

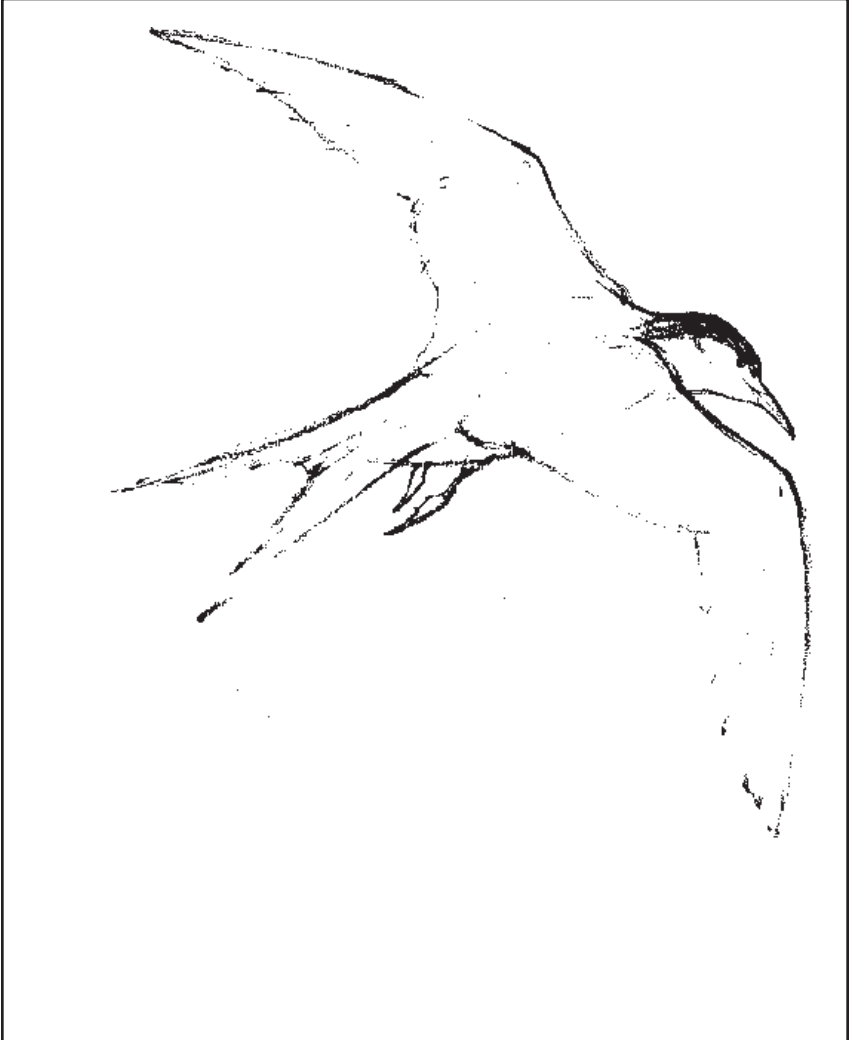
Federation of  
Nova Scotia  
Naturalists

# NEWS

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# Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (FNSN)

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**Cape Breton Naturalists Society** (Rep: Betty & Rusty Gentile)

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**Chignecto Naturalists Club** (Rep: Gladys Mazeroll)

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**Cobequid Naturalist Club** (Rep: Jeff Odgen)

c/o Jeff Odgen, #13-34 Village Ct, Truro, NS B2N 6K8

**Eastern Mainland Field Naturalists** (Rep: Ken McKenna)

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**Halifax Field Naturalists** (Rep: Patricia Chalmers)

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**Tusket River Environmental Protection Association** (Rep: Peter Terry)

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**Members at large** (Rep: Larry Bogan)

Associate Member — **Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Society**

471 Poplar St, Cole Harbour, NS B2W 4L2

The FNSN purpose is to further communication and co-operation among naturalists and natural history societies in Nova Scotia. We also work towards a co-ordinated effort on the provincial level to protect our natural environment.

- We promote the enjoyment and understanding of nature by our members and the general public through education via publications, lectures, symposia, field trips, and other activities; through fostering the creation of nature centres and education programs; and by defending the integrity of existing facilities and programs.
- We encourage the establishment of protected natural areas, as represented in parks, nature reserves, wilderness areas, heritage rivers, and other such protected areas.

- We defend the integrity of existing sanctuaries by exercising constant vigilance against pollution and habitat destruction.
- We promote and engage in funding and research needed for protecting the integrity of all natural ecosystems.
- We encourage and engage in the protection and restoration of threatened and endangered species, with special attention to the preserving essential habitats through: working for the inclusion of all major habitats in a system of protected areas; encouraging and facilitating the reintroduction of extirpated flora and fauna to their former ranges in the province; and encouraging and facilitating the restoration and enhancement of essential habitats.

FNSN is affiliated with the Canadian Nature Federation and is a member of the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

Visit our website at <http://chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/FNSN/hp-fnsn.html>  
or call Doug Linzey at (902) 429-5997 for more information.

## FNSN

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§

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## From the Editor

Yes, you're right — this issue of *FNSN News* is late, very late. I'm the new editor, and I accept the blame, having taken longer than I should to get up and running.

For the last few years, we have had Jeff Pike to thank for pumping out a regular edition of the *News*. I only hope that, after this rocky beginning, I can live up to Jeff's obviously high standards.

In a publication like this, it is always hard to find the right balance between the everyday business of the Federation and pure natural history. We could easily fill every issue with reports and discussion of conservation issues, to the detriment of the subjects that, presumably, all of us naturalists want to know more about. The balance, to some extent, is up to you, the readers and contributors. Without feedback and relevant articles from the naturalists of Nova Scotia, I am hooting in the dark.

In this issue, we concentrate on Federation business. Michael Downing, past-president and a Federation founder, was inspired — by our failure to find someone to serve as president this year — to write about the significance of FNSN in modern Nova Scotia. Patricia Chalmers of the Halifax Field Naturalists invites us to this year's annual general meeting of the Federation. Tom Herman goes to Ottawa for endangered species, and Ruth Newell witnesses the birth of a protected area. The rest is housekeeping, announcements, and pleas for help.

With that last line in mind, please let me know what you want to see in this newsletter. The next issue will cover news and natural history arising out of the AGM in June. Call or e-mail me with your suggestions or offerings of editorial content. Deadline: June 15.

Doug Linzey  
May 1997

# A Plea for the Federation

by Michael Downing

Painfully ironic it was for me, as some of my readers will understand, to watch our last annual meeting fail to fill the president's office. And saddening too, that no one in all our clubs was sufficiently excited by this opportunity to serve, to grasp it. And worse, worrying, for our future. Our editor has encouraged me to try once again to persuade people that it is important to keep this organization going.

My argument for the FNSN has always been humanistic. Nature does not need our protection. If we abuse her, she will one day shake her rump, and we will be gone, and then she will heal. She has the time. We don't. My argument has also been spiritual. Nature is the background against which we define ourselves. Limit it, and we limit ourselves.

Emerson, considering man and nature, sees man as a sort of a fallen god, with nature a pointer to what he was, or should be: "Man is the dwarf of himself . . . having made for himself this huge shell, his waters retired; he no longer fills the veins and veinlets; he is shrunk to a drop. He sees that the structure still fits him, but fits him colossally. Say, rather, once it fit him, now it corresponds to him from far and on high. He adores timidly his own work

. . . But now and then he starts in his slumber . . ." <sup>1</sup> Think of that image, of a structure fitting colossally, drawing out and guiding our striving to be. Consider what it means to contract that structure, and make it subservient to our material goals! What sort of structure will there be to start our children in their slumber?!

Nor is it enough that in our tampering with this structure we be sensitive to its beauty, and make our "developments" sustainable, being as it were "environmentally responsible." Most people who quote Thoreau's passage, "Our village life would stagnate were it not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wilderness," stop there, but the words get stronger. "At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable . . . we must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigour, vast and titanic features . . . we need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander." <sup>2</sup> Beauty (as commonly understood), even environmentalism, are not the point. It must be

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*Michael Downing is a past-president and founder of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists.*

wild. It must express a power beyond our everyday bounds.

It is important to note in passing that for most of us, Thoreau's use of the word "witness" is significant. It implies something perceivable by the senses — nature on our scale. Nature is vast, and includes cosmology, microbiology, and physics, and the intellect can perceive her power in such studies, but most of us cannot be without our trees and birds and soil and rocks. I think almost all of us need them at some point. We call ourselves "field naturalists" for a reason.

I confess I have had some dissatisfaction with this organization. Spiritual life is individual. Spiritual men have long ago denied the claims of churches to the position of intermediary, and sought to form their own direct relationships with God. To say that they will also independently seek their own relationships with nature is almost to repeat the same thing. I have always been concerned about the prepackaged approach to nature offered by our commercial "wilderness experiences", our coffee table books, our high-tech outfitting stores — even our parks. Like the old churches, they present the answer before the question. They attach a preset style to the experience of nature. They package their culture along with it. Also, they threaten to deliver it into the hands of that very government and commerce from which we want it to be different. There are some very odd bedfellows even now calling for the restriction of much access to wilderness to forms managed by our institutions. I have tried, with little success, to make

the Federation a little more suspicious of these forces, and have sometimes wanted to cry out "If they meet our demands, they have co-opted and defeated us!" — for a spiritual movement can never really be at peace with the material culture that surrounds it.

But whatever shortcomings I may see, we did form an association that got lovers of wild nature, field naturalists in particular, from all over the province, meeting and talking on a regular basis about preserving wild space, and we have kept it going for about seven years. This is worth doing.

In fact, it is our responsibility. The broad shift of power to materialistic values we see about us must concern people of faith of any form. The battle being fought by social conscience advocates, public education projects, churches, and shelters for the abused and desperate, is our battle too. Each of us has found deep help and comfort in the visible flow of wild life in rich variety. We're the ones who know, then, that it will be deeply needed by others. It follows that we should work to preserve it. FNSN is the particular effort of the group of people for whom I am writing to do this work. It would be a bad thing for us to let it collapse now — a negligent thing. For all our difficulties, we have done some good things, and helped with others. There will be a big load of inertia to be overcome if someone eventually has to start this all over again. Take it from me. I know. Those who might by and by spend two or three years overcoming it will be able to get us a lot further ahead with the same energy if they can start with an

organization already in place. It's time for some new people to step forward, but failing this, it's time for us who are already involved to hang on. It's worth hanging on. It's the right thing to do.

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1957, p. 54.
2. Henry David Thoreau, Walden — An Annotated Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1995, pp. 308–309.



# The Great Big Gulp

by Brian Dalzell

Last week, I threw some large chunks of suet out in the front yard for the ravens to carry off. They did just that, leaving only one impossible-to-carry piece about the size of a legal (8.5-by-14-inch) sheet of paper and 3/16-inch thick. The crows played with it for several days, dragging it across the yard, where it sat until this morning. I just happened to look out the window about 11 AM and there was a Great Black-backed Gull surrounded by four admiring crows.

In his mouth he had this huge piece of suet, about half in and half out. After about 30 seconds he coughed it up and tried again. Remember, this chunk of suet-like material is about a pound — the only comparison I can think of is trying to swallow a Canadian Tire catalogue. But as I watched, it kept wolfing and wolfing, and then . . . it

just disappeared inside! Well, I couldn't believe my eyes. These birds must be all stomach. I knew they could wolf down eider chicks with ease, and I had even heard of one swallowing a ham bone, but this was incredible.

After he got himself around it, the gull settled to the snow and closed his eyes, and I thought, "Oh oh, now he's choked himself or something and he's going to pass out." However, after about two minutes he came to life, with his four crow friends still stalking about shaking their heads, as if they too couldn't believe he ate the whole thing. The gull then ran about 3 metres and easily got airborne, cleared a nearby power line with a metre to spare, and glided down to the beach about 200 metres away, where I'm sure he will spend the better part of a day digesting his well-earned dinner.

*Brian Dalzell is a well-known birder and naturalist. He lives on Grand Manan Island at 44 43N 66 45W and contributes regularly to NatureNS and NatureNB. This gem appeared first on NatureNS*

# Endangered Species

Bill C-65 is the federal government's proposed legislation on endangered species. In December 1996, FNSN vice-president Tom Herman presented these comments to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

by Tom Herman

I come here not as a legislator or someone who promises to understand the subtleties of the federal-provincial pas de deux, but as an academic who teaches ecology, biodiversity, and conservation biology and supervises students' research in those areas; as a research scientist working on dynamics of small populations of a variety of faunal groups, including species at risk; as a co-director of Acadia University's Centre for Wildlife and Conservation Biology, which works closely with government, NGOs, and private industry on biodiversity and conservation issues; as a member of two COSEWIC sub-committees (Reptiles and Amphibians, Mammals); as chair of the COSEWIC recovery team on the Blanding's turtle (Nova Scotia population); as a member of the small informal Nova Scotia Provincial Working Group on Species at Risk; and as president *pro tem* of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists. I mention these not so much to establish my credentials but rather to honestly

portray my bias.

In my preliminary remarks, I would like to set the context for this bill. Although it certainly grows in part from our international commitment to sustaining national and global biodiversity, it is *not* a biodiversity bill but rather a bill aimed at protecting species at risk, one that allows us to assess the degree of risk to which species are exposed. Ultimately we can ask how well it does this.

Clearly, the first step in protecting endangered species is to identify them. How well are we doing? How many endangered species are there? I have no idea; but the COSEWIC list can be very misleading. How well do we know our biodiversity in general? Our past disregard for our "fellow travellers" on this planet becomes apparent when we compare knowledge bases. A culture that has developed the capacity to send humans to the moon but does not know within an order of magnitude how many species it shares its own planet with is narrow in its vision.

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*Tom Herman is a population ecologist. He is professor and head of Biology at Acadia University and co-director of the Centre for Wildlife and Conservation Biology. The Centre promotes the of stewardship of biodiversity in both protected and working landscapes, mainly through curriculum development and community liaison.*

But I hope that our world view is changing, that we are beginning to recognize our “biophilia,” our love of all life, and its central importance to our own well-being.

So, what do we know?

- Most species in the world and in Canada are rare; that is, their populations are low, their geographic ranges are small, and their habitat requirements are specific. Put another way, rare species are common. This does not mean they are all at risk, but it does present us with a challenge: to assess which ones are.
- Most species in the world and in Canada are invertebrate animals; the vast majority are insects, mostly small insects. Most are undescribed and will probably go extinct without ever being described [by *Homo sapiens*]. However, this in no way reduces their value or importance, or the attention they deserve.
- At the risk of stating the obvious, the world is not static. Clearly the environmental changes that we do recognize have in part provided the impetus for this bill. But how well do we understand the nature of these changes and how they affect our “fellow travellers”? How well can we predict future changes?
- To answer the latter question, I would argue: not particularly well. In that light, planning for uncertainty must be integrated into the Act.
- In my estimation, the two environmental changes that threaten species the most are climate change

and habitat degradation and fragmentation. Our understanding of these changes and their individual impacts on species at risk is growing, but we have not begun to understand their synergistic effects on species at risk. Species that are long-lived or have complex life cycles, such as many of our reptiles and amphibians, are probably particularly vulnerable. These groups are also disproportionately represented among our species at risk.

What are the problems in our approach to protecting endangered species to date?

- We tend to exaggerate the importance of the individual. This natural bias probably extends from our tendency to recognize the importance of individuals in our interactions with one another. As a result, we often seek solutions to problems at the individual level. In contrast, protecting endangered species requires thinking and solutions at population and ecosystem levels.
- How many of us, when we hear the term “endangered species,” think Panda or Whooping Crane? This is the stuff of glossy magazines and fund-raising promotions. But protecting endangered species is more about protecting processes in space and time than it is about protecting large charismatic furry or feathery individuals.
- We are still struggling with the concept of “species.” What exactly constitutes a species? This question



— long and hotly debated in academic circles — seems relatively unimportant to most people. However, it is not a trivial issue, as is apparent from experiences with endangered species legislation in the U.S. We could take the pragmatic, business-like approach frequently promoted by conservation biologists: that a species is whatever a competent taxonomist says it is.

I hope I have sufficiently set the context for what follows. I am operating under certain assumptions, which I feel are secure: 1) the bill was crafted and written in good faith, with the interests of species at risk paramount; 2) in the interest of those species, it is always desirable to avoid incidents and circumstances that would generate the need for litigation.

It is clear that we face significant information and resource gaps, including the need for extensive inventories. Bill C-65 at present does not adequately address these. If the bill brings substantial reallocation of funds that can be directed at improving our information base and public education and involvement, I would consider it progressive. If the bill brings little funding, channelled to enforcement only, I would consider it regressive. At present, it appears that internal measures of success of the Act are based primarily on meeting deadlines for status designations, etc.

It is difficult to identify with certainty which species are covered by this bill (Section 3(1)). “Aquatic species” is somewhat ambiguous. Some turtles are “fish” but others are not. A supple-

mental list could easily be included, which would prevent species from falling through the cracks, regardless of the final federal-provincial mix in jurisdiction.

Similarly, some clarification of trans-boundary issues would be helpful. Should concerns be targeted to trans-boundary species perceived to be at particular risk? At what level — individual, population, progeny — is a species considered to be trans-boundary? How many species are *not* trans-boundary?

The structure of COSEWIC is extremely important. Its integrity and independence must be maintained, with all decisions being based on good science. The transparency of COSEWIC’s decisions is well protected by the Act. Some will argue that the scientific committee should make the final listing decision, rather than the ministerial council. In this light, the link between COSEWIC and the ministerial council, and the independence of COSEWIC are critical. I agree that the identification of species at risk should not be political. The final listing will have more credibility if Section 30(1) reads “The Governor in Council, on advice of the Minister, will make regulations . . .”

Habitat protection in the present Act is weak at best. The greatest single threat to most endangered species is loss of habitat. Although “habitat” appears throughout the document, there is really very little protection of it afforded by the Act. The primary avenue to protection seems to be through

an emergency order at the discretion of the responsible minister (Section 34(4)). To its credit, the Act requires that Recovery Plans be struck and that those plans identify critical habitat issues. But the plans need not be implemented, according to the Act; nor are they enforceable. The lack of consistent protection is disturbing.

The identification of critical habitat has significant political implications. Because of this, listing and determination of critical habitat are probably best separated. This should minimize the political pressure on the listing process.

The Act does to a certain extent address the taxonomic question I raised earlier. But it could be improved by some judicious wordsmithing. For instance, in section 2(1) in the definition of “wild-life species,” the term “geographically distinct” is ambiguous of itself and may be considerably less important than *biological* distinction, which may or may not involve disjunction or absolute isolation. “Human intervention” should explicitly include both deliberate and inadvertent. Otherwise, it may be interpreted as only one or the other.

Under Measures to Protect Listed Species, section 31 prohibits killing, harming, harassing, capturing, or taking an individual of a listed endangered or threatened species. Should extirpated species that are being reintroduced as part of a Recovery Plan not be included in these prohibitions? Or does the Emergency Orders provision (section 34) cover this? While there is good coverage of direct harm to endangered

species, less-direct disturbances appear to be excluded.

Also under these Measures, section 38(4) identifies the responsible minister as the individual to prepare a Recovery Plan. Was consideration given to placing the ministerial council in that role?

Under Enforcement Measures (section 53), should there not be some provision for the disposition of confiscated live specimens?

I find it particularly disturbing that the Act is binding on the Crown but *not* on Crown corporations (section 4, paragraph 1). What is the intent here? Surely governments and their associated enterprises should lead by example.

I again beg the indulgence of the Committee for pointing out the obvious: species do *not* recognize provincial boundaries, but rather landscapes. An aerial view reminds us how often arbitrary these boundaries are; from the air they are difficult to discern, except perhaps by change in the colour of pavement.

As one of my colleagues pointed out, after reading the draft Act, “we need a *national* endangered species act, not a federal one.” Out of the mouths of naive biologists . . . But it is true. It is clear that the Act is far too restrictive in terms of species and area covered. And even much of that limited jurisdiction can be exempted (see Section 3(3)).

This act will leave most of presently recognized endangered species with little or no federal protection. Some groups of organisms, such as plants, are particularly excluded. It is likely that the percentage protected will

shrink even further, as we assess the status of additional species, particularly invertebrates.

Obviously, a federal act alone will not and cannot protect all species at risk. The *ideal* federal act is probably not legally defensible. It is unlikely that we will rewrite the Constitution to accommodate it. The only “biological” solution is to resolve the political problem. Alienating any particular agency (be it a federal or provincial ministry) only creates a biological gap, and is self-defeating. Both the feds and the provinces must buy in. Therefore, the success of Bill C-65 is probably

closely tied to the implementation and success of the National Framework for the Conservation of Species at Risk. I suppose in that spirit, it is wise that provinces are not bound by the draft act to participate in the ministerial council. But clearly they should be encouraged.

*[Ed. note: The bill may have died on the order paper, but the essence of Tom’s message is very much alive and should serve as excellent background material for future forays into the wilderness of endangered species.]*



## Jim Cambells Barren

The FNSN board has devoted a fair amount of time to the Jim Campbells Barren fiasco of the past few months. This Cape Breton highland candidate site for protection under the Nova Scotia Systems Plan for Parks and Protected Areas was withdrawn from protection last December to allow mining exploration.

The Federation has responded with a letter of disapproval to the government. By this time, your local club has probably responded, too.

We certainly encourage all mem-

bers to write to the Premier, Natural Resources minister Eleanor Norrie, your own MLA, and anyone else that should know how you feel about this unfortunate act. Check the FNSN Web site for background details.

Premier John Savage  
1 Government Place  
Halifax, NS B3J 1X0

Hon. Eleanor Norrie  
Minister of Natural Resources  
Box 698, Halifax, NS B3J 2T9

# Habitat Conservation in Colchester

Thanks to Kimberley-Clark, Colchester County boasts the new Deyarmont, Twin and Hay Lakes habitat conservation area. Ruth Newell, FNSN secretary, was at the dedication ceremony.

by Ruth Newell

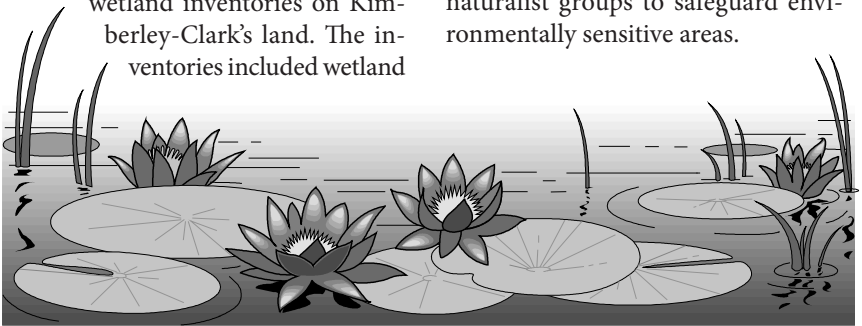
On Thursday, 3 October 1996, I had the pleasant task of attending, on behalf of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, the dedication of a new protected area. The Deyarmont, Twin and Hay Lakes Habitat Conservation Area in Colchester County is on Kimberley-Clark land. Natural Resources Minister Eleanor Norrie represented the government — the area will be held as a non-development area in perpetuity through a legal agreement with the province.

By means of a stewardship agreement signed in 1993, the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture Wetland Stewardship Program carried out a series of wetland inventories on Kimberley-Clark's land. The inventories included wetland

management plans. The Deyarmont, Twin and Hay Lakes Conservation Area is one of the sites recognized. Data accumulated as a result of these inventories will allow Kimberley Clark to carry out environmentally sensitive management planning.

Traditionally, the lakes are valued for their recreational fishing close to Truro (about 22 km ESE from town as the loon flies). It was raining to beat the band while we were there, but it seemed to be a relatively natural, undisturbed site despite logging in the vicinity.

It is refreshing to see a large company such as Kimberley-Clark so willing to work with the government and naturalist groups to safeguard environmentally sensitive areas.



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*Ruth Newell is a botany technician and curator of the E.C. Smith Herbarium at Acadia University. She is particularly interested in the rare native flora of Nova Scotia. Ruth has been secretary of FNSN for a year and would gladly train a new volunteer for this prestigious position.*

# A Super Field Trip

Here's a notice from the South Shore Naturalists that sounds like a terrific way to spend a week this fall:

**6–13 September 1997** — Join us at the Huntsman Marine Science Centre in St Andrews, New Brunswick, for a one-week workshop with the Catharine Traill Naturalists (Montreal).

**Activities:** Aquaculture; Birding; Chocolate (tour of Ganong's); Early Indian Settlement; Federal Fisheries Research Labs; Geology; Local Flora; Passamaquoddy Bay and Fundy Tides; Salmon Research Institute; Salt Marshes; Tidal Pools & Beach Studies; Whales

**Accommodation:** University-residence-style in Needler Hall (new building) — all meals included.

**Cost:** \$500 (plus applicable taxes) all inclusive.

**Registration:** First-come . . . a deposit of \$50 saves a spot (refundable before 30 June 1997).

**Contacts:**

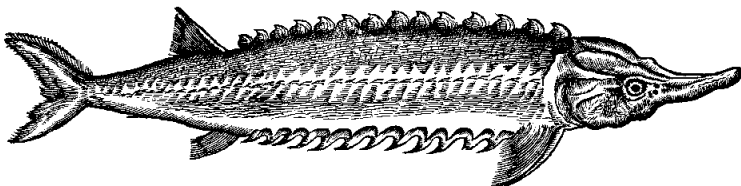
Stacey Dean (Huntsman Marine Science Centre, St Andrews, NB E0G 2X0)

tel: (506) 529-1200; fax: (506) 529-1212; e-mail: huntsman@nbnet.nb.ca

Bridget Grice (Catharine Traill Naturalists Society, RR2, Green Valley, Ontario

K0C 1L0) tel: (613) 525-1216

St Andrews by-the-Sea is a historical town, rather akin to Lunenburg. It features the oldest North American fisheries research station, an aquarium and museum at the Huntsman (check out their website: <http://www.unb.ca/web/huntsman/>), the elegant Algonquin Hotel, a superb golf course, and nearby Roosevelt summer home Campobello Island.



# A Cyberplace for Naturalists

The Internet phenomenon continues to embrace more and more aspects of our lives, and the volunteer sector is no exception. An especially useful feature of e-mail is the mail list. A mail-list enables a form of conversation among people with a common interest. For instance, most of the FNSN board members belong to a mail list on which board business can be discussed. The marvelous thing about the mail list is that members of a widely dispersed group can have the next best thing to face-to-face meetings, without the expense and inconvenience of travel, and with the added benefit of time to put together reasoned or researched responses to the issues being discussed. By the time they get together for a quarterly board meeting, everyone is familiar with the agenda, and many of the issues have already been discussed in detail.

This kind of communication is old hat to academics who have been trading research and “meeting” over the Internet and its precursors for years. But it’s new to the multitudes who themselves are relatively new to computers and the suddenly easy access to the Internet.

One of the latest entries to the mail list genre is **NatureNS**, a list that’s open to anyone with access to an e-mail account and an interest in what’s happening in the natural world of Nova Scotia. Already, only a few months old, NatureNS has proven to be a popular way of keeping up with the progress of spring. Whether it’s the first coltsfoot in

Metro or the first Lep in Pictou County or a South shore Osprey, or the last Iceland gull in the heart of Cape Breton, you’ll read about it here. And you’re welcome to participate with your own stories and observations.

One of the inspirations for this list was a similar list in New Brunswick, NatureNB (of course). One fascinating and fairly wide-ranging conversation on that list that comes to mind was about mud shrimp and shorebird populations on the Bay of Fundy. On NatureNS, there has been much talk of the comet Hale-Bopp, including fascinating observations by Sherman Williams from his home in Avonport. Oh, yes, and who could forget the roadkill series?

So what do you do if you want to join? The NatureNS mail list belongs to FNSN and is operated by a computer program called Majordomo, located on the Chebucto Community Net (where our Web site is). The procedure is simple:

Address a new message *To:* majordomo@chebucto.ns.ca. Leave the *Subject:* line empty. In the message area, type SUBSCRIBE NATURENS SAM SLICK (or use your own name if it isn’t Sam Slick). That’s all there is to it. You’ll get a confirmation from the Majordomo server, which you should save because it tells you how to unsubscribe (which you might want to do someday).

We’ll see you in cybernature.

# Come to the AGM

The 1997 annual general meeting of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists will be in Halifax 13–15 June.

Greetings fellow naturalists,

The Halifax Field Naturalists are proud to be the host for the eighth Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists. Our theme this year, “Green Spaces in Urban Places,” will focus on the efforts of groups and individual people to recognize, protect, and restore natural sites within the greater metropolitan area. We invite you to join us on the weekend of 13–15 June 1997 for field trips, illustrated lectures, and social events with your fellow naturalists from around the province. We will be meeting on the beautiful green campus of Mount Saint Vincent University, overlooking Bedford Basin. Our field trips will introduce you to many of the parks and natural sites in our neighborhood.

Program highlights will include talks on the natural history of McNab’s Island and efforts to save it as a park; the achievement of the Sackville Rivers Association in cleaning up this important waterway; Schoolyard Naturalization projects; the Piping Plover Guardianship program, particularly at Conrad’s Beach; work to protect the forest of Point Pleasant Park; and finally, the natural history and future prospects of Sable Island (a little bit offshore, but still part of the Halifax Regional Municipality). On the usual early morning field trips, you will see wildflowers, birds,

medicinal plants, and so on in natural habitats. Saturday afternoon will feature a boat trip to McNab’s Island in Halifax Harbour, where a variety of longer field trips are planned, focusing on water life, plants, birds, dragonflies, and the historic forts and houses. On Saturday evening, we will have a banquet catered by a community group in Lower Sackville, and if fine weather prevails, rather than an after-dinner talk, we will have an after-dinner walk along the Little Sackville River greenway.

The AGM will follow our final speaker on Sunday morning. During this time, events for children will be scheduled. Following the AGM there will be a barbecue on the Mount Saint Vincent campus. A variety of field trips at sites outside the city will be scheduled, so that those headed out of the city on their way home can easily reach them. These will include a butterfly walk off Highway 103; a hike at Mount Uniacke Estate Park, near Highway 101; and a wildflower walk at Shubie Park on the outskirts of Dartmouth.

Please check out the enclosed full program and registration information. We hope to see you in Halifax.

Patricia L. Chalmers  
FNSN planning committee  
Halifax Field Naturalists

# From the Notebook of Sherman Williams (via NatureNS)

The opportunities for viewing Comet Hale-Bopp are indeed getting limited. Fortunately, this evening, here in Avonport, (May 4th) a large clear patch of sky opened up and permitted a good view of the comet between 9:30 and 10:40 PM ADT. . . . Its light is diminished from its former glory; however, compared to the average view of a comet, it is still remarkable. . . . What was most interesting to me as I viewed Hale-Bopp this evening was the pattern it formed when combined with the stars of constellation Auriga. It suggested a large, fat exclamation mark or a large, celestial ostrich plume.

During the observing session I took a brief hike around my rural trail to take in the overall setting. How pleasant it was to view and sense the stars above, the trees silhouetted against the skyline, hear a spring frog chorus filling the air and have a comet suspended above the fading twilight.

[*Ed. note: The illustration below is not one of Sherman's sketches. To view his work, check out < <http://scienceweb.dao.nrc.ca/comet.html> >.*]

