEXT DEADLINE !

#### 1 JUNE FOR JUNE ISSUE

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