

THE HALIFAX FIELD NATURALIST



No. 153

December, 2013 to February, 2014

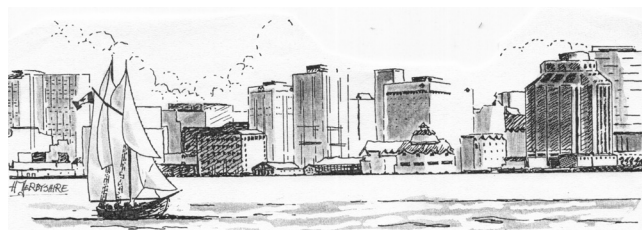


In This Issue.....	2
News & Announcements.....	3
Special Reports.....	4
Talks	4

Field Trips	9
Nature Notes	12
Almanac	13
Hfx Tide Table: January to March.....	15

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 the Canada Revenue Agency. Tax-creditable receipts will be issued for individual and corporate gifts. **HFN** is an affiliate of Nature Canada and an organisational member of Nature Nova Scotia, the provincial umbrella association for 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, and 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; they are open to the public. **Field Trips** are held at least once a month; it is appreciated if those travelling in someone else's car share the cost of the gas. **Participants** in HFN activities are responsible for their own safety. Everyone, member or not, is welcome to take part in field trips. **Memberships** are open to anyone interested in the natural history of Nova Scotia. Forms are available at any meeting of the society, or by writing to: Membership Secretary, Halifax Field Naturalists, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History. Members receive **The Halifax Field Naturalist**, along with its included **Programme**, quarterly. Our membership year is from January 1st to December 31st, and new memberships received from September 1st to December 31st of any year are valid until the end of the following membership year.



HFN ADDRESS
Halifax Field Naturalists, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History,
1747 Summer St., Hfx, N.S., B3H 3A6 **Email:** hfninfo@yahoo.ca
Website: halifaxfieldnaturalists.ca

IN THIS ISSUE

HFN News and Announcements	3
NSNT – a great Annual Dinner; ways to support	3
Interpretive Panels – how they're done	3
New & Returning – seven more (again!)	3
Special Reports	4
Submerging Sandpiper! – a rescue	4
HFN Talks	4
Fern Landscaping – all you wanted to know	5
HRM's Urban Forest – help for our cities' trees	5
Florida Birding – a plethora of species	6
Important N.S. Bird Areas – all about IBA's	8
HFN Field Trips	9
Point Pleasant Park Walk – the old and the new	9
Whopper Drop Trail – all the Autumn flora	10
Wetland Restoration – at Cheverie Creek	10



GRAPHICS All uncredited illustrations are by H. Derbyshire or from copyright-free sources. **Front Cover** - winter woodland trail, Richard Beazley
Back Cover - Snowy scene with Pine, David Patriquin; **Tide Table** - Canadian Hydrographic Service, Fisheries & Oceans Canada.

NNS ADDRESS
Nature Nova Scotia, c/o N.S. Museum of Natural History, 1747
Summer St., Halifax, N.S., B3H 3A6
Email: doug@fundymud.com (Doug Linzey, NNS Secretary and
Newsletter Editor) **Website:** naturens.ca

EXECUTIVE	2013/2014
President	Janet Dalton443-7617
Vice-President	Clarence Stevens.....864-0802
Treasurer	Ingrid Plache475-1129
Secretary	Michael Bradfield.....423-7706
Past President	Allan Robertson.....422-6326
Directors	Elliott Hayes, Burkhard Plache, Lillian Risley, Stephanie Robertson

COMMITTEES	2013/2014
Membership	Lillian Risley422-8652
Programme	
Talks/Trips	Richard & Grace Beazley.....429-6626
	Sharon Berkinshaw444-9241
	Elliott Hayes835-9819
	Burkhard Plache.....475-1129
	Gillian Webster.....453-9244
	Stephanie Robertson422-6326

Design	
Newsletter	
Editor & Design	Stephanie Robertson422-6326
Almanac	Patricia Chalmers422-3970
Taxonomy	Ursula Grigg681-1264
Distribution	Bernice Moores.....422-5292
Labels	Doug Linzey582-7176

Refreshments	Regine Maass
Conservation	Bob McDonald.....443-5051
	David Patriquin.....423-5716
	Clare Robinson446-6603

NNS Rep.	Burkhard Plache.....475-1129
YNC Rep.	David Patriquin.....423-5716
PSAs	Gillian Webster.....453-9244
Webmaster	David Patriquin.....423-5716
CSC Award	Doug Linzey582-7176
	David Patriquin.....423-5716

FEES	2013/2014
Student	\$15.00 per year
Individual	\$20.00 per year
Family	\$25.00 per year
Supporting	\$30.00 per year

Nature Notes	12
October, November, December, and January	12
Almanac	13
Natural Events	13
Significant seasonal phenomena	13
Organisational Events	13
Blom. Nat. Soc. – snowshoeing, orchids, supernovas	13
Burke Gaffney Observatory – 1st & 3rd Saturdays..	14
N.S. Bird Society – winter bird survival and more	14
N.S. Dept. Nat. Resources – Parks for People	14
N.S. Museum Natural History – all about N.S. gold	14
N.S. Wild Flora – 4th Mondays of the month	14
N.S. Inst. Science – CO ² , air quality, dark energy	14
Royal Astron. Soc. – 3rd Fridays of the month	14
YNC – stars – and bears!	14
!Hunting Season Still! – to the 28th of February	14

HFN NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

NSNT ANNUAL DINNER, OCT. 24th

The 2013 Nature Trust's (NSNT) 16th Annual Dinner and Auction at the Halifax World Trade & Convention Centre celebrated Nova Scotia's treasured islands. We had fun meeting like-minded naturalists pre-dinner, and heard wonderful stories and experiences of island conservation efforts during some excellent dining.

CBC's Preston Mulligan was MC; poet, educator, and surfer Lesley Choyce was the speaker; and we were treated to a running showcase of breathtaking island images by photographer and zoologist Damian Lidgard.

If you haven't attended one of these events, you might like to do so next year. Lots of fun, and with truly excellent food (tasty vegetarian options too), you'll help raise critical funds for NSNT to continue saving unique and outstanding places across our province that we naturalists so love to visit.

More ways to support NSNT are by joining the **"Blue Nose Marathon Wilderness Soles Team"** – get fit, lose weight, save the wild, and bring along some friends to share the fun (visit nsnt.ca/bluenose for the details); **"Take a Walk on the Wild Side"** – go out for a wilderness paddle, an educational snowshoe or hike, and discover the wonders of Nova Scotia's wild places; **"Help Nature While You Work"** – see if your company matches employee donations; and **"Spread The Word"** – share Nature Trust news with friends and family, join our facebook/twitter sites, and 'spread the word' with online friends. More Nature Trust friends means more conservation of places that support a fully viable range of our wild flora and fauna.



INTERPRETIVE TRAIL SIGNS

Long-time HFN member and Christmas Social Organiser Patricia Leader was once part of a medical rehabilitation team. Some team members were from small, Newfoundland outposts who had never before interacted with a few of the professions represented; a booklet was needed explaining each of their roles. Pat co-ordinated the first draft, expecting brief summaries with consequent quick results and distribution. But – *everyone* wanted input or else disagreed with the contents! Some professions overlapped. Turf wars raged. Revisions took *a year*, but the pamphlet emerged as worthwhile. Foolishly, she then agreed to co-ordinate its first revision. That took *two years* due to even more extensive fine-tuning before its final approval!

Presently, Pat produces those wonderful, interpretive trail boards for the Halifax North West Trails Association (HNWTA). Most trails have historical backgrounds, (e.g. The Old Coach Road Trail, Belchers Marsh, and Hemlock Ravine), so she always conducts thorough historical research before pulling everything together.

Besides a trail's history, the panels can also include a trail's geology, geography, and flora and fauna. Maps and photographs are also used to eliminate the need for too much text. Besides resourcing archives, she spends a great deal of time interviewing local people who know and use an area. For instance, Scott Manor, where she volunteers, is a wonderful resource for anything in the Bedford

area. Lectures provided by the Senior College Association of N.S (SCANS), the St. Mary's Elder Learners, and the library also lead to additional material. As well, Pat uses her photography and travel to study a great variety of other interpretive boards. All this research can take, and has taken, years! While this is going on, HNWTA applies for funding and additional grants. Trail signs can cost up to \$10,000, and there is stiff competition for HRM money (other funding is sought as well).

A suitable site for the sign is chosen close to the trail. With all materials assembled, Pat usually starts on her floor, adding text to each photo. Then comes all the corrections, the weeding out of too-lengthy text, the re-checking of facts (especially dates), and the obtaining of permission for the illustrations. Designed to be visually appealing to all age groups and reading levels, the finished assemblage (including logos of the sponsors) is then taken to the production firm. HNWTA is lucky to have a member who does this professionally. The finished product is then fitted into a stand or kiosk, and a grand 'ribbon cutting', attended by the public, councillors, and sponsors is arranged.

With a hopefully graffiti-proof surface, a public place can be a good siting. The recently installed board at Cabin Lake trail in Bedford was covered with black spray paint and scratches within three weeks of its placement! A call to HRM's 300 line saved the day. Quick removal of graffiti seems to deter repetitive attacks. Police also keep track of such incidences, and occasionally, offenders are caught – but not often enough.

Pat's latest venture is to produce a board (she started in 2011) for the Mill Run Trail. It begins at Paper Mill Lake and tells the story of early industrial Bedford, including the Moirs Chocolate Factory. Watch this space! Go to HNWTA's website, Halifaxnorthwesttrails.ca, to see all their trails and boards.



A LECTURE SERIES

Dalhousie's 2014 Environment and Sustainability Society (ESS) lectures have begun. Its roster appears to include a few topics likely to be of interest to many of our members.

16 Jan. - "Managing Risk in Canada's Critical Infrastructure"; **23 Jan.** - "Gifts from the Elders". Google **ESS Lecture Series** to find out more.

Lectures begin every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in Ondaatje Hall, 6135 University Ave., Marion McCain Arts & Social Sciences building. All are welcome, and it's free. **There is limited seating – please arrive early!**



NEW AND RETURNING



Ron Cosper
James and Julie Gregg
Gareth Harding
Mandine LeBlanc
Joan Manual
Dorothy Turner

SPECIAL REPORTS

SUBMERGING SANDPIPER

– Gareth Harding & Renée Lyons

July 13, 2013 was a beautiful, blue-sky day in Antigonish County. After a warm morning of weeding our garden, the three of us – Renée, myself, and Jacques Junior (our neighbour Marie MacIsaac's inexhaustible Black Labrador) headed down the Dobson Trail to cool off in the Northumberland Strait. To reach it, we clambered across jagged basaltic headlands in order to get to Horseshoe Bend Brook Beach, where it is easy to enter the sea and swim.

Spotted Sandpipers are one of the more common birds seen along this shoreline, and Jacques Jr. never fails to gallop after them, no matter how futile the chase. At this time of year the adults will actively encourage our rambunctious companion in order to remove him from wherever their young are supposedly hidden.

This particular day however, a young Sandpiper did a u-turn on Jacques Jr. and came right back along the beach towards us. The beach is relatively narrow there and it is bounded by an eroding and steep glacial scree of over a hundred feet of red mud, sand, gravel, and boulders. Suddenly, the bird veered towards the ocean to avoid us and then disappeared just beyond the beach/water interface. I couldn't believe my eyes, and neither could Jacques Jr., who stood with his paws in the water looking dumbfounded. There was not even a trace of the bird, although the sea was calm, with nary a ripple.

Renée soon pointed out a tiny object some 50 feet offshore. It could have been a bit of flotsam as seen through my binoculars; however, it then disappeared and resurfaced further out to sea. I instantly stripped down and went into the water to save the little creature. It became obvious that I was forcing the little blighter

further away, so I swam a wide arc and herded it back towards the shore. The sandpiper now swam continuously at the surface, (rather – the head was above the surface, bill open, and its body was beneath). I overtook it easily, lifted it out of the water, and gently confined it after it started to squirm. I got Renée to distract Jacques Jr. down the beach, while I released the soggy little bird at the base of the cliff near a patch of Coltsfoot, where it promptly disappeared into the vegetation. I felt reassured that it would dry out quickly on such a super warm day.

Although I've seen thousands of Spotted Sandpipers, I have never witnessed anything like this. The more I thought about it, the more it dawned on me that this was a very successful and unique way for a fledgling shorebird to avoid a terrestrial predator, such as a Fox, Coyote, or – a dog such as Jacques Jr.

That evening I searched my pile of bird books and came up with a blank until I picked up good old Robie Tufts' book on Nova Scotian birds. In it he described the identical experience which we had just witnessed with our young Spotted Sandpiper, and amusingly, he even had the same response in order to rescue 'his' bird!

This begs the question – have other shorebirds, such as Piping Plovers for instance, evolved the same behaviour to avoid predation? Bird identification books are sadly lacking in descriptions of bird behaviour, even those not quite as dramatic as diving Sandpipers.



HFN TALKS

FERN LANDSCAPING

3 OCT.

– S. Robertson

Native Ferns to Know and Grow For those who prefer a more natural, easy-to-care-for garden, this presentation, "Native Fern Landscaping" was perfect, informative, and interesting – all you wanted to know about ferns, and then some. Ian Jack, of Fernwood Plant Nursery in Hubbards (where there are more than 40 varieties of ferns presently growing and available), talked about the unique and ancient history of ferns, their many landscape uses, and the identity of specific native Nova Scotian ferns for gardening. Having no flowers, no fruit, and no seeds, ferns are easier to care for than the more traditional garden cultivars.

Ferns are a very ancient group of plants, having evolved about 400 million years ago, while flowering plants showed up in the fossil records only about 145 million years ago. Ferns had to 'move over' for these relative newcomers, and finding themselves now standing in their shade, they successfully adapted to lower

light and lower nutrient conditions. They've colonised every habitat on earth – from from the arctic to the tropics; from low woodlands to high alpine areas; from the very dry to the very wet; and from areas with rich humus to those with mere bare rocks. There are roughly 11,000 to 12,000 species and their allies, and with all these diverse habitats, they have a large impact on the earth's ecosystems.

There are two plant characteristics to think about when trying to differentiate between mosses, ferns, and seed plants – vascularity, and seed/spores/reproduction. Mosses are non-vascular (they have neither xylem nor phloem), while both ferns and seed plants are vascular, with both xylem (water/nutrient transport) and phloem (sugar/nutrient transport). Both mosses and ferns regenerate by means of spores, with moss spores being found in a capsule at the end of the stalk, while fern spores are found in clusters under their leaves. Seed plants produce seeds in order to regenerate.

There are many ways that ferns reproduce, includ-



ing self-fertilisation. Fern spores are hardy enough to be successfully transported all over the earth via the jet stream! Being the first to colonise some of the more barren areas, they provide the first layer of biomass, and indeed are important sources of biomass everywhere they grow. Also, they play a significant role in ecosystem succession, and can very effectively prevent weed growth. Bracken is an interesting fern – it can suppress the growth of other plants because of its allelopathic (toxic) properties.

The benefits of gardening with N.S native ferns are that they are already perfectly adapted to our unique range of habitats, offering a variety of colours, textures, sizes, and growth habits. They are also ideally suitable for diverse landscape applications. They don't require high maintenance, and it is easy to observe our wild native fern communities in order to recreate them for our own gardens. First, the gardener sets the mood by choosing woodland, alpine, relaxed, or formal settings. One can opt for multi-season interest, mixed groupings of certain specimens, background and edging types, groundcovers, sunny to shady rock garden ferns, or grow certain ferns in containers. Ferns can be tiny, massive, delicate, or coarse, and there are many, many shades of green available.

Iain had some beautiful slides, and he followed with images of some of the more common ferns for gardens, according to habitat and local conditions. **For groundcovers in shady spots** – Oak Fern, Northern Beech Fern, Northern Maidenhair Fern, Hay-scented Fern, New York Fern, and Marsh Fern are all suitable. **For groundovers in partial to full sun** – Netted Chain Fern, Sensitive Fern, Virginia Chain Fern, and Ostrich Fern will do well. **For 'clumping' effects in full sun** – Cinnamon Fern, Royal Fern, and Interrupted Fern were listed. **For clumping types of ferns for shady areas** – suggested were Northern Lady Fern, Spinulose Wood Fern, Intermediate Wood Fern, Marginal Wood Fern, Goldie's Wood Fern, Christmas Fern, and Braun's Holly Fern. **For rock gardens in partial to full sun** – there are Rock Polypody, Rusty Woodsia, and Hairy Lip Fern; **for shady and moist rock gardens** – Maidenhair Spleenwort.

To learn more, go to www.fernwoodplantnursery.ca.

HRM'S URBAN FOREST 7 NOV. – Lillian Risley

Sustaining HRM's Urban Forest; The Urban Forest Master Plan Trees are very important to Haligonians for many reasons, including improved air quality, water retention habitat for city-dwelling species, UV protection, their cooling effects, and just being there for people to enjoy looking at.

The Halifax Regional Council put forward a motion in 2001 to develop a functional plan for Halifax's 'urban forest'. But, over the next ten years, a number of natural

events had significant impact on our city's trees—Hurricane Juan, beetles in Point Pleasant Park, and White Juan. Finally, in 2008, work on a plan was able to be begun in earnest. That plan was approved by Halifax City Council in Sept. 2012, and HRM's Urban Forest Master Planner John Charles, who had been involved from the very beginning, could now begin the official implementation. Through public engagement three implementation priorities were identified. These were: 1) increasing funding to plant more trees on HRM land and improving urban forest maintenance; 2) adopting new regulations and standards to conserve urban forest canopy cover; and 3) promoting citizen urban forest stewardship and developing educational programmes.

The Urban Forest Plan was developed for decisions about trees on public and private land, with the goal of obtaining support from citizens and creating more benefits for everyone. On public land the City must make decisions about how many and what trees are planted (promoting the planting of a mix of native Maritime trees), and ongoing maintenance, with consideration of power lines, new construction, etc. On private land (which contains more than half of our forested land), the City provides advice and assistance as well as controlling the removal/replacement of trees.

Using the Plan's principles (which were designed to cover the most important natural and public elements), HRM identified needed actions in 32 categories ranging from planting trees, public education, support, citizen-led stewardship, to research and fund-raising. This work has been stratified at four levels: the Urban Forest Study Area; communities; neighbourhoods; and divisions within neighbourhoods. The initial study area included the lands along both sides of Halifax Harbour and Bedford Basin and their connected watersheds. Neighbourhoods were then identified, along with their parks and neighbourhood divisions. These areas were then prioritized according to the level of their management needs. The current planting project (with both spring and fall activities) was carried out in the areas of Connaught/Quinpool, the North End (including Africville), Colby Village, Eastern Passage, and Fairview. In all, 1,352 trees were planted!

The annual implementation cost estimates in the Plan for the 2013-2018 period were \$1.83 million per year. For park areas, a 33-hectare annual planting target has been established. Volunteers are also an integral part of urban forest management and, with their hard work, 1,500 trees were planted in the Russell Lake community this Fall. In another joint effort, HRM and NS Power will partner to begin a seven-year cyclical pruning programme.

There have been some challenges in coordinating activities which impact on pushing the tree programme forward. For example, the space between streets and sidewalks used to be six feet; this has now been reduced to one foot. In Fairview, where plans were made to plant trees, some of the designated tree-planting spaces became bus stop pads instead! Despite such setbacks, 1,000 new trees were planted in the spring of 2013, with some of them replacing existing trees that



had grown quite old. These plantings included a mix of varieties, including Sugar Maple, Red Maple, Oak, White Pine, and American Elm. Mixed plantings should help prevent catastrophic loss if a particular variety encounters a problem. Dalhousie University is involved in monitoring the number of trees planted and they will be assessing any mortality next spring.

Looking to the future, many more options are being examined. Two examples – the use of permeable concrete, and a requirement to have trees in parking lots. Looking further afield, some cities, such as Calgary, do not allow any runoff from parking lots. A programme has been begun here to examine the use of a magnesium-based replacement for road salt. The benefits would be wonderful, but – it is *very* expensive. As work continues in all of these areas, the City will be involved in related public education, engaging widely with NGO partners and offering volunteer events.



FLORIDA BIRDING 5 DEC.

– *Stephanie Robertson,*
with *Bob McDonald*

In April 2013, Bob and Wendy McDonald went to Florida and travelled some of the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. It was established in 1997, and it is a self-guided highway trail comprised of 23 different ‘zones’ with 515 designated birding sites. They visited a few of them, but missed the Northern (Panhandle) Section. Birding is big business in Florida (“Healthy wild lands make healthy economics.”), earning that state a whopping \$5.2 billion per year! The wealth of birds, wildlife, and flora they saw was amazing, and being avid birders, they were clearly very pleased with this trip. Bob himself saw 20 new birds for his life list! Their presentation was so chalk-full of wonderful wildlife shots and information that in merely taking notes, I felt I had been on the trip myself.

They visited many Nature Centres as well as designated birding trails. While there, they also discovered that there were many ‘birding festivals’; but those latter they chose not to attend. Habitat for birds there seems to be very well-protected by a series of parks and wildlife management areas, and they were also very pleased to see many young people hiking the trails.

For the first week of their trip, they hired a guide; for the second week, they travelled on their own. All of the areas they visited were well-maintained and showed a lot of biodiversity.

They first flew to Tampa, where they were met by their guide Mike Nelson. Then, in a rented vehicle, they drove circularly around the Trail, covering a total of about 3,000 km in the two weeks they were there. A map showed their route down Florida’s west coast, and then down the Florida Keys including a day trip to the Dry Tortugas. From there they travelled up the Atlantic Coast and eventually back to Clearwater.

Their first stop was Fort De Soto Park, which boasted a nice mix of shorebirds and passerines. On the beach they saw a pair of Least Terns and many shorebirds including Piping, Black-bellied, Semipalmated and Wilson’s Plover along with Willets, Sanderlings, and Dowitchers. Among the passerines were Hooded Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Loggerhead Shrike (an endangered species here), and a Northern Mockingbird.

Heading south from Fort De Soto, a stop at Oscar Scherer State Park provided a great view of a Florida endemic species, the Florida Scrub Jay. The Cyprus swamp in the Park boasted very large trees with a plethora of *Usnea* lichens, very much bigger than here, and much greyer in all that heat. Shortly after, they headed back to the air conditioning in their vehicle, since the temperature was in the mid-90’s!!

Proceeding south again, at Babcock Webb Wildlife Management Area they saw a Common Nighthawk in a Gumbo Limbo tree, *Bursera simaruba*, with its peeling red bark.



There was a large variety of butterflies and dragonflies as well as birds in Everglades National Park. We were shown images of a young Anhinga with its wings spread, a Green Heron (one of the smallest herons) and a Purple Gallinule. Butterflies included a Mangrove Buckeye, Gulf Fritillary, and White Peacock. Dragonflies were represented by male and female Halloween Pennant and Eastern Pondhawk. Alligators were everywhere and turtles as well were present – Bob showed us a picture of a group of three Florida Cooters. Many lizards have been introduced and are thriving in Florida, but at this point we were shown a native one – a Green Anole.

Everglades National Park is huge, and the birds there seemed to be very accustomed to and not afraid of the alligators they always encountered. April is breeding season in Florida, and we were shown a male Anhinga with its beautiful breeding crest erect.

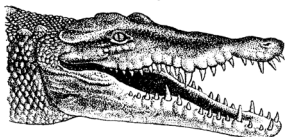
In Florida City they photographed a parrot. Many species of parrots have been released in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area; the one we were shown was a Monk Parakeet.

The next morning, still exploring the Everglades National Park, they saw an endangered Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. There also were Red-bellied Woodpeckers (which, because of global warming, are now moving into Nova Scotia and have been reported as breeding here as well). There were lots of Black Vultures, a Great Blue Heron, and many, many ‘wall-to-wall’ alligators – 35 in one particular picture! On their final stop in the Everglades’ Paurotis Pond, they encountered a huge breeding colony of Wood Storks, along with Roseate Spoonbills and egrets.

After a short stop for fruit smoothies, where they happened upon the southernmost breeding colony of Purple Martins, Key West beckoned. En route they were able to catch a glimpse of an endangered Key Deer, rounding out the marvelous range of wildlife they saw there.

These deer are only two feet high; with a population of only seven to eight hundred, they are present on only two of the smallest keys.

Early morning brought the McDonalds to the wharf in Key West where Brown Pelicans and Laughing Gulls were very common. The high-speed catamaran ferry to the Dry Tortugas provided views of a large colony of Masked Boobies and Brown Boobies as well. The ferry destination was historic Fort Jefferson (constructed in 1848 during the Spanish-American War) on Garden Key. Many birds were seen – magnificent Frigatebirds overhead, Piping Plover and Ruddy Turnstones on the beach, and a colony of Brown Noddies, a species of tern, on the rusted remains of the coaling docks. There was also a nesting colony of Sooty Terns on adjacent Loggerhead Key, access to which was clearly prohibited. Also seen were Sandwich Terns (their guide Mike knew them as Cabot's Terns). Within the walls of the fort (12 million bricks used in its construction!), and hanging around the provided fresh water, were Glossy Ibis looking for passerine meals. The fort was surrounded by an old moat which seemed strange since the small island is surrounded by ocean!



Back in Key West they snapped an Iguana (non-native), a Strangler Fig tree (native), Cattle Egrets, and another Green Anole.

Outside Miami they photographed a Hill Mynah and a beautiful male Cardinal; there they saw another Iguana, this time right in the middle of a street! Along a public pathway through a golf course there was a singing Brown Thrasher, a Bronzed Cowbird, and some butterflies including a female Queen. Another non-native lizard, a Knight Anole, was also seen.

Just north of Miami, the Wakodahatchee Wetlands boasted some terrific interpretive signage as well as a plethora of water birds. They saw breeding-plumaged Tricolored (Louisiana) Heron, Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, White Ibis, Little Blue Herons, pairs of Mottled Ducks and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Double-crested Cormorants, Purple Gallinules and a Sora (a type of rail) which Bob discovered. A Boat-tailed Grackle perched on a railing very close by. All the birds were fairly tame there, and were not easily startled.

More butterflies, really beautiful fish in the shallows, and Elderberry blooming (in April!) were seen. Some of these were truly spectacular shots.

Further north and inland there was a flock of White Pelicans getting ready to fly to Lake Winnipeg. They used a tape to attract a Bachman's Sparrow, and there were myriads of different and beautiful flowers. They also came across a singing Eastern Meadowlark and saw a Crested Caracara.

Next was the long journey across the state back to Clearwater. Enroute they encountered Sandhill Cranes – two parents and a young one, Red-shouldered Hawk

(common there but found only rarely in Nova Scotia), and a Brown-headed Nuthatch. After some Pawpaw flowers, we saw a snap of Wendy at one of their picnic sites. Sadly, we also saw a sign boasting how many animals had been killed that day – specifically deer, hogs, and turkeys. They also actually got to see the famous "Heartbreak Hotel" and the highly-sought-after Red-cockaded Woodpecker in a slash-pine forest.

On their final day with their guide, the McDonalds visited Honeymoon Island, on the coast north of Clearwater. Black Skimmers (a type of tern), an Eastern Towhee, a Limpkin, Ospreys (they do well in Florida), a Grey Kingbird, and Seaside Goldenrod (blooming there in April) were seen. They also noted a Prickly Pear Cactus in bloom near the beach. There are Wild Turkeys in Florida, and they were able to photograph a female. Many more dragonflies were seen as were several more lizards including the introduced Brown (Cuban) Anole with its very visible red dewlap, and a Brown Basilisk.

Now on their own, the McDonalds picked up their rental car and drove south to Sanibel Island for a 3-day stay. Enroute, they searched for and found an endangered Burrowing Owl. While on Sanibel, daily visits to the famous 6,300-acre Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge are essential! This Refuge is home to over 200 species of birds, alligators, mangrove forests, and more. Herons and egrets of many species may be easily viewed and we were shown an interpretive panel illustrating the history of the early peoples there. Sanibel is also home to quite a variety of snakes – we were shown images of two – a Yellow Ratsnake and a Black Racer.

Along the 100-acre Bailey Tract Trail on Sanibel, Black-necked Stilts were breeding and Blue-winged Teal were seen. In the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation property, there was a Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Along the beach, American Golden Plover and a Lesser Black-backed Gull(!) were spotted.

Their final two overnights were spent in Fort Myers, and one full day was spent exploring the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Corkscrew is best seen by walking the 3.5-km boardwalk and this is what they did, twice! Most noteworthy were the old-growth Cypress trees, several of which are over 500 years old. The Sanctuary has started a 'Landmark Tree' project, where, each month, a different old-growth Bald Cypress is featured. They photographed one of them which boasted a 22 ft circumference. Beside one boardwalk, they came across a sleeping Florida Cottonmouth or Water Moccasin, one of the more venomous species! They were also able to watch the unique feeding behaviour of a Wood Stork, a truly unforgettable experience.

Bob and Wendy had captured truly wonderful images of all the birds and other wildlife and flora, and it was a pleasure to see so much variety on what must have been a marvellous and rewarding trip.



The first talk of the new year, **Canada's Important Bird Areas** programme, was presented to the Halifax Field Naturalists by Sue Abbott from Bird Studies Canada, a national non-for-profit organisation committed to advancing the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds and their habitats.

Sue began with a brief definition of an Important Bird Area (IBA), a concept which was developed in the 1990s for focusing on bird conservation. For an area to become recognised as an IBA, at least one of four criteria must be fulfilled; they are:

Globally threatened species:

Where the area is home to and/or supports a bird species that is critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable.

Restricted-range species:

Such an area is designated to ensure that a species of restricted range is found in significant numbers in at least one IBA.

Biome-restricted species:

Such an area is selected to represent species in a given biome.

Congregating species:

Where an area is designated if it provides nesting colonies and/or migration habitat for a bird species (e.g., Cape St. Mary's).

Currently, some 12,000 IBAs are recognised internationally. Recognition of a site as an IBA does not, however, guarantee legal protection. Currently, 36% of IBAs in Canada have some form of protection. On the other hand, because the establishment of an IBA requires the collection of standardised scientific data, those data are a benefit in that they are then available to drive decision making and to inform stakeholders. More benefits of IBAs are: to focus conservation and protection initiatives, to support site connectivity along migratory flyways, and to direct eco-tourism.

Among the nearly 600 IBAs in Canada, Sue pointed out the northernmost (Inglefield Mountains on Ellesmere Island), the southernmost (Point Pelee on Lake Erie); the largest (Queen Maud Gulf in Nunavut), and the smallest (Ile Paquet in the Magdalen Islands).

In Canada, IBAs were identified starting in 1996 by a number of partners including Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service, the N.S. Department of Natural Resources, Bird Studies Canada, and Nature Canada. Information on all Canadian IBAs is available at www.ibacanada.ca. For each site an area map is available and the protection status is given. Additionally, the seasonal abundance and annual frequency of bird species is there as well. These are obtained from the eBird database, to which any birder can contribute. Sue emphasised the importance of people visiting IBAs to make an effort to record bird sightings and to add them to the database, in order to improve site information.

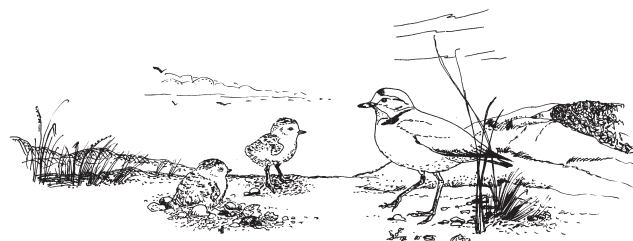
CANADA'S IBA PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Canada's Important Bird Areas programme is a science-based initiative to identify, conserve, and monitor a network of sites that provide essential habitat for Canada's bird populations by:

- Providing good science
- Developing strong partnerships
- Conserving IBAs on the ground
- Enabling a network of IBA caretakers
- Safeguarding migratory flyways

Out of these objectives, Sue took a closer look at the IBA Caretaker Network which exists in each province. These networks provide the eyes, ears, and hands 'on the ground'. She found that, currently, 40% of IBAs have caretakers, with some 2,000 people involved. These volunteers (and, in some cases, conservation partners) monitor birds, respond to threats (e.g., dogs that run off leash), work at habitat enhancement and restoration (e.g., garbage removal or invasive plant removal), and engage in community outreach and advocacy.

Nova Scotia has 32 IBAs, of which 22 are globally significant, six continentally significant, and 12 nationally significant (one IBA can fall into more than one category). Out of these 32 areas, 12 are important for shorebirds, 10 for waterfowl, 14 for seabirds, eight for landbirds, and three for raptors. In 2013, a total of 41 caretakers have spent some 1,200 hours in about half of Nova Scotia's IBAs.



Three examples serve to illustrate the successes of the caretaker programme.

The Blomidon Naturalists Society embarked on a stewardship programme focusing on the Minas Basin IBA where they monitor birds and submit their observations to eBird, put up signage, and organise outreach events at Evangeline Beach.

At Port Joli, **Bird Studies Canada** is working closely with the **Nature Conservancy of Canada** to enhance the protection of and monitor the birds within that IBA.

The third and probably best known caretaker programme spans multiple IBAs for **the protection of the endangered Piping Plover**. Volunteers strive to protect the birds' breeding habitat, and to enhance the success of the rearing of their young. For this project dozens of volunteers and youth were involved in installing signage educating beach visitors about proper behaviour around Piping Plover sites.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion with lots of good questions. The Halifax Field Naturalists would like to thank Sue Abbott for an engaging and informative presentation.

FIELD TRIPS

POINT PLEASANT PARK

– Shirley McIntyre

Date: Tuesday, September 17th

Place: Point Pleasant Park

Weather: Warm, with an almost full moon; a perfect evening for a walk in the park!

Leader: Peter Bigelow

Participants: 30 (18 HFNers, 12 non-HFNers)

Point Pleasant Park: Ten Years Post-Juan. Near the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Juan hitting Point Pleasant Park (PPP), Peter Bigelow, HRM Public Lands Manager, led an informative and interesting walk through the park. We began soon after 6:00 p.m., walking at a brisk pace in order to cover as much of the park as possible. Peter presented many historical and cultural aspects about the park, which he interspersed with information about old and new management practices.

History – Hurricane Juan hit PPP in the wee hours of September 28th, 2003, and caused much damage. The park had to be closed, but, because of its great interest to many people in HRM, after the main pathways were cleared, it was reopened for a weekend so that people could see what Juan did to our beloved park. Peter reminded the group that historically, since 1760, the park had been used for strolling and leisurely walks. A general ‘park movement’ began in the 1850s, when Central Park was being built in New York, Algonquin Park in Ontario, and Stanley Park in Vancouver. PPP itself was incorporated in 1866, is owned by the Crown of Canada, and is leased by the its Directors for a term of 999 years for one UK shilling annually.

Park Management – To help the park recover from Hurricane Juan, the management team of PPP considered the natural history of the park, its cultural factors, and its historic and recreational uses. After much remedial work and changes in management practices, it was reopened in June, 2004. At the Tower Road entrance, a large cement-pad waiting area was installed at the edge of the parking lot, to facilitate easier drop-off of users and to improve pedestrian access. Peter noted that the Young Avenue entrance, with its iron gates, is considered the historical arrival area. He also mentioned the need to reclaim Point Pleasant Drive, which is actually within the historic park boundaries

Seven groves of trees survived Hurricane Juan. We soon came to the first, on our left just after Lodge Road, and it is known as the ‘Witness Grove’. Peter pointed out some problems that PPP had had previously with its dominant species of trees, shallow soil, susceptibility to beetle infestation, and damage caused by storms.

It was a huge challenge to figure out how to best deal with Hurricane Juan’s aftermath. Now, the new management practices allow fallen trees to decay on the ground and thus rebuild the soil. Now, ‘snag trees’ are left for birds and other wildlife, rather than removing them for aesthetic reasons (however, if the tops of these ‘snags’ along or near a path could pose a danger, its top is removed). As well, new practices will eliminate any non-native species of trees, and instead will promote native species such as White Pine and Red Maple. For the present, the non-native and invasive Norway Maples are being left until other trees grow larger. However, because they contain toxins which prevent other species from developing, eventually they will be removed. Copper Beech trees, also non-native, used to line either side of the Bridle Path, and because of their historic and cultural value, seedling trees are being taken from the wild areas nearby and replanted there in order to bring back the full splendour of this beautiful corridor. Otherwise, Copper Beech seedlings are removed, potted, and offered to the public free of charge!

Some 100,000 trees have been planted over a three-year period. The aim is to have a mixture of softwood and hardwood species. Presently, the primary trees in the park’s ‘seed bank’ are White Birch and Red Maple. Red Spruce was planted with White Birch. A grove of Tamaracks was planted six years ago in one area and is doing well. However, 2013 was a dry summer and it is the first time concern was raised about the Tamaracks possibly being unable to get enough water to maintain their growth. The planting of disease-resistant Elms also is being considered.

Peter noted that the lower areas of PPP, towards the Harbour, are to be kept open, while it is hoped that the upper area of the park will regain its ‘cathedral’ look. By the Martello Tower, a well-known cultural artifact, some of the great view planes of the Harbour will also be kept open.

Remnant Site – Site Six, a one-and-a half acre site which has been left as it was after Hurricane Juan. It is along Sailors’ Memorial Way, the lower road closest to the Harbour. Peter pointed out that this site is being allowed to fix itself; the fallen trees and debris will decay as new trees grow, but of course this will be a slower process than at the assisted recovery sites.

Discovering Past History – Peter explained the use of a laser-based survey system called LIDAR, which provided much valuable historic information to park managers. The digital photographs it produced show what is going on at ground level and what went on in earlier times, including where old roads were located, such as the now overgrown Old Military Road that ran from Black Point Beach to Cambridge Bat-



tery. Built around 1870, it was used to carry supplies to the Battery; no printed plans have ever been found for it. Cambridge has had three different batteries; the last of these was augmented in the 1890s. Peter also mentioned that some batteries are now buried in order to preserve them. As one enters Cambridge Battery, a large mound on the right is one of the preserved battery areas, and there are big buildings underneath it. In the fortified areas, trees were removed to protect the cultural assets, while grasses and small plants such as blueberries have been allowed to grow.

Heather – Peter pointed out some areas where heather grows in the park and mentioned that various stories abound about how heather came to PPP. At one time there was an American Battery by the present heather field, however, the most likely story relates to a Scottish Regiment encampment along Heather Road. The soldiers' palliasses (mattresses) were filled with heather, and the seeds likely escaped, leading to the its abundance there. In fact, PPP has one of the very few natural heather patches in North America!

Kiosks – New features found here and there in the park are attractive wooden display cases which highlight various historical and cultural aspects related to the park.

Self-guided Tours – Self-guided audio tours with commentaries about historical, cultural, and ecological sites found throughout the park, are another new feature. There are two ways to access them: by downloading the audio tour app (available at the park's website) to an iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, or some such device; or by accessing it online by scanning the QR code, found on each of the 13 numbered short post tour markers, to an iPhone or similar device while walking throughout the park.

By about 8:30 p.m. dusk had fallen and darkness had descended, making it impossible for me to take any more notes! However, the near-full moon really helped to light the paths in the last half hour or so. We continued on and returned to the Tower Road parking lot. It was a most informative and interesting walk through this jewel in HRM.



WHOPPER DROP TRAIL

– Richard Beazley

Date: Saturday, October 19th

Place: Whopper Drop Trail, Susie's Lake area

Weather: 16° and sunny

Leaders: Richard Beazley (HFN); Charles Cron (NSWFS)

Participants: 17

The five-km looped Whopper Drop Trail is located between Bayers Lake Business Park and Susie's Lake, traversing a beautiful wilderness with rugged granite ridges, panoramic views, and abundant flora. The reader is directed to Jennifer Smith's article entitled Birch Cove Lakes: A Near-Urban Gem for more information about the Blue Mountain/Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area and walking the Whopper Drop Trail in the winter (The Halifax Field Naturalist, Summer 2013, Issue #151, p. 8-9).

The purpose of this walk, jointly conducted by HFN and the Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society (NSWFS), was to focus on the abundant flora along the trail in mid-October. Participants experienced the autumn-coloured foliage of familiar trees and shrubs and also learned about less well known flora as identified and described by Charles Cron, President of the NSWFS.

Interestingly, everyone on this excursion, except for the two leaders, was female! I led this very pleasant walk on a beautiful fall day, assuring that participants stayed together and did not stray from the easily-lost (even though flagged) trail. And, I was successful – until near the end of the four-hour trek, when several participants wanted to forge ahead. No one wandered very far off the trail however, and all (some with the guidance of friendly non-participants) found their way back to the trail's head.

All-in-all this was an informative, invigorating, and enjoyable outing in what many believe to be the finest time of year in Nova Scotia.

(observed flora identified by Charles Cron; recorded by Neeraj Bhanot)

WHOPPER DROP TRAIL FLORA

Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Sugar Maple	<i>A. saccharum</i>
Mountain Sandwort	<i>A. montana</i>
Wood Aster	<i>Aster cordifolius</i>
White Birch	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>
Gray Birch	<i>B. populifolia</i>
Penny Bun Mushroom	<i>Boletus Edilis</i>
Reindeer Moss	<i>Caldonia rangiferina</i>
Lichen	<i>Cladium gacillis</i>
Broom Crowberry	<i>Corema conradii</i>
Dogwood, Bunchberry	<i>Cornus canadensis</i>
Crowberry, Black Crowberry	<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>
Wych Hazel	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>
Path Rush	<i>Juncus tenuis</i>
Common Rush	<i>J. effuses</i>
Common Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Sheep Laurel, Lambkill	<i>Kalmia angustifolia</i>
Tamarack, Larch	<i>Larix laricina</i>
Partridgeberry, Two-eyed Berry	<i>Mitchella repens</i>



Bayberry
White Spruce
Black Spruce
Red Spruce
White Pine
Jack Pine
Bracken Fern
Red Oak
Beaksedge, Beakrush
Mountain Ash
Snowberry
Teaberry
Huckleberry
Cranberry
Blueberry
Viburnum, Wild Raisin
Lion's Paw

Myrica pensylvanica
Picea glauca
P. mariana
P. rubens
Pinus strobus
P. banksiana
Pteridium aquilinum
Quercus rubra
Rhynchospora capitellata
Strobilus aucuparia
Gaultheria hispidula
Gaultheria procumbens
Vaccinium parvifolium
V. macrocarpon
V. angustifolium
Virburnum nudum
Prenanthes trifoliolata



WETLAND RESTORATION

– Burkhard Plache

Date: Saturday, November 16th

Place: Cheverie Creek salt marsh, Hants Co.

Weather: Overcast, windy, and cold

Leaders: ecologist Tony Bowron

Participants: 23



The wetland visited on this field trip is located along the lower section of the Cheverie Creek tidal river, at the Southern shore of the Minas Basin. We met with Tony Bowron on the causeway separating the salt marsh from the Bay of Fundy. Tony started with an overview of the area's history.

The original wetland was dyked by the Acadian settlers in the 1800's, transforming the salt marsh into valuable and productive farmland. The remnants of the dyke are still visible, some 50 metres inland, parallel to the road. When the causeway was built for the coastal road, it originally included a small bridge that was later replaced by a very small culvert. Both the dyke and the causeway caused restriction of tidal flow to the river and wetland, resulting in the almost complete loss of all tidal wetland (salt marsh) function and species from the system.

In 2001, research and community outreach efforts were started in order to move Cheverie Creek forward as the first demonstration salt marsh restoration project in Nova Scotia. In 2005, the Department of transportation replaced the old culvert with a 9.5 m x 5 m culvert in order to restore a more natural hydrological regime to the 43 ha site.

Tony then gave us a short story of the restoration project, its struggles, its setbacks, and its final success – brought about by continued support from the community and a film project by the local elementary



school.

While we were getting this background information, the tide was approaching its high point. Thus, we could clearly see the waters of the Minas Basin entering the area and flooding the wetland. At the right point in time, it is possible to ride this incoming tide in a kayak, going upstream, and then to return with the receding tide, via the culvert, back into the ocean.

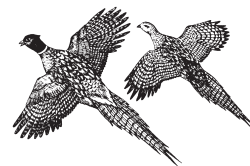
Following the wetland trail, we could distinguish three distinct regions:

The main river channel with its muddy banks which are exposed at low tide; the low salt marsh which floods with the daily tide and is dominated by Cord Grass, *Spartina alterniflora*; and the high marsh which floods monthly during the big spring and storm tides and which are dominated by Salt Hay, *Spartina patens*. These plant communities provide important nursing areas for small species of fish (Mummichogs & Stickle-backs), which move in and out of the salt marsh with each tide, or seek refuge in the salt pannes (salt marsh ponds).

One consequence of reverting the land back to a salt marsh was the killing of trees that had established themselves below the high water mark. Cat-tail, *Typha* sp., was also pushed back inland and replaced by salt tolerant plants. At the end of the trail we stepped onto the marsh itself, where the waters were now in retreat.

On the way back we visited the Camera Obscura, a substantial brick structure overlooking the Bay of Fundy. We were not able to see the camera functioning, and were not sure if there were parts missing, or if the conditions were not right.

After the chilly wind on the trail, we were happy to warm up with a hot lunch at the Avon Emporium in Summerville. Many thanks to Tony for leading our walk and sharing his experiences of working on the first saltmarsh restoration project in the province.



BIRD SPECIES OBSERVED

American Black Duck
Mallard
Ring-necked Pheasant
Ruffed Grouse
Red-throated Loon
Common Loon
Pileated Woodpecker
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
American Robin
European Starling



Anas ribripes
A. platyrhynchos
Phasianus colchicus
Bonasa umbellus
Gavia stellata
G. immer
Dryocopus pileatus
Cyanocitta cristata
Corvus brachyrhynchos
C. corax
Poecile atricapillus
Turdus migratorius
Sturnis vulgaris

NATURE NOTES

OCTOBER – Allan Robertson

Bob McDonald had seen a lot of blooming **Wych Hazel** (Witch Hazel for both Bob and Marion Zinck's revised Roland's Flora of Nova Scotia) in the last few weeks. Around Belchers Marsh the woods were full of it.

Dennis Hippert reported seeing a large wading bird, probably a **Great Blue Heron, wrestling with an eel** on the banks of the Cunard River in Canning.

Clarence Stevens referred to a **Glossy Ibis 'invasion'** in the Metro region, although he said most had moved on by early October. He also noted that **Goldenrods and Asters were in abundance** this time of year, as well as **many ferns**.

Stephanie Robertson saw a **Great Blue Heron** in the Public Gardens feeding on goldfish in one of the ponds near the main entrance. Presumably it was storing up reserves for its trip south.

David Patriquin remarked on the presence of **Button-bush in Point Pleasant Park**. The initial sighting had caused him mild consternation ('what's it doing there?'). He subsequently wrote to Peter Drucker, who reported that 1,000 Buttonbushes had been planted there in 2008 – mystery solved!

Clarence Stevens Sr. reported **other sightings of Glossy Ibis**. As most of the sightings occurred after rainy weather, he felt their presence was likely due to storm activity, and that they were blown in from Maine while on their way to South America. They have not been common in Nova Scotia, at least over the past five to six years.

Bernice Moores reported seeing a kettle of approximately **250 Broad-winged Hawks** over Sandy Cove, Digby Neck on Sept. 28th. "It appears to have increased markedly here since the mid-1960s. It is most common in fall migration, when 'kettles' of many hundreds are found along Digby Neck and over Brier Island, mostly between mid-September and mid-October." from All The Birds of Nova Scotia, Dr. Ian McLaren, 2012.

NOVEMBER – Allan Robertson

Clarence Stevens reported **Fox Sparrows** at his home feeder. About the size of Robins and the colour of a fox, they're very enthusiastic and messy feeders! Clarence advised members to ensure their bird feeders are full for the November/December period, as there'll be lots of activity.

Keith Vaughan, just back from two weeks in the U.K., visited Leighton Moss in the north of Liverpool. Leighton Moss is a large wetland and a migration point for ducks. He also saw there **huge, flying clouds of Starlings** (called murmurations) containing tens of thousands of birds. They moved into and out of groups, producing large, undulating black areas in the sky. They were very high, and it seemed there was also a hawk in the group. He promised to show pictures on Members' Slide Night.

Scott Aislin said there were many great examples of **Starling murmurations** on YouTube. He also reported seeing **Golden-crowned Kinglets** near Porter's Lake.

On Bissett Lake in Cole Harbour Dennis Hippert saw **large concentrations of waterfowl** containing many different kinds of ducks. He said having a scope was helpful. The area is popular with waterfowl because of being within Cole Harbour (an area protected from hunters). The

birds also like nearby Salmon River which they follow to the ponds on the edge of the lake. Roughly three-quarters of the lake's perimeter is green space. Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth isn't as busy any more since the vegetation was removed to discourage the presence of waterfowl. He referred to a **paucity of House Sparrows** this year, although others had seen some recently; about 20 were seen in Cole Harbour.

Ron Cospur saw two unidentifiable waterfowl last year, which were larger than Black Ducks. The discussion which followed led to the conclusion that they were probably hybrids.

Patricia Chalmers reported seeing a **Northern Ringneck Snake**, lots of **Canada Holly berries**, **Robins**, and **Cedar Waxwings** near the Frog Pond – but **no Beavers**.

Ken Hiltz saw **two Deer** recently on Colpitt Lake near the Spryfield Urban Farm.

Clarence Stevens Sr. reported seeing roughly **100 Northern Gannets, two Storm Petrels**, and a **Peregrine Falcon** on Crescent Beach, near Cherry Hill, Lunenburg Co., after a recent storm.

DECEMBER – Allan Robertson

Wendy McDonald reported seeing a **Cardinal** on December 1st., and Bob McDonald saw some late-blooming **Wych Hazel** with blossoms attached, a month later than usual.

Dennis Hippert saw both a **Winter Crane Fly** and a **winter moth** on the afternoon of the meeting – December 5th. Stephanie Robertson said she still had **fruit flies** in her kitchen, suggesting it was a bit late for them to still be around. Pat Leader requested help in identifying what she felt was an owl about 10 inches high, with a beige chest and bright yellow legs, which she saw recently in Bedford (it was later identified as a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**).

Janet Dalton reported a **female Cardinal** feeding on the ground in her backyard (even though there were feeders hanging nearby). She thought she saw a **male Cardinal** as well, suggesting they might be planning to stay around for the winter.

JANUARY – Allan Robertson

Bob McDonald reported that a **large number of Snowy Owls** were seen during the 2013 Christmas Bird Count – seven at Hartlen Point, one at Rainbow Haven, and 13 at Cape Sable. They do occur regularly in Nova Scotia but normally in very small numbers. Bob felt they had left their usual Arctic location because of either over-population or unsatisfactory feeding conditions there. Given their generally poor physical shape, he concluded they were trying for more successful hunting here.

Shirley McIntyre mentioned a news story about an **injured Snowy Owl** but didn't know the details. Another member knew that the owl on the news had suffered an eye injury, and that it had been taken to Hope for Wildlife for rehabilitation.

Richard Beazley noted that, while he spends a fair bit of time in the woods, he's never seen much wildlife! However, a friend in Windsor Junction told him that while looking out his window at Christmastime, he was startled to see a **Bobcat** on his lawn. Happily, he managed to take three pictures of it.

ALMANAC



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

The winter! the brightness that blinds you,
The white land locked tight as a drum,
The cold fear that follows and finds you,
The silence that bludgeons you dumb.
The snows that are older than history,
The woods where the weird shadows slant;
The stillness, the moonlight, the mystery,
I've bade 'em good-by—but I can't.

— Robert W. Service, from "The Spell of the Yukon" (1907).

NATURAL EVENTS

- 7 Dec. Daily average temperature goes below 0°C.
- 5-13 Dec. Earliest sunset of the year at 16:34 AST.
- 13/14 Dec. Geminid Meteor Shower.
- 14 Dec. -5 Jan. Audubon Christmas Bird Count period.
- 17 Dec. Full Moon. Moonrise at 17:14 AST.
- 21 Dec. Winter Solstice at 13:11 AST: Winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere. Though the temperature drops, the days begin to lengthen.
- 27 Dec. -8 Jan. Latest sunrise of the year at 7:51 AST.
- 13 Jan. -24 Jan. 'January Thaw' (the temperature stops falling, and the average actually rises 0.2°C).
- 16 Jan. Full Moon. Moonrise at 17:54 AST.
- 25 Jan. & 26 Jan., plus 1 & 2 Feb. 'Eagle Days' in Sheffield Mills, King's County. Two weekends of organised events.
- 6-8 Feb. Coldest days of winter (average daily minimum -9.4°C).
- 9 Feb. Average temperatures start increasing.
- 14 Feb. Full Moon. Moonrise at 17:44 AST.
- 19 Feb. Tenth anniversary of 'White Juan', the record-breaking snowfall.
- 28 Feb. Daily maximum temperature rises above 0°C.
- 9 Mar. Daylight Saving Time begins at 2:00 AST. Turn clocks ahead one hour.
- 16 Mar. Full Moon rises at 19:37 ADT.
- 20 Mar. Vernal Equinox at 16:57 GMT: Spring begins in the Northern hemisphere.

— Sources: Atmospheric Environment Service, Climate Normals 1951-80 Halifax (Shearwater A) N.S.; Blomidon Naturalists Society Calendar, 2013; United States Naval Observatory Data Services.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON WINTER AND EARLY SPRING SATURDAYS FOR HALIFAX: 44 39 N, 063 36 W



7 Dec.	7:38	16:34	4 Jan.	7:51	16:48
14 Dec.	7:44	16:34	11 Jan.	7:50	16:55
21 Dec.	7:48	16:37	18 Jan.	7:46	17:04
28 Dec.	7:51	16:41	25 Jan.	7:41	17:13
1 Feb.	7:33	17:23	7 Mar.	6:52	18:02
8 Feb.	7:25	17:33	14 Mar.	6:40	18:11
15 Feb.	7:15	17:43	21 Mar.	7:27	19:20
22 Feb.	7:04	17:53	28 Mar.	7:15	19:29
			30 Mar.	7:01	19:38

ORGANISATIONAL EVENTS

Blomidon Naturalists Society: Indoor meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month, in Room BAC241 of the Beveridge Arts Centre of Acadia University, Wolfville, at 7:30 p.m. Field trips usually depart from the Wolfville Waterfront, Front Street, Wolfville. For more information, go to <http://www.blomidonnaturalists.ca/>.

- 18 Jan. "Winter on Snowshoes", with leader Soren Bondrup-Nielsen, 582-3971.
- 20 Jan. "Laser imaging of the valley: from resolving geological landforms to modelling sea-level rise impacts in the future" with speaker Tim Webster, Centre of Geographic Sciences.
- 17 Feb. Annual Show and Tell Night.
- 22 Feb. "Orchid Display & Sale" with the Valley Orchid Group, at the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, Acadia University.
- 17 Mar. "Kathryn and Nathan Gray: Sibling Supernova Superstars" with speakers Kathryn and Nathan Gray.

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 7:00 p.m. between November 1st and March 30th, and at either 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. (depending on when it gets dark) between April 1st and October 31st. For more information, 496-8257; or go to <http://www.smu.ca/academic/science/ap/>.

Nova Scotia Bird Society: Indoor meetings usually take place on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to April, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information, contact Kate, 541-0874, or email the trip leader; or go to <http://nsbbirdsociety.ca/>.

4 Jan. New birders' walk; "Living in the Dead of Winter", with leader Sue Abbott, sabbott@birdscanada.org.

23 Jan. "Acoustic Monitoring of Nocturnal Migrant Songbirds", with speaker John Kearney.

19 Mar. "Valley Birding", with leader Patrick Kelly, 472-2322, patrick.kelly@dal.ca.

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources: Many outings which will take place in Provincial Parks are listed in the "Parks are for People" Programme, available at museums, parks, and tourist bureaus, and on the web at <http://www.novascotiaparks.ca/>.

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History: For more information, 424-6099, 424-7353; <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mnhnew/>.

12 Jan. "Gold: A Nova Scotia Treasure"

Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society: Meets the fourth Monday of the month, September to May, at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information, Heather Drope, 423-7032; or go to <http://www.nswildflora.ca/>.

26 Jan. "Members' Presentation Night", contact Heather Drope, 423-7032

Nova Scotian Institute of Science: Meets first Monday of the month, September to April, usually at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 7:30 p.m. For more information <http://nsis.chebucto.org>

6 Jan. "Energy Budgets in Marine Mammals: Tactics and Tricks", with speaker Dr. Sara Iverson, Director of the Ocean Tracking Network, Dalhousie.

3 Mar. "Carbon Dioxide: Capture, Uses, and Challenges", with speaker Dr. Jason Clyburne, Saint Mary's; and "Global Air Quality", with speaker Dr. Randall Martin, Dalhousie.

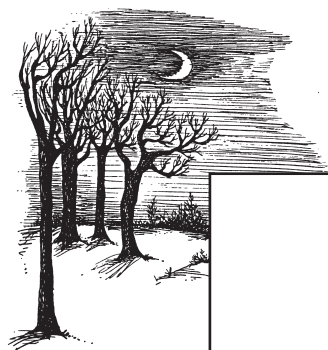
7 Apr. "Dark Energy in the Cosmos", with speaker Dr. Rob Thacker, Saint Mary's.

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Halifax Chapter): Meets the third Friday of each month in Room L176 of the Loyola Academic Building at Saint Mary's University, 8:00 p.m. For more information, go to <http://halifax.rasc.ca/>.

Young Naturalists' Club: A fun, free nature club for children seven to 12 years. Meetings take place every third Saturday of the month (excepting July and August), at the Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. Field trips take place every fourth Sunday, at 1:00 p.m. For more information, Karen McKendry, 404-9902, yunchalifax@yahoo.ca; or, go to <http://nature1st.net/ync>.

11 Jan. Starry, Starry Night! **Field Trip**; 6:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m. 337 Aberdeen Road, Bridgewater N.S.

18 Jan. Astronomy Month! **Meeting**; Museum of Natural History.



**! IT'S STILL HUNTING SEASON !
! REMEMBER TO DRESS TO BE SEEN IN THE WOODS !**

SNOWSHOE HARE
1 Nov-28 Feb. Excludes Sunday



HALIFAX TIDE TABLE



January-janvier

February-février

March-mars

Day	Time	Feet	Metres	jour	heure	pieds	mètres	Day	Time	Feet	Metres	jour	heure	pieds	mètres	Day	Time	Feet	Metres	jour	heure	pieds	mètres
1	0122	1.0	0.3	16	0214	2.0	0.6	1	0305	0.7	0.2	16	0248	1.6	0.5	1	0154	0.7	0.2	16	0146	1.3	0.4
WE	0714	6.6	2.0		0758	5.9	1.8		0847	6.6	2.0		0849	5.9	1.8		0739	6.6	2.0		0746	5.6	1.7
ME	1405	0.0	0.0	TH	1435	1.0	0.3	SA	1530	-0.3	-0.1	SU	1507	1.0	0.3	SA	1418	0.0	0.0	SU	1403	1.0	0.3
	2000	5.9	1.8	JE	2037	5.6	1.7	SA	2124	6.6	2.0	DI	2115	5.6	1.7	SA	2012	6.6	2.0	DI	2007	5.6	1.7
2	0220	1.0	0.3	17	0244	2.0	0.6	2	0402	0.7	0.2	17	0323	1.3	0.4	2	0248	0.3	0.1	17	0222	1.0	0.3
	0808	6.9	2.1		0836	5.9	1.8		0938	6.6	2.0		0924	5.9	1.8		0830	6.6	2.0		0823	5.6	1.7
TH	1458	-0.3	-0.1	FR	1506	1.0	0.3	SU	1622	0.0	0.0	MO	1539	1.0	0.3	SU	1508	0.0	0.0	MO	1436	1.0	0.3
JE	2053	6.2	1.9	VE	2113	5.6	1.7	DI	2211	6.6	2.0	LU	2148	5.9	1.8	DI	2059	6.6	2.0	LU	2040	5.9	1.8
3	0319	1.0	0.3	18	0315	2.0	0.6	3	0459	0.7	0.2	18	0402	1.3	0.4	3	0341	0.3	0.1	18	0300	1.0	0.3
	0901	6.6	2.0		0914	5.9	1.8		1027	6.2	1.9		0959	5.6	1.7		0918	6.2	1.9		0859	5.6	1.7
FR	1551	-0.3	-0.1	SA	1536	1.0	0.3	MO	1715	0.3	0.1	TU	1614	1.0	0.3	MO	1557	0.3	0.1	TU	1511	1.0	0.3
VE	2144	6.2	1.9	SA	2147	5.6	1.7	LU	2257	6.2	1.9	MA	2222	5.9	1.8	LU	2144	6.6	2.0	MA	2115	5.9	1.8
4	0420	1.0	0.3	19	0350	2.0	0.6	4	0556	1.0	0.3	19	0446	1.3	0.4	4	0433	0.7	0.2	19	0341	1.0	0.3
	0954	6.6	2.0		0950	5.9	1.8		1115	5.9	1.8		1037	5.6	1.7		1005	5.9	1.8		0937	5.6	1.7
SA	1645	0.0	0.0	SU	1608	1.3	0.4	TU	1810	0.7	0.2	WE	1654	1.3	0.4	TU	1647	0.7	0.2	WE	1549	1.0	0.3
SA	2234	6.2	1.9	DI	2221	5.6	1.7	MA	2343	6.2	1.9	ME	2257	5.9	1.8	MA	2228	6.2	1.9	ME	2151	5.9	1.8
5	0521	1.0	0.3	20	0430	2.0	0.6	5	0653	1.0	0.3	20	0535	1.3	0.4	5	0526	0.7	0.2	20	0425	1.0	0.3
	1045	6.2	1.9		1025	5.6	1.7		1204	5.2	1.6		1116	5.2	1.6		1051	5.9	1.8		1016	5.6	1.7
SU	1741	0.3	0.1	MO	1643	1.3	0.4	WE	1906	1.3	0.4	TH	1741	1.6	0.5	WE	1739	1.0	0.3	TH	1632	1.3	0.4
DI	2323	6.2	1.9	LU	2255	5.6	1.7	ME				JE	2336	5.6	1.7	ME	2311	5.9	1.8	JE	2229	5.9	1.8
6	0622	1.0	0.3	21	0515	2.0	0.6	6	0029	5.9	1.8	21	0631	1.6	0.5	6	0620	1.0	0.3	21	0515	1.0	0.3
	1136	5.9	1.8		1102	5.6	1.7		0750	1.3	0.4		1200	5.2	1.6		1137	5.2	1.6		1057	5.6	1.7
MO	1837	0.7	0.2	TU	1723	1.3	0.4	TH	1255	4.9	1.5	FR	1837	1.6	0.5	TH	1834	1.6	0.5	FR	1724	1.6	0.5
LU				MA	2330	5.6	1.7	JE	2004	1.6	0.5	VE				JE	2356	5.6	1.7	VE	2311	5.9	1.8
7	0012	5.9	1.8	22	0606	2.0	0.6	7	0120	5.6	1.7	22	0020	5.6	1.7	7	0714	1.3	0.4	22	0612	1.3	0.4
	0722	1.0	0.3		1142	5.2	1.6		0846	1.3	0.4		0731	1.3	0.4		1225	4.9	1.5		1143	5.2	1.6
TU	1229	5.6	1.7	WE	1809	1.6	0.5	FR	1354	4.6	1.4	SA	1251	4.9	1.5	FR	1932	2.0	0.6	SA	1826	2.0	0.6
MA	1935	1.0	0.3	ME				VE	2101	1.6	0.5	SA	1940	2.0	0.6	VE				SA	2357	5.6	1.7
8	0102	5.9	1.8	23	0009	5.6	1.7	8	0219	5.2	1.6	23	0112	5.6	1.7	8	0044	5.2	1.6	23	0714	1.3	0.4
	0820	1.3	0.4		0700	2.0	0.6		0941	1.3	0.4		0833	1.3	0.4		0809	1.6	0.5		1234	5.2	1.6
WE	1326	4.9	1.5	TH	1226	5.2	1.6	SA	1504	4.6	1.4	SU	1353	4.9	1.5	SA	1319	4.9	1.5	SU	1933	2.0	0.6
ME	2032	1.3	0.4	JE	1902	1.6	0.5	SA	2159	2.0	0.6	DI	2044	2.0	0.6	SA	2030	2.0	0.6	DI			
9	0157	5.6	1.7	24	0052	5.6	1.7	9	0327	5.2	1.6	24	0215	5.6	1.7	9	0140	5.2	1.6	24	0051	5.6	1.7
	0917	1.3	0.4		0758	1.6	0.5		1035	1.3	0.4		0935	1.3	0.4		0902	1.6	0.5		0816	1.3	0.4
TH	1430	4.9	1.5	FR	1319	4.9	1.5	SU	1621	4.6	1.4	MO	1509	4.9	1.5	SU	1426	4.6	1.4	MO	1336	4.9	1.5
JE	2130	1.6	0.5	VE	1959	2.0	0.6	DI	2255	2.0	0.6	LU	2149	1.6	0.5	DI	2127	2.3	0.7	LU	2038	2.0	0.6
10	0258	5.2	1.6	25	0144	5.6	1.7	10	0433	5.2	1.6	25	0329	5.9	1.8	10	0248	4.9	1.5	25	0156	5.6	1.7
	1012	1.3	0.4		0856	1.3	0.4		1127	1.3	0.4		1036	1.0	0.3		0956	1.6	0.5		0917	1.0	0.3
FR	1542	4.6	1.4	SA	1422	4.9	1.5	MO	1724	4.9	1.5	TU	1628	5.2	1.6	MO	1545	4.6	1.4	TU	1453	5.2	1.6
VE	2227	1.6	0.5	SA	2100	2.0	0.6	LU	2347	2.0	0.6	MA	2253	1.6	0.5	LU	2222	2.3	0.7	MA	2143	1.6	0.5
11	0401	5.2	1.6	26	0245	5.6	1.7	11	0529	5.2	1.6	26	0443	5.9	1.8	11	0401	4.9	1.5	26	0313	5.6	1.7
	1106	1.3	0.4		0956	1.3	0.4		1214	1.3	0.4		1136	0.7	0.2		1047	1.6	0.5		1018	1.0	0.3
SA	1651	4.9	1.5	SU	1536	4.9	1.5	TU	1814	5.2	1.6	WE	1735	5.6	1.7	TU	1653	4.9	1.5	WE	1612	5.2	1.6
SA	2323	1.6	0.5	DI	2202	1.6	0.5	MA				ME	2357	1.3	0.4	MA	2313	2.3	0.7	ME	2246	1.3	0.4
12	0459	5.2	1.6	27	0353	5.9	1.8	12	0032	2.0	0.6	27	0548	6.2	1.9	12	0501	5.2	1.6	27	0430	5.9	1.8
	1157	1.0	0.3		1057	1.0	0.3		0615	5.6	1.7		1233	0.3	0.1		1135	1.6	0.5		1117	0.7	0.2
SU	1748	4.9	1.5	MO	1649	5.2	1.6	WE	1256	1.3	0.4	TH	1831	5.9	1.8	WE	1743	5.2	1.6	TH	1717	5.9	1.8
DI				LU	2305	1.6	0.5	ME	1856	5.2	1.6	JE				ME	2358	2.0	0.6	JE	2347	1.0	0.3
13	0015	1.6	0.5	28	0459	6.2	1.9	13	0110	2.0	0.6	28	0057	1.0	0.3	13	0549	5.2	1.6	28	0535	5.9	1.8
	0550	5.6	1.7		1156	0.7	0.2		0657	5.6	1.7		0646	6.6	2.0		1217	1.3	0.4		1213	0.7	0.2
MO	1243	1.0	0.3	TU	1752	5.6	1.7	TH	1333	1.0	0.3	FR	1327	0.0	0.0	TH	1824	5.2	1.6	FR	1811	6.2	1.9
LU	1836	5.2	1.6	MA				JE	1933	5.6	1.7	VE	1923	6.6	2.0	JE				VE			
14	0101	2.0	0.6	29	0008	1.3	0.4	14	0143	1.6	0.5					14	0036	2.0	0.6	29	0045	0.7	0.2
	0636	5.6	1.7		0602	6.6	2.0		0735	5.9	1.8						0630	5.6	1.7		0632	6.2	1.9
TU	1325	1.0	0.3	WE	1252	0.3	0.1	FR	1406	1.0	0.3					FR	1255	1.3	0.4	SA	1307	0.3	0.1
MA	1920	5.2	1.6	ME	1849	5.9	1.8	VE	2008	5.6	1.7					VE	1900						



NEXT DEADLINE

21st of February for the March, 2014 Issue
Send submissions to 'Newsletter', c/o NS Museum of Natural History,
or by email to sdhaythorn@ns.sympatico.ca